

Support the IWA-RFC's rank-and-file investigation into the death of autoworker Ronald Adams Sr.!

WSWS Editorial Board

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The WSWS urges workers to come forward with information and support this investigation. Fill out the form at the end to send us your comments.

The Socialist Equality Party and the *World Socialist Web Site* support the call by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) for an independent investigation—led by rank-and-file workers—into the entirely preventable death of Ronald Adams Sr.

Ronald Adams Sr., a 63-year-old machine repairman, was crushed to death on April 7, 2025, at Stellantis' Dundee Engine Complex in southeast Michigan. According to initial reports, he was killed in the early morning hours while servicing a Cinetic Washer in Department 7300, when an overhead gantry crane unexpectedly engaged, pinning him and fatally crushing his upper torso.

Ronald was a widely respected and beloved figure, known throughout the plant not only for his exceptional skill but for his unwavering commitment to safety. Referred to by coworkers as “the protector of the plant,” Adams had earned the trust of those around him.

He leaves behind a large and grieving family. He was a devoted husband to Shamenia Stewart-Adams, a proud father of 10 children and a grandfather of 11 in their blended family, and a mentor and coach to many young people in his community. His death has left a family stricken and a workplace in mourning, with co-workers and loved ones united in the demand for truth and accountability.

More than five weeks after Adams' death, Stellantis, the United Auto Workers (UAW) and the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA) have failed to provide any explanation for why this catastrophe occurred. There are still more questions than answers: Was the safety lockout system compromised? Had the gantry crane malfunctioned before? Did staff shortages, speed-up demands or cost-cutting measures contribute to the fatal incident? What specific safety violations or systemic failures allowed this to happen?

On Wednesday, MIOSHA rejected a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for information filed by the WSWS, claiming that public disclosure would interfere with its investigation. MIOSHA's letter argued that “external interference” could compromise witness testimony and the investigation's integrity.

This is in fact a serious indication of an unfolding cover-up, an attempt to shield corporate and union officials from scrutiny while they prepare a whitewash to absolve those responsible.

While MIOSHA has a formal responsibility to investigate workplace fatalities, it operates within a state apparatus that maintains the closest ties to the corporations. To uncover the truth and hold those responsible accountable, the investigation into Adams' death must be taken up by rank-and-file workers themselves.

Another powerful argument for an independent investigation is the role of the UAW apparatus, which has functioned from the outset as a partner in a corporate-state cover-up. The UAW remained silent for more than three weeks after Adams' death.

Then, on April 28—Workers Memorial Day—it posted a perfunctory social media image listing Adams among a number of workers killed, briefly noting that he was crushed by a gantry crane and claiming that the “incident” was being investigated by the joint “UAW-Stellantis Health and Safety Department.”

This was accompanied by a video featuring joint appearances by Stellantis executives and UAW-Stellantis Department Director Kevin Gotinsky, in which they praised their “joint efforts” to maintain a safe workplace while blaming accidents on “unsafe acts” by workers. Since then, the UAW has maintained a guilty silence.

The bureaucrats who control the UAW, completely tied to corporate interests, will do nothing. For decades, the union apparatus has worked hand in glove with the auto companies and successive Democratic and Republican administrations

to suppress strikes, impose layoffs and slash wages and benefits in the name of “competitiveness.” Shawn Fain, the current UAW president hailed by the media as a “reformer,” has carried forward this same pro-corporate agenda.

This is an experience that every worker knows all too well, regardless of industry: a constant pattern of neglect, indifference and unsafe conditions, enforced by corporate management—and a trade union apparatus that ignores complaints and sweeps injuries and deaths under the rug.

According to the AFL-CIO itself, over 140,000 workers die each year in the US from hazardous working conditions—more than 5,000 from traumatic injuries and the rest from occupational diseases like cancer, respiratory illness and heart failure. *That is more than 380 preventable deaths every day in the industrial slaughterhouses of America.* Yet with fewer than 1,800 federal and state inspectors overseeing 11 million workplaces, there is just one inspector for every 85,000 workers.

Worldwide, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that nearly 3 million workers die worldwide each year from work-related injuries and diseases. Roughly 330,000 of these are the result of traumatic injuries, while more than 2.6 million are caused by chronic occupational illnesses, such as cancer, circulatory failure, and respiratory disease. The global death toll is rising—up more than 12 percent since 2000.

These staggering numbers do not include the millions of people who have died from COVID-19 over the past five years, a virus that spread most rapidly throughout workplaces—in factories, warehouses, schools, offices and meatpacking plants—as corporations and governments prioritized profits and “business continuity” over human life.

Adams’ death takes place amid a sweeping offensive by the ruling class to dismantle basic worker protections and funnel wealth to the capitalist oligarchy. The Trump administration has gutted OSHA and handed oversight to billionaire Elon Musk, while pushing \$880 billion in social cuts to fund \$4.5 trillion in tax breaks for the ultra-rich—slashing Medicare, Social Security and education under the banner of “the largest deregulation campaign in history.”

This assault is the culmination of decades of bipartisan class war. Both Democrats and Republicans have presided over a historic transfer of wealth from the bottom to the top. Since 1975, \$79 trillion has been siphoned from the bottom 90 percent to the top 1 percent, who now earn 139 times more than the poorest 20 percent. Just last year, the 19 richest families increased their fortunes by more than \$1 trillion.

Only the working class can uncover the truth about the death of Ronald Adams. The initiative launched by the

International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) is a critical and necessary response to the conditions of exploitation and danger workers face every day. As the IWA-RFC explains:

There must not be another cover-up. An inquiry independent of Stellantis, the United Auto Workers (UAW) apparatus and state authorities is essential to uncover the truth, expose systemic safety violations and prevent future deaths. It must gather testimony from Dundee workers, autoworkers at other plants, safety experts and others with relevant knowledge. Such a workers’ investigation is crucial to laying the basis for genuine rank-and-file oversight over safety and production conditions in the factories.

This investigation must be the spearhead of a broader struggle. The working class must intervene as a conscious, organized force, asserting its own interests against the corporations, the state and the union bureaucracy that defends them.

The WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party urge autoworkers and all sections of the working class in North America and internationally to support the IWA-RFC’s investigation and join the fight to transform the auto industry into a public utility under workers’ democratic control.

Workers who have information about the circumstances surrounding Adams’ death or who wish to volunteer for the inquiry should fill out the form below. Support the fight to expose the truth, defend lives and build rank-and-file committees as the foundation of workers’ power.



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