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TELEMUNDO NETWORK

The Weather Channel

and Efran Films

present

HARVEST OF MISERY

This place is the source of one of the Earth's greatest treasures. Locals say that the ashes from the Tacana Volcano are the key to its richness.

Amidst dense forests on the hillsides of the Sierra Madre, the volcanic soil gives fruit to the coveted aromatic grains that are exported throughout the world.

This is Chiapas, the land of coffee.

Despite being the poorest state in Mexico, tens of thousands of tourists come to Chiapas every year to visit its extraordinary Mayan ruins, colonial towns, and, of course, to drink the organic coffee for which it is known worldwide.

Its plantations produce almost 46 thousand tons of the beans, whose taste has hints of chocolate. The labels on the packages not only guarantee its high quality, but also that it was harvested under optimum conditions both for the environment and for the workers who cultivate it.

The majority of the crop ends up in the United States and Europe, where consumers at

Starbuck's, Nespresso, and other chains are willing to pay a premium for those very characteristics.

But after hearing several complaints, my colleague John Carlos Frey, and I, Monica Villamizar, have arrived in the city of Tapachula, near the Guatemalan border, to confirm whether or not the working conditions on some coffee plantations have a dark side.

Almost immediately we begin to witness scenes that clash with the concept of fair trade. We make our way to one of the plantations that produces the valuable crop, and we find Amalia. She's been working in the area for 20 days.

Why do you come to Mexico to work? Is it harder in Guatemala?

We come because there's no money. We are poor. That's why we come out here, so we can eat. If not, we wouldn't come.

Like Amalia and her eight children, the majority of the laborers found on these plantations come from Guatemala. Between the harvest months of October and March, around 30,000 immigrants arrive.

Do the children that you bring also work?

Yes, they're right over there.

They help you?

Yes.

They keep me company and they also help pick coffee beans so we can earn more.

Do you think children should work?

That's just how it is in Guatemala.

At what age do they start working?

At nine, like him. He already knows how to pick coffee.

Her other son, Marvin, is eleven.

Do you like to work?

Yes.

He's so little.

Nearby, we find Israel and his young son.

How old are you?

Six.

Just six? Isn't this heavy though? It's heavy, isn't it?

Yes, it is.

He's very shy.

Are you his father?

Yes.

Why do you bring such a small child here?

I don't have anywhere else to leave him. That's why I bring them.

They've been up since dawn. After a light breakfast, they walked for several hours to come pick coffee.

How much do you get paid?

If we fill the box, we only make 96 pesos.

At today's exchange rate, that's a little more than five dollars. Each box is made up of eight baskets and sells in the international market for about 30 dollars. Although in Mexico it's illegal for minors younger than 15 to work, according to official statistics, around 1.75 million children between the ages of 5 and 13 participate in the country's workforce. The majority of them work in agriculture.

We were told that many children were working in coffee plantations, but we never imagined it would be to this degree. I mean, wherever you look, there are many children working.

In Tapachula, the municipality with the greatest yield of coffee nationwide, we went to Manuel Tomasini's office. Aside from being the leader of a local coffee organization, he's the cousin of the plantation owner where some of the laborers said they were working.

Hello. How are you?

Mr. Tomasini, do you think that people who grow coffee, like your cousin, and who see that families bring along small children during harvest time, would say something in regards to that?

I mean, it may occur. A laborer may come with his family, his wife, and sometimes their youngest child. A child around ten or eleven years old will be integrated into the workforce. But those are exceptions, it's not the norm.

If the owner sees this, will he say anything about it? Because the certificates imply that certain conditions are met.

Yes.

Like fair treatment...

Yes.

The labor laws in this country require you to provide dorms with all the basic amenities and forbid plantation owners from exploiting children.

So how is it that so many children work six-to-eight-hour shifts six days a week?

It's against the law, but tolerated.

Jorge Ausencio Aguilar is a former priest who began working with small-scale growers, as part of his pastoral mission.

Does the fact that they're Guatemalan influence the government's lack of involvement? Because they aren't citizens.

It has a lot to do with a parent's rights to allow a child to work or not. The plantation owner isn't the one who makes them work, and neither is the government. The decision to allow them to work is made by the parents.

But a parent cannot tell a five-year-old child that he has to go work with them. They shouldn't do that, right?

They shouldn't, no. But since they find themselves living in extreme poverty, a parent will allow this as a necessary evil.

Aguilar confesses that he himself worked when he was in elementary school.

My father told me I had to help him, so I helped. Each family has the right to decide how they want to raise their children.

Does the coffee that those children are harvesting make it to the United States?

It's possible, very possible.

Why very possible?

Because out of every four sacks, three are exported to the U.S., which is our main market. It's possible for the fruits of this labor to make it into the U.S. market.

When we return...

Far from the plantations, there's an entire industry dedicated to promoting the ethical production of this desirable crop.

However, what are the real living conditions of immigrant laborers?

Plus, we run into Mauricio and Oscar, who tell us they're working alone for a nearby plantation.

SEGMENT 2

The St. Francis Assisi Center for Agriculture and Ecology that Jorge Aguilar directs helps thousands of producers with parcels between one and three hectares obtain organic and fair trade certification in order to commercialize their coffee, cacao, or honey.

A fair trade producer makes up to 60-70% more than a non-fair trade producer.

The fair trade movement began several decades ago to counteract the exploitation of agricultural workers. A fair trade seal guarantees a minimum amount for the product. In exchange, producers must comply with fair trade guidelines and each country's labor laws, including certifying that child labor is not used.

If I see children working in the fields, it's not fair trade, right?

No. It shouldn't be.

There are lots of kids working in the coffee plantations. How is that possible?

Yes, that's one of our realities. Unfortunately, it's one of the vestiges of the Middle Ages.

The coffee boom in Chiapas began in the early 19th Century, when Italian and German hacienda owners planted large parcels with the aim of commercializing the beans using indigenous labor to cultivate the land. Now, 70% of the farms in the region belong to small-scale Mexican growers. However, the largest coffee plantations continue to depend on indigenous labor that comes mainly from Guatemala.

As we traveled along the coffee route, we ran into Mauricio and Oscar resting by the side of the road.

Did you two collect all this? Is this coffee?

How old are you?

14.

What about you?

12.

Are you brothers?

Yes.

They're with another brother who hasn't finished his shift yet.

Are you waiting for your brother so you can take the coffee to Chapultepec?

Yes.

Is that where you're staying?

Yes.

Are you from Guatemala or Mexico?

Guatemala.

Do you think I can carry this or not?

Yes.

No, I can't.

Let me see.

If it's difficult for an adult, it must be brutal for a child.

Can you carry it?

Yes.

How much do they pay you?

12 for an eighth.

That's more or less what someone in the U.S. would make per hour. They collect all this in one day.

Who do you give the money to, your parents?

No.

You can spend it?

My dad died.

Really? Do you live with just your mother?

My mom is sick.

She is?

This will be their routine for the four days they have left before going back to their country.

Is this the way to Chapultepec?

We decided to go to the Chapultepec plantation, where the boys said they were working.

