

SAF

Student Action with Farmworkers

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Alix Blair



Adriana Sanchez

Interns learn photo and audio documentary skills. Left Telling stories with photos **Right** Elizabeth Hayes-Lozada interviews her subject through her documentary project

Focus on Documentary

Amelia Alexander, 2007 Documentary Intern

It is so often taken for granted that *someone* will cultivate and harvest our food, but the stories and lives of workers themselves are too often ignored. It is troubling to see the difficult work that farmworkers do, their distance from home, and the living conditions they often deal with, yet their spirit and dedication to having better lives is inspiring.

This summer, college students participating in SAF's Into the Fields Internship worked with organizations throughout North and South Carolina to provide essential services for farmworkers. In addition, seventeen of these students created photo and audio projects documenting farmworkers, and while most interns had no previous experience with documentary work, many *did* have experience with farmworkers (The majority of the interns are from farmworker families themselves).

The narratives presented here are a small sample of the work that these students created focusing on the **educational aspirations** of farmworkers. Interns and their subjects interpreted the theme in a variety of ways, from formal education to the practice of passing down traditions from one generation to the next. There are also stories of sacrificing one's own goals to provide opportunities for family, farmworkers educating themselves, religious education, and practical skills learned in home countries. These stories bring diversity to our definition of education, which doesn't always happen in a classroom.

Through the projects, farmworkers shared their hopes and dreams with students, granting them access to their personal lives. They built relationships with people they might not have otherwise met if they weren't part of a documentary. Intern Kendal Walters writes about her interviewee, "I know that as time passes it will be harder to keep in touch so frequently, but I also know that my memories of her will stay with me forever."

By bringing forth their stories and aspirations, we hope to raise the voice of the people who work so hard bringing food to our tables. ★

"Ves, un tomate, una naranja, una manzana. ¿Bien bonita verdad? Pero tú nunca sabes cómo fue el procedimiento de ese trabajo... es muy bonito saber."

"You see, a tomato, an orange, an apple...very pretty right? But you never know what the source of that work was... it's very beautiful to know."

-Luz Elena, Farmworker



Alix Blair



Amelia Alexander

Interns meet individual farmworkers through their documentary projects. Above Left Yesica Orozco talks with a worker at a labor camp in central NC. **Bottom Left** Maribel Maldonado shares a gift with her subject Maria (see p. 2 for her story).

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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Maribel Maldonado

Maria Ramirez holds an Our Lady of Lourdes Pendant she found in a stack of tobacco she was working in; she saw it as a sign of God speaking to her.

Servidora de Dios (Server of God)

Maribel Maldonado & Charlotte Sibley-
Into the Fields Interns, 2007

Maria Ramirez is a Mexican immigrant who came to the United States in order to help support her family. She has been in North Carolina for fourteen years, and her husband has remained in Mexico due to disabilities that keep him from working or traveling.

For twelve years, Maria worked in a peanut factory, but she was fired recently due to her refusal to work on Sundays. Nonetheless, her faith in God is so strong that Maria is able to see the bright side of her struggles and knows that she will persevere. She is a dedicated Catholic—a regular mass attendee, a communion server, and an instructor of the catechism who has received a certificate of recognition for her service to St. Gabriel's Catholic Church.

Maria is devoted to La Virgen de Guadalupe, and religious education is an important part of her life. Likewise, she also feels that formal education is an important thing for her children and grandchildren to take advantage of, especially since she had to work and was unable to complete school.

Having come so far since she first crossed the border with her friend fourteen years ago, she knows that God will not forsake her now, just as she will not forsake Him. Maria knows that with God by her side, everything will be okay. She hopes to continue learning about her faith to grow closer to God and also about the English language, in order to get a job to better the lives of her family members. Maria believes that no matter what age a person is—from her youngest grandchildren up to abuelitas like herself—educating oneself (religiously or otherwise) is absolutely essential. ★

"Es lo único que yo les puedo dar a ellos, como una herencia para toda su vida. Si la aprovechan, ellos pueden conseguir un trabajo mejor."

