

“Someone is getting paid millions to provoke racism and hatred”

## US autoworkers oppose anti-immigrant campaign

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Over the weekend, reporters for the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* spoke to Detroit area autoworkers about the fascistic campaign against asylum seekers being fomented by President Trump, a provocation that has been aided and abetted by the Democratic Party, which was deliberately silent on this issue during the midterm elections.

The president ranted against Central American immigrants who are traveling to the US to escape rampant violence in the region long ravaged by American imperialism, calling workers and their families seeking a better life “invaders.” The president has also sent thousands of US troops to the border area and said they should shoot migrants, including children, if they throw stones at the soldiers.

The WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* insists that the defense of immigrant workers is a critical task for American workers. The forging of solidarity between workers in the US and workers in Canada and Latin America is essential for a successful struggle against the transnational auto corporations.

Predictably, the United Auto Workers has been silent regarding the Trump administration’s attempt to whip up fear over the thousands of asylum seekers from Central America participating in the immigrant caravan, now in Mexico. In fact, Trump’s assault on immigrants and Make America Great Again agitation dovetails with the reactionary Buy American campaign long promoted by the UAW to scapegoat international workers for layoffs and the destruction of jobs and living standards.

Over the weekend, reporters for the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* spoke with Ford workers at the Dearborn Truck Assembly plant south of Detroit, part

of the giant River Rouge complex. Names have been altered in some cases to prevent possible union or management retaliation.

David, a Ford Dearborn Assembly worker, came to Detroit from another state looking for work a number of years ago. The old neighborhood where he grew up is full of immigrants from all around the world. He spoke eloquently about the unity of workers of all countries.

“We have to be truthful about the situation. It’s about critical thinking,” he reflected. “Someone is getting paid millions to provoke racism and hatred. It’s a war move that goes way back in time: divide and conquer.

“Every group of immigrants in history has faced this. It’s supposed to be the ‘United’ States. But there was splitting before the Civil War. Africans, Irish, Eastern Europeans, the Arabic people. It was always the same; keep the workers divided.”

“Immigrants contribute to society,” he continued. “We are all immigrants really, except the Native Americans.”

As he reflected on the implications of Trump’s sending troops to the border with orders to shoot, it became clear how closely immigrants, both documented and undocumented, are bound up with the lives of American workers and the horror and anger a potential massacre of unarmed families would provoke.

For David, as with most workers we talked to, the attempt to incite a fascist hatred of foreigners evoked revulsion. “Illegal immigrants only want citizenship,” he said. “What’s the problem? That’s all they’re doing is working.”

WSWS reporters recalled the coming to power of fascists in Europe during the 1920s and 1930s and the

re-emergence of similar forces today in Germany, France, Brazil and other countries.

“Whenever I see the news, I feel like I’m in a cartoon,” David responded. “It’s unreal. Other countries are horrified at the conditions that are developing in the US.”

He remarked, “I have read Karl Marx. My high school teacher gave me a book of his to read. I knew it was important but I didn’t know why at the time.”

Carmen, another Dearborn Truck worker, was born in Puerto Rico and has family members who survived Hurricane Maria and its aftermath. She strongly identifies with the caravan of asylum seekers who are traveling by foot across Mexico.

“Immigrants receive no help,” she said. “I am from Puerto Rico, and after the hurricane we were abandoned. Puerto Ricans are portrayed as second-class citizens.”

She went on to explain the conditions of intimidation that confront wide layers of the working class as the media and whole political establishment lurch to the right in line with Trump’s fascistic rants. “The Democrats and Republicans both work together,” she said.

“I am afraid to speak Spanish,” she continued. “Trump is inciting the right wing and fascists, and the Democrats go along with it.”

Other workers, readers of the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* contacted by our reporters, also spoke out in defense of immigrants.

A Fiat Chrysler worker said, “He (Trump) does not see immigrants as people. They are demanding immigrants have the right paperwork when they apply for asylum, but they know that takes money. So, they are basically only accepting immigrants who have money.”

Mike, a young worker at Ford Sterling Axle plant denounced the Trump administration’s mobilization of troops to the US Mexican border and threats to shoot workers participating in the immigrant caravan. “He is pushing this to the extreme. It is unbelievable.”

Mike continued, “They are seeking asylum. It is not like they are trying to sneak in.

“If they are seeking asylum due to political persecution, it should be granted. All the political problems in Central America over the last 60 years are due to US involvement, either the US overthrowing

governments or supporting right-wing death squads.

“The US overthrew the government in Chile and installed the Pinochet junta. The death squads in Central America were financed by the US government. We have to let them in. It is the right thing to do.”

He continued, “The GOP claims they are the party of morality and good Christians. It has always been the tactic of the people in power to blame foreigners. They have given the rich so many tax cuts, but everyone else is struggling. I don’t think that is the fault of a Guatemalan refugee. He won’t take your job.”



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