Close to the property, we ran into Marvin, an eleven-year-old we had already seen harvesting coffee with his mother and little brother.

Are you going to rest?

Wow!

How can you carry it?

It's about 60 or 70 pounds. I can barely lift it.

Once in Chapultepec, we wanted to see firsthand how the workers live since we were informed that, by law, whoever hires migrant laborers must provide adequate living conditions.

Are these the workers' dorms?

Yes.

Hello.

Hello. How are you?

However, we didn't have much time to inspect the so-called hen houses.

I went into one of the sleeping quarters for a few seconds. They had concrete bunk beds. There were no mattresses. It wasn't clear whether men or women slept there, but there were two sleeping quarters, one of which seemed to be for families with children. The conditions were truly deplorable.

In another organic farm in the area, a cook we caught off guard showed us the living quarters.

This is where they live.

The odor of sweat and urine is overwhelming. Apparently, around 30 people live in this space. They don't have mattresses.

Do they sleep on these boards?

Nope, no mattress.

How often are they fed each day?

Twice, I reckon.

In the morning and at night?

Yes.

The gentleman is telling us this pot feeds 12 people.

This is lunch for 12 people, right? Do you give them meat or vegetables?

The boss doesn't provide any.

So the boss basically only gives them beans?

Beans and corn flour.

We didn't get to see much else because we were asked to leave shortly after.

Or I'll have to report you.

Okay, okay.

At the Tapachula customs office, where work permits are issued to migrant workers, we found Jose Antonio, another Guatemalan. He'd been in Mexico for a month working with different crops and says the farm supervisors who hire them often make promises they don't keep.

Did they say that you'd be staying in a nice house, but it turned out it's not nice at all?

Yes, that's true. They told us there'd be beds, running water, and bathrooms, but when we got there, there weren't any bathrooms or water. It was dirtier than this floor. No beds either. We slept on the floor. There was nothing, not even light. They said there was electricity and we went a month with no light.

After everything we saw, we wanted answers from the authorities so we went to the Department of Labor. There we were told the director wasn't in and that we should return later. They also suggested that we visit the Human Rights Commission.

But in the local offices we're not welcomed.

We're not the government.

You're not?

We're a non-governmental institution.

Please don't.

Okay, sorry. We can't record?

They sent us to the labor office again. This time, they said we had to go all the way to the capital.

So now I have to travel to Tuxtla, a six-hour car ride away, when the same offices are here. You understand?

Yes, I do.

For us, the issue of child labor is very serious. You're sending us from one office to another. These are simple questions. What is the law? What do you do when there are children there? So you can't answer me. Okay.

Well, we're in a state where it shouldn't be allowed and it is, and in an industry that shouldn't allow it and it does.

The plantations we visited where we documented child labor are Chapultepec and the surrounding three. I don't know if you know whom these plantations supply.

I couldn't tell you who they sell to, but they probably sell to local buyers. The majority of it certified as "no child labor." Mexican law prohibits children working on plantations and so does 4C. Specifically, Nestle, buyers from AMSA, Dreyfus and Grupo California.

Grupo California, Dreyfus, Merino Telis Cafe, and AMSA, which stands for Agroindustrias Unidas de Mexico, in Spanish, are some of the intermediaries whose function is to collect coffee from several producers and sell it to large companies.

We saw boys who carry more than their own weight in coffee. It's astounding. Have you seen that?

Boys and girls.

Girls, of course. Ultimately, they're deceiving consumers. If I'm being told this label guarantees certain things that it doesn't actually guarantee.

You'd have to prove it because whoever accuses has the burden of proof.

Right.

And proving it isn't always so easy.

Coming up...

Who is responsible for bringing coffee harvested by children into the United States? We search for answers.

We're going to mark this exact location.

Cristina Londoño investigates what some companies are doing to keep their customers from being fooled by intermediaries.

SEGMENT 3

In an old chocolate factory located in the middle of Montreal, Canada Monika Firl and her colleagues compare the aroma and the array of flavors from different coffees in an elaborate ritual similar to wine tasting.

For the expert tasters of Cooperative Coffees, a tiny sip is enough to distinguish coffee from Africa from coffee from Central America. One of their goals is to establish a numerical scale from 50 to 10 which would allow gourmet coffee to be classified the same way wine is classified internationally.

Firl is the co-op's special projects director, which has 20 commercial partners in the United States and Canada. She says she discovered her vocation during the six years she lived in Chiapas at the beginning of her career.

I want to share profits in the fairest way possible. I want to know where my food and coffee come from.

During the last 15 years, the company has established ties with small farms to promote fair and direct trade.

One of the problems with coffee is that there are many intermediaries. Plus, there's an entire industry committed to certifying good practices. There are many systems and many companies who try to present themselves the same way.

But not all of them follow through with what their labels promise.

I think the most difficult thing to achieve is good intentions. For a consumer, I'm aware that it's a challenge.

Verifying the conditions under which products are harvested is not only a challenge because of the amount of intermediaries, but also because of the invisibility of those who occupy the last link in the chain. In Los Angeles, California, Carlos Hernández de la Torre learned that lesson firsthand.

If you don't see who's picking the crop and under what conditions, you don't care. You don't care who picked it, how they picked it, how old they are.

The optometry technician confesses that he too was indifferent until he started visiting Mexican farms as a member of Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity and felt as if he had landed on another planet.

We've tried to educate the rest of the world about what we call democracy, but I don't think we've achieved anything. Once you cross the border to the south, everything changes.

During the 25 years he's been traveling throughout Mexico, from the fields of Baja California to Chiapas, the images of laborers with their sunburnt skin and worn hands have become etched in his mind. Many of the workers had never received an eye exam, despite the risks associated with their work.

Because of the sun exposure they endure from 10 to 12 hours, especially during summer when the sun is strongest. The constant glare can deteriorate their corneas and eventually cause blindness.

And the younger they are, the more vulnerable they are to the health risks. It's been proven that carrying heavy loads at an early age can cause permanent spinal damage.

Hernandez says he's seen children working in nine out of every ten farms that his organization visits throughout the country.

They think the 80 to 200 pesos that child will earn will help them. Many of those parents never went to school, so they don't think their children need an education either if they're going to be working in the fields.

Luisa Rodriguez started working at age 10 in her hometown of Oaxaca, the birthplace of the fair trade coffee movement.

When I first started working, I couldn't carry the basket.

She says the fields stole her childhood.

There's no time to play or to go to school or anything. You go to work, come home and sleep, wake up and go back to work.

She moved to Baja California over two decades ago where the cycle was repeated.

The most painful thing when I got here is that I couldn't speak Spanish. I couldn't even ask for a glass of water. Where I worked I didn't know how to ask to use the restroom. That's the price you pay for having child labor.

Hernandez is outraged that products harvested by children are sold at high prices in well-known supermarkets abroad.

Sometimes you wish your skin was as thick as a rhinoceros', but it's not. Sometimes you wish you could pull a curtain before your eyes so you wouldn't have to see it, but you're there, you're witnessing what's going on. Personally, it's been very hard.

Monika Firl admits she's never been to the coffee plantations in Chiapas, but she knows that many workers live in subhuman conditions.

I'd like to think it's uncommon, but it obviously still exists. It's sad that in an industry such as coffee, with all its potential and resources, that people have to work that way.

Firl says her co-op would like to close the gap between the world where coffee is like gold, generating \$80 billion across the planet, and the other world where its harvest is based on people's misery.

Entities such as Fair Trade USA, Rainforest Alliance, 4C, and Starbucks' Café Practices told us they trusted their measures to ensure that there was no exploitation on their suppliers' plantations.

Hernandez isn't so sure though.

It's an injustice, and I won't have enough time in what's left of my life to see changes.

When we return, we're back in Chiapas where we traced the coffee harvested by children to the plantation that employs them.

We'll speak to the owner and the multinational company he sells to.

SEGMENT 4

WELCOME TO CHIAPAS

After several days traveling down the coffee route, we leave Chiapas with many questions. One of the most important goals of our investigation is to record evidence of the places where we saw children harvesting coffee.

People here usually say they don't know what plantation the coffee comes from. So we're going to mark the exact location of this site so that later we can determine if it's sold in the US. We use these coordinates to find out who owns the plantation and who they're selling their coffee to. We discovered that since December 2000, Mauricio Tomasini Bassols has been the sole owner of the Chapultepec plantation, a parcel of 110 hectares in the Soconusco region southwest of Chiapas.

Last February, Marcus Stern, an investigative reporter on our team, traveled to Tapachula to tell Mr. Tomasini what John Carlos Frey and I discovered in October 2015.

Tomasini proudly points out that since his uncle arrived from France in 1917, three generations of Tomasinis have harvested Arabica beans in the shadow of the Tacana volcano nearby.

In 2013, in order to get through the crisis caused by a plague that devastated coffee crops throughout Central America and Mexico, Tomasini joined Nestle's Plan Nescafe, planting Robusta, a higher-yielding and more disease-resistant coffee variety.

I have certificates from Plan Nescafe.

He had his first Robusta harvest this year, selling it to Merino Telis, an intermediary headquartered in Veracruz. Nestlé acquired the beans through Merino so they could be processed in the Nestlé plant in the state of Mexico.

Nestlé, headquartered in Switzerland, is one of the largest companies in the world. Last year it reported \$9 billion in earnings. They depend on an organization called Common Code for the Coffee Community, known by its acronym, 4C, to certify that the plantations supplying them with coffee meet ethical standards and labor laws.

He assures us he does everything he can to follow the law to a T.

The Mexican government wants immigrants be treated well because it expects its people in the U.S. to be treated the same. That's why it makes requirements. But many times, it doesn't see the real and practical problems on a coffee plantation.

For example, making the workers who arrive with work permits issued by the National Institute of Immigration fulfill their contracts.

Of every 10 workers who come, seven or eight leave. How do you make a Guatemalan worker fulfill his contract? The only way is to withhold their permit. In general, the contract is for one month. If they fulfill their contract, they get paid and their permit is returned. But that's not legal. If you don't do it though, your Guatemalan worker will leave.

By law, a minor must travel with both parents or have their written authorization in order to obtain a permit.

If only one parent comes, he won't get the permit. If they both come, he'll get the permit. That permit allows him to help, not work, to help his parents who are both here.

But Mauricio, who's 14, and his brother Oscar, who's 12, whom we found along the road, told us they were working alone because their mother was sick and their father had died.

Tomasini flatly denies they were working on his property.

Are you waiting for your brother so you can take the coffee to Chapultepec? That's where you're staying, correct?

Yes.

I live here. I'm always watching. There are no children working here. There are some youths 15 to 17 years of age who are here with their parents. They can help by carrying the coffee, but it's to help the parents. I don't allow minors to go into the coffee fields. Anyone younger than 11 or 12 cannot go into the fields. They stay here.

We also wanted to ask about the so-called galleras, which we almost didn't get to see because we were kicked off his property on our first trip.

There are wooden bunk beds and an aluminum roof. It can be improved. Those lodging conditions given to the workers could always be improved.

According to the International Labor Organization, accommodations should guarantee safe construction and a reasonable level of order, hygiene, and comfort. Therefore companies must offer, among other things, a separate bed for each worker, separate accommodations for men and women, sufficient natural light during the day as well as sufficient artificial light, a lamp for each bed, and heating whenever necessary.

There are nicer rooms than these on other plantations. I admit it.

In 2015, a government inspector told Tomasini that his workers' accommodations were below standard and he would return in one year to verify conditions. But he claims he can only improve conditions if he does better financially.

I'm at the mercy of the voracious coffee exporters, foreign and domestic ones.

He admits that the bathrooms for the workers are rudimentary.

There's a seat, but no tank. They're not used to it. If you put a handle for them to flush, soon enough the handle will disappear because they've stolen it. You have to give them the service as best as possible without giving them a chance to destroy things. For example, electricity. There aren't any switches. If there were switches, in three days, they would be gone, or the plates would be missing, or they would be destroyed. It's very hard. What he feeds them consists mainly of beans, rice, and tortillas twice a day.

If it's too hot, they get pozole. If it's cold, they get coffee. That's basically it.

On Saturdays each person receives two eggs and a piece of chicken seasoned with onions, garlic, and tomato.

You could give them meat. Other plantations might do that. They get beans, but also other things, more variety. But it depends on the financial situation of each plantation.

We reached out to Nestlé in Switzerland and their representatives assured us that 4C has never cited Chapultepec for any child labor law violation. However, 4C has never visited Tomasini's plantation.

A representative of Coffee Assurance Services, the company charged with carrying out the verifications for 4C, informed us that Chapultepec is one of 25,000 plantations in Mexico that work with Nestlé and must be verified. In the last 3-1/2 years, they've inspected 422 plantations, which represents less than 2%.

Jorge Aguilar, who works with several small grower co-ops, says that in the end, it's the government's responsibility to regulate child labor. But with few inspectors in the area, they never arrive when they should.

Federal inspectors don't visit plantations during the harvest, so there are no sanctions or verifications.

Why not?

It's due to omission, complacency, to protect the economy, or sometimes just so families can make money and put food on the table. If a working child helps make that happen, that could be a justification.

Representatives for the giant multinational in Mexico assured us that they are committed to getting to the bottom of this.

We've never discovered anything like this. So we've got to find out what's going on.

They invited us to visit some of their coffee growers in the mountains of Chiapas, including Mr. Tomasini's plantation.

SEGMENT 5

In the more than 80 years that it has been in Mexico, Nestlé has become one of the largest companies in the country,

Nestlé: the expert in health and nutrition.

With factories and food distribution centers in 17 states. Eighty percent of the coffee it buys comes from small growers in Veracruz, Guerrero, Oaxaca and Puebla. But without a doubt, the most important is the state of Chiapas.

On April 6 we returned to Tapachula for the third time. We were invited by a Nestlé team, among them Emilio Diaz, the senior supply manager for coffee and cacao at the Toluca, Mexico plant.

The reason I'm here with you today is to verify whether there are children working, or any forced work.

