

Baltimore Amazon workers endorse International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees

BWI2 Independent Rank-and-File Safety Committee
20 May 2021

We, the Amazon workers of the BWI2 Independent Rank-and-File Committee, voice our support for, and are in agreement with, the International Committee of the Fourth International's April 24 statement calling for the building of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC).

We send our greetings to other workers across the globe involved in the struggle to protect themselves and their families from the capitalist system and the sacrifice of lives for profit during the pandemic. As the speakers at the ICFI's International Online May Day Rally demonstrated, the experiences of working people are mirrored throughout the globe. Though our languages and cultures may be different, our struggles are the same.

We endorse the call for the IWA-RFC because workers need a collective voice to speak through. Without it, we have nothing. We are vulnerable to whatever the capitalist system wishes to do to us. The pandemic has revealed just how interconnected society is. Whether it is in schools, hospitals, factories, transportation, logistics, retail or food services, the pandemic has revealed how essential we are to one another.

In contrast, the billionaire capitalists who profit from our labor are not only inessential, they are downright harmful. In the case of Amazon, the internet retail and shipping giant, tens of thousands of Amazonians in the United States alone have come down with COVID-19. Some have died.

The BWI2 Rank-and-File Committee and the *World Socialist Web Site International Amazon Workers Voice* have regularly spoken up for our fellow Amazonians. When Poushawn Brown, a 38-year-old Amazon worker in Northern Virginia, died mysteriously after working in Amazon's COVID-19 testing department, our committee was the only organization to issue a statement demanding

that the truth about this tragedy be revealed.

Our committee demands:

- The release of all information relating to the death of Poushawn Brown, including job requirements, on-site interactions and potential exposures. This should include internal company communications and deliberations about how it should respond to Brown's death.

- Full financial and medical support for the Brown family, paid for by Amazon.

All the claims that Amazon is a "generous" and even "progressive" employer are lies. Amazon has clawed back basic safety precautions and hazard pay bonuses throughout the pandemic, even as things have gotten worse and the corporation has made record profits from the increased need for shipping and delivery. A study put out late last year discovered that Amazon's profits were so great that the corporation could have quadrupled our hazard pay and still had money left over. Amazon's former CEO Jeff Bezos is currently the world's richest human in terms of personal wealth.

We solidify ourselves with the ICFI and agree with its position that a true workers' organization "will strive to unify workers in a common worldwide struggle, opposing every effort by capitalist governments and the reactionary proponents of the innumerable forms of national, ethnic and racial chauvinism and identity politics to split up the working class into warring factions."

This is not the attitude of the official bureaucratic organizations calling themselves "trade unions" in the United States. In Bessemer, Alabama, the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU) is recoiling from an election defeat in which Amazonians at the BHM1 fulfillment center voted two-to-one to reject its

advances. Amazonians in Alabama rejected the RWDSU even after the union gained unprecedented support and endorsements from figures such as the Democratic President of the United States, Joseph Biden as well as a number of prominent Democratic and Republican politicians.

In its organizing drive, the RWDSU did not appeal to workers as a class. It appealed to workers at the BHM1 warehouse, which has a majority African American workforce, in racial terms. It did this while refusing to raise a single demand of Amazon to improve conditions at the warehouse. So poor are the conditions for Amazon workers that one month after the vote concluded, a worker died at the BHM1 warehouse. The RWDSU, which is appealing its election loss at BHM1, didn't so much as issue a statement about it!

Furthermore, we reject with contempt the efforts of President Joe Biden and his administration as well as the Democratic Party to target us Amazonians for a top-down "unionization drive," which sought to pit us against our fellow workers throughout the world. In recent comments, both President Biden and Republican Senator Marco Rubio, a supporter of the RWDSU's campaign, have advocated for trade war against China.

In comments last month, President Biden stated that the United States must "win the 21st century" in a competition against China. He claimed that the latter was "deadly earnest about becoming the most significant and consequential nation in the world." Comments like these do nothing for workers, but divide them from each other in a race to the bottom. The official trade unions support these efforts.

Rather than support such a stunt, we hereby affiliate the BWI2 Independent Rank-and-File Safety Committee with the IWA-RFC, and call for our fellow Amazon workers to do the same.



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