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Sembrando Consciencia:

The Student/Farmworker Alliance and the

Growth of Critical Consciousness

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Sembrando Consciencia:

The Student/Farmwork Alliance and the
Growth of Critical Consciousness

by

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to all of my friends, *compañeras y compañeros* de lucha, who have served as my teachers over the years, and to the members of the CIW and the SFA. It has been your love, support, and the consistent challenges to be more, do more, and dream more, that has given me the strength and the vision to walk this far. Thank you.

"Con tu puedo, y con mi quiero, vamos juntos, compañero."

-Mario Benedetti

Acknowledgements

Abstract

Sembrando Consciencia: **The Student/Farmworker Alliance and the Growth of Critical Consciousness**

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The Student/Farmworker Alliance (SFA) is a national network of students and youth that is based in Immokalee, Florida, formed to support the work of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (SFA), a migrant farmworker-led human rights organization that seeks an end to the poverty wages and human rights abuses that are faced by workers in the US agricultural industry. Since the 2001 inception of the Campaign for Fair Food (CFF), an ongoing partnership between the two organizations that seeks to bring major corporations to the table to ensure better wages and basic rights while on the job, the joint network has been able to secure agreements with ten major corporations, in addition to aiding the US Department of Justice in prosecuting eight cases of modern day slavery in the agricultural industry.

Throughout the course of the CFF, thousands of young people across the US have participated in the political actions and educational spaced organized by these organizations, and hundreds has visited Immokalee as part of annual strategy retreats and conferences put on by the SFA, and it is a commonly-shared belief amongst members of both organizations that these monumental gains would not have been possible without the participation of the student allies that form part of SFA. The questions guiding this research include: How do people become politicized? How do student allies in the Student/Farmworker Alliance develop a politicized, critical consciousness, and how is this related to their sense of their own identities? It is these questions, for me, which will help to understand better the ways in which educators in both political and traditional educational spaces can educate for critical consciousness, which I will argue is a crucial piece of the educational work which must happen in order to live in a robust, participatory democratic society.

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Introduction

In 1996, in central Floirda, a 15 year-old boy was brutally beaten on the job for asking his employer for a drink of water. While such an instance seems anachronistic, to say the least, it was not an isolated incident, but rather, part of a myriad of abuses suffered by Florida's farmworkers. The young boy worked as a tomato picker, and after being brutalized by the crewleader that day, he was left to lay in the bus that had brought him and his co-workers out to the field that morning while the others finished working. That evening, after their return from the fields to the town of Immokalee, where the workers lived, the others visited the office of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, a local organization that they thought would be able to help them. Later that night, the boy's co-workers, along with members of the organization, mobilized their community in protest, and hundreds of workers rallied together and marched to the house of the crewleader who was responsible for the brutality the young man experienced, carrying his bloody shirt as a symbol and a warning. That night, they sent a message to the powers-that-be: ¡Golpear a uno is golpear a todos!

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers is a worker-led organization made up of primarily Mexican, Guatemalan, Mayan indigenous, and Haitian workers who pick tomatoes that are subsequently shipped across the U.S. to fast food restaurants, college campus kitchens, grocery stores, and dinner tables. Based out of what used to be a forgotten corner of southwest Florida, Immokalee, the group formed in a small town that has over the years become a major hub of the Florida tomato industry. In 1993, a small group of workers began meeting in a local Catholic church to discuss the insupportable working conditions they faced in the field.

Despite inflation, wages had not been raised since the late 70s, and workers had to pick approximately 50 32-lb buckets of tomatoes (equaling nearly one ton) daily in order to make around $50 in day. In order to make this wage, workers had to pick approximately two tons of tomatoes in a day, and annually make far below the federal poverty level, with yearly income averaging around $9,500. The workday started at 5am

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and often didn't end until after dark, and lack of water, breaks, sanitation facilities were compiled along with frequent verbal and physical abuse on the job. In some of the most extreme cases, workers were treated as chattel, held and forced to work against their will, and met with violence and sexual abuse for as little as a request for water on the job. In 1995, faced with a wage decrease, the Coalition (CIW) mobilized its members and held a community-wide work stoppage, demanding that the wage rate at a minimum be raised back up to where it had been since 1978. Five years later, in February of 2000, the CIW stepped out of Immokalee and began the 240-mile "March for Dignity, Dialogue, and a Fair Wage," where participants walked across the state to the governor's mansion. Here, on this march, this story finds its focus.

Students from colleges and universities across the state joined the workers on the march that spring, walking alongside the workers for up to 10 hours a day, for 15 days, and it was on this march that the Student/Farmworker Alliance (SFA) was formed. Recognizing that the power to create structural change lay not in the hands of individual growers, but in the hands of the major purchasers at the top of the supply chain, the CIW's strategies changed course. Relying on the power of a nascent worker/consumer alliance, the following year in 2001, the two groups jointly launched a campaign against Taco Bell calling for the corporation to take responsibility for the working conditions in its tomato supply chain. Since then, the groups have jointly won a over a dozen agreements that help to secure the dignity, dialogue, and fair wages they have sought since 1993, and today, these groups continue their struggle, and since 2005, I have been privileged to be a part of this struggle.

Being a long-time participant in this movement, as well as someone with an interest in education for democracy and social change, the questions asked in this study are of critical importance to me. These questions interrogate the ways in which critical consciousness is developed, in the hope of being able to offer some insight for a better-informed praxis of organizing, both for participants and organizers in this struggle, as well as for those participating in other struggles. The questions that ground this study include: How do people develop critical consciousness, and how is this related to their sense of their own identity? How is this kind of critical consciousness developed through practice, and what kinds of lessons might the experiences of participants in this movement have to offer others seeking to build a broader, more vibrant struggle for social justice today? This study will focus primarily on the role and participation of the student and youth members of the SFA in this struggle. By examining the ways in which the CIW's organizing philosophy and strategy have influenced and shaped the tactics of this network of allies, I will move to look at how young people's individual and collective participation in the movement contributes to the development of a particular kind of critical consciousness in participants.

PRACTICING MOVEMENT-BUILDING, THEORIZING CONSCIOUSNESS

Throughout much of this work, I have begun to appreciate the extent to which the multiple processes of consciousness-raising and movement-building are interwoven. These processes are not static, disparate, or easily-categorized and organized into linear methods of thought and writing, or simplified into rote or formulaic teaching practices and strategies; this is precisely what makes them so effective and compelling. I have

found the attempt at thinking through the strategies used by various movements I have reviewed for this study to be necessarily complicated, and I think that this speaks to the challenges of building movements for liberation. The necessary work of movement-building requires an individual and collective, internal, critically-reflective process, paired with external action upon the world. This dual focus serves to challenge both the deep levels at which we have been socialized into an oppressive reality, as well as the deeply-entrenched structures around us that reflect the power that reality wields against us on a daily basis. In other words, doing this kind of important work is complicated. This means that any attempt to communicate how the processes of this work are undertaken will necessarily be overlapping, somewhat messy, and emulate the stop-start feeling of someone learning to drive a stick shift.

As I began the process of tentatively answering my questions, I came to recognize the extent to which these questions are a matter of strategy to any struggle for justice, and so the necessity of looking for preliminary answers and themes to be found within a broad range of movements and theoretical fields became imperative. I had a desire to know how other movements have done their movement-building, how they brought new members in, and how they viewed questions of political education and consciousness. Additionally, my intellectual background in critical pedagogy, women of color and Third World feminisms, Marxism, and critical theory guided the theoretical formations that ground my work. I focus my theorizing here by explaining what terms like "critical consciousness," "consciousness-raising," and "leadership development" mean in this

context, on an intellectual level and in practice, and what the three ideas have in common with each other.

To begin any systematic study of other movements that might have either influenced the formation of the CIW and SFA, or might offer my theorizing some valuable lenses through which to interpret these organizations, it would be impractical to start anywhere else but at home, and "home," at least for the members of the CIW, is Latin America and the Caribbean, and the movements and organizations that CIW members originally came from. The majority of the CIW's membership, as mentioned earlier, is primarily Mexican, Guatemalan, Mayan-indigenous (from southern Mexican and Guatemala), and Haitian. Many CIW members come from a background of social justice struggles in their home countries, many of which borrowed from Paulo Friere's methods of literacy education. This deeply influenced their organizing model here in the US.

As Asbed writes, the movement that overthrew the Duvalier regime in Haiti was rooted in liberation theology paired with Freirean educational pedagogy, and as Sellers goes on to add, this framework heavily shaped the CIW, as Haitian *animateurs* were brought in to give trainings to other workers during the early years of the organization.[4]

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[4] Greg Asbed, "Pigs, Peasants, and Politics in Haiti: Migdal's Theory of Peasant Participation in National Politics and the Fall of Jean-Claude Duvalier," *Journal of Public and International Affairs* 2:2(1991): 74-75. Sean Sellers, "Del Pueblo, Para el Pueblo: The Coalition of Immokalee Workers and the Fight for Fair Food," Master's Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2009, 67.

The importance of transferring Freire's pedagogy from literacy education to political education was understood long before the Coalition formed, and the commitment to developing new leaders is an integral piece of the success of both the CIW and SFA.

Given the influence of Freirean theory and pedagogy on my life and work, and the direct influence of Friere's work on the CIW, his body of theorizing seemed an apt place from which to start deepening my sense of what exactly I, or anyone else for that matter, means when referring to "critical consciousness." Freire describes critical consciousness as having two moments of knowledge: in the first, one must be cognizant of oppression and its root causes, and in the second, one must recognize their own ability to act in order to transform the situation.[5] Critical consciousness, then, includes the ability to "perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but a limiting situation," which can be changed.[6] So, as Laura Pulido notes in her work on the politicization of the Third World Left, people must be able to understand the structural conditions which lead to inequity, and furthermore, also understand their personal role in taking action to transform these conditions.[7] Following Freire's framework, she writes that an example of one having a politicized critical consciousness is the ability to "understand the problem beyond individual remedies," which is to say, an ability to identify the root causes of inequity as opposed to understanding and identifying complex

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[5] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 31-32.
[6] Ibid., 34.
[7] Laura Pulido, *Black, Brown, Yellow and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles* (Berkley: UC Press, 2006), 61.

issues (and thus, their solutions) on an individualized or single-issue level.[8] In this sense, this kind of consciousness is particularly concerned with seeking long-term, structural solutions to social problems, an analysis which is again emphasized in Friere's insistence on true solidarity as opposed to "false generosity," which I name as charity.[9]

PILLAR ONE: LOVE

Friere goes on to define the process of conscientization, or what I will call *consciousness-raising*, by writing that "the term conscientization refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality."[10] In this definition, the importance of action is already present, action which, he writes, is done out of love, due to the commitment to making possible the ongoing humanization of men and women.[11] Citing Roland Barthes, Chela Sandoval's work picks up this important thread, and she defines love within the context of consciousness-raising "as a 'breaking' through to whatever controls in order to find 'understanding and community,'" which leads one to the place "where political weapons of consciousness are available in a constant tumult of possibility."[12] Translated, this means that critical consciousness must include a sense of love, and that development of the ability to love in this way is part of the process which makes the development of a

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[8] Ibid., 62.
[9] Friere (1970), 39.
[10] Ibid., 19.
[11] Ibid., 35, 19.
[12] Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 139, 142.

critical consciousness possible.   Sandoval goes on to affirm that this kind of love, "combined with risk and courage, can make anything possible."[13]   It is then, this kind of love that enables an ability to perceive oppression, a desire to dream differently, and the courage to act to make those dreams a reality.

In this work, Sandoval describes falling in love as a process that opens up "access to a spectrum from which consciousness-in-resistance emanates;" in this place, the "obtuse, third meaning emerges to haunt all we think we know."[14]   In other words, falling in love, in this sense, enables us to question the norms of oppression inscribed on the world around us. From here, we can come up with new understandings that disrupt the otherwise silent veneer of privilege that underscores most social interactions. The author goes on to theorize how this kind of love enables us to continually question everything, and that the kind of consciousness that results from this is not dogmatically tied to any particular theoretical standpoint or political practice. This sort of ability to "to 'slip between the two members' of the either/or alternative" of often-dichotomized political theories and practices is practically quite useful. Here, Sandoval also spends a great deal of time theorizing this space in a context similar to the liminal/borderlands space that Anzaldúa writes about.[15]   I take this part of her work to mean that when we consciously deny identification with the dichotomies offered us, and instead insist upon a third option, we open up a spectrum of possibilities, where all we've previously ideologically assumed

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[13] Ibid., 140.
[14] Ibid., 140.
[15] Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands*/*La Frontera* (New York: Aunt Lute Books) 2007.

can be challenged. She writes that it is here, in "the 'no-place' of the abyss that subjectivity can become freed from ideology as it binds and ties reality."[16]

Possessing a desire and ability to continually pose critical questions about our positionalities, theoretical standpoints, and political practices keeps us from unproductively establishing a resolutely inflexible set of guidelines. This kind of consciousness enables a continual flexibility, and ongoing willingness to be critically self-reflexive, which I believe is absolutely necessary in doing effective educational, intellectual, and political work. The ability to move between various standpoints enables us to remain in a constant state of critical questioning, which, if based on the pursuit of a stronger political praxis, enables the deployment of a myriad of political strategies and tactics, depending on their usefulness within a given context.

