

Autoworkers denounce threat by UAW official against rank-and-file presidential candidate Will Lehman

Our reporters
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Autoworkers, retirees and other workers have issued statements demanding immediate action against the United Auto Workers official who issued a death threat against Will Lehman, the Mack Trucks worker and socialist candidate for UAW president.

Raymond Jensen Jr., an organizer for UAW Region 9 whose Facebook profile carries an “I Support Shawn Fain” campaign badge, posted an AI-generated image on Lehman’s public Facebook page last week showing the candidate bound and gagged, blood running from his mouth, with a masked gunman training an automatic rifle on his back. According to the UAW, Jensen was paid \$202,000 in salary and other expenses last year. As of this writing, neither Fain nor any officer of the UAW International Executive Board has repudiated the threat, and Jensen remains on the union’s payroll.

Lehman has denounced the threat as an attempt to intimidate the growing rank-and-file opposition his campaign is giving voice to. In a letter to the legal counsel of the court-appointed monitor overseeing the UAW, Lehman’s attorney Eric Lee demanded: an immediate investigation, Jensen’s suspension without pay, a public repudiation by the union and referral of the matter to the Department of Labor and federal law enforcement.

Workers who contacted the WSWs denounced the death threat and the silence of the top leadership of the UAW and its Solidarity House national headquarters.

Tanya, a worker at the Stellantis Detroit Assembly Complex-Jefferson plant, said: “As a UAW member, I find the threat that Raymond Jensen posted against Will Lehman disrespectful, an incitement and horrific. Something needs to be done to stop it. Even though we are all entitled to free speech, this crosses the line.

“It is not right if UAW officials are allowed to do whatever they want to do with no accountability. Workers are fed up and tired with the union because we don’t feel our voice is taken into consideration when it is time to vote, or that we have a say period.

“What Jensen did is way out of line. If things had been on the other foot and brother Lehman had done something like that,

you can be sure all hell would break loose. It is time for the UAW to put a stop to these threats.”

“Raymond L. Jensen Jr. should be fired at once,” a GM worker in Flint Assembly Plant said. “I can’t believe nothing has been done. There have been no repercussions yet for his action of threatening to kill Will Lehman, a shop floor worker, running for UAW president. Workers get fired for much less! This should have already been addressed in a timely manner.

“The UAW apparatus fears Will, because more and more workers like myself know he is right and exposing the truth! If someone in the UAW can send death threats to workers, what kind of people are we dealing with? Surely not people fighting for us, or on our side. UAW officials act like gangsters.

“It truly shows it is us the workers vs. them. They only care about profits and not our well-being, and apparently they want to hurt anyone who gets in their way. The corruption is so blatant, in front of our faces. There are far too many instances to ignore this anymore. A UAW official has threatened to kill one of our brothers. We have to form rank-and-file committees to stop this intimidation and the unsafe working conditions.”

A leading member of the Nexteer Workers Rank-and-File Committee in Saginaw, Michigan—which fought the UAW’s repeated attempts to push through concessions contracts at the giant steering plant—said, “The UAW apparatus has threatened Will because what he is fighting for threatens the institution of the UAW. It is not an institution that defends or represents the workers, the membership. It represents those who hold power and will not voluntarily relinquish it. An investigation is needed to uncover all those who are perpetuating this injustice against Will. It should be a criminal investigation. Without a doubt, this shows Solidarity House, Fain and all of them are in bed with Ford, GM and Stellantis—and all the auto-related corporations. They act like the Godfather. Fain has not done anything for workers.

“Under unbearable conditions in the plants of toxic air and very high heat, the UAW opposed any work stoppages. The companies’ profits shall not be disturbed! The threats against Will are aimed against us, the rank and file.”

Thomas Adams, a retired GM worker and author of UAW,

Inc., an investigation of the corporatist degeneration of the UAW, condemned the death threat and pointed to the significance of the region Jensen works for: “I find it interesting that Raymond Jensen Jr. is from Region 9. In my 2019 essay, ‘Tale of Corruption by the United Auto Workers and the Big Three American Automakers,’ I discuss a nonprofit corporation called the UAW Region 9 New York Training Initiative tasked with training Perry’s Ice Cream workers.

