
BLESSING THE HANDS



A Curriculum on Farm Workers for Faith Communities

Leader's Booklet

Produced by the National Farm Worker Ministry



Blessing the Hands
Revision December 2008

by the
National Farm Worker Ministry
438 N. Skinker Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63130
(314)726-6470 fax: (314) 726-6427
nfwm@nfwm.org

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North Carolina Council of Churches Farm Worker Ministry Committee
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Original Curriculum Editor: Lori Fernald Khamala, National Farm Worker Ministry
Assistance provided by: Susan Alan, Alice Kunka, Denise Long,
Jose Villaseñor, Melinda Wiggins

Original Curriculum Authors: Farm Worker Ministry Curriculum Subcommittee:
Connie Gates, Church Women United
Lori Fernald Khamala, National Farm Worker Ministry
Sister Evelyn Mattern, NC Council of Churches
Ellen Phelps, Episcopal Farm Worker Ministry

2008 Revision Writer & Editor: Susan Alan
Assistance provided by: Dan Parziale, National Farm Worker Ministry

Cover design by Virginia Druhe, National Farm Worker Ministry
Photo front cover by Ken Light

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Dedicated to the memory of Sister Evelyn Mattern, who began the process of creating this curriculum
but never got to see its final version. Her faith and activism have inspired many.



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THE FARM WORKER PRAYER

United Farm Workers Prayer

by César Chávez, co-founder of the UFW (1927-1993)



United Farm Workers Prayer

Show me the suffering of the most miserable, so
I may know my people's plight.

Free me to pray for others, for you are present in
every person.

Help me to take responsibility for my own life, so
that I can be free at last.

Grant me courage to serve others, for in service
there is true life.

Give me honesty and patience, so that I can work
with other workers.

Bring forth song and celebration, so that the
Spirit will be alive among us.

Let the Spirit flourish and grow, so that we will
never tire of the struggle.

Let us remember those who have died for justice,
for they have given us life.

Help us love even those who hate us, so we can
change the world.

Amen.

Oración del Campesino en la Lucha

Enséñame el sufrimiento de los más desafortuna-
dos; así conoceré el dolor de mi pueblo.

Líbrame a orar por los demás; porque estás pre-
sente en cada persona.

Ayúdame a tomar responsabilidad de mi propia
vida; sólo así seré libre al fin.

Concédeme valentía para servir al prójimo; por-
que en la entrega hay vida verdadera.

Concédeme honradez y paciencia; para que yo
pueda trabajar junto con otros trabajadores.

Alúmbranos con el canto y la celebración; para
que levanten el Espíritu entre nosotros.

Que el Espíritu florezca y crezca; para que no nos
cansemos entre la lucha.

Nos acordamos de los que han caído por la justi-
cia; por que a nosotros han entregado la vida.

Ayúdanos a amar aún a los que nos odian; así
podremos cambiar el mundo.

Amen.



**National Farm
Worker Ministry**

... together with farm workers,
harvesting justice.

INTRODUCTION

"We can choose to use our lives for others to bring about a better and more just world for our children. People who make that choice will know hardship and sacrifice. But if you give yourself totally to the non-violent struggle for peace and justice you also find that people give you their hearts and you will never go hungry and never be alone. And in giving of yourself, you will discover a whole new life full of meaning and love."

Cesar Chavez, co-founder, United Farm Workers

Curriculum Objective

Thank you for using *Blessing the Hands*. The curriculum was written to assist congregations and groups in examining and reflecting on farm worker issues. It is our hope that through the use of *Blessing the Hands*, your faith community will lift up farm workers and become a part of the historic farm worker movement to improve the living and working conditions of those who harvest our fruits and vegetables.

In each session and especially in the last one, "Faith in Action," there are listed some ideas of how to stay involved.

Intended Use

The curriculum is intended for use with adult and high school worship groups, Sunday schools or Bible studies. There are nine class sessions, each approximately 45-60 minutes long. We hope that your group will use all of them; however the curriculum is designed so that a group can use Session 1 and as many others as desired. Session 10 is specifically geared for middle school age children.

Curriculum Organization

Each session has a *Leader's Instructions*, a *Participant's Handout*, and a *Learning Activity* page. Additional sections are: *Glossary*, *A Brief History of Farm Worker Organizing*, *Resources to Learn More*, and *Organizations Supporting Farm Workers*. Throughout the curriculum, terms in bold are in the *Glossary*.

Leader's Instructions

The *Leader's Instructions* page is a guide for conducting the session. The leader will need to review this in advance of each scheduled session, as there may be some preparation to be done prior to class time. Suggested time allowances are given.



Session Organization

Each session contains: a *Theme*, *Opening and Closing Prayers*, *Farm Worker Realities*, *Reflection*, *Learning Activity*, *Serve/Advocate/Act* (suggested follow-up actions), and a *Learn More* section.

Inclusion of *Serve/Advocate/Act* actions is based on the concept that in ministry, in addition to prayer and reflection, we must walk on two feet: the foot of mercy and the foot of justice. We urge you to take time during each session to do this with the group.

At the end of the curriculum, there is a more complete listing of resources with further information on farm workers.

For other information about the curriculum, contact the National Farm Worker Ministry's national office: nfwm@nfwm.org or 314-726-7470.

Curriculum Evaluation

There is an evaluation form at the end of the booklet. Please take a little time to fill out the evaluation and return it to the national NFWM office.

We invite you and your group to support the work of the National Farm Worker Ministry by contacting one of our offices and getting involved in the struggle for justice for farm workers.

Farm workers are empowered by the churches lending their voices to the struggle, while those of us in the church find ourselves energized and empowered by acting on our faith.

SESSION ONE ~ FOOD: A SACRED EXCHANGE

LEADER'S INSTRUCTION

Note: If possible, use this session in the context of a meal (simple foods like beans and rice would be best). If time or place does not allow for a meal, offer some healthy snacks or produce picked by a farm worker.

Step 1: Theme and Prayer

Read the theme aloud and then ask a volunteer to read the opening prayer from the Handout.

Theme: *Food is basic to life, and those who provide it enable us to live. Sharing food, the means to life and livelihood, is what a community does. Breaking bread suggests that those of us who receive the food pledge ourselves to act justly toward those who provide it.*

Step 2: Farm Workers' Reality (10 min.)

Read the facts aloud from the Handout and briefly discuss with the group what was surprising about these facts and what the group already knew or didn't know about farm workers.

Step 3: Reflection (15 min.)

Read Luke 11:2-4 and discuss the following:

Why do you think Jesus included in the Lord's Prayer the phrase about requesting daily bread?

Read Matthew 26:26 and discuss the following:

What is the significance that Jesus' last meeting with his community was in the setting of a meal?

Read Isaiah 58:6-7 and discuss the following:

What are our responsibilities to those who provide our food and yet may not have enough to eat for themselves and their families?

Step 4: Learning Activity (15 min.)

Materials: food for meal. Copy the Learning Activity page for each participant. Optional: photos of farm workers to hold up during the reading of

the dialogue. You can download sample photos from the curriculum website.

Process: Using the food provided, have participants solemnly feed each other, actually placing food in each others' mouths. The intention is to perform this intimate act feeling the dependence that we have on each other. This can be an uncomfortable activity for some people. Encourage everyone to try it.

Afterwards, pass out the Learning Activity page and have volunteers read aloud the words of the four farm workers and the reader.

After the reading, let the group sit in silence for a few minutes to reflect on the readings. Have participants briefly share their feelings about what they heard and the feeding activity.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY: If you feel this activity is not appropriate for your group, do the Learning Activity for Lesson 10.

Step 5: Serve, Advocate, Act (5 min.)

Read aloud the suggested follow-up actions from the Handout and ask which of the suggestions are most feasible for participants to do during the following week. Encourage participants to commit to at least one action as an individual and consider engaging in some actions as a group.

Close with the following prayer or with a prayer offered by one of the participants.

Closing Prayer

God, our Creator, help us to feel in our hearts and bodies our deep connection with those who touch our food as it is grown and prepared. May we treat our food as a sacred gift from them and from you.



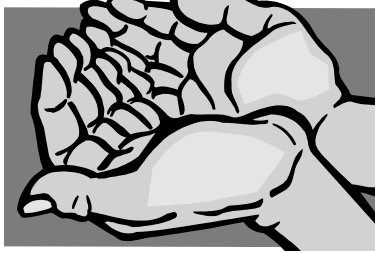
SESSION ONE ~ FOOD: A SACRED EXCHANGE

PARTICIPANT'S HANDOUT

Theme:

Food is basic to life, and those who provide it enable us to live. Sharing food, the means to life and livelihood, is what a community does.

Breaking bread suggests that those of us who receive the food pledge ourselves to act justly toward those who provide it.



Opening Prayer

*My plate, empty now, will soon be filled with precious food. In this food, I see the presence of the entire universe supporting my existence. Many beings are struggling for food today. I pray that they all may have enough to eat.*¹

Farm Workers' Reality

- **Migrant farm workers** move from place to place to work in agriculture, living in temporary housing; **seasonal farm workers** work primarily in agriculture, but live in one community year round.²
- Each year, two to three million migrant & immigrant farm workers and their families labor in United States' fields.³
- Eighty-five percent of US fruit and vegetable crops are still harvested by hand.⁴
- North Americans spend a smaller percentage of expenditures (11%) on food as compared to other industrialized nations (Australia:15%, Japan: 18%, Mexico: 25%).⁵
- A farm worker's average annual income is \$11,000 a year⁶ and it is estimated that up to ten percent of US farm workers are forced to work without pay in "debt slavery."⁷
- Farm workers are often paid by the bucket, called "piece rate". In some states they earn as little as 40¢ per bucket of tomatoes or sweet potatoes. At

that rate, farm workers have to pick around two tons of produce (125 buckets) to earn \$50.⁸

- Most major US labor laws (such as those governing minimum wage, overtime, **workers' compensation** and protection when joining unions) are different for farm workers or exclude them altogether. Most workers are immigrants who, without legal protections, fear firing or deportation if they complain.

Reflection

Luke 11:2-4, Matthew 26:26, Isaiah 58:6-7

Learning Activity (see handout)

Serve, Advocate, Act

- For a week, as part of table grace, reflect on all the foods farm workers have helped bring to your table.
- For one day, eat no food that a farm worker had a hand in producing (e.g. eliminate fresh, frozen and canned produce and dairy products).
- Fast for a meal or a day and donate the money you save to a farm worker organization.

Learn More

- Read *Food and Faith*, edited by Michael Schut.
- Visit www.nfwm.org for more information on farm worker conditions or Agricultural Missions (www.agriculturalmissions.org) for information on global agricultural issues.

"Every time we sit at a table to enjoy the fruits and grain and vegetables from our good earth, remember that they come from the work of men and women and children who have been exploited for generations."

*Cesar Chavez, Co-founder,
United Farm Workers of America*

1. From Thich Nhat Hahn. 2. Farmworker Factsheet, North Carolina Farmworker Institute, 2007. 3. Thompson and Wiggins, *The Human Cost of Food*, 2002. 4. NC Farmworker Health Alliance Factsheet, "Facts About North Carolina's Farmworkers," 1997. 5. Alabama Farmers Federation, (http://www.alfafarmers.org/ag_facts/food_dollar.phtml), 2004. 6. National Agricultural Workers Survey, US Department of Labor, 2005. 7. Coalition of Immokalee Workers, 2003. 8. Farmworker Factsheet, North Carolina Farmworker Institute, 2007.

SESSION ONE ~ FOOD: A SACRED EXCHANGE

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Copy and pass out to participants.

Note: Worker quotes are words of actual farm workers in North Carolina documented by Sister Evelyn Mattern in the 1990's, except Worker 4, an apple picker in Washington state, documented by the United Farm Workers of America, 2003.

Worker 1: We are only shoulders here, wanted because we do the work no one else wants to do.

Worker 2: The other day that we were at mass, I couldn't feel my face because it was cracked and that comes from the fertilizers. The fertilizer is alive. It is alive. It is alive in the soil! You pick it up and you start with this rash. Then it starts penetrating....

