



California Rural Legal Assistance
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PRESS RELEASE
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\$600,000 SETTLEMENT FOR AGRICULTURAL WORKER VICTIM OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Salinas teen's victory includes requirements that impact workplace safety for thousands more workers.

Salinas, CA. A packing shed worker who was sexually assaulted by a supervisor during his night work shift received over a half a million dollars as a result of a settlement after filing a complaint against the farm labor contractor and the owner of the packing shed where he worked.

The 17-year old packing shed worker from Salinas was employed by Ramco Enterprises, LP (Ramco), one of the biggest farm labor contractors in the state, to work at a packing shed owned by Taylor Fresh Vegetables, Inc. (Taylor). He alleged that his supervisor verbally and physically harassed him at the workplace by making unwelcome sexual comments that escalated to unwanted touching that then culminated in sexual assault.

The teen went to California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. (CRLA) when he was terminated by Ramco after reporting the sexual assault to law enforcement. The teen's attorney, Ana Vicente de Castro, helped him file a complaint with California Department of Fair Employment & Housing (DFEH) in 2017 claiming that he was sexually harassed and assaulted by his supervisor while he was working for Ramco at a food processing facility, owned by Taylor in Gonzales, California.

“Unfortunately, sexual harassment, both physical and verbal, is still commonplace in the agricultural industry in California. Fear of retaliation often prevents reporting of this unlawful practice,” said Ms. Vicente de Castro, CRLA Salinas Migrant Directing Attorney. “Shockingly, many employers choose to fire the victim and continue to employ the harasser,” Ms. Vicente de Castro added. “My client's courage to report the sexual assault and come forward to tell his story is commendable.”

After the DFEH found cause to believe a violation of the Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA) and the Ralph Civil Rights Act had occurred, the parties reached a mediated settlement. Ramco promised to pay \$600,000.00, which included payment to the teen for emotional distress damages and attorney's fees. The settlement also requires Ramco to hire a third-party monitor for three years to review Ramco's policies and procedures, make regular visits to the worksite, review complaints of harassment filed by employees, attend human resources meetings at the company's headquarters, and submit compliance reports to DFEH. Taylor, which denies employing the worker named in the settlement, will also hire a monitor for a two-year period.

“The injunctive relief in this case is momentous and will impact the working conditions of thousands of workers. I hope this victory resonates throughout the agricultural industry, creating a safer work environment for all agricultural workers,” said Ms. Vicente de Castro. “CRLA’s mission is to fight for vulnerable workers like the minor who was sexually assaulted in this case and to end unlawful employment practices impacting not only a specific worker but the whole industry,” she added.

California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. (CRLA)

Founded in 1966, CRLA’s mission is to fight for justice and individual rights alongside the most exploited communities of our society. Through a network of regional offices in 20 California cities and communities, CRLA provides legal services to over 40,000 people through specialized programs focusing on the needs of farm workers, housing, environmental justice, education, individuals with disabilities, immigrant populations, LGBT rights, and women, children and families. For more information on CRLA, please visit www.crla.org.