

## VICTORY FOR OREGON FARM WORKERS !

Oregon dairy workers represented by the United Farm Workers are negotiating their first contract with management at Threemile Canyon Farms (3MC) of Boardman, Oregon. The contract will cover about 250 workers at the mega-dairy.

A landmark agreement last August between the UFW and 3MC required the company to negotiate with the union if a majority of workers signed authorization cards indicating their desire for the UFW to represent them. That majority was officially certified in November. The agreement also called for binding arbitration in negotiations, assuring a contract within three months of the certification in

November. A similar agreement was just signed with Willow Creek Dairy in Boardman, where another 50 workers are employed.

NFWM Board members first met workers from Threemile Canyon nearly four years ago. Together with Oregon Farm Worker Ministry (OFWM) we supported their organizing efforts from the beginning, through appeals to the dairy and its customers and lenders, rallies, radio ads, food drives, city hall testimony and press conferences. "This victory would not have happened," said UFW Northwest Director Erik Nicholson, "without OFWM and NFWM".

***Many workers had some very difficult and humiliating experiences on the job, and people were afraid to speak up. It is important that we come together to support and defend one another. That's what the union is all about. To be able to help my brothers and sisters is a wonderful experience. We must lend a hand to one another, and we can change the world.***

Threemile Canyon Worker



Photo by Alex Jones

NFWM Board & Staff meet with PCUN in Woodburn in mid-January.

## NFWM Meets in Portland, Oregon

During the weekend of January 12 & 13, board, staff and local supporters met at Still Meadow Conference Center in Portland. The meeting was planned for Oregon hoping that we would be celebrating a victory for Threemile Canyon Dairy (3MC) workers...and that's just what we did!

On Friday evening, we were joined by Arturo Sepulveda, former 3MC worker and current UFW organizer, Gerardo Castellanos and his wife and child, and Devia Caldera, one of the women who successfully sued 3MC for gender discrimination in hiring, and her three children.

*The workers spoke to us about their struggles and triumphs and thanked us for "standing by the workers all the way."*

The meeting included two educational sessions presented by Erik Nicholson, Northwest Director of the UFW. One was "Elements of a Corporate Campaign," with 3MC as the example and the other was "Justice for Guestworkers campaign," which has grown out of their 2006 contract with Global Horizons.

On Saturday we visited *Nuevo Amanecer* in Woodburn, a farm worker housing project built and run

by PCUN's sister organization, Farmworker Housing Development Corporation. We heard from Laura Iciordia, Director of Education and Community Organizing Programs.

We then traveled to PCUN's headquarters and visited the offices of KPCN-LP, their newly inaugurated radio station. We heard from Ramon Ramirez, PCUN President and Larry Kleinman, PCUN Secretary-Treasurer. Through years of struggle and perseverance, PCUN has established itself as a respected and integral part of the Willamette Valley community, the center Oregon agriculture.

## We're Not Lov'in it

Nearly two years have passed since Taco Bell and the CIW announced their historic initiative to address the poverty and exploitation of Florida farm workers.

Since then, the National Council of Churches, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, the United Church of Christ, the Presbyterian Church (USA), NFWM and others have called on McDonald's to join Taco Bell in improving wages and conditions for the workers who pick its tomatoes.

But McDonald's refuses to work with the CIW. Thus, the workers' Campaign for Fair Food is intensifying efforts and begins a new phase of the campaign with the actions in April in Chicago, where McDonald's has its headquarters.

### Burger King

As McDonald's has failed to see its complicity, now so does Burger King. On February 5th, BK announced that it "declined to accept" CIW's penny per pound request. Their reasoning is, in part, that they have "no business relationship with the workers." A familiar rationale!

However, they did offer "to send Burger King Corporation recruiters to the area to

talk with workers themselves about permanent, full-time employment at Burger King restaurants."

Lucas Benitez, CIW Co-Director responded, "What is clear now is that during almost two years of conversation, BK was never acting in good faith. How else could one explain their absurd offer to solve the ongoing exploitation of farm workers by training all of Immokalee's tomato pickers to work in their restaurants? *Who, exactly, would be left to pick their tomatoes?*"

## CIW TRUTH TOUR headed for Chicago.

*Plan to join the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in calling on McDonald's to ensure real rights and fair wages for farm workers.*

**Friday, April 13, 2007:** Major rally outside McDonald's global headquarters in Oak Brook, IL

**Saturday, April 14, 2007:** Latin American-style Carnival and Parade for Fair Food, Real Rights, & Dignity in downtown Chicago.

