

# FROM THE GROUND UP

a publication of STUDENT ACTION WITH FARMWORKERS

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## SAF CELEBRATES TEN YEARS!

### FOUNDING DIRECTOR CAROLYN CORRIE SPEAKS ON SAF'S ORIGINS

*Interview by Connie Gates*

I was an intern the first year the program was run by Duke's Center for Documentary Studies (1990). There were many incarnations of students from Duke University working with farmworkers. At that time, it was called the Center for Documentary Studies' Migrant Children's Education and Documentation Project. It was funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Iris Tillman Hill was involved; Bob Coles was officially the head researcher; the staff person working on it at the Center was Lynn Wareh Fine, and the student coordinator was Luisa Tio. They got started in the fall of 1989 putting the program together and creating the spring house course and summer internships for 1990.

During the summer of 1990, we were planning to work in Migrant Education Programs, but since the summer school didn't start until July we got in touch with Tri-County Community Health Center, Farmworker Legal Services and St. Martin's Migrant Head Start Center to set up placements. I worked at Head Start and Legal Services; I had always been torn between education and law.

After the summer program, I went back to school. Sarah Carroll and I were coordinators for the second summer. While working at the office in the Center, I was filing some stuff related to the migrant project, and saw the [Department of Education] grant application. I started reading through it and realized that there was funding for someone to write a final report and resource manual to help students and administrators from other schools start similar programs with farmworkers. I became very attached to

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### SAF: SOLIDARITY SINCE 1992

For ten years, Student Action with Farmworkers (SAF) has brought students and farmworkers together to learn about each other's lives, share resources and skills, improve conditions for farmworkers and build diverse coalitions working for social change. SAF is the only non-profit organization specifically dedicated to linking young activists with organizations seeking justice for farmworkers.

SAF connects young people with the larger politically active community focused on changing the unjust agricultural system. Through training, internships, and networking opportunities with progressive farmworker organizations, SAF provides thousands of students the opportunity to become a vital part of the farmworker movement.

SAF's goals are to:

- ∞ Provide farmworkers with greater access to resources;
- ∞ Increase interaction, communication, and understanding among people of different backgrounds;
- ∞ Increase the involvement of farmworkers in leadership and decision-making roles within SAF and encourage such involvement within other organizations;
- ∞ Create internships and other projects that are mutually beneficial for students and farmworkers;
- ∞ Provide information on farmworker issues for students, faculty, organizations, and community groups;
- ∞ Provide students from farmworker families with educational and career opportunities;
- ∞ Link student groups working with farmworkers;
- ∞ Encourage student commitment to justice and social action.

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Into the Fields alumni at SAF's ten year anniversary celebration at California State University in Sacramento on November 9, 2002.

**SAF** is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose mission is to bring students and farmworkers together to learn about each other's lives, share resources and skills, improve conditions for farmworkers, and build diverse coalitions working for social change.

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**Action Alerts:**

To receive SAF's weekly email Action Alerts, send an email with the word "subscribe" to <farmworkers-request@duke.edu>

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Melinda Wiggins

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## MEET THE SAF STAFF

SAF's Education Director **Ramiro Arceo** is originally from Colima, Mexico. He moved to the U.S. in September 1990 and worked in the fields with his parents. Ramiro was the first in his family to attend college; he went to Sacramento State University and completed his bachelor's degree from NC Central University in December of 2002. Ramiro was a SAF intern in 1996 and began working with SAF full-time in January 2000. Ramiro is a board officer of NC Lambda Youth Network and the NC Editorial Forum, and a founding member of the Asociación de Mexicanos en Carolina del Norte.

**Esteban Echeverria** is the 2002 SAF Apprentice. He worked with Chatham County Schools as a SAF intern during the summer of 1998. He is originally from Guerrero, Mexico but moved to Eastern North Carolina in the 1980s where he worked in the fields with his family. After Esteban graduated from Appalachian State University in 2001, he worked as a Fellow with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute placed with the National Council of La Raza. Among other things, Esteban coordinates SAF's College Days for migrant youth.

**Laxmi Haynes** is SAF's Sowing Seeds for Change Coordinator. Laxmi graduated from the University of NC-Chapel Hill in 2001. She has been working with SAF since participating as an Into the Fields summer intern in 2001. Laxmi is an environmental justice activist who was involved in numerous student groups at UNC. She currently represents SAF on the Agricultural Resources Center Pesticide Education Project. Laxmi coordinates SAF's national efforts linking students with farmworkers.

SAF Program Director **Libby Manly** grew up in Louisville, Kentucky. She has been working with SAF since 1997, when she graduated from Guilford College with majors in Gender and Religious Studies. Libby coordinates SAF's Into the Fields Internship & Leadership Development Program and regional campus organizing. Libby uses popular education and theater to train college students on farmworker issues and to co-direct SAF's traveling protest theater troupe. Libby works on various fair trade, lgbt, and social justice campaigns and is a sustainer at the Durham Food Co-op.

**Luis Velasco** is SAF's Documentary Coordinator. Luis is the son of farmworkers in CA. He worked with Granville County Migrant Education Program as a SAF intern during the summer of 1999. He began working with SAF as a consultant on our Folklife Documentary Project in 2001 and part-time during January of 2002. Luis is also the Darkroom Coordinator for the Center for Documentary Studies.

