

Spring 2025

NATIONAL FARM WORKER MINISTRY NEWS & VIEWS

In this issue:

**P. 1: ED LETTER: WELCOMING
THE STRANGER**

**P. 2: WINTER 2025 BOARD
MEETING REPORT**

**P. 3: WINDMILL MUSHROOM
BOYCOTT**

**P. 4: FARM WORKER
CAMPAIGNS**

P. 5: NFWM STAFF CHANGES

**P. 7: NFWM PROGRAM NEWS &
A REMEMBRANCE**

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

**SPECIAL INSERT: ART &
ARTIFACTS OF THE FARM
WORKER MOVEMENT**



Message from the Executive Director

Growing up I learned that one of the basic tenants of the Christian faith was hospitality, welcoming the stranger. There is a story in the Christian gospel that was told by Jesus about a judgement day when everyone would be gathered to face a judge and the single criteria applied to all the people was what they did in response to him. For those who receive an inheritance, he described it this way, "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." (Matthew 25:31-46)

This is the foundation of not just Christian faith but others as well and is the impetus for the way in which people and their congregations are called to be faith in the world. It is why there are feeding programs, shelters, hospitals, prison ministries, clothes closets, migrant ministries and other forms of outreach. Faith is oriented towards meeting needs and caring for the world. Faith communities are places where everyone is welcome. Some of the most generous places I have ever been are to meetings with groups of people who, upon hearing the struggles of others, give generously to meet the need.

Migrant ministries was how the National Farm Worker Ministry began over 50 years ago. The outreach of people around the country to the "strangers" in their communities who were picking the fruits and vegetables at the local farm were people to whom these ministries were called to go. They were strangers who had needs, in large part they needed the care and fellowship of people of faith and conscience. Sometimes they also needed assistance. Over time, it was clear that they needed the solidarity and support of the people who came so that they could address the injustices they experienced in their living and working conditions.

Continued on next page...

It is the same today, only more so. Today's farm workers as well as immigrants in general face the constant and terrible threat of deportation. Many who have been here for decades, who have established a home here, who are raising their children here, are living in fear. They are being called "criminals" even though they have committed no crimes other than to be without documentation. Their violation is administrative, being in this country without status. So many are here meeting the labor needs of industries that cannot find cheap US workers. Many are working in exploitative conditions because of the overwhelming greed of companies who seek huge profit margins for upper management and stockholders rather than spreading out earnings among all the levels of production. Today, these immigrants have become the scapegoats, blamed for a system that has been all too willing to use them.

The National Farm Worker Ministry believes that farm workers, as other workers, are an essential part of food production in the US. Their work is honorable and necessary and deserves fair compensation. In addition to that, we believe that their work conditions should be respectful, safe, reasonable and without threats either of deportation or harassment. We believe the same thing for farmers in this country. The food system is what gives health and sustenance to all the people. Farming and working as a farm worker should both be professions that are appreciated and compensated and valued. We all eat. We also believe that ALL immigrants should be welcomed and valued. Join NFWM as we welcome farm workers and immigrants. Support us as we continue our work for justice with and for farm workers.

National Farm Worker Ministry's 2025 Winter Board Meeting Report

On January 24-25, NFWM met at San Damiano Retreat Center in Danville, CA for their bi-annual meeting. Farm worker engagement day was a trip to Half Moon Bay to meet with Ayudando Latinos A Soñar (ALAS) and to mark the second anniversary of the farm worker tragedy there. Following a press conference where NFWM Board President, Rev. Dr. Nathan Hosler, spoke, we were taken on a tour of the outreach of ALAS. Through their efforts, farm workers have access to mental health treatment. There are cultural events, music and art classes for all the generations, all designed for healing and support. They have been a catalyst for new and affordable farm worker housing in the city of Half Moon Bay.

In the evening, we were part of a vigil to honor the seven farm workers who died in Half Moon Bay. A guitar and accordion band performed traditional Mexican music. Band members were farm workers who had learned to play these instruments. Among them was Pedro, the brother of one of the farm workers killed and who himself was shot 5 times. It was a moving performance before community members, farm workers and their families, and NFWM received a certificate of recognition from the County of San Mateo.

Saturday, Board Members met to approve the 2025 budget, elect officers for the next two years, endorse the UFW's boycott of Windmill mushrooms and approve a Succession Plan for Unexpected Disruption in Leadership for NFWM. There were reports on Finance, Personnel, Fundraising, Farm Worker Advocacy, Communications, and discussions on strategic planning. The next meeting is set for Ossining, New York, July 25-26.



