



## The union team in the workplace

**T**here is a new Postal Service DVD out now. It proudly promotes dignity and respect in the workplace—certainly a laudable goal. One message that is seen throughout is that whenever you feel harassed by a co-worker or manager, you should go to a manager for resolution.

In Scene One, letter carrier Carlos is visibly upset about certain workroom floor situations. His supervisor comes by and asks him how he'll be that day. Carlos tells her that he'll need two hours of overtime on his route. His supervisor tells him that she'll get a part-time flexible letter carrier to take one hour but he'll have to carry the rest of the route in eight hours. Carlos says, "I've been doing this job for 26 years; I think I know this route better than you do." "Sorry, Carlos. No overtime," his supervisor says as she walks away. Notice there is no request for or providing of PS Form 3996 in this scene.

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The letter carrier at the next case begins to bug Carlos by mimicking the supervisor repeatedly, by saying, "Sorry, Carlos. No overtime." Carlos gets mad, complains to the supervisor about being harassed by the other carrier, and explains to the camera how he is glad he reported him to his supervisor, how the supervisor took care of it and how happy he was that the other carrier apologized. Not one word about how the supervisor questioned Carlos' integrity by not authorizing the requested overtime or how that could have been the real source of his frustration. Real world? You be the judge.

Now consider the same dialogue taking place between Carlos and the supervisor somewhere other than in "Postal DVD Fantasyland." Carlos asks for two hours of help or overtime by submitting a PS Form 3996. The supervisor only grants one hour of help and tells him no overtime. Carlos asks the supervisor what she wants him to do with the hour of mail that he cannot deliver in under-time, immediately requests to see his shop steward, and ultimately has at least two grievances filed on his behalf. The letter carrier at the next case knows his union means business, does not even think of harassing Carlos, and ultimately, this type of situation is resolved by the establishment of sound parameters of conduct in like situations by the local NALC branch and the installation head, or more grievances get filed.

In that second example, that office was probably not always like that. The office was more like the first example: managers picking on the carriers they thought they could

intimidate, no enforcement of the contract, and managers doing whatever it took to get carriers to run routes, skip breaks and lunches in order to meet the goals falsely predicted by DOIS.

The branch leadership realized that they needed to unite the letter carriers, establish contract enforcement, and strate-

gize how they could get everyone on the workroom floor to support the shop stewards, not for the leadership's benefit, but for the benefit of all letter carriers. They set up numerous social get-togethers for letter carriers and their families and managed to educate their members at those functions as to how much more of a positive work environment there would be if they all supported the branch leadership's attempts to enforce the contract and supported each other. It took a while, but their success made their efforts worthwhile. It then became apparent to them that a true union relies on the solidarity of the members as much as on the leadership of the officers and stewards. ✉