Worker 1: We are only shoulders here, wanted because we do the work no one else wants to do.

Worker 3: We were all shaking because it was so hot, almost dehydrated. You know what I did? I left them.... It was less than an hour before finishing, and I thought for \$6 I am not going to die here. I'm leaving. In the field, there were no shade trees. It is just a ditch full of weeds, but that's where I stayed, and it didn't matter if there were snakes or thorns. It didn't matter.... All I wanted was shade.

Worker 1: We are only shoulders here, wanted because we do the work no one else wants to do.

Worker 4: My husband, my five children and I had to move out from the apartment we rented because the landlord didn't want children in the building. So we went down by the river to live. We put a mattress in a big van and all slept there. People from Seattle donated food and clothing to us. We had to bathe in the river; this was during September, October, and November when it gets cold here. We didn't have electricity. We had to cook over an open fire with wood. We suffered a lot during that time.

Worker 1: We are only shoulders here, wanted because we do the work no one else wants to do.

Reader: Our food, which nourishes our bodies, hasn't yet been totally reduced to technological process. Some would have us forget where food comes from. They seem to believe it is a product of biology labs and machines, with a heavy sprinkling of fertilizers thrown in for good measure. Food nevertheless, at its most nourishing, remains a product of the wholly and holy cycle of nature: seed placed in earth, blessed by rain, harvested and cooked by human hands (and shoulders) as a meal for the body - and the body is community.



SESSION TWO ~ GOD HAS NO BORDERS

LEADER'S INSTRUCTION

Step 1: Theme and Prayer

Read the theme aloud and then ask a volunteer to read the opening prayer on the Handout.

Theme: *Human law, not God's law, creates borders and boundaries. As people of faith, we look for ways to overcome these human barriers and divisions between peoples by showing hospitality and mercy towards strangers. Seeing God in them, we are "entertaining angels."*

Step 2: Farm Workers' Reality (10 min)

Read the facts aloud from the Handout and briefly discuss with the group what was surprising about these facts and what the group already knew or didn't know about farm workers.

Step 3: Reflection (15 min.)

"States have a right to control their borders, but not an absolute right. The right to feed yourself and your family comes first. These people aren't breaking the law; the law is breaking them."

Bishop Thomas Wenski, Orlando Diocese,
former Chairman, U.S. Conference of
Catholic Bishop's Migration Committee

What are some things that are more important than the "absolute" borders of a country?

What are some of the borders in our own lives that act as barriers to connecting to others not like ourselves?

How might we break these barriers down?

Step 4: Learning Activity (15 min.)

Materials: Copy Learning Activity page for each participant. If possible, have pictures that graphically express what's being read and have two volunteers hold them up during the reading. You can find photographs on the curriculum webpage.

Process: Ask for volunteers to read the border

crossing stories to the whole group. *Let the group know that these are real individuals who have worked in U.S. fields.* Afterwards, discuss the questions that follow the stories.

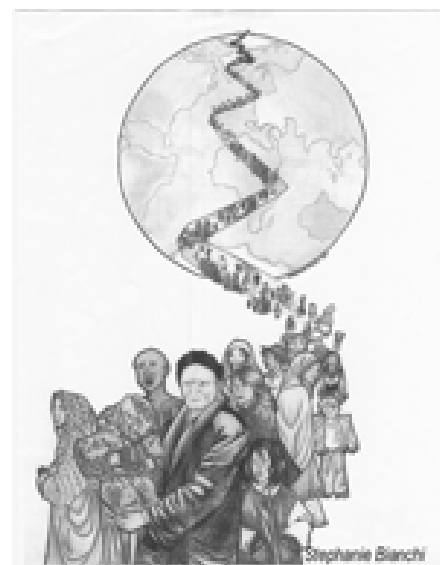
Step 5: Serve, Advocate, Act (5 min.)

Read aloud the suggested follow-up actions from the Handout and ask which of the suggestions are most feasible for participants to do during the following week. Encourage participants to commit to at least one action as an individual and consider engaging in some actions as a group.

Close with the following prayer or with a prayer offered by one of the participants.

Closing Prayer

We pray that we may learn to show mercy, justice, and love towards all those who we, as a country, neither welcome nor accept into our borders. And we pray for your help in tearing down the borders and fences we have built around our own hearts, that we may learn to love and welcome each of your children as members of one body.



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SESSION TWO ~ GOD HAS NO BORDERS

PARTICIPANT'S HANDOUT

Theme: Human law, not God's law, creates borders and boundaries. As people of faith, we look for ways to overcome these human barriers and divisions between peoples by showing hospitality and mercy towards strangers. Seeing God in them, we are "entertaining angels."

Opening Prayer

God of us all, who brought Jesus into the world a refugee, we pray for your blessing on those who are strangers in a strange land, forced to leave the homes they love because of poverty and injustice. We pray that you protect and keep them on their journeys. We pray for those who would persecute your pilgrims. Open all our hearts so that we might see and welcome God in all, neighbors and strangers alike.

Farm Workers' Reality

- Pervasive poverty and joblessness in Mexico and Latin America force thousands of people to cross to "the other side" to work in the US both legally and without proper documentation. At least 52% of farm workers are **undocumented**.¹
- Border crossing is very dangerous and expensive - **coyotes** (border smugglers) often charge thousands of dollars to assist immigrants. They cross walking through the desert, swimming, crawling through tunnels, or in the backs of vans.
- The number of southwestern border-crossing deaths began increasing in 1995; and by 2005, the officially recorded deaths had more than doubled to 472, despite the fact that there was no corresponding increase in the number of undocumented entries. More than three-fourths of the doubling was attributed to increases in deaths occurring in the Arizona desert.²
- Policies such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) have contributed to much of the poverty faced by communities in Mexico. As part of NAFTA, the US demanded an end to Mexican farm subsidies, while US farmers continue to receive disproportionately large subsidies. Under NAFTA, U.S. corn exports to Mexico increased

240%. Over two million Mexican farmers have lost their employment since 1994.³

- About 85% of the Mexican rural labor force has gone from being poor, but getting by, to watching their children go hungry.⁴ Many decide to seek work in the US rather than watch their children starve.
- For decades, the US agriculture industry has counted on and courted the cheapest available labor in order to earn the greatest possible profits. By offering low wages and poor working conditions, US employers deter US workers from seeking these jobs.

Reflection

"States have a right to control their borders, but not an absolute right. The right to feed yourself and your family comes first. These people aren't breaking the law; the law is breaking them."

*Bishop Thomas Wenski, Orlando Diocese,
former Chairman, U.S. Conference of
Catholic Bishops' Migration Committee*

Learning Activity (see handout)

Serve, Advocate, Act

- Invite immigrant groups to speak to your congregation about local issues.
- Attend multi-cultural events in your neighborhood to break down barriers that may exist between different ethnicities in your community or church.
- Learn about the work of BorderLinks at <http://www.borderlinks.org> or another group which serves the needs of immigrants crossing the border into the United States.

Learn More (See full citation on Resource page)

- Watch *Dying to Live*, a documentary about the immigrant experience crossing the border. Visit <http://dyingtolive.nd.edu/> or contact NFWM.
- Read *Shadowed Lives: Undocumented Immigrants in American Society* by Leo Chavez.
- Read *Mexican Lives* by Judith Adler Hellman.

1. National Agricultural Workers Survey, US Department of Labor, 2000. 2. GAO-06-770 *Illegal Immigration: Border-Crossing Deaths Have Doubled Since 1995*, United States Government Accountability Office, August 2006. 3. Farmworker Factsheet, North Carolina Farmworker Institute, 2007. 4. Susskind, Yifat, "Some Basics on the Global Economy," *Madre Speaks*, Fall 1998.

SESSION TWO ~ GOD HAS NO BORDERS

LEARNING ACTIVITY

My wife is having health problems and I could not earn enough building houses in Mexico to pay for her care. Unless her health gets worse I think I will stay another year, because I should be able to make enough to get us back on our feet. If I left now I would just break even because the **coyote** [a guide people hire to help them cross the border between the U.S. and Mexico] charged me \$1,200 to cross.

Faustino, 38, Idaho. "In Our Own Words: Immigrants' Experiences in the Northwest, Northwest Federation of Community Organizations, February 2006

"Sometimes we come here without our families in order to work so that we can earn money and there is too much rain, or there is too little rain and there is not enough work. This is the worst because we are here to work and we can't do it. And all the while my children love their father and want us to be together. For the family it is very difficult."

Zaul, an H2A Guestworker farm worker in Nash County, North Carolina was interviewed in the summer of 2007 by Hannah Johnston, NFWM's Intern from Student Action with Farmworkers.

I saw a lot of mistreatment by the **coyotes**. After crossing the border, I was kept under armed guard in a house with about 150 other people. Some of the women in the room were sick, and they gave us very little food. They harassed the women and they had large firearms. They prevented us from looking out the windows to see where we were – if you did they would hit you with the butt of the rifle. They wouldn't let us talk with each other, just with them. People were constantly being moved in and out – they would move ten or twenty people at a time – depending on when they got payment from family members already here, who would wire money to them through Western Union in order to have family released. Once my brother paid, they took me to Atlanta and then got me a bus ticket to Florida.

Enrique, 47, Washington state. In Our Own Words: Immigrants' Experiences in the Northwest, Northwest Federation of Community Organizations, February 2006

I came through the desert the first time ten years ago and it wasn't as dangerous then as it is now. I went back last December to see my parents and my son and it was hell trying to cross back. I won't do that again unless there is an emergency. Some people don't make it across and there are some that are left out there in the desert and they don't even get a decent funeral.

Alejandro, 27, Idaho. In Our Own Words: Immigrants' Experiences in the Northwest, Northwest Federation of Community Organizations, February 2006

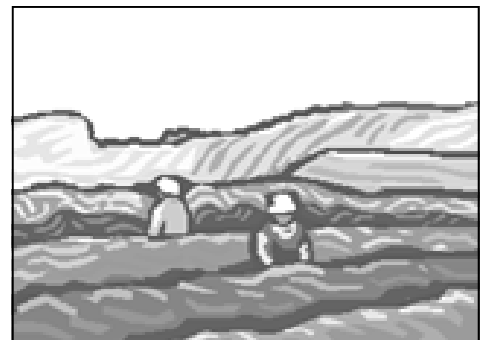
Discussion Questions:

How did hearing these stories make you feel?

Does putting a human face on immigration issues change your perception of immigrants?

Can you imagine being so desperate to take care of your family that you would risk death?

Have you heard first-hand an immigrant's story about coming to United States that would help the group understand what compels people to migrate?



SESSION THREE ~ IMMIGRANTS IN THE U.S.

LEADERS'S INSTRUCTION

Step 1: Theme and Prayer

Read the theme aloud and then ask a volunteer to read the opening prayer on the Handout.

Theme: *Immigration plays a large role in our country's history. The United States is truly a nation of the immigrant. The US is a melting pot of cultures, faiths and ideologies and we define ourselves by our diversity. We need to respect and appreciate immigrants for the role they play in our communities and society.*

Step 2: Farm Workers' Reality (10 min)

Read the facts aloud from the Handout and briefly discuss with the group what was surprising about these facts and what the group already knew or didn't know about farm workers.

Step 3: Reflection (15 min.)

"There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you"

Exodus 12:49

What might society look like if there truly were one law for all people, both native born and immigrant?

How does the statement in our Declaration of Independence "All men are created equal" apply to the Exodus verse? Does this seem to be true in the U.S.? How could we prescribe more closely to this ideal of equality for all people?

Step 4: Learning Activity (15 min.)

Materials: Copy Learning Activity page for each participant.

Process: Ask for a volunteer to read aloud "The Virtuous Illegal Alien" and use the question following it to discuss the reading.

Step 5: Serve, Advocate, Act (5 min.)

