

Comprehensive Immigration Reform - The Time is NOW!



The great majority of farm workers who harvest the food we enjoy daily and who are the backbone of our multi-billion dollar agricultural industry, lack legal status in this country.

In the fields, labor camps, and rural towns across the country, NFWM Staff and Board members have met many of these workers. Some live in crowded, bug infested labor camps, lacking clean sanitary facilities or safe drinking water; some have been cheated out of minimum wage; some have endured sexual harassment, some sprayed with toxic pesticides — all afraid to speak up for fear of firing or deportation.

We have met men and women who came here for work so they could provide food and shelter for their families in their home countries - yet haven't seen those families for years due to the risk of crossing the border. We have met the families of workers who have died in the fields from heat stress, only returning home to be buried.

It is a moral travesty which has reached such crisis proportions, in agricultural labor and beyond, that we now have the best opportunity in years to remedy it. **Senate Bill 744, the Border Security, Economic Opportunity and Immigration Modernization Act**, was introduced on April 17, 2013 by a bi-partisan group of Senators to reform the nation's broken immigration system; **an amended version of the bill was passed in the Senate in June.**

The bill followed a compromise agreement reached by agribusiness representatives and the United Farm Workers (UFW) in consultation with other farm worker organizations. If enacted, it will provide hundreds of thousands of farm workers and their immediate family members the opportunity to achieve permanent residency and eventual citizenship. The farm workers' path to legal status is faster than other immigrants in order to provide immediate stabilization of the farm labor workforce.

The bill would also phase out the current H2-A guest worker program and replace it with a new 3-year visa with opportunities for workers to go back and forth to their home countries, as well as switch employers here in the U.S. Under the new program, guest workers would be provided, for the first time, with the protections of the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act. And, the bill contains critical provisions for all guest workers which address corrupt recruitment issues, providing for increased regulation and oversight of international labor recruiters.

For a more detailed summary of the ag provisions of S. 744, visit: nfwm.org/campaigns/immigration/

NFWM in D.C. with the Farm Workers

Just prior to the bill's introduction, NFWM was proud to work with the United Farm Worker Foundation, assisting with food and housing for over one hundred farm workers and family members who came from across the country to Washington, DC to share their stories with legislators. NFWM Board members in the DC area provided space for meals, meetings and sleeping; volunteers organized by NFWM staff provided over 600

Continued next page



meals for the group. Administration officials from the White House and the US Department of Agriculture welcomed the group and affirmed the importance of this issue. On the concluding day of the DC visit, the farm workers joined tens of thousands of others in a rally on the Capitol lawn.

Immigration reform legislation is a number one priority for the White House, as well as for faith leaders and others across the country. While we recognize that this bill doesn't live up fully to our biblical mandate to "welcome the stranger" or to "love our neighbor as ourselves", it is a critical step to enabling hundreds of thousands to live and work in this country without fear, and to ending the separation of families that plagues our consciences. Attention has now turned to the House of Representatives.

House Bill H.R. 1773: A Disaster for Farm Workers & US Policy

The agricultural labor provisions of the Senate Bill are the result of a compromise between the UFW and all of the nation's major grower associations representing both large and small farms. Both sides made concessions to reach the agreement. However, Rep. Bob Goodlatte, (R, Virginia) the chair of the House Judiciary Committee, chose to ignore the historic agreement. Instead, he introduced the Agricultural Guestworker Act, H.R.1773.

Religious leaders sent a letter to Rep. Goodlatte, at NFWM's request, opposing the bill. Faith communities nationwide are advocating for immigration reform that includes a humane legalization program. Goodlatte's bill provides no pathway to citizenship for farm workers and creates a new agricultural guest worker program only, called the H2C program. Goodlatte's H2C program would eliminate hard fought protections won for farm workers in the years following the infamous Bracero program and add new burdens for the workers who come here to feed us. It makes no provisions for the accompaniment of family members, perpetuating the moral travesty we currently live with of separating families to feed US families. (To read the letter, visit: nfwm.org/campaigns/immigration/)

Unfortunately the bill was passed out of Committee and is now eligible to be brought to a vote on the House Floor. *Its very important that we stop this bill.*

**ACTION: CALL YOUR REPRESENTATIVE
AND ASK THEM TO OPPOSE H.R. 1773 -
THE AGRICULTURAL GUESTWORKER ACT.**

**Capitol Switchboard: (202) 224-3121
To find your Representative: www.house.gov**

Oregon Authorizes "Driver Card"



PCUN President Ramon Ramirez joins Oregon Gov. Kitzhaber for signing of "The Safe Roads Act".

