

“Workers have to stand up and do something about this”

Postal worker Russell Scruggs Jr.’s ex-wife speaks out, backs call for rank-and-file inquiry into postal deaths

Kathleen Martin
28 August 2026

Are you a postal or logistics worker? Do you have information on Russell’s death at Palmetto? Contact the USPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee with information about conditions at your facility. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

On November 15, 2025, Russell Scruggs Jr., a 44-year-old postal worker, died just weeks after starting his job at the USPS Palmetto Processing and Distribution Center in Georgia. Coworkers told the *World Socialist Web Site* that Scruggs suffered a head injury after falling and hitting his head on machinery in the plant. Coworkers also reported that he complained earlier in the day that he was not feeling well and was denied a request to go home.

His death was one of four at Palmetto since 2024—this June, Demarcus Little also died at the facility. Workers say the facility has no cell phone service, leaving employees dependent on management to summon help, and that supervisors called security before calling an ambulance.

His death also came one week after Detroit postal worker Nick Acker was killed on the job in a mail sorting machine accident.

The Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee, part of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), has initiated an independent, rank-and-file inquiry into these deaths, carried out by workers themselves rather than USPS management or the American Postal Workers Union.

Workers are “humans, not machines”

Barbara Scruggs, Russell’s ex-wife of seven years and mother of three of his children, spoke with the WSWWS in support of the IWA-RFC’s independent inquiry and is encouraging Russell’s coworkers from Palmetto to come

forward with any information.

“Russell was a hard worker, a great father, really loved his daughters, always provided for them and always provided for the household. He was just a really great person with a big, big heart,” she said. “Russell would give you the shirt off his back. He wanted to help everyone. He wanted everybody to live comfortably. He really loved his children and wanted to make sure they had everything they needed. And while we did separate, he always wanted to make sure that I wasn’t struggling to take care of them by myself. He still wanted to make sure that I was good and that they were good. Everybody loved him. He was always smiling, always laughing, just a hard worker. I remember at one point he had three different jobs just because he didn’t want me working while I was pregnant.”

She told the WSWWS that Russell suffered from heart problems and that his doctor advised him to quit his old job at a furniture moving company to avoid heavy lifting. “He’d told me things would be getting better because he had a new job. He was always working. He hated having to change jobs and not being able to work due to his condition. He definitely took the [USPS] job to care for the kids.”

Barbara found out Russell died while she was at work, when his sister contacted her. “Apparently his dad went up there [to Palmetto], and they weren’t giving his dad too much information. She called back again and said he’d had an accident at work, but they still weren’t telling the family much. So, it took a couple days for us to really find out what happened,” she said.

She and Russell’s family found out that he’d requested to go home but was not allowed to leave. His coworkers told his family that the post office often discourages absences to keep the mail running constantly. “I just think it’s very careless,” Barbara said. “If someone isn’t feeling well, you don’t know what they have going on, you don’t know their condition, and what happened to Russell could be the result. If people aren’t feeling well, they should be allowed to go home. It’s their

right. They shouldn't be made to stay and make sure the job's done. They should view them as humans, not machines.

"Had he been allowed to go home, he could have gotten some medical help. That probably could have saved his life. You never know what may happen at a job, especially that type of job where it's a dangerous line of work, using machines. There should be a nurse on call, or someone in the building just in case something does happen."

"It's just really sad," she said. "So many lives probably could have been saved. To my understanding, this is the fourth death there," she said, "their workers are safe and that they get to go home to their families?"

"Workers have to stand up and do something about this"

Barbara, a former warehouse worker, knows the difficult conditions inside plants that workers are up against. "You never know who could be next. Workers have to stand up and do something about this, especially if you're going to keep working there [at Palmetto]," she said.

She addressed herself directly to the Palmetto workers. "I understand your position in the company. Of course, you don't want your name out there. You need that job to provide for your family. But you also need a safe work environment. You need to feel that you're important. You are the one there working in these conditions, and it needs to be safe so that you can go home to your family afterward. I would like for you guys to come forward and tell us what you know, about what happened to Russell," she said. "Come forward so that we can make a difference in the work environment you are in."

Barbara still has not been called by USPS, OSHA or the APWU. "I have not been contacted, no nothing. It was like, 'Okay, he lost his life,' and that was it. They [USPS] were not really caring about who he left behind, just not caring about him as a person at all. Even the steps they took after him falling, I just heard it wasn't good. A couple people who witnessed it were encouraged to just 'Go back to work, go clock in.'

"Of course, if people are walking over a dead body, it's going to be traumatizing. I think that was the most heartbreaking part. When I got that call, I was thinking how bad it was, but then when I read the rest of the story in the article, I was like, 'Oh my god, is this real?' It just really angered me. I was thinking, 'Could he have been saved?'"

After Demarcus Little's death, workers told the WSWs that a few landlines were installed inside the facility, and that voluntary medical training was offered to postal workers, which is not sufficient to prevent further deaths. "It's really sad that they're hardly going to take any precautions and make sure it doesn't happen again. They have no plans on making it a better

environment. I heard they got a couple of phones installed, but do they even work?"

"This is someone's life"

She described the impact of Russell's death on their children. "It's still so hard for us. I know my oldest daughter still texts his phone every single day to tell him she loves him. I wish I could say it gets easier, but it's still fresh for us," she said. "He's not here for them anymore. Pretty soon his daughter is going to be graduating, going to prom. He won't be there for that. And college, he won't be able to help me with that. The children are more withdrawn. The older they get, the more they'll want him here.

"It's sad that they can't call him and talk about the things they used to talk about, because they used to talk about everything, stuff they wouldn't even talk about with me, because he had a different perspective and was close to them. They were all daddy's girls, especially the younger two. I've tried to get financial benefits to help us out, but they denied that. We've looked into lawyers but no one wanted to take the case. So, we're still dealing with it, but I will say, to his coworkers: can we see if something can be done to prevent other families from going through this?"

"One of his children, seven, is too young to fully understand, but she knows he's gone. They've had to go through three birthdays and Christmas without him. Russell's birthday was in May, so we did celebrate it. They couldn't sing happy birthday because it was just too much for them, but we did have a birthday cake and blow out the candles and got some pictures which they have on their nightstand. It's just really hard. They're still dealing with it. I'm still dealing with it because it's so unexpected—you just never think in a million years this would happen. My daughter even asked, 'Why my dad?'"

She made a final appeal for Palmetto workers to get in touch with the WSWs and to support the independent inquiry. "Please don't be scared to talk, to come forward. This is someone's life. He left children behind, and we just want answers. We want to ensure this doesn't happen again."



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact