

Who are the Farmworkers?/

¿Quiénes son los Trabajadores Agrícolas?

Hoy en día hay cerca de 3.5 millones de trabajadores agrícolas en los Estados Unidos. Cerca de 170,000 de los cuales trabajan en el Estado de la Florida. Algunos de ellos tienen residencia en el estado y algunos forman parte de la llamada "corriente migratoria." Todos viven en la pobreza y desamparo.

Los trabajadores agrícolas, en su mayoría negros y mexicano-americanos, siembran y siegan un cultivo que le da a los cultivadores más de \$700 millones al año. Pero son escasos los trabajadores agrícolas que se benefician de las ganancias que resultan de sus labores. Los ingresos totales de la mayoría están por debajo de las figuras federales de pobreza.

Sometidos a un salario inadecuado, los trabajadores padecen penalidades extraordinarias como alojamiento por debajo de un "standard" aceptable, la desnutrición, el analfabetismo y la enfermedad. Y al serles negado el amparo de las leyes que protegen los derechos de los demás trabajadores del país, los agricultores no tienen a su disposición ningún remedio para su situación excepcional y deplorable.

En breve, la gente que cosecha las frutas y los vegetales de los campos de la Florida padecen condiciones desconocidas por la mayoría de los trabajadores americanos. Según el Preámbulo de las leyes que se pasaron en la Florida en 1970, el trabajador agrícola es "el segmento más despojado, tanto social como económicamente, de toda la población de hoy en día.

He aquí los hechos:

SALARIOS — El trabajador agrícola promedio en la nación gana \$1,576 al año. El trabajador agrícola promedio en la Florida gana \$1,737 al año. (Departamento de Agricultura)

EDUCACION — Como los trabajadores agrícolas ganan tan poco, sus hijos deben dejar la escuela para trabajar en los campos. Noventa por ciento de dichos jóvenes y niños nunca completan su educación. (Departamento de Salud, Educación y Bienestar)

LABOR INFANTIL — Aproximadamente 800,000 trabajadores agrícolas, o sea, uno de cada cuatro son menores de los 16 años. (Comité del Senado sobre la Labor Migratoria)

SEGURIDAD EN EL TRABAJO — El trabajador agrícola promedio del país tiene cuatro veces mayores posibilidades de morir en un accidente que el trabajador promedio americano. (Subcomité del Senado sobre la Labor Migratoria)

ALOJAMIENTO — Aunque en promedio la familia de agricultores que vive en la Florida, tiene cinco miembros, el alojamiento promedio tiene dos piezas, sin ducha, inodoro ni lavamanos. (Ministerio Cristiano Migratorio de la Florida)

SALUD — Debido a las condiciones deplorables, el trabajador agrícola tiene el *doble* de las posibilidades de morir en la infancia que tiene el promedio de americanos: más del *triple* de posibilidades de morir de influenza y neumonía; cerca de *cuatro veces* mayores posibilidades de sucumbir a tuberculosis y otras enfermedades infecciosas. (Subcomité del Senado Sobre la Labor Migratoria)

LONGEVIDAD — En promedio, el trabajador agrícola en los EE.UU. vive hasta los 49 años. En promedio, cualquier otro americano vive hasta los 72 años. (Subcomité del Senado Sobre la Labor Migratoria)

La situación clama por el cambio. Pide un fin a las condiciones brutales que mutilan los cuerpos y aplastan los espíritus de decenas de miles de trabajadores. En las propias palabras de Willie Brown, un trabajador migratorio en Homestead, Florida: "Hay que trabajar y trabajar. Pero no se gana nada. Algo tiene que cambiar."

There are nearly 3.5 million farmworkers in the United States today. Of those, about 170,000 work in the State of Florida. Some of those workers reside in the state. Some of them travel the "migrant stream." All of them live in conditions of poverty, squalor and neglect.

The farmworkers, mostly native-born blacks and Mexican-Americans, sow and harvest a crop which nets Florida's growers \$700 million a year. But few of the farmworkers share in the bountiful profits accruing from their labor. Most earn incomes which fall far below the federal poverty level.

Compelled to accept an inadequate wage, the farmworkers suffer exceptional hardships — substandard housing, malnutrition, illiteracy and disease. And barred from the laws which protect the rights of all other laborers in the land, the farmworkers have no immediate remedy for their special plight.

In short, the people who gather the fruits and vegetables from Florida's fields endure conditions unknown to any other American workers. To use the words of the Preamble to the 1970 Florida Laws, the farmworker is "the most economically and socially deprived segment of the population today."

