“We want the truth”: Educators support the IWA-RFC Investigation into the death of Stellantis worker Ronald Adams Sr.

Statement of Educators Rank-and-File Committee (ERFC)
26 May 2025

The Educators Rank-and-File Committee (ERFC) stands in unwavering solidarity with autoworkers demanding an independent, rank-and-file investigation into the death of Ronald Adams Sr., a 63-year-old skilled tradesman crushed to death on April 7, 2025, at Stellantis’ Dundee Engine Complex in Michigan.

According to a brief note posted by the United Auto Workers (UAW) on April 28, Adams was servicing a Cinetic Washer in Department 7300 when “the overhead gantry engaged, pinning Brother Adams between the gantry and the conveyor,” causing fatal upper torso injuries. The UAW stated that an investigation was being conducted by the UAW-Stellantis Health and Safety Department, the International UAW, and the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA).

However, more than seven weeks have now passed since Adams’ tragic death, and his family still has not received any explanation regarding the cause of death. Adams was a highly respected skilled tradesman, known to others as the “protector of the plant,” and a safety advocate. He leaves behind his wife, Shamenia Stewart-Adams, and their blended family of 10 children and 11 grandchildren.

There has been no word to Adams’ family or coworkers because there is no real investigation. Instead, there is the usual collusion between the company, the UAW, and government agencies in a cover-up.

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) has launched its own independent investigation, advocating for families who have lost loved ones and countless victims of the sacrifice of human life for corporate profit. The IWA-RFC insists that whitewashes must end, that those responsible must be held accountable and that workers should have the information they need to enforce safety standards. For far too long, workers’ deaths have been ignored with no one held accountable. The Educators RFC fully supports this initiative and urges educators to publicize this investigation and its findings.

This is an urgent fight: There are 380 preventable deaths every day in America’s industrial slaughterhouse

According to the AFL-CIO, over 140,000 workers die each year in the U.S. from hazardous working conditions. This amounts to more than 380 *preventable deaths* every day. Meanwhile, the Trump administration is dismantling basic worker protections, gutting the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and all regulatory agencies they view as limiting corporate profits.

As educators are aware, even child labor laws are being loosened, with the Trump policy book *Project 2025* advising that teenagers should be permitted to work in “hazardous” jobs. Forcing young people to abandon an aspiration to higher education, punitive student loan policies, transforming K-12 into business-directed “career pathways” and privatizing public education are all components of an overarching policy of increased exploitation.

Indeed, Trump, Musk, Education Secretary Linda McMahon and the financial elites they represent want to eliminate any restrictions on exploitation and impose conditions of industrial slavery similar to those exposed by Upton Sinclair in *The Jungle*. In this maniacal drive for profit, workers’ lives are valued at nothing. The union leaders, earning paychecks that are ten times higher (or more) than those of rank-and-file workers, offer no resistance to the intensification of exploitation and eagerly pocket their share of the spoils.

The deaths of educators and the collusion of the teachers’ unions

The fight to uncover the truth about Adams’ death is inseparable from our struggles as education workers. We, too, have learned hard lessons about the role of the union apparatus stifling and betraying strikes, the brutality of the capitalist profit system, the endless budget cuts of both the Democrats and Republicans, and, above all, the necessity of independent collective action by the working class.

Since 2020, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA) have collaborated with bipartisan policies that have led to the deaths of thousands of

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educators from COVID-19, while debilitating hundreds of thousands more with symptoms associated with Long COVID. The virus continues to claim lives and jeopardize the health of both educators and children, as the unions have suppressed all efforts by educators to demand the renovation of school buildings, including the installation of HEPA filtration systems and airborne disease management, as well as sufficient paid leave and fully funded health insurance.

Autoworkers led the way in early 2020, carrying out plant walkouts to protect lives and force COVID lockdowns. This independent initiative saved the lives of countless workers and their families. However, once the corporate elite secured a massive $3.4 trillion bailout for themselves, they were determined to force workers back onto the shop floor to pay for it, no matter the cost in lives. To make this happen, the ruling elites needed schools reopened.