Oregon Farm Worker Ministry members joined PCUN, CAUSA and other Oregon immigrant advocates in celebrating the passage of a law enabling undocumented immigrants and others to access a driver's card. The Safe Roads Act, signed by the Governor in May, will go into effect January 2014.

In addition to undocumented workers who do not have the papers needed to get a driver's license, the law also benefits: seniors born at home who do not have a birth certificate, homeless people who do not have access to their documents but need to be able to drive to re-enter the workforce, and veterans who wish to use their military documents in the application process for a license. See www.causaoregon.org for more on the story.

Elvire Francois of Haiti Tells Her Story

Photo by Emily Helm

Elvire Francois, who works in the citrus groves near Fellsmere, FL, was among those who traveled to Washington, DC with fellow farm workers last April. Elvire has 3 children of her own and took in 4 children of her brother's, who was killed in Haiti's earthquake.



Elvire & YAYA Organizer Nico Gumbs during break in DC trip.

"I wake up at 5AM to be picked up by 6; then we travel to the groves and begin working at 8AM. I have to carry a bag, that can fill to about 40lbs, up a ladder while picking oranges; but since I am smaller and older I cannot fill the bag all the way up. I try to though. For every bin I fill, I make 7 or 8 dollars. The bins fill up anywhere between 80-120 lbs. In a day, I make 40 dollars for about 7 hours of work.

I am working everyday to give the children the best life they can have. It is important for my wages not to be decreased in immigration reform bills. It is hard enough for me to get by now."

Justice for Tobacco Farm Workers - Update from Reynolds Shareholder Meeting

Photo courtesy YAYA



11 YAYAs from Florida traveled to Winston-Salem to support FLOC at the May 9th Reynolds shareholder meeting.

300 farm worker supporters gathered once again in May for the Reynolds Tobacco shareholders meeting in Winston-Salem, NC. With proxies provided by NFWM board members and

others, more than forty Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) supporters attended the meeting to raise various farm worker issues directly with Reynolds leadership. Outside, hundreds, including NFWM YAYA members, picketed in front of the headquarters, waving signs and chanting, before being joined by those inside and then marching through downtown to a rally at Lloyd Presbyterian Church.

This year's meeting was attended by British American Tobacco (BAT) Board Chairman Richard Burrows for the first time in our five year experience there. BAT owns 42% of Reynolds American Inc. stock and nominates five RAI's Directors. Rev. Raymond Singh, United Reform Church and Vice-President of the United Kingdom's

Ecumenical Center for Corporate Responsibility, had attended the BAT Annual Meeting in London several weeks before, at our request, to raise issues on behalf of US tobacco farm workers.

Because of the ongoing pressure FLOC and its supporters have put on the company these past five years, RAI has begun meeting with FLOC, both via a multi-stakeholder group, and directly. But, as FLOC President Baldemar Velasquez says, "This effort is not about meeting to just talk, this campaign will continue until Reynolds comes to an agreement with FLOC guaranteeing the right to freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively for all farm workers in their supply chain."

Photo by Emily Helm



YAYA Berenice Cristiano

And so the campaign continues full steam ahead. Plans are in place for regular monthly and bi-monthly actions at the convenience stores 7-Eleven, Kangaroo and WaWa - all of which are major purchasers of Reynolds products, as well as activities with other RAI stakeholders.

CIW - March for Right, Respect, and Fair Food to Publix ... and on to Wendy's

On March 17th, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers' 200-mile long *March for Right, Respect, and Fair Food* from Ft. Myers to Lakeland, FL came to a rousing conclusion with a jubilant rally outside of the Publix headquarters. More than 40 NFWM-YAYA supporters marched the final 6 miles alongside faith organizations, students, and other allies to call on Publix to sign the Fair Food agreement. Forty-five different churches and community groups fed and housed the marchers along the route. Publix continues to deny its responsibility for the farm workers in their supply chain. Letters to the Company and actions at Publix grocery stores continues.