Consider the facts:

WAGES — The average farmworker in the nation earns \$1,576 per year. The average Florida farmworker earns \$1,737 per year. (US Department of Agriculture)

EDUCATION — Since farmworkers earn such meager wages, their children must leave school to work in the fields. Ninety per cent of those children never complete their education. (US Department of Health, Education and Welfare)

CHILD LABOR — About 800,000 paid agricultural workers — or one out of every four — are under the age of 16. (US Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor)

SAFETY — The average farmworker in the nation is four times as likely to die in an accident on the job as the average American worker. (US Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor)

HOUSING — Although the average farmworker family living in Florida has five members, the average Florida farmworker house has two rooms — with no shower, toilet or sink. (Florida Christian Migrant Ministry)

HEALTH — Since farmworkers live in such squalid conditions, the average farmworker is more than *twice* as likely to die in infancy as the average American; more than *three times* as likely to die from flu and pneumonia; and nearly *four times* as likely to die from tuberculosis and other infectious diseases. (US Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor)

LIFE EXPECTANCY — The average farmworker in America lives to be 49 years old. The average American lives to be 72. (US Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor)

These then are the facts. While Florida's growers net hundreds of millions of dollars each year, the workers who harvest their crops can barely pay for their basic needs. Denied a fair wage, those workers are caught in a vicious cycle of poverty — a cycle from which few workers ever manage to escape.

The situation cries out for change. It calls for an end to the brutal conditions that maim the bodies and crush the spirits of tens of thousands of workers. To use the words of Willie Brown, a migrant worker in Homestead, Florida: "You work and work. But you don't make nuthin'. Somethin's gotta change."

Aunque los trabajadores agrícolas han padecido ya muchos años, hoy sienten la esperanza de poder vivir una vida decente y digna. Esa esperanza ha nacido de una unión laboral dirigida por trabajadores para los trabajadores, la United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO.

La U.F.W., fundada por César Chávez en 1962 ha tenido como objetivo el ayudar a los trabajadores agrícolas a lograr una justicia económica. En la Florida, en California y varios otros lugares la unión ha ayudado a ganar salarios adecuados, seguridad en el empleo, seguridad en el trabajo y ayuda médica para muchos trabajadores.

Hoy en día la unión — con la asistencia de los trabajadores, quienes como César Chávez ganan \$5 semanales — está tratando de ayudar a aquellos que cosechan las uvas y la lechuga en este país. Pero el litigio es tenaz y la victoria todavía no está a la vista. Por eso es que los trabajadores ahora buscamos el apoyo de usted, el consumidor americano.

Hace menos de un año, muchos trabajadores de la uva y la lechuga en California y Arizona, gozaban de los beneficios de un contrato de la U.F.W. Pero cuando estos contratos vencieron, los cultivadores rehusaron negociar con los trabajadores de nuevo. Al contrario, firmaron en seguida contratos clandestinos con la Conferencia Occidental de los "Teamsters".

No estando dispuestos a trabajar con una organización que no los representara, los trabajadores hicieron huelga y pidieron elecciones a fin de escoger la unión de su preferencia. Pero los cultivadores rehusaron elección y trajeron trabajadores extranjeros ilegales, en un intento de romper el paro y así, en efecto, destruir la unión.

Al chocar contra las fuerzas combinadas del agronegocio incorporado y la Conferencia Occidental de los "Teamsters", los trabajadores se encontraron con la necesidad de buscar ayuda por fuera de los campos. Así vinieron a Miami y a 49 otras ciudades americanas a pedir que los consumidores no compraran la lechuga "Iceberg", ni uvas de mesa, ni el vino Gallo.

Boicoteando la lechuga "Iceberg", las uvas y los vinos Gallo, los consumidores harán escuchar a los trabajadores agrícolas en las cámaras de directores de las corporaciones agrícolas. El boicoteo es un medio legal, pacífico y no violento que se ciñe a la ley de ayudar a los trabajadores agrícolas a llamar la atención a los adinerados cultivadores de la uva y la lechuga.

El boicoteo de consumidores ya ha demostrado tener efecto. En 1970, un boicoteo de la uva le ganó contratos de U.F.W. a más de 30,000 trabajadores. Hoy, el boicoteo volverá a surtir efecto — si solo usted ayudara a los trabajadores agrícolas de la nación, absteniéndose de comprar los siguientes productos:

UVAS DE MESA — Por favor, absténgase de comprar toda uva de mesa.

LECHUGA ICEBERG — Por favor, no compre lechuga Iceberg a no ser que tenga la envoltura con el sello del águila Azteca.

VINO GALLO — Por favor, no compre ningún vino Gallo, incluyendo Ripple, Boone's Farm y Spanada. (Cualquier vino que porte el sello: "Meda in Modesta, California", es producido por Gallo)

Agradecemos su ayuda a fin que los trabajadores agrícolas ganen igualdad de derechos y una mejor vida. Como dicen los trabajadores agrícolas: "¡Sí se Puede!"

Although America's farmworkers have suffered for many, many years, today they have hope for a better life — a decent and dignified life. That hope has come from a labor union managed by and for farm workers, the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO.

The UFW, founded by César Chávez in 1962, has been working for years to help farmworkers achieve economic justice. In Florida, in California and elsewhere, the union has helped many workers win adequate wages, job security, safe working conditions and medical care.

Today, the union — assisted by workers who, like Chávez, earn \$5 a week — is trying to help the people who harvest the nation's grapes and lettuce. But the struggle is not an easy one and the victory is far from won. That is why the workers now seek help from you, the American consumer.

