The Agricultural Justice Project (AJP), in which CATA is a founding member, is now entering an exciting stage of implementation and growth after eight years of steady development. AJP began in 1999 when CATA's members identified the need for workers' rights to be protected within organic and sustainable agriculture, in addition to the environmentally-friendly practices more often associated with that movement. CATA's call for social justice in organic agriculture grew into a project with our partners, RAFI (Rural Advancement Foundation International), Peacework Organic Farm, and FOG (Florida Organic Growers), to develop standards for fair prices for farmers and fair working conditions for farmworkers.

For the past two seasons AJP has been conducting a successful pilot on four organic farms and two retail co-ops in Minnesota and Wisconsin. The 2007 audit of the farms and stores took place in May, and the AJP team members were accompanied on some of the audits by local stakeholders, including an inspector from MOSA (the Upper Midwest organic certifier) and staff from Centro Campesino, a local farmworker organization based in Owatonna, Minnesota.

The farms have all made progress from last year; all farms now have in place progressive employee policies including recognizing their workers' right to freedom of association. Workers

*Article continues on page 11*
Editorial

Nelson Carrasquillo

The Comprehensive Immigration Reform Bill failed to pass through Congress last month due to an insufficient number of votes needed for approval. Practically speaking, it will not be until after January 2009 that its' passage will be reconsidered. For the immigrant community this was a great disappointment. Although the bill was punitive in nature and did not recognize the positive contribution of immigrants, it would have at least facilitated their legal presence in the USA.

Postponing the vote presents the opportunity to work towards an immigration reform that is based on the recognition of the contribution of the immigrant community. In the interim, we must work towards educating the community and promoting a national debate that results in a just and humane immigration reform.

Although civil society in the United States recognizes the need to address the situation of more than 12 million undocumented workers living in this country, there lacks the necessary consensus for a resolution due to disparate and diverse interests within civil society. There is a lack of clarity on how to address the situation of the immigrant community from a human rights perspective. This lack of determination reflects the uncertainty that faces the nation when needing to decide on what course of action it is going to undertake.

The presence of more than 12 million undocumented workers is the outcome of global policies that results in their displacement from their home communities. They come to the USA because of economic necessity and the abundance of jobs that they are willing to do. But they are treated as criminals, fomenting a double standard that encourages their presence while criminalizing it. In essence, the country’s policies are opportunistic, but the national debate frames the issue as if the immigrant community is undermining the quality of life.

The matters of law enforcement and the legalization process provisions, over which Congress could not decide, expose the limited framework within which the immigration reform is contemplated. Neither approach recognizes the contribution of the immigrant community or provides for the well being of the country. The current debate reflects how limited our expectations are for the recognition of the immigrant community’s basic human rights.

The indecisiveness comes out of fear but also in the deliberate and intentional effort of denying workers the opportunity to earn a living wage. It promotes the downward trend of the quality of life for all workers. The postponement of the legislation is an opportunity to stop and change the framework of the national debate.

The immigrant community should be responsible for organizing and mobilizing its people. Allies of the immigrant community should organize and educate their own communities to influence the national debate. This can be achieved by changing the focus from one that is punitive to one that recognizes the contribution and gives value to protection from abuses at the community and work place.
CATA Members Continue to Struggle for a Just Immigration Reform

Jessica Culley

We had originally planned to include in our summer newsletter an article on the immigration proposal being considered by the Senate. Unfortunately, in the intervening days, the legislation, known as the "Grand Compromise" was killed in the Senate, failing to achieve the appropriate 60 votes necessary to close debate and move towards a full vote.

The "Grand Compromise" was not the bill that we had championed, the one that we had hoped and labored for. It fell far short of recognizing the important economic and societal contributions of the immigrant community, and even less the human rights of all peoples for survival and for a better life. It was a bill tenuously achieved through negotiations between two extremes, a compromise representing the polarity and fundamental lack of clarity our nation has had tackling the issue of immigration. Very few people, in both the Senate and the general population, were completely comfortable with the bill. For immigration advocates, it provided a highly punitive process for legalization, a process that could leave millions of people to suffer in a continued state of undocumented status. It also made legalization dependent on the prerequisite of the creation of a highly militarized zone along the U.S. – Mexico border with more fencing, the use of unmanned surveillance vehicles, digital tracking of legal admittance into the country etc. Despite all the militarization and the levying of huge fines in order to begin the legalization process, conservative opponents dubbed the bill "amnesty".

