

Update from CALIFORNIA ... Holding Companies Accountable

Giumarra / Nature's Partner

Giumarra Vineyards is the largest table grape grower in the US. Employing nearly 3000 farm workers in California, it markets its grapes and numerous other fruits and vegetables from around the world under the name Nature's Partner. But it is no partner to the workers; Giumarra has one of the most egregious histories of abusing farm workers in the state.

In one recent episode, a foreman and company President Sal Giumarra himself threatened the workers that whoever picked the least would be suspended from work. Fearing they would lose their jobs, workers literally raced against one another *in triple digit heat*, many not even stopping to drink water. The foreman sent home the workers who picked the fewest boxes.

Giumarra workers have asked the United Farm Workers (UFW) to help them in getting a union contract so they have protection against such abusive practices.

NFWM-CA staffer Christy Lafferty spent 6 weeks in the San Joaquin Valley helping with the organizing efforts. She told us, "*When you shake a farm worker's hand, you feel the results of years of hard physical labor. And you see in his or her eyes a hope for the day when they will receive the respect and just compensation for the work they do. And that hope remains most when they join together and it grows even stronger when they know that they have allies in the people who buy the fruits and vegetables they pick.*"

Photo by Jocelyn Sherman, UFW



NFWM Director Virginia Nesmith spoke at the July 28 Heat vigil.

Death in the Fields

The lack of adherence to heat regulations at Giumarra has led to farm worker deaths there as well as elsewhere in the state. In fact, since 2004, 15 farm workers have died in California due to heat-related causes.

Although UFW-sponsored heat regulations were passed in California in 2006, they are not

adequately enforced. This past summer, NFWM-CA staff Lucy Boutte & Christy Lafferty organized public vigils on the anniversaries of the 15 deaths, culminating with an interfaith vigil at the LA Wholesale Produce Market on Tuesday, July 28th - the 5-year anniversary of the death of Asuncion Valdivia, who died while picking grapes for Guimarra. Lucy & Christy also led study sessions with church & community groups and organized *Farm Worker in the Pulpit* days to increase public awareness.

Action Called at Kroger stores

The UFW is talking to grocery chains about Giumarra's treatment of its workers. The Kroger chain has been unwilling to listen. In southern California, Kroger owns Ralphs and Food-4-Less and has stores in 31 states. We are calling on individuals and congregations to send letters to their local stores' managers. **To get involved, call Lucy Boutte (951-634-8817), Christy Lafferty (323-893-9605) and visit www.nfwm.org/giumarra/kroger for a store manager letter.**

Update from NORTH CAROLINA ... Calling for Responsibility throughout the Supply Chain

NFWM continues to support the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) in its campaign to get Reynolds American to acknowledge responsibility for the workers who pick its tobacco, and to work with FLOC to improve conditions for the workers. Alexandria Jones, NFWM-NC, is organizing a steady stream of actions calling on the giant cigarette company to talk with farm workers.

The tobacco workers' experience of low pay, lack of breaks and deplorable housing, are similar to most farm workers. But additionally, many tobacco farm workers suffer from Green Tobacco Sickness, caused by absorption of nicotine.

Although Reynolds does not directly hire farm workers, it does determine the price it pays to contract growers, which directly affects the pay and conditions of the workers. Reynolds could not earn its multi-billion dollar profits without the farm workers' labor; it has the responsibility and financial resources to ensure better pay and working conditions for the farm workers in its supply chain. And yet, for more than two years, Reynolds' CEO Susan Ivey has refused to even meet with FLOC.

In the past several months, NFWM staff have organized:

- letters and calls to the company
- leafletting at universities in North Carolina and Florida
- Presentations to churches and college groups
- Vigils outside company headquarters
- An alternative fall break for Warren Wilson College students focusing on farm worker issues

Alexandria and fellow staffer, Rebecca Fontaine, also visited 28 labor camps this season in order to get to know the workers and pair them with area congregations to build community. For some workers in isolated labor camps, they were the first visitors they had seen.

To get involved in North Carolina and with the Reynolds Tobacco campaign, call Alexandria Jones (919-489-4485) and visit www.nfwm.org.



Photo Courtesy of John Hill

NFWM's Board held our semi-annual meeting this August in NC. Board members, staff and local supporters held a service honoring farm workers in a tobacco field north of Winston-Salem. We then traveled into the city and held a vigil at Reynolds' headquarters.

Here is the United Methodist contingent attending the meeting— John Hill, Julie Taylor, Rev. Steve Taylor, Ollie Pleggenkuhle, Christy Lafferty, Alexandria Jones.

Update from NFWM's YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT NETWORK (YAYA)

NFWM has a growing group of Youth and Young Adult (YAYA) activists around the country who support a variety of farm worker campaigns, including immigration reform, changes in pesticide use laws and national farm worker campaigns. Plus, YAYAs in Florida work on state issues, such as our project with women in the nursery industry, and YAYA's Bicycle Project, which has delivered bicycles to more than 150 farm workers needing transportation. And they hold fundraisers so that they can take immersion trips to learn from farm workers first hand.