How old are you?

14.

What about you?

12?

Are you brothers?

Are you waiting for your brother so you can take the coffee back to Chapultepec? That's where you're staying, correct?

What do you think?

That shouldn't be.

We can talk in the car on the way to save time.

Unlike our first trip in October 2015, this time the roads were empty. The harvest ended in March. Most of the families have returned to Guatemala until next season. On our way there, Diaz assured us they're doing everything possible to instill 4C values in each of their growers. He also revealed why many growers in the region sell to Nestlé.

If you ask anyone in Mexico who pays the best price for coffee...

Nestlé pays more.

We arrived at El Chaperal, a property managed by Maria de Lourdes Santos Osaya, known as Doña Lulu.

Hi!

How are you?

Doña Lulu is one of the growers in the region with a plantation that hires workers.

How big is it?

60 hectares.

We're basically dedicated to growing the Robusta variety.

During the walk-through, she told us the Ten Commandments she must abide by in order to work with Nestlé.

This is part of what we're doing as social policy. That's why this is posted up. When people arrive and ask for work; I can't. These are the work conditions here.

You could. Who would know?

No, no.

They do it.

I'm sure, but what value would I be giving my product? I know I can sell that product to whomever, including Nestlé or anyone else, but I personally would not like to know that young children are involved in activities that could potentially be dangerous.

How many workers do you have during harvests?

About 60.

A lot.

She introduces us to Iroel.

What do you make for breakfast?

I make them tortillas, coffee and beans for breakfast.

Are there other meals during the day?

Yes, at 2 p.m. we give them lunch: beans with rice.

What about at night?

They get coffee in the afternoon.

The bathrooms have toilets and individual shower stalls.

They're private. They have walls.

Yes. Because when we had women, but no separation, then it was one bathroom for everyone.

This is a room for single men.

How many people sleep here?

Currently no more than six. They use these top bunks for their belongings and sleep down here.

They bring their own mattresses?

They do.

Pillows?

Whatever they need.

Our next appointment is at the plantation of Eduardo Camarena.

-You're the owner?

-Yes, of El Capricho.

-El Capricho?

-Right.

Diaz confesses that this is the model that Nestlé wishes to duplicate throughout Mexico.

If the plantation owners are willing, we can work together to improve conditions and write a good story together.

They're used to living this way. You know what? We gave them beds, but they would get on the floor. They're used to the galleras. We had to tell them, and set up beds.

I'll show you. They're very nice.

-May I?

-Of course.

How many people live here?
Currently it's just two.

All women, there shouldn't be any men. They're separate. These are the rooms for people traveling alone. They have their beds.

You used to have a different system, but you've changed everything, and what did you get?

I'm a better human being. I couldn't have people living that way.

Doña Lulu and Camarena are two of the success stories Nestlé features in their corporate video, "Beyond Coffee." Lulu is also featured on their coffee labels.

At the end of a long day, we reached Chapultepec. Diaz explained to the owner, Mauricio Tomasini, the purpose of our visit.

They came upon, by chance, two young boys carrying large baskets of coffee, waiting to be picked up and taken somewhere. Upon being asked where their coffee was headed, they said they were on their way to Chapultepec.

Let me see it.

-I'm not lying.

-No, no.

I'm not saying that, but show it to me. Because he didn't tell me that, you're saying that now. Never before that there were children working here.

Which is not true. In the video Marcus Stern filmed two months earlier, you can hear it clearly.

He's saying they're from here, right? That they're coming here.

If what we recorded isn't real and is just a lie, then we'll go.

-Let me say something...

-We'll leave today.

The fact of the matter is that, as the owner, he's concerned. He asked me if we agreed to this interview and I said yes, just like we agreed to the previous interviews.

Tomasini finally agreed to speak to me.

I don't know that boy. I'd tell you if I did. No, no! I'm not saying you did it intentionally, someone else set this up. Because this is unfair, it's a setup.

But the camera doesn't lie.

But they're not from Chapultepec.

If we found kids working at Chapultepec, and it's been verified by 4C, who failed here?

I wouldn't ask that. I'd ask: what more do we need to do, if this problem exists?

Even though Tomasini insists he doesn't let children work in his fields, he spoke to Marcus Stern about his dilemma.

A Guatemalan father will say he wants to bring his son to the plantation because that way he'll make more money. If you say no, they leave. If they leave, the coffee falls unpicked, there's no harvest, and all is lost.

On November 10, 2015, several weeks after our first visit, federal and state authorities raided the San Lorenzo plantation, located near Chapultepec. They found over 50 Guatemalan minors and their families harvesting coffee.

We'll help you and pay you for the day.

Under the watchful eye of their rescuers, the tiny hands continued working. After the raid, the plantation was temporarily closed. But authorities concluded the children had not been mistreated and that San Lorenzo had not broken the law.

Yadira de los Santos is the director of International Policy and Immigration for the Tapachula local government, the entity responsible for enforcing migration laws. She acknowledges that there is a serious problem.

We're talking about a problem that didn't just suddenly appear. It has been a problem for a long time.

If you've been aware of this problem for many years, is it getting better?

We're working on it.

But you've been working on it for a long time.

We've been gradually working on it. We've been perfecting the law.

According to her, in November 2015, a commission to eradicate child labor was created.

We are not ignoring a reality. Emilio Diaz says that besides raising awareness among growers, there's little Nestlé can do.

We don't have the authority to penalize anyone.

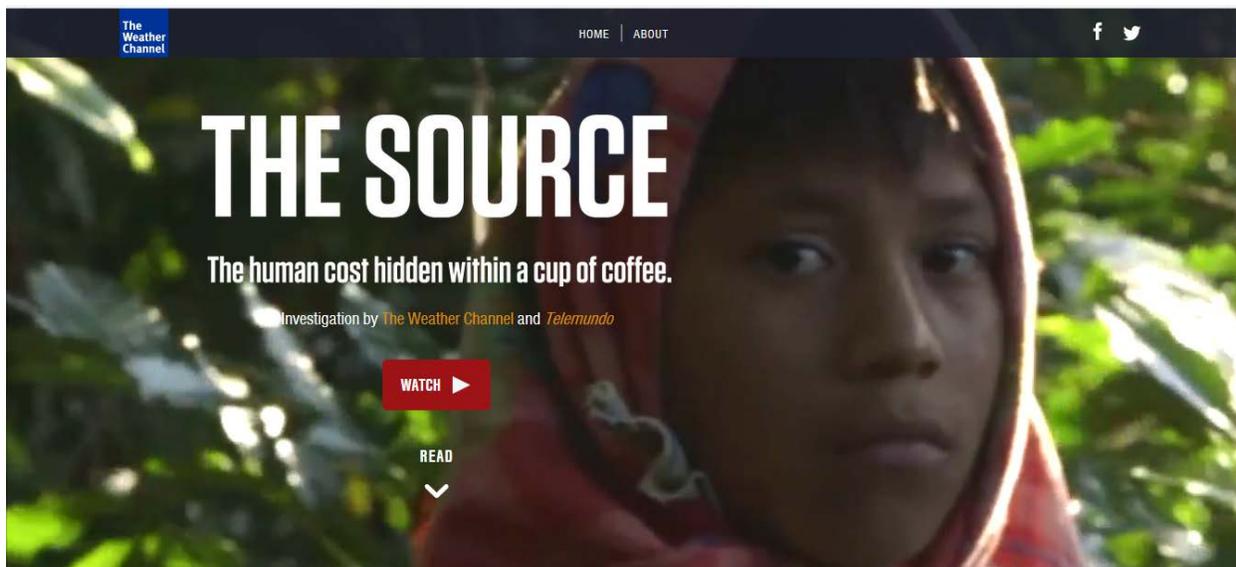
The only sanction they could impose would be to not buy any more coffee from the plantation.