Read aloud the suggested follow-up actions from the Handout and ask which of the suggestions are most feasible for participants to do during the following week. Encourage participants to commit to at least one action as an individual and consider engaging in some actions as a group.

Close with the following prayer or with a prayer offered by one of the participants.

Closing Prayer

Dear God, we thank you for the opportunity we have had today to meditate upon your favor for the Sojourners among us. We pray that we may learn to show mercy, justice, and love towards all those who we neither welcome nor accept into our borders. And we pray for your help in tearing down the borders and fences we build around our own hearts, that we may learn to love and welcome each of your children as members of one body.



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SESSION THREE ~ IMMIGRANTS IN THE U.S.

PARTICIPANT'S HANDOUT

Theme: Immigration plays a large role in our country's history. The United States is truly a nation of the immigrant. The US is a melting pot of cultures, faiths and ideologies and we define ourselves by our diversity. We need to respect and appreciate immigrants for the role they play in our communities and society.

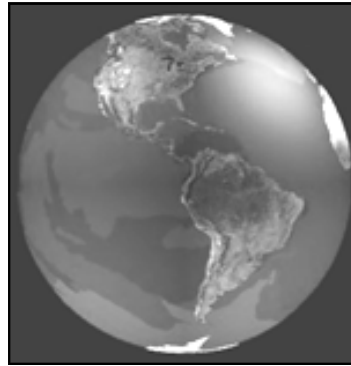
Opening Prayer

*God, full of love and mercy, please care for my sister and brother immigrants. Have pity on them and protect them; they suffer mistreatment and humiliations on their way; are looked on as dangerous by most; and are marginalized for being foreigners. Help us to respect them and appreciate their dignity. Touch with goodness we who see them pass by. Take care of their families until they return home, not with broken hearts but with their hopes fulfilled.*¹

Farm Workers' Reality

- Today, just over half of all immigrants to the United States come from Latin America with another 25% coming from Asia.²
- In 2004, about 70% of Latinos in the U.S. were either native born or naturalized citizens.³
- In 2006, it was estimated that there were between 11 and 12 million **undocumented** immigrants in the United States. Over 75% of undocumented workers come from Latin America with the vast majority of these workers coming from Mexico.⁴
- Immigration has no discernible negative effect on U.S. employment or wage rates.⁵
- While most undocumented immigrants do pay their taxes - payroll, sales & consumer - most do not receive any government benefits because of their immigration status. Over the course of their time in the US, it is estimated that an immigrant will pay \$80,000 more in taxes than he or she receives in government benefits.⁶

- Although 30% of farm worker families live in poverty, less than 10% use food stamps and under 1% use general assistance welfare.⁷



Reflection

“There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you”

Exodus 12:49

Learning Activity (see handout)

Serve, Advocate, Act

- Pray for those immigrants who risk their lives to come into the United States every day and pray for those who have prejudices against immigrants, that they learn to see the love of God in all people.
- Support legislative efforts for comprehensive immigration reform and against legislation that marginalizes or discriminates against immigrants.
- Support legislative efforts to provide legal residency to farm workers, Visit www.nfwm.org for the most current legislative updates.
- Volunteer to tutor at a local community organization that helps to teach English to recent immigrants.

Learn More

- Take an online quiz about immigration or see a slide show at the US Census website: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/foreign/graphics.html>

1. Adapted from the prayer on the wall of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish Church, Altar, Mexico. 2. U.S. Census Bureau, (<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/foreign.html>). 3. U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey 2004. 4. Pew Hispanic Center, Immigration & Naturalization Services: <http://aad.english.ucsb.edu/basicfacts.html>. 5. Cato Institute study: (http://www.cato.org/pubs/policy_report/pr-imsum.html). 6. Immigrants' List, Fact vs Myth: (http://www.immigrantslist.org/pages/myths_vs_facts). 7. Farm-worker Factsheet, North Carolina Farmworker Institute, 2007. The American Immigration Law Foundation, <http://www.aifl.org/pubed/facts%20immigration.shtml>.

SESSION THREE ~ IMMIGRANTS IN THE U.S.

LEARNING ACTIVITY

A Virtuous Illegal Alien

(Dedicated to Pete Wilson and supporters of California Proposition 187.)

Rosalvo Welsch, Yale University.

Printed in the American College Personnel Committee on Multicultural Affairs *Newsletter*, Vol. 1995, Winter Issue.

What makes an illegal alien virtuous?

A virtuous illegal alien must cross the border only when you need him. When your factories are low and your goods need assembling, he may cross. When your fields need hands to gather your harvests, he may cross. And when your children need nannies to walk them to school, he may cross. But a virtuous illegal alien must not carry across that which you cannot use; namely his language, his children, and his ways. Only his hands and his back must cross that line.

A virtuous illegal alien must make your economy swell. He must labor hard, buy your goods, and pay taxes into your system, but he must not request any services in return. He must remain sick rather than seek hospital care. He must keep his children ignorant rather than to educate them. And he must leave his assaults unreported, rather than seek police protection.

A virtuous illegal alien must be silent. He must never complain when he cannot afford to feed his family on the wages you give him. He must never gripe when he cannot bear to work in unsanitary conditions you have placed him in. He must never protest when you blame him for all the ills of society that you yourself have sown. A virtuous illegal alien must disappear when you tell him to. When your factories are full, he must fade. When his work is done, he must withdraw. When you are scared of his numbers, he must shrink.

And as he is leaving, a virtuous illegal alien must never stop — not even to point out that it was your forefathers who were once the aliens on this land you now call your own.

Discussion Questions:

What does it do to the humanity of a person when they are looked at simply as a means of cheap and necessary labor? By seeing a person as a machine, how does that change what we see as acceptable treatment of that person?

How loyal to a group, company or country would you be if you were being taken advantage of? How might those feelings, your attitude and your commitment change if you felt as though you were appreciated and valued?

What are some of the terms we use and hear, especially in the media, for immigrants? How do these language choices influence the debate about immigration?

SESSION FOUR ~ LABOR IN GOD'S HARVEST

LEADER'S INSTRUCTION

Step 1: Theme and Prayer

Read the theme aloud and then ask a volunteer to read the opening prayer on the Handout.

Theme: *Jesus brings "Good News" to the poor and "proclaims release to the captives." Those who labor to provide our food deserve this good news too: fair wages, work with dignity, a day of rest.*

Step 2: Farm Workers' Reality (10 min.)

Read the facts aloud from the Handout and briefly discuss with the group what was surprising about these facts and what the group already knew or didn't know about farm workers.

Step 3: Reflection (15 min.)

"If you dehumanize people, then they lose their self-worth and they won't fight for their rights. The **union** gives workers self-worth, it gives them faith in their ability to really change their situation."
Dolores Huerta, Co-founder, UFW

What do you think are some of the basic rights of every worker? Why?

Do you think the pay difference between a corporate CEO and a farm worker is fair? What does that say about how our society values different types of work?

Why might farm worker self-determination be more effective in changing working conditions than only receiving charity?

Step 4: Learning Activity (15 min.)

Materials: Four copies of the role play (found on Learning Activity page); four giant "name tags" for each part. (Copies of the Learning Activity page for each participant.

Process: Ask for four volunteers from the group; if possible, choose four who are successively taller. Assign the "Farm Worker" role to the shortest person, then the "Grower," "CEO," and "Consumer" roles to the progressively taller persons.

Ask the "Farm Worker" to stand in front of the group and read his/her part first. Then the "Grower" stands directly in front of the worker and reads her/his part. The "CEO" stands directly in front of the grower to read her/his part, and the "Consumer" stands directly in front of "CEO" to read. At the end, there will be a line, with the "Consumer" at the front, blocking the view to the rest of the readers.

After the role play, discuss the following:

What happened to the farm worker as everyone else played his or her part?

Do individuals have the responsibility to make purchases that are produced under fair working conditions? What are some ways we can determine which products to buy?

*How could a farm worker **union** help to equalize the roles highlighted in the role play?*

How can consumers demand fair treatment for the laborers who pick and pack the food we eat?

Step 5: Serve, Advocate, Act (5 min.)

Read aloud the suggested follow-up actions from the Handout and ask which of the suggestions are most feasible for participants to do during the following week. Encourage participants to commit to at least one action as an individual and consider engaging in some actions as a group.

Close with the following prayer or with a prayer offered by one of the participants.

Closing Prayer

Bless the hands of the people of the earth, the hands that plant the seeds, the hands that bind the harvest. Soften the hands of the oppressor and strengthen the hands of the oppressed. Bless the hands of the workers; bless the hands of those in power above them, that the measure they deal will be tempered with justice and compassion.

SESSION FOUR ~ LABOR IN GOD'S HARVEST

PARTICIPANT'S HANDOUT



Theme: Jesus brings "Good News" to the poor and "proclaims release to the captives." Those who labor to provide our food deserve this good news too: fair wages, work with dignity, respect.

Opening Prayer

God, help us to understand the way of freedom and power proclaimed by Jesus. May we learn how to live in a way that brings good news to the poor and freedom to those held captive by oppressive economic systems.

Farm Workers' Reality

- Farm workers are usually employed by farm owners (growers) or by crew leaders (intermediaries between the growers and the workers).
- At the height of the harvesting season, farm workers often work 12-14 hours a day in the hot sun with few breaks.
- Seventy-one percent of every food income dollar goes to **corporate food processors**; 23% goes to growers; and 6% goes to farm workers.¹
- Increasing farm workers' wages by 35% would cost the average consumer just 65¢ more for fresh produce a week.²
- A **union** is an association of workers who seek to improve their wages and working conditions. A UFW contract in the strawberry industry provided 1,700 workers in California with a 7% wage increase and health, dental, and life insurance.
- Many things in a farm worker union contract are like personnel policies in an office. They include provisions for breaks, availability of bathrooms and fresh drinking water.
- Farm worker union contracts usually provide for a grievance procedure, allowing workers to address problems on the job, such as underpayment of wages or no water breaks, without fear of retaliation and

allowing workers to enforce standards rather than rely on overworked, understaffed state agencies.

- Farm workers are specifically excluded from the National Labor Relations Act. Without this legal protection, farm workers rely on consumer support and sometimes need to resort to **boycotts** as a means to gain a voice on the job.

Reflection

"If you dehumanize people, then they lose their self-worth and they won't fight for their rights. The **union** gives workers self-worth, it gives them faith in their ability to really change their situation."

Dolores Huerta, Co-founder, UFW

Learning Activity (see handout)

Serve, Advocate, Act

- Pray for the resolution of labor conflicts involving farm workers.
- Hold a fundraiser, such as a movie night or food fast for a farm worker organization.
- Honor farm worker-called **boycotts**, purchase **union** label products, and follow farm worker campaign developments; visit www.nfwm.org. Use NFWM produced wallet-size shopping guides to make your purchases.

Learn More

- To learn more about improvements in living and working conditions gained by farm workers through **collective bargaining** and legislation, visit the websites of farm worker organizations: www.ufw.org, www.floc.com, www.ciw-online.org, www.pcun.org.
- See *Learn More: A Brief History of Farm Worker Organizing*, page 32



1. Student Action with Farmworkers factsheet, "Farmworkers in the United States," 2000. 2. Farm Workers: Their Contributions to the California Economy, Philip Martin and Mark Madamba, July 6, 2000

SESSION FOUR ~ LABOR IN GOD'S HARVEST

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Copy and pass around to participating volunteers first. After role-play is completed, pass out to whole group.

Farm Worker:

I am a farm worker from Chiapas, Mexico. I come to the United States to pick crops - tomatoes, sweet potatoes, apples - in fields from Florida to Michigan, from Texas to Washington. I do not mind the work, but I earn so little. My wages come to only \$11,000 a year. Also, I had to pay \$1500 to a **coyote** - or smuggler - to bring me across the border. I'm still paying it off! In every place the **contratista** - **labor contractor** - takes us to work the housing is run down and I often have to live with as many as 12 other workers. Last year, I had to go back home in July because I got sick from the pesticides sprayed on the plants. I would rather stay in Mexico with my family, but we really need the money and back home there is no work.

