

Fall 2024

NATIONAL FARM WORKER MINISTRY NEWS & VIEWS

In this issue:

**P. 1: ED LETTER: CESAR'S
DREAM**

**P. 3: 5 WAYS TO SUPPORT
NFWM**

**P. 4: FARM WORKER
VICTORIES**

**P. 6: SUMMER 2024 BOARD
MEETING REFLECTION**

**P. 7: NFWM NEWS &
REMEMBERS**

**P. 8: THE FARM WORKER
MOVEMENT NEEDS YOU**



Message from the Executive Director

Once upon a time Cesar had a dream. So did Dolores. So did Larry. And their dream birthed the United Farm Workers Union. Along with them, Chris Hartmire had a dream of bringing people of faith and conscience into the Farm Worker Movement. Together with Cesar, Baldemar Velasquez, other farm worker leaders and a number of faith



NFWM meeting Ira Cuello-Martinez from PCUN.

leaders from the National Council of Churches, Church Women United and a variety of other denominations, helped to envision an organization that would come alongside the dream of a farm worker union and supported Chris as the first leader of that organization, the National Farm Worker Ministry.

How this dream would come true has changed over the years. Other farm worker unions started in other places. Where unions were strongly opposed, different kinds of farm worker organizing formed and today we have an association, a coalition, a support committee, an alliance, and others. All of them are pursuing the dream that Cesar had in their own way. From contracts with specific growers or companies, to community organizing, to political advocacy, all these groups seek to get better living and working conditions for farm workers around the country.

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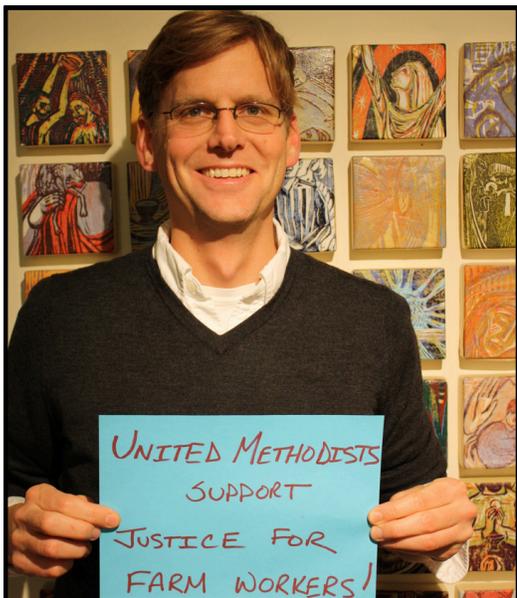
Later in this newsletter there will be an article on farm worker wins. Take note of this. Also know that the UFW provides health insurance for union members. Many have pensions, vacation and sick time. The Coalition of Immokalee Workers has regulations that govern heat, housing, sexual harassment, wages. Other groups provide community IDs and driver's licenses. And know that there is more to do. In the absence of federal legislation that gives farm workers the right to organize without retaliation and to have the same access to worker rights as all other workers in the country, these state and community protections/opportunities give farm workers a better advantage than they have in other locations. We support all these efforts and more.

Join NFWM as we continue to live out these dreams with farm workers and allies. We need a lot more financial resources to do this work. NFWM has been part of every farm worker campaign over the years, but we need more staff to make meaningful change. Income is down for us as well as for many other nonprofits, especially in an election year. Please help us to continue to work towards the dreams of those who have come before us. Let's keep the dream alive and do more to make it come true.

Board Member Corner: Thank You For Your Service!



Sister Karen Bernhardt came to NFWM as the General Coordinator of the Catholic Migrant Farmworker Network. Her work with them highlighted long years of the migrant ministry of the Catholic Church and the roots of NFWM. When Sr. Karen left CMFN, she secured her religious order, the Sisters of the Humility of Mary, as a member organization and became their representative to NFWM's board. As a representative, Sr. Karen participated in marches and protests in solidarity with our farm worker partners and she even offered remarks on behalf of the CIW at a 2018 Wendy's shareholder meeting in support of the Fair Food Program. She made presentations and wrote about her experiences in her order's publications. During her tenure on the NFWM board, Sr. Karen assisted the Fundraising Committee in making contacts with donors.



