“Dana really ruined my life”

More Dana workers stand up to reveal rampant corporate-union abuse

Kathleen Martin
6 March 2023

If you are a fired Dana worker, or if you would like to join the rank-and-file committee to fight against the mass firings, text or call the WSWS Autoworker Newsletter at 248–602–0936 today.

Autoworkers at parts manufacturer Dana Inc.’s Toledo Driveline Plant are continuing to come forward with more reports of how the company is working with the UAW to fire workers en masse. As corporate profits and prices of basic goods soar and wages stagnate, workers are realizing there is no option but to fight back.

Tayon Roach, 22, is the latest Dana auto parts worker to step forward for opposing abuse carried out by the corporation with the acceptance of the UAW.

Roach represents a generation of younger workers eager to fight for equality. In November 2022, Roach lost his mother, a devastating blow for any young person. But because Roach is an autoworker, he had to fight to be allowed just three days off for bereavement.

“I’m a 22-year-old with no parents, no guidance, no anything. I’ve explained this to Dana so many times, but they don’t offer me any help. My car just got repossessed yesterday morning. I’m trying to get back on track, but it’s not easy. The union just says ‘there’s nothing we can do for you.’ I’m trying to find a rental assistance program. But it’s not easy. Dana has ruined my whole 2023 already because of how far behind I am now. I am going to be spending all my time and money now just catching up.”

Roach is one of many workers who have been fired for speaking out against the the company and union, which have many ways of forcing workers out of their jobs. Dozens of Dana workers say they were fired for reporting sexual harassment and wage theft, for taking parental leave, or for standing up for the rights of their coworkers in even the most basic ways.

Like many of his co-workers, Roach reports that he was sexually harassed by management and then victimized for standing up for himself. The UAW, Roach says, did nothing to help him.

He says a team lead invited him over for a drink outside of work. He turned her down when he realized it would only be the two of them. The following day he told her he was engaged and not interested in a sexual relationship with her.

“I told her in person, ‘Hey, I don’t feel comfortable with this.’” As punishment for refusing her advances, Roach was put in a position on the line that he was not trained for.

When the line got backed up with materials, the team lead reported Roach to a supervisor and said he was on his phone, though this was not true. The supervisor then attempted to write Roach up for his phone use. “I told him, ‘This is very personal. I want to go to HR and file something. I need to talk to my union.’ I then talked to the union about it, showed them the screen shot of the text messages I had received from [his team lead], and I ended up getting moved permanently to a different line.” He urged the company to review camera footage, but workers report the company does not honor such requests.

Roach explained:

“Two weeks later, the superintendent came and asked for more information and more evidence of the harassment. But what more can I give? I gave a simple screenshot right there. It has [the team lead’s] name in it, her phone number was there, the text messages were right there. What more could they need to see? What

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more could they want? They then threatened to move me back to the old line or else I would be fired. That's not okay. Why would they make me uncomfortable as a worker? Why would I want to work in an uncomfortable spot where I know that I can't be myself, that I would have to be quiet or not be able to speak up?

"It only takes one person to get the word out. Now other people want to join in and stand up because nobody wants to do it alone, and we have had enough."

One of Roach's former co-workers, Rayshawn Doyle, witnessed this harassment but was also fired.

He believes he was fired for attempting to take time off for the birth of his son and was never even informed by the UAW that he had the right to file a grievance.

"My environment was fine until I told my supervisor that I needed time off to bond with my new child," he told the *World Socialist Web Site*.

"I let them know that I'm expecting to have a child, and as soon as I told them they treated me differently. After I asked for time off, Dana made excuses as to why they couldn't answer my request. Before my son was born the supervisors were picking on me for the most minor things. I quit after all of this, it was getting to the point where I couldn't take it.

"It was incredibly stressful. I want to be able to feed my kid, I didn't want to quit, but they made it impossible to stay. My last straw was they called a standup meeting, and they said we can't have water bottles or eat snacks, nothing with lids, and they sell those at the plant! We basically live here, we work seven days a week. I couldn't wrap my mind around that. You will prevent me from taking sips of water on a hot night? The UAW never gave me a chance to complain. There was never anyone from the UAW there on the floor. Nobody told me how to get a hold of anyone in the union. I never met any of them."

This type of abuse is not only happening to younger workers. Donna Williams, known as "Starr" to her friends and co-workers, is 58 years old. She began working at Dana in July 2022 and was forced to quit in January 2023.

Like Roach, Williams was harassed by her team lead as well. "My team lead was going around asking people about my personal business, things like 'who am I going out with,' 'who am I related to,' 'where do I live,' which made me very uncomfortable." Her team lead was off for a few months on FMLA but continued to text Starr anyway to inquire about what time she arrived at work and whether she was doing her job or not.

"I want to talk about the hardship I dealt with at Dana," Williams told the *World Socialist Web Site*. "I've been a forklift driver for 23 years, and Dana just didn't appreciate anything I did for them. The seven months that I was there was hell for me. I've never been so stressed as I was there. I couldn't eat. I couldn't sleep. My hair fell out. I wouldn't wish that on anybody. Working seven days a week like that and being on a forklift is just not safe. Your mind is not sharp the way it needs to be to be able to do a good job. I've never been to prison, but I think it's kind of like that at Dana," she said.

An individual close to the UAW began harassing her, she says, and her repeated requests to move to a different part of the plant were denied. "The union did not do anything for me. I went to my UAW rep and complained on several occasions, and nothing came out of any of it." It became too much for her to handle, and although she left her job, in reality, she was forced to leave, which is the legal equivalent of firing under the legal doctrine of "constructive discharge."

As corporate profits soar and inequality grows worse, Dana workers are beginning to recognize that the fight against the company and the union must be conducted with the broadest possible support. This year contracts expire for 150,000 autoworkers at Ford, Stellantis and GM, and they all handle Dana parts. Dana employs 30,000 workers at 139 factories across five continents. Workers are increasingly realizing that what is required is to unify across all companies, all industries and all countries against the capitalist system.

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