**NFWM especially calls on our supporters in the Midwest to join us in Chicago.** Groups are encouraged to organize their own floats and delegations for this action. CIW can help with logistics ...so plan a van load! Call 239-986-0688 for logistics information. For general info on the events or the McDonald's campaign, visit: [www.ciw-online.org](http://www.ciw-online.org).

Photo by Jacques-Jean Tiziou



NFWM Board member Carol Cook, BVM in front of McDonald's headquarters in Oak Park, IL at a March '06 demonstration.



I remember Steve's brotherhood toward me personally, when he learned I had been fired by Threemile. Everyone who works at these farms knows Steve and feels affection for him because without him our struggle would have been more difficult.

Arturo Sepulveda

## ¡Sí Se Puede! ... Steve Witte

Rev. Steve Witte, Director of the Oregon Farm Worker Ministry, is leaving at the end of February to continue his commitment to farm worker justice as Director, Northwest Division, United Farm Workers of America (UFW).

Under Steve's leadership, OFWM is a respected voice for farm workers. Steve will remain in Portland and help the next

OFWM staff person transition into the work. While we are sorry to see him leave OFWM, we look forward to continuing to work with Steve in his new position with the UFW.

Inquiries regarding the OFWM position may be directed to OFWM Board Chair Ed Brandt at 503-623-5153 or email [OFWM@earthlink.net](mailto:OFWM@earthlink.net).



photo by Andy Mirkva

NFWM Board Member Joan Papert Preiss in the FLOC March.

FLOC's 10th Constitutional Convention, including a March for Immigrant Rights, was held in Toledo, Ohio on September 30, 2006. Over 400 farm worker delegates from the Midwest were joined by 100 delegates from North Carolina, participating for the first time since winning their 2004 labor contract.



## No More Deaths: Lenten Farm Worker Remembrance and Call to Action in North Carolina

Photo by FLOC

A baby is born with no arms and legs to a farm worker illegally sprayed with pesticides. The skull of a farm worker is found by dogs outside a field. Human remains are found under a tree weeks after a worker disappeared while exhibiting signs of heat stroke. A van carrying 18 farmworkers tips over killing two.

*These are examples of horrific tragedies which have occurred in North Carolina's agricultural fields over the last several years. And these kinds of tragedies occur to farm workers around the country.*

The National Farm Worker Ministry and member organizations, the North Carolina Council of Churches Farm Worker Ministry Committee, Agricultural Missions, Inc., the United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries, and others are convening clergy, laity and conscientious consumers

*to call for a death free season in North Carolina in '07.*

This *Farmworker Remembrance and Call for Action* will be initiated with a March 7<sup>th</sup> event in Raleigh, NC. March is the month farm workers begin returning to NC and it is the month of the Christian season of Lent. Local and national religious leaders will join farm workers at the event.

We believe that all of us hold responsibility for farm worker conditions -- government, agricultural industry, and consumers. To recognize our own complicity, we are using the time of Lent to examine our consciences, reflect on that complicity, and consider how we are called to respond.

NFWM asks our supporters around the country to join in using the



Urbano Ramirez's children visiting his grave site near their home in the Mexican state of Guerrero.

Lenten season as a time of personal reflection. Visit [www.nfwm.org](http://www.nfwm.org) beginning February 21 for weekly Lenten reflections. To participate in the NC event, email [nc@nfwm.org](mailto:nc@nfwm.org).

Also, if your congregation or organization is interested in witnessing first hand the conditions in NC farm labor camps, send a delegation during this coming summer; email [nc@nfwm.org](mailto:nc@nfwm.org).

### Welcome to Alexandria (Alex) Jones

Alex, our new staff assigned to NFWM-NC for 18 months, comes to us from a Methodist Mission program. Alex joined us in January following her term in the Philippines, where she discovered that "the majority of those who labor in the fields to produce food for the Philippine population, and for export as well, are also those who can't afford to feed their families." Alex comes with organizing skills, great enthusiasm and more energy than a locomotive. She will take over NFWM duties after Lori Khamala leaves.