Grower:

I am Mr./Ms. Grower. I am very good for the community because I provide jobs, though most Americans don't want my jobs. I know these migrants are happy working for me. Some of them complain about the wages I give them, but it's better than what they make back in their home countries, so I don't pay any attention to that. I am proud to sell my produce to big companies like *Tasty Foods Corp.* They support my business and even provide me with the seeds to grow and tell me when to plant. Even if I wanted to pay my workers more and provide decent housing, it wouldn't be economically viable unless the corporations paid me a higher price for my produce. I depend on my partnership with the company.

Tasty Foods Corp CEO :

I am the CEO of the *Tasty Foods Corp.* We make several very popular food items sold all over the US. In fact, our earnings are in the \$100 millions. To our customers, *Tasty Foods* means quality and value. We are able to keep our cost to the customer low and our profits high because we are so big that we can negotiate the lowest prices for the fresh produce we use. We think that the growers from whom we buy mean well, and we trust that they follow the law when it comes to the farm workers. Besides, we don't hire the farm workers and we don't want to interfere with how the growers run their businesses. That's not our responsibility.

Consumer:

Every week when I do my shopping, I look for *Tasty Foods*. My family likes their products and they are so often on sale. Last week, I got another two for one deal. But these farm worker advocates are telling me I shouldn't buy *Tasty Foods*. How will that help farm workers?

("Tasty Foods Corp." is intended as an illustration only and does not represent a real corporation.)

Labor Agreements Remedy Injustice

Conditions in the fields do not have to be oppressive and dehumanizing. Farm workers have been organizing since the 1960's to win representation and to improve their living and working conditions. Farm workers and their allies are standing up to the exploitive agricultural system by holding growers and corporate food processors accountable to the workers from whom they profit.

A three-way contract is one way to achieve fairness. In September 2004, after a four year boycott of Mt. Olive Pickles, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) negotiated this type of labor agreement with the Mt. Olive Pickle Co. and the North Carolina Growers Association, which resulted in more than 8,000 H2A farm workers becoming the first such guest workers in the U.S. and the first farm workers in NC to win union representation. The contract included improved wages, grievance procedures and safety protections,

especially from toxic exposures, as well as the right to receive visitors in camps, compensation for the day of an injury, a paid bereavement leave, and a half-day off for religious worship. The contract was renewed in February 2008.

Labor agreements not only benefit workers, but consumers and companies too. Consumers benefit because contracts often require stricter enforcement of sanitation and pesticides regulations. Companies often find that the relationship between labor and management grows from being adversarial into a partnership and improves their productivity. After Jackson and Perkins, the nation's largest rose producer, signed its first contract with the United Farm Workers in 1995, plant production increased 35% and the company turned a profit for the first time in years.

To learn more, read *A Brief History of Farm Worker Organizing*, page 32.

SESSION FIVE ~ HEALTH AND WHOLENESS

LEADER'S INSTRUCTION

Step 1: Theme and Prayer

Read the theme aloud and then ask a volunteer to read the opening prayer on the Handout.

Theme: *Those who labor to provide us with food to strengthen our bodies have their own bodies, minds and spirits broken by the living and working conditions under which they suffer.*

Step 2: Farm Workers' Reality (10 min.)

Read the facts aloud from the Handout and briefly discuss with the group what was surprising about these facts and what the group already knew or didn't know about farm workers.

Step 3: Reflection (10 min.)

"[In the US] farm workers exhibit the type of health status that one sees in the Third World. We see a lot of infectious diseases because of poor sanitation, poor nutrition, and exposure... Whenever you have a population with poor access to health care, then you have a public health problem."

*Dr. Ed Zuroweste,
Migrant Health Provider, Chambersburg, PA*

How does failing to provide access to health care for all affect our community at large?

What does it say about our society that there are people here who live in third world conditions?

Step 4: Learning Activity (20 min.)

Note: There is no separate Learning Activity page.

Materials: flip-chart paper and markers

Process: Use the "But why?" method of analysis to identify problems as they relate to farm workers in general, health issues in particular. The goal is to try to move to a deeper understanding of root causes. Pick one of the health problems already mentioned in the Farm Workers' Reality section.

The leader asks, "But why does this happen?" Write the answers on a large flip chart. Choosing one answer, ask again, "But why?" List those answers and pick one. Continue to ask, "But why?" As more answers come up, try to find the connections between causes and effects.

The process should result in a list of issues that impact each other. There should be a single course of causes/effects, but also branches. Causes include medical, physical, social, economic, political, environmental, and religious situations. The group should discuss some of the causes and talk about some possible solutions to the problems.

EXAMPLE

Health problem: A farm worker boy has tetanus.

But why? He stepped on a rusty nail.

But why? He didn't have shoes on; he lives in poor housing conditions.

But why? His family didn't have money to buy him shoes because farm workers earn such low wages.

But why? His family had to leave Mexico because there were no jobs available.

But why?...

ALTERNATE Learning Activity (25 min.)

Show the 21 minute documentary "Standards of Living" from North Carolina TV station WRAL about farm worker conditions. It can be viewed at:

<http://www.wral.com/news/local/documentaries/story/1029935/> or a DVD borrowed from NFWM.

Step 5: Serve, Advocate, Act (5 min.)

Read aloud the suggested follow-up actions from the Handout and ask which of the suggestions are most feasible for participants to do during the following week. Encourage participants to commit to at least one action as an individual and consider engaging in some actions as a group.

Close with the following prayer or with a prayer offered by one of the participants.

Closing Prayer

God, we pray that our brothers and sisters working in the fields may be comforted in their suffering and made whole. When they are afraid, give them courage; when they feel weak, grant them your strength; when they are lost, offer them hope; when they are alone, move us to their side. May we be your agents of healing.

SESSION FIVE ~ HEALTH AND WHOLENESS

PARTICIPANT'S HANDOUT

Theme: Those who labor to provide us with food to strengthen our bodies have their own bodies, minds, and spirits broken by the living and working conditions under which they suffer.

Opening Prayer

God of health and wholeness, we pray for those who toil in conditions that result in disease or injury, limiting their ability to be whole. We pray for those who create the conditions and for those who allow the conditions to continue. May farm workers feel your healing touch on their bodies, minds, and spirits.

Farm Workers' Reality

Dangerous Work: Agriculture is consistently ranked as one of the most dangerous occupations in the U.S.

Working conditions: Farm workers labor long days exposed to intense sun and heat. They often work stooped over, which leads to chronic back injuries. There are often no toilets or handwashing facilities in the fields and drinking water is often warm and/or dirty.

Pesticide Risks: Agricultural workers face a great threat of suffering from pesticide-related illnesses - including acute poisonings and long-term effects such as cancer and birth defects - than any other sector of society.¹



Housing conditions: Most farm workers live in overcrowded, substandard housing and may experience lead poisoning, poor plumbing, broken screens, inadequate washing and laundry facilities, missing beds or beds with thin, filthy mattresses.

Obstacles to Health Care: Most farm workers do not have reliable access to health care due to

frequent relocation, the isolation of living in remote rural areas and complete reliance on crew leaders or growers for transportation. Other barriers include language, lack of knowledge and information about available services, and fear of deportation when accessing government institutions.

Limited Insurance: Only ten percent of farm workers report having employer-provided health insurance.² Most do not have sick leave or **workers' compensation** and risk losing their jobs if they miss work.

Reflection

"[In the US] farm workers exhibit the type of health status that one sees in the Third World. We see a lot of infectious diseases because of poor sanitation, poor nutrition, and exposure...Whenever you have a population with poor access to health care, then you have a public health problem."

*Dr. Ed Zuroweste,
Migrant Health Provider, Chambersburg, PA*

Learning Activity

Serve, Advocate, Act

- Volunteer to translate at a health clinic serving farm workers.
- Collect first-aid items to be distributed in labor camps.
- Plan actions supporting farm worker unions whose contracts provide some type of health care. For campaign actions, visit www.nfwm.org.

Learn More

- Visit the websites of the Migrant Clinicians Network (www.migrantclinician.org) or the National Center for Farmworker Health (www.ncfh.org).
- Read Chapters 6 and 7 of *The Human Cost of Food* on farm worker housing and health.

1. *Fields of Poison: California Farmworkers and Pesticides, 2002*, www.panna.org/campaigns/docsWorkers/CPRreport.pdf. 2. National Agricultural Workers Survey, US Dept. of Labor, 2005.

SESSION SIX ~ COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

LEADER'S INSTRUCTION

Step 1: Theme and Prayer

Read the theme aloud and then ask a volunteer to read the opening prayer on the Handout.

Theme: *Farm workers offer us the richness of their culture and traditions as they seek to form communities in the United States and integrate themselves and their families into our communities. We can embrace these new traditions with open arms as well as invite them into our culture.*

Step 2: Farm Workers' Reality (10 min)

Read the facts aloud from the Handout and briefly discuss with the group what was surprising about these facts and what the group already knew or didn't know about farm workers.

Step 3: Reflection (15 min.)

"We become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams."

Jimmy Carter, 39th U.S. President

What are some of the ways US society is adopting latino customs and language?

What are some ways that latinos are adopting US customs?

How might the United States benefit from the influx of culture (language is just one example) that we sometimes are hesitant to accept?

Step 4: Learning Activity (15 min.)

Materials for Farm Worker Repollo: "Repollo" is Spanish for cabbage. This is a fun way to get the facts.

Write questions and the answers from Learning Activity page on twenty 8x10 sheets of paper,

preferably of various shades of green (one question on each paper). Ball up one paper and then ball up each successive piece of paper around the ball to make a cabbage-like ball of paper.

Process: Form the group in a circle. Person One starts with *repollo*, and takes the outermost sheet of crumpled paper off the cabbage. He or she asks the question to the group, the group decides on an answer and then Person One gives the correct answer.

Then Person One says the name of someone else in the group and throws the *repollo* to them. Person Two takes the next sheet of paper and the game continues until everyone has had a chance, or until you run out of paper.

Step 5: Serve, Advocate, Act (5 min.)

Read aloud the suggested follow-up actions from the Handout and ask which of the suggestions are most feasible for participants to do during the following week. Encourage participants to commit to at least one action as an individual and consider engaging in some actions as a group.



Close with the following prayer or with a prayer offered by one of the participants.

Closing Prayer

O God our Creator, open our eyes to the beauty of cultures and traditions different from our own. Help us to understand that the crafts we create, the songs we sing, the stories we weave are your creations. Guide us on the path towards a day when each person is able to discover her/his talents and be valued for those gifts. Be with us as we discover the joy of the diversity of your people.

SESSION SIX ~ COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

PARTICIPANT'S HANDOUT

Theme: Farm workers offer us the richness of their culture and traditions as they seek to form communities in the United States and integrate themselves and their families into our communities. We can embrace these new traditions with open arms as well as invite them into our culture.

Opening Prayer

O God of many cultures and many nations, we thank you for the varied gifts and talents you have given us. Help us to recognize the value of ways other than our own, and give us guidance in accepting other traditions into our hearts. We know that in you, we are all one people.



The **Virgin of Guadalupe** is an important symbol in Mexican Catholic culture.

Farm Workers' Reality

- The Latino population grew from 12.5% of the US population in 2000 to 14.8% in 2006.¹ Latinos are now the US's largest minority group. Most farm workers are latino immigrants.
- Immigrant farm workers "acculturate," adopting many US customs. In turn, local communities "transculturalate," adopting new traditions.²
- According to the 2000 Census, of the people who report speaking Spanish at home, 72% report also speaking English "well" or "very well". Second generation Latino immigrants are largely bi-lingual and third generation generally speak English only.³
- More than 90 cents out of every dollar earned by immigrants stays in their adopted communities, creating a huge boost to local economies. In 2003, that was well over \$400 billion.⁴
- The majority of Latino farm workers are Roman Catholic. Religious beliefs and practices are often a mix of Catholic practice and indigenous traditions and are more likely to be passed on through the family than the church.

