

# FROM THE GROUND UP

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# SAF

STUDENT ACTION WITH FARMWORKERS

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Check out these photos of the 2005 Into the Fields Internship taken by SAF Documentary Intern Carmela Meehan

## Focus on Documentary



Left 2005 SAF Intern Reynaldo Sosa, from the University of South Florida Right SAF Intern Lupe Huitron interviewing a worker during his time off photos by Carmela Meehan

## Oral Traditions In the Fields

by: Carmela Meehan, 2005 SAF Documentary Intern

For the past seven years, Student Action with Farmworkers (SAF) interns have been teaming up to document the cultural traditions and skills of farmworkers in North and South Carolina. These projects celebrate numerous traditions, and give farmworkers a chance to share a sense of pride and value in their culture. The project also enables SAF interns to form meaningful relationships with workers and address injustice by sharing what they have learned with the wider community.

During the summer of 2005, SAF summer interns set out to document the oral traditions of farmworkers they met. They found singers, cooks, net weavers, and healers who learned these traditions orally, continue to practice them far from home, and are passing these traditions on to their families. By paying particular attention to the oral traditions of their subjects rather than focusing on them as just workers, interns were reminded that farmworkers are "people with dreams, interests, and aspirations" (Rocio Rangel, 2005 ITF Intern).

Interns with a family history of farm work had an intense experience of self-discovery. Intern Joslyn Wiley recalled: "During the interview, it finally hit me that by talking to this woman, I was not just learning about a particular cultural tradition important to one woman and her family - I was also gaining insight into the history of my family and how it has changed over the generations." Interns who did not have a background in farm work gained insight into these discoveries by collaborating with the interns who did.

Through the documentary projects, interns and their subjects built strong personal relationships with one another. Both interns and workers were empowered by sharing and recording traditions that otherwise might be forgotten. This newsletter focuses on a few of these incredible stories. ☀

"Sometimes documentarians forget how much influence the work they do has on themselves. Documentary work is just as much about self-exploration as it is about exploring the outside world."



