



# FARMWORKER SOLIDARITY AT THE EVERGREEN STATE COLLEGE



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### INTRODUCTION

In the early spring of 2018, I sat in a classroom with dozens of students, shoulder to shoulder and leaning up against fabric walls, to hear Rosalinda Guillen and Maru Mora Villalpando speak. They stood like pillars next to each other, holding a message as wholehearted as it was direct: the time is now to unite in solidarity with Washington farmworkers. They spoke of our duty to each other to mobilize resources at our disposal in the fight for farmworker justice and to join in the network of community solidarity with intention, as intrinsic members of our food system. Where academia is so often severed from our larger networks of being-- or extractionist, theoretical, individualistic in nature-- we have the opportunity to act in togetherness.

I can still feel the energy in that room and in the rooms following it: planning meetings in CCBLA offices; sessions for commitment distribution in the back of Student Activities; sign painting in one of our backyards; and sharing fries, Organic Farm apples, and muted dry erase pens in the back of the Flaming Eggplant. There is so much joy in this.

That first year I got involved was also the first year I'd ever really thought about how the food I eat is grown and harvested. That's why the question "*who grows your food*" is a radical one-- so many of us do not have any conception of the path the products we consume take, or who the workers are who move them along their way. Capitalism separates us into isolated roles-- and hides what isn't marketable. So many of us subconsciously situate those smiling White families on brand labels in the Safeway produce section as the people who tend, pick, and package the food-- instead of as the owners and growers.

As a student in the program *Seeds of Change* (the reason I was in that classroom in the evening of Farmworker Justice Day to begin with) I learned that there is a long history of systemic farmworker oppression in this country. Inseparable from the ongoing legacy of slavery and settler-colonialism, our economic systems remain dependant on exploitative labor. Prior to that class, I'd been in conversations on environmentalism and animal cruelty on farms. Like most White kids from Portland, I'd frequently used words like "pesticides," "organic," "local," and "small-scale" when talking about agriculture and consumption. But none of the conversations going on around me had ever included farm labor, much less the human and workers' rights that farmworkers are so often denied.

Rosalinda often says that farmworkers are among the most invisible in our society. Though Evergreen has a thriving culture of students interested in organic farming and political economics, we continue to exclude farmworkers from these conversations and actions. It is not enough to be against corporate agriculture, to shop local and organic, or even to start our own small-scale farms when farmworkers remain exploited in our economic systems. Internalized capitalism has us convinced that individual choices are the path to morality-- that consumer activism is the way to make a difference. The truth is that this is larger than us. It is collective action and honoring farmworker leadership that makes change in our food system.

There is so much joy in this. This work is community-building. There is heart and purpose in intentionally belonging to the food system, in claiming the role of community member, in placing oneself as one piece of a network of workers, students, elders, dreamers, lovers of delicious berries. To truly work towards environmental and food system justice, we must support farmworker leadership. Our dreams are the same: we want our earth to be protected and free from pesticides, we want the people who work the land to be its stewards and be shown respect and dignity, and we all want access to delicious, healthy food cultivated by loving hands.

### **INTENTIONS**

This zine is:

- for student organizers, inexperienced organizers, all people interested in moving towards farmworker justice solidarity
- made with the direct intention of taking away from the educational labor of farmworker activists by collecting resources that activists have made available and by sharing knowledge given to us
- for the sake of telling history so that we may learn from it and move with it
- anti-capitalist, anti-colonialist, and against all power structures that oppress workers and Black people, Indigenous people, and Immigrants intrinsically

- pro-worker, made in the belief in food sovereignty, made in the knowledge that the land belongs to those who work it and to first peoples, who include Nisqually, Puyallup, Squaxin, Coast Salish, Skykomish, Tulalip, Skagit, Nooksack, peoples
- made in the belief that another world is possible
- in the spirit of learning and unlearning together-- we have a lot to learn
- with the intention that more students will take action, and give back to the communities we learn from through action.

The Farmworker Justice Solidarity Collective has gone through several iterations in it's life span, and farmworker solidarity at Evergreen as a whole has an even longer history-- going back to UFW solidarity organizing in 1972, the first school year Evergreen held classes. But despite this history, there's yet to be consistent student organizing that spans more than a few years. There's real downsides to this lack of continuity. Rosalinda Guillen of Community to Community often talks about how much mental, physical, and emotional energy it takes for farmworkers to explain the exploitative conditions on corporate farms, provide basic background on the history of farmworker oppression and the workings of the food system, and give testimony on their experiences. Community to Community (C2C) has organized for nearly 17 years now, and they are only one of the food justice communities who continually provide blog updates, radio shows, articles, interviews, videos, events that we can learn from. Especially in this pandemic era, with so many event recordings and other resources existing online, this necessary background information is readily accessible. However, when members of C2C and farmworker activists come down to Olympia for Farmworker Justice Day, they often express the feeling that they're educating students from the ground up. The problem, of course, is multifaceted. The ag industry keeps the details of their labor system a secret for a reason-- the reality of exploitative conditions are not the image of "family farms" that corporate agriculture spends hoards of money trying to maintain. In addition, our labor education continues to be nearly non-existent in the U.S..

Rosalinda has emphasized to Evergreen folks in partnership with C2C that we bear responsibility to educate our fellow students and community of farmworker justice-- as we all eat food and thus owe our very lives to workers who are currently being exploited. While

planning Farmworker Justice Day several years back, she recommended that the event be preceded by workshops and other outreach actions to give students a foundation on farmworker issues before interacting with affected community members. In response, the collective has organized workshops on key issues, including H-2A, pesticide exposure, boycott actions, and legislative battles. We've presented to academic programs, at Harvest Festival, and in Evergreen community spaces, though often to very small groups. Despite the wide participation in Evergreen's Organic Farm and the shared vision of anti-capitalism among students, the collective hasn't been able to engage many new students toward farmworker solidarity-- and as members graduate and the pandemic changes what community space looks like, we've been unable to sustain ongoing collective action. This is a theme of Student Activities at Evergreen, and the dissolution and reformation of the group has happened before. First called the Olympia Farmworker Justice Collective, students organized in support of the Sakuma and Driscoll's boycotts within Familias Unidas por la Justicia's unionizing efforts, which began in August of 2013 and lasted until they signed a contract with Sakuma Brothers Berry Farms in 2017. When then-members graduated, the collective began to dissipate. It was re-formed after Farmworker Justice Day in 2018 with Rosalinda's call to action, in the wake of the NatuRipe label boycott and Honesto Silva Ibarra's death at Sarbanand Farms. Though these calls to action depended particularly on community engagement, the issues today are no less urgent. The new apple packers' union in Naches, Trabajadores Unidas por la Justicia, has faced difficulties with strike breaking from the company (Allan Brothers Fruit Co.) which included threatening to fire striking workers, bribing workers who cast 'no' votes with \$100 gift cards, and spreading misinformation about unions, resulting in the loss of a union election earlier this year. Despite this setback, TUJ union organizers continue to engage in community education and providing PPE and vaccines through the pandemic-- and additionally, the National Labor Relations Board is set to hold a trial against Allan Brothers, having found merit in workers' complaints of union-busting practices. Public support for these workers is critical right now.

In addition, a federal bill that's currently passed the house and is moving to the senate--The Farm Workforce Modernization Act-- has been a major concern since it was introduced in 2019. This bill would expand the already exploitative H-2A guestworker program, cementing it into our immigration and corporate agriculture systems. It would also make E-Verify mandatory for all employers-- which is essentially a surveillance database that checks workers' documentation status. We can only speculate how this would affect the violence imposed by ICE and CBP for the community. However, farmworker justice communities are not aligned against this bill: though C2C, FUJ, and many other organizations are firmly opposed, the United Farm Workers are notably a major backer. This is because the bill has been largely marketed as a path-to-citizenship for farmworkers in the United States. However, the postured path-to-citizenship would not apply to all, and it would take farmworkers around 10 years of work before they are even able to apply for a "certified agricultural worker" status, which in itself is miles away from citizenship. Additionally, what liberals are calling "a path to citizenship" is the same thing that conservatives are assuring their bases is not. Conservative lawmakers and news outlets are consistently comforting their readers that "this is not amnesty," assuring them that it in fact strengthens immigration 'law' enforcement, and even claiming that the path-to-citizenship parts of the bill would really just benefit employers by providing access to a reliable workforce-- language that embodies the comparison between H-2A and indentured servitude that many activists have pointed to. This is what Rosalinda calls back-door immigration reform. H-2A, lauded as a "legal alternative" solves the tension between the racist, anti-immigrant culture of the United States and our structural dependance on the exploitation of undocumented people's labor.

C2C has organized for years in response to the continuing human rights abuses faced by H-2A workers in Washington and beyond-- as the program is characterized by substandard housing and food, and inhumane working conditions. Some legislative progress has been made within the state because of their work, including Senate Bill 5438, which created an office for H-2A oversight; however, there is concern that the Farm Workforce Modernization Act would undermine some of the work that local farmworker organizers have put in. And these issues are only examples of the urgent battles farmworker justice organizers are fighting within our current context. As we continue to witness the rise in neoliberalism, fascism, and militarization at local, national, and global scales-- we've got to unite wherever we can in support of another world. The belief that *another world is possible* cuts at the center of it all-- it always has. That's ultimately why Rosalinda left the United Farm Workers to found Community to Community--because we as people do not have to simply work with what has been handed to us: these socio-economic systems based on power and capital hoarding and White supremacy. Farmworkers deserve better than that. All people deserve better than that.

Because it's happened before, we know that Evergreen solidarity will be reinvigorated again. In documenting our learning, I hope that the current pattern of repetitive educational labor by farmworker organizers can be shifted. I hope that Evergreen can someday build widespread awareness of these issues among our communities, expanding the hyphae of solidarity networks. I hope that the incredible beauty of beloved community and sovereignty embedded within this other world that is possible moves you. I hope more of us transform from guilt and passive support into action and community building. I hope this for myself, too-- that we all can continue showing up. In a workshop with professors Prita Lal and Tamsin Foucrier's classes the other day, Rosalinda said that each time she speaks to classrooms full of students, there's always one or two who are moved to action. So, she says, she will keep doing it to reach more of us.

# LOCAL FARMWORKER JUSTICE ORGANIZATIONS

The Farmworker Justice Solidarity Collective takes direction from the following organizations and campesino unions. This is a critical part of our role, especially since most of our group has consisted of White, non-farmworkers in the years that I've been involved. One of the phrases guiding C2C's values is "nothing about us, without us," which was popularized by disability justice activists, especially in South Africa in the 1990's. To this end, we follow and respect farmworker leadership, in expanding some of the actions that they do to the Olympia area, fundraising to support their work, and educating our community so that we all have a better foundation for the issues faced by the people who feed us.

### **COMMUNITY TO COMMUNITY (C2C)**

Community to Community describes themselves as a place-based, grassroots, eco-feminist organization from Bellingham, Washington. C2C organizes in many ways around earth justice and food sovereignty: from supporting farmworker union organizing and cooperative development, to responding to ICE raids and anti-immigrant violence in Whatcom, to legislative lobbying. On their website, they include this in their mission statement:

We believe that another world is possible and we are active participants with other popular people's movements.

We strive to reclaim our humanity by redefining power in order to end settler colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy in their external and internalized forms.

Towards this end we:

- Empower under-represented peoples to have an equal voice in decision making processes
- Develop cross-cultural awareness
- Restore justice to our food, land and cultural practices
- *Promote community relationships towards self-reliance*
- Work in solidarity with those that strive towards human rights for all
- *Rescue the value of feminine intellect and leadership*

C2C was founded by Rosalinda Guillen in 2004-- who prior to C2C was on the executive board of the United Farm Workers (UFW) and a founding member of the Whatcom county chapter of the Rainbow Coalition. Rosalinda is the daughter of farmworkers, and she grew up in migrant labor camps as her family followed her father's seasonal work. She spent a significant part of her childhood in Coahuila, Mexico before the family moved to Washington's Skagit Valley, where she began working on farms at the age of 10. Rosalinda was radicalized when a recruiter for Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign knocked on her door in 1988, while she was living in rural Whatcom on a chicken ranch and working at Skagit State Bank. She got involved with the campaign, and through fellow organizers she first heard of Cesar Chavez at the age of 37. These experiences opened her eyes to the possibility of justice for farmworkers and a change from the racism and bigotry she faced in her life. After studying Cesar Chavez's work, Rosalinda was approached by workers from Chateau Ste. Michelle winery in 1993 while organizing with the Rainbow Coalition. They asked if the coalition would support their boycott. In 1995 with Rosalinda's leadership, the workers won a union contract, making it the first ever farmworkers' collective bargaining agreement in the state of Washington. Rosalinda went on to organize with the UFW following this win.