Appreciation For NFWM Board Member, Giovana Oaxaca

On April 25, 2025 Giovana Oaxaca left her position at the ELCA where she served the last four+ years and was representative for them on our board, recently as a Vice President. What she learned there was how to advance key federal policy efforts, to leverage the voice of the church--in all of its expressions--for the service of neighbors and the common good. She cited our time in California a few years ago as particularly meaningful. She believes we continue to witness our friends and allies in the farm worker movement who turn these challenging circumstances into new possibilities for movement organizing and advocacy, recognizing we have so much to gain from the resiliency and fortitude of los y las campesino/as.

Gio is continuing her immigration work as the Senior Government Relations Advocate on Immigration at NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice. We are looking forward to staying in touch with her. All the best, Gio!



Windmill Mushroom Boycott



On Dec 18, 2024, current and former mushroom farm workers from the Windmill Mushroom Farms in Sunnyside, WA rallied to formally announce a UFW boycott of Windmill Mushroom products. The NFWM Board of Directors endorsed the Windmill Farms mushroom Boycott on January 25, 2025.

After enduring harassing and discriminatory tactics and bringing them to the attention of management and human resources, the employees were subjected to harassment. All employees who raised concerns about their right to a safe workplace were laid off in retaliation. Those still employed now work in fear, afraid to speak to former co-workers who could be targeted if the employer believes they support the union effort.

The Windmill Mushroom label can be found at many grocery stores across the Pacific Northwest and has been identified by UFW activists at locations in Washington, Oregon, and Alaska. Windmill also produces mushrooms sold under generic store labels, making them difficult to identify as Windmill products. Any mushroom labeled as being from Sunnyside, Washington will be one produced by Windmill Farms, as it is the only mushroom plant in the area.

How can you stand in solidarity with workers? Don't buy Windmill Mushrooms or any mushrooms from Sunnyside, Washington! Go one step further by sharing about the campaign on social media, creating your own post or sharing one of NFWM's.

NFWM joins the ALL DAY PICKET with Migrant Justice to Demand Milk with Dignity

This spring, a group from Migrant Justice traveled to the Netherlands to submit a human rights complaint to the Dutch government and participate in Ahold Delhaize (owners of Hannaford Supermarkets) shareholder meetings. As a result, Hannaford agreed to collaborate with Migrant Justice to launch an investigation of working conditions for dairy workers, thanking the organization for shining a light on the industry and working standards. This is a good step in the right direction and we celebrate this victory! At the same time, Migrant Justice knows they must continue to be persistent here in the US and demand Hannaford join the Milk with Dignity program.

An ALL DAY 16 Hour Picket event was organized on International Workers Day, May 1st, outside the Hannaford Supermarket in Williston, VT. Migrant Justice, in collaboration with local partners, organized shifts and assigned tasks to maintain a picket outside Hannaford from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m., stopping cars and urging shoppers not to buy from the store that day to demonstrate the potential revenue loss if Hannaford doesn't sign on to Milk with Dignity. NFWM's Elizabeth Rodriguez participated in the 16 hour picket and witnessed the outpouring of support by the community. Over 30 community organizations participated and delegated responsibilities for the all-day picket, including Bread and Puppet, Sisters of Mercy, student groups, and the Vermont Worker Center. Dozens of immigrants, dairy and construction workers also showed up, ready and happy to support because Migrant Justice supports them and the Milk with Dignity Program allows them the ability to improve their own working conditions.

Later in the afternoon, more than 2,200 people of faith and conscience gathered nearby for a solidarity march, demanding the release of eight dairy workers detained by ICE in the days leading up to the picket. The march began close to the picket line and proceeded to a local ICE office, where participants also celebrated the release of Mohsen Mawdawi, the Columbia student detained for protesting. At the rally, community members praised Migrant Justice as heroes—trusted leaders who can be counted on when rights are under attack. The march then continued to the picket line outside the Williston Hannaford, culminating in a powerful rally to remind Corporate Hannaford that the people united will never be defeated.



NFWM STAFF CHANGES

NFWM Welcomes Isabella Legra



The new Administrative Assistant at NFWM is Isabella Legra. Isabella's office hours are 8:00-1:00 p.m. Monday-Thursday.

Here's what she says about herself:

"In 2023, I graduated from Rutgers University with a major in Communications and a minor in Cinematography. I've always had an eye for creativity as I'm passionate about storytelling through film, whether it's movies, TV, or one day, my own production company. My love for crafting began in high school, where I created videos of my friends to cherish and look back at years from now, capturing the beauties of our teen years. As much as I loved creating the work, seeing how I elicited emotions from a 20 second video was fulfilling. It was then that I realized my calling: to entertain, inspire and bring happiness into a world often overshadowed by negativity. This is also why the work of the National Farm Worker Ministry means so much to me. Their mission to uplift and advocate for farm workers aligns closely with my values. As an Afro-Latina woman, I'm deeply committed to standing up for marginalized communities and doing my part to bring about justice, equity, and meaningful change."

Intern Update: Thank you, Amanda Morrow!