"It's the only thing I can give them, like an inheritance for their whole lives. If they take advantage of it, they can get a better job."



Charlotte Sibley

Standing before her shrine to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Maria presents a certificate she earned for service to her church.

Dos Vidas, Un Sueño

Two Lives, One Dream

Elizabeth Arias y Elizabeth Tomás-
Pasantes de Hacia los Campos, 2007

Nosotros Andrés y Roberto Patricio somos de Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, México. Somos hermanos y los más chicos de nuestra familia. Los dos como hermanos decidimos venirnos a Estados Unidos por el mismo motivo de superación.

Soy Roberto Patricio. Tengo 19 años y he estado en Estados Unidos por casi dos años. Desde que llegue a Estados Unidos he trabajado en el campo pizcando tomates, cebolla, pepino y muchos otros más vegetales. El trabajo en el campo no ha sido fácil, ya que el trabajo del campo requiere mucha fuerza, valor y estar soportando malas condiciones cada día. Pero el fútbol es una de las cosas que disfruto hacer después del trabajo y en mi tiempo libre.

Yo Andrés Patricio, siendo un joven de 16 años abandoné la escuela por la necesidad y la curiosidad de venir a conocer Estados Unidos. El venirme para acá fue una decisión muy difícil para mí y especialmente para mis padres ya que soy el más chico de la familia. Yo al igual que mi hermano Roberto, he estado trabajando en el campo desde hace un año y medio que he estado aquí. Me he convertido en un trabajador emigrante viajando a Florida, Georgia, Carolina del Norte y Kentucky, buscando las diferentes temporadas de trabajo.

Yo Roberto soy un joven como cualquier otro con aspiraciones, sueños y metas. Como no pude cumplir mi sueño de ser maestro en México al venirme a Estados Unidos mis sueños cambiaron debido a nuevas responsabilidades. Ahora mis sueños son aprender inglés y llegar a ser contratista. Para lograr esto estoy dedicando 20 minutos de mi tiempo para estudiar inglés todos los días.

Yo Andrés Patricio al igual que mi hermano, el sueño que tenía en México era llegar a ser maestro, pero todo cambio cuando deje mi tierra para venirme a trabajar a Estados Unidos. Una de las cosas de las que me di cuenta es que la clave para poder superarse en este país es el idioma, por eso una de mis metas es aprender inglés para poder conseguir un mejor trabajo. Por esta razón acompaño a mi hermano cuando el esta estudiando inglés.

Estando solos y lejos de nuestra familia nos hemos dado cuenta que la vida en Estados Unidos no es fácil y que nos tenemos que apoyar el uno al otro como los hermanos que somos. Ahora solo pensamos en salir adelante echándole ganas para apoyar a nuestra familia en México. Porque nos hemos dado cuenta que no somos los únicos que tienen una historia que contar.

Elizabeth Arias & Elizabeth Tomás-
Into the Fields Interns, 2007

We, Andrés and Roberto Patricio, are from Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, Mexico. We are brothers and the youngest in our family. Together, we decided to come to the United States for the same reason- to succeed.

I am Roberto Patricio, I'm 19 years old and I've been in the US for almost 2 years. Ever since I came to the US I've worked in the fields picking tomatoes, onions, cucumbers, and many other vegetables. Working in the fields hasn't been easy, since fieldwork requires a lot of strength, valor, and an ability to put up with bad conditions every day. But soccer is one of the things I enjoy doing after work and in my free time.

I, Andrés Patricio, dropped out of school at just 16 because of necessity, and also because of curiosity to come and see the United States. Coming here was a very difficult decision for me and especially for my parents, since I am the youngest of the family. Just like my brother Roberto, I have been working in the fields for the past year and a half that I've been here. I've become an immigrant worker traveling to Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and Kentucky, looking for different seasons of work.

I, Roberto, am a young person like any other with hopes, dreams, and goals. Since I couldn't achieve my dream of being a teacher in Mexico, coming to the US changed my dreams because of my new responsibilities. Now my dreams are to learn English and become a crewleader. To achieve this I am dedicating 20 minutes of my time every day to study English.

I, Andrés Patricio, just like my brother had the dream of being a teacher back in Mexico, but everything changed when I left my country to come to work in the United States. One of the things that I realized is the key to getting ahead in this country is the language, and for that reason one of my goals is to learn English to get a better job. That is why I join my brother when he is studying English.

Being alone and far from our family, we've realized that life in the US isn't easy and we need to help each other out like the brothers we are. Now we only think about getting ahead and making a good effort to be able to help our family in Mexico. We've realized that we're not the only ones that have a story to tell.



Elizabeth Arias & Elizabeth Tomás



Elizabeth Arias & Elizabeth Tomás



Elizabeth Arias & Elizabeth Tomás

I am a young person like any other-
Yo soy un joven como cualquier otro-
with con
hopes, aspiraciones,
dreams, sueños,
& goals. y metas.



Kendal Walters

Una Mujer Realizada

Kendal Walters-
Into the Fields Intern, 2007

Luz Elena has been living in the same home in St. Helena, South Carolina, right beside tomato fields, for the past two years. Luz hasn't seen her children or other family in all this time, including a new granddaughter born at the end of last year. She says she made the difficult decision to come to the US for many reasons- so that she could pay her bills, get a better house, and better the lives of her children.

Growing up in Chiapas, Mexico, Luz enjoyed school and learning and wanted to continue with her studies. She especially dreamed of being a teacher, but she wasn't able to pursue this dream because she only got to finish primary school. She didn't go to school past 13 years old because she was one of six kids and there wasn't enough money. Now, Luz says she has left that dream and is focusing on her children. Her daughter, who is 23, was able to go to a university and ended up becoming a teacher herself.

"Yo tuve muchos sueños. No se realizó. No puede ser que mi hija tampoco. Yo tenía pues, ahora con mi trabajo, yo tenía como apoyarla y así fue, lo logramos. *I had many dreams. They weren't realized. It can't be that my daughter's aren't either. I had, well, now I have with my work, the means to support her, and so like that we achieved it.*"

Although Luz's formal education ended at the age of 13, she has continued learning and teaching others. She knows how to do many things, including sewing, cutting hair, and cooking. Luz's parents taught her many values and lessons, one of which was to fight for what she wants.

Luz has now paid off her debts, but is staying in the US two more years to save money so she can make a better home in Mexico and take care of her children. She says she sees her life as a little difficult and tiring nowadays, but is just trying to continue forward and realize her goals. She wants to be a fully realized person, or in her words "una mujer realizada."

"La mujer realizada, eso es, como lograr tus propósitos. Una mujer realizada, cuando logra, obtiene lo que pensó. *The fully realized woman, that is, achieves her purposes. A fully realized woman, when she achieves, obtains what she thought.*" ★



Sacrifice for Family
Luz Elena holds up photos of her two children in Mexico.

Kendal Walters



Adriana Sanchez

Valuing Community Education At 22, Angel is proud of the many things he has learned outside of the classroom.

Learning From Each Other

Elizabeth Hayes-Lozada & Adriana Sanchez-
Into the Fields Interns, 2007

When you think of what makes a person an individual, you focus on their talents, skills, and other characteristics; but where are these skills developed? Would it be narrow-minded to think that in today's society, the most proficient person would be the one with the highest college degree? This summer, we were fortunate enough to be able to discover the richness of community education.

Angel, male, Mexican, migrant farmworker, age 22. That might be enough description to know who he is, but in reality it doesn't describe who he is as a person.

Angel came from a poor farmworking family, and had limited resources to continue his education beyond ninth grade. Reflecting on his education took him years back to what he had learned his whole life, not only at school but from his family as well.

He learned his native language Chol from his parents, and farm work from his father. He learned Spanish in the third grade from his cousins and uncles. His grandmother taught him the medicinal properties of plants.

Part of his community's tradition is to go to other communities and learn from them. He's learned different job skills such as construction, fishing and hunting. In his hometown, he knows every skill and job there is to be done, and he has the advantage of being bilingual.

It is impossible to account for all of the knowledge that Angel has attained in his short lifespan. As a farmworker and a young man he could be easily underestimated. However, if you have the opportunity to dive into his life, you will learn to appreciate the true value of his being.

It is interesting to see how from a different perspective, the life of a farmworker can be so promising. The learning experiences that Angel has had have molded him into the person that he is today, and little by little he is passing them on to anyone who is willing to listen. This is how traditions are passed on; this is how we learn from each other. ★

A Taste of Mexico

Deborah Cramer-
Into the Fields Intern, 2007



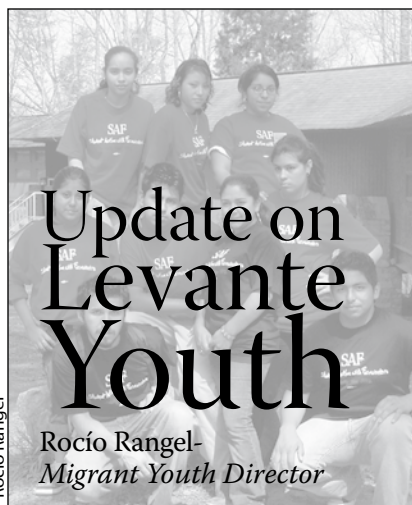
Deborah Cramer

Rosa González has been in the fields of Spartanburg County, South Carolina for the past 16 years. Originally from Piedras Negras, Coahuila, she arrived with her family in 1991, when they migrated from Florida to follow the harvest of crops.

Although Rosa is no longer a farmworker, she still goes out into the fields every day to take authentic Mexican food to local farmworkers. She says that these workers have to be in the fields early, 6 a.m., and that if she did not take them tacos they would have no other opportunity to eat in the mornings. She also sells assorted bread, and sodas. She sells tacos, because she wants to be able to give Mexican farmworkers the food they love. She sells everything for one dollar, because she wants the food to be as affordable as it is delicious.

Though Rosa has been living in the United States for 28 years, her Mexican culture is extremely important to her. To Rosa, one of the most important aspects of Mexican culture is Mexican food, and she wants her children to grow up knowing this.

Rosa dreams of starting a catering business to provide authentic Mexican food at baptisms, weddings, Quinceañeras and other celebrations. She feels that the events are an important part of Mexican culture that should be kept alive within the Mexican community that lives in the US. ★



Rocio Rangel

Update on Levante Youth

Rocio Rangel-
Migrant Youth Director

The Levante program began in 1997 to promote higher education for migrant youth by organizing college days and leadership workshops throughout NC. At the heart of Levante is the mission to encourage farmworker youth to pursue their education and become more involved in their community.

Over the past year Levante piloted a new youth group project. In March, ten youth from farmworking backgrounds were selected to participate in a theater project with the ultimate goal to teach other farmworkers how to protect themselves in the fields. After intense training in popular theater, the youth created a participatory theater piece using their own stories and experiences. In September the youth performed their play to more than 300 farmworkers and their families. During the performances, the youth created space for farmworkers to share their own stories from working in the fields. ★

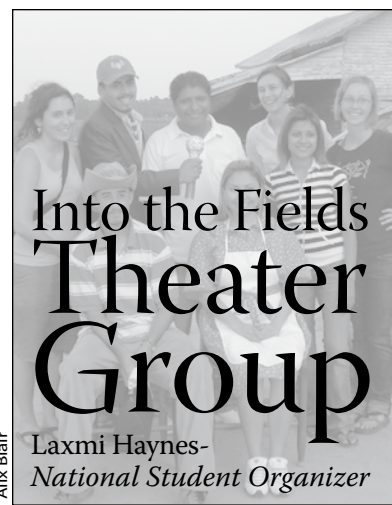
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Walker Somerville,
Telamon Corporation, VA

Jorja Cummings,
Southern Migrant Legal Services, TN

Maria Herrera,
Comité de Apoyo a Trabajadores Agrícolas, PA



Alix Blair

Into the Fields Theater Group

Laxmi Haynes-
National Student Organizer

"I'm very grateful that you guys came out here. In all my years I've never seen anything like this. It's great to see the youth involved."

