

Fort Wayne GM worker alleges UAW-management collusion in unjust termination

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Workers at the General Motors Fort Wayne, Indiana Assembly plant are up in arms over the firing of a veteran worker as an apparent result of union-management collusion.

Ami Reveal was fired at the end of September from her job at the giant Fort Wayne facility that builds the Chevrolet Silverado and GMC Sierra. The worker had only recently been recalled to the plant after being off for four years.

Reveal, who is approaching 49, had been placed on one of the most physically difficult jobs in the plant despite her age. Struggling to keep up on her job, she approached the United Auto Workers because she felt she was being harassed by management and needed another job assignment more conducive to her abilities.

According to workers familiar with her situation there were hundreds of other open jobs at the facility, which employs an enormous number of temporary part-time workers, 800 by one estimate. These workers are brutally exploited, making as little as one-half the pay of legacy workers with no contract protections and few benefits.

Ami reached out to her immediate UAW representative for help about being moved to another job. However, after several weeks of getting no help she decided to approach the shop chairman of UAW Local 2209, Rich Letourneau, and started a conversation via text message. In her texts she pleaded for help saying she was afraid of losing her job. In reply Letourneau sent her a text message, apparently meant for someone else, likely in management, saying “are you going to fire her or what your killing me lol.”

Indeed, several days later she was terminated. Her life quickly spiraled downhill and she is currently homeless, living in a motel room provided by a local church.

“I feel I was wronged and disrespected,” Reveal told the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter*. “It was devastating. To lose your job and become homeless. I was sleeping in my car.

“When I went to the union, I was desperate for help. What I got from the union was ‘do your job or else.’”

Ami posted the text exchange on the UAW Local 2209 Facebook page and received a flood of support. “People were telling me their stories. I think that is what cost me my job. I was fired for a bogus reason.”

She noted that she had been given inadequate training for her position, no more than four hours, when three days is considered standard.

Indeed, even the state unemployment compensation office agreed. It wrote a letter stating, “The claimant was not discharged for just cause... no intentional disregard of the employer’s best interest has been shown. No disqualification.”

A Fort Wayne GM worker who contacted the WSWs *Autoworker Newsletter* about the firing of Reveal commented, “She and most other employees who read the message believed this message was meant for a member of management and he was basically telling them to fire her. She asked him to respond about the message and he didn’t for a long time. Eventually he sent a message back saying I didn’t text that and blamed it on some Republican friend of one of his kids... (who) grabbed the phone at a party. No one’s buying that excuse.”

Local 2209 officials responded to Reveal’s postings by banning her from their Facebook page. She has meanwhile filed a grievance with the UAW over her termination and has scheduled a hearing with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Ami said she had been moved by reading on the *World Socialist Web Site* about Jacoby Hennings, the

young TPT worker at the Ford Woodhaven Stamping Plant outside of Detroit who police claimed shot himself after visiting the UAW offices at the plant over as yet unspecified grievance. “I read about the kid who went to the union for help. That affected me so much. They tried to say he was on drugs, but they did a toxicology test and he had nothing in his system except caffeine. I have been there. It just devastated me that no one would stand up for me.

“You might as well not have a union. You walk into the plant and you have no freedom.”

A retired Fort Wayne GM worker who is familiar with the case spoke with the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*. Wray McCalester was a former Local 2209 shop chairman at the plant before the present administration took over.

Pointing to the text message that Reveal had received from Letourneau, he noted, “It’s pretty hard to get out from under that one.”

He continued, “Almost 20 percent of the total employment at the plant are TPT workers. That is insane. That can only come because there is some arrangement by the local and likely the International UAW. There is no way any plant needs 800 temps. They should only be used for vacation relief. If the plant needs them for more than vacation relief they should be hired, period.

“It is ridiculous that in a plant of 4,000 workers they couldn’t find her another position.”

The termination of Ami Reveal is hardly an isolated case. It is just one of many horror stories relating to the abandonment by the UAW of any defense of workers’ interests. It comes amidst continuing revelations relating to the bribery scandal rocking the UAW leadership. Top UAW officials, including former UAW President Dennis Williams, have been implicated in a scheme to illegally divert millions from joint training centers to pay for first class travel, lavish meals and entertainment as well as personal expenses. These payouts from management were intended to buy the union’s complicity in imposing sweetheart contracts and to keep union officials “fat, dumb and happy.”

It underscores the importance of the call by the Socialist Equality Party and *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* for the creation of rank-and-file factory and workplace committees to take over the functions long abandoned by the UAW, including the processing of

grievances, the defense of jobs and the oversight of health and safety conditions.

Reveal has issued an urgent appeal for help in fighting for her reinstatement and has set up a gofundme page to publicize her case. The *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* encourages workers to support her fight for reinstatement and to share similar experiences with the *WSWS*. Contact auto@socialequality.com.



To contact the *WSWS* and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact