

Defend the Silao Seven!

Fired Mexican GM workers issue open letter to American workers

The WSWS Autoworker Newsletter
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The WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* urges workers to support the General Motors workers at the Silao, Mexico factory who were fired for supporting the 40-day strike by GM workers in the United States in September and October.

In the weeks leading up to the walkout, GM sought to increase production at the Silao complex, where 6,000 workers manufacture the company's most profitable vehicles, the Silverado and Sierra pickup trucks, for \$2.25 an hour. But GM's strikebreaking plans were disrupted when the Silao workers refused to accept speedup and forced overtime. Fearing that resistance would spread to other GM plants in Mexico, corporate executives in Detroit quickly shut down the Silao plant.

For their courageous act of solidarity, GM and the gangster-ridden Confederation of Mexican Workers union tracked down the leaders of the rebellion and fired them. The victimized workers included several who had more than 20 years of seniority at GM.

After the end of the strike, GM refused to reinstate the workers. Exploiting the economic hardship workers would face without a job or an income, GM pressured several to accept "voluntary" severance packages instead of fighting their terminations. The remaining workers have been blacklisted by GM and area employers have refused to hire them.

The Silao workers have set up a defense fund to support their families and pay for legal assistance while they fight to get their jobs back. In an open letter to US workers, the Silao workers, who called their group the "Generating Movement," have appealed for support.

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The following is their statement:

We, the group of fired workers at General Motors Silao Complex who joined hand in hand and strongly supported our fellow workers in the strike at General Motors in the United States, are continuing our struggle against the employer and our union leaders, resisting their pacts and alliance with the authorities. Our struggle is not over, and we are not willing to take a step back, which is why we are requesting your solidarity and your support for our defense fund. The economic situation is hitting us hard, and the main purpose we are asking for your help is to keep going, fighting for our reinstatement and for a democratic movement of workers at GM Silao.

The labor authorities in Mexico have not shown any willingness to address the lawsuits we have filed against the transnational corporation General Motors at the Silao Complex. Those same authorities have deals with the conciliation and arbitration boards to obstruct our lawsuits and close our path. That is why we request

your support for our workers' movement and our fight for the livelihood of those workers fired at General Motors Silao Complex.

In advance, we thank you for your solidarity and understanding.

We are still fighting!

For the international unity of workers at GM!

Not one step back!

Signed,

Dolores Israel Cervantes Córdova

Pilar de la Luz Torres Rosales

Ramón Rodríguez Gutiérrez

Arturo Martínez Fernández

Javier Martínez Mosqueda

Mauricio Negrete Pérez

María Guadalupe Ibarra Ramírez

Generating Movement

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The United Auto Workers union has not said a thing about the fired Mexican GM workers. That is because the corrupt criminals who run the UAW fear nothing more than US, Canadian and Mexican workers coming together to fight the attack on jobs, wages and conditions that all autoworkers confront. For years, the UAW depicted the Mexican workers as little more than industrial slaves who were supposedly stealing "American jobs." But now it is clear that the Mexican workers, just as much as their US brothers and sisters, want to join together and fight the efforts by the corporations and the unions to pit workers against each other in a race to the bottom.

For 40 days, GM workers in the US fought on the picket lines. Far from unifying GM workers with Ford, Fiat Chrysler and other workers, in the US and internationally, the UAW deliberately isolated GM workers, put them on starvation-level strike pay, and then rammed through a concessions contract that will close plants, force out thousands of higher-paid workers and replace them with temps who, as one Lordstown worker said, "are treated no better than Mexican workers."

Like the Silao workers, dozens of GM workers in US plants were also fired for "strike-related activity." This includes 61-year-old Juan Gonzales, a Flint Assembly worker with more than 20 years at GM, who was terminated the first day back after the strike, allegedly for statements he made on social media. "They want to force those workers into poverty, just like us, in order to shut us up," Juan told the *Autoworker Newsletter*. "We are all building the same cars for the same companies. These cars have parts from all over the world. We need to get together and unite no matter what country we are from."

All over the world, workers increasingly understand that it is impossible to organize an effective strike, let alone a broader social movement against inequality and capitalist exploitation, without collaborating across national borders. Earlier this year, 70,000 auto parts and electronics workers in the maquiladora sweatshops in Matamoros, Mexico, revolted against the corrupt unions, carried out wildcat strikes to demand higher wages and shorter working hours, and marched to the US border to appeal to American workers to join their fight.

The Mexican workers stood up for American workers. Now it is the duty of American autoworkers to defend their courageous class brothers and sisters in Mexico. The fight to support these workers and demand their reinstatement will only strengthen US workers.

This means organizing independently of the UAW, which is nothing but a bribed tool of corporate management, and building rank-and-file factory committees, led by the most class conscious and militant workers, who are democratically elected and accountable to workers, not the profit interests of the corporations.

To fight the global strategy of the auto companies, workers need to reject the nationalism of the UAW, Trump and the Democrats, and adopt an international strategy to unify autoworkers around the world.

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Who are the Silao Seven?