This kind of consciousness might loan young organizers the ability to see the usefulness of engaging in service-based work at one moment, such as providing childcare or food, but to do so with an analysis that understands the problematics of approaching such issues with an individualized response or charity-based response, as Pulido and Freire note above. In such a situation then, the service work undertaken might be done as part of a larger strategy of critical dialogic interaction focused on addressing the root causes of why the community needs the services in the first place. This relates to the combined set of politically practical and ideologically-driven practices of the

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[16] Sandoval, 141.

organizations studied here. While the CIW and SFA work to meet the daily needs of workers on the job through seeking higher wages, they do so as part of a larger strategy that specifically names collective liberation as a long-term goal for all involved, workers and allies alike.

PILLAR TWO: IDENTITY

It seems useful here to expand further on the idea that we must be flexible, and resist the urge to normalize the experiences of others based on standards we've either been socialized with or grown to develop. In particular, I think this conception is useful in relationship to identity, and in compiling a list of ingredients required for a critical consciousness, it seems imperative that a critical conception of one's own positionality vis-a-vis others be explicitly included. As Haraway notes, we must develop "a more adequate, richer, better account of the world, in order to live in it well and in critical, reflexive relation to our own as well as other's practices of domination."[17] One must be willing to have a critical sense of their own indentity in order to develop a sense of critical consciousness, and I believe that each continues to develop as the other deepens, in a life-long process of becoming ever more critical and humbled. On this, Chandra Mohanty writes that the process of developing a critical consciousness

> is also about coming to believe in the possibility of a variety of experience, a variety of ways of understanding the world, a variety of frameworks of operation, without imposing consciously or unconsciously a notion of the norm....it means that we understand race, class, gender, nation, sexuality, and colonialism not Just in terms of static, embodied

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[17] Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14 (1988): 579.

categories, but in terms of histories and experiences that tie us together – that are fundamentally woven into our lives.[18]

Taken in addition to the capabilities listed above, this sort of an acknowledgement leads to an analysis that is able to understand both structural and subjective forms of inequity, and emphasizes the need to address both in the political work undertaken to challenge such inequity. To this, Mohanty adds that we must be able to understand "the particularities of [this] stage of global capitalism," and that this "necessitates the naming of capitalist hegemony and culture as a foundational principle of social life."[19]

An acknowledgement of capitalism as a hegemonically-deterministic factor that shapes us culturally consequently requires that we acknowledge the importance of culture as a terrain of struggle, which opens a space to talk about how to practice such an acknowledgement. Gramsci writes a great deal about waging a battle on the grounds of culture, and is often cited for his theoretical work on hegemony and counter-hegemony. In thinking about these terms in relationship to subjectivity, I believe they illuminate the ways in which we can confront power and inequity through cultural means and begin to create what Monhanty calls "cultures of dissent."[20] Based on Sandoval's theorizing, these cultures of dissent might (and should) take a number of different shapes and forms, but would entail a commitment to interrupting power in all its various forms, which

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[18] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Duram: Duke University Press, 2003), 201, 191.
[19] Ibid., 183.
[20] Ibid., 213.

would additionally require of adherents a willingness to be continually self-reflexive, as Haraway notes.

PILLAR THREE: POWER

Through this combination of theories, we can begin to visualize the construction of a common culture of resistance that insists on space for a multiplicity of identities and tactics, and acknowledges the importance of struggle on the multiple terrains of culture, subjectivity, ideology, and materiality, as such a culture of resistance would recognize the interconnections between these. A crucial aspect of making this work possible includes keeping in mind the ways that economic factors cross-cut the experience of living various embodiments of similarity and difference. Thos practiciing such a culture must acknowledge that the living of a particular identity indeed be experienced quite differently based on structural and material privileges conferred by one's access to capitalist success. This results, then, in a kind of consciousness that would also render those who posess it capable of conceptualizing the multiple levels at which power functions, and thus an ability to conceive of multiple ways with which to confront and interrupt such power, which Friere writes ought to be done by people in solidary partnership "with, not for," one another.[21]

This kind of conceptualization of power is critical to understanding the complexities of how successful struggles are created. In all roles in which organizers

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[21] Freire (1970), 33.

find themselves they must challenge themselves to continually recognize the multiple ways in which power functions to shape their own lives, struggles, and as well as of those around them. In visualizing what a political practice that embodies this might look like, one might consider a multi-issue coalition that comes together on a politics of solidarity and a persistent acknowledgement of the "coimplication" of all involved to "take difference seriously."[22] For participants and leaders in this movement, this means recognizing that power cross-cuts lives at multiple angles, and that one room can (and often does) hold the experiences of multiple lifetimes and manifestations of manifold levels of power. In movement-based educational space, this means conceding the presence of the power of the educator/facilitator, recognizing that of someone else with a privileged class or racial location, and relative to that, acknowledging the very different experiences of another student's who's family migrated due to political repression – the combinations of such are endless. This focus on the multple intersections of power holds serious implications for the projects taken on by youth organizers, the political coalitions and alliances they choose, and the ways in which a practice of solidarity that is always with, and not for, others is formulated.

PILLAR FOUR: PROCESS

This sort of solidary partnership includes not only the ability to acknowledge different ways of seeing, knowing, and being in the world, but does so with humility. The kind of humility necessary for this sort of political relationship is one which enables

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[22] Mohanty, 191.

actors to indentify their own process of conscientization as just that – a process, and one which is ongoing. In other words, a critical consciousness includes a sense of ongoing work, and an understanding that one never fully 'arrives.' Haraway's earlier assertion is again useful here, and Mohanty advises that this approach must always include a continual processing and transforming of new knowledges. She writes that "resistance lies in self-conscious engagement with dominant, normative discourses and representations, and in the active creation of oppositional analytic and cultural spaces."[23] This further reinforces the importance of recognizing that these processes are never static or stagnant. Due to the functioning of power, the communities that we attempt to build out of these counter-hegemonic value systems must incorporate a sense of the need for an ongoing, active process of creation and re-creation of resistant cultural practices.

Urrieta also notes the importance of this conception, as he writes that this sort of "critical state of consciousness is an endless but necessary process of life-long analysis...[and includes] awareness of the multiple oppressions of other groups of people in the US...and throughout the world."[24] And again, turning back to Sandoval, we gain the understanding that it is only in this place, where everything might be up for question, reflection, and resignification, do we untie the self from the hegemonic ideologies that have shaped all of us, and become able to work in true solidarity with others.[25] It is

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[23] Mohanty, 196, 201.
[24] Luis Urrieta Jr., *Working From Within: Chicana and Chicano Activist Educators in Whitestream Schools* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009), 91.
[25] Sandoval, 142.

precisely because of the constant barrage of insulting manifestations of ideological and material power on our lives, practices, bodies, and ways of being that creating and keeping sharp our sense of critical consciousness demands of us that we contstantly remain engaged in the processes of critical questioning, reflection, and action. This development of what Gramsci names "good sense" enables us to see and be humbled by the idea that we may never fully 'know,' or 'get it,' (whatever 'it' is) and instead find challenges, comfort, and community with those who we seek to continually create and re-create with.

PILLAR FIVE: COMMUNITY

Understanding that this kind of consciousness includes a solidary relationship with others also highlights the importance of how people begin to develop, and subsequently sustain this sort of an analysis. It is here that I wish to emphasize the importance of community in the consciousness-raising process, as "activist agency is drawn from community."[26] The centrality of community cannot be understated here, and with this emphasis, I want to highlight the relationship between community and democracy. Apple and Beane's seven-part definition of democracy sets the kind of participatory democracy they envision apart from the sort of procedural democracy which we currently live with in the United States. In their work, the authors posit the term not as "an ideal to be reached at some point," but rather a set of values and principles by which to live and participate in society, further emphasizing the notion that cultivating a

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[26] Urrieta, 90.

critical consciousness is part of an ongoing process that happens in community. Expounding on what democracy might be, they write that it includes:

> Concern for the dignity and rights of the individual; concern for the welfare of others; faith in the individual and collective capacity of people to create possibilities for resolving problems; the open flow of ideas; the use of critical reflection and analysis to evaluate ideas, problems and policies; an understanding that democracy is not so much an 'ideal' to be pursued as an idealized set of values to live by; and the organization of social institutions to promote and extend this way of life.[27]

This understanding of democracy, and the kinds of values it should include, has implications for both the working definition of critical consciousness at hand, as well as for the kinds of political practices undertaken through which this kind of consciousness can develop. Furthering my point about the importance of community, Mohanty notes that the practices undertaken in creating a culture of dissent must "lead to a consciousness of injustice, self-reflection on...[socialization processes], and action to transform one's social space in a *collective* setting. In other words, the practice of decolonization."[28]

Reflecting on my own experiences, I have come to recognize that it is in community that I have been able to flourish, find support, and ultimately, find a path to begin healing from the inflictions of power on my life. In talking to my respondents, I observe a similar set of processes for many of them, as well. hooks writes about the idea of education as healing, and this process of connecting my political work to my personal work has become a critical part of creating a space where the confluence between

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[27] James A. Beane and Michael W. Apple, "The Case for Democratic Schools," in *Democratic Schools: Lessons for Powerful Education*, eds. Michael W. Apple and James A. Beane (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2007), 7.
[28] Mohanty, 216. Emphasis mine.

disparate pieces of my life becomes possible. It is this space of confluence which enables practitioners of these resistant ideologies to find even more power and drive to continue the work of constantly swimming upstream. The presence of a supportive community has been critical to not only my personal success in living differently, but has been (and continues to be) central to the success of the CIW and SFA.

Given the grind of the day-to-day, and the harshness with which the world can crash in upon the heart of those who are open to being fully human and recognizing the humanness of others, it is crucial to find a community of support with which to grow and operationalize new cultural practices of resistance. It is in community with others that we can begin to challenge the individualizing ideologies of capitalism and begin to construct new paradigms and standards for how we wish to be in the world. It is through the construction of communities based on the kinds of democratic values that Apple and Beane lay out that we can begin to practically challenge the hierarchies of power that shape our lives on so many levels, and move towards a political praxis that incorporates the idea that "whoever teaches learns...and whoever learns teaches," thereby cultivating a space that is "fundamentally about making the axes of power transparent."[29]

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[29] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 31. Mohanty, 216.

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Methods

My involvement with some of the questions presented in this study predates the research process by a number of years. Similar to a number of my peers, my engagement with the issues being interrogated here began with my participation in anti-war activism in 2003, during the ramp-up to the second Gulf War. Tracing this trajectory forward, after some involvement with others in my community around anti-war mobilizing, I became more and more intrigued by issues of power and consciousness. The lack of victory in preventing a US military invasion provoked further questioning of the relationships between these topics, and a further commitment to continue organizing and deepening my nascent understandings of justice. It was during this time I initially got wind of the struggles of the CIW, through friends and student organizing networks in Florida, although my first encounter with the organization wasn't until the summer of 2005, when I was returned to Florida to visit Immokalee and participate in the SFA's first Encuentro (annual student conference).

On that visit, I recall the sense that something very special was happening in this small, nearly forgotten corner of the state I'd grown up in, and that this "something" held the potential to teach me volumes about myself and about the world around me. Reflecting on my own process of *concientización*, I recognize some mile-markers along the way, and I note the combination of formalized educational spaces, events I participated in, and relationships that have served as the pedagogical tools with which

I've constructed the path that I walk.[30] It is these experiences, relationships, and political commitments, which brought me to formulate the questions I attempt to address here.

Given my long-standing history with these organizations, while I have trouble committing to a moment when the fieldwork for this study started, I can accurately assert that throughout the years that this study has been under examination, my critical capacities to question, suggest answers, and continue to question have been honed. My dual identity vis-à-vis my organizing and intellectual work positions me to take very seriously the idea that it is precisely because the "relations of rule…work to obscure" power that "it becomes imperative that we rethink, remember, and utilize our lived relations as a basis of knowledge."[31] It is this politicized commitment, to utilizing the lived experiences and relationships of those I have struggled alongside for the past six years, which informed the methodological choices employed here.

ACTIVIST ANTHROPOLOGY

While finding a political home was a long process, finding an intellectual home as I wrote this study seemed, luckily, serendipitous. I arrived at UT Austin in the summer of 2009, shortly after finishing an undergraduate degree, with a series of questions about power, privilege, education, and processes of consciousness-raising, all footnoted with colorful personalities and snapshots accumulated over the previous four years of organizing with the SFA. Although enrolled in a graduate program within the College of

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[30] Here, I use the word *concientización* in the Freirean sense, to refer to one's process of developing a critical consciousness. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 19.

[31] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Duram: Duke University Press, 2003), 78.

Education, I was able to take courses outside my department, and upon the recommendation of a friend, enrolled for a course in the methodological practices of the emergent area of "activist anthropology."

As noted by Hale, although the practitioners of this vein of anthropology have no formulaic methodology for how such studies can be undertaken, there is some agreement on at least one central question that undergirds this style of research and writing, which is, "Knowledge for whom?"[32] He writes that activist anthropology "reorients research practice" around a set of priorities that differ from traditional anthropological commitments to representation and description of difference.[33] Others in the field note the various ways in which this new methodology is practiced, unifying around the imperative that researchers align themselves with a community in struggle, be it a grassroots organization or an imagined community based on identity.[34]

This politically-aligned methodology comes as a response to the inherent power differentials between researcher and subject, and seeks to problematize the traditionally colonial trajectory of anthropological inquiry, which bases itself around a methodology that seeks an "Other" to observe and write. As noted by Gupta and Ferguson, the concept of fieldwork is correlated to the practices of natural science, where "the object to be studied, both intensively and in a limited area," reflects practices similar to those of

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[32] Charles Hale, "In Praise of "Reckless Minds": Making the Case for Activist Anthropology," in *Anthropology Put to Work*, ed. L.W. Field and R. Fox (Oxford: Berg Press, 2007), 105.

