

# Layoffs

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 ployed in automobile manufacturing.  
 By 2004, this share had fallen by more than one-third to 1.3 percent.

By contrast, the share of White workers employed in auto manufacturing fell just 0.2 percentage points from 1.3 percent to 1.1 percent.  
 The share of Hispanic workers also fell by 0.2 percentage points, from 0.8 percent to 0.6 percent."

This decline has taken place despite the fact that Black workers still maintain a higher percentage of union members based on their numbers in the workforce.

Says the report: In 2004, African-Americans were still more likely to be in a union (16.6 percent) than Whites (13.9) and Hispanics (11.4 percent).

Nevertheless, the decline in union membership for Black workers between 1983 and 2004 was sharper for Blacks (down 15.1 percentage points) than it was for Whites (down 8.3 percentage points) and Hispanics (down 12.8 percentage points).

For Ford retiree Desi Amaz Scott, confronting the challenges facing the union means finding a way to organize the unions in plants where it does not exist to take away the auto bosses' ability to drive wages, benefits, and working conditions down.

"I want the UAW to come down here [in Mississippi] and organize Nissan," said Scott in an interview with the *Spokesman-Recorder*.

Scott was the second Black woman hired at the Twin Cities plant in 1973. She was also the first Black woman to retire from the plant, an accomplishment of which she is proud. She now lives in Benton, Miss., with her husband, who is also retired recently from Ford.

Scott discussed some of the problems she has in attempting to convince workers she knows who work at the Nissan auto plant in nearby Canton, Miss., to organize a union.

"They make \$12 to \$13 an hour without many of the benefits I enjoy as a UAW member. When I tell them to get the union in the plant, they tell me, 'No. The company says that they will close the plant if we get a union.'"

Local elected officials have negotiated with Ford in an effort to convince the company to keep the Twin

Cities facility open.  
 The main proposal officials have made to Ford has been to reconfigure the plant to make hybrid cars, with the state and city government picking up a good deal of the bill in the form of research and development monies, tax breaks, and other incentives.  
 Gov. Tim Pawlenty proposed that the State and Ford build a "Center of Excellence in Renewable Fuels."

In his proposal, Pawlenty promised that the state would make "significant investments in this effort."

Azariah is not optimistic about the prospects of the

plant staying open.  
 "I think the fact that the Twin Cities plant was not mentioned [in the first round of closures] does not mean that we are out of the woods. All of the reasons that they gave for closing the other facilities all apply here, too."

And if the State gives Ford some money to stay? "All they'll do is buy some time," Azariah said.

"Ford will take the money, keep the plant open for a little while, and close it anyway."

Chris Nisan writes for *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*.

# Thomas bio due out in '07

WASHINGTON (AP) - The memoirs of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas will be coming to a bookstore near you — just not as soon as expected.

Nearly five years after starting his autobiography, and three years after getting a \$1 million-plus book deal, Thomas is still writing.

HarperCollins Publishers paid Thomas a \$500,000 advance in 2003 and awaits delivery, which is behind schedule.

The book, detailing Thomas' rise from destitution in tiny Pin Point, Ga., to the highest court in the land won't be out until 2007, according to the New York publishing house. Initial reports had said the book would be finished in 2005.

Thomas succeeded Thurgood Marshall in 1991 — like Marshall he is the court's

only Black justice — and is one of the group's most intriguing members. He asks virtually no questions during argument sessions and gives few speeches.

He loves sports and spends his vacations traveling around the United States in a large recreational-type vehicle. He's a NASCAR fan.

Thomas, 57, is also the most emotional member. He angrily charged during his confirmation that he was the victim of a "high-tech lynching." And he broke down in tears five years ago while giving a speech in Georgia, as he discussed adopting a grandnephew.

Thomas' agent, Lynn Chu of New York, said that "there's a lot of interest" in the book and the justice. "He's going to talk about everything, quite openly," she said.

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