

Developing Resources for the Student/Farmworker Alliance to Engage Peers in Supporting Farmworker Rights

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Abstract

This project creates capacity for the Student/Farmworker Alliance by compiling an instruction manual for community organizers and student leaders in support of the initiatives of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and the Student/Farmworker Alliance. Nationwide, farmworkers face gender-based violence, wage theft, and, in extreme cases, slavery. By drawing on the resources provided in the manual, groups can orchestrate their own projects in their community to promote and support farmworker rights.

Community Impact Outcomes

- Educated individuals of the injustices farmworkers experience in the industrial agricultural system.
- Implemented in the Barry Service Corps Fellows handbook for fellows to start their own campaigns and organize their own demonstrations.
- To be disseminated at the 2020 Student/Farmworker Alliance Encuentro for student leaders and activists to engage their own communities regarding farmworker rights.

Collaboration with Community Partners

This individual project collaborated with the community partners of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) and Student/Farmworker Alliance (SFA). The CIW is a worker-based human rights organization recognized for its achievements in social responsibility in the fields. SFA works with the CIW in advocating its message and accomplishing its goals through students and young people.



Issue Background

It is estimated that there are more than three million migrant and seasonal farmworkers in the United States. However, human rights violations are prevalent across the country for farmworkers, and little is known about where these injustices stem from.

A main cause for abuse is the supply system. Fast food companies and retailers such as Wendy's and Publix refuse to join the Fair Food Program, a partnership among farmworkers, growers, and companies to ensure that farmworker rights are protected. However, when companies like Publix and Wendy's refuse to join Fair Food Program farms, and instead purchase their produce from farms like those in Mexico with even less measures of protection, they consciously place their money in farms that do not protect their workers and perpetuate abuse. By focusing on the supply chain of what groups are in power, it can determine who has the power to make change, and what measures can be taken by those in power to improve the lives of farmworkers.

SFA is a national network of students and young people organizing with the CIW to uproot exploitation in the fields and build a food system based on justice, respect, and dignity. SFA first began working with CIW in 2001 when students from Florida joined the CIW's 234-mile "March for Dignity, Dialogue and a Fair Wage" action. In just a few months, students began connecting to work on persuading Taco Bell to join the Fair Food Program. SFA announced the "Boot the Bell" campaign against Taco Bell in the summer of 2001. Ever since then, SFA has played an important role in strategizing and organizing students and young people across the country to assist CIW in keeping companies accountable – work that requires time, organization, and guidance.

Assessment and Evaluation

The success and performance of the instruction manual is assessed through the number of individuals who resort to the guide and use the information within it to conduct their own actions.

On average 100-200 individuals participate in SFA's Encuentro, with an average of 10-20 members of SFA's steering committee that will regularly resort to the guide. SFA works with around 100 universities across the country.

Overall, many individuals have vehemently expressed their desire for a Student/Farmworker Alliance manual by the organization themselves and Barry Service Corps Fellows at Barry University. Their commitment to farmworker rights and keeping those in power accountable for their role has improved the lives of farmworkers across the United States, an important and powerful feat.



"This is spectacular... definitely a resource for SFA."

– Yaissy Solis, Student/Farmworker Alliance Co-Coordinator

Project Implementation



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- How to Start and Maintain a Student/Farmworker Alliance Chapter
- How to Organize a Demonstration
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This project implemented an instruction manual for the SFA and the Center for Community Service Initiatives to advocate and spread awareness of farmworker rights through providing resources to community organizers and student leaders. Currently SFA is working on a national campaign for Wendy's to join the Fair Food Program through a boycott of their business. The instruction manual provides background information on the issue for individuals to have a better understanding and provides different ways to support the campaign. Students and young people, a demographic of great power and influence, should have resources to support issues they care about that affect society. Therefore, the instruction manual not only educates about injustices farmworkers face but also engages students by teaching how to organize non-violent actions and campaigns, skill-building sessions, and more. Through these various initiatives, the community can learn about these issues and participate in peaceful methods to share their voice while creating systemic change.

The author collaborated with SFA staff with the goal of organizing with more students and young people. Therefore, it will be given to SFA to be distributed at their annual conference. The Encuentro (Spanish for "meeting") is a national strategy-building event that is in support of the Campaign for Fair Food. Students and activists from across the country come together to participate in workshops and strategize the Wendy's boycott. The instruction manual will be given to participants of the Encuentro and will also be made accessible online. By creating a template for others to use, universities and activists across Florida and the country may implement these ideas in their own community. As well, this template will be passed on to future Barry Service Corps Fellows to continue the work for farmworker justice.

Reflection

Due to the time commitment it takes to research and compile resources for a technical document of this kind, it will take many drafts until it will be completed. Improvements that would like to be made as drafts are edited and revised is to receive the final approval from members of the SFA and personnel from the Center for Community Service Initiatives. More chapters would like to be added to the manual that will explain several ways to participate in non-violent tactics of action such as sit-ins, letters of opposition/support, group lobbying, and more.

Overall, success has been achieved through this manual as students and community organizers have shared approval for the manual so they may increase their knowledge and awareness of farmworker rights and the ways to support this social issue. This can be seen with more students who have vowed to not shop in restaurants like Wendy's and supermarkets like Publix. Other indicators include a passion to organize events like actions in the community and participate in various campaigns.

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