Dolores Israel Cervantes Córdova, 13 years at the plant, fired on August 28, 2019

After winning several acknowledgements for repair work in final assembly, Cervantes, an outspoken opponent of the company-controlled union, was fired after GM falsely claimed that he had failed a drug test. He used his own money to take an independent test, which proved that he had no drugs in his system. Afterwards, Cervantes refused to sign a “voluntary” severance package management told him to sign and instead decided to fight for reinstatement. “I have three children, one who is trying to go to the university, one who is in high school, and one in kindergarten,” Cervantes told the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*. “I’m still paying for my home through Infonavit [state loan], while helping my 86-year-old mother and 83-year-old father.”

Pilar de la Luz Torres Rosales, 8 years at the plant, fired on September 13, 2019

Rosales, who was active in the militant Generating Movement, was fired by GM after she returned from a medical leave due to a shoulder injury she sustained at work. In a statement to US workers shortly after her firing, Rosales said, “I join you in your strike, fellow GM workers, to fight together and in support of each other against unjustified firings. Let’s do this through an independent workers’ commission and not through the same unions.”

Ramón Rodríguez Gutiérrez, 23 years at the plant, fired on September 20, 2019

Before being terminated, Gutiérrez was a co-worker of Israel Cervantes in the same work area and one of the first participants in the militant workers group. “Two people depend on my income, my wife and a daughter who is studying in Irapuato, where we live,” Gutiérrez told the *Autoworker Newsletter*.

Arturo Martínez Fernández, 23 years at the plant, fired on September 20, 2019

Fernández was among those fired summarily the day after the Silao workers group announced they would oppose speed-ups and forced overtime in order to support the strike by US GM workers. “I worked in

final repairs, paint and final processing. We worked in a shop in the back called the ‘fleet’ where we re-painted pieces, did ‘spots’ and the final repairs on any imperfections. I have five dependents: my wife, an 18-year-old son, a 13-year-old daughter, a 10-year-old son and a 5-year-old daughter,” Fernández said.

Javier Martínez Mosqueda, 24 years at the plant, fired on September 24, 2019

Before being fired Mosqueda worked in the final assembly area and was a team leader of seven workers. Two supervisors began harassing him for organizing with other Silao workers in the Generating Movement group, compelling him to file a complaint. Rather than addressing his grievance, management demoted Mosqueda and sent him to an area of the plant with heavier workloads. “I was unable to move and stuck doing one single operation,” he said, adding that management’s aim was to force him to resign. Unable to break him, management fired Mosqueda after four weeks and the union refused to help him. That day, Mosqueda sent the following appeal to US workers, “Today, I’m laid off but in solidarity with you and your strike and my fellow GM workers in any part of the world. I’m convinced that we must fight together.” Since being terminated, Mosqueda has been unable to find another job because he has been blacklisted.

Mauricio Negrete Pérez, 21 years at the plant, fired on October 1, 2019

After years of discussions, Pérez and Israel Cervantes co-founded the militant rank-and-file group in April 2019 to break free from the company-controlled trade union. Pérez received several warnings from supervisors after he refused to work overtime during the GM strike in the US and was ultimately fired. “My activities in the plant were assisting the assembly people when they had issues with the machinery,” he told the *Autoworker Newsletter*. “As maintenance workers, we had to do preventative care on any day of the week, even Sundays and holidays. I’m from Salamanca, so I would wake up at 3:45 a.m. and return home at 7:30 p.m. I have two children. One is sick with a severe cognitive deficit. My wife and I need medical care, but we lost that right when I got fired.”

María Guadalupe Ibarra Ramírez, 8 years at the plant, fired on June 5, 2019

A member of the Generating Movement and an outspoken critic of GM and the company union, Ramírez was terminated without compensation while on medical leave for a severe back injury sustained when she picked up a heavy box in the transmission area. Ramírez worked in several areas of the Silao complex, including bodywork, general assembly, paint, machinery and transmissions. “They claimed there was no operational area where I could work and that they couldn’t relocate me since they are running 12-hour shifts,” she told the newsletter. “I’m the head of a household, in charge of two children and my mother and I’m now selling candies to cover part of the daily expenses.”

GM workers in US speak out to defend victimized Mexican workers

During the historic 40-day GM strike, workers on the picket lines in Flint, Detroit and Ft. Wayne, Indiana expressed their support for the fired Silao workers. A veteran Flint engine worker said, “I believe it’s going to be the workers of the world that have to unite against the corporations to protect ourselves. It’s not just the US anymore or the Canadian workers, it’s all of us in the same fight.”

A third-generation autoworker at the Detroit-Hamtramck plant said, “All my brothers and sisters in Mexico, we are all fighting for the same thing. We, American workers, are fighting for you who were fired to get your jobs back. We stand in solidarity with you.”

A worker at the Ft. Wayne, Indiana plant, which produces the same Silverado and Sierra pickup trucks as the Silao factory, said, “It is awesome that the Mexican workers took a stand with us. We are one, it’s one company and GM should treat everybody equally no matter what country we work in. The Mexican workers are trying to provide for their families too. We’re tired of being treated like crap no matter where we’re working, in the US or outside. It’s wrong.” Asked what she would say to the victimized Silao workers, she said, “Keep up the good fight. We are proud of you and thank you for taking a stand for us, and we will stand with you.”



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