In 2001, as a member of the UFW's executive board, Rosalinda attended the first annual World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Here, she learned about concepts like participatory democracy and transformative/solidarity economies from organizers within the Landless Workers' movement and in People's Movement Assemblies. This was a pivotal experience for her, revealing a whole new way of grounding organizing in Mother Earth, anti-capitalism, and non-hierarchical community building, led by women. She founded C2C with these intentions, but also with deep roots in Cesar Chavez's practice.

Other members of C2C's leadership team include Brenda Bentley, who led weekly Dignity Vigils for many years and organizes arts builds to create signs and banners for C2C's actions, and Liz Darrow: a video editor, media consultant, and filmmaker who works on legislative tracking for C2C, and is interested in radical policy making. Other members of the leadership are the Community to Community Promotoras, an advocacy collective within C2C that supports community health and wellness in Whatcom and Skagit and supports community organizing, especially throughout the pandemic. The Promotoras are led by Lucy Madrigal, Arely Dominguez, and Australia Tobon, all strong community leaders in their own right.

### FAMILIAS UNIDAS POR LA JUSTICIA (FUJ)

Familias Unidas por la Justicia (FUJ) is a farmworker union based in Skagit county, WA. Formed in 2013 when workers at Sakuma Bros Berry Farm were fired after asking for fair pay and work conditions, the union led strikes and boycotts of Driscoll's berries for four years until they were officially recognized by the company. Familias Unidas por la Justicia have not only created a more just work environment for their own members, they've also done incredible work supporting other unionizing efforts such as that of Trabajadores Unidas por la Justicia and the apple packing shed strikes of May 2020. They additionally provide community education on a variety of fronts: from COVID resources to testifying in support of radical change in the agriculture industry and beyond. In addition, members of FUJ started a worker-owned berry cooperative called Tierra y Libertad, named after the revolutionary practice of Emiliano Zapata and the Mexican Revolution. The president of Familias Unidas is Ramon Torres, who also was a leader in the Sakuma strikes. Edgar Franks is their political director, and is on the board for the Network of Labor and Sustainability, as well as the Washington State Climate Justice Allegiance.

From their facebook page: FUJ is "the only labor union led by over 400 indigenous Mixteco and Triqui farm workers. They labor in the industrial agricultural farms hand harvesting strawberries, raspberries, blueberries and blackberries as well as flower bulbs, cutting broccoli, cauliflower, harvesting cucumbers and other agricultural tasks such as pruning and milking in dairies and greenhouses."

### TRABAJADORES UNIDAS POR LA JUSTICIA (TUJ)

Trabajadores Unidas por la Justicia is a new fruit warehouse workers union based in Yakima, Washington. They were formed in 2020 after workers from 6 different apple packing sheds throughout Yakima went on strike in protest of the lack of workplace protections during the COVID-19 pandemic. Now centered around the first warehouse to go on strike, Allen Brothers Fruit, the union has struggled due to union-busting practices by the company. As previously mentioned, this caused them to lose a union election; however, the National Labor Relations Board (which covers these workers because they technically work at a packing shed and not a farm) is set to take Allen Brothers Fruit through a court process on the anti-union practices they've employed. TUJ has continued to provide education, community organizing, and health services since they formed--especially through spreading pandemic-related information and PPE. Agustin Lopez Morales is the president of TUJ.

## BACKGROUND ON WASHINGTON FARMWORKERS' STRUGGLE

As a part of a subcommittee on 'Education and Outreach' that the Farmworker Justice Solidarity Collective formed, I helped lead several workshops to classes and in community spaces on the history of farmworker oppression and farmworker resistance in Washington state from 2018-2020. Friends from the collective like River, Tzvi, Noa, and others collaborated on researching these issues and presenting to the groups. When the pandemic began in spring of 2020, and the organizers of Farmworker Justice Day had to quickly change plans, I created a recorded workshop for students to prepare for the event remotely. Much of the following text comes from that video, which can also be found on the CCBLA website. This background information is important for all participants in the food system-- which is to say, everyone-- to be acquainted with. It benefits corporate ag that we do not know our history, or many details of our economic systems. There are many resources that can be found on these topics from people who know a whole lot more than me, some of which are listed at the bottom of the zine.

### FARMWORKER DEMOGRAPHICS

According to a national agricultural workers survey created in 2018, over half of farmworkers in the United States are undocumented. Most estimates place that number closer to 70%. This is

important to name, because the violence toward and oppression of undocumented people is an integral part of agriculture, and other corporate economics in the United States. Despite the dominant rhetoric of illegality when talking about undocumented people, our food system is dependent on their labor-- and intentionally so. This structure also goes to the heart of our economy of extraction, which forces people into desperate circumstances and then exploits the position of vulnerability that it has created. Food sovereignty, which includes worker-owned cooperatives, is an antithesis to the current structure that denies agency to workers, and to traditional stewards of land and resources, at a global scale.

Within this, it's important to mention why many people are forced to migrate from Mexico to the US in search of work. There are of course many reasons, but a dominant one especially connected to farmwork is the North American free trade agreement, or NAFTA: a trade block in North America that's claimed to help keep food prices low through government subsidies to farm owners and reduced trade restrictions. Mexican farms aren't included in these subsidies that benefit the U.S., and this resulted in it being cheaper in Mexico to import crops from the U.S. than to grow them locally. Farmers have lost their livelihood and unemployment has skyrocketed as a result. When we talk about immigration in this context we need to frame it as forced migration. Additionally, many farm workers have pointed out how COVID-19 has highlighted the ways in which they are both viewed as illegal and essential simultaneously. Our economic systems are built around using undocumented peoples labor and this is systemic, not employer by employer. However, tightened border restrictions impacts the ability to higher undocumented workers: leading guestwork to become more widespread, as it is often framed as a "legal" alternative.

