

Reynolds Tobacco Shareholder Meeting and FLOC/NFWM Actions

On May 6th, NFWM, Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) and farm workers allies gathered in Winston Salem, NC for a day of actions during the annual shareholders meeting of Reynolds Tobacco (RAI). We were there to tell Reynolds' management and shareholders that farm workers are stakeholders too!

Thousands of farm workers pick the tobacco that enabled Reynolds to earn over \$8 billion in revenue in 2008. Yet, while Reynolds holds dialogues with numerous groups they consider 'stakeholders', including public health officials, tobacco growers, suppliers, retailers, investors, elected officials and community groups, they have refused to even meet with the farm workers!



The day began with a brief prayer service led by NFWM Duke Divinity Intern Kevin Todd. The litany included these words, *"Give us hope in a new day in which all women and men will know justice, peace, equality, and love; a new day when we will no longer need to gather to STRUGGLE for justice but will gather to CELEBRATE justice."*

Following the prayer service, 40 supporters went inside to the shareholders meeting, where a resolution on farmworker & human rights was introduced by Bro. Michael Crosby of the Capuchin Brothers. As Virginia Nesmith seconded the resolution, the 40 stood and held up the names of farm workers who were unable to be at the meeting because they cannot afford to miss even one day of work and because most are undocumented - left alone as long as they labor silently in the fields, but in danger of deportation if they step up or speak out.



After the shareholders' meeting, FLOC supporters marched through downtown Winston-Salem and past Reynolds headquarters. Reynolds management approved an annual compensation package for CEO Susan Ivey of nearly \$9 million. It would take the average tobacco picker 1,250 years to earn that much.



In downtown Winston-Salem, supporters lined the streets educating passers-by. Tobacco isn't just dangerous for smokers. Among the abuses tobacco workers suffer is green tobacco sickness, causing nausea, rashes and dehydration that can lead to heat stroke and death.



The day of actions ended with a rally and prayer at Lloyd Presbyterian Church and a pledge by all to continue to struggle alongside the workers until justice is realized.

Hasta la Victoria!

Keep up-to-date on the campaign at
www.nfwm.org.



NFWM, UFW and supporters remember Maria Isabel Vasquez Jimenez, a 17 year old girl who died last year after collapsing in the fields after working for nine hours in temperatures that reached 101 degrees - without shade, or water nearby.

NFWM and UFW Honor 15 Fallen Farm Workers with Prayer Vigils this Summer

NFWM and the United Farm Workers are holding prayer vigils throughout the summer in Los Angeles to honor the lives of Maria and fourteen other farm workers who have died heat-related deaths since Governor Schwarzenegger took office. Each year, many farm workers are denied water, rest, and shade by their employers as they work for hours under the hot summer sun, despite a law in California to protect farm workers from these very violations. Last summer alone, six farm workers lost their lives due to lack of grower adherence to or government enforcement of this simple law.

Many faith communities are joining us to help honor each of these workers and call for change. The vigils will be held at the Los Angeles Wholesale Produce Market on Olympic Blvd. near Alameda. For information on how you can participate, please contact the NFWM California office: Lucy Boutte - lboutte@nfwm.org, (951-634-8817) or Christy Lafferty - clafferty@nfwm.org, (323-893-9605).

"Maria was a beautiful human being who came to this country with a lot of dreams and with the desire to work hard and to help her Mom and younger siblings. But her dreams were cut short. A year after her passing, the best way to honor her is by making sure farm workers are protected and treated with dignity and respect." Doroteo Jimenez, Maria's uncle

AgJOBS Introduced in 111th Congress

Most of the workers who hand harvest the crops in our multi-billion dollar agricultural industry are immigrants and the majority lack legal documentation - despite our dependence on them. On May 14th, the Agricultural Job Opportunities, Benefits and Security Act - AgJOBS was reintroduced in the Senate by Sen. Diane Feinstein (SB 1038) and in the House by Reps. Berman and Putnam (HR 2414). AgJOBS is a bi-partisan bill agreed to by both farm worker advocates and major agricultural employers

California's Employee Free Choice Act for Farm Workers

April 23rd, NFWM's Virginia Nesmith, Lucy Boutte and Christy Lafferty were in Sacramento when the California Senate took a vote on SB 789, California's Employee Free Choice Act for Farm Workers. This bill will allow for a more level playing field for farm workers to organize in, helping to create an environment in which they can learn their rights, such as the right to shade and drinking water in the heat, and to speak out without fear if those rights are violated. Through SB789, farm workers would be given the option to choose union representation either through a secret ballot election or by a majority signing cards in favor of a union.

The bill goes next for a vote in the State Assembly and then must be signed by Gov. Schwarzenegger in order to become law.

ACTION: In California, take action now to support this bill by contacting your State Assemblymember and Governor Schwarzenegger, visit: www.ufwaction.org



Mark Carlson, Director Lutheran Office for Public Policy in California, NFWM's Virginia Nesmith & Lucy Boutte, Rev. Jerry Pedersen, & NFWM's Christy Lafferty in Sacramento in April.