John Hill served the NFWM board for over 20 years representing The United Methodist General Board of Church and Society. He was an integral part of the Executive Committee for much of that time and served as both board Secretary and then Vice President of the board most recently. He was part of the strategic planning team that led to changes in 2012. Over the years he has joined all our United Methodist partners in public witness opportunities, protest, even hosting a meeting with the leader of Sakuma Brothers Berries and NFWM board members in 2016 at The United Methodist Building, something that combined with other actions, led to the signing of the union contract between Sakuma and Familias Unidas Por la Justicia.

We are grateful for both these faithful board members, their representation of their organizations and their personal commitments for farm worker justice.

5 Ways To Support National Farm Worker Ministry

1. Help grow NFWM's supporter base. Tell your family and friends about the work of NFWM and encourage them to visit our website (nfwm.org) or follow us on social media. We are also looking for opportunities to speak with communities across the country both virtually and in-person. If you know any groups or events we should connect with, please email Rose Green Flores at communications@nfwm.org.

2. Use and share NFWM's resources. Each year we create new educational resources and continuously update our website so we can continue raising awareness about farm worker issues. Visit our website regularly to explore our content and help educate other consumers about the Farm Worker Movement by sharing our resources with your network.

3. Sign NFWM's petition telling Congress to create a path to citizenship for farm workers and other essential workers. The petition closes on October 13, 2024. Sign now at nfwm.org/immigration.

4. Deliver a manager letter at a Wendy's restaurant. Whether it is your neighborhood Wendy's or one you are passing on a road trip, we encourage you to deliver NFWM's letter stating you are joining the boycott of Wendy's until they join the Fair Food Program. Our goal is for every Wendy's in the U.S. to receive a letter from a supporter like you. Visit bit.ly/wendysboycott to download a letter, see a map of locations visited, and to submit the location of the restaurant you visited.

5. Give to NFWM. We are able to continue our commitment to economic, social, and racial justice for farm workers through gifts by donors like you. Help us sustain our mission of standing alongside farm workers by giving generously today at nfwm.org.



The 2024 Harvest of Justice resources are available! This year's theme is the impact of immigration on farm workers and the need for immigration reform. Please share our HOJ 2024 resources with your community so even more people learn about this important issue. Learn more at nfwm.org/immigration.

Farm Worker Victories Across The Country!



Since enacted, the Fair Labor Standards Act has left out agricultural workers from overtime, paid, and sick leave. Mily Trevino Saucedo, Executive Director of Alianza Nacional de Campesinas, called this out as a racist policy that discriminates against agricultural workers in an Instagram interview she did with The Anti-Racist Research and Policy Center. Low wages and long hours have been a major concern for farm worker advocacy groups across the nation who have campaigned to include farm workers in the fair labor standards laws. In 2019, California's department of labor was the first to amend their labor rights to include farm workers in overtime pay and sick leave. This inspired other states to follow suit, including Washington, Oregon, Minnesota, and New York. Although it was disputed in

New York, the UFW declared victory when it was confirmed that all farm workers, including seasonal and temporary foreign workers, are eligible and should be paid overtime in states where overtime is law.

Adding to this victory, California amended their unemployment policies this past year with bill SB227 to include workers who do not have legal permanent residency. Seasonal and temporary agricultural workers in California can now apply for unemployment benefits and might be eligible to get up to 300 dollars assistance per week. Our partner in the East coast, C.A.T.A, as well as ACLU and the Seton Hall Law School, used this motivation to file a complaint of discrimination with the state of New Jersey calling for equal rights in hourly wages, sick and paid leave, on behalf of farm workers in August 2024.