Less than one year ago, many grape and lettuce workers in California and Arizona enjoyed the benefits of UFW contracts. When those contracts expired, however, the growers refused to meet with their workers again. Instead, they signed "backdoor" contracts with the Western Conference of Teamsters.

Unwilling to work with an organization that did not represent them, the workers went out on strike and asked for union representation elections. But the growers refused to hold elections and, instead, brought in illegal alien workers to try to break the strike and, in effect, destroy the union.

Opposed by the forces of corporate agribusiness and the Western Conference of Teamsters, the workers had to look beyond the fields for help. They came to Miami and 49 other American cities to ask consumers to help them by not buying non-UFW iceberg lettuce, grapes and Gallo wine.

By boycotting iceberg lettuce, grapes and Gallo wine, consumers can make it possible for farmworkers to be heard in the corporate board rooms. The boycott is a legal, peaceful, non-violent way to help the farmworkers gain the attention of the wealthy grape and lettuce growers.

The consumer boycott worked once before. In 1970, a boycott of grapes won UFW contracts for more than 30,000 workers. Today, the boycott will work once again — if only you will support America's farmworkers by simply refraining from buying the following products:

TABLE GRAPES — Please avoid all table grapes.

ICEBERG LETTUCE — Please don't buy iceberg lettuce unless it is wrapped in a package bearing the UFW's Aztec eagle label.

GALLO WINE — Please don't purchase any Gallo wine, including Ripple, Boone's Farm, and Spanada. (Any wine bearing the label, "Made in Modesto, California" is made by Gallo.)

Thank you for helping the farmworkers win equal rights and a better life. As the farmworkers say: "¡Sí se puede!" "Yes, It Can Be Done!"

I would like to know how I can help the United Farm Workers. Me interesa saber cómo ayudar a United Farm Workers.

I am enclosing \$ _____ (check or money order).
Incluyo \$ _____ (cheque o money order)

Mr./Ms. _____

Street and Number/ Calle y Número _____

City and State/ Ciudad y Estado _____ Zip Code _____

Please mail this coupon to/ Por favor envíese este cupón a: United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO, 2206 N.W. 27th Avenue, Miami, Fla. 33142. (Tel: (305) 633-7071).

THE FLORIDA CHRISTIAN MIGRANT MINISTRY
3637 N.E. 1 Avenue
Miami, Florida 33137

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ANOTHER SAD CHAPTER IN THE FARMWORKERS' STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE

Franklin F. Smith

This another story of the big people vs. the little people in the "good ol' U.S.A." In this case, the big people are the Gulf and western Products Company, one of the powerful conglomerates in our country. Among other things they own Paramount Studios, producers of such multi-million dollar money makers as "The Godfather." In Florida they are into tomatoes and sugar. Their sugar operation is one of the biggest in the state, and their Ckeelanta mill a few miles south of South Bay and west of Highway 27 is well known in the Lake Okeechobee area.

Not so well known are the several hundred Jamaican men, hard up for work, who leave their families, and spend five months attacking the heavy stalks of Gulf western cane with the deadly machette and living in huge, bleak dormitories with their endless rows of double-decker bunks. If a man is unable to cut his task (200 feet per hour or 8 tons per day!) or begins registering complaints about his working conditions or the food, he is liable to be summarily sent back to Jamaica and charged for his passage here and back. This fear of being "shipped back" is so great that the men are often extremely hesitant about talking to any "outsider" in the camp itself or when he makes one of his infrequent trips to town. (The company charges \$3.00 transportation to Belle Glade.)

The above is background for the tragedy that occurred in the pre-dawn hours on the first Monday of 1974. Three crews (the Florida Highway Patrol estimates at least 130 men) were packed into an inclosed 8'x55' van which had no windows and no light inside. To say that they were packed in like cattle would in no sense convey the true picture. We treat cattle much better. Something apparently went wrong with the steering mechanism and the van flipped over. One man was killed and 86 were hospitalized. Some of them critically injured. Somehow, in spite of that, Gulf and Western says there were only 85 men in the van.

In the midst of this senseless catastrophe, there are several bitter ironies: the Highway Patrol says that Gulf and Western is exempt from the safety standards of the Florida Migratory Carriers Law because the act exempts employers hauling their own workers! The Patrol also said that since the accident occurred on Gulf and Western's private property (the road from the mill out to Highway 27) it cannot file charges.

As if that were not enough, three weeks earlier, 39 Jamaican cane cutters were injured when a similar truck flipped off the same road after the driver said the shoulder gave way as he was easing his truck around a pothole. Four of those men are still hospitalized. Twenty-five others, who were released from the hospital but still unable to work, have been shipped back to Jamaica. What they have received or will receive in workman's Compensation is an important question for which we have no answer. Several workers who were in that first accident, hospitalized, and back at work now, indicated, on the day after the second accident, that no one had approached them about workman's Compensation yet.