If our broken immigration system isn't fixed, then farm workers will continue to be abused, the agricultural industry will be without a stable workforce, and the safety of the nation's food supply will be in jeopardy.

to address the agricultural immigration crisis. It allows immigrant farm workers to earn the legal right to permanently stay in this country by continuing to work in agriculture and reforms the current H2A guestworker program, providing growers with a stable workforce.

ACTION: Keep updated at NFWM's website and Contact your Congress members to support AgJOBS. Congressional switchboard: 202-224-3121

More Victories for Florida Farm Workers

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers' (CIW) successes continue in their Fair Food Campaign. In December of 2008, Subway, the biggest fast-food buyer of Florida tomatoes, reached an agreement with the CIW. And on April 14th, CIW signed an agreement with the food service company, Bon Appétit.

CIW took their Anti-Slavery Campaign to the State Capitol recently in Tallahassee, where they re-enacted the horrendous circumstances leading to the conviction of the Navarette family for enslaving farm workers both in Florida and North Carolina - by locking them in trucks overnight, chaining them, beating them and threatening them with pistols. Following a presentation of 40,000 petitions to Florida Gov. Crist, the governor met with CIW members and agreed to work with them to help end slavery and improve conditions in Florida's fields.



YAYA leaflets in support of CIW's Fair Food Campaign

Photo by Alexandria Jones



NFWM YAYA (Youth and Young Adults) Alternative Spring Break

Thirteen students from the University of Florida - Gainesville spent their spring break in North Carolina learning about and supporting farm workers and interacting with young people in North Carolina who are active in the farm worker movement.

They visited a labor camp and heard from farm workers, gleaned in a collards field, visited a migrant health outreach project, had a variety of workshops and presentations on issues such as pesticides and farm workers, immigration, and NAFTA and met with a variety of North Carolina social justice groups. The students capped off their week by leafleting on the campus of Wake Forest University in support of FLOC's Reynolds Tobacco campaign. The visit followed a trip last fall in which North Carolina students went to Florida for a YAYA summit.

Farm Worker Awareness Week Celebrated in Oregon and Around the Country



Photo by John Munson

In honor of Cesar Chavez day, farm workers and their supporters held a "Gran Marcha" for justice in Hermiston, Oregon, organized by the United Farm Workers union.

Among several major actions in Oregon, state and local leaders celebrated Farmworker Awareness Week at the Capitol in Salem. Governor Ted Kulongoski issued the 8th annual proclamation celebrating the contribution of Farm Workers to our well-being, their struggle for better working and living conditions, and the birthday of Cesar Chavez, who inspires us all to work for justice, service, and non-violent change. Also, for the first time, Commissioners in Oregon's most urban county, Multnomah, honored the contribution of farm workers to its residents.

NFWM staff around the country helped organize or participated in numerous Farmworker Awareness Week activities. For more information, visit our web site.

WAYS TO GIVE

NFWM, a nonprofit 501(c) 3, is supported primarily by donations from individuals and religious organizations. Donations are tax-deductible to the extent permissible by law.

CASH GIFT - You can send a check by mail or donate online with a credit card at www.nfwm.org.

PLEDGE - A pledge of any amount may be made on any schedule you choose. For amounts of \$25 or more we can arrange direct deposit from your checking or savings account.

MATCHING GIFT - Check with your human resource department to see if your employer offers a matching gift.

HONOR A FRIEND - We'll send you a gift card to let others know you've made a gift in honor of their special occasion.

STOCKS - Donors can make direct gifts of stocks or appreciated securities.

PLANNED GIVING - Designate NFWM as a recipient of part or all of your estate, trust, insurance policy or establish a charitable gift annuity.

Use the enclosed envelope for your donation or call our national office, 314-726-6470, to talk about donating to NFWM.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Have you visited NFWM's NEW Website?

www.nfwm.org

And link to NFWM's Youth & Young Adult Network - YAYA's new website right from our home page.



Farm workers are the mostly immigrant men, women and children who work in our fields, orchards, nurseries, dairies and feedlots. Their labor fills our supermarkets, restaurants & dining tables.

The National Farm Worker Ministry believes that farm workers deserve adequate pay, safe working conditions and the right to address problems without fear of firing.

For more than 30 years, NFWM has supported farm workers as they organize for justice, empowerment & equality. We educate consumers and mobilize the public in support of farm worker campaigns.

JOIN US !

NFWM has state offices in Florida, North Carolina, Oregon & California. Visit our web site for state contact information or contact our national office: NFWM, 438 N. Skinker Blvd, St. Louis, MO 63130 Office: 314-726-6470 nfwm@nfwm.org

Exec. Director: Virginia Nesmith
News & Views Editor: Susan Alan

Return Service Requested

National Farm Worker Ministry
438 N. Skinker Blvd
St. Louis, MO 63130

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