### **THE H-2A PROGRAM**

The guestworker program regarding agriculture in the US is called the H-2A program. This program allows U.S. farm owners, or "growers," to hire workers from mostly Mexico and Central American countries to fill seasonal agricultural jobs. The H-2A program ties workers to a single employer who has full control of their living and working conditions. Workers are not privy to standard labor laws, and because growers work to keep their costs as low as possible at the expense of the workers, the H-2A program is characterized by terrible conditions. Many farmworkers report getting expired food, unsafe water, and working inhumane hours. Some workers report waking up hours before dawn in order to take a long bus ride to the farm, and returning home far after dark. Despite rampant sexual violence and harassment on farms, farmworkers have been largely excluded from the Me Too movement. Farmworkers are also seldom included in the organic movement, which focuses primarily on mitigating *consumer* pesticide exposure, despite the fact that farmworkers are far and away the most harmed from these chemicals. Many workers report not being told what they are spraying on crops, and that they were not provided with any protective equipment and did not know the risk. These graphics distributed by C2C give more insight:

# H2A IS NOT OK

H-2A workers are bound to one employer. Since they are moved by their employer across state lines many remain without access to

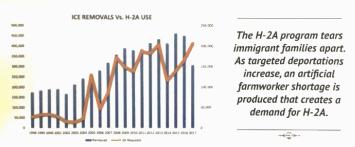
- legal resources or community. As a result, guestworkers are:
- ROUTINELY CHEATED OUT OF WAGES
- FORCED TO MORTGAGE THEIR FUTURES TO OBTAIN LOW-WAGE, TEMPORARY JOBS
- HELD VIRTUALLY CAPTIVE BY EMPLOYERS OR LABOR BROKERS WHO SEIZE THEIR DOCUMENTS
- FORCED TO LIVE IN SQUALID CONDITIONS
- DENIED MEDICAL CARE FOR ON-THE-JOB INJURIES
- EXPOSED TO UNSAFE PARTICULATE MATTER FROM FOREST FIRES AND OTHER CLIMATE CHANGE RELATED PHENOMENON

#### H2A PROGRAM HURTS LOCAL ECONOMIES & COMMUNITIES The H-2A program marks a transition from our local small family farming system to an unsustainable industrial agricultural model. Under this new model, large agriculture corporations control the labor pool and harm workers, families, the environment, and local economies. H-2A is opening the door to a highly undemocratic food system that would be dependent on unfair trade agreements that continue to promote GMOs, pesticides, and environmental harm.

### WHERE DID THE H2A PROGRAM COME FROM?

Industrial Agriculture in the United States of America has always been based on labor that is of little or no cost to those cultivating land. Since the abolition of institutionalized slavery in industrial agriculture, there have been many experiments to keep the costs of labor low, including sharecropping, migrant labor, and contract guest workers. The United States moved from the exploitation of the labor of African Americans, to Chinese and Native Americans, then to Japanese, Sikh, and later Filipino laborers, dust bowl immigrants, Braceros, Mexican immigrants, and ultimately Haitian, Puerto Rican, and Mexican H-2A guest workers. The move between the different ethnic groups to harvest America's crops was based primarily on the ability to control the labor force and to do so a lower cost as to maximize profits for the capitalist farmers. The consistent thread is that the bottom line has always superseded the well-being and dignity of other human beings. We say: enough!





### **THE BRACERO PROGRAM**

Farmworker oppression in the United States endures from the brutalization, bondage, and incarceration of Black people who labored on farms while enslaved. The history of who farmworkers were, and how the demographics have both changed and remained the same is a long history that connects very closely with U.S. immigration policy. Throughout this history, the U.S.'s dependance on cheap, exploitative farm labor continues to be a defining part of our food

and agriculture systems. The H-2A program was modeled after the Bracero program, which began in 1942 when farm owners became concerned about labor shortages due to World War II. However, the Bracero program did not end when World War II ended, even though their "labor shortages" reasoning no longer applied. Both the H-2A and Bracero programs have drawn parallels to indentured servitude. Just like the H2A program, workers were brought in under a temporary work visa. Abuses were built into the program in a similar way: workers were tied to a single employer, and had no way of becoming documented residents--also the case for the H-2A program. There was also a "wage trust" theft scheme in the Bracero program where 10% of workers' wages would be held back until they returned to their country of origin. Oftentimes, these wages were never seen, even when Braceros did return to their country of origin— though many did not. This wage theft was an anti-immigrant condition that the government created to enforce the temporary work arrangement.

The Bracero program ended because of its rampant inhumane conditions, in large part due to the leadership of Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez from the United Farm Workers. H-2A was brought in shortly after The Bracero program was phased out.

### H-2A LOCALLY IN WASHINGTON

Washington is the third highest user of the H-2A program nationally. It's estimated that over 30,000 H-2A work visas will be drafted for harvest season in Washington this year. The numbers of H-2A workers has risen dramatically in the state the past several years, and this reflects a national pattern— issuances of H-2A visas have more than tripled since 2007, with an average of a 13% growth rate. Over half of all H-2A visas are concentrated in just five states, including Washington. Nearly all of the farms in Washington are berry farms or apple orchards, and blueberries are in fact the largest crop that is predominantly picked by H-2A workers. Tobacco and apples are second and third. Even though about 10% of farmworkers nationwide are H-2A workers, the farms that use the program are nearly always the largest. This means that a significant portion of the U.S. produce in dominant grocery stores, especially berries and apples in Washington, were picked by H-2A workers. In addition, the national trend toward increasing H-2A use (as exemplified in the Farm Workforce Modernization Act) shows how guestwork continues to replace resident/local farmworkers.

As mentioned earlier, the conditions on H2A farms are nearly always inhumane. Oversight in Washington has historically been very poor, with different aspects of the program – for example housing or food— overseen by different government agencies, and with very little money allocated to WA for the purpose of ensuring safe conditions, despite the fact that our state is among the largest users of the program. Farmworker activists have long fought for more protections, and a Senate bill was recently passed in WA that created an office specifically for H-2A oversight-- SB 5438 - 2019-20. This was a big win for farmworkers, but the work toward just living and working conditions continues.

### WAFLA

Farms hire H-2A workers in Washington through a third party contractor called Wafla, formerly an acronym for Washington Farm Labor Association. Farms do this by contacting Wafla, saying they would like to hire H-2A workers-- and Wafla contracts and employs these workers from their countries of origin--primarily Mexico. There is a lot of mystery around how exactly they hire workers in Mexico, but some workers have given testimony to methods such as word of mouth dispersal that a company from the U.S. is hiring "only the best workers." Growers who use the H-2A program must first obtain a Temporary Labor Certification from the Department of Labor; in order to do this, they must prove that there are not enough local workers and that they have tried and failed to hire them. Farmworker activists have shown that the claim that there are not enough workers is false, and that it's used as an excuse to avoid reshaping our corporate agriculture system and paying workers good wages. Farms break the rules about prioritizing local workers regularly, and there is next to no structure in place regularly holding them accountable. There are also other ways that H-2A can disadvantage local farmworkers. For example, labor disputes regarding H-2A were integral to the strikes at Sakuma Bros Berry Farm in 2013 (see the sections on FUJ) which was replacing local striking workers with seasonal H-2A workers-- and effectively using them as strike-breakers.

Back to Wafla. On their website, Wafla describe themselves as a human resources provider, which is offensive in an endless number of ways. When you look at their website, the HR page is mostly devoted to resources supporting growers in mediating sexual harassment lawsuits. This both shows that Wafla is not supporting farmworkers, and is yet another example of how common sexual violence is on corporate farms. Wafla markets the H2A program as a win-win. But again, the reality is that our government has built a continental economic system that pushes people out of their country of origin and forces them into bad conditions that many people have no clear way out of. It may be true that farms are dependent on this stream of labor, and that they otherwise struggle to harvest their crops, but activists argue that the solution to this problem is to rework the unjust food system and build cooperative labor models that honor human rights and make farmwork physically sustainable— which would encourage local workers to stay on farms. The answer is not to further invest in and expand the already exploitive H2A program.

# FARMWORKER JUSTICE SOLIDARITY IN THE ARCHIVES

While working on this project, I got help from Evergreen archivist Liza Harrell-Edge, who found some documentation of farmworker solidarity in the earliest editions of The Cooper Point Journal (which was at first just called "The Paper") in the 1970s. Three references to farmworker justice were found in these early years-- primarily as news updates on the United Farm Workers' struggle for fair labor conditions and union recognition. The first report references Evergreen community action supporting the UFW in response to anti-worker actions from Nixon appointees to the National Labor Relations Board. The references this article makes to the NLRB and their exemption of farmworkers is interesting-- as it's been particularly relevant to movement conversations in the last few years. Farmworkers (as well as domestic workers) are exempt from the National Labor Relations Act of the New Deal Era, which established the right for most workers to engage in collective bargaining with employers-- giving farmworkers less structural support when trying to unionize. However, as Familias Unidas por la Justicia and the United Farm Workers remind us, unionization is still possible with organizing power and community involvement. In fact, the strict rules of the National Labor Relations Board can sometimes even deny workers agency. This 1972 article testifies to the NLRB's capacity for anti-union action, and I think, further demonstrates why local, grassroots organizing led by the most impacted members of the community are valuable union structures.

From *The Paper* Volume I, Number XIV, May 3rd, 1972:

# Farmworkers' enemy

Due to the actions taken by President Nixon since he was elected he, Nixon, has become the most formidable enemy of the United Farmworkers. Since his election he has succeeded in appointing three new members to the National Labor Relations Board. All three of his appointees a r e R e p u b l i c a n s a n d Anti-farmworkers.

Nixon has also appointed two new justices to the Supreme Court, who are also considered anti-farmworkers. He successfully set up the United Farmworkers by using party power and political deals! Since his N.L.R.B. appointees have gained their new positions there has been a petition filed with the N.L.R.B. asking that boycotts and strikes by farmworkers be outlawed.

Over the past five years similar petitions have been filed, but the N.L.R.B. has repeatedly stated that they have no jurisdiction over farmworkers, because there has never been any legislation to cover farm labor.

Since Nixon's new appointees have been in office they claim to have jurisdiction over farm workers -- No legislation has been produced the only change is the administration.

You as a citizen can help although, your letters and communications to Senator Robert J. Dole, chairman of the Republican National Committee can be of a great service. They should be sent to:

Senator Robert J. Dole, Chairman Republican National Committee

310 First Street S.E. Washington, D.C. 20003

Interested persons in this community have already shown

their support towards this issue by the vigil held on the Capitol steps last April 4.

The other two articles digitized in the archives are from January 21, 1974 and December 4th, 1975; they respectively offer a 'guest commentary' reprint from MECHA in Salinas Citizens Committee in Defense of Farmworkers' *Si Se Puede* magazine on the farmworker justice cause, and a deliberation on the ideological and power struggle between the Teamsters and the United Farm Workers in farmworker union organizing. Though these articles do not give explicit accounts of Evergreen solidarity, they do demonstrate the history of student engagement with these issues. They are accessible to the public at <a href="http://collections.evergreen.edu">http://collections.evergreen.edu</a>.

There are also many documents in the Evergreen archives that have yet to be digitized, including records from Evergreen's *Labor Education and Research Center*, which existed from 1987-2010 before being transitioned into the Center for Community-Based Learning and Action (CCBLA). Notably the unionizing efforts of workers from Chateau Ste Michelle winery occurred during the time of the Labor Center: from 1993 to December 5, 1995 when workers won a union contract (the first for farmworkers in Washington state). Our dear director of the CCBLA, Ellen Short Sanchez, was a student organizer at Evergreen during the time of the strikes and boycott of Chateau Ste. Michelle. She spoke to me about her experience with Evergreen student solidarity,

remembering the formation of a "solidarity committee for the boycott," and handing out pamphlets in front Hagan's, then called Top Foods. She said that overall, the community was very receptive, noting that "the (UFW) grape boycott was recent history, and consumers had a sense of boycotts" and were willing to have direct conversations about the movement during that time. We deliberated on how the increase of the feelings of a right to convenience, especially in the Amazon era, in addition to 'greenwashing' may have changed how consumers respond to calls for boycotts-- though the struggle for worker rights and dignity remains as hard fought as it ever was. During the Chateau Ste. Michelle strikes, Ellen began working with Rosalinda Guillen, and she witnessed an array of union busting tactics by the winery management as well as the threats and vandalism that organizers faced. She participated in the annual marches from Burlington to Mount Vernon in support of the farmworkers' fight, and stayed in contact with Rosalinda while working with an ELL program in Shelton and serving as a member of the Labor Center's Advisory Board. In 2004, Ellen became a board member for Community to Community, which was founded then. More details of the history of the Labor Center, and student involvement with farmworker justice solidarity will be more accessible when the conditions of the pandemic change, and Evergreen's paper archives can be accessed and dignitized.

## COLLECTIVE HISTORY + ACTIONS

The collective was first formed in March of 2014 during the boycotts of Sakuma Bros Berry Farms and the Driscoll's berry label (the major distributor of Sakuma berries). Actions to support Familias Unidas por la Justicia (FUJ), who were then attempting to negotiate a contract with Sakuma, had spread across Washington: members of the union and supporters picketed outside of the farm and in front of grocery stores throughout Skagit and in major cities, C2C helped organize fundraising and phone banking to Sakuma management and buyers like Haagen Daz from their support base, and boycott committees began forming across the state.

# PICKET OUTSIDE OF BAYVIEW THRIFTWAY-- FEBRUARY 17, 2016 AND OTHER BOYCOTT DRISCOLL'S ACTIONS

As a follow-up action to Evergreen's seventh annual Farmworker Justice Day in 2016, the Olympia Farmworker Justice Collective (as they were then called) organized a picket outside of Bayview Thriftway, calling on the store to discontinue selling Driscoll's berries. Nearly 100 students and community members were present, many holding signs made earlier during Farmworker Justice Day. The protest began at around 4pm and continued past sunset, but food was provided by Vic's Pizza and organizers with Olympia Food Not Bombs, who tabled there. Protestors handed out fliers to people walking by or stopped in traffic, which read:

Driscoll's is the largest berry distributor in the world and has a history of repressing union organizing. They also supply berries from farms in San Quintin Mexico where over 30,000 farm workers went on strike this March over \$7 dollar-a-day wages, widespread sexual abuse, and child labor, and are continuing to fight for just treatment. Farmworker families in both WA and Mexico are asking people to stop buying Driscoll's Berries until they have legally binding union contracts that ensure justice and dignity in the workplace.

Sarah Bradley from *The Cooper Point Journal* covered the action, describing Farmworker Justice Day's events, the activists from C2C and FUJ who spoke, and the momentum of the protest: "...students and activists lined both sides of the street outside of Bayview. The group held signs in support of the Driscoll's berries boycott, protesting the unfair treatment of farmworkers, and urging shoppers to consider where their food comes from and how it is made."



Students holding signs in front of Bayview Thriftway. Photo from The Cooper Point Journal: February 17, 2016

The Olympia Farmworker Justice Collective organized other marches and pickets in support of the Driscoll's Boycott:



Students organize in front of Costco: March 18 2016

Collective members also stood in solidarity with *La Resistencia* lead by Maru Mora Villalpando, attending several rallies at the Northwest Detention Center. This photo is from a vigil at the Northwest Detention Center on August 11, 2017.



## **EN LA LUCHA**

From 2016-2018, some of the students who became involved with spreading awareness about the boycott began working on a film titled *En La Lucha*, documenting Familias Unidas por la Justicia's struggle for unionization, C2C's work building community around food sovereignty and farmworker justice, and La Resistencia's NWDC resistance. Ry Feder Pruett, Katryna Newman, and Jorge Bex, now graduates from Evergreen, followed C2C and FUJ at actions and in their community work, and captured powerful interviews with leaders from the movement. Their process intentionally centered the stories that these organizers wanted to tell, without trying to frame their message externally. In conversations with Ry, they've told me that the crew wanted

above all to create something *for* the movement, that could be used by C2C in the struggle for liberation. The full version of *En La Lucha* is not available yet-- but an accessible 7 minute long trailer on youtube has already had impacts on students as it honors this ongoing history.

### FARMWORKER JUSTICE DAY 2018-- COLLECTIVE RE-FORMS

Familias Unidas por la Justicia won their historic union contract with Sakuma Bros Berry Farms in 2017, after four years of strikes and boycotts. Though this year held more urgent events, including Honesto Silva Ibarra's death at Sarbanand farms and the strikes and boycotts of Munger and Driscoll's that followed, the collective dissipated with the graduation of its members. On Farmworker Justice Day in early 2018, Rosalinda and Maru Mora Villalpando spoke to students about an array of issues at the forefront of their organizing at that time: including the dangerous conditions at Sarbanand farms and the workers' response, the sexual violence faced by workers on farms, and the deportation hearings that the state targetted at Maru, who is a very powerful undocumented activist in the community. That evening, many students in the classroom signed their names and emails to organize a student solidarity response. Later in January, members of the newly-formed collective visited Bellingham to learn more about farmworker justice organizing and the pressing needs for solidarity.

In March, a member of the collective received an email from a C2C organizer, informing them that a boycott of NatuRipe was soon to be announced, and that the leadership team was currently working on mobilizing boycott committees across their networks. The organizer, named Andrew, called for us to start researching where the NatuRipe label is sold in Olympia, and to begin pushing grocers to stop selling them. Andrew also called on us to track Wafla's movement (their state office is in Olympia)-- and to organize protests for events that they would hold.

### Action items from 4/4/18 meeting notes:

- 1. Boycott Committee (Reach out to Andrew at C2C)
- Calling govt. officials Committee (legal outreach team, maybe making a script, dispersing information, phone banking)
- 3. WAFLA Boycott (tracking events, call events, demonstrating nearby)
- 4. Coalition Building (Seattle, The Bay, other schools, etc.)

### ANTI-H-2A



HAVE YOU MET YOUR LOCAL HUMAN TRAFFICKER?

A lot of folks were not huge fans of this (righteous) flyer one of our members made about the executive director of Wafla, Dan Fazio. March, 2018.

Meet **Dan Fazio**, executive director of the Washington Farm and Labor Association (**WAFLA**), the Northwest's primary contractor of **H2A** guestworkers with its executive office in Lacey. H2A as a program is responsible for the inexcusable abuse of the migrant farmworkers it precariously employs. It naturally follows that Dan Fazio, profiteer of the professional exploitation of people of color, is a racist and misogynist who's been accused of workplace discrimination and sexual harassment.