CIW is stepping up its pressure on Wendy's - the final hold out in the fast food industry refusing to commit to the Fair Food agreement. With its major presence this May at the Wendy's Annual Shareholder meeting to numerous actions at stores around the country and through on-line petitions and call-ins, CIW is calling on Wendy's executives to "do the right thing by farm workers".

For the most up-to-date action alerts, sign up for CIW's listserve at <http://ciw-online.org/>; and visit their new website - really cool!



photos courtesy of YAYA

Farmworker Association of Florida's General Assembly & 30th Anniversary



Photo courtesy of YAYA

The Farmworker Association of Florida (FWAF) held its 6th General Assembly in Apopka in March. Nearly 300 people attended, including Arturo Rodriguez of the United Farm Workers and Maria Rodriguez of the Florida Immigrant Coalition, as well as NFWM staff Bert Perry and Susan Alan and YAYAs Nicole Godreau and Melissa McGuire-Maniau. NFWM's Bert Perry & Virginia Nesmith were presented awards of appreciation.

Delegations from each of FWAF's five regional areas had identified the top three priority issues affecting farm worker communities: the need for immigration reform; health and safety in the workplace/pesticide exposure; and economic issues, including the need for better wages and benefits.

This was also a celebration of FWAF's 30th Anniversary. NFWM and YAYA are proud to be FWAF partners in the positive work in, with, and for farm worker communities they do around Florida.

Thank You Bert Perry

Over the past two years, the NFWM has been reviewing its mission and program goals; through this process, the difficult determination was made to close our DeLand Florida office this past March and end the part-time Florida Organizer position held by Bert Perry.



NFWM thanks Bert for her many years of service to the NFWM and *La Causa*. Bert was a part of many of the major farm worker campaigns and victories, from the UFW's 1984 organizing convention in Lakeland, FL, through FLOC's Campbell Soup and Mt. Olive boycotts, to CIW's historic month-long hunger strike in 1998. Through boycotts, marches, hurricanes, freezes, support committee and church meetings, Bert's passion and tenacity gained her the respect of many in Florida and around the country.

NFWM continues to support our farm worker partners in Florida through our YAYA office in Orlando and our faith partners throughout the state.

Pinellas Support Committee's Annual Strawberry Festival

In April, the Pinellas Support Committee of NFWM held their annual Strawberry Festival. This year's program honored PSC member Dave Haney and former NFWM organizer, Bert Perry. For many years, Dave helped organize the Christmas Toy Drive and community Posadas for farm worker camps in the Tampa area, as well as activities through St. Clement Catholic Church. Bert, the keynote speaker, recounted stories of her 30 plus years organizing in Florida and around the country on behalf of farm worker justice. Bert had worked closely with the PSC from the beginning.

NFWM National Office Moving to North Carolina this Fall

Along with a transition to a new Executive Director, (see pg. 5) NFWM will move its national office to the Triangle area of North Carolina this Fall. The move means we will be doing our national work from a farm worker-rich area; and many of our Member Organizations and other colleagues have offices in Washington, DC and New York City. Along with our commitment to justice for farm workers throughout the US, we will maintain staff and offices in Florida and California. Be on the lookout for the new office address and telephone number.

Betty Wolcott & Bob Edgar—PRESENTE!

Sister of St. Francis of Assisi Betty Wolcott died this past December. I first crossed paths with Betty in 1976 in LA, where she worked in the UFW office for years. She rejoined the farm worker movement in 1988 as NFWM Co-Director serving in the Delano office with her fellow community member and friend Pat Drydyk. Betty lived out her commitment to justice for the poor and care of creation through leadership in a variety of ministries. Betty was a great friend of farm workers and a "creative, inspirational woman who enriched all of our lives," said NFWM supporter Eunice Wagner.

Bob Edgar was also a great friend of farm workers and countless others who tackled issues related to "peace, poverty, and planet Earth," as he framed them when General Secretary of the National Council of Churches. It was in that role that I met him. Bob responded quickly and cheerfully to our varied requests for support: writing to or meeting with company CEOs, supporting boycotts, or assuring that farm workers were on the agenda of NCC assemblies. Bob died suddenly in April at the age of 69, leaving his wife and family and a legacy of service as President of Common Cause, as a 6-term member of Congress and as a leader of churches. "We are the leaders we have been waiting for," Bob once said, as he led the fight for justice with relentless energy and a smile.