Reflection

"We become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams."

Jimmy Carter, 39th U.S. President

Learning Activity

Serve, Advocate, Act

- Attend a mass or other worship service in Spanish to learn more about Latino culture.
- Talk to congregations in your area doing Hispanic ministry and find out how you can support them.
- Write letters to the editor of your local paper denouncing discrimination against immigrants.
- Support bilingual education and other ways that preserve diverse cultures.
- Encourage your local library to purchase bilingual or Spanish language books or collect books and Bibles in Spanish and donate them to a local organization.

Learn More

- Read Chapter 1 (Culture) in *The Human Cost of Food*.
- Read *Y No Se Le Tragó la Tierra (And the Earth Did Not Devour Him)* by Tomás Rivera.



1. Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of 2000 Census (5% IPUMS) and 2006 American Community. 2. Thompson and Wiggins, *The Human Cost of Food*, University of Austin Press, 2002. 3. "From Immigrant To Citizen", Janet Murguía and Cecilia Muñoz, *The American Prospect*, October 23, 2005. 4. "Immigrants Spend Earnings in U.S.," Joel Millman, *The Wall Street Journal*, May 17, 2004.

SESSION SIX ~ COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Repollo Questions & Answers: (See Process on the Leader's Instruction page.)

Q. What is the name of the traditional Mexican celebration of girls on their fifteenth birthday?

A. Quinceañera

Q. How many indigenous languages are still spoken in Mexico? A. 60

Q. Name one the main indigenous peoples of Mexico. A. Nahuatl, Mayan, Mixtec, Zapotec

Q. What is the practice of sending Money back to an immigrant's home country called? A. Remittances

Q. What is the Spanish Word for 'store'? A. Tienda

Q. Who is the patron saint of Mexico? A. Virgin of Guadalupe

Q. What is the name of the largest Spanish language television company in the US? A. Univision

Q. About how many Spanish language radio stations are there in the US? (come within 100). A. 700

Q. Name three of the six states with the highest number of farm workers.

A. California, Texas, Florida, Oregon, Washington, North Carolina

Q. Name the co-founders of the United Farm Workers (the first successful farm worker union).

A. Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta

Q. What is the slogan of the farm worker movement (also used in immigration reform rallies)?

A. ¡Sí se Puede!

Q. What does ¡Sí se Puede! mean? A. "Yes, it can be done!," or "Yes, we can!"

Q. What is the fastest growing religion in Latin America? A. Evangelical Christianity

Q. What is the traditional Mexican celebration introducing a three year old to the church? A. tresañeras

Q. What is the traditional Mexican celebration at Christmas which reenacts the holy family seeking refuge? A. Posadas



SESSION SEVEN ~ CHILDREN AND FAMILY

LEADER'S INSTRUCTION

Step 1: Theme and Prayer

Read the theme aloud and then ask a volunteer to read the opening prayer on the Handout.

Theme: *We take special care to acknowledge and value the children of farm workers in our local and national community, many of whom work in the fields themselves or are separated for long periods, maybe years, from one or both parents.*

Step 2: Farm Workers' Reality (10 min)

Read the facts aloud from the Handout and briefly discuss with the group what was surprising about these facts and what the group already knew or didn't know about farm workers.

Step 3: Reflection (15 min.)

If we don't stand up for children, then we don't stand for much.

*Marion Wright Edelman,
President & Founder of the Children's Defense Fund*

What challenges might young immigrants face that adults do not?

*In what ways does our current agricultural system put road blocks in the way of migrant farm workers meeting their responsibilities as parents?
In what ways does it benefit?*

Many farm workers are separated from their families for long periods. What do you think are some of the consequences of that separation?

Step 4: Learning Activity (15 min.)

Materials: pens or pencils

Process: COMPOSE A PRAYER:

Read or have volunteers read the two narratives on the Learning Activity Handout. Then, have the group sit in silence for several minutes and reflect on the readings and on what they have learned

today about children who work in the fields and farm worker families.

Ask each person to compose a prayer (or song) for these children and their families, using a faith tradition with which they are comfortable ; and write it in the blank space at the bottom of the Handout.

Then, ask participants to share what they have written.

Step 5: Serve, Advocate, Act (5 min.)

Read aloud the suggested follow-up actions from the Handout and ask which of the suggestions are most feasible for participants to do during the following week. Encourage participants to commit to at least one action as an individual and consider engaging in some actions as a group.



Close with the following prayer or with a prayer offered by one of the participants.

Closing Prayer

O God of the harvest, despite the prosperity of this good earth, there are children in our fields, children who work to help their families, children who cannot go to school regularly, children who are exposed to pesticides, children whose parents cannot support them from the wages they earn. Bring a harvest of love into our hearts so that we may work for justice in our world and justice for the children in the fields.

SESSION SEVEN ~ CHILDREN AND FAMILY

PARTICIPANT'S HANDOUT

Theme: We take special care to acknowledge and value the children of farm workers in our local and national community, many of whom work in the fields themselves or are separated for long periods, maybe years, from one or both parents.

Opening Prayer

O God, bless your children working in the fields and bless those children who sit in comfort. Give bread to those children who hunger and a hunger for justice to those of us who have bread.

Farm Workers' Reality

- Forty-five percent of adult immigrant farm workers are married and have children but leave their families behind while working in the United States. Most live in isolated labor camps provided by employers. About 90% of the families left behind live in Mexico.¹
- Before increased **border patrol**, 95% of Mexican immigrants returned to Mexico within 5 years and the average trip length was 1.7 years. By 2004, only 76% returned within 5 years and the average trip length duration grew to 3.5 years.²
- The **Fair Labor Standards Act** sets 12 as the minimum age for farm work, making agriculture the only industry that allows children under the age of 16 to work.³
- There are an estimated 400,000 to 500,000 child farm workers, children who work on farms not owned by their families, in the US.⁴
- Forty-eight percent of farm worker children working in the fields have been sprayed with pesticides.⁵ Children are more vulnerable to pesticide exposure because they have a high skin to body weight ratio and are in a more rapid stage of development.⁶
- The average migrant child may attend three different schools in a year. For many migrant children, it takes three years to advance one grade level.⁷

- In an increasingly common occurrence, youth aged 14 to 17 are immigrating alone to the U.S. to perform farm work to support their family members back home. The Department of Labor reported in 2000 that 80 percent of migrant teens did not live with any other family member.⁸

Reflection

If we don't stand up for children, then we don't stand for much.

Marion Wright Edelman,
President & Founder of the Children's Defense Fund

Learning Activity

Serve, Advocate, Act



- Volunteer at a school that has a migrant education program (or an English as a Second Language site).
- Start a collection in your congregation of school supplies for migrant students.
- Support national legislation like the DREAM Act, granting in-state college tuition to **undocumented** students (www.nilc.org for more information).
- Encourage youth/young adults to join YAYA (NFWM's Young Adult & Youth Action Network) to support organizing efforts that result in farm worker parents earning a living wage. Go to: www.nfwm-yaya.org

Learn More

- Read *Fingers to the Bone: US Failure to Protect Child Farmworkers* by Human Rights Watch.
- Read *Children in the Fields: An American Problem*, from the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs. www.afop.org

National Agricultural Workers Survey, US Dept. of Labor, 2000. 2. "In Our Own Words: Immigrants' Experiences in the Northwest", Northwest Federation of Community Organizations, February 2006. 3. Student Action with Farmworkers factsheet, "Farmworkers in the United States," 2000. 4. "Children in the Fields: An American Problem", Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs, May 2007. 5. The Child Labor Coalition, www.stopchildlabor.org, March 2004. 6. "Children in the Fields: An American Problem" ---. 7. Student Action with Farmworkers factsheet, "Farmworkers in the United States," 2000. 8. "Children in the Fields: An American Problem", Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs, May 2007.

SESSION SEVEN ~ CHILDREN AND FAMILY

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Narrative of a Mother¹

I first came to the United States eight years ago. My son was with me for a while but he didn't like it, so he went back to live with my family. Now he thinks of my parents and sister as his parents. If you have a child you can imagine how painful that is for me, and how hard it is to live without him. He is graduating from high school and I have decided that I have to be at his graduation. Now my father is really sick. I know that this will probably be the last time I see him alive. I am **undocumented**, so when I come back I will have to spend thousands of dollars to hire a **coyote** to help me cross illegally. The first time I came with my son we got caught and sent back. The second time we got lucky. Last time I came back the **coyote** made us wait for a long time in a small apartment with no ventilation. It was terrible – you can't sleep, you can't eat, you can't rest because you are too afraid, and you don't know how long you will have to wait or what will happen. I would like to bring my son back with me, but I do not want to put him in danger again.

- Adriana, Washington



Child's t-shirt reads, "FLA Migrant Worker."

Narrative of teenager²

I pitched watermelons. Now that's some hard work. You throw it down the line, one to the other, standing about five feet apart. That's when I was fourteen. I worked pitching watermelons from about 4:00 to 8:00 pm. Because in the morning I was doing other work. I chopped cotton from four or five in the morning until noon. Then they make you go home and rest. Then watermelon. So it was like, eight hours in the morning, then four hours at night. Cotton and watermelon is hard work. I'd get home about eight, go to sleep around ten, then get up at four ...It's hard. You can faint. You have to drink lots of water.

- Dean S. interviewed in 1998 in Casa Grande, AZ

COMPOSE A PRAYER OR SONG:

1. "Immigrants' Experiences in the Northwest: In Our Own Words", Northwest Federation of Community Organizations, February 20062
 2. Human Rights Watch, "Fingers to the Bone: United States' Failure to Protect Child Farmworkers", 2000.

SESSION EIGHT ~ RACISM & FARM WORKERS

LEADER'S INSTRUCTION

Step 1: Theme and Prayer

Read the theme aloud and then ask a volunteer to read the opening prayer on the Handout.

Theme: *Racism keeps us from seeing others for who they truly are and prevents us from developing relationships with people we see as unlike ourselves. Racism limits the progress of society and unjustly suppresses the ability of groups of people to be truly free.*

Step 2: Farm Workers' Reality (10 min)

Read the facts aloud from the Handout and briefly discuss with the group what was surprising about these facts and what the group already knew or didn't know about farm workers.

Step 3: Reflection (10 min.)

"We used to own our slaves; now we just rent them."

*Farmer quoted in the 1960 CBS Documentary,
"Harvest of Shame"*

What in this farmer's statement do you think is still true and what not?

How does hearing this statement make you feel?

Learning Activity (20 min)

Process: Clear enough space and have everyone line up next to one another in about the middle of the room. Tell participants that the front wall is their goal and to keep their eyes on it. Read aloud the statements and have people step forward or backward, as appropriate.

After the last statement, ask everyone to freeze in place, without looking around, and to notice briefly where they are, who is in front of them and who they can and cannot see.

Then tell participants that they are in a race to the front wall for some well paying, good jobs. They

should imagine that they need one of those jobs to support themselves and their families. When told to, they are to run to the wall as fast as they can. The first few to the front wall will get those jobs.

Quickly say, "Ready, set, go," to start the race and get out of the way!

Have the group discuss the following:

How did it make you feel to have to step backward? Forward?

Did you sometimes have to step forward or backward because your life experience to which the statement referred was not under your control? How does that make you feel?

Were you so focused on your own answers and the front wall - your goal - that you failed to see the people behind you. How might that apply to real life?

Step 5: Serve, Advocate, Act (5 min.)

Read aloud the suggested follow-up actions from the Handout and ask which of the suggestions are most feasible for participants to do during the following week. Encourage participants to commit to at least one action as an individual and consider engaging in some actions as a group.

Close with the following prayer or with a prayer offered by one of the participants.

Closing Prayer

We too often do not pay attention and we do not stop to think that, even in this day and age, injustice remains an ingredient in much of the food we eat. God, shake us awake and open our eyes and help us to work to put things right.