[33] Ibid., 105.

[34] Charles Hale, "Introduction," in *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Methods and Politics of Activist Scholarship*, ed. Charles Hale (Berkley: University of California Press, 2008), 1-30; Jemima Pierre, "Activist Groundings or Groundings for Activism?" in *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Methods and Politics of Activist Scholarship*, ed. Charles Hale (Berkley: University of California Press, 2008), 115-135; Shannon Speed, "Forged in Dialogue," in *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Methods of Activist Scholarship*, ed. Charles Hale (Berkley: University of California Press, 2008), 213-236.

zoologists, except that the object in view here has instead been "primitive humanity in its natural state."[35] The sense of entitlement to a uni-directional vista were sewn into the discipline from early on, eventually resulting in a "crisis of representation," wherein anthropologists came to confront head-on the imbalance of power between themselves and their research subjects, during which time notions of true scientific objectivity came into question.[36]

Haraway's seminal article "The Science Question in Feminism" offers a well-placed critique of the long-held insistence on scientific objectivity, calling onto the mat researchers who do not critically question the ways in which their social location informs their analytical lenses. Responding to the faults of positivism's disregard of the inherent power differentials between researcher and subject and lack of concern for the social cost of research results (especially as they pertain to the further marginalization of the periphery), Haraway calls for a feminist theorizing of objectivity. She writes,

> Feminists have stakes in a successor science project that offers a more adequate, richer, better account of a world, in order to live in it well and in *critical, reflexive relation* to our own, as well as other's, practices of domination and the unequal parts of privilege and oppression that makes up all positions.[37]

Haraway and other standpoint feminists argue that stances which preclude the possibility of one's research having power-oriented ramifications ultimately collude with power. In juxtaposition to traditional views on scientific objectivity, here the author

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[35] Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Discipline and Practice," in *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science,* ed., Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (Berkley: University of California Press, 1997), 6.

[36] Speed, 214.

[37] Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14:3 (1988): 579; emphasis added.

maintains that it is precisely this commitment to critical, reflexive theorizing and positioning that enables researches to be more rigorously objective.

On this position, practitioners of activist anthropology argue alongside Haraway and other standpoint epistemologists, arguing against long-held beliefs that researchers must check their politics at the door. Instead, these scholars insist that their methodology offers more theoretical rigor, and that, given the politically-committed relationships driving the questions of their work, the results often can have more practical output than work undertaken solely for the sake of intellectual curiosity.[38] Taking these critical insights as my own starting point, I considered for some time the possibility of launching a study of the popular education organizing methods of the farmworker organization. Despite their uniquely interesting model and successes however, I ultimately decided to move ahead focusing on the student ally movement. While this decision was based on multiple factors, of central importance was the desire to minimize the power differentials between myself and those I research.

STUDYING ACROSS/INSIDER ETHNOGRAPHY

Long before conceptualization of this project, my experiences organizing alongside the workers in Immokalee taught me something about solidarity; central to this lesson has always been the importance of doing political work in one's own community cannot be underscored enough. Upon entering graduate school, and considering anthropological notions of studying either "down" or "up," I had to reconsider my own

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[38]Joy James and Edmund T. Gordon, "Activist Scholars or Radical Subjects?" in *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Methods and Politics of Activist Scholarship,* ed. Charles Hale (Berkley: University of California Press, 2008), 367-373. Hale (2007), 105.

political formation.[39] Informed heavily by the organizing model of the SFA and CIW, and influenced by the politics of the Zapatista movement, I came to this work already positioned to understand that given my own social location, and the questions I wished to address, that "studying across" would be the best use of my privilege, time, and resources.[40]

At best, this methodological choice might perhaps lead to others across my social location asking themselves some critical questions as well, in turn leading to a better-informed and more critically reflexive praxis. What I wish to point to here is the idea that anthropological interrogation of one's own community is a political act in its own right. The undertaking of such a study complicates the standard processes of fieldwork, in particular when the "field" is woven into the fabric of the investigator's life. As Gupta and Ferguson note, for many anthropologists, the field and home are often spatially and temporally separated, and traditionally, the field is often "not home."[41] But what happens when the field and home are the same place, featuring the same faces?

Organizing with Fair Food Austin and serving on the internal leadership of the SFA throughout the research process, I found it difficult to nail down just what "counted" as the "field."   This led to a complication in assessing what conversations, what documents, which meetings, and which relationships should or would serve as viable

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[39] Laura Nader, "Up the Anthropologist – Perspectives Gained from Studying Up," in *Reinventing Anthropology*, ed. Dell Hymes (New York: Vintage, 1969).

[40] In terms of my own work, one of the most salient points made by the Zapatistas is the idea that those who wish to ally themselves with the movement need to stay in their communities and organize, as opposed to coming to Chiapas, Mexico to work alongside the movement. Translating this, this stance indicates the importance of looking to our own communities, broadly imagined or defined, to uncover the questions that might lead to intellectual projects which serve our own and other's movements for liberation.

[41] Ibid., 12-13.

pieces of "data" to analyze, resulting in a critical assessment and constant re-commitment to my study's guiding questions, and ultimately, my political alignment. Perhaps the familiarity and comfort of the faces and places I story here made the analysis all the more difficult. Lending credence to the positions of other activist anthropologists, I must acknowledge that it was precisely this level of intimacy which necessitated that my analysis and writing be even more thoroughly critically objective regarding my own location, as researcher, *compañera,* leader, friend, and participant.

The timeline of this study further facilitated the development of the research, yet complicates the outlining of my methods. While reviewing other works that incorporate activist methodologies, I recognize a thread amongst some studies, indicating the importance of researchers developing their study through horizontal dialogue with those involved in the movement they wish to represent in their writing.[42] But what when those involved in the movement in question simply does not have the time or desire to participate in such an intimate way in the methodological development of a study? Does this discount the activist-ness of one's work?

The reality of this study is that the development of my research questions and the entirety of the study itself do not fit neatly into prescribed methods of horizontal dialogue and collaborative feedback, if I take the timeline of this study to have coincided with the parameters of my IRB approval. Does this trouble the timeline and prescribed notions of 'when' fieldwork and research starts, or the assertion that horizontal collaboration is a necessary feature of activist research? Perhaps, if my history of working alongside these organizations is taken into account, the experiences I carry that inform the questions at

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[42] Hale (2007), 105. Speed, 215.

hand push my work into the arena of those studies which are, as Speed's title pronounces, "forged in dialogue."

Whether my collected history of conversations and lived moments can 'count' towards the formation of the research project at hand is a messy question to sort out. The writing of Gupta and Ferguson is useful again here, as they point out that insider ethnographies often rely on a lifetime of experience, enabling a wealth of information to be counted as data as used in the building of a theory, which subsequently "challenges unspoken assumptions" around when and where the "field" is.[43]   The boundaries of this investigation have been less than neat; throughout the building of the theoretical framework, data collection, analysis and writing, I've gone back and forth, from one to the other, stopping and starting over the course of one, two, or maybe six years, depending on what one considers my studies timeline. Specifically, the "official" data collection here (that which involved fieldnotes, reviewing of movement-produced documents, and interviews) happened over the course of a year, in various settings: on marches, in the farmworker community, in vans and airplanes, in meeting rooms and classrooms at my own university, and at restaurants over pizza, tacos, and drinks with other organizers/participants, even in my own home.

The theoretical analysis and method of coding data employed was a combination of grounded theory mixed with open coding.[44] The sharing of data, and refining of data collection also took place cyclically throughout the official research timeline, and the position I hold within the organization has enabled me spaces to test some of the import

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[43] Ibid., 31-33.

[44] A. Strauss & Juliet Corbin. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. Newbury Park: Sage, 1990.

of the insights I've developed throughout the process, through workshops and conversations with others. In addition to this, my desire to make this work accessible and useful to the members of SFA, in addition to my recognition of the problems of attempting to represent others, led me to consult those featured in the study along with other movement leadership and request feedback at various points throughout the writing process, in addition to requesting that they review and comment on the work alongside those advising my study.

This study features three types of data: responses from an organizationally sponsored short-answer survey that I was granted access to, field notes from multiple meetings, events, and actions, and transcriptions made from interviews. Alongside these data I also offer short vignettes drawn from memory, from my own five year history of working alongside the CIW and SFA. There were 10 participant interviews done in this study, and interviewees were selected based on their amount of time spent organizing with the SFA. I interviewed three groups of people: organizers involved with SFA for approximately one year or less, those involved for in between one and three years, and those involved for over five years. All participants have either attended or completed college, or were students at the time of interviews, and although six of the interviewees have served or were at the time of the interview serving on the leadership bodies of the SFA (in either staff, intern, or Steering or Administrative Committee positions), this factor was tertiary to their selection for participation.[45] The primary factor for selection of participants was the number of years each person had been involved, and secondary factors included demographics and geographic location.

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[45] These bodies will be explained and differentiated in the data analysis section below.

The participants in Group One included: Leticia, and Eric, both from Texas, and Lizz, from Florida all of whom worked with the SFA for one year or less. Despite her short amount of involvement time, Lizz quickly applied for and was granted a position on the Steering Committee, and was one of the six interviewees in an organizational leadership role. Group Two participants, who have one to three years of experience participating with SFA, included Marley, Iliana, and Cristian, who currently reside in Washington, D.C., New York, and Texas, respectively. Of this group, Marley and Cristian were each serving their second term on the Steering Committee. Group Three participants included: Brent, Sean, Raquel and Robert, and all besides Robert reside in Texas, while all besides Raquel have served on the leadership of the SFA at some point in the past eight years. At the time of interviews, Marley, Cristian, Eric, and Leticia were pursuing undergraduate degrees at various universities. To give a sense of demographics, five of the ten participants in this study are people of color, and five white, all range between the ages of 19-29, and half are women.

MEETING THE PARTICIPANTS: THE STORIES THEY CARRY

When asked what they understood to be early political influences, all participants in this study shared stories that in some way reflect a pattern noted by Pulido. She writes: "the politicization of the Third World Left was a two-step process. First, almost all individuals…were confronted early on with racial or class inequalities leaving a lasting impression on them…The second requirement was the presence of an opportunity, or an opening, that provoked individuals into action."[46] While indicating the trend Pulido points to here, respondents reflected this trend within a spectrum of differences. Some

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[46] Pulido, 59.

cited their parents and some talked about siblings, while others noted books, music, and social groups as primary political influences.

Lizz, Leticia, Marley, Iliana and Raquel all cited their parents as political influences early in life, saying that their parents helped them gain an understanding of the importance of political action. Leticia said, "I think it was because of my dad. He worked a lot in the Valley, Raymondville…organizing with farmworkers in the onion. Its always been this thing with him, and we have always talked about it. You do the right thing; its never been a question." Marley talked about how her parents took action to stop a water bottling company from destroying a local stream in Florida, and Lizz's parents were "hippies" who "chained themselves to fences" and taught her "not to shop at Wal-Mart." Iliana told me about her mother being involved in supporting the immigrant community in their hometown in Kansas, and about how her father was a radical pastor who was against the invasion of Iraq. Raquel also recalled her father politicizing her, but in a rather distinct way, saying:

> The reason why I got involved was because I think about my grandma, I think about my dad and his brothers and sisters, you know, like when he was growing up…he was actually he was a picker, he would go and pick potatoes, and like all kinds of different fruits, things like that. You could look at his hands, you could see that, look at his back, you could see that…I would hear his stories, [and he would say to me] "That's why its so important you're in school." And so for me, it [being involved in SFA] was like, "This is for my dad, this is for my abuelita, this is for my tios."

At another end of the spectrum, Cristian, Eric, Brent, Robert and Sean all cited slightly different influences. Cristian and Eric both told me about how their older siblings were their primary political influences, and how through their siblings they came to learn to question authority. Robert talked about his experiences being involved in a counter-cultural Unitarian Universalist youth group when he was a teen, where youth

were "involved in all kinds of stuff from animal rights to anti drug war stuff, and that was definitely just a politicizing experience." Sean and Brent both mentioned books as primary political influences early on, including reading about the Black Panthers and the Zapatistas, as well as reading works like Naomi Klein's *No Logo* and Mumia Abul-Jamal's *Life on Death Row*. As Brent put it, "it was kinda this like one-two punch of like fucked up domestic policies, you know, on death row, and then fucked up foreign policies internationally – I just started eating all that stuff up."

Indicating what Pulido posits, when asked about why he decided to participate in a 34-mile march with the CIW, Sean later said, "Part of it was that something inside me became willing to take that step, and part of it was having the opportunity to take that step, and by opportunity I mean both the invitation to participate and the flexibility in my schedule and life to be able to do that." Although in 2003, at the time of the Root Cause March which Sean references, SFA was substantially smaller and still in many ways a nascent network and idea, I believe the point that he makes here is critical to understanding why some have been attracted to participating in the organization over the years.

While the network of allies has grown substantially in the eight years since Root Cause, the relationship that the CIW has to its ally organizations remains the same, and the invitation continues to be extended in much the same way. Iliana also talked about how the movement presented an opportunity for her as well, saying:

> I think having that [my family's values] as a foundation, as I got older I was interested in…food justice. So when I went to that conference it was cool to be able to connect food justice but that wasn't strictly environmentally-focused, with like immigration and people power and shit like that, and that was really powerful to me and I hadn't seen anything like that before.

This extension of an invitation from the CIW to walk alongside SFA members and struggle together presented for those featured in this study an "opportunity," as Pulido names it, to be provoked into action, and a subsequent opening of a path towards the development of a particular brand of conscientization, CIW-style.