**#SHUTITDOWN #NOWAYTOTREATAGUEST #HUMANTRAFFICKING** 

Noa developed call scripts for the Governor's office, Labor and Industries (L+I), and the Employment Security Department (ESD), about developing a task force investigating H-2A exploitation, the unjust labor practices at Sarbanand Farms, and corruption within Wafla, respectively. This is from the script to Governor Inslee: "I am a Washington state resident, and I am calling to urge Governor Inslee to develop a task force that will conduct an in-depth investigation of the H2A guestworker program in Washington, and to work on a substantive policy that will shield our state from the awful impacts of the federal guestworker program. These programs take advantage of people in poverty and force them to work in inhumane conditions for awfully low wages. And the future this federal administration has in mind for the program will only make it more cruel"

### NATURIPE BOYCOTT

Honesto Silva Ibarra, an H-2A worker at Sarbanand Farms in Sumas WA, died in 2017 from being forced to work in smokey wildfire conditions, not getting proper access to medical treatment, and being denied rest. Many of his co-workers also became sick due to the hazardous working conditions. Silva Ibarra collapsed in the fields after he was forced to go back to work despite feeling unwell-- and he died at Harborview Medical Center a few days later. Because H-2A workers often have no access to medical care (even though employers are supposed to provide living necessities during their work season) Silva Ibarra was not given the help he needed, though he asked supervisors several times to seek treatment for painful headaches prior to his death. On August 5th, 2017, 100 of Silva Ibarra's co-workers organized a work stoppage in response to the inhumane conditions on the farm; the following day, they were all fired and told to move out of company housing. Because H-2A workers are tied to a single employer, they effectively have no ability to strike and protest conditions without risking housing security and deportation. Workers essentially become stranded, and often report being blacklisted from entering H-2A work later on, which many depend on. Having nowhere to go, workers established a camp on a neighbor's property with support from the Bellingham Community Food Co-op and C2C, and spoke to L+I about the severe working conditions they faced. Columbia Legal Services, a collective of lawyers who regularly work with farmworker activists in Washington to fight for legislative justice, helped workers sue Sarbanand Farms for human trafficking through an employment rights class action. Sarbanand Farms immediately started spreading lies about what had happened, attempting to discredit activists and workers. A few months later, C2C announced the boycott of NatuRipe, calling attention to the exploitation on Sarbanand and Munger Bros Farms. Likely due to strong community push back, the U.S. Department of Labor launched an investigation into the labor practices of the farm and the nature of Honesto Silva Ibarra's death.

Because of the very complicated nature of corporate agriculture distribution through labels and grower-owned cooperatives, the target of the boycott changed a few times throughout its duration. Sarbanand Farms, the large blueberry farm where Honesto Silva Ibarra died and other workers suffered because of unsafe labor conditions in 2017, is owned by a company called Munger Bros, from California, which owns several large farms and packing houses selling pistachios and almonds. They merged with another large company in 2016, and remain the largest producer of blueberries in the world, with over 3,000 acres across the Pacific coast. Munger berries are frequently solid to and distributed by NatuRipe. This nesting-doll setup within corporate agriculture shows how much capital is created by workers who don't benefit from it.



Ezra and Lauren table in front of the Westside Co-op, handing out information on the H-2A program, the NatuRipe boycott, and ways that community members can get involved: July 15, 2018 In December of 2019, L+I determined that Sarbanand was in "serious violation" of 13 workplace health and safety requirements. They were fined for only 2 of those violations, for 1 million dollars-- and required to pay \$2.5 million in back wages, as the company had been stealing wages from the workers (underpaying them and not giving wages for time spent traveling to the job site, which is a requirement for H-2A employers). The investigation also found that Sarbaband was not giving priority to local workers, which again is (technically) a pre-requisite for use of the H-2A program. Because of these violations, Munger Farms were banned from using H-2A for 3 years. However, they were not deemed responsible for Honesto Silva Ibarra's death. A judge ruled that because Silva Ibarra was suffering from complications with diabetes, Sarbaband was not at fault: essentially saying that he wasn't healthy enough to be subjected to extremely hot temperatures, wildfire smoke, and lack of water and rest, and then denied medical treatment. It makes my blood boil. If he had access to proper care and safe work conditions, the issues from diabetes would not have taken his life-- how is that not Sarbanand's fault?

### **VIGILS**

The Dignity Vigils were organized by C2C in response to the violence of ICE and Border Patrol on the community, including the 2018 ICE raid in Bellingham. These vigils called on leaders at city hall in particular to do something about the violent raids that had occurred several times in the fifteen years of C2C's organizing span, and caused huge harm to the community. City Council did not listen to organizers asking them to help keep families and workers safe, but the spaces of the vigils became like community centers where people would gather and collaborate on the problems they faced, in the absence of a physical space for impacted communities. When Honesto Silva Ibarra died, these vigils became a space for community mourning and demanding justice. Our collective began holding vigils in front of Olympia City Hall during the early fall of 2018. For an hour each week, anywhere from 2-10 of us would stand holding signs with messaging that C2C helped us focus. We took a photo each week of our group, and documented what kind of reception people had to our presence. Many people honked their support, and others flipped us off, yelled support for ICE or Trump out of their window, or got up close to us and became physically intimidating. City Hall employees largely looked uncomfortable and avoided eye contact, but some took the small hand-outs on H-2A from C2C that we provided. Still others asked questions-- people who'd never heard of the H-2A program or had seldom thought about

their consumer role in corporate agriculture (like many of us) had conversations with us, especially Tzvi who was usually the most brave and most informed.



### **TABLING**

We tabled at a variety of events, including Evergreen's Harvest Festival a few times. At one Harvest Festival, we set out cardboard and paint for people to make their own signs-- at another, we led a workshop in the food lab room. Lauren and Knell tabled at a May Day event held in Sylvester Park; David, Sean, and I tabled and then marched at an event called Block The Wall, organized in opposition to U.S.-Mexico border militarization; we also tabled at a film screening of a few food justice films, including En La Lucha, at Capital Theater-- and helped sell T-shirts for organizers with Friends of the ATC who spoke at the event.



# TRIPS TO BELLINGHAM + TIERRA Y LIBERTAD

The collective has been up to Bellingham a few times to learn from and support C2C and FUJ. In 2019, Prita and Martha's Ecological Agriculture class planned a trip to the cooperative berry farm Tierra Y Libertad to learn from leaders of the co-op, like Modesto Hernandez, Ramon Torres, and Marciano Sanchez, and help them with farm labor. Members of the collective met up with Prita, Martha, and the students on the farm, and volunteered some of our time beforehand to set some fences up around blueberry plants. C2C let us sleep on the floor of their office space in downtown Bellingham when we drove up the night before, and it was a really beautiful night-- the office space is covered in artwork and posters, and painted banners hang from the ceiling.