-- Virginia Nesmith

NFWM Announces Upcoming Departure of Virginia Nesmith, Executive Director

Photos by Tia Rowan



The National Farm Worker Ministry (NFWM) Board of Directors announces the departure later this summer of our esteemed Executive Director Virginia Nesmith. For 15 years Virginia has been a relentless leader of NFWM, steering its staff, board and supporters through a whirlwind of victories, challenges and change in the pursuit of justice for and

empowerment of farm workers. Virginia led NFWM's support for numerous farm worker organizing campaigns, mobilizing national and international faith leaders, and establishing NFWM's Youth and Young Adult Network (YAYA) to develop a new generation of activists for the work. She helped found and develop the Equitable Food Initiative, a groundbreaking initiative of farm worker groups, NGOs, growers and retailers who are working together to create a fairer and safer food supply.

We thank Virginia for her steadfast commitment to lead people of faith in support of farm worker led efforts to improve their living and working conditions. In a recent communication she said, "Farm workers captured my heart over 35 years ago and fortunately, never let it go. I feel incredibly blessed to have been able to work with all of you who embody a ¡Sí se Puede! attitude and with farm workers who have taught me so much about faith and hope."

Leadership transition can be both a challenging and exciting time for any organization. NFWM, the current staff, board of directors and Virginia are looking forward to all of the possibilities that come with change and will work together to insure that the transition is accomplished as smoothly and effectively as possible. To that end, a search committee and a transition team were appointed by the Board of Directors. The search committee is anticipating having a new Executive Director in place this summer. Virginia and other staff are working closely with the transition team to prepare for the new director.

As always, NFWM remains committed to our mission. We know we can count on your continued support and engagement in our work for farm worker justice during this time of transition.

In Solidarity, Felix Garza, NFWM Board President

Standing in the Gap with Farm Workers

"Today, as we become aware of the suffering experienced by those who harvest our food, we become uncomfortable at our tables. As we get involved with farm workers in their struggle for self-determination and empowerment, we disrupt the careful ways we have organized our lives. As we commit with them to that struggle for the long haul, we awaken a spirit deep within - a spirit of patience, courage, and hope that brings out the best in us, and enables us, together, to stand in the gap."

Excerpted from a speech Virginia gave in 2001 during the Farm Labor Organizing Committee's campaign with the Mt. Olive Pickle Company. The company signed an agreement with FLOC in 2004. To read the entire speech, visit www.nfwm.org, or call 314-726-6470 and request a hard copy mailed to you.

YAYA in Action .. more news than fits in this News & Views

NFWM's Youth & Young Adult Network are getting it done — from Tampa to Lakeland to Fellsmere to all around the state of Florida; from Washington D.C. to North Carolina to New York City — and still they have the energy to host the January NFWM Board meeting in Orlando and raise \$4610 for their joint soccer game fundraiser with the Alliance of Active Women (AMA) !!

We can't fit it all in here, but you can read about YAYA's activities on their website <http://nfwm-yaya.org/>. And remember to sign up for YAYA's listserve and friend them on facebook.



Photos courtesy of YAYA





*Please Join the National Farm Worker Ministry
in honoring Virginia Nesmith, her 15 year tenure
as NFWM's Executive Director
and her lifetime of
Standing in the Gap with farm workers.*

Here are some ways you can honor Virginia.

- ♦ **Join us for the Celebration** on Saturday, August 24, 2013, 6:30 pm at Our Lady of the Snows Shrine, Belleville, IL
- ♦ **Become a "Standing in the Gap" Sponsor**
- ♦ **Give a "Standing in the Gap" gift** to NFWM in honor of Virginia Nesmith.
- ♦ **Add your Tribute, digital or hard-copy-** for Virginia.

*To respond to our "Standing in the Gap" campaign use the RSVP form
in the invitation that came to your mailbox or inbox,
or visit www.nfwm.org - click the "Standing in the Gap with Farm
Workers" block for more information.*

National Farm Worker Ministry (NFWM) is a faith based organization committed to justice for and empowerment of farm workers. NFWM educates, equips and mobilizes member organizations and other faith communities, groups and individuals to support farm worker led efforts to improve their living and working conditions.

*Celebrating 90 years of
solidarity with farm
workers & 40 years as a
national organization.*

JOIN US !

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