That would be a punishment.

It wouldn't be a punishment, but a business decision.

In mid-April, Carlos Hernandez de la Torre began his annual journey to help migrants in the Mexican fields along with a team of volunteers. He's convinced that the biggest step towards eliminating the problem is simply opening one's eyes.

Sometimes we become blind. If it's something that doesn't bother you, you turn a blind eye. You just shut off the light switch.



<http://thesourcefilm.com/>

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TRANSCRIPT

weather.com

The Weather Channel & Telemundo Present

An Efran Films Production

-OPENING MONTAGE-

The world consumes close to 1.6 billion cups of coffee a day.

More than 60% of Americans drink coffee every day.

Global coffee consumption is increasing.

THE COFFEE BUSINESS IS BOOMING.

Coffee commodity prices...they've soared.

IT'S AN 80 BILLION DOLLAR INDUSTRY.

One of my favorites actually is the Kenyan - wonderful berry citrusy notes. -SLURPS - Mmm. SPITS.

WE KNOW IT'S HARVESTED BY PEOPLE LESS ECONOMICALLY FORTUNATE THAN US.

The cup of coffee – and I've seen it – changes the life of those growers.

BUT WE PAY TOP DOLLAR BECAUSE CELEBRITIES, CERTIFICATIONS AND CORPORATE VIDEOS PROMISE US THAT IT'S "ETHICALLY SOURCED," "SUSTAINABLY GROWN." THAT EVERYONE BENEFITS -- FROM THE AMERICAN CONSUMER BACK TO THE THIRD-WORLD FARMER.

Fair trade is actually about improving lives.

The coffee you drink can help coffee farmers all around the world.

When you drink that cup of coffee, think about the family in the bottom of the cup.

BUT WHAT IF ALL THIS HAPPINESS IS ACTUALLY A CHARADE?

You can help a family keep their kids in school.

WHAT IF IT'S JUST A FICTION DESIGNED TO MAKE US FEEL GOOD AND KEEP BUYING? WHAT IF THE HIDDEN TRUTH BEHIND SOMETHING WE USE EVERYDAY IS SO MUCH DARKER?

THIS IS THE STORY OF WHAT WE FOUND WHEN WE LOOKED PAST ALL THOSE HAPPY PROMISES ON THE PACKAGING -- AND TRACED COFFEE FROM ONE OF THE BIGGEST LABELS...BACK TO THE SOURCE.

THE SOURCE

CHIAPAS, MEXICO. ONE OF THE POOREST PLACES IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE. HALF THE POPULATION DOESN'T HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT. THE AVERAGE YEARLY INCOME IS JUST \$3,600.

I'VE COME HERE WITH MONICA VILLAMIZAR. OUR GOAL IS TO UNDERSTAND THE ROOTS OF ONE OF THE MOST EVERY DAY PRODUCTS IN THE WORLD -- COFFEE.

WHERE DOES IT COME FROM? WHO PICKS THE BEANS? AND SHOULD WE TRUST THOSE LABELS THAT PROMISE OUR COFFEE IS "ORGANICALLY GROWN," "ETHICALLY SOURCED" AND THAT THE WORKERS ARE GETTING A FAIR DEAL.

WE HEAD UP INTO THE MOUNTAINS TO FIND OUT.

CHIAPAS PRODUCES ABOUT HALF OF MEXICO'S TOTAL COFFEE CROP. BRANDS LIKE NESTLE, STARBUCKS AND FOLGERS BUY BEANS HERE.

JUST 30 MINUTES INTO THE HILLS, WE STOP AT ONE OF THE FIRST FARMS WE FIND. IT'S AN ORGANIC PLANTATION.

THE COOK TELLS US THE WORKERS ARE OUT PICKING. THEN HE OFFERS TO SHOW US THE DORMS.

(Monica) This is where they live?

THESE ARE THE BEDS.

(John) How long do they stay here? For months, or weeks or what?

(Farm Cook) They're here until the harvest ends which takes about six weeks.

THIS IS THE KITCHEN.

(verite)

SUDDENLY, MONICA SAYS WE NEED TO COME OUTSIDE.

(Monica) Juanito!

WE'RE TAKING PICTURES AND IT'S MAKING THE MANAGER NERVOUS. HE DEMANDS WE LEAVE.

(Manager) I'm going to notify the authorities of your presence here.

(Juan) Yes. We know, sorry.

(Manager) You know I can do that ...

(Juan) Yes, we know.

(Manager) You come here without permission and take photos.

(Monica) The living conditions are horrendous. The people are sleeping in places that were basically places for animals, for chickens and hens, specifically, I think.

WE DRIVE ON, FURTHER UP THE ROAD THAT CONNECTS A STRING OF PLANTATIONS.

ABOUT A MILE AHEAD, MONICA SEES SOMETHING. THEN WE BOTH SEE THEM. CHILDREN EVERYWHERE.

NAT sequence: Car exit.

WE GO UP THE TRAIL.

IN MEXICO, IT'S AGAINST THE LAW FOR CHILDREN UNDER 15 TO WORK, BUT WE FIND AN ASSEMBLY LINE OF THE UNDER-AGED.

(Monica) Coffee? Yes? And where did you get it from?

(Boys) From up there.

(Monica) You picked it up there? Up there where?

(Monica) I can't lift it. Like, I honestly can't lift it.

(Boys) Up there in the back.

(Monica) All of this you picked between the two of you?

(Monica) How old are you?

(Boy) Fourteen.

(Monica) Fourteen. And you?

(Boy) Twelve.

(Monica) Twelve. And you're brothers?

(Boy) Yes.

(Monica) And who do you give the money to? To your parents?

(Boy) No.

(Monica) You can spend it yourself?

(Boy) My dad already died.

(Monica) Your dad died. You came here alone with your mother?

(Boy) My mom is sick.

[Kids picking coffee b-roll]

(Mom) This is Anna.

(John) Anna? Anna how are you? You get shy Anna?

THIS MOTHER FROM GUATEMALA IS HERE WITH HER EIGHT CHILDREN. SHE EARNS FIVE DOLLARS A DAY.

(John) How long have you been here in the mountains working?

(Mom) Twenty days.

(John) Twenty days. And with that money that you earn here can you survive in Guatemala or it's not enough?

(Mother) Good God, no. It's impossible. It's too little. But we have to keep going, because we have no choice. Some people have money, and some that don't.