SESSION EIGHT ~ RACISM & FARM WORKERS

PARTICIPANT'S HANDOUT

Theme: *Racism keeps us from seeing others for who they truly are and prevents us from developing relationships with people we see as unlike ourselves. Racism limits the progress of society and unjustly suppresses the ability of groups of people to be truly free.*

At the heart of racism is the religious assertion that God made a creative mistake when He brought some people into being.

*-Friedrich Otto Hertz
Sociologist & Historian*

Opening Prayer

*We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.*¹

Farm Workers' Reality

- Non-European immigrant labor has been critical to the US agricultural economy beginning with African slaves in the 1600's, Chinese workers in the 1880's, and Filipinos and Mexicans in the early 21st Century.²
- Hate crimes against Latinos increased by 35% between 2003 and 2006³ and Latinos currently comprise more than 60% of all hate crime victims, according to the FBI.⁴
- 2006 & 2007 saw the birth of at least 144 "nativist extremist" groups, active across 39 states. These are organizations that do not merely target immigration policies they don't agree with, but instead confront or harass individual immigrants. These groups increasingly popularize bigoted theories and dubious statistics.⁵
- Since mid-2006, record numbers of anti-immigrant aimed at Latinos have been introduced in over 20 states.⁶

- According to the 2002 census, over 20% of Latinos live below the poverty line compared to under 10% of whites in the United States.⁷
- A series of studies have found that darker-skinned Mexican Americans, presumably highly indigenous in appearance, experience substantially greater labor market barriers than their lighter-skinned counterparts.⁸

Reflection

"We used to own our slaves; now we just rent them."
*Farmer quoted in the 1960 CBS Documentary,
Harvest of Shame*

Learning Activity

Serve, Advocate, Act



- Pray both for those who are targets of racism and nativist extremists and for those who act in a racist way toward others.
- Work to eliminate racist jokes, innuendos and language from your conversations.
- Fight the passage of local and state anti-immigrant laws and ordinances.
- Write letters to Congress asking for their support for immigrants' legal residency and comprehensive immigration reform and against legislation that marginalizes or discriminates against immigrants.
- Support legislative efforts to provide legal residency to farm workers, such as AgJOBS. Visit www.nfwm.org for current legislative updates

Learn More

Visit the websites of the National Council of La Raza at www.nclr.org and the Southern Poverty Law Center at www.splcenter.org.

1. Adapted from *The Long View* by Bishop Oscar Romero. 2. A Brief History of Farm Labor in the US, NFWM (<http://www.nfwm.org/nfwmresources/resources.shtml>). 3. Southern Poverty Law Center. Intelligence Report: "The Year in Hate", David Holthouse and Mark Poto. Spring 2008. 4. Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, (<http://www.maldef.org/news/press.cfm?ID=444&FromIndex=yes>). 5. Southern Poverty Law Center. Intelligence Report: "Shoot, Shovel, Shut Up", Susy Buchanan and David Holthouse. Spring 2008. 6. American Civil Liberties Union. (<http://www.aclu.org/immigrants/discrim/27848res20070105.html>). 7. US Census, 2002, (<http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/p60-222.pdf>). 8. Remarks of Charles Kamasaki, Senior Vice President, National Council of La Raza. U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Meeting on Race and Color Discrimination, April 19, 2006, Washington D.C. (<http://www.eeoc.gov/abouteeoc/meetings/4-19-06/kamasaki.html>).

SESSION EIGHT ~ RACISM & FARM WORKERS

LEARNING ACTIVITY

1. If you or your ancestors were forced to come to this country, either temporarily or permanently, to try to make a living, take one step backward.
2. If you identify yourself primarily as an "American," take one step forward.
3. If you grew up with people of color or working class people who were servants, maids, gardeners or babysitters in your house, take one step forward.
4. If you ever worked instead of attending school when growing up, take one step backward.
5. If you have immediate family members who are doctors, lawyers, or other professionals, take one step forward.
6. If you studied the history and culture of your ethnic ancestors in elementary and secondary school, take one step forward.
7. If you started school speaking a language other than English, take one step backward.
8. If in school or work, you have always been in the racial or ethnic majority, take one step forward.
9. If you ever skipped a meal or went away from a meal hungry because there wasn't enough money to buy food for your family, take one step backward.
10. If you or a family member has never had to go to the emergency room because you had no health insurance, take one step forward.
11. If one of your parents was ever laid off, unemployed or underemployed not by choice, take one step backward.
12. If you or anyone in your family ever lived in a home without a lock, take one step backward.
13. If you, as an adult, have always lived where you can have visitors anytime you want, take one step forward.
14. If you have ever felt embarrassed or afraid in public because people were staring at you because you look different than they do, take one step backward.
15. If you come home from work at the end of the day and need to take a shower right away to wash off dirt, oil, or pesticides, take one step backward.
16. If you know who to contact with grievances about your job, and you trust that your grievances will be addressed, take one step forward.
17. If, prior to your 18th birthday, you took a vacation outside of your home state, take one step forward.
18. If you moved around as a child because one or more of your parents could not find steady work, take one step backward.
19. If your parents owned their own house, take one step forward.
20. If you have been paid less than minimum wage doing piece rate work or had your wages withheld for reasons you didn't understand, take one step backward.
21. If you were trained in a trade or profession in another country, but cannot now work using those skills, take one step backward.
22. If you ever inherited money or property, take one step forward.
23. If you have easy access to a vehicle, take one step forward.
24. If you do not have access to a telephone, take one step backward.
25. If you generally think of the police as people that you can call on for help in times of emergency, take one step forward.
26. If your parents did not grow up in the United States, take one step backward.

SESSION NINE~ FAITH IN ACTION

LEADER'S INSTRUCTION

Note: This session is intended to be done only after the group has completed previous sessions.

Step 1: Theme and Prayer

Read the theme aloud and then ask a volunteer to read the opening prayer on the Handout.

Theme: *We can begin to act according to the view that life is a round table, where everyone brings gifts to the meal, and leave behind the view that life is a ladder, where some inevitably perch on the higher rungs.*

Step 2: Reflection (15 min.)

Read Luke 16:19-31 and discuss the following:

In our society, who is the rich man? Who is Lazarus? How does faith make possible the sacrifices implied?

What prophetic appeals regarding farm workers have you heard?

“We can choose to use our lives for others to bring about a better and more just world for our children. People who make that choice will know hardship and sacrifice. But if you give yourself totally to the non-violent struggle for peace and justice you also find that people give you their hearts and you will never go hungry and never be alone. And in giving of yourself, you will discover a whole new life full of meaning and love.”

Cesar Chavez, co-founder, United Farm Workers

What in this quote resonates with you?

Step 3: Course Review (15 min.)

Guide discussion around the following questions:

- *What has been the most meaningful part of this course for you?*
- *How has this experience affected your understanding of and relationship to farm workers?*
- *How does what you have learned affect your understanding and relationship to food?*

- *What strikes you as common threads in the lives of farm workers?*
- *How does what you have learned in this curriculum affect your feelings about the agriculture industry in our country?*
- *What do you think are the most effective ways to empower farm workers?*
- *In what specific ways are you willing to make part of your life some consistent practice on behalf of farm workers?*

Step 4: Planning Ahead: Commitments to the Farm Worker Struggle (15 min.)

Note: There is no separate Learning Activity page.

Materials: flip chart, markers

Process: Briefly discuss which follow-up actions from previous sessions participants have done and what their experiences were.

Ask the participants to brainstorm what they would like to do to continue their involvement with farm workers, both as individuals and as a group. Consider the suggestions on the Handout.

1. While the group is brainstorming suggestions, write them on the flip chart for all to see.
2. Have the group prioritize which items are most important to them.
3. Gauge the group's interest and determine a timeline - what needs to be done by when, and then ask individuals to volunteer for each task.
4. If appropriate, set up another meeting for on-going support of farm worker issues.

Step 5: Closing Prayer

Close with the following prayer or with a prayer offered by one of the participants.

God, we understand that the farm workers among us are like Lazarus at the gate. For their sake and for ours, may we open the gate now by finding ways to admit farm workers into our thoughts and into our lives. By welcoming Lazarus may we be different from the rich man who does not rest with God.

**National Farm
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SESSION NINE~ FAITH IN ACTION

PARTICIPANT'S HANDOUT

Theme: We can begin to act according to the view that life is a round table, where everyone brings gifts to the meal, and leave behind the view that life is a ladder, where some inevitably perch on the higher rungs.

Opening Prayer

God, we believe that your spirit is present wherever people strive to make it present. Be with us today as we seek to empower those whom we often cannot see and as we discover our own capabilities to reach out in new ways. This we ask in your name. Amen.

Biblical Reflection

Luke 16:19-31,

"We can choose to use our lives for others to bring about a better and more just world for our children. People who make that choice will know hardship and sacrifice. But if you give yourself totally to the non-violent struggle for peace and justice you also find that people give you their hearts and you will never go hungry and never be alone. And in giving of yourself, you will discover a whole new life full of meaning and love."

Cesar Chavez, co-founder, United Farm Workers

Ideas for Long-term Commitments to the Farm Worker Movement

Serve, Advocate, Act

- Incorporate farm workers into your worship in a regular way, e.g. every Labor Day Sunday invite farm workers to address the congregation.
- Utilize National Farm Worker Ministry worship and Harvest of Justice materials.
- Hold Sunday School or study group sessions using this curriculum.
- Develop a Farm Worker Sunday when prayers, sermon, and materials are focused on food and farm workers.

- Plan an annual collection within your congregation of items farm workers need during the summer: gloves, hats, handkerchiefs.
- Donate your congregation's offering once or twice a year to a farm worker organization.
- If your congregation would like the opportunity for direct contact with farm workers, contact one of NFWM's state offices or our national office.
- Hold an NFWM Harvest for Justice event as a fundraisers for a farm worker organization.
- Develop a farm worker committee within your congregation or denominational network to promote knowledge and support of justice for farm workers.
- In your congregation or committee, study and support farm worker organizations and their campaigns & **boycotts**.
- Write to your elected officials supporting state and federal legislation favorable to farm workers.

For resources or assistance to help with any of the above activities, and for legislative and farm worker campaign information: visit www.nfwm.org

Learn More

- See the pages *Organizations Supporting Farm Workers* and *Resources to Learn More*.



SESSION TEN ~ FARMWORKERS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

LEADER'S INSTRUCTION

Step 1: Theme and Prayer

Read the theme aloud and then ask a volunteer to read the opening prayer on the Handout.

Theme: Farm workers are the men, women, and children who work in the fields and orchards of the United States to plant, weed, pick and pack the vegetables, fruits and dairy we eat. In the same way that we should care about the people who make our toys and clothes, we should know and care about the people who provide us the food we eat every day.

Step 2: Farm Workers' Reality (10 min.)

"Repollo" is Spanish for cabbage. Create a repollo as a fun way for kids to get the facts.

Write the Farm Worker's Realities found on the Participant's page on 8x10 sheets of paper, preferably of various shades of green - one Reality per sheet. Starting with the last Reality, ball up one paper and then ball up each successive piece of paper around the ball to make a cabbage-like ball of paper. The outer layer should be the first Reality listed.

Toss the cabbage to one participant and have them read the Reality aloud. Repeat the process until all the Realities have been read aloud.

Step 3: Reflection (15 min.)

The purpose of the Reflection time is to lead the participants to an understanding that BECAUSE they eat, they have a connection to farm workers. We have vegetables and fruits because a farm worker touched them (picked them) first. Even if the food is processed, ie, pizza uses tomatoes and a fast food hamburger has a pickle (cucumber).

Materials: flip-chart paper and markers

Ask: *Did you eat today?* Then ask the participants to begin listing what they ate and, as

food items are mentioned, write each on the flip chart. When all food items are on the board, go through the list circling those foods which are produce or have some produce in it. Once everyone has participated, ask: *How are we connected to farm workers? How are they a part of our lives?* Elicit as many answers as possible.

Step 4: Learning Activity (15min.)

See instruction on the Learning Activity Handout.