Despite our discomfort with the bill, CATA ultimately supported its passage. We joined forces with other farmworker organizations from around the country in Washington on June 21st. Our goal was to voice our support and urge passage of the bill, specially highlighting the provision of the bill aimed towards legalizing farmworkers - AgJOBS. Why did we agree to this? Our membership feels a sense of urgent desperation. It became clear through discussion and analysis with membership that although it would be difficult and a sacrifice, people would come up with the money to pay the high fines, wait the long waits, do whatever was necessary to achieve some kind of legal status. Political analysts pointed to the current moment as being the best time in the foreseeable future for passing a bill. Although it might seem to be contrary, the moment presented the best option for bi-partisan cooperation for passage of comprehensive immigration reform.

Therefore, a delegation of CATA board members, committee members, and organizers went to Washington. We visited legislators to share our stories and speak our positions. Between the different organizations present, which included the United Farm Workers, The Farmworker Association of Florida, Farm Labor Organizing Committee, Pinos y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN), CATAN, and every other major farmworker organization in the United States, more than 50 farmworkers spread out across Capital Hill that day, visiting legislators, and hoping to put a face to the debate that has been raging.

But ultimately, on June 27th, the bill died on the Senate floor.

Now we find ourselves in the position of returning to the point of origin, motivating membership participation, lifting up their voices, putting their stories and perspectives into the debate on how to achieve a just immigration reform. We could feel defeated, but instead we feel empowered and energized to seek something better, a proposal that truly reflects the value and importance of the immigrant community, a proposal that celebrates the diversity, the contributions, the value of immigrants in our society. Ultimately, we seek a proposal that recognizes the human rights of all people. We have a chance to make things right.
On May 1, 2007, CATA organized two successful local marches in Bridgeton, NJ and in Kennett Square, PA. Following each march, different speakers addressed the workers who gathered to make their presence and voices felt. In Bridgeton, Mariza Ibarra emceed the rally, and made a particularly strong speech, exhorting her fellow immigrants to recognize and respond to the oppression they face, overcoming their fears. We have included her speech in this edition of the SIEMBRA, because it encapsulates the challenges we face in organizing the immigrant community.

Mariza Ibarra giving her presentation on May 1, 2007.

On a day like today in which we come together with a common goal of demanding the rights that all human beings deserve, it is impossible not to remember a great man who was a great leader. Martin Luther King Jr. led a massive movement of non-violent struggle to sensitize the consciousness of the oppressed to not collaborate with the oppressor.

How did he achieve making the people aware? By planting in them the seeds of dignity and self-worth – these were the valiant and important thoughts that changed the attitudes of millions, achieving for them liberation from a cruel racial segregation in the United States.

Some of the words of Martin Luther King Jr.:

“He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it.”

“When oppressed people willingly accept their oppression, they only serve to give their oppressors convenient justification for their acts. Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever; the yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself. Freedom is never given voluntarily by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. To accept passively an unjust system is to cooperate with that system.”

History is repeating itself and we cannot remain passive. Take these beautiful thoughts with you in your heart and reflect on how they change our attitude, ...so that we realize when we are mistreated and when we are not respected. In consequence, we will achieve that we are all treated with respect and dignity in this great country to which we are giving our best. We will remember that when this country declared its' independence, these were some of its' basic beliefs, “That all men are created equal and have certain inalienable rights: life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” That is why we have come to this country...seeking this same thing.
Pictures from the May 1st, 2007 marches in Kennett Square, PA, and Bridgeton, NJ.