(John) So, without offending you, is this a job for poor people?

(Mother) Yes, it is work for the poor. Because there's no money to buy clothes, to eat, to dress the children.

(John) Some people in the United States might say how can a mother put her kids to work? Do you understand what I'm asking?

(Mother) Yes, but they're over there, where there's money to eat whatever you want. In Guatemala there's no food unless you go out to earn money, so that's what we do.

(John) There is no other way?

(Mother) No. There's just no work.

(Monica) How old are you?

(Father) Six.

(Child) Six.

(Monica) Six, my love. And isn't this heavy? It's heavy, no? Yes, it's heavy?

WE SPEND THREE HOURS FILMING ON THE HILLSIDE AND WE SEE ABOUT TWO DOZEN CHILDREN LIFTING LOADS THAT, OVER TIME, COULD CAUSE PERMANENT DAMAGE TO THEIR GROWING SPINES.

(John) Are you going to rest?

--John on the road next to a child lifting a bag.--

(John) Wow! How can you? It's about like 60 pounds, 70 pounds. I can barely carry it.

IS THIS THE EXCEPTION, OR THE RULE?

ARE CHILDREN THE SECRET LABOR FORCE BEHIND BIG-BRAND COFFEE?

WE HEAR ABOUT A MAN NAMED CARLOS HERNANDEZ, A MEXICAN-AMERICAN OPTICIAN WHO TRAVELS THE COUNTRY TO GIVE CARE TO FARMWORKERS.

(Hernandez) The first time that I went down there, it was like being in another planet.

(John) And how many of the farms you visited have children working?

(Hernandez) Out of ten? Nine and a half.

(John) How can there be children working in those kinds of conditions?

(Hernandez) My personal opinion is because the parents need the extra money.

(John) How would you explain to a U.S. mother, who would never think about putting her child to work, who maybe sees something like this? She may think that the mother is responsible.

(Hernandez) I would say the mother is responsible to the necessity of the family which is responsible. To us, education is first. For them, have a better economic situation, I think, is first.

(John) Are you saying they don't have a choice?

(Hernandez) Sometimes they don't have a choice. Most of the campesinos don't have a choice. It just breaks my heart. Simple as that.

(John) We didn't see one child. We saw many children. Five years old, seven years old.

(Jorge) It's prohibited...but tolerated.

JORGE AUSENSIO AGUILAR IS A FORMER PRIEST, WHO IS NOW IN THE COFFEE BUSINESS. WE TURNED TO HIM FOR AN INSIDER'S VIEW.

(John) I'm wondering if you could tell me if you think that that coffee will someday reach somewhere in the United states. Will be bought by an American company.

(Jorge) It's possible. Very possible.

(John) Very possible?

(Jorge) Yes.

(John) Why very?

(Jorge) Because out of every four sacks, three get exported. And the U.S. is our principal market. It's possible that the products of this work could be in the U.S. market.

WILL THE COFFEE WE FILMED END UP IN OUR LOCAL SUPERMARKET? OR MAYBE A FANCY COFFEE SHOP? OUR PRODUCER, PULITZER PRIZE WINNER MARCUS STERN, GOES BACK TO THE PLANTATION WHERE WE SAW THE CHILDREN.

AS WOULD TURN OUT, THIS LITTLE FARM WOULD BE KEY TO UNCOVERING HOW BIG COFFEE WORKS.

(Translator) Buenas tardes!

THE OWNER IS FRIENDLY AND INVITES US IN.

(Marc) Nice to meet you. Nice to meet you.

(Tomasini) You too.

HE PROUDLY EXPLAINS THIS FARM HAS BEEN IN HIS FAMILY SINCE 1917.

(Tomasini) Her daughter married with my grandfather.

HIS GRANDFATHER IMMIGRATED FROM FRANCE, BOUGHT THE LAND, AND STARTED GROWING COFFEE.

EVER SINCE, IT'S BEEN TOUCH AND GO. AND THE LAST FEW YEARS, HE'S BEEN ON THE VERGE OF BANKRUPTCY BECAUSE OF A CROP DISEASE.

WE EXPLAIN THAT WE FILMED CHILDREN PICKING COFFEE UP THE ROAD.

(Tomasini) Yeah, this is a big problem. You know? With the children, with the child here.

THE PRESENCE OF CHILDREN SEEMS TO BE AN ACCEPTED FACT. TOMASINI SAYS PARENTS BRING THEIR KIDS INTO THE FIELDS -- AND THERE'S NOT MUCH HE CAN DO ABOUT IT.

(Tomasini) The Guatemalan father says: I want to bring my son to the plantation, because I want to pick more coffee to make more money. So if you tell him no, they leave the farm. If they leave the farm, the coffee doesn't get picked, there's no harvest, and everything is lost.

(Tomasini) In Spanish you say, mecapal. It's a band who we put here and for to bring the coffee, the sack, to carry. If they are minors, they don't carry. The 12 or 11 year olds don't carry.

(Shots of kids lifting heavy bags on their backs)

BUT THAT CONTRADICTS WHAT WE'VE SEEN. SO WE SHOW TOMASINI.

(Tomasini) No no. Not me. Yeah, but I don't know this kid. I would tell you. I swear to God, I don't know who that kid is. No, no. Never. I have never had minors. Those kids are around six years old? But, I don't have kids who are six years old.

(John) I took those pictures here.

(Tomasini) Yes, but I don't have them, Juan Carlos. No, I'm telling you I don't have kids.

IN HIS DEFENSE, TOMASINI SAYS HE SELLS SUPPLIES TO A BRAND THAT PRIDES ITSELF ON ITS ETHICAL SUPPLY CHAIN.

(Nats)

(Tomasini) Here we have the certificates.

(Nats)

THE \$235 BILLION NESTLE CORPORATION.

(Emilio) This is something - I would say new for me. I have not seen this over there.

(Lorena) It's important for us to understand if you have really seen something which is against our values, it's important for us to know. We are super clear about the fact that one child laborer is one too many. So it's in our interest to investigate and it's something that we will do.

WE SPEND WEEKS ASKING NESTLE HOW IT SOURCES ITS COFFEE. NESTLE INSISTS IT DOESN'T KNOWINGLY BUY BEAN PICKED BY KIDS.

(Emilio) We don't allow farmers to have these kinds of practices, but of course we cannot control everybody. We have around 20,000 farmers already verified as 4C farmers.

20,000 FARMERS VERIFIED AS "4C," INCLUDING TOMASINI. BUT WHAT DOES THAT ACTUALLY MEAN?

TURNS OUT, 4C, AN OUTFIT YOU'VE PROBABLY NEVER HEARD OF, IS ONE OF THE LARGEST COFFEE VERIFICATION ORGANIZATIONS IN THE WORLD. IT'S SORT OF A WATCHDOG FOR HIRE. NESTLE DOESN'T CHECK THE FARMS FOR CHILD WORKERS ITSELF. IT PAYS 4C TO DO IT.

IN FACT, ABOUT 30 BIG COMPANIES OUTSOURCE VERIFICATION TO 4C.