CIW Methods & Values: Worker Leadership

EMBODIMENT

This study will focus on experiences, stories, structures, and relationships that contain within them politicizing lessons that combined have served to develop a particular type of political analysis within participants of the SFA network. While this study is aimed at examining how SFA as an organization specifically encapsulates a wealth of pedagogical material that teaches volumes about power and possibility, it must be acknowledged that, as one survey respondent said:

> I think without a doubt that SFA's biggest strength has been and will continue to be its relationship with the CIW. That SFA is based out of Immokalee, works out of the CIW's center, and takes its lead from the CIW gives us an essential characteristic that I think many other solidarity organizations/campaigns lack.

Given this relationship, and the myriad of lessons that youth organizers glean from it, it seems imperative to start this work examining the CIW, and the lessons the organization offers to its allies through their collaboration. The idea of embodied practices will stand as a central theme throughout this work. Within the picture painted by this study, I offer as a beginning the ways in which very specific forms of global corporate power have been inscribed upon the lives, stories, faces, and bodies of the CIW's membership. Alongside this bleak reality, though, is a re-written script featuring salient configurations of human resistance and hope.

As noted earlier, the majority of CIW members arrived in the US fleeing repressive regimes or seeking respite from unendurable economic conditions. In the fall of 2006, I had the opportunity to meet Leonel Perez, then 18 and recently arrived from

Guatemala, and the following February, at the SFA's first Midwest Encuentro, he shared

his story with a room full of about 60 young activists.

> *It was the beginning of the weekend event, and the participant's chairs were set in a large circle. It was early February and snowing outside. Although the size of the building and broken heaters contributed to the seeping cold inside, the community center was packed with colorful jackets, laughter, and vibrant murals along walls stuccoed with protest art. The murals, depicting Chicano history, were interspersed with signs painted to look like tomato buckets and suns, alongside re-imagined McDonald's characters, like the 'Wage Burglar." As people settled in, Leonel stood. Addressing the group through a translator, he introduced himself and began talking about how he grew up in a small farming village in rural Guatemala, harvesting corn, coffee, and other produce with his family. Over the years, he said, they became less and less able to support themselves by selling their harvest, and had to begin selling more and more of their land. Eventually, his older brother moved to the US to find work and send money home, but it wasn't enough, and as Leonel approached adulthood, he too migrated northward. He asked the audience if they knew why his family had trouble selling their produce as he got older, and began talking about international trade practices by asking the group if anyone knew what NAFTA stood for. In retrospect, I recall focusing in on how this young man, five years my junior, seemed so calm and matter-of-fact about how his experiences had taken him so far afield from home, and how his short story encapsulated and put a face on these terms and policies I'd only read and heard about, and was still struggling to understand at the time.*

Fast-forwarding four years, in January of 2011, I found myself once again sitting

and facing about 20 other young SFA members and about seven or so CIW members, all

surrounding a number of tables pushed together to form a large square at which everyone

was seated. It was the second night of the annual Face-to-Face meeting of the SFA, and

as is customary, we were sitting down to dinner with the CIW.[47]

> *In front of each of us steamed plates filled with fresh chiles rellenos drenched in aromatic salsa alongside heaps of hot corn tortillas and arroz mexicana, and I sat down, joking with a few CIW members as to who's name is Nacho. As the seats filled out, people picked up their forks and began to cut into their plates, and things quieted. A moment later, Silvia addressed the group. Using a translator, she welcomed us to the space, and the rest of the CIW members went around the room introducing themselves. Introductions from the SFA staff, Steering and Administrative Commitees followed, some in halting Spanish. Then the workers began to share with us some of the recent changes they'd been seeing in the community because of the Campaign for Fair Food. They*

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[47] The Face-to-Face meeting is essentially the annual board meeting of the SFA, and will be talked about in detail later in this paper.

related a story of a worker who was now able to walk his children to school, as opposed to taking them to early-morning daycare at 5am, and another of a worker who stopped work while in the field to call and report a labor violation from their cell phone. These changes, which only two years prior were still not more than a vision and a hope, had been brought about by new agreements with two of the largest tomato growing companies in Florida, agreements that worked to respect worker's basic rights on the job. That night, while reminding us that despite these changes, the struggle was nowhere near over, the CIW thanked us for our role in making these changes a possibility.

These vignettes capture a central set of lessons I wish to convey here. In each of these events, as in all of the joint events which the CIW and SFA organize together, there is an explicit focus on positioning the voices of CIW members as the centerpiece from which the dialogue, and thus the movement, flows outward. All SFA events begin and end with presentations and participation of CIW members, and this is done for explicit reasons.[48] The very presence of the CIW at the front of this struggle, as experts on their own reality and agents of their own change, teaches all involved something about the kind of democracy that Apple and Beane write about and the kind of consciousness and praxis that Mohanty, Friere, and others advocate for.

Examining this within the context of Omi and Winant's often-cited idea of racial formation, which states that there is a "Socio-historical process by which racial categories are created," and that this process is linked to the "evolution of hegemony, the way in which society is organized and ruled."[49] If we accept the idea of racial formation to be true, then young people in this movement (and by extension, others who do not participate but simply view the movement) cannot help but have their ideological

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[48] "SFA events," as a term, will be used to reference SFA-specific events, and differentiate from joint events, organized by both the CIW and SFA jointly. An "SFA event" includes those events organized by SFA specifically for SFA members, and some events, like the Face-to-Face and Encuentros, will be examined and explained in greater detail later in this paper.

[49] Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s,* (New York: Routledge) 1994, 55-56.

foundations challenged by the positioning of the CIW, a brown, black, and indigenous, worker-led movement, at the front of the leadership of the organization with which they identify.

THE PEDAGOGY OF WORKER AGENCY

At its very core, the agentive stance occupied by the CIW's membership in these stories presents a pedagogical lesson in difference. This teaches youth volumes about their own social location, while also extending an invitation to youth to reflecting on those differences and participate in an act building collaborative community across such. Sean told me about his first encounter with the CIW, when they visited his university to give a presentation on campus. He recounted this story:

> The workers [were] speaking for themselves, and Julia and Brian helped translate. It was Francisca and Gerardo…leading the presentation, and given that my only other real experience with this stuff was that the people at the front of the rooms had PhDs or will have PhDs, you know that was distinct. These were people that had a different background leading a very intelligent discussion about complex global issues that was so clearly informed not by something they had read but their experience and by kind of the analysis that they had formed collectively. So that was remarkable to me, I mean this was all new to me, and you know part of it says something about what your assumptions were, prior to that point. But that's also socialization in the US, and…this was something that was confronting that socialization in a really cool way. And it was funny, and it was cool because it was serious with a sense of humor…they were asking us directly to participate.

What Sean's story gets at here is that the leadership and central focal point that the CIW provides for this movement disrupts hegemonic narratives about how change is made, by whom, and for whom. The strong self-organization of workers in Immokalee, combined with their stories about both the power exercised over them and the now-tangible changes they've been able to win, makes for an undeniably influential wake-up call to those who are willing to listen. As Leticia said to me, "I don't know how you honestly couldn't do

it…people are literally being enslaved…I mean anybody who know that can process this information, I mean this is what's going on, I mean this march is happening to prevent this from happening, to uplift people, how could you say no to that?"

Sandoval writes that in struggle, falling in love includes "breaking through whatever controls."[50] In a more typical context, love for one's fellow human is related primarily to an acknowledgement of the old 'do unto others' axiom. Here, I believe that it is the sheer humanity of workers, elucidated through these demands for dignity and respect and related in simple conversations over food, which holds the power to shock, awaken, and inspire would-be allies, or in other words, to love. The shocking differences between the lives of students and the lives of workers can serve as a learning moment that awakens and inspires, as confirmed by Lizz, who when talking about her participation in the 25-mile Farmworker Freedom March of 2010 said:

> I guess it was the second day of the march when we went to Publix's Headquarters, and walking down that road, I had blisters on my feet and I was tired and exhausted, my ankles hurt, I was dirty, I was gross, we had been up since 4am to drive down here and walking miles and miles and miles, and [I was] just literally feeding off the energy of other people, just to really have this visceral kind of connection to this huge group of people, hearing the chants, feeling…its like this fire energy that just like roars up the street… I had no idea that anything like that could happen and just to see that happen and to participate really inspired me to want to be a part of this, because I felt like it was a really good opportunity for me to learn something…this mutual collective effervescence…just as a human it feels really good. To know that they [the farmworkers] have the energy to go to meetings and go to actions when they've been in the fields for fifteen hours, that gives me a great source of energy…Like I had blisters, but like these people probably had blisters, too but they were going to go to work the next day and carry buckets of tomatoes in the sunshine and its hot as hell. And its like, if they can do it, I am capable of so much more than I ever thought I was.

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[50] Sandoval, 139.

The sad reality of our food system is that (historically and currently) farm laborers suffer through standard, dehumanizing, "Business as Usual" practices, from early African chattel slavery to modern-day trafficking and enslavement. This is a direct effect of an imbalanced global racial formation, and inequitable trade policies that reduce livelihoods to mere statistics. When combined with a food system that distances and divides producers and consumers, so that one can live an entire life without ever encountering the other, the daily results for workers in the fields can be quite volatile. In contrast to a social change landscape that responds to this reality through acts of benevolent charity that ultimately still silence the oppressed, workers in this context are recognized as equals and teachers. CIW members position themselves within this struggle as experts and agents, owning the fact that they are the ones best capable of articulating the strategies to be used to create change, and allies who choose to sit at the table with them engage in practices that recognize and reinforce this positioning. As one survey answer read,

> In the realm of farmworker justice, there are a lot of young people involved in organizations that advocate for and help farmworkers, but these organizations often sideline the farmworkers themselves. SFA is pretty unique in that it's an organization of young people that are intentionally accountable to farmworkers. In a world of farmworker charity organizations, SFA is the only organization that I know of that takes the lead from farmworkers, and sees the work that it does in the context of broader anti-oppression work and the idea that we all can and need to be part of the creation of the world that we want to live in.

The repositioning of the disadvantaged at the center of the development of processes by which to challenge their marginalization is a principle which radiates layers upon layers of lessons outward. From the organizational core of the CIW to the peripheries of the Fair Food Movement, these lessons can be caught in glances by onlookers at actions, lived through movement practices, or viscerally felt through experience, as Lizz and Robert mention above. Cristian told me that seeing some CIW members do a presentation in his community, and then meeting one of them afterward

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was really important to him because "actually meeting him made it…not more real, but more present. And the notion was more available in my head, so I could use that to think about it in new ways." This spectrum of learning moments will be examined throughout this work. It is from this centerpiece, Immokalee, that the work of the CIW began. It was from the early invitations to participate, extended to allies beginning with the 230-mile march for Dignity, Dialogue and a Fair Wage in 2000, that the workers and their youth allies in the SFA began to write, as one CIW member said, "A chapter where we would be together."

Consciousness + Commitment = Change

The morning break was over and people filed back in and sat down. After a moment of awkward silence, heads began to swivel around and look to see where the CIW members had gone, since their session wasn't over yet, and as jokes began to toss back and forth about them being late to their own presentation, the side door opened and a line of workers came in, looking straight ahead and carrying tomato buckets. They went to the front of the room and pantomimed a scene of picking tomatoes. After a few moments of picking, the workers began talking about their working conditions and the scene changed to that of the workers being at a meeting. They continued talking about how to change their working conditions, and came up with a strategy to ask the owners of the grocery store buying the tomatoes they were picking to pay them a little more for the produce. In the next scene, the workers approach the store's owner but are ignored. Workers exit, and students enter through the other door. They discuss hearing about the worker's poor wages and decide to approach the grocery store owner about it, but are also ignored. The play ends with the workers and students meeting, finding out they are both fighting for the same thing, and approaching the store owner together, which takes more time and multiple visits, but is ultimately successful.

CODES

The clarity with which the workers convey their stories and their message is buttressed by the simple and compelling methods of communication they employ. They rely heavily on Freirean practices of popular education, which involves the use of 'codes,' explained to the SFA members present at the organization's 2011 Strategy Retreat.[51] Early in the weekend, one CIW member explained the use of popular education, saying "Immokalee was asleep…[we needed] an analysis for action, change…with pop-ed, you can take any piece of reality to analyze and provoke reflection." The CIW has always incorporated the use of codes, and in particular, simple drawings, posted all around Immokalee, to provoke discussion and bring new members into the organization. After being asked by an SFA member to explain the role of

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[51] The term *codes,* in this context, refers to the Freirean idea that one word, picture, or item can be used to as a symbol to provoke discussion. The chosen 'code' will signify some larger piece of reality, which through discussion, can be used to extrapolate from and *profundizar,* or make one's understanding deeper and more profound. Some examples, used and explained later, would be a tomato bucket or corporate logo. This idea is explained most fully in *Education for Critical Consciousness.* Paulo Friere, *Education for Critical Consciousness,* (New York: Continuum, 2005).

popular education in the movement, Lucas, another CIW member said, "The role of the CIW is education, always, and popular education is the root, the central part…Guatemala, Mexico, Haiti had it in common and we used it. This is the heart of the Coalition. New people keep coming, and we have to use it. Maybe they can't read or write, but they can watch a movie or [understand a drawing]." (See Inset 1, below)

Lucas' explanation of the importance of using popular education techniques that use movies, drawings, and theatre pieces to provoke discussion and action within a largely-illiterate worker community represents a central value, reflected over and over again: those who experience oppression are the ones best-placed to take action to resolve their situation. A secondary value is at play here as well, which, to quote Mohanty again, recognizes that people carry with them a "variety of experience, a variety of ways of understanding the world, a variety of frameworks of operation," thus necessitating the employment of a variety of multiply-accessible methods to provoke discussion, education, and action.[52]

An adaptation of these methods, and the values they embrace, can been seen at play when the CIW leaves Immokalee, either physically going on tour by visiting a string of other cities to do education work about the Campaign for Fair Food, or metaphorically, when SFA members and other allies take the Campaign into their communities. Annual meetings of the SFA have for many years consistently included workshops on how to adapt the CIW's style of popular education for use in other communities, and this reflects the premium placed on the values that these pedagogical tools espouse. During the SFA's 2010 Strategy Retreat, three workshops focused specifically on explaining the

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[52] Mohanty, 201.

importance of popular education and how to use some pop-ed techniques when doing Campaign outreach and education work.

