

An interview with the WSWS

Laid off UPS worker denounces Teamsters: “They knew they would enact these mass layoffs ahead of time”

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On Thursday, March 21, the World Socialist Web Site spoke to Julia (name changed to protect identity), a UPS worker in Southern California who was laid off as part of the ongoing mass job cuts at the company. UPS has already announced more than 12,000 cuts so far this year alone.

Julia, a single mother of two, spoke to us about her time working at UPS, the layoffs, the Teamsters union, as well as the immense hardship and injustice facing her and other sections of the working class.

She paid dues to the Teamsters union throughout her six months on the job but received no job security or protection. Having grown up in foster care, Julia has not had any family to support her and relies on food stamps to feed her children.

Gabriel Black: Can you tell us about UPS and the layoffs?

Julia: The hours just started being cut. I started seeing people just not being there. As much as I think I have a strong work ethic, this one guy, who was a great worker, I thought to myself “he would never be fired, I’ll definitely be leaving before him,” but then he got cut.

I asked around, and my older co-workers said this happens every year around this time. They always let go of X amount. But they said that they had never seen this many let go before.

Then another round of layoffs hit, and another group left. So I was like, okay, well, did I make it? And people suggested I had. I got a couple of “Congratulations, you made it,” but something was not sitting right in my stomach.

So, it came to this month, and I left one day without taking a picture of the schedule. I texted my lead for the

schedule, and I look at it, and my name’s not on there.

I was pissed because I never got any kind of heads-up. Like, let me know how this is coming. [My lead] knew my situation, knew I didn’t have anybody else to depend on.

I asked my supervisor straight out, “Am I fired or what?” And he goes, “No, you’re not fired. I’ll call you back when production goes up,” and when I asked him, “Can you give me at least an estimate about how long this lasts?”

I’m like, “Be real with me. Let me know I’m being laid off.” I’m basically being treated pretty much as a temp, even though I was hired full-time and paid union dues.

Like I put literal blood, sweat and tears into doing my job at UPS, literal. I had a gash that went from the top of my pinky all the way down.

Jacob Crosse: Can you tell us about the new contract and how it affected you? Were you working under it the whole time?

Julia: You mean the contract of abuse? They are pushing us and pushing us. And it’s like, okay, well, if you have a great workhorse, it’s not going to last long if every single day you’re tearing it down.

I know what a setup looks like, and I’ve been in plenty of setups before. They knew they would enact these mass layoffs ahead of time. They knew this. They set it up that way to even out their pockets.

They did this for money, for power. But they don’t care about my life or the next person’s life or what anybody’s going through. It was a setup, a setup to the max.

I was just talking to a friend that still works over there and he’s like, “They are milking us for everything that they can.” And I was like, “dang, it’s that bad?” He said,

“I don’t even know why they let you go. ... It’s not like we don’t need the help.”

GB: Did the Teamsters do anything to help?

J: Well, I’ll put it like this. If they were real protectors, if they valued us as human beings, it wouldn’t have happened the way it did. And they must have known about the mass layoffs because for it to go through as smoothly as it did, compliance had to come from all the way around so nobody could speak up and cause ripples. And that’s what happened. They let go, and “shushed” those people that probably would have made trouble.

But all of the [Teamsters] knew, because if you flat out told somebody, “Hey, I’m going to rob you for this, this, and this,” I guarantee you there’s not a person that would like, “Okay.” We would do whatever we needed to do to protect ourselves, right?

... How could they not know? Show me proof of how they *didn’t* know.

JC: Did you get to vote on the contract, or were you brought in after it was ratified?

J: No, I didn’t get to vote on it. [The contract was just being ratified a few days before she was hired.]

When I was brought in, when all of us were coming in, they were like, “Oh, we’re getting this new contract, so you should be getting you know X, Y, and Z.”

They said in that first meeting, like your first week, they said, how great the company was, that part-timers are going to full-time, that you might have to stay after, but you’re guaranteed your hours.

They promised all kinds of stuff once we had passed our 90 days on the job. I still have the little packet that they gave us. And I always showed up on time, usually 30 minutes before.

I was told, “You don’t have to worry about getting fired.” I was coming up to that 90-day mark, and a few days before, but then they told me 100 working days.

And even then, I was already past that. So I’m just like “Okay, what is it then?” Don’t play me like I’m stupid. Don’t beat around the bush. Give it to me straight because then I can have respect for you, and whatever I choose that’s on me. But if you don’t even tell me let me know what’s up and or do some shady stuff like this ... that’s messed up, and what you put out in the world you get back.

That lady [UPS CEO Carol Tome] alone has enough money to feed so many people in America, in California itself. Not only could you feed them, you could house

them and get them going to where they have, they could actually do something.

You’re putting us in a corner where no matter what we do, no matter how good we are, no matter how hard we work, blood, sweat and tears, you’re making it so we cannot make it at all.

JC: What do you think about the ongoing war in Ukraine?

J: I mean, so they’re killing people to save them? This whole thing is dumb. Like you got people starving here. Every single photo that I have seen about the aftermath of over there, I can take you to a spot here where it looks the same. I can introduce you to people that look the same here.

You nuke everything. What do you have left? Look at Chernobyl. Are we even allowed to go there today? So then that means you’re fighting for a landfill? With nobody surviving? So what did you gain from that?

JC: How are we going to fight this system? Is it going to be through the Democrats? Is it going to be through the Republicans?

J: I say wipe the checkerboard off. Wipe them all off ... they’ve been lying to us about why they took that job.

There’s so much suffering for no reason. No, my enemy is the person that is on my paycheck. Like, why aren’t you giving me what I’m worth so I can survive? That’s my enemy.

I don’t care what color you are. No, the person that signs my check and can morally sleep at night, that is my enemy.



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