

# NO SYMPATHY FOR DEVAL... THE Killer Coke COUNSEL

## Letter to Equal Justice Works Board Members

Oct. 2, 2003

As you are a board member of Equal Justice Works, I am writing to express concern about your organization's recent decision to award Deval Patrick, General Counsel and Vice President of The Coca-Cola Co., the Equal Justice Works 2003 Scales of Justice Award. While Mr. Patrick certainly has had a distinguished career, his activities in his current position at Coca-Cola nullify any basis for Equal Justice Works honoring him as an "advocate for civil rights, equality, and fairness in the workplace."

Coca-Cola and other multinational companies in Colombia are literally getting away with murder by partnering with Colombia's notorious armed forces and paramilitary troops, including the most brutal organization in Colombia, the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC). The AUC was designated a "terrorist organization" by Secretary of State Colin Powell in September 2001. The paramilitaries are particularly well-known for murdering, abducting and torturing trade union leaders whom they view as being subversives, and other persons believed to be "insurgents." Indeed, Colombia has led the world in the number of murders of trade unionists for the past 10 years with over 1,500 trade unionists murdered.

Coca-Cola bottlers Pan American Beverages (Panamco) and Bebidas y Alimentos are two of the companies that provide support to the AUC. In turn, the AUC murders and tortures trade union leaders seeking to represent workers at these companies. In response, SINALTRAINAL, a Colombian trade union representing workers at Coca-Cola bottlers in Colombia, filed a lawsuit, along with victims of AUC violence, against Panamco, Coca-Cola, and Bebidas y Alimentos, in the Federal District Court for the Southern District of Florida, No. 01-03208-CIV.

There is no dispute that several SINALTRAINAL leaders who represent workers at Coca-Cola's Colombian bottling plants have been murdered by the AUC, and five individuals represented in the lawsuit have been tortured, and/or unlawfully detained. Led by Deval Patrick, the Coca-Cola legal team has reached new lows in the so-called corporate responsibility movement.



**Deval L. Patrick**

Executive Vice President, General Counsel & Corporate Secretary  
The Coca-Cola Co.

2001 Compensation: \$10.7 million

Unable to dispute the facts, Coca-Cola is pursuing a corporate shell game defense. The company claims that the people who were murdered and tortured under the Coca-Cola signs in the Coca-Cola bottling plants that send profits back to Coca-Cola in Atlanta have no recourse against Coca-Cola and should instead subject themselves to further risk of violence by seeking justice in Colombia. Mr. Patrick's team seeks to maintain an incredibly unjust, uncivil and unfair system that allows companies to enjoy the best of both worlds in their overseas operations, by profiting from human rights violations while limiting liability to a local entity that is a mere facilitator for the parent company's operations.

This represents a grave threat to innocent workers worldwide. A man who undermines efforts to protect fundamental human rights does not deserve the honor of receiving the Equal Justice Works 2003 Scales of Justice Award. I urge you to reconsider your decision or to decline to honor Mr. Patrick with your personal presence.

Sincerely,

Terry Collingsworth  
Executive Director  
Int'l Labor Rights Fund

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