

Student Action with Farmworkers

READERS THEATER | Farmworker Voices

Quotes from SAF documentary participants from 1997-2015

Reader 1- Farmworker

“Look, in reality we come here with hope, but, I am realizing that there are a lot of people that run into bad luck, and they return to their countries the same way they arrived in the United States. You come looking to make money. And this is a lie because you come to suffer worse than in your own country... You leave your family behind suffering just to come to make money here in the U.S. and it is not true, how you imagine it will be.”

– Miguel | Burlington, NC 1997

Reader 2 - Farmworker

“I am a guy who has a lot of dreams.
I think that one day the labor of farmworkers will be valued.
I want to buy a house for my mom in Mexico.
I wonder if my mom in Mexico is proud of me.”

– Rigoberto | Boone, NC 2015

Reader 3 - Farmworker

“I felt free... I FEEL free in the fields. I... talked, I yelled loudly, I sang. I enjoyed my work and now, well, it’s the same. I work alone and I’m in the fields and I can do the same thing. I can yell, I can sing, I can do whatever I want. And this... this makes me feel happier. I feel more free, more comfortable working in the fields.”

– Pablo | St. Helena Island, SC 2012

Reader 1- Farmworker

“The difference is that here you work more. Because over there it’s different. Because if you’re doing your own thing, you get tired and you sit down over there in the shade, nobody is pressuring you. You do what you can do and that’s it. If you get tired, you rest a little bit and that’s it. You keep going for a little while. There are schedules for starting and leaving. You’re more pressured to work here. Right now, we start at 7:30 and we leave at six in the evening.”

– “Juan” | Monetta, SC 2012

Reader 2 - Farmworker

“Another thing I did was to pour water over my head, to feel cooler. I didn’t know this was dangerous. I got sick, because I stopped sweating. I started having chills; I felt hopeless. I reached for some low leaves and when I tried to stand back up, I fell in the tobacco. A compañero [colleague] who was walking with me looked at me and said, “Are you sick?” He told the boss that I was sick. The boss said, “Just have him work slowly. If he doesn’t work, I’ll get someone else from Mexico.” So I kept going. My compañero never left me. He walked with me and helped me the whole time.”

– Benjamin | Roxboro, NC 2006

Reader 3 - Youth

“I feel like the machine is going to cut my hand but I just try to do my best. We don’t really get anything to keep us safe, I just have to keep an eye on stuff and be careful.”

– Mayra Cort, SAF Levante youth member 2007-2008

Reader 1- Farmworker

“Something that I’d like to change... the pay, the pay, for sure. You’re like, this is hard and they pay you so little. At 45 cents, you’re like, I have to do like 200 buckets of sweet potato to make 100 dollars. And I imagine that to do 200 buckets a day you have to [laughs] almost go without drinking water... I don’t know why farm work, which is harder, pays so much less.”

– Yonatan | Garland, NC 2015

Reader 2 - Farmworker

“It’s something I think about every day. Is it going to be like this the rest of my life? To be separated... to be far away from my family? Because they grow up and the teenage years come... you see it happening and they become more rebellious as they get older... and you wonder what will become of them.”

– Demetrio | Bunnlevel, NC 2015

Reader 3 - Youth

“Sometimes I get really pissed off. I wish I could just go up to the growers and tell them, “You treat your dogs better than your workers. What are you thinking?” I always think about how I’ll see myself when I’m older, when I’m married, have grandchildren. [When I have] become like my mom; she’s sixty-two. My mom told me about being in the fields [in California] and this guy came and talked to her about the union, the UFW [United Farm Workers]. César Chávez is who explained it to her and took a picture of her, for her union card... I realized that my mom worked with the UFW and helped a lot... and now I am here working with SAF. I’m going to be so proud to say that I was able to do my small part to help farmworkers.”

– Luisa Baeza | SAF Into the Fields intern, 2007