

# GM Flint workers support Will Lehman's call to unite US and Mexican workers

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*The World Socialist Web Site has endorsed Will Lehman for UAW president. For more information, visit [WillForUAWPresident.org](http://WillForUAWPresident.org).*

Campaigners for Will Lehman traveled to the General Motors truck assembly plant in Flint, Michigan last week and spoke with GM workers about the program Lehman is fighting for as candidate for president of the United Auto Workers in the upcoming election. Many workers expressed support for Lehman, a Mack Trucks worker and socialist candidate for UAW president who visited the factory earlier in his campaign.

The Flint Assembly Plant is a key facility in GM's North American manufacturing network, with 5,200 workers on three shifts producing the company's highly profitable Chevrolet Silverado and GMC Sierra pickup trucks. A large percentage of the workforce consists of temporary part-time (TPT) workers who start at \$16.75 an hour and who have virtually no rights.

"When I hired in, they told me that we're nothing but at-will employees," one TPT told campaigners. "What's the point of having a union if you can be fired at any time? I agree with Will that we should be rolled over to full time right away."

There is enormous opposition in the plant to UAW incumbent Ray Curry and the UAW apparatus, which betrayed the 40-day strike by 48,000 GM workers in 2019 and signed a contract that allowed the company to expand the use of highly exploited temps.

During the strike, workers at the Flint plant expressed widespread support for workers at their sister plant in Silao, Mexico when they learned from the *World Socialist Web Site* that GM had fired a group of militant workers for defying management's demands for speed-up and overtime work to undermine the impact of the US strike. Workers at the Silao plant also produce Silverado pickups for wages ranging from 184.35 pesos (\$9.15) *per day* to a maximum of 679.53 pesos (\$33.74) *per day*.

The UAW bureaucracy, which has spent decades promoting the lie that workers in Mexico and other countries are the enemies of American workers, said nothing about the heroic stand of the Silao workers.

In recent days, supporters of Will Lehman in the Flint factory distributed flyers on his campaign, including his call to unite US and Mexican workers and to demand the reinstatement of the Silao workers fired during the US strike and afterwards for organizing against the corrupt Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) union.

Supporters have also circulated an article and video of the horrific injury of a 30-year-old worker, Jose Daniel Tejas Muños, at the GM Silao Complex. On October 3, a conveyor in the paint shop amputated the leg of the young worker.

Several Flint assembly workers spoke to campaigners after learning about the terrible incident. "As a GM worker at Flint Truck Assembly, I was not aware of the horrible conditions the Silao workers are under, building relatively the same product that we produce. I watched the short video of the chassis line at their plant. To know that a worker lost his hand and his leg doing the same work we do is abhorrent."

Referring to the Silao workers who were victimized for taking solidarity action with American workers during the GM strike, the worker said, "We need to band together and be united. We need to spread the word and stand up for our brothers and sisters in distress, as they have for us."

The worker continued, "We have had horrific incidents at our plant as well, such as the group leaders not wanting to stop the line for repairs, a team leader had to stand on tow hooks to do an under-the-hood repair on a moving truck. When he stepped down his foot got ran over by the line and then his leg and his other leg. The line was only stopped by his bones. He was trapped under the truck on the conveyer in excruciating pain for over 40 minutes."

He added, “I specifically have experienced workers from my plant being angry about people driving a Blazer to work and parking in the lot, because it’s made in Mexico. We should not be mad at the Mexican workers. We should be united with them and mad at the company and the UAW higher-ups. I am grateful for Will Lehman and people like him who are willing to fight for us and wake people up.

“Will’s campaign is like no other. It’s important and is in the best interest of the actual workers on the shop floor. This campaign will create the actual positive change we need when we work together to take our power back.”

Another young worker said he was opposed to the nationalism peddled by the UAW bureaucracy and other candidates for UAW president, including Brian Keller. “How can we win the support of Mexican or Chinese workers, if we denounce them as our enemies?” he said. “I will look over Will’s program and think seriously about voting for him,” he told campaigners.

“I’m supporting Will,” a worker with seven years at the plant said. “The way he speaks seems very approachable. I was very surprised to learn of the firings and now the terrible injuries at the Silao plant. If it weren’t for workers using their cell phones to make the video, no one would ever know about this. I am glad the Mexican workers were able to speak out about it themselves because GM and the UAW would not. Communication like this is important.”

A TPT worker who read Will’s statement defending the GM Silao workers said, “This is horrible, and as a GM worker at the Flint Assembly Plant myself I fully support their struggle against the company and the corrupt union bureaucrats. At my plant the UAW bureaucrats tell us we need to compete with GM workers outside the US to keep our jobs. They work with the company and use nationalism to pit us against each other to drive wages down and keep us working in unsafe conditions where workers get injured and COVID spreads rampantly. They say if we don’t accept wage cuts or give up more concessions, our jobs will go to Canada or to Mexico where workers are paid far less.

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“We all build the same trucks, and GM employs workers all over the world, so why should we have our struggle limited only to the US or Mexico or behind any other border? As workers on the shop floor, I think our interests are not the same as either the union bureaucrats or management. They make profit off of our collective

labor. It seems the only way to be effective in fighting the company and union corruption, is to come together on an international scale. We can’t accept the lies peddled by the UAW bureaucracy any more.

“I support Will’s campaign because it is for uniting with other workers not only in the US but across these borders with our sister plants in Silao and Oshawa.

“If we go on strike here in the US only, the company will just force workers in another country to make up for the lost profit and production. We are powerless and cannot fight the company when our struggle is limited within these borders. When a strike happens in the US or elsewhere, like Mexico or Canada, we all need to support each other by striking. We could shut down the whole production process internationally. I think the only way forward is an international movement of workers.”

In a statement to the WSWS, Will Lehman said, “The old ‘Buy American’ narrative of the UAW bureaucracy is reactionary and only plays into the hands of GM and the other global auto companies. What happened to our brother in Silao, Jose Daniel Tejas Muños, is horrific and another example of how workers’ lives and limbs are sacrificed for corporate profit. We have to end this race to the bottom and unite workers around the world in a common fight. That is why I support the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.”

After watching Will’s debate, a worker in Silao told the WSWS, “Wow, how brave! My respects. This is truly what we need, people brave enough to say this even though they try to keep us quiet. I think that the fact that they [the UAW] are not allowing for the dissemination of the debate is because they feel inconvenienced and believe that this will provoke controversy and that many more will raise their voices and support what Lehman is proposing. I congratulate him for being so clear in what he said. We need many more like him.”

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