

# FROM THE GROUND UP

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SUMMER 2004

## Focus on Farmworker Awareness Week

# SAF

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### About Farmworker Awareness Week

Farmworker Awareness Week (FAW) is a nation-wide week of action for students and community members to raise awareness about farmworker issues within their local communities. Students across the country participate by planning events such as teach-ins, rallies, marches, and film screenings. Through these events, students inform individuals on their campuses and local communities about the injustices farmworkers face and provide information about ways to support farmworkers in their struggle for justice. FAW is scheduled each year during the week of Cesar Chavez's birthday, March 31st, to honor his legacy as a leader of the farmworker movement.

This spring's Farmworker Awareness Week was a huge success. **More than 500 students and community members around the country spread the word about farmworker issues and learned about farmworkers in their communities.** Individual reports from participating groups around the US can be found below.

Take part in next year's action by organizing farmworker activities in your area. Or commit to raising awareness about farmworkers throughout the year! Farmworker Awareness Week information and organizing materials can be found online year-round at <http://www.saf-unite.org>. Contact SAF's National Student Organizer, Laxmi Haynes, at (919) 660-3660 for more information.



Duke student Lyndsey Beutin addresses the crowd at a Farmworker Awareness Week Teach-in at Duke University in April. *Photo by: Laxmi Haynes*

### FAW 2004 Campus and Community Reports

#### Cornell University, NY

Members of the Farmworkers Advocacy Coalition helped organize the first *NE Regional Students for a Global Conscience Conference* and incorporated farmworker issues into the weekend agenda. SAF was invited to present 2 workshops on farmworker issues. The Farmworkers Advocacy Coalition also planned events for their own Farmworker Advocacy Week, April 26-30th. Please refer to the "Cornell's Farmworkers Advocacy Coalition..." article on p. 2 for more information.

#### California State University-Long Beach

Members of the United Migrant Student Association and College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) coordinated events including a Cesar Chavez March and evening program with SAF Internship Coordinator Nadeen Bir. Over one hundred people participated in this action.

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Check out SAF's new Internship Directory  
Get updates on farmworker boycotts and  
SAF events

[www.saf-unite.org](http://www.saf-unite.org)

**SAF** is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose mission is to bring students and farmworkers together to learn about each other's lives, share resources and skills, improve conditions for farmworkers, and build diverse coalitions working for social change.

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**Action Alerts**

Send an email with the word "subscribe" to <[farmworkers-request@duke.edu](mailto:farmworkers-request@duke.edu)> to receive SAF's weekly Action Alerts about legislation affecting farmworkers, organizing campaigns, campus events, and job opportunities.

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## Cornell's Farmworkers Advocacy Coalition Celebrates First Ever Farmworker Advocacy Week

*By Pilar McKay and Justin Finch*

During the week of April 26 to 29, 2004, students at Cornell University participated in their first ever Farmworker Advocacy Week. The week of action was a result of student activist Alex Chan's project for the service learning course entitled "Farmworkers," and was planned by members of the Farmworkers Advocacy Coalition of Cornell (FWAC).

Students attended four events, including documentary screenings and panel discussions. "Cesar Chavez Day at Cornell" was the week's first event in which students commemorated the achievements of the United Farm Workers' co-founder. The film, "The Fight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farmworkers Struggle" was shown to introduce students to the activist's life and triumphs.

Events on the second day included "Current U.S. Immigration Debate: Introduction to Opposing Views," a panel discussion featuring Professor of the Political Economy of Mexico Maria Cook, Professor of Human Resource Economics and Public Policy Vernon Briggs, and Director of Labor Education Research Kate Bronfenbrenner. The debate centered on the permeability of American borders, legalizing undocumented immigrants, and the pros and cons of organizing undocumented immigrants into unions.

On Thursday, five farmworkers told Cornell students about the state's working and living conditions. The event, "Working in our Backyards," educated students about the workers who toil in our fields and their desire for the deserved respect and the pay to reflect their hard work.

The last event was a screening of the 1960 documentary "Harvest of Shame" narrated by Edward R. Murrow. This landmark film closed the week with a glimpse into the not-so-distant past.

The purpose of the week was to introduce students to the basics of farmworker issues. And as we celebrate our second year as a campus organization, we hope this week's success will be the start of many more.

The 70 member Farmworkers Advocacy Coalition of Cornell (FWAC) was formed to bring attention to the thousands of farmworkers in our immediate community as well as throughout the nation and world. We focus on educating the Cornell and Ithaca community about the historic and present conditions of farmworkers. FWAC actively works with several organizations to highlight the plight of farmworkers and to promote improvement in their situation. FWAC President Pilar McKay can be reached at [pem23@cornell.edu](mailto:pem23@cornell.edu).

