

FROM THE GROUND UP

a publication of *STUDENT ACTION WITH FARMWORKERS*

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Summer 2000

Student Activists Supporting Farmworkers

Farmworker Awareness Week 2000: A Success!

During Farmworker Awareness Week held in April 2000, SAF supported students to coordinate events about farmworkers. Below are some highlights of the events students organized to bring farmworker issues to the forefront on their campuses.

- University of Notre Dame, Indiana & California State University-Fresno: Students showed videos *Legacy of Shame* and *Harvest of Shame*.
- University of South Carolina-Columbia: Students passed out leaflets for the Mt. Olive Pickle Boycott, presented slides of migrant workers, and made table-tents with facts about farmworkers for cafeteria tables.
- University of South Florida-St. Petersburg: Students conducted a "Teach-In" on Globalization.
- University of Florida-Gainesville: Students hosted activists from the Coalition of Immokalee Workers.
- University of South Florida-Tampa: Students sponsored talks by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers.
- University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill: Students organized a rally on campus during the state's annual Pilgrimage for Peace and Justice. Speakers included a Farm Labor Organizing Committee organizer, students and faculty activists.
- Duke University, Durham, NC: Students joined a rally for the Mt. Olive Pickle Boycott at a local grocery store.

Student Solidarity with Farmworkers

Student Action with Farmworkers' mission is to bring students and farmworkers together to learn about each others' lives, share resources and skills, improve conditions for farmworkers, and build diverse coalitions working for social change. SAF knows that young people are tremendous assets and leaders in the struggle for farmworker justice. This newsletter explores some of the ways students across the United States accept the challenge to fight for improved living and working conditions for farmworkers.

Young people have been involved in every social movement in the history of the U.S. College is a time when many students open their eyes to exploitation and begin to realize the injustices that exist between races, classes and genders. Student involvement brings essential energy and enthusiasm to movements, and trains the next generation of activists.

During the Civil Rights Era, students laid the groundwork for the activism that continues supporting social and economic justice for farmworkers:

- Thousands of Latino university students joined Cesar Chavez in his 300 mile march from Delano, California to Sacramento in 1966 to demand justice for farmworkers.
- In Texas, the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) joined in the farmworkers' struggle during a march in Austin in 1966 sponsored by a local chapter of the UFW.
- Cuban Eleazar Risco, a Sacramento State and Stanford student, assisted Cesar Chavez in 1967 organizing the UFW's grape boycott in East Los Angeles.
- In Phoenix, Arizona in 1968, students created the Mexican American Student Organization (MASO), which later became MEChA. They advocated for laundry workers at the university by demanding that the university end the contract with the racist laundry company. Inspired by the farmworker movement, they staged a sit-in at the president's office for two days until the university agreed to cancel the contract.

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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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Students Support Farmworkers Organizing

Marching with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers

Students from different universities in Florida joined in the Coalition of Immokalee Workers' (CIW) 15 day *March for Dignity, Dialogue and a Fair Wage* February 19 through March 4, 2000. The 50 core marchers traveled through several colleges, including New College and Florida Gulf Coast University, where 30-50 students joined in the march to support the CIW. The goals of the march included raising awareness about the situation of farmworkers in Florida and pressuring growers into a dialogue for improved conditions.

Brian Payne, a student at the University of Florida who is writing his thesis on the Coalition of Immokalee Workers as a social movement, met many students interested in justice for farmworkers during the march. These students are organizing a state-wide coalition of students interested in farmworker issues. They plan to start farmworker advocacy groups on their campuses. Brian said the march created an ideal space for meeting others with similar interests.