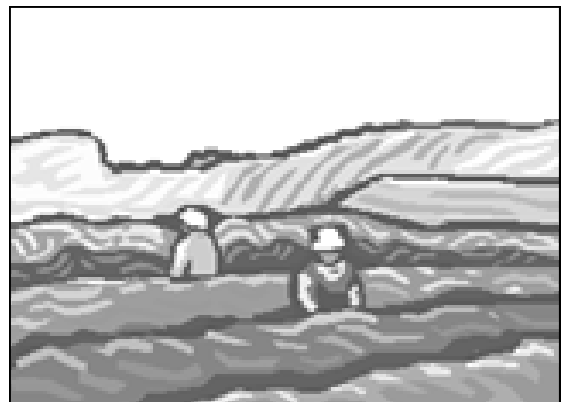
Step 5: Serve, Advocate, Act (5 min.)

Read aloud the suggested follow-up actions from the Handout and ask which of the suggestions are most feasible for participants to do during the following week. Encourage participants to commit to at least one action.

Close with the following prayer or with a prayer offered by one of the participants.

Closing Prayer

God, bless those working in the fields and bless we who sit in comfort. Give bread to those who hunger and a hunger for justice to those of us who have bread.



SESSION TEN ~ FARMWORKERS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

PARTICIPANT'S HANDOUT

Theme: Farm workers are the men, women, and children who work in the fields and orchards of the United States to plant, weed, pick and pack the vegetables, fruits and dairy we eat. In the same way that we should care about the people who make our toys and clothes, we should know and care about the people who provide us the food we eat every day.



Opening Prayer

God, help us to feel in our hearts and bodies our deep connection with those who touch our food as it is grown and prepared. May we treat our food as a sacred gift from them and from you.

Farm Workers' Reality

- **Migrant farm workers** move from place to place to work in agriculture and live in temporary housing; **seasonal farm workers** work most of the time in agriculture, but live in the same place year round.
- Of farm workers in the U.S., 75% were born in Mexico and migrate here.¹
- Each year, two million immigrant & migrant farm workers and their families labor in United States' fields.²
- Sometimes farm workers are paid by the hour, but more often they are paid by the bucket, called "piece rate". In some states they earn as little as 40¢ per bucket of fruits & vegetables. At that rate, farm workers have to pick around two tons of produce (125 buckets) to earn \$50.³
- Farm workers earn an average of \$11,000 a year,⁴ often not enough to feed their families.
- Increasing farm workers' wages by 35% would cost the average American consumer just 65¢ more for fresh produce a week.⁵
- Almost one half of adult immigrant farm workers are married and have children but leave their fami-

lies behind while working in the United States. Most live on the farms where they work in isolated labor camps provided by employers.⁶

- Children as young as 9 work in the fields, even though U.S. law sets 12 as the minimum age for farm work, making agriculture the only industry that allows children under the age of 16 to work.⁷
- Agricultural workers face the greatest danger from pesticide-related illnesses - including poisoning and long-term effects such as cancer and birth defects - of any other group.⁸
- The best way to improve working and living conditions for farm workers is for the workers themselves to have a say in the agricultural industry so that they are able to solve problems without being afraid they will be fired from their jobs.
- Consumers, the people who buy and eat vegetables and fruits, can help farm workers get a voice by supporting farm worker organizations and their campaigns for justice.

Reflection

Did you eat today?

Learning Activity

Serve, Advocate, Act

- For a week, as part of table grace, reflect on all the foods farm workers have helped bring to your table, naming each one out loud.
- For one day, eat no food that a farm worker had a hand in producing (e.g. no fresh, frozen and canned produce or fast food with the same in it or dairy).
- Fast for a meal and donate the money you save to a farm worker organization.
- Visit the web site of the National Farm Worker Ministry Youth & Young Adult Action Network at www.nfwm-yaya.org for more information or to get involved.



1. National Agricultural Workers Survey, US Department of Labor, 2005. 2. Farmworker Factsheet, North Carolina Farmworker Institute, 2007. 3. Farmworker Factsheet, North Carolina Farmworker Institute, 2007. Thompson and Wiggins, *The Human Cost of Food*, 2002. 4. National Agricultural Workers Survey, US Department of Labor, 2005. 5. Farm Workers: Their Contributions to the California Economy, Philip Martin and Mark Madamba, July 6, 2000. 6. National Agricultural Workers Survey, US Dept. of Labor, 2000. 7. The Fair Labor Standards Act. 8. *Fields of Poison: California Farmworkers and Pesticides*, 2002, www.panna.org/campaigns/docsWorkers/CPRreport.pdf.

SESSION TEN ~ FARMWORKERS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Materials: Create a 32 lb bucket of ‘tomatoes’. Get a 5 gallon bucket (restaurants often have one they will give you or a paint supply store). Fill the bucket with 32 lbs of something - 5lb bags of rice work well; and then the rice can be given to a food pantry. You can make ‘tomatoes’ to layer on top by balling up red and green paper. *An alternative is to use 32 lbs of potatoes, spaced along the floor. Participants then go down the row picking the potatoes until the bucket is full and then carry it back to the start.*

You might also download photos of farm workers from the curriculum web site and pass these around during the activity.

Process: Have each participant carry the bucket for some distance; and even try to lift it. While they are carrying the bucket, explain the following:

Most farm workers are paid by the bucket (piece rate), not by the hour like in most jobs. In south Florida where a lot of tomatoes are grown, a tomato picker picks a bucket full this weight, carries it down the long row and then hoists it up above his or her head to another worker standing in a truck, who dumps the tomatoes in a bin. The farm worker then takes the empty bucket back down the rows, picks another bucket full and so it goes all day long. Workers pick about 125 buckets full a day.

Farm workers aren’t working just a few hours. Tomato pickers will pick up to 12 hours a day during the harvesting season – the crops have to be brought in. And they do it usually in the hot sun...and even when its raining. And during the harvesting season when the produce is ready and must be brought in, farm workers will often be required to work 6 days a week.

Once everyone has carried the bucket, ask:

- How much do you think you should get paid to pick all the tomatoes in this bucket?
(answer: \$.40-\$.50)
- Do you eat fast food? What is your favorite fast food? How much does it cost to eat a meal at ... McDonalds, Burger King, Taco Bell, etc?
(answer: \$4.50 or \$5)
- How many buckets would a farm worker have to pick to buy a meal at McDonalds?
(answer: at least 10)
- Farm workers can pick about 6 buckets per hour. How many hours would a farm worker have to work to make enough to buy a meal?
(answer: 1 ½ hours, maybe 2)
- What do you think it would be like to do this work?
- Do you think you could do this work? Share your thoughts.

Border Patrol – a government agency that controls border crossing between the United States and neighboring countries. The Border Patrol became increasingly militarized in the mid-1990s.

Boycott – the practice of abstaining from purchasing, using, or dealing with a specific business or organization in order to bring about a change in policy, including wages and working conditions. A boycott is a nonviolent tool to bring about social change through moral and economic pressure.

César Chávez – (1927-1993) founder of United Farm Workers, along with Dolores Huerta, in 1962. The UFW was the nation's first successful farm worker union. Chávez was an early leader in non-violent efforts for farm worker rights, often fasting and rallying supporters in the farm worker struggle.

Collective bargaining – a tool used by unions to negotiate for fair wages and working conditions with their employers. Workers and their union representatives negotiate with the employer to create an agreement stipulating fair working conditions and workers are then able to enforce the terms such an agreement.

Corporate Food Processor – a company that produces a consumer food product after receiving the crop from farms. The processor is usually responsible for setting the purchasing price of the crops, and thus has a direct effect on wages and working conditions of farm workers.

Coyote – also known as a “border smuggler,” this individual may charge thousands of dollars to assist undocumented migrants in their dangerous attempts to cross the US border to find work. Coyotes may “sell” workers to a labor contractor to pay off the workers’ transit debt.

Debt slavery - Workers are held in involuntary servitude through threats and actual violence against them and their families because of the system of perpetually accruing debt, in which they are over-charged for housing, food, water and transportation.

Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)– initially enacted in 1938, this Act excluded farm workers entirely until 1978. The FLSA requires a minimum wage only for farms where 10 or more workers are employed. Additionally, the FLSA excludes farm workers from receiving overtime pay and establishes the minimum age for farm workers at 12, whereas in all other industries the minimum age is 16.

Guestworker – a farm worker recruited by the US government to come to the US to work for a specified period of time. Guestworkers cannot apply for Legal Permanent Residency and can only work for the employer who applied for their visa.” (See H2A)

H2A – the guestworker program created by the US government to alleviate perceived labor shortages in the agricultural industry. This program brings workers from Latin America, the Caribbean, Thailand and elsewhere to work legally in US fields for a specified period of time. Although standards have been set to regulate H2A working conditions, abuses are well documented, including: blacklisting, witness tampering, visa fraud, and violations of wage and hour laws.

Labor contractor (or crew leader) – an intermediary between some farm owners and the farm workers. The crew leader, many times a former worker, often hires the workers. The farm owner pays the crew leader, who then pays the workers, usually after taking a cut for himself. The crew leader is often the only person on the farm who speaks both Spanish and English. Crew leaders have been used by growers to shift the blame for labor violations.

Migrant farm worker – a person whose principle employment is seasonal agricultural labor and moves into temporary housing for farm work. They may be employed by the actual farm owner, by a crew leader, or by an H2A contract. Migrant workers may continue in the migrant stream, traveling from state to state for work, or they may go back to their home country after the harvest.

Seasonal farm worker – someone who works in agriculture during the harvest season and who works in other jobs during the off season. Seasonal workers are permanent residents of the community and do not move into temporary housing.

¡Si se puede! – a popular slogan of the UFW attributed to its co-founders Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta as they rallied farm workers in the seemingly impossible task of changing working conditions. This is typically translated as “Yes, it can be done!,” or “Yes, we can!”

Tri-party agreement – a labor agreement between three parties: in this case, the farm workers, the farm owners, and the corporate food processors. The tri-party agreement works so as not to apply undue pressure on the farm owners alone, but rather places responsibility for working conditions on the processor as well. This type of agreement was pioneered by the Farm Labor Organizing Committee in its agreement with Campbell Soup in the 1980’s.

Undocumented – individuals in the US without legal documents. As of the year 2000, approximately 52% of farm workers in the US were working without the proper documentation necessary to make them legal residents. Because of this, many farm workers fear they will be deported by their employers, and therefore do not complain about poor working conditions.

Union – an association of workers who seek to improve their working conditions and wages through collective bargaining with a given employer. Unions enable workers to receive fair wages, job security, and the enforcement of safe working conditions.

Virgin of Guadalupe – a vision of the Virgin Mary who appeared to a native Aztec man in the 16th century. The shrine in Mexico City which commemorates this vision is a pilgrimage site for Mexican Catholics, and the Virgin’s image has become a central aspect of Catholicism in Mexico and the rest of the world.

Wage Theft - the intentional theft of services by either not paying the wage that was promised or not paying overtime for work completed. Wage theft also includes misclassifying a worker as an independent contractor rather than an employee in order to avoid certain financial obligations.

Workers’ Compensation – provides medical coverage for employees injured on the job. Despite the fact that farm labor is one of the most dangerous occupations in the country, an overwhelming majority of farm workers do not receive workers’ compensation.

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF FARM WORKER ORGANIZING

National Farm Worker Ministry (NFWM)

NFWM's origins date back to the 1920's, providing services to farm workers through state based ministries. When Cesar Chavez began organizing in the 1960's, he called on religious groups to move from charity to justice. NFWM became the national vehicle to respond to that call, educating and mobilizing national, regional and state religious groups and concerned individuals to act together with the farm workers to achieve structural change.

Collective Bargaining

Labor agreements ensure workers a voice in the industry and provide a means to address concerns on the job without jeopardizing their employment. A union contract can mean decent wages, medical benefits, grievance procedures, and job security for farm workers. A contract fundamentally changes the relationship between the workers and their employers. For many workers, it means that they will be treated for the first time with dignity and respect.

