



**WE MUST
END
HUMAN RIGHTS
ABUSES
IN
AMERICA'S
TOBACCO FIELDS**



DANGEROUS WORK

In the punishing heat of the Carolina summer, thousands of farm workers tend and harvest tobacco that yields massive profits and seven-figure salaries for companies that turn this crop into cigarettes and other consumer products. Workers receive sub-poverty wages to face daily threats to life and health. An Oxfam America-FLOC investigation reports:

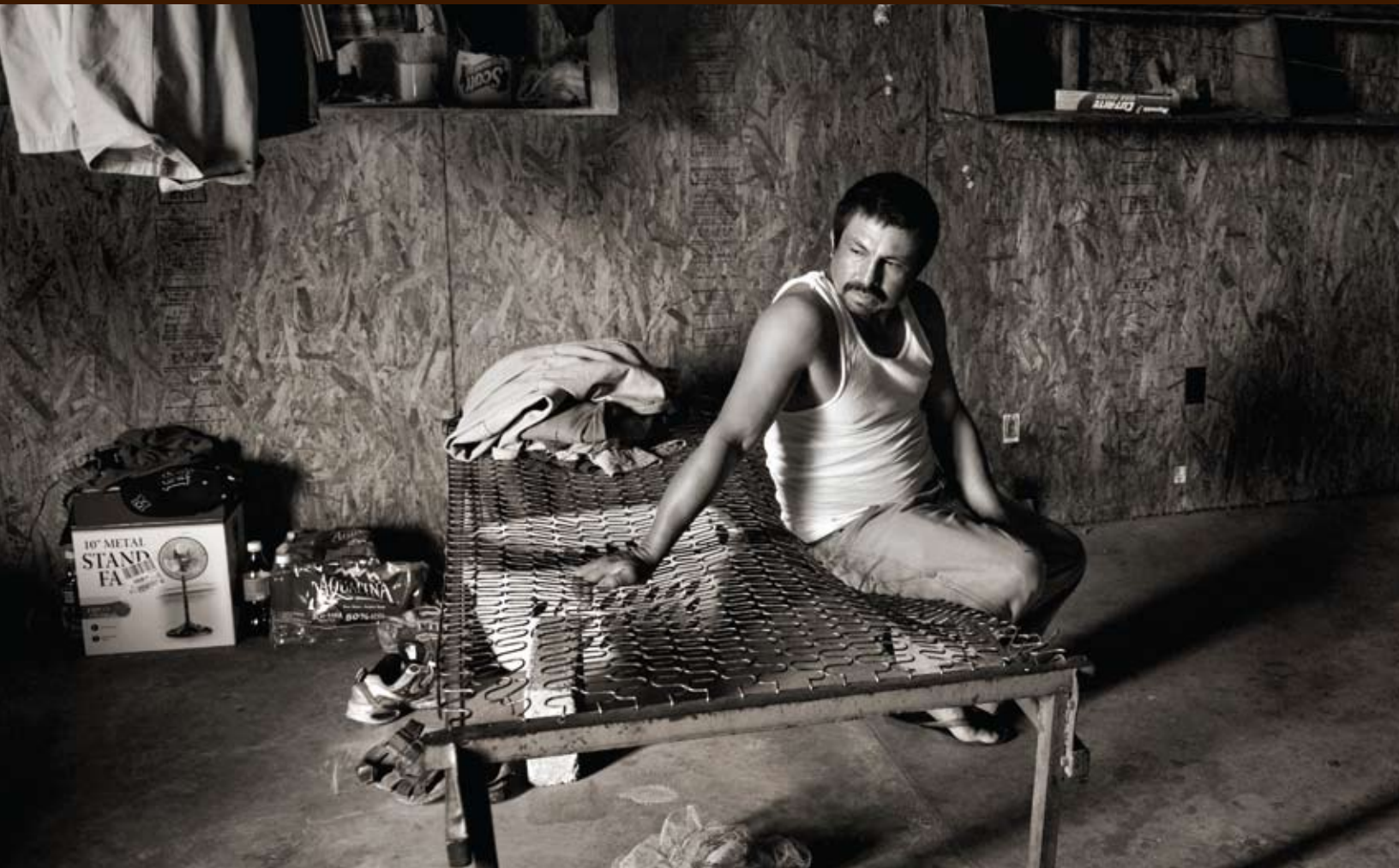
- **Heat stroke** sickens many workers every year, sometimes causing deaths—needless tragedies that could be averted by providing enough clean drinking water.
- **Green Tobacco Sickness (GTS)** afflicts workers with crushing headaches, nausea, vomiting, and disorientation. Caused by the absorption through their skin of toxins given off by the plants, GTS can be averted if growers provide protective clothing, and soap and water in the fields.
- **Pesticides** build up on the hands and clothes of workers forced to work in fields too soon after—or even during—spraying.

SQUALID HOUSING

When the workday ends, field laborers are returned to grim camps scattered across North Carolina's farmlands. Here they are housed in conditions that often violate internationally recognized standards. In confidential interviews workers reported on the conditions they face.