Fig. 1: *En La Mesa de los Rancheros*/At the Boss' Table (Drawing courtesy of the CIW)

One workshop, referenced above, opened the first full day of the retreat, and was led by the CIW. SFA members led two more workshops, and these focused on the use of various techniques and 'codes.' Some examples given during these workshops included simple theatre skits and drawings, like those referenced earlier. Workshop facilitators also talked about the power in using a bucket, identical to ones that workers fill with tomatoes while in the field, but filled with 32 pounds of rice, to simulate the weight of a full tomato bucket. Facilitators explained that in this activity, participants are challenged to pick up the bucket, balance it on their shoulder, and run about 10 meters with it, which conveys an idea of the kind of labor a tomato picker engages in. When paired with the subsequent information on how much a tomato picker earns for each bucket picked (40-

45 cents), and how many they have to pick in a day to earn $50 (125), the 'rice bucket' activity can be a powerfully-provoking code, or symbol, which can be used to expand upon and discuss.

POPULAR EDUCATION PRACTICES

Another set of interesting activities often used by SFA members in presentations includes the use of codes that most North American students and young people are quite familiar with: corporate logos and clothing labels. Corporate logos are drawn in front of a group, such as the Nike or McDonald's symbols, and the group is asked to respond with that the drawings represent, which is used to facilitate a discussion of corporate power and hegemony. In another activity, participants are asked to check the labels on their clothing, and call out where their articles were made, which typically includes a laundry list of nation states located in the Global South. They are then asked to talk about what they imagine working conditions to be like in the factory where these items were made, and this list of working conditions, which tends to include things like low pay, long hours, child labor, and other substandard labor practices, is then used to talk about working conditions in Florida's tomato fields.

A "How-To" presentation that covers adapting these activities and methods to varying audiences, along with tips on facilitating subsequent discussions was part of the 2010 Retreat, and frequently included among workshop offerings at most SFA events. The practices of using rice, corporate logos, and clothing tags all draw on items and ideas which are familiar to young people. Used as part of these practices, these familiar objects help participants to expand outward from what they already know, and develop new

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knowledge about the relationships between themselves and workers at the other end of their food supply chain.

Viewers, passer-bys, and participants in these presentations are asked to deepen their understanding about the relationships between producer and consumer. As facilitators in these processes, SFA members learning to employ these practices also do the same. Doing educational work to expand the reach of the Campaign for Fair Food in their communities presents a unique opportunity for members of SFA to play the simultaneous role of teacher and student in these settings. Learning about and subsequently operationalizing the practical and ideological groundings of the Campaign, SFA-ers also learn the values and ideals associated with these accessible educational techniques through the embodied practices of using them. Reflecting on the structure of the SFA's Encuentros and Retreats, Marley told me how useful she felt it was when she participated, and why she thinks the structure is beneficial to participants generally. She said the events are structured to "give all this information, and [then] you give an outlet for creativity and involvement instantly," which helps young participants be able to immediately use the skills and channel the energy they have to act on the issues presented.

At another point in the interview, Marley talked about what these structures and what the CIW's leadership in these events have taught her, which is something a number of participants reflected on. She told me,

> I'm doing it with this group of workers who I consider to just be at all points in time more well-versed overall in the big picture about what we need to do and how we need to do it, and I feel so good about that…I know I don't have the life experience to singularly construct a new universe, so it has to be a collaborative effort. And this is very

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> collaborative in a lot of ways that…accurately allocates roles, like this is the best role for
> you to be most effective in bringing about this new world.

Here, Marley indicates the understanding she has gained as a participant in this movement, that as a relatively privileged young person, it would be not only inappropriate, but impossible for her to know just what needs to change in order to structure the world more equitably for farmworkers. She also indicates that she clearly understands that there is value and use in someone like herself and in her social location doing this kind of educational work (referenced above) in her community.

Pairing this with a story Robert recounted for me, a crucial point is illuminated. Telling me about a conversation he'd had with Sean years prior, Robert said,

> I remember bringing up this idea that had become very prominent during the Civil Rights movement, [the idea that] that white people should organize against racism in white communities. And when I mentioned it to him, he said "You know, I feel like that's what SFA is doing," and I was like, "Yes," and it had just never seemed that simple to me in the past…our job is to be in our communities, in student communities [for example], and there is all kinds of things we can do there.

In both of these moments, SFA members demonstrate their learned understandings of how to truly operationalize an effective solidarity model. As Marley said, this model properly allocates power and ascribes a practical role to each individual based on their needs, resources, and social location. At their core, these roles, and the intentional structures that ascribe them, serve to fundamentally challenge the hegemonic structures that shape the realities that bind together, but often blind and hide, workers and youth from each other.

The deployment of educational techniques that are accessible to multiple cross-sections of the population – from the "apathetic student body" full of "beach-bums" that Lizz encounters at her school, to the rooms of graduate students that I've encountered in my own campaign outreach, or the elementary students that I once witnessed a fellow SFA member address in rural Illinois – speaks to the broader idea that anyone can understand, anyone can be invited to discuss, and anyone is capable of taking action. This idea undergirds the entirety of this struggle. Embodied through these practices, this idea is based in a simple democratic value, which pays true credence to the difference that Mohanty writes about above, and, as Apple and Beane write, puts faith in the "collective capacity of people to resolve problems," regardless of the differences they live.[53] Reflecting SFA member's understandings of these practices, one person wrote in their survey that at the organization's core lies "our reliance on popular education," which effectually aides in what another respondent named as the group's ability to "push our targets by mobilizing our fellow students to go to protests and to change our schools, our consciousness, our communities, and our consumer practices."

By nature, this struggle carries with is a certain set of values, enacted through various facets of the Campaign for Fair Food, such as the educational techniques cited above. These practices foreground a very simple demand: that basic human rights be granted to some of the most exploited workers in the US. Part and parcel of this demand is the Campaign's reliance on allies meeting the worker's request for collaboration and respect across difference. The placement of the marginalized as agents of change who direct the process effectually serves to horizontalize the power usually granted the relatively privileged who tend to do charity or non-profit work. Marley spoke to this

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[53] Apple and Beane, 7.

when she relayed a story to me during our interview, and what she said stuck with me for days as I reflected and thought about its meaning. Referencing a slogan on a shirt she'd seen that another non-profit organization had made, she said:

> "All we do is win." SFA could say that, but the "we" is a very different we. Like who's doing the work, and who's work is most important, and who's direction and decision-making…and so there's just a constant level of humility that is integral to the SFA work, because…its essential to the work that you are following the lead of the CIW at all points in time, and that is just a constant check, and that check isn't present as consistently in a lot of other groups…so they don't have the advantage of have that check on privilege.

In addition to the lessons conveyed through the worker's leadership, the Campaign carries with it a basic acknowledgement of the importance of putting the well-being of people before profit, and the entirety of the struggle rests upon hope, and a belief in the collective power of people to create a different world where 'people before profit' is a norm. Taken together, all of these principles, embodied through practice, teach participants in this struggle a wealth of lessons about how to begin creating a different world. As envisioned on a CIW banner that hangs in the organization's community center, *"Otro mundo es posible"* (Another world is possible).

SFA Structures

EXTERNAL STRUCTURES AND PUBLIC PEDAGOGY

Thinking about the CIW and SFA on a macro-level and examining the ways in which the CIW as a collection of individuals and practices, there is one more area relevant to explore before moving on to the specifics of how SFA as an organization functions internally: actions, meaning public protests. The CIW is founded on a three-pronged strategy of tactics, which includes: popular education, leadership development, and the use of large, colorful public actions to call attention to their struggle, all themes will arise again and again throughout this work.[54] Talking about the first encounter he had with the CIW, and how he got involved, Robert told me:

> There was this really exciting, energetic actions outside of a local Taco Bell in Albuquerque…it was massive, it was like hundreds of people outside this Taco Bell and [the store] felt puny in front of us. The only chant we did the whole time was "Boycott Taco Bell," just over and over and it just echoed through the air, it just felt amazing, it was just so much energy…everything was electrified…[and] you know, I don't think I necessarily put this together in my head at the time, but it was definitely the workers on the tour [who] it felt like they were running the show…and it was the workers who seemed like they really knew what was going on. They were leading the chants, there was a few times when I remember folks speaking, and it definitely felt like they owned it and they were taking ownership over it…So it was definitely really powerful to see two busloads of folks come in and just take up this space in a really powerful way.

Many of the interviews I did echoed this, such as when Eric said, "It was definitely inspiration to see them speak and represent the CIW…you know it was so great 'cause obviously this was their march, right? If it was just students asking…for higher wages for farmworkers I don't really think that would be very effective." Sean also told a poignant story about the afore-mentioned Root Cause March, in which all allies were

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[54] Sellers, vii.

asked to march behind the workers, and he said, "The way the march was spatially organized, allies were requested to be in the back of the march, which I thought was great, I liked that kind of analysis around privilege and the role of allies."

The SFA network has grown drastically since the 2003 action which Sean references above. This growth has consequentially seen the increased expectation that SFA allies continue to do the hard and important educational outreach in their communities that builds the support and commitment needed to take multiple days off and drive across the country to march for miles and miles for these actions. Usually referred to as mobilizations, large CIW actions tend to happen twice yearly: one in the spring, averaging between 1,000-2,000 participants, and one in the fall, averaging around 500 participants. The amount of logistical muscle that is required to pull off the events the groups organize requires serious commitment, accountability, discipline, and ultimately, ownership.

Huge mobilizations like this require tons of planning and logistical execution, from the organization of water and bathroom stops, to security forces, to assistance with food and participation in things like the rallies, which cap off the end of marches, and over the years, SFA members have been increasingly asked to step in to fill these roles. This reflects and results in an increased sense of student leadership during mobilizations, and the pedagogical result is that CIW mobilizations teach democracy and collective responsibility in ways that many other things in young people's lives cannot. One member spent time in her survey reflecting on her experiences stepping up to take on organizational responsibilities. She wrote:

> Whenever I did step up I always felt encouraged by other members of our organization, even if I was clueless as to what I was doing. And whenever I stepped back I was never

made to feel bad for doing so. Also, can I just comment on how being involved in SFA has for sure been a defining moment in the story that is my life. It changed the way I see the world.

In March of 2011, the CIW requested the SFA bring about 1,000 allies to join them for the finale of the Do the Right Thing Tour: two days of protests, pickets, and marches in Tampa, Florida. On the second day, participant numbers were over 1,500, and SFA groups from as far away as Austin, Denver, New York, Washington, DC, and Illinois turned out dozens of people, with some cities bringing full tour buses of participants. Key SFA members, including a number of those interviewed for this study, were principally responsible for mobilizing these large groups of participants, and helping out with logistical needs like the provision of food and water for the weekend and picking up others from the airport. In addition, SFA allies were called upon to participate in one of the largest pageant theatre pieces the CIW has performed in my five years of involvement. (See Figures 2 and 3)

> *Do the Right Thing, Day 1 (Fri): approx 10pm*
> *I returned to the church from picking up the U-haul right around 10pm, hoping that all the evening's logistics meetings would be done so that folks could help divide, organize, and load up the food and water supplies for Saturday's march so that I could get to sleep before midnight. As I arrived, I found the grounds quiet. The dancing had stopped, no one was at the picnic tables, the music was off, and I'd seen just a few people milling out by the gym. Called around, found out my crew of helpers had been roped into the theatre, felt annoyed. "Why?" I asked Charlene, "You're on water all day tomorrow, you can't be in the theatre." I went to the gym, where it was being rehearsed, and found everyone inside wearing headbands with words written on them tied around their foreheads and listening to a few folks at the front who were directing traffic. Seemed like there was no calling anyone outside to help with the U-Haul loading, so I resigned myself to waiting it out, found a copy of a sketch for the pageant, and sat to watch. As the rehearsal played out, the agitation washed away and I realized that I was witnessing the rehearsal of one of the most beautiful moments I'd seen this extended community put together.*
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> *Do the Right Thing, Day 2 (Sat): in front of Publix*
> *"They took away my human rights…who will stand with me and fight? Took away my dignity…who will come and stand with me?" The woman's voice bellowed out in a slow cadence, punctuated by stomps and claps of the line of*

allies marching behind her toward the flatbed truck-come-stage. Three of the four Atrocities puppets on stage remained: Slavery, Poverty, and Sexual Harassment stood, assaulting the assembled crowd and passing traffic with their haunting imagery, but one puppet, Abuse, had been turned around with the addition of the Faith Allies to the stage, and in it's place, on the back side of the puppet, read the word Respect. A large sun continued to peek out slowly and hesitantly from behind a huge suit and tie puppet emblazoned with the Publix logo, but had yet to fully make itself known to the onlookers. The voice singing was an ally from Baltimore, a representative of the United Workers, and she was leading a group of Community Allies to the stage. Upon arrival, they addressed to the audience and shared their reasons for participation, and another puppet was turned around, and as Sexual Harassment became Dignity, another group of allies gathered at the end of the impromptu walkway and began chanting "Ain't no power like the power of the people 'cause the power of the people don't stop!" Wearing red headbands around their foreheads with the word "Resist!" written across them, a rowdy group of young folks, led by Cristian and Lupe approached the stage, carrying a sign that read "Students/Youth." The SFA had arrived on the scene, bringing dozens of allies from across the nation to the stage, who proclaimed the reasons for their participation and shouted out the cities they represented. By the end of the pageant, the Publix giant had toppled, and large sunshines popped up throughout the crowd, reading "Hope!" "Victory!" and "¡El sol es de todos!" All the Atrocities had turned around, and in their place were puppets of Dignity, Respect, Freedom and Fair Wages.