Another pressing issue has been the increasing climate temperatures. Again amongst the most vulnerable, farm workers are at high risk of heat illnesses, even death from heat stroke. After Oregon resident, 38-year-old Sebastian Perez, passed away from a heat stroke, PCUN, FWM Northwest, and our partner organizations in Oregon campaigned and passed some of the Nation's strongest heat stress laws, protecting and saving lives, reflected in the decrease of cases reported in 2024 in Oregon. Five states, California, Washington, Oregon, Colorado and Minnesota have all passed standard heat protections for workers. The current administration also reported recommendations made to OSHA proposing a first time federal heat protection standard that would impact and protect over

36 million American workers. Partners in the East, Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) have integrated heat stress education in the Fair Food Program (FFP) and are working with growers to ensure that the focus is on training employers and employees to be aware of indicators of possible heat stress, how to avoid, treat and react to a case of heat stress or heat stroke.

Another recent victory for CIW occurred when the USDA awarded the FFP to be part of the Farm Labor Stabilization and Protection Pilot Program which will ensure that growers are prioritizing the workers' health and treatment. According to CIW, a total of 27 new farms answered the call to join the FFP

Farm Worker Victories Cont.

through the new program, nearly doubling the current number of participating growers and introducing the life-saving provisions of FFP to 13 new states and thousands more farm workers harvesting countless new crops.



To continue the celebration of victories, we announce a major win in public health and pesticides. The AMVAC Chemical Corporation has announced their decision to voluntarily cancel and discontinue the pesticide Dacthal, also known as DCPA, effective immediately. This announcement was made after the EPA declared an emergency suspension of the pesticide due to results of a high risk of thyroid toxicity development in fetuses of pregnant women exposed to this chemical, saving future unborn babies from life long illnesses.

The last victory is in education. All children deserve a head start in their education, including agricultural workers. The Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker head start education program was recently able to expand the reach of qualified families and can now accept children of families in which at least one person in the family works in agriculture. Additionally, income brackets were eliminated, which opens up the head start opportunity to more agricultural families who can benefit from this service.

Social justice is not an easy task, advocating to create change doesn't happen overnight. When we win a victory, big or small we celebrate those victories and use that motivation to keep the energy going. These are some of the celebrations to remind us that our work matters.

“There’s no turning back ... we will win.

We are winning because ours is a revolution of mind and heart.” -Cesar Chavez



Art in the Farm Worker Movement Exhibit

Spring 2025

Washington, DC 20002

Learn how you can visit and support this event at nfwf.org/art

Board Meeting Highlight: Windmill Farms Report

By The Rev. Connie Yost, President of Farm Worker Ministry Northwest

On July 12, the NFWM board and supporters met virtually with Sandra Chávez, a former (fired) worker at Windmill Mushroom Farms (formerly Ostrom Mushroom Farms) in Sunnyside, Washington, and Kimberly Tyskiewicz, Regional Director, United Farm Workers (UFW). Workers at the mushroom farm have been organizing for better working conditions with the help of UFW since 2022 when Ostrom management fired 170 local workers and brought in H-2 A workers. Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson filed a lawsuit against Ostrom for these actions, and the company was fined \$3.4 million. Ostrom sold the farm to Windmill in early 2023, and the new management fired all of the workers, hiring them back only if they agreed to whatever job and quota they were given and forcing them to sign an arbitration agreement. Workers and UFW filed a lawsuit against Windmill in late 2023, which is in the court system.

Sandra Chávez spoke movingly about the working conditions she experienced under Windmill. She had worked for Ostrom for over 3 years when Windmill made her a lead supervisor in February 2024. As a supervisor, she was told to yell at the employees and pressure them to pick the mushrooms faster. She refused, so she received warnings from her supervisor, who yelled at her and called her a “fool.” Many of the employees experienced this kind of verbal abuse and harassment. They were made fun of and their complaints were dismissed by Human Resources. Sandra was fired in June 2024 for not doing good work, but her previous reviews stated she was a good worker. Other workers have been similarly fired, some with no warning. Sandra said the company would like to fire all the workers and bring in the H-2A workers through a labor contractor, which would relieve Windmill of the management of the workers.