The academic year Duke Divinity School intern, Amanda Morrow has finished her placement with NFWM and graduated to begin a United Methodist pastorate in Southeast North Carolina. As a Rural Fellow, Amanda is assuming a two point charge with a part-time appointment as a prison chaplain. We wish her well as she goes. During her year with NFWM, Amanda has been on farm labor camp visits, tabled at the North Carolina Conference of United Women of Faith, participated in the NFWM winter board meeting in Danville, CA and joined in farm worker engagement day in Half Moon Bay, CA (both for which she served as photographer), written a multitude of thank you notes, created name tags for our board members and given assistance in every way imaginable. We are grateful for her service to our organization and wish her well as she pursues the next chapter of her calling.

NFWM STAFF CHANGES

Farewell To Rosie Shahar and Rose Green-Flores



At the end of December, Rosie Shahar, our Administrative Assistant left NFWM to continue her educational journey. Rosie is in Atlanta, pursuing a graduate degree in physical therapy. We are grateful for all the support she provided the ministry in 2024, including her work on a farm worker fitness video.

Rosie shared, "I will always cherish my time at NFWM and all of the lessons I've learned. Wishing you all the best, and I will be keeping in touch. Si se puede!"

Rosie will be missed, but we wish her the absolute best in this next chapter of her life.



Our Communications Director, Rose Green-Flores, left the National Farm Worker Ministry February 7th. She dedicated 3 years to the farm worker movement with us and for that we are grateful. During her time, she produced three videos and many resources for Harvest of Justice focusing on Child Labor and Agriculture, Farm Workers and Racism, and Farm Workers and Immigration. A promotional video on the work of NFWM was also created under her leadership. Working with an intern, Rose developed our presence on Tik Tok, a new social media platform for us. She made a commitment to making any new resources bi-lingual and offering our webinars in both English and Spanish. Rose was a valuable member of our team and we wish her the best in her future endeavors with her family in Kansas City.

NFWM Holds Art And Artifacts In The Farm Worker Movement Exhibit In Washington, DC March 23-April 11, 2025

NFWM's art exhibit set out to illuminate the experiences and struggles of farm workers through art, fostering awareness and inspiring action for farm worker rights. Farm workers are among the most marginalized and impoverished laborers in the United States. This project sought to bridge the gap between their realities and the public's understanding through the powerful medium of art, particularly art used in farm worker campaigns. While the project achieved significant milestones, challenges were encountered, offering valuable lessons for future initiatives.

The exhibit included items donated or secured from all but one of the farm worker-led or elected organizing groups in the country, including unions and non-union groups. In addition, there were farm worker allies who also contributed. We are especially indebted to Jennifer McCallum for her work as project director and to Mitchell Bond and Patrick Ellis of Goose Creek Studios in Bedford, VA for their contributions to the display and framework of the exhibit.

It opened on March 23rd with a Community/Congregational reception attended by church representatives and leaders in the DC area. The exhibit continued daily at The United Methodist Building for the first week from 9:00-5:00 with a Congressional reception on March 25th, the beginning day of Farmworker Awareness Week. Farm worker partners and allies along with faith leadership were there to give voice to farm worker challenges and the desire to stand in solidarity with farm workers. Congressional leaders who promised to join us did not show up. The environment in DC is chaotic and

demanding for everyone. Despite that, those who gathered demonstrated a commitment to farm worker solidarity even if our national representatives don't.

For the second and third weeks, the art exhibit moved to Washington City Church of the Brethren who hosted a panel discussion during their week, Creative Resistance: A Cross-Movement Conversation on Labor, Economics, and Art with leaders from Alianza Nacional de Campesinas, DC Jobs with Justice, Jubilee USA Network and NFWM to deepen understanding of farm worker issues and engage in dialog.

Remembering Jean Forbath, OCIC Member

Jean Forbath of California passed away on Sunday, April 20th. She was most well known as the founder of Share Ourselves which "provides medical and dental care for nearly 16,000 individuals across Orange County in eight locations and provides food and financial assistance to countless others" says the Daily Pilot. She also founded Save Our Youth to support low income and poor youth in academics and leadership development as well as providing scholarship assistance, one in her name. A devout Catholic, Jean and her husband, Frank, were among the founders of the Orange County Interfaith Committee to Aid Farm Workers and were faithful volunteers for many years. We are grateful for Jean (and Frank's) support over the years.
¡Presente! Jean!

National Farm Worker Ministry

PO Box 10645

112 Cox St., Ste 208

Raleigh, NC 27605

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: New educational content, such as webinars and this 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.**

NFWM

112 Cox St., Ste 208
PO Box 10645
Raleigh, NC 27605

386-801-1232
nfwm@nfwm.org
www.nfwm.org

Staff Team:
Amanda Bell
Isabella Legra
Elizabeth Rodriguez
Julie Taylor

Follow Us:

[@nfwmministry](https://www.instagram.com/nfwmministry)