-farmworker

SAF's 2007 Into the Fields interns wrote and performed a new play *Novelas, Noticias y Usted* to inspire dialogue and action among farmworkers to address concerns about pesticides. Interns used popular theater techniques and participatory methods for getting farmworkers to talk about health issues that concern them and ways to protect themselves from pesticide exposure. SAF provided dinner for the workers, performed for over 150 people, led group discussions and took polaroid photos with workers as souvenirs. ★

Class of 2007 Into the Fields Interns

- Elizabeth Tomás, *Henderson Co. Migrant Ed*
- Elizabeth Arias, *Latino Advocacy Coalition*
- Jonathan Luna, *Workers United of Western NC*
- Claire McLendon, *Watauga FW Health Program*
- Oscar Vasquez, *Gear Up & SAF*
- Anna Jensen, *Pesticide Education Project*
- Yesica Orozco, *Wake Co. Migrant FW Health*
- Luisa Baeza, *Wake Co. Migrant FW Health*
- Maria Bañuelos, *Piedmont Health Services*
- Alice Wheet, *Piedmont Health Services*
- Meghan Antol, *East Coast Migrant Head Start*
- Eugenia Ojeda, *NC Justice Center*
- Hannah Johnston, *National FW Ministry*
- Noemi Amezcua, *National FW Ministry*
- Isidro Diaz, *Episcopal FW Ministry*
- Molly Sweetser, *NC Farmworkers Project*
- Agmet C. Miguel, *NC Farmworkers Project*
- Adriana Sanchez, *Carolina Family Health Center*
- Elizabeth Hayes-Lozada, *Carolina Family Health Center*
- Maribel Maldonado, *Greene Co. Health Care*
- Charlotte Sibley, *Greene Co. Health Care*
- Deborah Cramer, *SC Migrant Health Program*
- Heriberto Martinez, *SC Legal Services*
- Kendal Walters, *Beaufort-Jaspar Health Care*

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Council of Churches, NC Farmworker Health Program, NC Humanities Council, New Garden Friends Meeting, Noël Family Fund of the Triangle Community Foundation, Olin T. Binkley Baptist Church, Paul Green Foundation, Pesticide Environmental Trust Fund, Public Interest Projects Inc., Puffin Foundation, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation, Strowd Roses Inc., Third Wave Foundation, Triangle Community Foundation, UCC Justice & Witness Ministries, Watts St. Baptist Church, Whole Foods of Durham and Raleigh, Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation

SAF Holiday Sale Coming Soon!

- ✿ NEW! SAF T-shirts - \$15.00
- ✿ 2008 Farmworker Wall Calendar (featuring SAF!) - \$12.00
- ✿ Sustainable Holiday Wreaths - \$22.00-\$36.00

Contact us soon to order these great gifts and more!

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Solidarity Day

November 30th:
Support the Burger King Campaign!

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers and Student Farmworker Alliance call nationwide actions to coincide with their march on BK headquarters shareholders meeting in Miami, Florida.

Get Involved!

Contact farmworker_justice@yahoo.com or visit www.sfalliance.org

Into the Fields Internship Application Deadline: February 15, 2008



Alix Blair

Sowing Seeds for Change Fellowship Application Deadline: March 7, 2008



Leah Russell

Thank you also to the *NC Humanities Council, SAF Documentary Advisory Committee, & the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University* for your ongoing support of our documentary work!



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