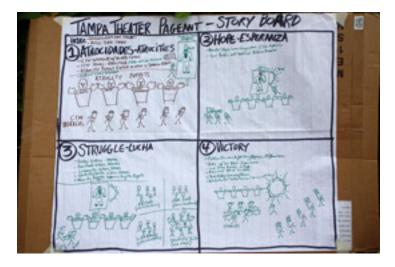Fig. 2: Publix blocks hope

(Photo courtesy of CIW)

Fig. 3: Story board used for pageant theatre rehearsal

(Photo courtesy of CIW)

The single-act pageant theatre encapsulated the simplicity of the message: with the conjoined power of multiple groups of allies, hope for a new day cannot be threatened by corporate recalcitrance. The practice of participation in the performance by nature imparts valuable lessons about democracy, including concern for the rights of others, the power of collective action, the need to maintain hope and value life over profit, alongside lessons about building community and working collaboratively across differences.

Useful for interpretation of both the theatre specifically, along with CIW mobilizations generally, is Giroux's notion of public pedagogy, which acknowledges the education and learning done in social spaces. The concept highlights the idea that the world around us, and the actions and interactions we witness and take part in are all sites of pedagogy, or teaching and learning. Here, the idea of public pedagogy provides a lens for interpretation of how onlookers, viewers, and passer-bys may be affected by the reconfiguration of social space that happens during CIW mobilizations. Giroux argues for the use of a radical public pedagogy that harnesses counter-hegemonic possibilities, asserting that we ought to make the notion of public pedagogy central to the struggle against neoliberalism. Reading the CIW's mobilizations through the lens of public pedagogy brings into focus the multiple layers of power and resistance, inscribed within the performance detailed above.

Each participant had different recollections to share about the actions they'd participated in, including what they'd learned from them, and what they thought others might have taken from participating or viewing them. When Cristian reflected on his first big CIW mobilization, the three-day Farmworker Freedom March of 2010, he told me,

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> I guess it was just really inspiring because I'd never been to a march that large and…just realizing all the work that was put into it and all the amazing sacrifice that had to be done by a lot of people to get that entire thing moving…[I learned] how a lot of people together have such an amazing power.

Lizz's first major CIW action was also the Farmworker Freedom March, and she spent a great deal of time in her interview talking about the impact her participation had on her. She told me,

> That was the first action, the first protest I've ever participated in, and one of the biggest actions in recent SFA history, and [so it was] kind of a funny time to join and a really, really inspiring time to join. It was really good for me to have this catalyst for a life long commitment…I still get chills when I think about watching that last day.

Adding to these observations, Leticia also pointed to the effect that these mass marches have on observers. She said,

> All these people here, we are all connected for this one goal, this one idea, we are going to change this one thing and I think that these people are amazing, marching and making themselves uncomfortable, doing whatever to just help people, to accomplish something, to work together instead of just sitting [around]. And then all of this too, all these people honking may or may not have heard of us, but they feel us! It's pretty powerful.

Here, she reaffirms the usefulness of Giroux's notion of public pedagogy as a lens through which to interpret the CIW and SFA.

Beyond the effect on those viewing the performances and marches, there are lessons on democratic responsibility within the tasks necessitated by these mobilizations. That is, young people learn responsibility to each other and to a larger collective working together to a cause that benefits them not materially, but in a more deeply liberating sense. The survey data collected by the SFA assists in further exploring this idea. One respondent wrote, "Our struggle (meaning SFA's struggle) is not about me." Perhaps this recognition, and willingness to "be actively involved wherever I'm needed," and

"integrate [new] ideas and analysis into my own work," and "continue my participation beyond graduation into my private life" is due to something else that is conveyed during the mobilizations. Addressing the audience during a short speech just before the pageant theatre, Lucas, a CIW member, said, "It is not a question of if we will win, but when. And when we do win, we will not only help free workers from oppressive conditions in the fields, but we will also free Publix from the impossible burden of supporting and justifying that oppression."

Returning to the conversation between Robert and Sean (referenced earlier), which Robert shared with me, he said that during that same conversation, he had another important realization:

> The other thing I remember form that conversation was Sean started talking about his stake in the game…he said something about how this doesn't benefit me, just pointing to everything, the orange groves in the distance and unpaved streets. And that sunk in also…The struggle of farmworkers is going to advance my struggle for some semblance of a liberated life and the liberated world I want to truly live in. It was just like, yeah, like this doesn't make any sense, setting up the world so that I'm supposedly benefitting from the exploitation of all these folks…that is just such a clear falsity. And that's just what we're basically told, on some level at least, that the exploitation of migrant workers is somehow benefitting us, because we get all these like great things.

When I asked Robert if changing that structure would benefit him personally, he said in response,

> I could get all abstract and draw you a picture of the sideways hourglass and say look we're both basically at both ends, both basically having to feed into or suckle from the intense consolidated control of our food supply, and that's just one example. I think on a more just personal level, being involved in a campaign so deeply and intimately, and a campaign and a network of people, not just the SFA network but the broader Campaign for Fair Food network, has just provided a true sense of personal agency for sure, like I can act on the world and have change, and a true sense of meaning.

Perhaps it is this sort of analysis, reminiscent of Freire's idea that oppression not only dehumanizes the oppressed, but also the oppressor, which students translate into their own lives. As read in another survey response, "Our analysis [is] that our liberation as (relatively privileged) young people is going to be achieved by advancing the struggle of (relatively oppressed) workers." Because of this work, there is a section of young, 'relatively privileged' North Americans are considering the revolutionary possibility that their privileges in fact do not equate with liberation. Instead, these youth are finding that their own liberation can be gained by struggling alongside one of the most exploited worker populations in the US, and this indicates a pedagogical hurdle that few can hope to teach or learn in a classroom.

Considering the social and pedagogical effects of an economic recession combined with this time of heightened xenophobia and increasingly severe criminalization of immigrant populations, the practical actions of taking up a struggle that materially benefits immigrant workers opens up "access to a spectrum from which consciousness-in-resistance emanates," as Sandoval writes.[55] The choice to embody the democratic, libratory principles of this movement through participation in a march, rally, or pageant theatre like that discussed above, and even by extension, the sheer witnessing of others taking up such actions, holds the potential to open up a spectrum of possibility not only for what the world can look like, but what the steps to get us there might include.

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[55] Sandoval, 140.

INTERNAL PEDAGOGIES

A central thread that ties together the visions that the CIW and the SFA have for a different world is the set of practices these organizations implement to begin walking toward their vision. When I asked Sean about his opinion of the role that the various actions, Encuentros, and other gatherings play in the movement, he indicated the crucially important role these events have, saying

> It's the glue that holds it all together…the idea for the encuentro was that we need a space for reflection, for trainings outside of the actions because the actions were always so crazy, I mean they're both really really important, but I mean both of those are opportunities for people to be involved and feel like they're participatinga lot of it comes back to the three C's [Consciousness, Commitment, and Change], and that's the philosophy of the coalition. You see that in how the actions are designed and how the day surrounding an action looks like, and what the Encuentro looks like… There is this ongoing commitment to deepening people's consciousness, and that's a goal.

One of the core values reflected in the practices that shape how these kinds of events look is both organizations' shared commitment to leadership development.

As referenced earlier, the SFA network is made up of various leadership bodies, which have been implemented and developed throughout the last six years, with the first four years of the organization's existence being led primarily by a single staff member. In 2005, during the first *Ecuentro,* ('encounter,' for an exact translation in English), or annual meeting of the SFA, the participants elected to begin forming a Steering Committee, which would serve alongside the staff as the primary decision-making body for the organization, and function as a ad-hoc board of directors. Important to mention here is that the provisional SC, which served from 2005-2006, decided that each newly selected crop of SC members should demographically represent the ideological principles that the organization strives for. As such, not all SC members needed to be students

(given that not all SFA members are; the organization refers to itself as a network of "students and youth"), and the SC would always strive to attain a goal of being 50% women-led and 50% people of color-led.

The SC, made up of SFA-ers with varying timelines of involvement, is an organizationally-named place for leadership development, and it is from the various active CIW support groups across the US that the body recruits new members. This is done through an active process of "internal vetting," as one SC member said during a conversation at the annual Face-to-Face (the SC's primary meeting of the year) about the importance of cultivating leadership in youth of color. The internal vetting process occurs principally at mobilizations and during the annual Encuentro. In addition to strategically using these two spaces to scout and encourage new leaders, special attention is paid by current SC members to the leadership qualities of SFA allies in their locally-based groups, which was discussed at length during the aforementioned conversation. Referencing this process, and the understood intentionality of it, one survey answer read, "The SFA has been really radical in this sense, since it has been intentional about picking its local representatives and its steering committee, to create a broad and multifaceted dialogue**."**

In 2009, a proposal was made by a combination of current and former SC members and staff to develop and implement a second leadership body, which was approved late in the year and led to the 2010 formation of the four- to six-person AC, or

the Administrative Committee.[56] SFA's leadership trifecta, working alongside each other virtually (via telephone and internet communication) for the majority of the year, is the primary "hub," as Robert called it, around which the work of keeping SFA alive circulates. It is the principal group of people responsible for the fundraising, event planning, campaign execution, conference and mobilization planning, outreach, and leadership development that all come together to make up the SFA. They are responsible for organizing events, such as the Encuentro, and bringing other young people out for the mobilizations detailed earlier, which combined are the "glue that holds it all together," as Sean said. Given the crucially important role these bodies have in making SFA what it is, I'd like to examine what their internal pedagogies look like in practice, by analyzing some of the learning that happens at SFA's annual Encuentros, and what these practices represent.

Building a Learning Community

Since 2005, the SFA's annual Encuentro has been the one time of year that SFA members visit Immokalee en-masse and come together to build community, meet workers, get a slight picture of what the working and living conditions they are fighting to change really look like, and strategize on how to topple the current targets the Campaign for Fair Food. Of equal importance at this event is the goal of building a

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[56] Interesting to mention here is the general division of tasks between the two bodies: the SC, while initially formed to undertake the responsibilities of a typical board of directors, eventually came to be a body that serves as an organizing skills- and political analysis-based training ground for young organizers. The SC is responsible for upkeep of all day-to-day organizational decisions, and for being the primary location the CIW looks to for ally mobilization and support, and members serve one-year terms. The AC, by contrast, deals strictly with long-term financial planning for the organization, and with any staff issues, and serves two-year terms. This body is made up of former SC members, interns, and staff, and also helps to provide access to historical memory and continuity, functioning mostly as a support to the SC. Both bodies collaborate with staff on major decisions such as hiring.

stronger and more vibrant movement for social change on a broader scale. The event typically lasts four days, over a long weekend, and takes place in mid-September, averaging between 90-120 participants from across the nation.

In 2010, the organization decided to change the format of this event to hold a what they called a *Cyountura*/Strategy Retreat. On the organization's website, a Coyuntura is defined as "a tool of popular education that introduces a collective process of research, analysis and direct action... a gathering for the purpose of a community to arrive at a shared analysis and agree on a plan of action that addresses the immediate relations of force affecting them at any given moment."[57] The survey data used in this study came from a survey put out by the SFA to be used as a way to gather member's reflections, in to help shape the Strategy Retreat. As I read the survey responses, I reflected on the varying perspectives they contained, the specificity of topics that SFA members were requesting to see covered during the Retreat, and the capacity we had as a community to meet those requests. I recall suddenly recognizing an overwhelming feeling of pride, inspiration, and accomplishment as I recognized the depth and importance of the self-education work we, as an organization and community of friends, had undertaken over the years.

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[57] The group's site also offered the following as further explanation for the change in format that year: Campus- and student-based organizing is still very much a part of the repertoire that is going to win us victories in the supermarket campaign. But not on its own. For these reasons we've decided to pause for a moment to arrive at a more clear understanding of who we are as SFA, what our role is in the supermarket campaign, and how we could most effectively coordinate and share an analysis and strategy…to help win the fight to end sweatshops and slavery in the field. "2010 SFA Strategy Retreat," Student/Farmworker Alliance, accessed March 9, 2011, http://sfalliance.org/2010coyuntura.html.

Survey responses, which were used as applications to attend the Retreat, requested that we collectively find a way to cover topics like historical connections to and influences from other student movements of the past and present, in addition to strategizing and skill-building around off-campus community-based organizing and outreach. Of utmost importance to respondents, seen in about 50% or more of surveys, was the following:

1) A desire to focus on the relationship between the CIW and SFA, evidenced by this response: "I would say that a deep solidarity discussion and an analysis of CIW / SFA history to glean lessons would be in order."