In the past several months, YAYA members have also participated in the NFWM board meeting in North Carolina and the FLOC Convention in Ohio. In support of tobacco farm workers, they organized actions at the University of Florida in Gainesville and Florida International University in Miami. And YAYAs are very active throughout Florida supporting CIW's Fair Food campaign, most recently at Publix grocery stores.

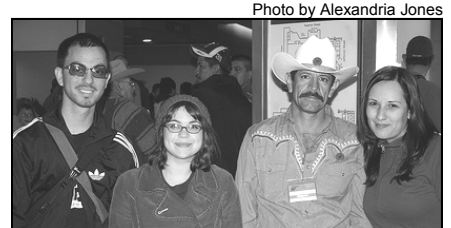


Photo by Alexandria Jones

At the FLOC Convention, Oct. 4, 2009. Left to right: YAYA members Matthew Garcia & Lauren Hill, FLOC member from North Carolina, Victor Vargas, and YAYA Coordinator Lariza Garzon

For more YAYA news & to get involved, visit www.nfwm-yaya.org.

By Matthew Garcia

The best thing about going to Toledo, is that I went from being a supporter and admirer of the Farm Worker and Immigration Reform Movement, to becoming an active participant in the movement. This is a movement that is alive today, a movement that I can dedicate my life to. I feel hope for the future.

Photos courtesy of Juan Barredo



NFWM-FL & YAYA picket outside a Publix store in Orlando, FL on Nov. 1 to support CIW.

Update from FLORIDA ... Justice in the Tomato Fields and Just Soup Suppers

In the past several months, Compass Group, the world's largest food service company, was added to the growing list of companies which have signed agreements with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) to increase wages and improve working conditions for Florida tomato pickers. Also, East Coast Growers, Florida's third largest tomato grower, announced that it would implement CIW's agreements with fast food and food service companies.

The campaign is now focusing on the campus food companies Sodexo and Aramark. And CIW has begun a push with grocery stores. NFWM-FL staff Bert Perry and Lariza Garzon are helping to organize demonstrations at Publix stores around Florida.

CIW is asking each of us to drop off a letter to the store manager when we do our grocery shopping and ask them to share your concerns with the company's headquarters.

To download a letter for your grocery store, visit: www.allianceforfairfood.org/2009supermarket.html

Bert Perry, along with 50 supporters, attended the Pinellas Support Committee's annual Soup Supper to benefit NFWM on November 21st. This was the 25th year that the Pinellas group has held the event

To get involved in Florida work, call Bert Perry or Lariza Garzon at 386-738-2589 and visit www.nfwm.org.

Update from the NORTHWEST ... Protecting Dairy Workers and All Immigrant Farm Workers



Margarito Martinez, one of the fired Ruby Ridge workers, receives a check from Rev. Ed Brandt, OFWM Board Chair. OFWM/NFWM is procuring donations to help the fired workers and their families.

dignity and a voice on the job, safer working conditions, and better wages. But at **Ruby Ridge Dairy** in nearby Washington, workers were fired for protesting abusive

Over the past three years, the Oregon Farm Worker Ministry (OFWM) and NFWM helped farm workers in the northwest win UFW union contracts at two mega-dairies and a feedlot.

Workers at Threemile Canyon Farms, Willow Creek Dairy, and Beef Northwest feedlots have now gained

conditions and seeking union representation. In August, nine workers lost their jobs because they would no longer buckle under to intimidation and abuse by the dairy owner. A tenth worker was fired in November for the same reason. Workers say they regularly receive checks for fewer hours than worked. They complain of long shifts without breaks for lunch, water, or rest and tell us they are yelled at, insulted, and treated with utter disrespect.

In addition to supporting Ruby Ridge workers, OFWM Director John Munson has also been active in organizing visits to area politicians in support of immigration reform, particularly the AgJOBS bill covering farm workers. Most farm workers are immigrants and many are undocumented. Our agricultural industry could not survive without them, yet they work in fear. They deserve better. **To get involved, contact John Munson at 503-805-2343 and visit www.nfwm.org.**

Farm workers are the mostly immigrant men, women and children who work in our fields, orchards, nurseries, dairies and feedlots. Their labor fills our supermarkets, restaurants & dining tables. **The National Farm Worker Ministry** believes that farm workers deserve adequate pay, safe working conditions and the right to address problems without fear of firing. For more than 30 years, NFWM has supported farm workers as they organize for justice, empowerment & equality. We educate consumers and mobilize the public in support of farm worker campaigns.

NFWM has state offices in Florida, North Carolina, Oregon & California.
Visit our web site for state contact information or contact our national office:
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