

“Go on strike ‘til you get it right!”

Detroit rapper GmacCash supports striking autoworkers

By Kathleen Martin
21 September 2019

Detroit rapper, comedian, father and former autoworker GmacCash spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* about why he supports striking workers and about life inside the plant as a young temporary part-time (TPT) worker.

Gmac initially gained popularity in 2016 for his sleeper hit “First Day at Popeye’s,” a parody of fellow Detroit rapper Tee Grizzley’s “First Day Out,” swapping jokes about his love of the fast-food chain over the original beat about getting out of prison after committing robbery. Citing a unique combination of woke rap (J Cole) and spoofs (Weird Al Yankovic) as his biggest influences, Gmac has cultivated his growing fanbase by taking up “everyday people” issues. (Readers should note Gmac’s explicit lyrics before clicking links below.)

He released the comedy rap video “FMLA” in 2018, which gained a massive popular following among auto and plant workers on social media and going viral overnight. It ultimately cost him his job at FCA’s Sterling Assembly Plant last October.

“They told me to take it down at first,” he said, referring to the music video. “Then a week later they came and told me I was fired.” The justification was a code 27 violation, or misuse of company property, for filming the video outside of the plant.

“I was a TPT so I never even had FMLA [family medical leave], so that’s why I never understood how I got fired. I wasn’t on company property, and I never mentioned Chrysler [in the music video]. I even had a disclaimer in the song saying that it was just for entertainment purposes, and they still fired me. My coworkers were upset. I didn’t have problems with anyone, and I was cool with everyone at the plant.

“They got upset when I took some days off when I had my daughter. I was at risk for being fired. They told me I could take the days off” for the birth of his daughter, “and then they called me and said I had to come in. When I came in,

they gave me four points. I was one point away from being fired.

“Our supervisor had told me I could take the days off, and I’d be good, but they ended up removing him and putting a new supervisor in. He just took my days and said I had four points. After that I had the situation with the [“FMLA”] song, and that probably was my last strike. They got me up out of there, honestly. The union’s still trying to get me my job back. Whatever happens, happens.”

Gmac described some of the difficulties that workers face inside the plant. “I ain’t gonna say I know a lot, but just from what I hear and what I’ve read up on, there’s a lot of secrets in the plant. There’s a lot of things not told in the plant, like working conditions. As far as I’ve encountered, like with supervisors and everything, they don’t want to hear it, they just want you to work.

“When I worked there [at the plant], there were temps that had been there for five years and they were still temps. It’s like, no seniority. Even at new plants there will be temps that just started getting rolled over, and you have temps who’ve been there for five years who aren’t getting rolled over. It’s crazy.

“At the plant I was at, they work the temps hard. They get no FMLA. You get five points out of the whole year,” he said, referring to the write-up policy by which workers get five “points” for misconduct, tardiness, etc. before being fired. “How can you keep doing this every year without making five points out of 365 days? It’s crazy!”

Gmac’s most recent song, “On Strike”, was an instant hit on social media. He went to the picket lines in Warren to film the video and support his fellow workers. “I have a lot of family in the auto industry. With my music, I rap about relatable things and trending topics. So when something happens, I’ll get anywhere from a hundred to a thousand tags, with people asking me to do this or that topic,” he said, describing how he uses Facebook and Instagram to connect with his audience for content ideas.

“I had so many tags to do this song. That’s where a lot of my fans come from—a lot of my fans are ordinary, regular people, not people out here trying to be something they’re not. So that’s why they appreciate what I do, and it’s almost like I’m the only one doing it! I don’t see a lot of people rapping about potholes or snow or whatever. I’m just staying in my lane and I just wanna rap about everyday things that I go through every day.

“I’m from Detroit, my family’s from Detroit, my mother works at Chrysler; uncles, aunties, cousins, friends work at Chrysler—everybody works at Chrysler. My mother’s in the union, my uncle’s in the union—really my whole family comes from Chrysler.

“The strike, it’s a big moment. That’s why I chose to do the song—there’s never been a strike since I’ve been born! I always heard about them and now there actually is one, and you can see it in person. So why not do a song about it, because the song’s going to be remembered. Ten years from now there might not be another strike!”

While Gmac is known for his hilarious takes on everyday life, he has a serious side as well. He wrote a rap in defense of 21 Savage earlier this year when US President Donald Trump deported him following a live performance where the rapper criticized the government over the water poisoning in Flint.

“A lot of people keep up with the funny stuff, but I do a lot of serious stuff too. Honestly, it shouldn’t just be that you can get taken away like that without notice,” he said on the arrest and deportation of immigrants in the US. “You got kids, you got family—no one should get taken away from their kids like that. Even with the families that are in holding right now [on the US-Mexico border], it’s sad. It’s sad watching that ’cause I got kids, and I can’t imagine just being snatched away from my kids. I just think it’s all wrong so that’s why I did the song about it.”

We also spoke about the role that General Motors played in devastating working-class industrial cities like Detroit and Flint, and the ongoing water poisoning that residents face there. “I really think that’s an issue that the government should handle, that should have been handled, it shouldn’t be going on. It’s been going on for years. People wash up every day and brush their teeth and wash their faces in dirty water. It should have already been handled by the government.

“Somebody told me at the strike that GM cut off healthcare. How can you work there without healthcare? How do you pay for that stuff out of pocket?

Gmac commented on the decline in living standards for the working class and compared what a job at an auto plant used to mean to today. “You were set, really—it used to be the dream job. But now it’s so frustrating working there

because it causes problems every day.

“Like one time the fans was out for a month. All our supervisors were giving us the runaround; our team leader was giving us the runaround, all saying ‘I talked to such-and-such.’ It was like a hundred degrees in there. And even still, the fans aren’t right there on you. They’re far, and you can barely feel them, so you have to stand in one specific spot just to get a little breeze and you still have to work on the line.

“It’s frustrating. People argue, people fight. It’s a line with about ten to thirteen people on each line, so it’s all types of attitudes each day. You can’t have no headphones, no nothing—you just gotta work and deal with people every day. That’s mainly one of the top problems in the summertime is the heat.

“They got the money to fix the problem, so I say, just fix it,” he said of GM. “I don’t think the small things should be overlooked because they have enough money to put top-of-the-line quality in the plant. The fans in there are old as—I mean, they’re just regular old fans hanging there with dust on them. They definitely have the money to re-do these plants. They just don’t want to give up the money, and they don’t want to fix anything.”

Gmac had a message of support and solidarity for autoworkers currently on strike: “Get it right! Go on strike ‘til you get it right. Because honestly, it’s going to be a problem that just keeps getting looked over.

“It’s all across the world. It’s not just here. It’s everywhere—it’s the same problems everywhere, from what I’m reading. I think everybody should go on strike, honestly.”

We asked Gmac if he has plans to go back to work at the plant and what happens if he has a major breakthrough in the music industry. “I think I want to be the first rapper to actually do what I’m doing, just a normal person. I would still just want to rap about normal things. There’s no shortage of material in everyday life.”

To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>