- **Mattresses** that are dirty, wet from the leaky roof, or missing entirely.
- **Infestations** of bedbugs, roaches, and other vermin.
- **Sanitation** that is inadequate or broken.
- **Unventilated, overcrowded** sleeping spaces.
- **Bathing and laundry** facilities that are inadequate or non-functioning.

Workers endure these inhumane conditions out of fear of losing the jobs they depend on to provide for their families. This climate of fear is perpetuated by the tobacco industry which exploits the field workers, forcing them to endure conditions that no one should have to bear and denies them a voice in making changes.





Steve Liss/AmericanPoverty.org

FLOC'S APPROACH

To address and correct these abuses, FLOC is pursuing the same kind of multi-party solution it created and employed successfully in the tomato and cucumber fields. FLOC is seeking to engage the entire tobacco supply chain—including the growers and the manufacturers that set prices, policies, and conditions for the industry—in solving them.

The human rights problems infecting the tobacco industry are the product of an archaic system increasingly dominated by the tobacco manufacturers. That system produces huge profits and salaries for the manufacturers and gives them a vested interest in perpetuating it. Most of them, including Reynolds Tobacco and British American Tobacco, turn a blind eye to the abuses, insisting that they are someone else's problem, even as they claim to support human rights.

A few companies—notably British American Tobacco, Phillip Morris USA, Phillip Morris International, and Altria—have begun a discussion with us around these issues. The campaign for justice is building pressure to bring Reynolds into the conversation and put an end to injustices in America's tobacco fields.

FLOC'S RESULTS

FLOC's supply chain approach made dramatic changes for thousands of farm workers in the Midwest and North Carolina. Through their union, workers have a voice in setting their living and working conditions and enjoy a grievance procedure for swift resolution of labor dispute, which ensures compliance with housing, wage, pesticide, and other laws.

In Ohio, FLOC:

- Ended sharecropping, eliminating sub-minimum wages and unpaid pre-harvest work. Farmworkers now enjoy basic benefits other workers take for granted: a fair wage for all hours worked, unemployment, social security, workers comp, and guaranteed minimum wage.
- Eliminated child labor in Ohio fields and expanded services for migrant children.
- Collaborated with growers to build new housing, with upgrades that include hot showers in the houses and flush toilets, and established a unique Mobile Family Health Clinic that provides free basic medical care, vision, HIV and diabetes testing to its members.

In North Carolina, FLOC:

- Saved its members thousands of dollars in fees and bribes previously paid to independent recruiters, coyotes and smugglers. Workers now can bid for their job position every harvest season. Seniority is respected, to ensure that workers in good standing who complete their contract can return year after year if there are open spots.
- Won workers the right to return home in the event of a family emergency, with three days' pay and the right to return to their position, with no discrimination.





Baldemar Velasquez
President

BUILDING THE ROAD TO JUSTICE

FLOC's campaign for justice is an international effort to persuade Reynolds Tobacco and others in the tobacco supply chain to come together with workers and their representatives to end their industry's human rights abuses. The campaign reaches out to companies and decision-makers to urge Reynolds to meet with FLOC to undertake this important work.

Campaign actions include:

- **Marches, rallies, and protests** at locations including tobacco manufacturers' shareholder meetings in the U.S. and Europe;
- **Media and public outreach** to spotlight human rights abuses and build pressure for change;
- **A comprehensive human rights assessment**, in partnership with OxFam America, documenting and exposing the grim conditions in North Carolina's tobacco fields and labor camps;
- **Camp Solidarity**, to bring people from labor, religious, student and community groups and the media to witness abuses within the tobacco industry firsthand and meet the workers fighting for their lives and their dignity.

How you can help:

- **Stand and march with us.** Join the campaign in its call for justice.
- **Help spread the word.** These abuses have taken root out of sight, hidden away on back roads. Use your website and emails, your Facebook and Twitter accounts, your speeches, blogs, letters and op-eds to shine a light on the abuses and help build solutions.
- **Donate what you can.** Reynolds Tobacco is one of the richest corporations in America. To confront them the campaign needs money for everything from printing and travel to staff. With your help we can deliver justice to the tobacco workers.



Nancy Siesel



**FARM LABOR ORGANIZING COMMITTEE,
AFL-CIO**

Baldemar Velasquez, President

www.floc.com

1221 Broadway
(419) 243 3456
Toledo, Ohio 43609
info@floc.com

4354 Alt. Hwy 117 S.
Dudley, NC 28333
(919) 731-4433
flocnc@floc.com

The Campaign for Migrant Worker Justice

is a movement of more than 10,000 union farm workers in the Midwest and South fighting for dignity and justice.

FLOC's Tobacco Farm Worker Campaign

seeks to end rampant abuses in America's tobacco fields by urging Reynolds Tobacco, British American Tobacco and other major manufacturers to work with FLOC to improve the working and living conditions of America's most exploited workers.

A broad coalition of labor, religious, student, human rights, and community groups participate in the campaign's actions and activities.