

For immediate release

Hunger Striker and President of Association of Injured Workers and Ex-Worker of GM Colombia, Jorge Parra, Featured Speaker at Public Forum on Working Conditions Here and Around the World

Media contact: Frank Hammer, 313-863-3219, Autoworker Caravan, 734-272-7651, autoworkercaravan@gmail.com, www.autoworkercaravan.com

What: Autoworkers' Speakout with special guest speaker, Jorge Parra, president, Association of Injured Workers and Ex-workers of GM Colombia

Who: Sponsored by Autoworker Caravan, for Rank-and-file autoworkers, retirees, and concerned community members, free and open to the public

When: Sunday, September 9th, 2:00 PM

Where: St. John the Baptist Church, 2371 Woodstock Drive, Detroit 48203
(One block south of W. 8 Mile, off southbound Woodward Avenue)

Why: Often we read and hear in the news media about the "rebound" of the Detroit automakers, with the plants "pushed to capacity." This is supposed to be "good news for autoworkers, "who are earning more overtime than they have seen in years." (Detroit News, 8/28/12) The truth is that autoworkers are being pushed beyond their endurance.

This is especially true in Colombia at the General Motors Colmotores plant in Bogota. Working at breakneck speed under antiquated conditions, over 200 workers have suffered injuries and illnesses rendering them unable to work. After being fired by GM and left with no source of income, these workers formed the Association of Injured Workers and Ex-workers of GM Colombia (ASOTRECOL) and set up an encampment August 1, 2011 outside the U.S. embassy in Bogota, choosing that location because of the 26 per cent stake of the U.S. federal government in GM. This past August 1 13 ASOTRECOL members began a hunger strike, sewing their lips shut, to pressure GM to meet their demands for recognition of their injuries as work-related, reintegration into the workforce for those able to work, pensions for those unable to work, paid health care, and recognition as an independent union inside the plant.

The workers ended their hunger strike when GM representatives from Detroit agreed to travel to Colombia for mediation under the auspices of the U.S Department of Labor's Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. United Auto Workers representatives also participated in the talks. Talks collapsed when the most money ASOTRECOL could get from GM was not even enough to cover medical bills and GM flat out refused to give workers their jobs back. "The insignificant funding they offered would have accomplished nothing but convert us into street food vendors," ASOTRECOL stated.

The hunger strike has been restarted and workers have sewn their lips shut again. Parra restarted his hunger strike here in Detroit September 5 at Hart Plaza, near GM world headquarters, and is seeking a meeting with GM corporate representatives.

The Autoworkers Caravan, which co-sponsored demonstrations on August and August in solidarity with their brothers in Colombia, is pleased to have Brother Parra joining workers from a number of U.S. plants in speaking out against the worsening working conditions for autoworkers everywhere, especially in low wage countries.