

## UFCW Mourns the Loss of “Red” Gomez

Emilio Emeterio “Red” Gomez passed on Saturday, April 16, 2011, at the age of 67, after a courageous battle with cancer while living in San Benito, Texas. He was born on August 3, 1943, in Brownsville, Texas.



Gomez became a meatcutter at the age of 18, and joined the Amalgamated Meatcutters Local 408 in 1969, which later became the UFCW in 1979. He worked for the Kroger Company as a head meatcutter operating the highest volume Kroger meat market in the U.S. He became a union steward in 1969 and would continue to be a leader in the UFCW family for decades.

One of his greatest accomplishments was as a founding member of the United Hispanics of the UFCW (now United Latinos of UFCW), serving as a Vice President, Executive Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer before becoming the National President in 2001. **OP**

## Impress USA, Inc. Workers in Bloomsburg Ratify New Contract

UFCW Local 38 successfully ratified a new three-year contract with Impress USA, Inc. at their plant located in Bloomsburg, PA. Approximately 120 workers at this location make metal food cans for Del Monte, Simmons, and Suter food companies, among others. The new contract delivers wage increases for each year and maintains affordable health care coverage with only a very modest increase in worker premiums over the duration of the contract.

UFCW Local 38 represents over 1,500 workers in the Milton and Bloomsburg areas. Local President Russ Baker credits the strong work ethic of the membership at the Bloomsburg plant as the main reason the contract passed. “We achieved what we did because of this

workforce’s dedication,” Baker said. “Our members care about their jobs and are committed. I know that both the UFCW and Impress USA, Inc. hope for continued success in Bloomsburg for many years to come.” **OP**

## California Fresh & Easy Workers Stand up for Workplace Safety

Over the past year, three Glassell Park, Ca., Fresh & Easy workers—Carlos Juarez, Lisa Austin and Michael Acuna—made repeated efforts to raise workplace safety concerns with company officials, but their efforts were met with stalling and attempts by the company to isolate the workers.

Since March 2010, over 17 employees have been injured while working at the Glassell Park Fresh & Easy. The injuries ranged from lacerations that required medical attention to serious back injuries that may require surgery.

“The sad part is that these injuries could have been avoided if the company had listened to our concerns and worked to prevent these unsafe conditions before it cost the company money,” said Juarez.

To prepare for meetings with Fresh & Easy officials around the issue of workplace safety, Juarez, Austin and Acuna took a course at UCLA’s Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program entitled “Worker Occupational Safety and Health Specialist Training.” The training provided Juarez, Austin and Acuna with the skills to identify hazards on the job, uncover underlying causes of injury and illness and evaluate and participate in efforts to reduce or eliminate common workplace hazards. The training also helped the workers understand how to maintain a safe and healthy workplace, participate in injury and illness prevention and problem-solving in the workplace, and serve as a health and safety resource for co-workers.

“Let’s make this company take us workers seriously so that we can make the changes in this workplace that we feel are causing these injuries in the first place,” said Acuna. **OP**

## Ahold Workers Take Their Voice to Amsterdam



Three Ahold workers from the Virginia area travelled to Amsterdam in the Netherlands, to attend the company's annual general shareholders' meeting on April 20, 2011. Workers will address the assembly on the unfair treatment that employees at Ahold-owned Martin's stores in Richmond, Va., are subjected to, and will call on management to stop the attacks on workers and afford its Martin's employees the same organizing and bargaining rights granted to Ahold workers elsewhere in the U.S. and Europe.

"We are taking a stand at the shareholders' meeting in Europe because we believe that many of the shareholders do not know what's going on at Martin's," said Richmond native Shaquana Battle, who works as a cashier at the Martin's Forest Hill store in Richmond, Va. "Since Ahold bought our store, management dictates everything with little regard for workers and customers. You don't get the feeling anyone really cares about you as a worker, and there is no sense of dignity," Battle added.

Also known as Royal Ahold, the Netherlands-based company expanded into the Richmond area a little over a year ago with the purchase of 25 stores from local Ukrop's chain, which it now operates under the Martin's banner. Although 65 percent of Ahold's U.S. workforce are already represented by the UFCW, the company decided to integrate the newly purchased stores with its non-union banner. UFCW Local 400 is now leading the campaign to win a fair process for the Martin's workers.

Manassas, Va., resident Kayla Mock, a UFCW Local 400 member who has worked at one of Ahold's unionized stores—Giant Food—for the past 12 years, took the trip to Amsterdam to express her solidarity with Ahold's non-union workers. "I stayed at Giant because my store

is unionized and the contracts that we've negotiated over the years have provided me with a comfortable life," Mock said. "Why should Ahold's Richmond workers be denied the same rights and treated as second-class employees? What does that say about how Ahold views people in this city?" **OP**

## Workers Win Social Media and Free Speech Rights in NLRB Settlement

The National Labor Relations Board recently settled a case finding that a company unlawfully terminated a worker for criticizing a supervisor on her facebook page. The policy prohibited workers from disparaging the company or any supervisor. The policy also prohibited workers from posting pictures of themselves in company uniforms or vehicles, or depicting the company's logo in any blog or on the internet.

In the settlement, the company agreed that workers had the right to criticize the company's employment practices on blogs, websites and other social media. The NLRB settled the worker's termination in a private part of the settlement.

*American Medical Response of Connecticut, Inc. Case No. 34-CA-12576 (settled Feb. 2011).*

### How This Case And Settlement Can Help You

Local unions can use this case and the settlement as legal precedent to challenge policies restricting workers from engaging in protected activity using social media, including commenting on the way their supervisors oversee workers and the workplace conditions of their companies, even though the company did not admit liability. They also show that workers generally have the right to engage in that activity using the company logo and wearing their uniforms. Finally, unions can use the settlement to arbitrate discipline of workers for using social media to exercise their rights. **OP**