

Ongoing UAW Strike Inspires Entire Labor Movement



UAW President Shawn Fain addresses UAW members and supporters at rally in Detroit launching the Stand Up strike.

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Eric Mays — TikTok Celebrity—Joins UAW strikers



When UAW members at the General Motors (GM) processing plant in Flint, Michigan, were called to Stand Up (walkout) on September 22, at Noon, they were greeted by other union members and community, including Councilman Eric Mays. Mays, himself a UAW retiree, served in a number of union leadership positions during his employment at GM. Paying it forward by supporting striking workers in their quest to restore lost wages and benefits, Mays led some of the workers in a heartfelt chant: POINT OF ORDER!



The ongoing strike against the Big 3 automakers is a huge gamble for the UAW. It is historic in that never before has the union targeted all of the companies, using intermittent walkouts at various auto plants. Never before have negotiations centered on winning back what autoworkers lost during the concessions (primarily bankruptcy) era. This 'Standup Strike' is a nod to the 1937 Sit Down strike, imbuing the membership with a sense of resolve and victory.

While the strike and negotiations continue, Big 3 autoworkers learned some good news. On October 9, UAW President Shawn Fain announced that GM would now guarantee future battery plants would be under the UAW Master agreement. President Fain rightfully lauded this as a transformative win. As electric cars rise and develop in the market, traditional car production will be diminished

alongside manufacturing jobs. So this development will ensure that future auto workers will have economic protection. While the Big 3 has secured millions of federal dollars for EV and battery production, securing wages and benefits were not a consideration until it was won (at least for GM so far) at the bargaining table.

“When working class people go on strike, we can put an end to the race to the bottom. We can stop the struggle living paycheck to paycheck. We can take our lives back. We can take our time back and we can build an economy that works for the working class and for all of humanity,” said President Fain.

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UAW President Shawn Fain: 'Our fight is everyone's fight'

Excerpts from Shawn Fain's speeches:

"I chose to be sworn in when I became president on my grandmother's Bible. I take this with me a lot of places. In 1933, at the height of the Great Depression, my grandmother's parents couldn't provide for their children. So they dropped her and her brothers and sisters off at an orphanage. That orphanage gave her this Bible. Years later, my grandparents were part of the millions of families who moved to the Midwest to work for auto. My grandfather hired in Chrysler in 1937, the year the UAW organized Chrysler. I carry a check stub of his every day I go to work as a reminder of where we come from and of the battle left to fight . . .

"And today, when people want to bash our neighbors to the south, and talk about building walls, when I see economic migrants from Mexico and Central America, or any place, I see destitute human beings in search of a better life. I see a worker

that needs to be organized. I see my own grandparents. Destitution does not know borderlines. Corporate greed doesn't recognize borders. And that's why it's so critical that we unite as a working class and unite as a country, unite as a global working class to fight for justice and equality. An attack on workers anywhere is an attack on workers everywhere.

"We need a political movement that can take the principles of unionism into the streets, into city hall and beyond. That's the kind of vision we're going to need to empower the working class of this country . . .

"The UAW holds a historic place in our nation's history. And just one great example is how we came together with the Civil Rights Movement. Both are inextricably intertwined. As one movement goes, the other's going to go. If labor does bad, the civil rights movement struggles too. And if they struggle, we struggle. And it's no coincidence, as worker rights have gone backwards, we've seen attacks on voting right laws and everything else. It's got to end.

"Over the last decade, the Big Three have made a quarter of a trillion dollars in profits. In the last six months alone, they've made over \$21 billion in profits and the workers have been left behind. In the economy of the Big Three and the corporate class, the CEOs get everything and the workers get left behind. In their economy, workers live paycheck to paycheck while the CEOs buy another man-



Chicago solidarity rally at UAW Local 551.

PHOTOS / SARAH-JI, LOVEANDSTRUGGLEPHOTOS.COM



sion. In their economy, we make all the sacrifice and they take all the profit. Their economy has no regard for humanity. And the result of it is the great chasm between the rich and the poor over the last 40 years. It's time we return to the founders of this nation's intent of working toward the common good and public good.

"UAW family, it's our mission to turn the system of corporate greed upside down. That's what we're fighting for with

our Stand Up strike. When we stand together united in the cause of economic and social justice there's no mountain we can't move. This is our generation's defining moment. And it's time for the working class to stand up and stand together. Our fight is everyone's fight. And when we stand up, the entire working class wins. Let's get to it. Join us on the picket line. Join us in our fight. Our greatest protection we have is each other."

Resistance is Rising Everywhere

The autoworkers strike has focused national attention on issues like the cost of housing, gas and groceries, low wages, the inequality of wealth, unbearable working conditions, and the quality of workers' lives. It is a major front in a fight breaking out in many forms all over the country and world. Below are other examples of this fight:

Other labor actions – The UAW strike is the among the latest in a series of strikes and organizing efforts in recent years, including by workers at Amazon and Starbucks, students, teachers, health care workers, flight attendants, screenwriters, actors, hotel workers and others. So far this year, at least 411,000 workers have been involved in actions that included more than 1,000 participants each, the highest number since 2019.

The homeless – The U.S. unhoused population is estimated at 8 to 10 million or more and rising, and they are fighting to demand housing as a human right. They are also defending their right to establish self-governing tent encampments, and challenging police harassment and laws that criminalize the homeless. As Crystal Sanchez, president of the Sacramento Homeless Union said, "This crisis has been caused by a variety of factors, including rising rents, stagnant wages, and a lack of available housing. The homeless

and housing crisis cannot be swept away or ignored. We must fight to end them. We must put our money towards solutions that will bring real, lasting change."

Migrants and refugees – "The last thing border communities need are more walls that endanger the lives of migrants and destroy pristine habitats. President Biden needs to center the humanitarian needs of asylum seekers and Congress must create fair and humane processes to welcome people safely in the U.S.," said Pedro Rios, Director of AFSC's U.S.-Mexico Border Program. Immigrants and their supporters are struggling to have the human rights of migrants and refugees respected, including the rights to seek asylum, to be treated humanely, to not be detained, to not have to live in the shadows, and to keep their families together. They are also fighting to stop and even reverse the building of the border wall.

Environmental and climate fights – In September, 75,000 marched to End Fossil Fuels in NYC. "Together, we're calling on Biden to stop approving fossil projects, phase out drilling and declare a climate emergency and we need you with us," said a young activist. From confronting chemical companies in Louisiana's Death Alley to fighting pipelines in Appalachia to demanding cutbacks in fossil fuels, people are struggling to defend life and



NYC climate march of 75,000 demands Pres. Biden end fossil fuels.

PHOTO / SUSAN MELKISTHIAN

the planet.

The struggle for democracy – In every state and at the federal level, democracy is under attack, and people are fighting to preserve and expand the right to speak, publish and vote, and to end racist attacks and all forms of discrimination. Chicago Teachers Union President Stacy Davis Gates said at a recent UAW rally in Chicago, "The solidarity we are showing out

with in this world is the only thing between us and fascism, and between us and an inequitable distribution of this society's income. The fight...is for an America that sees our humanity, that invests in our people and that makes sure that what they got on top is spread about down here...We ain't never just fighting for a contract, we are fighting for transformation."

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