Photo by Lori F. Khamala

### Vaya Con Dios ... Lori Fernald Khamala



Photo by NFWM

Lori Khamala & FLOC members at FLOC's Dudley office.

Sadly for us at NFWM, Lori Fernald Khamala is leaving, at the end of March, her position as NC Coordinator. Lori arrived in 2001 in the thick of the Mt. Olive boycott. Her tireless organizing significantly impacted the successful conclusion of that campaign. After FLOC signed its contract, Lori launched Project Solidarity, for two years organizing more than 160 volunteer drivers who drove 450 camp representatives to leadership meetings in various regions of the state.

Lori expanded the presence of NFWM in North Carolina through collaborations such as the NC Farmworker Advocacy Network and mentored eleven interns. The part of the work that Lori found closest to her heart is "being inspired by the workers." We salute Lori and wish her and her husband, Antony Khamala, the very best future.

I have never encountered anyone who provides the combination of capacity, commitment and skill along with her warm personality as does Lori Khamala.

*Wes Hare, NFWM NC Volunteer*

# Immigration Reform

## Justice for Guestworkers

The H-2A program is a foreign labor certification program that permits agricultural employers who anticipate a labor shortage to apply for permission to hire temporary foreign labor, also known as "guestworkers". The use of guestworkers in agriculture is increasing dramatically. Florida reported a 500% increase in H-2A workers in 2006. Nationally, the number of visas approved for H-2A workers has increased from 33,292 in 2001 to 59,112 in 2006.

There are some protections in the law for H2-A workers but enforcement is weak. A study by the U.S. General Accounting Office found that H-2A workers "are unlikely to complain about worker protections violations, fearing they will lose their jobs or will not be hired in the future." The UFW and FLOC began organizing workers in the H2-A program to change that. Today, thousands of workers covered by the FLOC contract with the North Carolina Growers Association and the UFW national contract with Global Horizons are able to address violations and to demand enforcement of federal and state regulations. NFWM will continue to work with these unions as they organize to stop unscrupulous labor contracting companies from taking advantage of workers, and to provide them with representation in the fields.

## AgJOBS

As Congress debates the issue of comprehensive immigration reform, NFWM continues to support the passage of AgJOBS, the Agricultural Job Opportunities, Benefits and Security Act. AgJOBS includes changes to the current H2-A program, but most importantly provides the opportunity for workers to earn permanent resident status if they continue to work in agriculture. The majority of farm workers today have no legal status.

On January 10th, AgJOBS was reintroduced in the House as H.R. 371 and in the Senate as S. 340. Senator Feinstein of California was among those introducing the bill, along with past sponsors, Senators Craig and Kennedy. AgJOBS was negotiated by the farm workers and the agricultural industry and enjoys strong bipartisan majority support. But there have been some attempts to weaken the bill through amendments such as those put forth by Sen. Chambliss of Georgia to reduce wage protections. We will continue to work with AgJOBS proponents to defeat such measures and are optimistic about passing the bill in 2007. Be sure your Senators and Representatives know you want them to support AgJOBS and watch [www.nfwm.org](http://www.nfwm.org) for the latest news and action alerts.

*As the debate about comprehensive immigration reform continues, our focus must remain on one underlying reality. The system we currently employ is unjust because it uses the labor of undocumented immigrants without extending them the protection of our laws. Real reform must include a path to legalization, not just for farm workers but for all those who now live in the shadows but contribute so much.*

A hearty Thank You to our supporters who held a **Harvest of Justice Soup Supper** or used the prayer pamphlets this past year. The events raised over \$3,200. More than 18,000 prayer pamphlets have been distributed.



**MUCHAS GRACIAS**

*Gen Cassani, SSND & St. Pius Catholic Church, St. Louis, MO • Durham Friends Meeting • North Carolina State Episcopal Campus Ministry • First Congregational Church of Chicago • Brian Fisher & Friends in Philadelphia • Sisters of Charity, BVM in Chicago • Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, KY • Pinellas Support Committee of NFWM*



**SUPPORT THE  
UFW BOYCOTT OF  
Charles Krug,  
CK Mondavi &  
CR Cellars wines**



Go to [www.ufw.org](http://www.ufw.org) to sign the boycott petition.



## Local NFWM Support Committees Active in California & Florida

Local support committees are an integral part of NFWM, educating and mobilizing for justice for farm workers. NFWM thanks the volunteers who work to keep these groups going and all who come out for events.