“The UAW leadership learned that they could establish these training centers funded by state training money—in this case, the New York State Department of Labor. New York State was funding the Perry’s Ice Cream training fund to the tune of \$579,463. It speaks for itself. It had FBI agents laughing that ‘127 ice cream makers were the best trained ice cream makers in the history of making ice cream.’

“The Administration Caucus is like an overarching fatal disease that’s infected the labor movement, not just the UAW. I call for a full and open investigation of these threats and a public statement defending the right of Brother Lehman to campaign.”

Lyle Roussey, a retired Michigan autoworker, pointed to the responsibility of the UAW monitor, installed after the federal corruption prosecutions that sent more than a dozen union officials, including two former UAW presidents, to prison for embezzling union dues and taking corporate bribes. “Isn’t it the monitor’s duty during an election cycle to assure honesty and integrity of the union election? So if it is, it’s time for them to take action against this horrendous display from the UAW leaders.”

Far from intimidating and isolating Lehman, the threat has provoked anger from rank-and-file workers and growing support for his campaign to abolish the corrupt UAW apparatus and transfer power to workers on the shop floor through the building of rank-and-file committees independent of the union bureaucracy.

A report on Lehman’s campaign website detailed the support he won from workers Monday outside Bridgewater Interiors and the Stellantis Warren Truck Assembly Plant in suburban Detroit. Workers stopped to denounce the threat, took stacks of leaflets into the plants, and posed with the candidate at the gates.

“They’re trying to shut you up,” one young Bridgewater worker told the campaign team. “And they usually only do that when somebody’s telling the truth.”

Will replied: “That guy makes \$202,000 a year as an organizer. So, I’m in Region 9 and he’s my region’s organizer. They haven’t organized anything new. They haven’t got any more workers in our region.

“All I’m doing is running for a position in the UAW. All I’m doing is telling workers that we don’t need those people, those positions in Solidarity House. We need the power on the floor. That’s what they don’t like. That’s why they issue threats.”

A Warren Truck worker told the team anyone responsible for the threat “should be in prison along with Shawn Fain too. Come on, you don’t go on and threaten people.”

Asked what he thought about Will’s call for power to be transferred from the UAW apparatus to the workers on the shop floor, he said, “That would be better. We have enough problems trying to get the union to fight for us or do anything.” As an example, he pointed to the smoke in the factories due to the Canadian wildfires. “The smoke days were real bad. They gave us masks, but they were only made for dust. They aren’t made for any kind of chemicals or fires. You need a respirator, and if you don’t have that forget about it, those dust masks do nothing. The factories should have shut down. Even the news said you need to stay in your house, don’t leave.”

A fuller account of the exchanges is available on Lehman’s campaign website willforuawpresident.org. Lehman’s campaign has urged workers to demand that the UAW publicly repudiate the threat by writing to feedback@uaw.org, with copies to info@willforuawpresident.org.

The record of the man who issued the threat sheds light on what workers are up against. Jensen was a member of Unite All Workers for Democracy (UAWD), the now-defunct faction that promoted Fain’s election as a “reform” candidate in 2022. In a 2019 interview with *Labor Notes*, Jensen who they referred to as an “activist” in Local 774 at GM’s Tonawanda Engine Plant in Buffalo, New York, said, “the Administration Caucus is thoroughly corrupt,” charging that its leaders had either participated in the corruption or known about it and done nothing.

Cleaning up the union, he argued then, meant giving the membership a voice through the direct election of officers. As recently as 2024, Jensen was still being showcased as a face of union “reform,” appearing as a featured speaker at that year’s *Labor Notes* conference with an address titled “How we are turning our unions around.”

The author of that 2019 *Labor Notes* article, staff writer Chris Brooks, went on to become Fain’s chief of staff—until the UAW monitor forced his resignation over his efforts to intimidate Fain’s internal rivals on the International Executive Board. Seven years on, the erstwhile critics of the Administration Caucus’s gangsterism have made its methods their own. Jensen’s own contribution to “turning our unions around” is now a matter of record: the “one member, one vote” system he once claimed to champion has produced a genuine rank-and-file challenge, and his response is to circulate an image of the challenger with a gun aimed at his back.



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