



October 1, 2018

Dear Community Partner,

YAYA - National Farm Worker Ministry invites you to partner with us in connecting the local organizing of Black farm workers with Black farmers and agricultural activists across the country. **YAYA, along with the Farmworker Association of Florida (FWAF) and the Hope CommUnity Center (HCC) will be attending the Black Farmers and Urban Gardeners Conference in Durham, North Carolina from October 19-21.** At the conference, we will present a workshop on the community history of the Lake Apopka farm workers, which includes injustice, courage, resilience and love.

**In order to send a delegation of six members from our organizations to this conference, we must raise at least \$3,000, by Wednesday, October 17. We invite you to support our attendance at the conference by contributing \$25, \$100, or \$500 towards this effort.**

*Why is it so important to teach the history of Black farm workers and Lake Apopka?*

Previously, extremely fertile vegetable farms lined the north shore of Lake Apopka. In 1998 the government purchased the land due to severe environmental concerns, and subsequently shut down the farms. Over decades, the intensive use of pesticides, including DDT, created devastating results. In 1999, the lake was so toxic that 1,000 migrating birds died and alligators were born with genetic mutations. **While the state of Florida compensated farmers for the land and paid millions of dollars for environmental remediation, 3,000 mostly African-American workers lost their jobs and were not compensated.** After a twenty year battle for payment from the state of Florida to investigate and treat the severe, chronic conditions caused by exposure to pesticides, the workers still have not received funding or justice. The majority of Lake Apopka farm workers have died at a relatively young age from diseases linked to pesticides, including kidney failure, lupus, diabetes, and cancer. Impacts of some pesticides are passed down through generations, causing conditions such as asthma, autism, and learning disabilities in the grandchildren of farm workers. While a direct correlation is difficult to verify, many workers contend these pesticides are the cause of their grandchildren's negative health outcomes.

The Farmworker Association has now transitioned to public awareness and keeping the legacy of the Lake Apopka farm workers alive. Workers have created two memorial quilts to honor the lives lost of all of those who worked on the muck. **In the face of overwhelming injustice, current economic struggles, and health disparities, community leaders such as Linda Lee continue to teach their history, work for justice, and show love and solidarity toward their fellow workers, living and deceased.**

Youth and Young Adult Network of the National Farm Worker Ministry  
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At the Black Urban Farmers and Gardeners conference, the Farmworker Association will present this history and the memorial quilts--a powerful opportunity to uplift these stories, honor history, and reshape the future. They will also support other Black farmers and activists in preserving the history of Black farm workers in their own communities. **It is especially important for YAYA to uplift the history and respond to current needs of Black former farm workers, because as the demographics of agricultural labor evolves to a primarily Latinx, immigrant, and indigenous workforce, the history, contributions, and current needs of Black American farm workers are often pushed to the side.** The reality is that as agricultural employers seek more exploitable workforces, the workers who are left behind face systemic poverty, health problems, and lack of access to jobs and education for themselves, their children and grandchildren. This is true for Latinx as well as Black workers. As employers change labor forces, mass incarceration, poverty and unemployment are an intrinsic part of the legacy of slavery and exploitative agricultural labor practices.

YAYA is committed to supporting Black farm workers in their efforts to improve their lives and their communities. We know that the more resources we provide farm workers to address their economic and social conditions, the more power they have to transform agriculture and society as a whole. This conference will expand the network and tools available to Black farm workers in order to better create change for their communities locally. **Will you join us in this transformative work by supporting our attendance at the conference with a financial contribution of \$25, \$100, or \$500 towards this effort?** Please donate online at [nfwm.org](http://nfwm.org); click "Donate" and enter "BUGS Conference" in the memo. You can also mail a check to "National Farm Worker Ministry" to our office at 231 E. Colonial Dr., Orlando, FL, or contribute cash in person. In appreciation, we will include all donors in a raffle with gift certificates to local restaurants, massage and more, so be sure to include your phone number on the form!

In solidarity,

Dominique Aulisio  
YAYA Coordinator

*P.S. Your gift is tax deductible to the extent permissible by law. Thank you for your generosity!*



*Farmworker Association leader Linda Lee presenting at a Lake Apopka Toxic Tour for NFWM-YAYA*



*YAYA members Tareek Leonard and Christina Buro presenting on proposed changes to farm labor visas*