From: lacayo_hitov
To: Mejia, Idania - WHD
Subject: Materials for Tomorrow"s Meeting -- Violence in the Fields
Date: Wednesday, March 28, 2012 2:08:17 PM
Attachments: C & C Notes for DOL.doc

Tania,

Here are three items for people to review (if they get the chance) for our meeting tomorrow at 2 pm. They all involve violence in the fields, which is still an endemic problem. We believe that a focus on this particular problem can form the foundation for the work the Department is hoping to do in furtherance of collaborations with NGOs.

First, attached are the notes taken through the CIW complaint line from a worker on a farm where guns are pretty regularly displayed in order to intimidate workers. DOL investigated this situation about a year ago but, to be charitable, didn't do as thorough a job as it perhaps could have. I have more detail about the case and will be happy to discuss it tomorrow as an example of where we believe DOL might fruitfully invest more of its agricultural work resources.

Second, just below is a link to a youtube video. When I got this link last week, it was to a video of a strawberry farmer recently verbally assaulting a group of workers. His aggressiveness, language and attitude were truly scary. So much so that I thought the cellphone holster on his hip was for a gun, and I fully expected the video to end with someone getting shot. Unfortunately, youtube has taken down the video for some reason, but the link still takes you to a short clip of the grower shouting invective at workers for being animals, etc. This undercurrent of violence has forever been the norm in Florida agriculture, and it is precisely what the Fair Food Program is rooting out. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCIV7gBxShk

Third, I have two pictures of a worker who was recently assaulted in a packing house near Immokalee. I tried to attach them to this email, but that is causing problems with transmission. So, I will bring them with me tomorrow. This sort of beating, which according to witnesses was launched with no warning during a dispute over whether the worker was doing his job well enough, is exactly what prompted the march of 500 workers on a crewleader's house 17 years ago in Immokalee. That sort of thing no longer occurs on farms in the Fair Food Program, but this beating shows that it is still a problem on those farms not in the Program. Since that is the majority of farms (i.e., those that don't grow tomatoes, and those that do but have not joined the Program), it is an issue that needs serious attention.

OK, that's it from this end until tomorrow. See you all then. Steve

Steve Hitov, General Counsel
Coalition of Immokalee Workers
Ex. 6 (Voice and Fax)