Southwest Airlines flight attendant attacked amid growing number of assaults by those opposed to coronavirus restrictions

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26 May 2021

A woman was charged with felony battery in San Diego after attacking a Southwest Airlines flight attendant, who lost two teeth and suffered other injuries to her face. The incident happened Sunday morning during a flight from Sacramento to San Diego.

According to Southwest spokesman Chris Mainz, passenger Vyvianna Quinonez repeatedly ignored standard inflight instructions and became verbally and physically abusive upon landing. San Diego Harbor Police said Tuesday that they arrested and charged Quinonez with battery causing serious bodily injury.

Paramedics took the flight attendant, who was not identified, to a hospital for treatment, and she was later released. Southwest Airlines reported it flew a friend to San Diego to be with the injured flight attendant.

Lyn Montgomery, President of Local 556 of the Transport Workers Union, told ABC News she wrote about the weekend attack in a letter to Southwest CEO Gary Kelly. Montgomery asked Kelly to lobby federal officials for more federal air marshals on flights and to ban passengers who violate rules, instead of putting them on another flight.

"Unfortunately, this is just one of many occurrences," Montgomery said of Sunday's incident. She said there were 477 incidents of "misconduct" by passengers on Southwest planes just between April 8 and May 15.

On Monday, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reported 2,500 incidents of unruly passengers this year, including 1,900 cases in which passengers refused to wear face masks. The FAA announced it was seeking $54,500 in civil penalties against five passengers for behavior ranging from refusing to wear a mask to assaulting flight attendants.

"I've been in the industry since 1992, and this is the worst ever," Montgomery said in an interview. "People seem to be more angry. When they're asked to do something, compliance seems to be more difficult."

Flight attendants are normally trained in de-escalation tactics to deal with threatening travelers, but Montgomery said some passengers have become bolder in challenging the authority of crew members. Montgomery also expressed concern about Southwest's plan to resume selling alcoholic beverages on planes because many incidents recorded by the FAA involved passengers who were drinking.

Workers at Starbucks have also reported increasingly aggressive and confrontational customers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Workers must also deal with understaffing at stores, intense workloads and mistreatment by corporate management.

Starbucks workers across the US complain of being verbally abused or physically assaulted by customers over coronavirus safety protocols. Customers have become violent after being asked to wear a mask or properly practice social distancing.

"I've been chastised for asking people to wear their masks correctly or asking people to put their masks back on because people like to take their masks up specifically to talk to us and the plastic barriers we have up, people will bang on them like they're glass," a Maryland barista told the *Guardian*.

The barista said they believed Starbucks has prioritized customer service over safety and respect for workers during the pandemic. Many Starbucks workers report that their pay is too low for the increasingly overwhelming amount of work the corporation demands from them.

"I'm not compensated enough for the amount of

work that I do, because I'm still struggling to pay my bills, pay my rent, and buy groceries. I've been living paycheck to paycheck and it's really hard to save money. I give so much of my time and energy to this job and the compensation doesn't measure up to the amount of work that we have to do," a Starbucks shift supervisor who spoke to the *Guardian* explained.

The company regularly conducts customer satisfaction surveys where workers can be written up if they do not satisfy a score or meet drive-thru time quotas.

"Starbucks definitely took this turn to becoming just another fast-food drive-thru," the Starbucks shift supervisor added. "They want us to just be these robots that move fast, we're just little drones to them that just need to pump out as many lattes as we can in a half-hour."

A barista in Massachusetts told the *Guardian* they are still concerned about COVID-19 because their infant daughter is not vaccinated. Starbucks is one of several retail chains following the recent shift in Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines that permit vaccinated individuals to not wear masks in stores. However, workers have no way of differentiating between customers who are vaccinated and those who are not.

"Working during this pandemic has been a terrifying experience. It's been almost unbearable and a few times, I've almost wanted to quit because it gets to the point we don't get paid enough to deal with verbal abuse from customers on a daily basis," the barista said.

Meanwhile, in Tennessee, a woman was arrested Monday after driving her car through an outdoor vaccination site at a high speed. Court documents said police arrested Virginia C. Brown, 36, after she drove through a vaccination center set up at the Foothills Mall in Maryville, Tennessee south of Knoxville.

Officers assigned to assist at the site saw Brown in a blue Chrysler SUV traveling at a high rate of speed through an enclosed tent where several health department and National Guard personnel were working. Police said Brown exited the tent and continued to drive recklessly through the cone course on the site.

Brown was later arrested and charged with seven counts of felony reckless endangerment. Deputies said Brown made several statements about wanting to protest the vaccine while in the back of their police vehicle.

Workers in the tent said Brown was shouting "no vaccine" as she sped by them. She narrowly missed hitting seven workers inside the tent. Workers later said they thought the driver was going to kill them.

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