



National
Farm Worker
MINISTRY

Harvest of Justice 2023: Farm Workers & Racism Lesson Plans

Week One: The Struggle for Justice, Respect, & Fair Pay

Download [Introduction to Farm Workers & Racism \(Introducción a los campesinos y el racismo\)](#) to read an overview of the topic, including discussion questions. Watch our bilingual video [“Farm Workers & Racism: The Struggle for Justice, Respect & Fair Pay”](#) to hear directly from farm workers.

Take Action: Support [farm worker-led campaigns and initiatives](#) across the country.

Discussion Questions:

- What are some of the major challenges farm workers face? Has that changed over time?
- How do you think racism plays a role in the farm labor industry and the fight for reform?
- What role do you think faith communities could play in overturning unjust and racist systems?
- How can you raise awareness about farm worker justice in your community?

Week Two: A History of Racism in Agriculture

Starting from the indentured servants from Europe who were recruited as cheap labor to help care for the land to the first African slaves who arrived in Virginia in 1619, the United States' agricultural system is deeply rooted in exploitation and racist policies. Learn more by exploring [Condensed Agricultural Timeline in the U.S. \(Cronología de la agricultura\)](#).

Take Action: Tell Congress to pass the Fairness for Farm Workers Act. The bill would amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide overtime and additional minimum wage protections for farm workers. Use these [Talking Points](#) to help craft your communication to your legislator.

Discussion Questions:

- What are some of the reasons lawmakers give for why farm workers still need to be exempt from overtime pay and other labor laws? Are these reasons justifiable?
- The majority of farm workers are people of color, but the most common ethnicity among farm managers is White. What steps need to be taken for managerial positions to be more equitable?

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Week Three: Environmental Racism

Environmental racism is the disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on people of color. From temperature changes to natural disasters, farm workers are on the front lines of climate change. Farm workers are also at a disproportionate risk from exposure to pesticides, which can cause short- and long-term illnesses for workers and their families. Although farm workers are often recognized as an environmental justice community, the U.S. government's regulations and policies offer workers little to no protections against environmental hazards. Read more about this week's topic in [Environmental Racism Handout \(Racismo Ambiental\)](#).

Take Action: Contact your legislators and urge them to stand with farm workers and their families by passing the Banning All Neurotoxic Organophosphate Pesticides from our Food Act (The BAN OPs Act). Use this [BAN OPs Fact Sheet](#) and [Email Copy](#) to help create a personalized letter/email to your legislator.

Discussion Questions:

- How do environmental issues disproportionately impact communities of color?
- How can we work towards environmental justice for all communities?
- What environmental injustices exist in your community and/or state?

Week Four: Modern Slavery

In some cases, farm workers experience physical and psychological abuse in the fields. In the worst cases they live in modern day slavery conditions. Read [Modern Day Slavery Handout \(La Esclavitud Moderna\)](#) to learn more. Please also watch our [short bilingual video](#) of two CIW staff members discussing their anti-slavery program and cases of modern day slavery within the U.S.

Take Action: [Boycott Wendy's](#) fast food chain until they sign on to CIW's Fair Food Program.

Discussion Questions:

- Why is modern slavery prevalent in agriculture?
- What steps need to be taken for modern slavery to be eliminated from our food chain?
- What organizations are working to combat modern slavery and how can consumers join in their efforts?

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Week Five: Celebrate BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, & People of Color) Farmers

In 1920, Black farmers made up 14% of all farmers. Farmers of color now make up less than 5% of all U.S. farmers. It is estimated that Black farmers lost around \$326 billion worth of land within the 20th century. While farming is hard work and it isn't uncommon for farmers to leave the profession, that does not account for this staggering loss of land. Much of this loss is due to discriminatory practices from the United States Department of Agriculture and other unjust dealings around heirs' property. We encourage you to educate yourself more about how a long-history of loan denials as well as violence and intimidation lead to farmers of color being forced off their land. Explore HOJ 2023 Farmers of Color Resources to learn more and connect with organizations serving farmers of color.

Take Action: Tell your legislators to support the Justice for Black Farmers Act and Increasing Land Access, Security, and Opportunities Act.

Discussion Questions:

- How did “farmer” become one of the top five whitest professions in this country?
- What is land hunger and how does lack of access to land hurt communities?
- How can people of faith and conscience better support farmers of color?

Week Six: Farm Workers Are Leading The Way

To turn around the unjust agricultural system, farm workers are organizing to demand a seat at the table with the people and institutions that have the ability to change their inhumane working and living conditions. Farm worker campaigns include creating consumer pressure on companies, boycotting, calling on elected politicians, and/or supporting certification programs. Campaigns may be local, regional, national and even global.

Take Action: Use our handouts in English and Spanish to educate your community about issues affecting farm workers and encourage them to support farm worker-led campaigns. Learn more about issues affecting farm workers at nfwm.org.

Discussion Questions:

- Why are many managers, owners, corporations, lawmakers, etc...unwilling to respond adequately to the needs of farm workers?
- What would our agriculture system look like if we prioritized the safety and well-being of workers?
- What accountability do consumers have in helping to change agricultural practices?

**Learn More About The Farm Worker Partners That Appear in
Farm Workers & Racism: The Struggle for Justice, Respect & Fair Pay.**

Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW): CIW is a worker-based human rights organization recognized for its achievements in the fields of corporate social responsibility, community organizing, and modern-day slavery and other labor abuses common in agriculture. They formed in 1993 as a small group of workers who met to discuss how to better their community and their lives. CIW founded The Fair Food Program, which is a unique partnership among farmers, farm workers, and retail food companies that ensures humane wages and working conditions for the workers who pick fruits and vegetables on participating farms.

Familias Unidas por la Justicia (FUJ): FUJ is an independent farm worker union of indigenous families located in Burlington, WA representing over 500 Triqui, Mixteco, and Spanish speaking workers at Sakuma Bros. Berry Farm. Familias Unidas formed in 2013 with the hopes of securing a better future for hand harvesters in the local berry fields of Whatcom and Skagit Counties in Washington State. Nearly four years later, on September 12, 2016, Familias Unidas won a historic secret ballot election ushering in a new era for farm worker justice in WA State. FUJ partners with Community 2 Community Development, which is a women-led grassroots organization dedicated to food sovereignty and immigrant rights in WA.

Farmworker Association of Florida (FWAF): FWAF, which was founded in 1986, does community organizing, education, and advocacy to build power among farm worker and rural low-income communities to respond to and gain control over the social, political, workplace, economic, health, and environmental justice issues that impact their lives. FWAF's programs and activities build leadership and activist skills among low-income communities of color who are disproportionately affected by pesticide exposure/health problems, environmental contamination, racism, exploitation, and political under-representation. FWAF has more than 10,000 member families, and five locations throughout Central and South Florida.

Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN): Based in Woodburn, the center of Oregon's agricultural industry, PCUN is Oregon's farm workers union and largest Latino organization in the state. Founded in 1985 by 80 farm workers, PCUN has since registered more than 6,000 members, 98% of which are Mexican and Central American immigrants, and to encompass a wide variety of organizing projects. PCUN's fundamental goal is to empower farm workers to understand and take action against systematic exploitation and all of its effects. To achieve this end, PCUN is involved in community and workplace organizing on many different levels.