You can find more pictures on our website at: www.catafarmworkers.org.
Mushroom Workers’ Voices Heard at Workers’ Memorial Day

Serafina Youngdahl-Lombardi

This year, CATA and the Kaolin Workers Union (KWU) had several representatives at PhilaPOSH’s Workers’ Memorial Day, an event which was held at the Sheet Metal Workers Hall in Philadelphia to a crowd of about 300 on April 27, 2007. On this day, names are read, along with place of work, manner of death, and roses are tossed into a casket. Worker’s Memorial Day makes real the deaths of workers in the tri-state area (Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware) every year, and the ongoing health and safety risks that workers face every day on the job. This year we remembered 148 people who were killed on the job, but the overall number of workers reported killed on the job in 2006 was 5,702.

This year, Workers Memorial Day was especially important for farmworkers. Representatives from the Kaolin Workers Union were asked to speak about their ongoing health and safety battle with the company concerning chemical usage, training and access to personal protective equipment, and access to information concerning three chemicals that Kaolin Mushroom Farms classified as “trade secrets.” Efren Diego, President of KWU said “We the members of the Kaolin Workers Union have a problem that many of you face as well, the fight for safe and healthy work place. . .We were insulted that the company thought that in this day and age it is acceptable to deny workers information about the chemicals we use. We were also scared, as one member put it, ‘The company is more concerned with losing a bed of mushrooms, than one of us losing our lives.’ We were offended but not surprised when supervisors and then the offices of the company did not take the effects we suffered from the chemical seriously.”

Various members of the health and safety and union community have followed up with KWU, showing interest and concern about mushroom worker’s health and safety issues. We felt we demonstrated to the crowd that immigrant workers are engaging in and part of the same struggle for health and safety for ALL. Workers Memorial Day helped us all reflect on the terrible consequences of unsafe work places, and revealed the personal stories behind the statistics that motivate us to continue to, as Mother Jones put it, “pray for the dead and fight like hell for the living.”
as the immigrants’ rights movement has grown over the past year and a half, one of the words we have been hearing is “sanctuary.” Between Sanctuary ordinances, and the New Sanctuary Movement, there are many ways that immigrants and their supporters are using this broad concept to work for the rights of immigrants in the United States.

To begin, what is “sanctuary,” and what does it have to do with immigrant rights? Webster’s Dictionary defines sanctuary as, “a sacred or holy place, a church or other sacred place where fugitives were formerly entitled to immunity from arrest, any place of refuge; asylum.” The concept of sanctuary originated in Medieval Times, when those persons accused of crime could take refuge in a church for a period of time in order to make a decision on whether to turn himself in and stand trial, or declare his guilt and be exiled from the kingdom. During the 1980’s the concept was modernized when churches (and some universities and cities) offered asylum to Central American war refugees who were not eligible for legal admittance to the U.S. (because of U.S. support for the ruling governments in their home countries). Now in 2007, what is the practical meaning of sanctuary? What would a place that offers sanctuary to the undocumented immigrant community look like?

In January 2007, a series of raids terrorized the immigrant community in Bridgeton, a town in southern New Jersey that is more than 25% Latino. Although Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) teams stated that they were seeking out people with criminal records or standing deportation orders, there were many others caught up in the raids as ICE went house to house, late at night, knocking on doors and rounding up people. Following this series of raids, local CATA membership made working toward Bridgeton being a sanctuary city one of their main goals. In order to work towards creating a geographic sanctuary, we began to build relationships with local churches, Hispanic and non-Hispanic, as well as local business owners and community leaders. We have a goal of influencing the Bridgeton City Council to pass a sanctuary ordinance, declaring the city to be a safe haven for the immigrant community. These ordinances, executive orders, and resolutions have been passed in many cities and towns all across the country (even while other towns are passing anti-immigrant ordinances). Most of them state that city officials, including police, will not ask about immigration status in the course of normal city business and police investigations in order to create a stronger dynamic of trust between local government and the undocumented community. Others go so far as to establish that no city funds will be used in
assisting ICE raids. For CATA, the campaign also created the opportunity to work in coalition with area churches, businesses, organizations and individuals. This process provides the grounds to build relationships and increase communication between different sectors, which is essential in such a deeply divided community.