Speaking for Wall Street and the Democratic Party, AFT President Randi Weingarten, a multi-millionaire, bragged to the media that she was "working 15 hours a day" to enforce teachers' return to work. As schools reopened, buildings plagued by poor ventilation were transformed into vectors for the airborne transmission of COVID. Tens of thousands of educators, students, parents and family members suffered the terrible consequences.

As just one example of the widespread deaths from COVID-19 among educators, in January 2021, Montgomery, Alabama schools lost four educators to COVID-19 in a single week. The victims included Leslye Ames, a 49-year-old piano teacher; Dwayne Berry, an administrator and football coach described as "really loved by all the kids"; Lushers Lane, a physical education teacher at Capitol Heights Middle School; and DeCarlos Perkins, a 36-year-old coach at Park Crossing High School. Additional Montgomery educator deaths included Joshua Farrow, an assistant principal at Johnnie Carr Middle School with 15 years of service; Ricardo Hogan, a paraprofessional at Park Crossing High School; Morris Pitts, a custodian at Jefferson Davis High School; Shai Hudson, a teacher at Goodwyn Middle School; and guidance officer Kay Toole.

The death toll increased under Democratic President Joe Biden, despite his campaign claims that he would "follow the science." On his first full day in office, he met with Weingarten and NEA President Becky Pringle, insisting that they move forward with the school reopening. The highly compensated union apparatus endorsed this deadly plan, openly defying educators who participated in sickouts and protests to protect lives. In addition to the loss of life, an entire generation of children is suffering from unknown future health consequences due to recurring bouts of the disease.

The toll of COVID on educators extends beyond fatalities. In 2022, 19 percent of U.S. educators reported experiencing Long COVID symptoms, with many struggling to secure accommodations or medical support. The AFT/NEA bureaucrats have remained silent on this mass debilitation of educators, leaving them to fend for themselves.

The lies and cover-up by the UAW over Ronald Adams Sr.'s death mirror the role of the educators' unions as school workers were sickened and dying from COVID-19.

Build the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees across industries

The ERFC urges all educators to support the IWA-RFC investigation into Adams' death. Not only is the old maxim, "An injury to one is an injury to all," profoundly true, but we also know that if this crime is buried, more lives will be sacrificed for profit.

Only through independent, worker-led inquiries can we expose the truth and unite the working class against these needless deaths and secure a decent future. This was the example set by the *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Committee of the Fourth International, which have led the way throughout the pandemic, advocating for a socialist public health program based on a strategy of global elimination and launching a Global Workers' Inquest into the COVID-19 Pandemic. This brought together workers and principled scientists to document the disastrous response of governments, corporations and media to the pandemic and to expose the political and economic interests that determined policy.

Educators mobilized their independent strength to save lives, forming Facebook groups and rank-and-file committees to coordinate protests, petitions, sickouts and strikes. Speaking for the most class-conscious sections of workers seeking to mobilize the working class across industries and borders, local groups of the Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee were established in Alabama, New York, Michigan, Los Angeles, Chicago, Pennsylvania, the Northeast, Cross-Canada, Germany, the UK, Australia and more.

We must now mobilize to support the IWA-RFC investigation into Ronald Adams, Sr.'s death and demand an end to the endless sacrificing of lives for profit. The AFT, NEA, and UAW bureaucracies have proven they exist to enforce management's agenda. The ERFC calls on educators and autoworkers to build and expand these new organs of struggle—rank-and-file committees—to unite the working class in defense of all democratic and social rights.

As Adams' widow, Shamenia Stewart-Adams, declared: *"We want the truth."* That truth will only emerge through the collective power of rank-and-file workers fighting for their lives against a profit-driven system.

Join the IWA-RFC investigation. Build committees in every school and workplace. No more deaths for profit!

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