Following their report to the NFWM board, on July 24, many current and former workers of Windmill Farms met in Sunnyside with a panel of elected officials, political candidates, and nonprofit staff. UFW organizer Kimberly reported that the next day, Windmill cleared warnings from workers' HR records and lowered the production quotas in some cases. On July 26, the manager who was the most abusive to the workers quit. UFW and the workers are cautiously optimistic, but management has still refused to recognize the union and negotiate a collective bargaining contract and grievance process for workers.

It hurts my heart to hear these workers' stories. As people of faith and justice, we know that farm workers are essential workers who deserve to organize, be safe on the job, make a living wage, and be treated with respect and dignity. Community support makes a difference as farm workers often have little voice or power and work in situations where exploitation is common practice. When we show up, we are telling management that we want the workers to be treated fairly and that we will use our voice and power to stand with them. It is our moral duty to join with the workers in compassion and hope, recognizing that we are connected, that we are all in this together, that the people who feed us are essential human beings and must not be exploited.

Watch the recording of Sandra and Kimberly's report at [youtube.com/@nfwministry](https://www.youtube.com/@nfwministry).



NFWM News

Welcome, Elizabeth Rodriguez!



Elizabeth is happy to call the Rio Grande Valley, TX her home, where she was raised in a large Mexican American family. She is a proud daughter and single mother of 5 amazing children. In 2018, she began to build relationships with Farm Workers to bring awareness to human trafficking in agriculture. She previously worked at La Union del Pueblo Entero as a community organizer, supporting the hardworking community living in rural areas to create power and advocate for policy improvement to help them meet their needs and improve their communities.

Elizabeth earned a Master of Science in Social Work in May 2024 from University of Texas Rio Grande Valley where she worked with the Alford research team collecting data with farm workers. She is dedicated to serving the community. Elizabeth is a product of generations of farm workers, parents who met as migrants in the fields, and grandparents who came into this country through the Bracero Program. She has worked hard to deliver great honor to her family and has been blessed with the opportunity to return respect and dignity to them.

Thank you, Trinity Long!



Trinity Long was NFWM's Summer 2024 intern. This Fall, she will be entering her third and final year in Duke's Master of Divinity program. During her time at NFWM, Trinity researched local and state ecumenical groups with interest in farm worker justice to help connect NFWM with new allies. She worked on updating educational and faith-based resources for the NFWM website. Trinity attended the Poor People's Campaign March on behalf of NFWM and led a gratitude activity at Ravensworth Baptist Church in Virginia. Trinity also led a reflection at NFWM's Summer Board Meeting inspired by her visit to a labor camp in North Carolina. Read more about her experience and what she learned from farm workers at nfwm.org/news.

NFWM Remembers



¡Presente! Kathie Franger

Kathie Franger passed away on March 8, 2024, after 95 years of devoted service to family, friends, and underserved communities. After retiring from the Mountain View School District offices, she volunteered her skills for various nonprofits. She was committed to social justice, marching, boycotting, leafleting, and picketing for immigration policy reform and improved conditions for farm laborers. Kathie's commitment to Farm Worker Justice and worker rights will be forever remembered.

National Farm Worker Ministry

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Return Service Requested

NFWM needs your help to educate, equip, and mobilize for farm worker justice!

As a small organization, we reach milestones as a direct result of our supporters. We have exciting upcoming projects planned: An Art in the Farm Worker Movement Exhibit in Washington, DC; new educational content, such as webinars and next year's Harvest of Justice on farm workers' housing; and new stories from the fields and farm worker campaigns. We can't wait to share these projects with you, but we need your help to accomplish our goals. By responding to our action alerts, sharing our resources, and donating to our organization, you can help us make a difference for the livelihoods of farm workers. Please give what you can so we can continue giving support to farm workers.



Donate now at nfwm.org.

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