The **Orange County Interfaith Committee to Aid Farm Workers**, Suzanne Darweesh, Chair, held their 42<sup>nd</sup> annual summer celebration for NFWM last August. It raised \$3,183. NFWM Director Virginia Nesmith was the guest speaker. This February 150 people attended the dinner for the UFW. Arturo Rodriguez, UFW President, spoke.



Photo by Nadene Ivens

The **Pinellas Support Committee** of NFWM, led by Joe Morgan, held their annual Sacrificial Soup Supper in December and raised \$1,535 for the Ministry. On February 17, they held a Strawberry Festival with shortcake, fresh Florida berries and a speaker. They hope this will also become an annual fundraiser tradition.

**Sarasota Manatee Support Committee**, with Alejandro Reyes as chair, continues to hold public forums on issues related to farm workers. Visit [www.smfws.com](http://www.smfws.com) for more news about their activities.

Photo by Maria McCourt



Every year, Maria McCourt and the **Tampa Support Committee** spearhead a community wide effort to provide Christmas gifts for farm workers and their children in Plant City & Dover, Fl. Before the holidays, Maria and volunteers visited labor camps to find out exactly what items were needed and hoped for. They raised money, purchased and distributed the gifts, to 529 children.

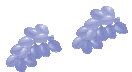
## Damaging Freeze Hits California Farm Workers Hard

In mid-January, a severe freeze devastated California's citrus, strawberry, avocado and other crops, putting up to 28,000 farm workers out of work. Governor Schwarzenegger responded quickly and with his help and that of California congressional representatives, a series of government programs have been put in place for growers and affected communities; however many of the workers are undocumented and ineligible for assistance.

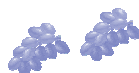
Workers face problems with utility bills, rental payments and food. Maria, an undocumented worker, wandered from one friend's home to another for a place to sleep and a meal. Before the freeze, she earned about \$300 a week picking oranges, but has had little work since. "I'm really

worried. I think every day, 'What am I going to eat the next day?'" the 53-year-old said. Even those eligible for food stamps say the offices are closing early and cannot handle the numbers of workers in need.

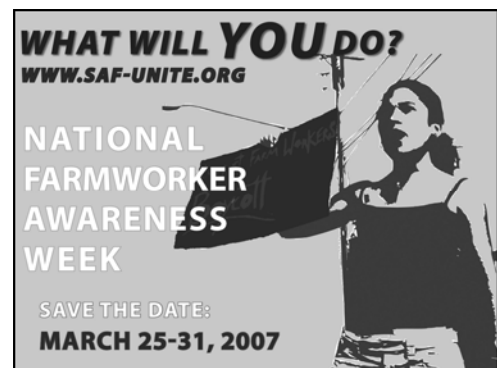
The UFW Foundation is working to get assistance to all affected workers, including opening an office and warehouse in Porterville from which it is distributing non-perishable food. They are also asking supporters to contact President Bush and ask him to declare this a federal disaster. Go to [www.ufw.org/freeze](http://www.ufw.org/freeze) to email the President and call the Foundation at 323-722-0118 for ways to help, including a wish list of foods and sundry donations needed in Porterville.



*NFWM is grateful to have been named as a beneficiary of John D. Moore's Trust. Mr. Moore was a long-time supporter from North Hills, California who died last year.*



Designating NFWM in your will, trust, or life insurance policy will strengthen the future of justice for farm workers. To talk about leaving a bequest, please call Virginia Nesmith at 314-726-6470.



Student Action with Farmworkers is again spearheading this effort. NFWM is a co-sponsor.



**CELEBRATING CÉSAR CHÁVEZ**  
**HISTORIC FARMWORKER LEADER**  
**March 31, 1927—April 23, 1993**



NFWM activists reflect on *César* and the farmworker movement from their experiences as a farmworker, a follower of nonviolence, a Christian, a woman, an environmentalist & a labor leader.

Visit NFWM's web site for weekly Lenten reflections on what *Cesar Chavez'* life means to us today.

February 21—April 4

**WWW.NFWM.ORG**

NFWM has field offices in Central & South Florida, North Carolina & Oregon.  
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**The National Farm Worker Ministry (NFWM)**

*Is an interfaith organization whose purpose is to support farm workers as they organize for justice, empowerment and equality.*

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