HOW COULD WHAT WE SAW BE 4C COMPLIANT?

(Veronica) Hello.

(Marcus) Hey Veronica, How are you? It's Marc Stern.

(Veronica) I'm fine. Yeah, hello. Finally, now we talk.

(Marcus) Yeah. Can you give me some sense of how many people are involved in the verification process?

(Veronica) Last year it was around 450,000 farmers.

450,000 FARMERS. THAT'S A CITY THE SIZE OF ATLANTA. BUT, THE 4C SPOKESWOMAN EXPLAINS, VERIFIED DOESN'T MEAN THAT ANYONE FROM 4C HAS ACTUALLY VISITED THE FARM.

(Veronica) We're a baseline standard. It's an entry-level. It's not as advanced as the requirement of the other certification. Of course they don't visit every single farmer. // There is a sample.

(Marcus) Is it called the square root rule?

(Veronica) Exactly.

THE SQUARE ROOT RULE -- WE HEAR ABOUT IT AGAIN AND AGAIN. IT MEANS THAT, AS THE MINIMUM STANDARD, INSPECTORS VISIT ONLY THE SQUARE ROOT OF THE NUMBER OF FARMS IN A GIVEN GROUP

IN TOMASINI'S GROUP, THERE ARE 5,144 FARMS. THE SQUARE ROOT IS 71.72.

BUT BECAUSE 4C, IS JUST AN "ENTRY LEVEL" STANDARD, THE REQUIREMENT IS TO INSPECT ONLY HALF THAT SQUARE ROOT -- AND JUST ONCE EVERY THREE YEARS.

THAT MEANS THAT IN TOMASINI'S GROUP, JUST 36 OF OVER 5,000 FARMS WOULD NEED TO BE PHYSICALLY INSPECTED EVERY THREE YEARS -- ABOUT ONE HALF OF 1 PERCENT.

(Marcus) I guess I was surprised and it's just because it seems like // many farms would go un-inspected ever. // I shouldn't be concerned or surprised by that?

(Veronica) No, you shouldn't actually. And I know it sounds strange. // But, it's the same with all the products // I mean it would be absolutely impossible to imagine an audit where every single farmer who is selling his coffee through the co-operative gets inspected, it's just not economically viable. It's not possible.

(Marcus) So really, the vast, vast, vast, vast majority would go uninspected.

(Veronica) That's right.

THE TRUTH IS THE SQUARE ROOT RULE IS THE STANDARD IN THE INSPECTION COMMUNITY. ALMOST ALL BIG BRANDS USE IT. FAIR TRADE, RAINFOREST ALLIANCE, STARBUCKS, FOLGERS, DUNKIN DONUTS -- THEY ALL RELY ON THE SQUARE ROOT RULE.

WHICH MEANS, THE CHANCES THAT AN ACTUAL INSPECTOR VERIFIED COFFEE YOU'RE BUYING IS NEXT TO ZERO.

(Jorge Aguilar) The certification companies also don't have a permanent presence during the harvest, so in the absence of inspection, how can the seal guarantee that children are not working, because it's a reality. What's worse, is that there are regulations and the consumer pays more for them to be effective.

(John) It is possible that these companies are in fact buying coffee picked by children?

(Jorge) All of them are potentially acquiring products with child labor.

(John) Good morning. John Carlos Frey. Mucho gusto. Como estan?

WE ASK NESTLE TO EXPLAIN WHAT WE'VE SEEN AND THE COMPANY SENDS A TEAM TO MEET US IN CHIAPAS. AT FIRST NESTLE'S REPRESENTATIVES IMPLY CHILDREN WORKING IS A PART OF THE CULTURE.

(Alberto Gonzales) It's very similar to my experience. The coffee fields became our playgrounds. When you live in the countryside you're not like riding bikes on the street you're just playing with your cousins along the coffee trees and sometimes you guys like help the grownups to do some of the work. It's like part of the formation as a child.

THEN, WE SHOW THEM THE FOOTAGE.

(John) What do you think?

(Emilio) They're carrying those bags?

(John) Yes. They put it on their backs and go.

(Emilio) It's something that should not be happening. But it's something also that we can talk to the farm owner about to understand the conditions they have because they have children working...if they have children working.

RETURN TO TOMASINI FARM

(Tomasini) Sit, sit please.

(John) What we recorded here last October, I was here. There were more than two kids. There were more than two kids. Dozens of kids.

(Tomasini) Dozens?!

(John) Dozens. With families. Let me finish please. We talked with the workers and they told us they were on the Chapultepec farm.

(Tomasini) I don't have dozens of kids working on my farm. I've never had them. Never. Not even during seasonal activities like pruning and cutting. I don't have them.

(Tomasini) I told Juan Carlos. I'm just asking for one thing. Five year olds? No, no. I'm not a slave driver. That ended years ago. I don't know if maybe in Africa but not here. No, five years old is slavery.

JOHN AND EMILIO RIDING IN VAN

(John) You will make sure that this doesn't happen again?

(Emilio) We will do our best to ensure that it will not happen again.

(John) That sounds like it's going to happen again.

(Emilio) But because as I told you I cannot ensure that we will solve the problem. It's not only in my hands to solve it. I wish. We would love to be able to do it but this is a very complex situation. So we will do our best as we are doing now to contribute and to improve the coffee farming conditions.

JOHN BACK IN THE U.S.

AFTER OUR VISITS TO THE COFFEE FARMS, WE CALLED SEVERAL OF THE MAJOR COFFEE COMPANIES -- STARBUCKS, MAXWELL HOUSE, SMUCKERS, DUNKIN' DONUTS -- TO ASK ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF CHILD LABOR IN THEIR SUPPLY CHAIN.

BUT THE COFFEE COMPANIES WERE RELUCTANT TO TALK.

A FEW WEEKS AFTER THAT -- WE SAW THIS ON THE NEWS.

-RAID FOOTAGE-

-VOICE OF MEXICAN NEWS REPORTER-

A MASSIVE RAID JUST UP THE ROAD FROM TOMASINI'S FARM.

50 CHILDREN FOUND WORKING.

IN THE MONTHS TO COME, WE'D LEARN THAT THERE WAS NO FINE, NO PRICE TO PAY FOR TOMASINI OR THAT FARM THAT WAS RAIDED.

THE PRIEST HAD TOLD US, IT'S PROHIBITED BUT IT'S TOLERATED AND HE WAS RIGHT. EVERYONE IN THE COFFEE BELT IN CHIAPAS KNOWS THIS IS HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS. THAT'S THE SECRET.

THE LABOR LAWS. THE CERTIFICATIONS. THE FEEL-GOOD CAMPAIGNS. THEIR WINDOW DRESSING MEANT TO MAKE US FEEL GOOD ABOUT WHAT WE'RE BUYING.

THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO DON'T UNDERSTAND THIS REALITY ARE US CONSUMERS. WE LOOK AT ALL CERTIFICATIONS AND WE BELIEVE. WE TRUST THE PROMISES MADE WITH GOOD DESIGN AND FANCY MARKETING.

