



714 4th St. SW ♦ Albuquerque, NM 87102 ♦ (505) 246-1627

*PRESS RELEASE*

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**Contact: Maria Jose Ramos (505) 916-1827; [mramos\\_elcentro@yahoo.com](mailto:mramos_elcentro@yahoo.com)**

**Hacienda Del Río Workers Demand Their Owed Wages**  
*Former Restaurant Workers of Hacienda del Rio Won in Court,  
Though They Have Yet to Receive a Cent*

ALBUQUERQUE, NM— A group of former employees from Hacienda del Rio and members of El CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos, an immigrant rights and worker justice organization, held a protest today to demand the collection of their owed wages as ordered by the County of Bernalillo Second Judicial District Court. Over two years ago, four former workers of Hacienda del Rio filed suit against Hacienda and its owners alleging they were not paid for all the time they worked. In December of last year, District Judge Nancy J. Franchini approved a decision D-202-CV-2016-05310 citing Hacienda del Rio and its owners are liable to pay for unpaid wages totaling over \$40,000 for the four workers.

Wage theft is against the law and includes the failure to pay the mandated minimum wage; forcing workers to work off the clock; the nonpayment of overtime; the nonpayment of a final paycheck; and the misclassification of workers.

“How many of you would be ready to pay your bills if your employer suddenly stopped paying you?” asked Blanca Garcia, working mother, member of El CENTRO, and victim of wage theft. Garcia added, “any small additional expense, whether it was medical or school related, caused additional stress for my entire family. When we finally demanded our unpaid wages, I was called “impatient” IMPATIENT?! How could I have afforded to be patient when I am no longer able to pay for the needs of my children and my granddaughter?!”

A study by Somos un Pueblo Unido in 2013 on Mexican immigrant workers and wage theft in New Mexico found that “wage theft is not limited to undocumented immigrants. While the percentage of undocumented immigrants who acknowledged experiencing at least one instance of wage theft was particularly high (29.6 percent), 22 percent of immigrants with legal documentation acknowledged wage theft as well.”

“Wage theft is a chronic problem in New Mexico, and it has a detrimental impact on all New Mexican families” explained worker victim of wage theft and member of El CENTRO Guillermo Camacho. “No worker should have to wait over two years to receive payment for work performed. Yet, we have yet to receive a cent, though a court has ruled against the owners of Hacienda del Rio. We, immigrant workers, are particularly vulnerable to unscrupulous employers who take advantage of our immigration status.”

“Wage theft sabotages New Mexico’s economy” acknowledges Edgar Salinas, workers’ justice organizer, carpenter, and immigrant father at El CENTRO “we are well aware of the current budget crisis New Mexico faces. The wages workers earned through their hard work should be flowing back into our local economy. However, when unethical employers refuse to pay wages, not only employers avoid paying taxes but they also constrain workers from investing their money back into our local economy.”

“By honoring applicable labor laws, I honor my community. I am proud of my city and believe that Albuquerque deserves to be seen as a city where it’s business owners are stand-up citizens who model business practices which are both modern and admirable” expressed Ivy Rizzo HR Director at FANO Bread Company. “As parents, my husband and I want to create a legacy of honest business so that when our children grow up they will want to stay and work here.”

Father Frank Quintana from Blessed Oscar Romero Catholic Community points to the ethical implications of wage theft, “as individuals and families, as members of faith communities, as community organizations, as businesses, as government, we all have the responsibility to promote the dignity of the worker and to honor workers’ rights. The dignity of the human person and the demands of justice require it. Therefore, depriving the worker of a just wage, depriving the sweat of the brow in order to enrich the employer is immoral, unjust, and engenders an evil trend toward an economy of exploitation.”

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*\*El CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos is a grassroots, immigrants' rights and workers' justice organization based in Albuquerque, NM that works with Latino immigrant communities and allies to defend, strengthen, and advance the rights of our community.*