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Students in Oregon Support PCUN

by Rebecca Saldaña, PCUN student coordinator

Oregon farmworkers have been calling for a consumer boycott of NORPAC products since 1992 because of NORPAC's refusal to negotiate with farmworkers and its blatant violations of workers' rights. Student solidarity was crucial in PCUN's (Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste/Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers' Union) victorious Gardenburger boycott from 1994-1999 and is key to the success of the NORPAC boycott campaign. NORPAC sells over 60% of its processed fruits and vegetables to institutions like your university. However, NORPAC hides much of its products under the packaging of huge food distributors like SYSCO, Food Service of America, ARAMARK, and Nugget. This has made campus campaigns to remove all NORPAC products difficult—until this Spring!

With workers' support, PCUN broke the code! All NORPAC products are tracked by a stamped code that identifies the products as NORPAC whether it is in a Food Service of America Package or a FLAV-R-PAC bag, NORPAC's brand name. As we currently understand the coding system, frozen products that have a code beginning with "5" stamped on the side are NORPAC, and all canned products with a code beginning with "E" stamped on the top are NORPAC. Put the code to the test, and let PCUN know what you discover! Find out where your fruits and vegetables come from! Work with your campus food service director and the food service distributor companies to make your campus NORPAC-free. You, too, can organize a successful boycott campaign on your campus! Contact PCUN for more information.

Student activists from across the U.S. and Canada are standing with the Oregon farmworkers' struggling for justice! From July 8-15, participants in the Summer 2000 Student Mobilization met with workers, accompanied union organizers, attended valuable workshops, networked with one another, and had fun! The week created effective organizers on their campuses for the NORPAC boycott and beyond!

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University-based Farmworker Programs

The University-Migrant Project, U of M

Begun in 1994, the University of Minnesota Migrant Project (U-MP) educates people about migrant farmworkers and encourages civic involvement in migrant related issues.

The U-MP includes the following components:

- **A summer internship program** with a farmworker agency
- **Support for collaborations** with U of M units and farmworker agencies/advocates. For example, in 1996, the U-MP connected U of M School of Dentistry with Migrant Health, Inc. and Migrant Head Start to provide service to more than 330 migrant family members and provide dental students with on the job training and experience.
- **The Farmworker Action Network (FAN)** is comprised of U of M students and community members. FAN promotes education and legislative efforts in support of migrant agricultural workers.
- **The Community Economic Development Program** seeks to enhance farmworkers' economic capacity.
- **The Applied Research Program** locates university departments interested in researching migrant / Latino workers.

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The Migrant Special Education Training Program

An excellent way of serving migrant students is by becoming a teacher who is sensitive to their educational, cultural and social needs. One program that prepares teachers to address the needs of migrant students and their families is the Migrant Special Education Training Program. The MSETP, a federally funded, tuition-free program that provides graduate students with a stipend, is a cooperative effort of the Special Education Program and the Mid-Hudson Migrant Education Center of the State University of New York at New Paltz.

Masters level students enrolled in the MSETP take courses that focus on special, migrant, bilingual, and multicultural education; perform fieldwork experiences tutoring migrant students; work with migrant families in their homes; teach in classrooms and assist staff in community agencies serving migrant families. Graduate students in this program also work with faculty to maintain a Migrant/Special Education web site designed to engage individuals in a discussion of issues related to the education needs of migrant students as well as share information and resources about these issues with professionals and families.

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Cornell Migrant Program, New York

The Cornell Migrant Program has been working for more than 20 years on programs including:

- **Multicultural education** to help agencies that serve migrant workers to better understand other cultures and to improve their services.
- **Health care** to provide migrant farmworkers with better access to health services. Programs include the Child Health Voucher Program and Migrant Nutrition Education.
- **Education** for workers and growers, including immigration assistance, academic and health tracking of children and help for growers to avoid illegal discrimination against immigrants.
- **Housing information** to help growers obtain low-interest loans and other sources of support for upgrading migrant housing.
- **Migrant Agricultural Workers Archives** in the Cornell University Library to store historical and unpublished materials relating to migrants.

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www.news.cornell.edu/general/PRESS92/PR12189202.html



Students and workers in Florida march for the dignity and justice of agricultural laborers with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers.

