

BANANAS!* **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

My dream as a filmmaker is to create a piece of work that can travel into the hearts and minds of the audience. For me, it is what is between the lines that matters the most in telling the story. Through my film, BANANAS!*, I am hopeful that viewers will see the lives of the workers who are at risk: the people who are paying the price of hundred years of banana history. These are the workers, the families and the communities who are suffering from poverty and from the disaster of the chemicals left on their soil and floating in their water.

I also want to tell the human story – one that moves the audience with a strong narrative arc. As a filmmaker, I believe in complexity and in characters that make you feel something or sometimes just make you wonder.

Juan Dominguez, the attorney for the banana workers, is a great character. He has much at stake to win or to lose. He is also bridging the locations of the story from the poverty laden banana plantation communities in Chinandega, Nicaragua to the wealthy and corporate Los Angeles, California in the United States.

BANANAS!* follows a historic first court case in Los Angeles Superior Court, and ends with a verdict from the jury. That verdict, however, is still under appeal.

In April 2009, Judge Chaney - who presided over the plantation worker's case - decided to kick out those cases represented by Juan Dominguez. This happened after the film was finished. Because of this new development, we decided to make a change with updated title cards at the film's end reflecting Judge Chaney's rulings. So far, Juan Dominguez has not been formally charged with anything. So basically, nothing has changed and everything remains status quo.

On May 8, 2009, Dole Foods wrote their first "cease and desist" letter to me, my producer, our production company and to the Los Angeles Film Festival. Suddenly, we the filmmakers became a part of our own film. We were transformed into the role of David – the underdog battling the corporate Goliath – Dole Foods. This legal battle continued for more than five months.

Dole Foods filed a defamation lawsuit against us on July 8, 2009. We were forced to expend a painfully large amount of money and time to defend ourselves from these wrongful accusations. We continued in our fight against Dole and to gather support from around the globe and in our home country of Sweden. Then on October 15, 2009, we prevailed, as Dole Foods withdrew this unjustified lawsuit. And now, this film can continue to be seen by all without the threat of legal action looming over it.

I am pleased that we can share BANANAS!* with you.

Fredrik Gertten, October 2009
Director – BANANAS!*