



## Comité Fronterizo de Obrer@s CFO

**For the labor rights and all human  
rights of the maquiladora workers**



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### Students see sweatshop brutality

**University of New Mexico, [www.dailylobo.com](http://www.dailylobo.com)**

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*By Rachel Stohr*

At least 1 million workers in more than 3,000 maquiladora plants make \$4 a day.

A student delegation that traveled to Juarez, Mexico, the site of many maquiladoras, or U.S. assembly factories, said they saw the brutal treatment of Mexican laborers firsthand.

They talked about the experience Thursday to a small group at UNM's School of Law.

"We're not experts by any stretch of the imagination, but the trip opened our eyes," Curtis White said.

White said he wants to show UNM stands in solidarity with the Mexican labor movement.

"Mexican labor laws are progressive like in the United States, but in practice, it's the enforcement of these laws that's just not happening," Eric Norvell said.

He said the Mexican government stands to gain economically from such work and laborers pay the price. Maquiladora workers simply aren't paid a fair wage. He called the situation wage slavery.

American, Japanese and European companies set up in Third World countries to avoid paying taxes and evade environmental protection laws, Brooke Nowak-Neely said.

About 90 percent of what is produced in maquiladoras goes north to the United States. The group also discussed the legal battles of maquiladora laborers.

The group met with Gustavo De la Rosa Hickerson, a Mexican labor lawyer and activist who represents assembly factory workers. Douglas Carver discussed one of De la Rosa Hickerson's cases that involved a man named Ponchito. He said he was fired for organizing his co-workers to speak up for better work conditions.

"The factory said he didn't show up for work, which is a lie," Carver said. "This legal battle has been going on for two years. All this man wants is the right to return to work."

Carver also discussed a case about a maquiladora worker who unknowingly signed a contract that subjected him to a new probationary period. "He was then fired, and since he signed the contract, he got no benefits or severance pay," Carver said. The group also addressed positive developments in the battle for fair treatment of Mexican laborers.

Comite Fronterizo de Obreras is a grass-roots organization that supports union democracy and workers rights in six cities along the Mexico-U.S. border, according to its Web site. Casa Amiga Crisis Center was founded as a reaction to the indifferent response by police and politicians to the killing of maquiladora workers. The center provides psychological, medical and legal support to victims of sexual assault, domestic violence and incest.

Rachel Winston said in order for places such as Casa Amiga to spread to other border cities, financial help is needed.

"It's an uphill battle but a promising one," Chris Frey said.

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*Media Credit: Tina Larkin*

Olga Rios-Soria, left, raises her hand to ask a question during Friday's presentation by UNM students on working conditions in Mexico's maquiladoras, or assembly factories.

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