**Melinda Wiggins**, Executive Director of SAF, is the granddaughter of sharecroppers who grew up in a rural farming community in the Mississippi Delta. Melinda received a Masters of Theological Studies from Duke Divinity School in 1994. Melinda is a former SAF intern and SAF Program Director. Melinda coordinates SAF's finances, fundraising, and program development. Melinda is the chair of NC Community Shares and co-chair of the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation Advisory Panel. She was a participant in the 1999-2001 William C. Friday Wildacres Initiative Program.



From L to R:  
Laxmi Haynes,  
Luis Velasco,  
Esteban Echeverria,  
Libby Manly,  
Ramiro Arceo,  
Melinda Wiggins  
Photo by Dan  
Patridge, 2002.

## SAF TIMELINE

- |       |  |      |   |
|-------|--|------|---|
| 1970s | Inspired by Dr. Robert Coles, Duke University students documented conditions in migrant labor camps that were used in a U.S. Civil Rights Commission hearing   |      | --SAF received the Fund for Southern Communities' Helen's Fund Award for its work with young people in the South  |
| 1980s | Duke public policy professor Bruce Payne founded the Interns in Conscience project which sent students to Florida during summer breaks to work with farmworkers  | 1999 | --SAF hired Genoveva Marín as the Education Director and Lori Fernald Khamala as the year-long Apprentice<br>--SAF published <i>Farmworker Folklife</i> and <i>Ni de Aquí/Ni de Allá, Not from Here/Not from There</i><br>--SAF Sowing Seeds for Change Symposium was co-sponsored by Frontier College Labourer-Teacher Program in Toronto, Canada  |
| 1990  | The Center for Documentary Studies at Duke developed an internship program focused on migrant children   | 2000 | --SAF hired Ramiro Arceo as the Education Director, Laura Podolsky as the Apprentice, and Public Ally Angeline Echeverria as the Levante Coordinator<br>--SAF created <i>Recollections of Home/Recuerdos de mi Tierra</i> documentary publication and traveling photography exhibit<br>--SAF Sowing Seeds for Change Symposium was co-sponsored by St. Edward's University CAMP in Austin, Texas<br>--SAF was awarded the Helen's Fund Award by the Fund for Southern Communities   |
| 1991  | Duke and University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill students published <i>Migrant Summer</i>   | 2001 | --SAF hired Alison Blaine as the Apprentice and Laxmi Haynes as the Program Assistant<br>--SAF published <i>Cultured Ground/Tierra Aculturada</i><br>--SAF Sowing Seeds for Change Symposium was co-sponsored by Chemeketa Community College CAMP in Salem, Oregon<br>--SAF initiated an Alumni Association to connect with and support Into the Fields alumni  |
| 1992  | Carolyn Corrie incorporated Student Action with Farmworkers as a nonprofit organization  | 2002 | --SAF hired Esteban Echeverria as the Apprentice and promoted Laxmi Haynes to Sowing Seeds for Change Coordinator<br>--SAF held our first Student Activist Leadership Training<br>--The University of Texas Press published <i>The Human Cost of Food: Farmworkers' Lives, Labor, and Advocacy</i> , co-edited by Melinda Wiggins<br>--SAF Into the Fields Program has record number of participants from farmworker families—18 of 29!<br>--SAF was selected to be featured in a pilot digital television production featuring social justice groups<br>--SAF Sowing Seeds for Change Symposium was co-sponsored by Sacramento State CAMP<br>--SAF celebrates ten years as a nonprofit organization supporting improved working and living conditions for farmworkers! |
| 1993  | SAF hired Deborah Rosenstein as Project Coordinator  |      |   |
| 1994  | --SAF hired Vanessa Davis and Melinda Wiggins as summer assistants. At the end of the summer SAF hired Melinda as Program Director and Margaret Horn as Executive Director<br>--SAF Levante Theater Group performed for first time<br>--Interns placed in SC for first time  |      |   |
| 1995  | --SAF hired Chris Sims as the summer assistant<br>--SAF interns Alejandra Okie-Holt and Michael Seguin began fundraising to endow a scholarship for migrant students at NC State University<br>--SAF hired Public Ally Juanita Chenault to create our first national Internship Directory  |      |   |
| 1996  | --SAF promoted Melinda Wiggins to Executive Director, hired Alejandra Okie-Holt as Program Director and Fred Ortmann as the summer assistant<br>--SAF coordinated its first national Sowing Seeds for Change Symposium co-sponsored by Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania<br>--SAF was awarded the first Peace Prize by the NC Peace Corps Association   |      |   |
| 1997  | --SAF hired Ben Edwards as the summer assistant and Libby Manly as Project Levante Coordinator through Public Allies<br>--SAF published <i>Into the Fields: Mobilizing Students to Work with Farmworkers on Campuses and in Communities</i><br>--SAF Sowing Seeds for Change Symposium was co-sponsored by California State University-Fresno CAMP<br>--SAF was honored for its dedication and commitment to the nation's migrant farmworkers by the Migrant Health Branch of the Bureau of Primary Health Care  |      |   |
| 1998  | --SAF promoted Libby Manly to Program Director and hired Kandra Strauss as its first Apprentice<br>--SAF called the first national Farmworker Awareness Week<br>--SAF created <i>Fields without Borders/Campos sin Fronteras</i> documentary publication and traveling photography exhibit<br>--SAF published <i>Living the American Dream: Economic Justice for Farmworkers</i><br>--SAF Sowing Seeds for Change Symposium was co-sponsored by the University of Florida at Gainesville<br>--SAF awarded the first SAF-NCSU Migrant Scholarship to Marc Rodríguez |      |   |



For your free copy of SAF's ten year anniversary booklet chronicling its history, please contact Melinda at 919-660-3616.

