

Eulogy by Mayra Santiago, Francisco Ortiz's wife, from Mexico

Francisco was a great person. We were together for 13 years. We met when I was working as a babysitter for a family in Mexico City. Francisco came to work in their grocery store. He was 18 and I was 17. Two years after we decided to live together and one year later Alejandro, our son was born. In the short time Francisco and Alejandro were physically together he loved and enjoyed his son a lot. Francisco left for the US when his "chaparro (little short one), like Francisco used to call him, was 3 years old. It was in 2004.

He went to work to the US to look for a better quality of life for his family. I was not in agreement but he had already decided. When he left he was in a lot of debt and he told me that the first year was going to be only to pay all the expenses. His priority was for us to have a piece of land so that we didn't have to rent anymore. He spent the next 9 years working in the same dairy farm in NY.

A few months before his death, he talked to me about his plans to finally return. He said "The day I arrive I am going to see my chaparro so big. It is hard to find the words now because it hurts so much in my soul that he never returned as we had planned.

He used to talk about a life, to recover the time he had lost with his son to do things, like take him to school. I also remember him telling me " I am very tired of working, I do not want to work like this any more". "Now that I am going to go back I am going to take care of my son and I am going to dedicate all my time to him."

A year ago when his body returned home, his parents, his friends, lots of people received him. We had a funeral for 9 days. People from all over came, all of his friends came. Even the people from Mexico City for whom he have worked many years ago send their condolences. They appreciated him because he was very dedicated to his job. I feel bad about the fact that the employers from the ranch where he worked in NY never even give us a call. Francisco worked for them 9 years. I have a lot of questions and at least they could have talked to me.

Francisco used to tell me some times about the details of his job. He said that they themselves would give maintenance to the machines. He used to say " I am going to check a machine to see if it's failing." I think he didn't have the capacity to fix machines because he was not trained to do that. I think the responsibility to keep the machines working in good condition was of the employers, to contract with someone who knew about fixing machinery. In fact the machine that killed Francisco had been failing for some time.

When Francisco died, I felt as if the whole world was coming down on me, but I thought about our son and that I needed to keep going on for him. Now I work a lot to give him a good education. I want Alejandro to continue his education but sometimes it is very difficult because what I make is not enough and to this day we have not received any worker compensation related to the accident. It has been one year since he died.

Life for our son has become also very difficult since Francisco's death. Alejandro cries and says how he would have preferred to have his father return than a house or anything. It is so much for

us because before at least I used to spend a lot of time with him. Now that is very difficult and he is very upset about it. And I tell him how do we do this? I have to work, I need to get the things you need. And it is very difficult .

We miss Francisco every day and although he didn't return how we wanted, he is here with us now. We buried him in a cemetery in the town where he wanted to live, Tlapacoyan, Veracruz.

I hope that many of the migrant workers there return safely with their families. Demand a better quality of work, because your work benefits the owners of the farm and all you have is your life.

Mayra Santiago