2) A request to address the need to re-imagine and revamp SFA's analysis of how corporate power intersects and influences young people's lives and how this relates to the supermarket industry in the US (as of 2010, the official Campaign for Fair Food shifted to targeting supermarket chains, save a few cities who are still focusing on pressuring the sandwich chain Quizno's). This desire was well-encapsulated by these responses: "With the supermarket campaign, I think the best we can do is continue to ultimately try to focus on young people with the goal of galvanizing a generation to think differently about their food," and

3) Expanding SFA's reach into neighborhoods and communities of faith, shown by this response: "For me, a shift to supermarket chains represents an opportunity to get off campus and start talking to my neighbors, really engaging in neighborhood organizing," and the acknowledgement that one of SFA's weaknesses is that the organization is "not as accessible to students that may not be the "activisty" type, e.g. student faith groups."

As can be imagined based on these knowledge requests and the process of gathering them, the retreat itself reflected organizational values throughout. From the practice of surveying the membership, to the SC, AC and staff collaboratively deciding on the format, schedule of workshops and sessions that would be included, and who would attend, to the execution of each of the sessions, each step along the way embodied democratic, collective practices. As all SFA events do, the Retreat itself opened on a Thursday evening with a process of introductions, creating group *Acuerdos*, or Agreements (as opposed to rules or expectations) for the weekend, an articulation and sharing of goals for the weekend, a shared meal, and a presentation and welcome by the CIW's membership. The following morning, after sharing breakfast, the group of participants entered the meeting room. From my fieldnotes:

> *Retreat Center, LaBelle, FL*
> *9am: all participants walk into room for the beginning sessions of the day, and automatically begin moving to set up chairs. The room is mid-sized, and without direction, through non-verbal communication, the chairs are arranged in rows in a half-circle facing what has been made the front of the room. To the far left of the front room wall is a drawing of a large tree, about 6 feet tall and two or three feet wide, with an intricate root system displayed. There is an information table in the back, covered in buttons, stickers, fliers, post cards, t-shirts and hoodies emblazoned with the SFA logo, campaign materials for the multiple campaigns being run. There is some protest art on the walls, signs of painted tomato buckets with slogans painted on them in English and Spanish and large cardboard sunshines painted with words like "dignity" and "victory" in Spanish. Some banners from the organizations displayed on the walls as well. A TV and 6 foot table at the front, along with a flipchart. Map/graph with supermarkets and locations hung on front window wall, and the side wall is covered with the schedule of weekend/agenda, Familias and tasks listed, goals for the weekend, and Acuerdos. Translation throughout day.*

What I find most interesting about these fieldnotes is the way that the moment they document to me truly captures the participatory nature of the organization, along with the values that such participation necessarily teaches and embodies in this context.

The process of assigning *Familias* (families), for example, includes grouping participants intentionally based on their geographic location and proximity, number of years involved, demographic information, organizing experiences, and campaign targets. These groups are then assigned a similar number of tasks per familia throughout the weekend, including serving meals, cleaning up, washing dishes, preparing breakfast, and organizing 'ice-breakers,' which are short games used throughout the weekend to get participants more comfortable with each other and help energize the group after long hours of meetings. This is done for both practical and ideological reasons, evidencing the importance of how tasks which combine both elements can impart a particular brand of consciousness.

Essentially, although the dishes must be washed, the floor swept, and coffee and bagels set out each morning, these tasks can be organized and conducted in a fashion that builds community and friendships. Lizz told me about meeting Cristian at the Strategy Retreat, and she said,

> When I came down to the strategy retreat I was searching for a way to be more involved…then Cristian pulled me aside and said, "You're here alone, what's up," and he had this conversation with me. You know, when I came I was really intimidated, you know I felt like I was the only person that came along from Jacksonville, everyone else had a couple of other people they were on committees or alliances with. You know, I came alone and I felt like this little fish, and when Cristian pulled me aside and said, "You know you should really apply for the SC."

She told me that over time, she began to consider what Cristian said, and that for her, part of the decision to apply for a position on the SC was because she "Made good friends at the Strategy Retreat and missed everyone."

As evidenced by Lizz's story, the inclusion of Familias in the weekend is an important part of the experience and the pedagogical practices. It enables newer members to feel like they have an opportunity to spend time with those who have been involved for longer, opens up the possibility of sharing experiences and interests over dishwashing and sweeping, and helps participants to build friendships. Moreover, familias embody the creation of a democratic community where each person is responsible for caring for the needs of the rest of the group in a collaborative fashion. While it means that cleaning is a little less of a chore, what is more important is that this builds a particular feeling of community, which a number of members reflected on in their surveys.

One person wrote that SFA gatherings provide a "Safe friendly atmosphere," and a sense of "kinship among members," and another responded "SFA has a very family-like feel for me." Someone else, responding to a prompt which asked potential Retreat attendees what they envisioned contributing commented "you know how much I enjoy to cook for the people I love…[so] hopefully lots of buttery cornbread muffins." Cristian, an SC member for two years at the time of his interview, talked about this sense of community when he said to me, "I feel like SFA is one big amazing family."[58]

Practical and Ideological Pairings

The emphasis on pairing practical and ideological education is woven throughout the internal events that the SFA organizes, evidenced by the inclusion of skill-based workshops on things like writing press releases, doing campaign presentations, and

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[58] Cristian's sentiments were shared by others, and this set of findings has been grouped together for further examination later in this paper.

fundraising paired with discussions on topics like the idea of solidarity and what it means, and how the CIW and SFA's work connects to the work of other organizations struggling for food justice and food sovereignty nationally and internationally. In reflecting on her first SFA Encuentro, which she attended in 2009, Iliana said,

> It was obvious that they wanted us to connect struggles with other people and that the whole focus on connecting struggles…[was to show] how that makes us stronger, and how we're all really part of one movement and we need to support one another. Their [the CIW's] issue touches on a ton of issues that people can blow up and become more politicized through.

Lizz, talking about her experiences at the 2010 Strategy Retreat (her first SFA event), bounces off Iliana's reflection above, as she references a workshop on understanding the supermarket industry's control on our food supply. She said:

> When Sean gave his presentation, [the idea of] from field to fork, that's a huge sticking point for me. From field to fork there's such a disconnect, and the supermarkets are this small group of people, these men around a table and they're controlling so they have all the power. Its like we are so much bigger than them, there's more farmworkers than CEOs…[so] why does this small group of people control so much of my life…to watch supermarkets spend hundreds of dollars on these cardboard displays, its like why don't you just take a little bit of that money and pay a penny more per pound? I feel like they put so much energy and time into blinding us and manipulating us.

Earlier in the interview, Lizz also spoke to another part of the Retreat, where the group of participants spent time talking about solidarity and privilege and what those terms mean in the context of SFA's work. Participants were divided into small groups and instructed to think about and then discuss personal stories that connect them to their political work, and her she reflects on what she learned in that discussion:

> I just remember sitting with you guys and hearing Brian's story about his friend when he was little. And I think it's a really good exercise for us to share those stories and share those experiences because not only do we get to know each other better, but because I looked at Brian and I'm like, "You're a white guy of course you're really involved, but why? What made you want to do this?" And to know that we all come from these really diverse experiences and backgrounds…it just constantly opens up my eyes more and more to see the diversity here…its like we all have these blinders on, no matter what

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color we are or what age we are or where we come from, this is a society struggle, its not like white man, Hispanic, whatever… its all of us.

Going back to Iliana again, I asked her if there were any specific moments or people she remembered learning from. She said, "I remember being at the [2009] Encuentro…and I don't know everything, the whole way it was set up, the music and why they were playing, that itself being very significant, and then um, also things like the solidarity panel, I was like oh my god, that makes so much sense to have a solidarity panel."[59] Earlier in the interview she said, "I didn't feel like it was a pity party at all, and I feel like in some places I was impressed. I feel like I learned a lot about the difference between solidarity and charity and it happened because of the SFA."

The moments that Iliana and Lizz speak to in these quotes were learning moments for both of them. These moments represent the kind of learning about power that can happen when various types of practical and ideological teaching activities and discussions are planned. The workshop Lizz mentions, where Sean talked about the idea of "From Field to Fork" represents one member's attempt to meet the practical need of the organization to facilitate a discussion that helps the membership to collectively re-evaluate the organization's analysis of corporate power, specifically as it relates to the

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[59] The music she references here is Son Jarocho, a type of music typical to Veracruz, Mexico, which is used more and more frequently by social movements throughout Mexico because of its history of being an accessible way to involve the community in the creation of music while also containing ideological messages and political news. Similar to the corridos of the Mexican revolution, Son Jarocho songs often tell stories of events and transmit information quickly, and the music has been adopted by many Chicano youth in SFA over the past ten years. It has increasingly become a focal point for the sharing of culture and the inclusion and mix of Son Jarocho and hiphop that is often seen at SFA events is largely and increasingly responsible for the creation of an accessible, culuturally-relevant space for youth of color in the movement.

new campaign targets (supermarkets). At the same time, this discussion was ideological, in that it was explicitly contextualized within the organization's value-based framework of collective liberation.

The discussion acknowledged the shared basis for struggle between consumers and farmworker – that is, that corporate power dominates their lives in specific, significant ways – but also acknowledged the differentials in how that power is perceived and felt by those on the receiving end of it. This discussion left Lizz reflecting on some new ways in which she understood that power and how it is felt by workers and consumers at opposite ends of the spectrum. The weekend continued expanding upon ways to practically put the new knowledge into use, through other workshops such as how to start a local Fair Food group, how to have effective group meetings, and how to do educational outreach for the campaign, as was mentioned above.

When Iliana and Lizz both mention the different solidarity discussions they were a part of, they both indicate an understanding they gained about making connections with others despite difference, and how these connections are important in order to build community and build a stronger struggle for justice. The discussions they reference were principally ideological in nature; that is, the goal of these discussions is to facilitate the building of a collective analysis. This collective analysis-building process informs the practical side of people's work together, though. As these intimate stories are shared, like that which Lizz references, people become closer and better able to understand each

other, and this facilitates the building of trust in one another. A trusting, safe environment can lead to a willingness to more deeply explore one's own sense of privilege, and holds the power to create a transformative experience, as others have already mentioned in this study.

Interrupting Power

One survey respondent, buttressing the importance of the building of friendships, wrote, "I think that at the end of the day, the friendships within the network are very powerful and that we need to maintain that personal connection because it translates into connection to the movement. We lose sight of those friendships sometimes and it's a sad way to organize." This speaks to the importance of creating community among those working together on these campaigns, because it is in these supportive spaces that people become better able to push and challenge themselves and each other to work beyond oppressive socialization. Touching on this idea, another person who responded to the survey wrote:

> I think something that's really drawn me to SFA is the consistent analysis on race, gender, class, and sexuality constructs and identities. I feel like this analysis really shapes a lot of the ways in which SFA organizes, both internally and externally. I think having that foundation inherently contributes to relationships within the network by automatically knowing that SFA is a safe space and that relationships will be more meaningful and will also that folks will be held accountable because of that.

When reflecting on my experiences with the SFA, and reviewing my fieldnotes for moments that indicate this, I was drawn to a specific set of practices and was reminded of

a discussion that I witnessed, where these ideals were enacted within a group of SFA members.

During the 2011 Face-to-Face Meeting, the group had a discussion on the lack of leaders of color represented on the 2011 Steering Committee. Members challenged themselves, and each other, during this discussion to respond to the situation with a proactive sentiment, as opposed to one of guilt. During this discussion, and during countless others that I can recall witnessing and being a part of, people began to facilitate the conversation by "taking stack," meaning to take note of the series of people in line to speak, so as to hear all voices. At some moments, those who had spoken frequently acknowledged their high level of participation and said they'd be "stepping back" to allow space for others to speak. One participant in the discussion recommended that the facilitator implement a "go-around," in order to hear from everyone in the room one at a time, which the facilitator did. Others helped to guide the discussion so that it be action-oriented and forward-focused, in order to not get caught up and have an unproductive meeting.

These kinds of tactics and practices are frequently implemented in many activist communities that I've been a part of, but what sets apart SFA's style of doing it is the utmost respect and personal sense of accountability and responsibility that I've seen other SFA members approach such discussions with. One member wrote in their survey "I hope to be challenged to continue reflecting on a personal level, and ultimately to

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contribute to the movement going forward." Another newer member noticed the amount of respect she was given in SFA, despite her newness to the group, writing "I would like to highlight the atmosphere of equality I breath within SFA as unique. In no other group I have worked with…have [I] been treated with so much respect even when being a fresh fish." This high level of respect that we have for one another seems to go a long way in terms of creating opportunities for leadership development as well, as this respect leads to an ability to be deeply influenced by conversations that people have with one another.

In processing the data I collected from the interviews, and pairing that with field reflections and my own experiences, I came to the conclusion that it is during these one-on-one conversations that some of the biggest opportunities for leadership development (which consequently enables opportunities to deepen one's critical analysis) come from these interpersonal exchanges. This was the case for Raquel, Cristian, Sean, Eric, and myself, and I can think of other times when I have seen it happen for others in SFA who were not included in this study. In these particular one-on-ones which I refer to here, someone is critically 'pushing' someone else to challenge themselves to take on a new task, to 'step up' to a new kind of opportunity, or to do something they might not have considered otherwise. It seems that these sorts of conversations are the stuff that long-term memories are made of. They stay with people in detailed measure for some time, and my data and experiences tend to suggest that they are crucially formative moments for some.