# **OTHER EVENTS**

- We regularly led workshops to classes in the Food and Agriculture, Climate Justice, and El Camino pathways.
- We supported C2C and FUJ in their toy drive for farmworker families around Christmas time. Olivia and I worked at the Children's Center on campus at the time, and we were able to get Talley, the receptionist at the center, involved with the drive. Parents, teachers, and community members helped us get several boxes to take up to Bellingham.
- We organized a few dance parties with the help of folks from Fruitopia at La Voyeur to raise money for Tierra y Libertad and C2C.
- We set up a table outside of the CAB to do phone banking, calling legislators in support of SB 5438, which created an office of oversight in Washington state for H-2A
- We attended bill hearings, sometimes organizing groups to show up in support of C2C's legislative goals. Tzvi gave public comment on SB 5428-- a bill they'd researched extensively while interning with C2C.
- Every year members of the collective helped plan, set up, and table at Farmworker Justice Day.
- Latino Legislative Day and the Farmworker Tribunal were (prior to COVID) also annual events we attended to support C2C-- we often brought food, set up chairs, and helped carry supplies for C2C organizers.

# PROCESS

These actions were named here so that future students can get ideas for future organizing. However, we also learned a lot from C2C about collective organizing processes, which is ongoing learning for us all. Some of the most important pieces of our process were already mentioned: such as our role as solidarity actors, taking direction and leadership directly from C2C and FUJ. Within this position, we engaged in work that C2C asked, and trusted C2C's primary messaging. This was definitely a lesson I had to relearn later on, during one year's Farmworker Justice Day planning, when I sent Rosalinda and Liz a list of brainstormed topics for post-event workshops, from conversations within the FWJD planning meetings. Rosalinda felt that some of the items on the list were not appropriate for the moment in their movement, and that the leaders from the Promotoras, FUJ, and TUJ would discuss what they determined was important. I've also learned a lot from a text on White supremacy culture in organizations that C2C shares with all of their volunteers, in the spirit of building true community solidarity that also deconstructs capitalistic, colonial, and hierarchical relationships. I wanted to include excerpts from one of its iterations, titled *Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture* by Tema Okun with *dRworks*, but it became too long-- so it will be included outside of the zine instead. I find that it's important to revisit this text regularly to be reminded of the ways that white supremacy thinking still clouds my ability to deepen community bonds-- both while working directly with farmworker activists and while working within solidarity circles. The characteristics are: perfectionism, sense of urgency, defensiveness, quantity over quality, worship of the written word, either/or thinking, power hoarding, fear of open conflict, and 'I'm the only one.'

There were other components of our process, such as the structure of our meetings, that may be helpful to students later on. Components of the collective's process were very memorable to me from the first time I became involved in 2018, after I saw friends from Seeds of Change tabling at the clubs fair. That afternoon, we all sat in the back of the student activities offices beside that large, vibrant mural. Ezra, who was facilitating that meeting (a shared role, alongside note-taking) shared that members of the collective had gone up to Bellingham over the summer to learn from C2C's organizing strategies and participate in their Dignity Vigils. They'd come back invigorated with ideas for our process, and we immediately outlined different projects to undertake, with responsible subcommittees. Having witnessed the Dignity Vigils and received direction from C2C to create our own in Olympia, organizing and committing to regularly attend the weekly vigils became a committee project. Another focused on education and outreach to our community: including workshops, social media, and tabling at events and in common spaces. There was also a committee focused on arts builds and sign making, one specifically focused on Farmworker Justice Day planning support, and a Spanish translation team. Additionally, there were designated Club Coordinators, a C2C contact person (Tzvi) and someone focused on tracking legislation (David). After a while, the roles became blurred and we all ended up sharing responsibility without those distinctions-- but the memory of Ezra writing headings and names and circles on a whiteboard in front of us is a sweet one for me. Over the following couple years, we worked with Kayla Mahnke (our student activities advisor) to book weekly meeting spaces for each quarter, which moved throughout the SEM II, CAB, and Purce Hall buildings.

We also:

- structured report-backs on events and subcommittee work into meeting times
- made an effort to write down all commitments that were made within the group and follow up with each about them (to remind each other and hold ourselves accountable)
- made an effort to take thorough notes about our decisions and discussions.

That last point is particularly notable to me. While looking through the archives of the collective's Google Group messages to try to understand what the early conversations and strategies of the collective were like, I found this delightful message to the group from Fred in 2018:

I'm thinking we should get in the habit of having a rotating note/minute taker and make sure we're posting the minutes on the drive. Documenting our processes will be helpful to us but especially helpful for students trying to help with a boycott three years from now, you know?

Cheers,

Fred

I laughed for several minutes about that one-- it being 2021, and with me doing just about that.

# **CURRENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVOLVEMENT**

The call for students to be involved with this work is ongoing. Separate from specific boycott campaigns, legislative actions, etc-- it is always a critical time to educate the public about the corruption of the corporate agricultural system, exploitation under H-2A, human impacts from U.S. foreign policy like NAFTA, farmworker resistance and food sovereignty struggles, environmental degradation from pesticide use and unsustainable ag practices... the list goes on. That being said, here are some particular fronts that activists have called for supporter action around right now:

• As previously mentioned, public support for Trabajadores Unidas por la Justicia, and opposition to the federal Farm Workforce Modernization Act. Organizers from Food Chain Workers Alliance created a letter writing campaign with The Action Network

against the FWMA that students can boost, or phone bank to senators, asking them to vote no.

- Fundraising in support of Tierra y Libertad, and Community to Community. The cooperative farm is still working to purchase their land, and also raising money to build a community space for C2C and members of the local unions. Organizers have long talked about the fact that no such space currently exists for affected communities to gather, and share resources and testimonies in the area. Tierra y Libertad also benefits from volunteer labor-- for which students could organize group work parties.
- Wendy Pantoja Castillo, an organizer who supported the Northwest Detention Center Resistance and works with C2C, is working on a community research project on farms and farmworker needs in Thurston County. Though many have been involved with farmworker activism in other counties, there is less known publicly about conditions on Thurston farms. Wendy and Anne Fischel, a former Evergreen faculty member, are looking for community members who speak Spanish, and others to get involved with this work-which may include talking with farmworkers in the fields and doing research into farm products, scale, and other demographics.



### **RESOURCES**

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