

Theim Chaiyajit Statement

I heard about agricultural work in America from a recruitment agency in Thailand and was told that the recruitment fee would be 650,000 baht but I would earn about 100,000 baht per month. I was excited because I would be making three times more than my current wage. I thought I would be able to pay back the 650,000 baht loan back in a few months. I would be able support my family, send my children to school, save some money, and maybe even buy myself a new pick-up truck. I mortgaged my house, sold my truck, and took out loans.

I flew to Los Angeles with other Thai workers in 2003. A couple of days later we were flown to Hawaii to work at Del Monte. Global took our passports and I only worked here for 22 days. I shared a one bedroom one bathroom apartment with 11 Thai workers. The bus that Global used to transport us to and from work was overcrowded like the apartment.

I worked 6 days a week and was supposed to be paid \$9.25 per hour. However, Global never paid me. One morning while we were getting on the bus to go to work, we were surrounded by immigration officers. I was handcuffed, arrested, and treated like a criminal. This is the only time I was ever arrested when I did nothing wrong. I was in jail for 15 days. All 53 of us were escorted to the airport and told that our visas had expired. We were deported back to Thailand. Global brought us back 4 months later to work in Maryland, Mississippi, and Georgia. I came back because I have paid and sacrificed too much to go home empty handed and was hoping that Global would pay me the wage they owed. While I worked at the other farms, Global was supposed to provide food but they did not. I was not paid so I did not have money to buy food so I and others had to fish for food. I was cold and faced overcrowding at the other farms.

After I left Global, I worked at a Thai restaurant in Los Angeles. Then I did construction work. My wife and I moved to Fresno along with a close friend. We are now working at a small farm picking eggplants and renting a room from the farm owner. Although the work is seasonal because sometimes the eggplants are not ready for harvest, I still feel happy.

My son is now a college professor and daughter is a college student in Thailand. I am able to get back my house and farm deeds. But I still owe about 300,000 baht. I want to continue staying in the US to work so I can pay off the recruitment debt.

I am thankful that different organizations/agencies especially EEOC were able to help me and the Thai workers. I hope that EEOC will be able to continue helping other victims like me. I feel relieved after leaving Global. I don't have to worry or be stressful or live in fear anymore. I don't have to worry about not having enough work, being deported, not receiving my wages, and feel trapped because of all the house rules and not having my passport.

I want to encourage others who experienced what I experienced, to not be afraid and to seek help from the EEOC.