Cristian is currently a member of the SC, and he talked about how he came to apply for the position. He said, "At the Encuentro [SFA's annual student conference], Angelica, Patrick, and Joe were telling me to apply. They were like, "You would really like it, you would get in, we really want you here, you're a really badass guy," and so when he returned to Austin, he applied and was later accepted. Speaking about his experience since becoming an SC member, he said,

> Being an SC has really…its tons more work, and its just so much of a learning experience, and its made me the person more that I wanna be…like, sacrificing my time for something that doesn't have a concrete output value that I can hold or whatever…being an SC takes the time and a lot of energy, but it's a learning experience…and I'm loving it.

In this conversation, Cristian also mentioned how "amazing" everyone else on the SC is, and how he feels like they are all "one big amazing family." It is evident that this particular leadership structure is effective in not only developing people's skills, but also in deepening their sense of respect for one another, and their consciousness and commitment to the organization. Furthermore, this structure also functions to provide community within which to continue to grow, which, as Urrieta noted earlier, also seems to be a necessary requirement for the development of a politicized, critical consciousness.

Raquel's memory of a conversation she had with Sean (a story which Sean also recounted for me) also seems fitting here, as it includes a similar story, and contained in it an important set of lessons for her. She recounted for me a meeting she had with Sean before he left to work in Immokalee in 2004:

> I remember him [Sean] saying we can come up with all these badass ideas, all these different things, but at the end of the day, its gonna be yall that has to hold this down, its yall that are gonna follow through with it, I'm not gonna be here. So again he drove it

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home, like you are just as important, what you are doing is just as important, this organizing is important, and just being very thoughtful of like what you're doing, and you can deliver what you say you're going to deliver…[just] be wary of grandiose things that may not come to fruition

This lesson proved particularly powerful for Raquel, as she took on the majority of the work to continue supporting the campaign once Sean left, organizing a big action for the first week of school the following fall. In her reflections on this conversation (which happened after the tape recorder went off), she told me that she honestly wasn't sure what might have happened to base of support for the CIW that had been built in Austin had she not stepped up to take this on. Consequently, she reflected, she wasn't sure how much longer the campaign might have taken to win, as it seemed to her that part of the victory was the willingness of people in Austin to "turn up the heat," and really "get rowdy" by ratcheting up the pressure on the corporation via their organizing tactics.

Community & Transformation

(include conclusion/concluding thoughts in title)

The sense of mentorship and community that is fostered by the collection of practices detailed here is an invaluable part of the process that leads youth activists in SFA to begin walking the path towards a personally-reflexive way of living and being in the world. Marley commented on this during her interview, when she told me that for her, SFA has "ended up being the most important part of my life." For her, and for many others, SFA work has been personally transformative, evidenced by her assessment that this work has "taught me lessons on so many different scales, taught me lessons about my relationship with myself, my self understanding as a political being, even just as a human being, as a person. It has shaped this balance of valuing my voice and my presence and my work." When I asked Marley to talk about the dynamics of the local group she first worked with to do CIW solidarity work, she attributed much of her growth to that group, saying,

> I can never over-estimate the maount of influence that having older folks mentoring had, that influence of having such an incredible group of students here who had been doing this work who were just so incredibly welcoming and inclusive, passed on so much knowledge and understanding and had these coffee dates with me and we had these big dinners and there was such a sense of community among the kids working on this, that was a huge influence I'm sure.

Upon analyzation of what this means and what this says about the SFA network, I'm brought once again to the notion of embodiment. The people that make up this

organization contribute greatly to it, not just in terms of the practical work they put in, but also in terms of the kind of relationships they foster, and the way in which their process of building those relationships reflects the political values they espouse.

Iliana noted this about one of the first women she met while beginning to engage in CIW solidarity work. She said:

> Meeting other people, like Ashley, played a huge role, and a lot of that had to do with her demeanor and how sweet she is and just making me feel really comfortable, and I think she was really intellectual…Ashley was just super warm and totally the personality I needed to meet to come back…I listened to her facilitate a meeting, and she just comes off as really genuine and really passionate and really gentle…I ended up getting to know her more and she ended up inviting me to a couple things, and she was just really good about reaching out, and then the more I got to know her, the more I was like oh…Its vey obvious that her actions speak to her ideals, her beliefs about community and justice in the way she treats people.

And this trend is seen over and over, as referenced throughout this paper: from interviews with others, to multiple survey responses, to community-building practices like facilitating respectful dialogues about difficult topics and working towards an inclusive atmosphere through the use of Familias during events like the Encuentro. One survey read, "SFA portrays more of a community feeling of loving one another that is much deeper than just working together on campaigns."

I've been organizing for the past seven years, and as I reflect on what these things mean in some broader sense, I have come to recognize that for me, as a member of SFA who has experienced a deep sense of personal transformation because of this work, it is this "community feeling of loving one another" that sets SFA apart from any other

network of organizers that I've come into contact with. Speaking from my own experience, it has been this sense of trust and the long-term friendships that had grown out of it that have created a situation where I have felt safe enough to challenge myself, succeed and make mistakes, and have humility about all of it. I can affirm that for myself, as well as for others who I worked with to write this study, the kind of social transformation that we seek will ultimately, and necessarily, transform each of us personally as well.

When interviewing Marley, I asked her what lessons she takes away from her work with the SFA, she said,

> It has ended up effecting so many of my personal relationships, but there's something about the self-understanding that is radiated out, that ends up affecting them in a certain way. Its definitely facilitated a lot of great relationships, [and] definitely taught me more philosophically about good relationships, about respect, and about organizing, humanity, and human beings…about being close to people and how crucial that is to changing world dynamics.

She then said something that I've carried with me since. She told me about a class she was taking about the relationship of the Catholic Church to the poor, and how in the class she learned about the related ideas of biblical justice and right relationships, and related this to the learning she'd done in SFA, saying

> I remember him defining biblical justice as having right relationship…[meaning] respecting the equal deservedness of each person, and the fact that everybody absolutely deserves, specifically, my respect and my benefit of the doubt and my compassion and my energy. So if you really live that on your own scale, that is really building a just world, [through] this idea of relating justice to interpersonal relationships, and starting there, and starting before that with a good relationship with yourself. And that stuck with me a lot…and that articulated something that I learned thru movements like SFA.

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Alongside these reflections from Marley are the acknowledgements of a number of other interview participants, who said similar things. When I asked Cristian why he chooses to do this work, he told me,

> Its liberating for myself and the people around me, because every day we're pressured to do one thing or another so that someone else can profit, like buy this or whatever. And when you're doing an action, no company or anything is getting profit off it. Its just so much of a learning experience and its made me more the person that I want to be, like sacrificing my time for something that doesn't have a concrete output value I can hold or whatever. But it's a learning experience and I'm loving it.

Iliana also had some interesting insights about SFA, and the potential for new and different kinds of relationships to be formed within the network. Throughout the interview, she charted her personal process of growth over the years through her work with her local SFA chapter, Lawrence Fair Food, and her interactions with the network at large. She told me that initially, when she first came to Immokalee for an Encuentro, she felt a little intimidated, because it seemed to her that everyone was "so strong, intense, and beautiful." When I asked her what this meant to her, she explained,

> People seem really confident in their abilities and in the movement in general, they seem like other stuff that seems to get in the way, like other insecurities that affect other more mainstream folks doesn't seem to plague SFA so much, because its just like not important because there's work to do. Also everyone is very different and everyone has a lot of different strengths. Its very evident that everyone has something to contribute and I think the SFA is really big on that, so maybe that's what I mean when I say that everyone is really beautiful because its clear that everyone is there for a reason and they all have something to give.

Later, she talked about the relationship between this group of beautiful people and her own sense of personal growth, saying,

> Having been in the MW, I felt like I was always looking for something, a group of people to belong to, to make sense with, to share my ideals and all of that…I felt like especially in school I was always the lone ranger trying to do things, but I couldn't do anything on my own there was no people power there. Then on top of that there was no way for me to grow as a person, because I wasn't being challenged I wans't learning skills…I feel like SFA is really good about pushing people to step up and to be heard. So it was good I don't know…First it was making sure I was at every meeting so people could see I was reliable, and then after while people would be like "Oh hey do you wanna help me

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bottom-line this?" And I'd be like, "Yeah," and they'd be like "Oh you're really reliable." So it was really important for me to feel like I had a place in a group.

Towards the end of the interview, when we began talking about the lessons she takes away from this work, she first said that the biggest lesson was "the difference between solidarity and charity," but then began to talk more at length about the "sense of community and accountability within SFA." When I asked her to explain a little more about what she learned from this and why it was important to her, she told me,

> I mean all around I think I've just tried to become a better person. In the ways that I live my life, and maybe being more socially conscious about consumption and stuff like that, you know? But also the ways I interact with people, maybe I've been more conscious about it, like striving to attain and maintain a community I guess. So I think I was just maybe more conscious of my relationships with people, I was more interested in feeding those relationships than in other groups or other things I've been involved with where its like go to the meeting and leave and with [SFA] I wanted to invest in people more. And I think I've tried to do that outside of organizing too, like I'll try to be more people oriented, more community oriented… Ultimately that's what I want, you want to live in a world like that, you know?

Following what Iliana ended with here, ultimately we know that something in the processes laid out and engaged by SFA is working, on a deeply personal and socially transformative level. Young people who engage in SFA, as illustrated through this series of interviews and observations, are reflecting a command of some specific critical capacities.

Through this work, young organizers are developing a sense of their own identity, and a commitment to standing firm within this identity and using it as a starting place from which to begin working for justice for others who are quite different from themselves. The nature of the work they've undertaken, and the implicit commitment to working for the liberation of others, has made available a framework from within which they are able to see and begin to understand the powerful structures which shape their

subjective and material conditions. Through the multiple processes and structures that the young organization has internally created, and the community that has grown out of this, SFA members have made available an opportunity for those involved to develop a sense of critical consciousness that is directly related to, and made more fertile by, the shared practices of organizing together.

If a rough framework for critical consciousness includes the five elements of *love, identity, power, process,* and *community*, and those of us seeking to create change can accept that such change will necessarily transform each individual, then we must, as educators and organizers, seek out processes to help develop these critical faculties. Recapturing for just a moment some of the processes that the youth within the SFA network have developed, what is most profound to note is that nearly all of these practices have been internally-generated. SFA's structures, pedagogical tools, community-building practices, have all been developed and implemented by young participants, and were created out of a specific need and at a specific moment within the movement's history. The two leadership boards which serve the organization, the pedagogical practices engaged within meetings and educational workshops, the commitment to challenging privilege through particular norms of dialogic interactions, and the valuation of creating community that imbues all of these are all examples of such. Important to also note, however, is the role of the CIW in all of this. Based upon the period of deep reflection this study has offered me, it is also clear that ultimately, it is the CIW that facilitates so much of the capability and success of the SFA network.

As an organization, the SFA has been successful at not only build a sense of critical consciousness among organizers (the primary focus of this paper), but to also

create strategies to win powerful victories against some of the largest multi-national corporations in the world (the primary focus of the struggle). While it is tempting to want to make broader assertions about what specifically this organization has to offer others doing similar work, it is equally important to assert that in doing change-work, it is at the very least challenging, if not impractical, to be prescriptive. What seems most useful to point out here is the concrete take-away value that other organizations have already begun to implement. In 2007, another student and youth led organization, the Student Environmental Action Coalition, switched their selection methods for their leadership body, and adopted the SFA's leadership mechanism. That year, the group began implementing the SFA's process for selecting national leaders. In the same year, the Civilian-Soldier Alliance was formed, using a model and a political platform similar to that of the Student/Farmworker Alliance, acknowledging the power of allying across social locations to create change. Today, in 2011, Workers Defense Project, an immigrant worker's rights organization based in Texas is in the midst of forming a student alliance, which is also based on the model of the CIW and the SFA's relationship.

Beyond these specific examples of allyship and organizational that are being adopted by various other groups and networks, there is also the ways in which this work will "connect to their [SFA member's] lives for the rest of their lives," as Erica, a good friend and SFA member pointed out during a conversation with me. Current and past SFA members, she pointed out, are building movements and organizations across the US right now. They are putting the skills and analysis they've built within the movement to work to serve broader movement-building purposes right now, and in these local and national struggles, they carry with them and share the experiences they've gained while participating in the SFA community. Examples include members who are doing union

organizing, working on resisting the border wall and immigrant detention, allying themselves with low-wage workers in worker's centers and worker's struggles across the country, challenging their universities and cities to implement living wage protections for their communities, and so much more.

It seems apt, at this point, to bring this story full-circle, and emphasize again the role that the CIW plays in all of this. While certain structures and practices can be shared and offered for adaptation in other communities, the one thing that cannot be prescriptively shared for redesign is the specific relationship, and consequently, the particular kinds of learning, that are facilitated by the relationship of the SFA network to the CIW and its membership. It is the simple truth of this story that there are no "voiceless" for which a benevolent being needs to step in to represent. Instead, what makes this story so compelling, and what has enabled its transformative power to truly take root in so many minds and communities, is that we simply need to listen. There is a saying amongst some US-based organizers which states that *"Those who are most directly affected by an issue are the ones best placed to lead the struggle against it."* While it is true that this statement often seems to stay within the discursive realm, it is at least the case that for this community of workers and allies, these words have found a place to come alive through a dynamic set of practices and a transformative set of relationships. This struggle, based principally upon the idea that *"Consciousness + Commitment = Change,"* shows if nothing else, a concrete example of the power of alliance across difference, and offers a vibrant glimpse of a world that many of us have only begun to envision.

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