THE FATAL EXPLOSION AT BRENT INDUSTRIES IN TOLEDO: TWO MORE WORKERS KILLED FOR PROFIT



BY WILL LEHMAN
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On August 18, a deadly explosion and fire ripped through the Brent Industries plant in south Toledo, Ohio, killing two workers, Heladio Perez, 46, and Mary Allen, 64. The company's operations in Alabama and Ohio have been repeatedly cited for safety violations.

My name is Will Lehman. I work at Mack Trucks and I'm running for president of the United Auto Workers. I'm standing outside the Brent Industries plant in Toledo, Ohio. This plant cleans shop towels and work gloves for auto suppliers and manufacturers across the region.

Two weeks ago, an explosion here killed two workers. Heladio Perez. He was 46. Mary Allen. She was 64. They went to work to earn a living. They didn't come home.

Their families have no answers. We're told it was an "accident." As if no one was responsible. But Brent Industries knew. This company has a history of safety violations — in Alabama, and here in Toledo. The dangers were known. They were tolerated. Because fixing them costs money.

This is American capitalism. Every company puts profit before our lives. Over 5,000 workers die on the job every year in this country. Tens of thousands more die from disease caused by their work. Our workplaces are a slaughterhouse.

And Toledo knows this better than most cities in America.

In 2022, two brothers — Ben and Max Morrissey — burned to death in an explosion at the BP-Husky refinery. Investigators found their deaths were preventable. BP was fined $156,000. For two lives.

In 2024, Antonio Gaston was crushed on the line at the Toledo Jeep plant. He was 53. A father of four. Stellantis was fined $16,000. They contested it. They paid $11,000 for his life.

In 2025, Ronald Adams Sr., another Stellantis worker, was crushed by a gantry crane at the nearby Dundee Engine plant. Sixteen months later, his family still has no answers. Not from Stellantis. Not from the UAW. Not from the state. The plant just went back to running. As if he never existed.

Now add Heladio Perez and Mary Allen to that list.

It doesn't matter if the plant has a union, or is non-union, like Brent Industries.

At the union plants, the company-union safety committees did nothing to stop deaths and injuries. They exist to give the illusion that workers have a voice. While management and union officials keep the line running. No matter the cost.

Union or not — the result is the same. Workers pay with their lives.

The answer is workers organizing ourselves. Independent of the company. Independent of any union bureaucracy.

I'm running for UAW president to fight for this. Abolish the company-union safety committees. Replace them with rank-and-file safety committees. Run by workers, on every shop floor — union and non-union alike. Give workers full access to every record. Give workers the power to stop production when conditions are unsafe.

No company investigation will ever tell the truth. No bureaucracy will either. Only the workers standing next to the machine know what really happened.

To the families of Heladio Perez and Mary Allen — you are not alone. Your fight is our fight.

To every worker in Toledo, and everywhere else — this fight is about putting an end to a system that sacrifices our lives for profit. We produce all the wealth in this society. We are the only ones who can fight for ourselves.

Form a rank-and-file committee in your workplace. Union or not. Take control of safety.

JOIN THE FIGHT FOR WORKERS' POWER!

Get involved with the rank-and-file campaign in the UAW elections.

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