



**Farm  
Labor  
Organizing  
Committee, AFL-CIO**

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**FLOC Marches on RJ Reynolds, Demands Meeting**

In a vibrant display of unity on Sunday, farmworkers, dozens of churches, unions, and community members came together to demand that RJ Reynolds (RJR) sit down with farmworker leaders from the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) to discuss the deplorable conditions in the tobacco fields. Nearly four hundred people marched to the driving beat of drums and chants around RJR headquarters in downtown Winston Salem. In front of the main entrance to company headquarters, participants laid flowers on a makeshift altar in memory of the six heat-related deaths of workers in the tobacco harvest since 2005.

Farmworker Diego Reyes opened the rally by welcoming the show of unity from the stairs of historic Lloyd Presbyterian Church, above the sea of red and black flags and shirts. Strong messages of solidarity were delivered by the President of the National Council of Churches, Michael Livingston; Executive Director of the National Farmworker Ministry, Virginia Nesmith; AFL-CIO President John Sweeney (delivered via Will Duncan); North Carolina AFL-CIO president James Andrews; Joseph Keesecker, Executive Director Agricultural Missions, and Edith Rasell, Minister for Workplace Justice, United Church of Christ.

Union representatives were out in full force, many traveling hours from Atlanta, Ohio, and Washington DC to participate. Teamsters, Letter Carriers, Seafarers International Union, United Steel Workers, United Auto Worker, Bakery Confectionary Tobacco Grain Miller International, International Association of Machinists, American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, and American Postal Workers all marched in solidarity with tobacco farmworkers.

Responding to media inquires, RJR representatives denied any responsibility for the workers that harvest the tobacco. Previously, RJR denied a meeting with farmworker representatives from FLOC for the same reason. Case after case, however, has shown the vertical control powerful corporate processors have over their supply chains. Throughout its history, FLOC has successfully bargained and implemented changes involving all parties in the supply chain.



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Emphasizing FLOC's commitment to this campaign, FLOC President Baldemar Velasquez said, "FLOC is called upon to challenge the deplorable conditions of the tobacco workforce that remains voiceless, powerless, and invisible to mainstream America. FLOC will campaign until RJ Reynolds commits to joining us in addressing this national shame."