### Excerpts from FAW Speech at CSU-LB

*By Nadeen Bir, March 30, 2004*

"...SAF and I do this work to make students and the community think about where their food comes from and to realize that there is a hidden population of people who picked that produce. We want to help expose the reality of what is going on in the fields and bring a voice to the farmworker community. We work with students because we believe that students have so much power in bringing about positive social change. Cesar Chavez said 'Students must have initiative; they should not be mere imitators. They must learn to think and act for themselves and be free.

One day, I heard a presentation on my campus about farmworker issues in the US. To my surprise, I learned that people were still actually working in the fields, and I learned that farm work is the second most dangerous occupation in the US. The most shocking thing I learned was that modern day slavery conditions exist for farmworkers...The reality hit me and it hit me hard...I was affected, and it changed my life...I realized that I hadn't been questioning things enough, that there were injustices happening in my own backyard. And as I reflected on it, I kept coming back to the same question: I kept thinking about 3 words...

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## Campus Reports continued

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### Duke University, NC

On April 1, over 50 students and professors attended a panel discussion on Duke's Chapel Quad sponsored by the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), Duke Students Against Sweatshops (DSAS) and SAF. Panelists addressed the ongoing boycott of Mount Olive Pickle Co., which has been the subject of intense discussion at Duke for the last several years. Members of DSAS and Duke faculty members worked with SAF, NC Legal Aid, the National Farm Worker Ministry (NFWM) and FLOC to inform students about the farmworker justice movement, labor rights, boycotts, and student activism.

### Guilford College, NC

A group of four students, a dean and a faculty member persuaded campus dining services to pull Six L's tomatoes from the cafeteria's salad bar. The cafeteria agreed to honor the Taco Bell boycott by not accepting any Six L's products in the weekly shipments of vegetables they receive. A Peace and Conflict Studies Committee at the school plans to follow up with the cafeteria, and a group is forming to explore other issues of ethical procurement in the college's purchasing practices. According to one student, "The action was a complete success and a lot easier than we ever imagined it could be!"

### Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Aylwin Lo, former Frontier College Labourer-Teacher posted SAF's Farmworker Awareness Week flyer and some of her own research outside her office cubicle to inform her coworkers about farmworker issues.

### St. Edwards University, TX

On March 28, 200 people from several community and student organizations from St. Edward's and University of Texas-Austin marched on Cesar Chavez St. from east Austin to the AFL-CIO offices. Local political figures and community leaders spoke about Cesar Chavez and the importance of his message today. On March 30<sup>th</sup>, the Hispanic Student Association, CAMP and ENLACE showed two documentary films to 60 people on the lives of two St. Edward's migrant students and spoke about the current boycotts on Mt. Olive and Taco Bell.

### University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill

On March 29, SAF, CHispa, and SURGE sponsored a screening of a film about the Coalition of Immokalee Worker's (CIW) 2003 Taco Bell Truth Tour and hunger strike. The following day SURGE sponsored a "NAFTA at Ten Years" panel. On the 31<sup>st</sup>, CHispa, SURGE, SAF, and FLOC sponsored a Farmworker Awareness Panel. Speakers included SAF National Student Organizer Laxmi Haynes, former SAF intern and UNC-CH student Laura Johnson, and FLOC National Boycott Organizer Nick Wood.



UT Pan Am students and local community members march in memory of Cesar Chavez in 2003.

### University of Texas- Pan American

The Association of Migrant Students organized and attended several events during FAW, including a Cesar Chavez march organized by the UFW. Events also included guest speaker and elementary school principal Mrs. Carolina Desiga, who talked about education and her migrant background, a screening of the video "New Harvest, Old Shame", and guest speaker Ms. Hortencia Armendariz, UFW representative, who spoke about the AgJOBS bill.

### Warren Wilson College, NC

On Cesar Chavez's birthday, a geography professor and a group of students distributed a birthday cake and information about farmworkers in North Carolina, farmworker-called boycotts, workers' rights, and Cesar Chavez. That evening students held a presentation about the labor movement in the US (including farmworkers) as part of events for National Student Labor Week of Action, which is co-sponsored by SAF.

### West Hills College, CA

SAF alumnus Salvador Alvarez conducted a presentation to 30 lettuce pickers about the importance of unions and how they are allies to workers. He spoke specifically about the UFW and distributed SAF information and publications.