In many of our discussions with membership, especially over the past few months, it has become apparent that being undocumented exacts a heavy toll on many in the immigrant community. Each day is lived with uncertainty. Every action taken, every decision made must be done with consideration of the risks involved, the costs of being deported and the consequences of that possibility.

In light of this reality, achieving "sanctuary" implies something more than a geographical space. There must also be an element of emotional security, one that allows people the freedom to speak against the injustices that they suffer in their homes, in their workplaces, and in their communities.

Mariza Ibarra referred to the lack of emotional sanctuary that the community feels in a presentation she gave at the United Nations last December. She said, "They do not hurt him with a whip, but with things that remain unseen...They hurt him when he goes to work driving, anguished by not having in order the paperwork for the vehicle. He lives terrified that they will enter his room and remove him..." When people live in a place of such uncertainty, daily survival is paramount, and makes it difficult to see oneself as able to struggle for a larger justice. Somehow, allowing people to feel safe emotionally and mentally is critical to enabling people to struggle against injustices, and creating a geographical sanctuary may help to create that sense of emotional security.

As CATA, we struggle to raise the consciousness of our membership and the larger immigrant community. We challenge them to see how their own silence about injustice can enable it to continue. However, in an environment with so many external pressures placed on the community, with so many possibilities to fear, it is an uphill battle. Perhaps achieving sanctuary is a first step.

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So Long! Farewell!

CATA would like to extend a heartfelt adios to Vanessa Cardinale. Vanessa worked for the Farmworker Health and Safety Institute in 2005, and then crossed over to work as a community organizer with CATA. Beginning this fall, she will be attending Union Theological Seminary. We owe her many thanks for all her hard work during her two years with us, and we wish her the best in the future.
on all the farms will have the opportunity to review the farm policies and to negotiate for changes.

The project has now “gone public”. Together with our AJP partners and the Local Fair Trade Network in Minneapolis we held a public launch in late July. A series of events took place at participating retail stores and in area restaurants that have helped to set the stage for expansion of the program in 2008. CATA and AJP are already being approached by interested farmers, workers, and stores in other regions of the country, as well as Canada.

For those wanting to learn more, an AJP website has been developed: www.agriculturaljusticeproject.org

CATA helps to increase Farmworker Participation in Domestic Fair Trade

On April 28-30, 2007, close to forty representatives from the farmworker community attended the first Farmworker Conference on Fair Trade in Owatonna, Minnesota. The primary farmworker groups participating were CATA, Centro Campesino, and the Farmworker Association of Florida. CATA’s labor standards were reviewed and supported by conference participants.

The main points of consensus of the conference were:

♦ Agricultural workers and their representative organizations need to have equal representation, voices and participation in the elaboration of the Domestic Fair Trade label – for example: the development of the standards, governance, the implementation of standards and monitoring of participating farms, among other things.

♦ Fair wages are an indispensable requirement in the certification of Domestic Fair Trade.

♦ The right to organize without retaliation must be guaranteed to all workers.

Conference participants also engaged in a deep discussion about pesticide exposure being one of the most serious dangers confronted by agricultural workers and consumers alike. It was agreed that “organic production combined with a just relationship between agricultural workers and farmers represents the most positive path to a just food system.”

For more information, please check out the AJP website or contact Richard Mandelbaum at richardmandelbaum@hotmail.com.

Participants in the first Farmworker Conference on Fair Trade in Owatonna, Minnesota.
Bread and Roses Celebrates 30 Years!

30 for 30 Tribute to Change: Building Paths to Social Justice

The Tribute to Change is an annual Bread & Roses event that brings together a community unlike any other in the Philadelphia area.

In recognition of Bread and Roses 30th anniversary, this year's Tribute to Change will honor thirty individuals who have broken new ground in building paths to social justice. A call for nominations was put out earlier this year; over 120 nominations were received and reviewed by a committee that made the final selections. CATA's Executive Director, Nelson Carrasquillo, will be among the honorees.

The 30 for 30 Tribute to Change will be a cocktail reception on Thursday October 11, 2007 from 5:30-8:00 pm at the University of the Arts Hamilton Hall.

For more information or tickets, please contact Bread and Roses at 215-731-1107 or at www.breadrosesfund.org.