

Stand On Solidarity Rally at UAW Region 3 Saturday

“History is a great teacher. Now everyone knows that the labor movement did not diminish the strength of the nation but enlarged it. By raising the living standards of millions, labor miraculously created a market for industry and lifted the whole nation to undreamed of levels of production. Those who attack labor forget these simple truths, but history remembers them.” — Martin Luther King

Brothers and Sisters, we are at a point in time where we must make a choice to go down in history as warriors or down as spineless victims. We must make a choice to raise the standard of solidarity or lower the standards of working people everywhere. History isn't kind to those who wait and see. We must act, now.

My grandfather, Tevell Johnson, came up from Mississippi to Indiana looking for a job with dignity and a future for his family. He went to work at Delco-Remy in Anderson, In. and joined United Auto Workers Local 663. In 1970 he walked the picket line with his brothers and sisters for 67 days. The UAW won 30-and-out and an uncapped cost-of-living. They set the benchmark for all workers and passed on a legacy to their children and grandchildren.

The new UAW wants to set another benchmark, a shameless, spineless, benchmark.

In 2007 the UAW abandoned the legacy our ancestors fought for. Our children and grandchildren will not be able to labor or retire with dignity. Wages for new hires were cut in half and their hope for retirement was terminated. Now the UAW under the direction of President Bob King, V.P. Joe Ashton, and Region 3 Director Mo Davison wants to lower the benchmark another notch at UAW Local 23 in Indianapolis, In.

The outcome of this dispute at the Indianapolis GM Stamping plant will set the standard for Big 3 negotiations in 2011. It is in the best interests of all UAW members to join us in our struggle to defeat the forces of government, union, and corporation that are pressuring us to break the master agreement and sever our solidarity with other working people.

Believe me, we are not fighting this battle out of self interest. It would be easy to roll over and cash out. But bigger things than nickels and dimes are at stake. We are fighting for the future of the union — the union that built the middle class in America and gunned the engine of commerce and created a market for industry that lifted the whole nation.

We are fighting for our children and grandchildren.

GM wants to set us up as a UAW shop that undercuts the wages and benefits for all

other UAW members and sets the standard for 2011 contract negotiations. It's surprising that UAW leaders would promote such anti union tactics. The sell out contract we were offered is union only in name. Every standard and compensation is nonunion. Beware, brothers and sisters, that is where the UAW under the direction of Bob King is headed in 2011.

When we refused to bargain a concession contract as is our right under the UAW Constitution, the International went behind our backs, negotiated a contract riddled with concessions, and circumvented our Local 23 Election Committee by setting up a mail in ballot which the International controls in violation of our By-Laws. Enough is enough. We will not be defeated.

Local 23 will be recognized as a turning point in history.

We, the working people, cannot single-handedly carry the burden of sacrifice for this nation. We cannot simultaneously support two wars and a ruthless class of financial predators who sabotaged the world economy with reckless speculation. Cutting our own wages and destroying the future for our children and grandchildren is not a fair and reasonable option. It's double taxation without representation.

We are not simply workers, we are parents and caretakers and educators. The world is in our hands. Someone has to take a stand. Someone has to say the cuts stop here. Workers cannot carry the burden of sacrifice for the leisure class any longer. If we make less, we spend less, and the whole economy spirals deeper into despair.

What happens at UAW Local 23 will make history. The decision we make here will be seen as a turning point. I for one do not want to dishonor my grandfather and turn my back on my children and grandchildren. I don't want to be destroyed by history, I want to make history.

Join us in a Solidarity Rally at UAW Region 3 Headquarters Saturday, September 23 at 3 p.m.

Let's demonstrate to the UAW leadership and the world that we are determined to take a Stand On Solidarity. We will not break the master agreement. We will not set up our Local Union as a scab shop to undercut the wages, benefits, and standards of our union brothers and sisters and all other working people. Solidarity isn't an idea, it's an ethical standard, the proper standard for our point in history, a history we can take pride in, a legacy we can be proud to pass on to our children and grandchildren.

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