United Farm Workers of America (UFW)

Denied many of the legal protections afforded other workers, Cesar Chavez and the UFW pioneered the use of consumer boycotts in the 1960's as a non-violent tool for farm workers and consumers together to call agribusiness to accountability. During the table grape and lettuce boycotts, farm workers called on churches, unions, and community organizations for support. The boycott spread and resulted in 1966 in the first ever union contract for farm workers. Today, thousands of workers in fields, orchards, vineyards and dairies now work under UFW contract in California, Florida, Washington and Oregon.

Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC)

Following an 8-year boycott of the Campbell Soup Company, Ohio-based FLOC, in 1986, negotiated the first three-way contracts in US labor history. In this type of collective bargaining agreement, companies pay more for the crop they purchase from the farms, resulting in more money for workers and farmers alike. Wages increased, a grievance procedure was instituted, and FLOC created a fund to improve housing and effectively lowered the farmers' cost of such improvements.

FLOC negotiated a three-way agreement in 2004 for farm workers in North Carolina, a first for H2A guest-workers and farm workers in the state, which is being re-negotiated.

Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN) (Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United)

PCUN in Oregon was founded in 1985 and now has more than 5,000 members engaged in community and workplace organizing. PCUN's successes include winning the first union contract for Oregon farm workers, maintaining workers' rights to picket and strike, doubling the state minimum wage since 1985, and gaining paid breaks for Oregon farm workers, a right most other US workers have enjoyed for decades.

Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW)

CIW began organizing in South Florida tomato fields in the 1990's. A tomato picker was paid a per bucket piece rate that had not changed significantly since 1978. CIW asked Taco Bell, one of the major purchasers of Florida tomatoes, to pay one penny more per pound, which growers would then pass on to the pickers, doubling their wage. Taco Bell refused to talk to the workers. After a four year boycott, Taco Bell and its parent company YUM Brands signing an agreement with CIW in March of 2005, which included the penny a pound increase and a code of conduct. Since then, CIW's Campaign for Fair Food has achieved similar agreements with McDonalds, Burger King, Subway and Whole Foods.

CIW also works to expose and eliminate modern-day slavery in the fields. Since 1997, CIW has helped in the prosecution of seven cases of servitude in Florida, involving over 1,000 workers.

Farmworker Association of Florida

Members of the Farmworker Association of Florida, formed in 1984, have created credit unions and food co-ops, demanded pesticide protections and equal treatment in the face of disasters, and together addressed workplace and community concerns.

Farm workers are also organizing in the fields and canneries of Minnesota with Centro Campesino and in Western New York with CITA (Centro Independiente Trabajadores Agrícolas.) Contact NFWM's national office for more information on any of these groups.

**We do not boycott to put anyone out of
business; we boycott to put justice into business."**

Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

**National Farm
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... together with farm workers,
harvesting justice.

RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE

Resources in bold are those referred to in this curriculum.

Books

- Anzaldúa, Gloria. 1987. *Borderlands: La Frontera*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.
- Atkin, S. Beth. 1993. *Voices from the Fields: Children of Migrant Farmworkers Tell Their Stories*. New York: Little, Brown and Co.
- Barger, W. K. and Reza M. Ernesto. 1994. *The Farm Labor Movement in the Midwest: Social Change and Adaptation among Migrant Farmworkers*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Barndt, Deborah, ed. 1999. *Women Working the NAFTA Food Chain: Women, Food and Globalization*. Toronto, Canada: Second Story Press.
- Bus, Fran Leeper, ed. 1993. *Forged Under the Sun: The Life of Maria Elena Lucas*. East Lansing: University of Michigan Press.
- California's Broken Promises: The Laws on the Books are Not the Laws in the Fields*. Stories and photos of California Farm Workers. Published by the UFW, 2007.
- Chavez, Leo. 1992. *Shadowed Lives: Undocumented Immigrants in American Society*. Ft. Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.**
- Ferriss, Susan, Ricardo Sandoval and Diana Hembree, eds. 1998. *The Fight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farmworkers' Movement*. New York: Harcourt Brace.
- Hellman, Judith Adler. 1994. *Mexican Lives*. New York: New Press.**
- Hoffman, Pat. 1987. *Ministry of the Dispossessed: Learning from the Farm Worker Movement*. Los Angeles: Wallace Press.
- Human Rights Watch. 2000. *Fingers to the Bone: United States Failure to Protect Child Farmworkers*. New York: Human Rights Watch.**
- Krebs, A. V. 1992. *Corporate Reapers: The Book of Agribusiness*. Washington, DC: Essential Books.
- Light, Ken. 1998. *To the Promised Land*. New York: Aperture Foundation, Inc.
- Nahmias, Rick. 2008. *The Migrant Project: Contemporary California Farm Workers*. Univ. of New Mexico Press.
- Northwest Federation of Community Organizations. 2006. *In Our Own Words: Immigrants' Experiences in the Northwest*.
- Oxfam America. 2004 *Like Machines in the Fields: Workers Without Rights in American Agriculture*. Boston: Oxfam America.**
- Perez, Ramon. 1991. *Diary of an Undocumented Immigrant*. Houston: Arte Publico Press.

- Rivera, Tomas. 1987. *Y No Se Lo Trago la Tierra (And the Earth Did Not Devour Him)*. Houston: Arte Publico Press.
- Rothenberg, Daniel. 1998. *With These Hands: The Hidden World of Migrant Farmworkers Today*. Harcourt and Brace.
- Schut, Michael, ed. 2002. *Food & Faith: Justice, Joy and Daily Bread*. Denver: Living the Good News.**
- Smith, Sydney. 1987. *Grapes of Conflict*. Pasadena: Hope Publishing House.
- Thompson, Charles D. and Melinda Wiggins. 2002. *The Human Cost of Food: Farmworkers' Lives, Labor and Advocacy*. Austin: University of Texas Press.** This book can be ordered from Student Action with Farmworkers at <http://cds.aas.duke.edu/saf/support/store.htm>, as well as retail book stores.

Videos

- "Cesar Chavez: Celebration of Life." 1994. United Farm Workers of America, Inc. (UFW), AFL-CIO.
- "Children of the Harvest." December 1998. NBC *Date-line*. Andy Court and Victor Anrango (producers), Dennis Murphy (reporter).
- "El Jardin de Eden." ("The Garden of Eden.") 1994. Vanguard Studios.
- "Justice on the Table." 2003. Farmworker Justice Coalition. Eugene, Oregon: Moving Image Productions.
- "El Norte." 1983. Gregory Nava and Anna Thomas. CBS/Fox.
- "Dying To Live - A Migrant's Journey", 2006. Groody River Films Production.
- "The Invisible Chapel". 2007. John Carlos Frey. Gatekeeper Productions.
- Standards of Living. WRAL Documentary on Migrant Housing in North Carolina. August 2005.
- Farmworkers' Lives & the Work of NFWM. 2007. Eleven minutes. Free download at www.nfwm.org or \$5.00 for mailed dvd.

Farm Worker Worship Resources by National Farm Worker Ministry

Harvest of Justice Table Prayer Pamphlets (English and Spanish). Materials for hosting a Feast for Justice event, wallet-size shopping guide, and worship resources in English and Spanish including: prayers, litanies, responsive readings, farm worker related Scripture listing, and more. These and more are available at www.nfwm.org or by contacting NFWM.

**National Farm
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ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING FARM WORKERS

National Farm Worker Ministry (NFWM)

438 N. Skinker Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63130
(314) 726-6470
nfwm@nfwm.org www.nfwm.org

National Farm Worker Ministry, NC Office

4907 Garrett Rd., Durham, NC 27707
(919) 489-4485
ajones@nfwm.org

National Farm Worker Ministry, Florida Office

P. O. Box 1589, Deland, FL 32721
(386) 738-2269
bperry@nfwm.org

Oregon Farm Worker Ministry

P.O. Box 30115, Portland, OR 97294
(503) 990-0611
ofwm@earthlink.net

YAYA—Youth & Young Adult Action Network

(386) 801-1232
yaya@nfwm.org

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS OF NFWM

Alliance of Baptists • California Church Impact • Catholic Migrant Farmworker Network • Central Conference of American Rabbis • Church of the Brethren • Church Women United in Illinois • Church Women United of S. California & S. Nevada • Cumberland Presbyterian Church • Christian Church (DOC) Disciples Farm Worker Ministry • Episcopal Church, Migrant Ministry Committee • Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Division for Church in Society • Franciscan Friars, Province of Santa Barbara • Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls • The Loretto Community • North Carolina Council of Churches, Farm Worker Ministry Committee • Orange County Interfaith Committee to Aid Farm Workers • Oregon Farm Worker Ministry • Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters • Pinellas Support Committee of The NFWM • Presbyterian Church (USA) • Sarasota-Manatee Farm Worker Support Committee • School Sisters of Notre Dame, Shalom North America • Sisters of Charity, BVM • Sisters of Charity of Nazareth • Sisters of St. Dominic of Akron, Ohio • Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi • Society of the Sacred Heart • Southern California Ecumenical Council • Unitarian Universalist Migrant Ministry • United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries • United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society • United Methodist Church General Board of Global Ministries, Mission C & R • United Methodist Church General Board of Global Ministries, Women's Division

Farm Worker Organizations:

Farm Labor Organizing Committee, AFL-CIO (FLOC)

Baldemar Velasquez, President
1221 Broadway St., Toledo, OH 43609
(419) 243-3456 ~ www.floc.com

United Farm Workers of America (UFW)

Arturo Rodriguez, President
P.O. Box 62, Keene, CA 93531
(661) 822-5571 ~ www.ufw.org

Pineros Y Campesinos Unidos Del Noroeste (PCUN)

Ramon Ramirez, President
300 Young St., Woodburn, OR 97071
(503) 982-0243 ~ www.pcun.org

Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW)

Greg Asbed & Lucas Benitez, Co-Directors
P.O. Box 603, Immokalee, FL 34142
(239) 657-8311 ~ www.ciw-online.org

Farmworker Association of Florida

Tirso Moreno, Director
815 S. Park Ave., Apopka, FL 32703
(407) 886-5151
www.thefarmworkerassociationofflorida.org

Centro Independiente Trabajadores Agricolas

P.O. Box 7109, Albion, NY 14411
(585) 589-7460
Email: CITA@verizon.net

Centro Campesino

301-A 4th Ave. NE, Austin, MN 55912
(507) 433-1031
Email: centrocampesino@centrocampesino.net

El Comité de Apoyo a Los Trabajadores Agrícolas

P.O. Box 510, Glassboro, NJ 08028
(856) 881-2507
Email: cata@cata-farmworkers.org

Advocacy

Farmworker Justice www.fwjjustice.org
Student Action with Farmworkers www.saf-unite.org

Assn. of Farmworker Opportunities www.afop.org

National Council of La Raza www.nclr.org

Agricultural Missions, Inc. www.agriculturalmissions.org

Health and Housing

Farmworker Health Services www.farmworkerhealth.org

Migrant Clinicians Network www.migrantclinician.org

National Center for Farmworker Health www.ncfh.org

Farm Worker Demographics and Statistics

National Agricultural Workers Survey:

www.dol.gov/asp/programs/agworker/naws.htm

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Blessing the Hands — CURRICULUM EVALUATION

Please respond to the following questions and return this form to
the National Farm Worker Ministry, 438 N. Skinker Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63130 or fax:314-726-6427.
Thank you for helping us improve this resource.

In what venue did you use Blessing the Hands? When?

Were the curriculum materials useful in generating discussion and interest in within your group
about farm worker issues?

Were the session materials appropriate for use without major revision?

Were the instructions accompanying the sessions clear?

Which parts of the curriculum did you (or your group) find most meaningful?

If you were to use these materials again, what changes would you make?

Did your church group commit to any follow up actions? If so, which ones?

How could NFWM support you in your efforts to follow through with these actions?

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

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NATIONAL FARM WORKER MINISTRY

is an interfaith organization that supports farm workers as they organize
for empowerment, justice and equality.

www.nfwm.org