

AFL-CIO Executive Council Statement  
Washington, D.C.  
June 17, 2020

### **ON THE PASSING OF OWEN BIEBER**

The AFL-CIO Executive Council mourns the passing of our brother and friend, UAW President Emeritus Owen Bieber.

Bieber began his career in the trade union movement at the age of 19, when he joined UAW Local 687 as an assembly-line worker in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He steadily rose through the ranks until his election as UAW president in 1983, an office he held for 12 years.

Under his leadership, the UAW expanded its organizing and education programs; and Bieber's exceptional performance at the collective bargaining table under challenging circumstances brought job and income security to hundreds of thousands of working women and men.

His unflagging commitment to the principles of trade unionism extended well beyond our nation's borders. He championed worker and civil rights movements across the globe, notably the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. He called attention to the racial injustice and brutality of South Africa's government, demanded the release of imprisoned anti-apartheid leaders and trade unionists, and advocated for a boycott of U.S. companies doing business in South Africa.

Owen Bieber's more than four decades of service to the UAW as local president, regional staff representative, international representative, regional director, vice president and president helped improve the lives of so many people. The AFL-CIO Executive Council sends our deepest condolences to his family, friends, and all the members, leaders and staff of the UAW. He will be missed but not forgotten.