AND -- CONTENT THAT WE'RE CONSUMING ETHICALLY -- WE SIT BACK AND SIP THAT THREE-DOLLAR CUP OF COFFEE.

SINCE WE STARTED FILMING, NESTLE'S VERIFICATION COMPANY 4C HAS MERGED AND CHANGED IT NAME. IT'S NOW CALLED "THE GLOBAL COFFEE PLATFORM."

BUT NESTLE, ALONG WITH MOST OF THE MAJOR COFFEE BRANDS, ARE STILL USING THE SQUARE ROOT RULE. SO THE CHANCE THAT A HUMAN BEING WILL ACTUALLY INSPECT A SO-CALLED VERIFIED FARM IS VERY, VERY LOW.

AFTER ALL WE'D SEEN, WE WONDERED IF CHILDREN WORKING WILL EVER CHANGE. AND EVEN IF IT WON'T, IS THERE A BETTER WAY? BETTER LIVING CONDITIONS? OR A SCHOOL HOUSE TO HELP BREAK THE CYCLE?

OR MAYBE INSPECTIONS FOR MORE THAN A PERCENT OR TWO OF THE FARMS.

AND, EVEN IF THE CHILDREN ARE DESTINED TO KEEP WORKING IN THE FIELDS, SHOULDN'T WE JUST BE HONEST ABOUT IT?



PRODUCTION CREDITS

Senior Executive Producers: Neil Katz, Sylvia Rosabal

Director, Specials: Desiree Colomina

Executive Producers: Marisa Venegas, Gregory Gilderman, Neil Katz, Shawn Efran

Reporters: Monica Villamizar, John Carlos Frey, Marcus Stern, Cristina Londoño

Producers: Marisa Venegas, Solly Granatstein, Greg Gilderman, Shawn Efran, Katie Wiggin, Brandon Kieffer, Manuel Iglesias, Juliana Ucros, Lucian Read, Juanita Ceballos, Pamela Ralat, Mirta Ojito, Keith Epstein, Jaime Ascencio

Field Producers/Videographers: Mauricio Gutiérrez, Carlos Calvo, Víctor M. Rivera Gálvez, Jose Cosme, Daniel Guzmán, Jorge Patiño

Field Producer/Fixer: Juan de Dios Garcia Davish,

Field Producer/Translator: Gabriela Peña Mendoza,

Digital Promotion: Alix Aspe

ABOUT THE EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Marisa Venegas, Former Executive Producer, Investigations & Long-Form Programming Telemundo Television Network



Marisa Venegas is an Emmy-nominated producer, writer, anthropologist and environmental journalist, who has worked in broadcast media for the past 24 years. She was Executive Producer for Investigations & Long-Form Programming at Telemundo Network, where she was responsible for overseeing the network's investigative content as well as generating news specials.

Previous to her time at Telemundo, she was an Independent Producer and Media Consultant at MavensWork Media, where she Executive Produced highly successful prime-time specials at Telemundo Network, as well as a 12 episode newsmagazine pilot for Estrella Network, En La Mira with Enrique Gratas, where she won a Golden Mike Award for Outstanding Medical Coverage. Until 2011, Marisa was Executive Producer of Univision Network's award-winning, prime-time newsmagazine, Aqui y Ahora (Here and Now), where she oversaw the show's growth into one of the highest rated programs at Univision, as well as its diversification into new media platforms. Prior to that, she was a producer at CBS News in New York, where she supervised the science and medical unit of the CBS Evening News with Dan Rather, and also worked as medical producer on the prime-time newsmagazine, Eye to Eye with Connie Chung. She was recruited to CBS from NBC News, where she leveraged her considerable academic credentials as a researcher for the network's chief science and medical correspondent.

Prior to her broadcast career, Ms. Venegas was a staff writer for Medical Tribune, as well as a contributor of science stories to the New York Times. She also worked in the epidemiology departments at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center and the American Health Foundation. She has a B.A. in Anthropology, with a specialization in Medical Anthropology, from Barnard College and a Master's degree in Science and Environmental Reporting from New York University. She is a member of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists.

Greg Gilderman, Senior Executive Producer
The Weather Company, weather.com



Greg Gilderman is an award-winning producer and reporter. In 2008 he was part of the editorial start-up team that launched The Daily Beast; currently he is executive producer of digital video at Weather.com. Recent projects include The Real Death Valley, a look at the mysterious deaths of migrants in south Texas; America Burning, an investigation into the country's epidemic of wildfires; and Down and Out in Anchorage, Alaska, a look at youth homelessness in America's coldest city.

His reporting interests range from environmental science to crime and public health policy. He has reported on Russia's AIDS epidemic, online prostitution, heroin trafficking, and how changes in policing affect crime rates. He recently was invited by Johns Hopkins University to speak about ways scholars can reach general audiences through reporting and writing.

He is a 2007 graduate of the Journalism School at Columbia University. While a student, he was named a finalist for the Livingston Award, a national prize that recognizes journalists under 35. His master's project was the November 2006 cover story of Philadelphia Magazine, an issue nominated for a National Magazine Award. In 2013, he was a four-time Webby Award nominee, and in 2014 he was the recipient of four Editor & Publisher Eppy Awards.

Neil Katz, Senior Vice President and Editor-In-Chief
The Weather Company, weather.com



Mr. Neil Katz has been Vice President and Editor-In-Chief of The Weather Channel Digital Properties at The Weather Channel Interactive, Inc. since November 8, 2012. Mr. Katz owns editorial direction of the properties overseeing digital video content, news, lifestyle and sponsored advertising content, supervising all content staff as well as content acquisition and analytics.

He joined TWC from The Huffington Post, where he served as Executive News Editor he was a part of the senior team that oversees editorial for The Huffington Post. He led the AOL.com editorial team and oversaw The Huffington Post business, tech and crime verticals and the production of several new video series.

Previously, he spent several years at CBSnews.com as an Executive Editor. He was the founding editor of the CBS News Crimesider site. In addition, he served as a Field Producer for "48 Hours" and a freelance video journalist for The New York Times, PBS, and others. In addition, he founded Merging Media, a digital design firm that produced sites for Nickelodeon, Hasbro, NYU, and others.

Prior to his journalism career, he served as an Interactive Media Art Director, Producer and Entrepreneur. He has art directed online campaigns for clients including Intel, Cuervo, Johnson & Johnson and the American Lung Association. He holds a bachelor's degree in interactive media from New York University and a master's degree in Journalism from Columbia University.

Shawn Efran, Executive Producer
Efran Films



Shawn Efran is the founder of Efran Films. He is an award-winning producer and director. Before starting Efran Films, Shawn was a staff producer/writer at CBS's 60 Minutes, where he covered stories ranging from the war in Iraq to a woman who swam to Antarctica wearing just a bathing suit. His first job was as a cameraman for a televangelist. When he's not creating films, Shawn enjoys training jiu-jitsu, running, and stuffing his face at various Manhattan eateries. Shawn is the winner of a Peabody, two Emmys, two Society of Professional Journalist Awards, the Overseas Press Club Award, an OPC citation, and is a five-time Webby honoree.