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Human Trafficking Class Action Case Filed in Mississippi

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Jackson, Mississippi (PRWEB) October 29, 2011

Louis H. Watson Jr., P.A. confirms that forty-eight (48) legal immigrant workers from the Phillipines, Jamaica, Bellarus, Turkey, and Indonesia have filed a class action complaint in Mississippi alleging human trafficking violations under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act as well as minimum wage and overtime violations under the Fair Labor Standards Act. Court documents show the immigrant workers are

contending that they were improperly required to pay visas fees of \$5,000 to \$8,000 for their H2B visas, which were supposed to be paid by the employer in the United States. The immigrant workers could not afford to pay these fees, so they were sent to specific loan companies in their country of origin where they were required to sign blank checks to pay back the money loaned once it was earned in the United States as well as requiring family members to co-sign the loan agreements so the loan companies would have someone to lean on in their country of origin if they could pay the loans backs.

Court documents show these immigrant workers signed the loan agreements because they had been given employment offers for work in the United States with specific employers at pay rates above minimum wage that would have allowed them to easily repay the loans. However, when the immigrant workers arrived in the United States they discovered the jobs offered to them were not available, and they were instead sent to other employers that had no involvement with their visa applications. The immigrant workers were sent employers that placed them in jobs making less than minimum wage and did not properly pay overtime wages. These positions paid so low the immigrant workers could not afford to pay the loans back. Additionally, in some circumstances the immigrant workers were placed in substandard living conditions, such as, placing several immigrant workers in a filthy, unsecured, and totally bare trailer trucks that had no running water, food, proper beds, or even mattresses.

Plaintiff's Counsel Nick Norris stated, "From the evidence we have seen so far we believe this is a case of modern day slavery where immigrant workers are being tricked into working in substandard conditions they did not agree to when they left their home countries, and are stuck working these jobs because they have to pay back these loans for visa expenses for their families and can't go work for other employers in the United States under H2B visa program."

In the next month, the United States has issued a criminal indictment against Michael V



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In the past month, the United States has issued a criminal indictment against Michael V. Lombardi, who is one of the individual defendants, alleging that he illegally trafficked humans. This criminal indictment also alleges that at least one other defendant conspired with Mr. Lombardi to defraud the federal government as to the number of immigrant workers they needed so they can be sent to other employers. Around the same time this indictment was issued, the federal government also declared all the plaintiffs to be human trafficking victims so they could remain in the United States legally while they pursue their legal claims against the defendants.

The case is pending in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi. The case name is Ferdinand Antigo, et al. v. Michael V. Lombardi, et al, Civil Action No.1:11-CV-408-HSO-RHW.

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Read the full story at <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2011/10/prweb8920562.htm>

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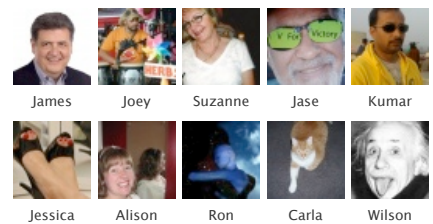
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