

## A Jamaican H2A Story and How it Worked for Him

Dig through the hype.

Through the agendas.

Through the political intrigue.

And you find the story. In this case; a good story—as many of them are regarding the federal H-2A program.

It is not that hard. I find them while cruising the Internet all the time.

This one is from Vermont; the *Brattleboro Reformer* reporter Robert Plain did the story. It could be from California or Florida, but the media types usually are very assiduous in blocking them out of the view of the public.

Here are the words—only a few necessary—to give you the gist of the matter; a farmer and a laborer, both content and working. Without the outside interference of judges, lawyers, unions or advocacy groups. It is a simple story. Each knows and appreciates the other.

It is simple, yes...and I must say, poignant. Here goes...sit back and read just a few lines about how the H-2A program and the participants in it *should* work:

"PUTNEY -- It's not only people from Connecticut and New Jersey who spend their summers in southern Vermont.

"Every year many of the local orchards, berry farms and bigger vegetable operations bring in seasonal workers from Jamaica (not the one in Vermont) to help get their crops from the fields to market.

... "Dalbert Harvey, who has been working for the orchard in Putney for the last 17 years, said many Jamaicans would love to have the opportunity to work in the United States for half of the year, even though it means being away from friends and family back home.

"In Vermont, Harvey said he earns \$9.50 an hour. If he were to do similar work in Jamaica, he would earn about \$2 in American currency per hour.

"People in Jamaica think we're lucky to be able to come here," he said.

... "The program Harvey, Vernon, their co-workers and most of the other Jamaican farm laborers are employed through is called the H2-A visa program. It allows residents of other countries to come to the United States temporarily to do agricultural work. This year farmers in southern Vermont have applied for 86 H2-A visas with the Department of Labor.

"While it works well for Harvey and his fellow countrymen, it also works well for the farmers here in Vermont.

"If they told me tomorrow there was going to be no more H2-A program," said Doug Harlow, of Harlow's Sugarhouse on Route 5 in Putney, "I'd go to my guys and try and get them green cards so they could still work here."

"Harlow's Sugarhouse employs three Jamaicans through the H2-A program, and like at Green Mountain Orchards, they have had the same core group for much longer than a decade.

"It works out great for us," said Harlow. "Being a fruit farm we're seasonal. Local people are usually looking for full-time employment. It's hard to find good help when you have to lay people off in the winter."<sup>1</sup>

Good reasons to hire H-2A workers—all good reasons. So do not let the hype, the personal agendas or political intrigue convict you...let the real stories of the farmers and workers do it. H-2A...it really works!

<sup>1</sup> Robert Plain, "*Farm away from home*," Thursday, August 21, 2008. Website at: [http://www.reformer.com/ci\\_10263297](http://www.reformer.com/ci_10263297). (accessed 8-1-08)