The fight for immigration reform has been an important piece of CATA’s work and is a touchstone for our community organizing work, specifically in the past several years. The issue touches nearly all of our membership. If they themselves are not undocumented, they have family members, friends, or co-workers who are. Many have children here and have established their families and homes in the region.

Almost every member of CATA characterizes their decision to come to the United States, their struggle to create a better life, and their decision to be involved in organizing for immigration reform as a struggle they engage in for their families. Whether they are working to provide an education for their children or younger siblings, or care for aging parents, they rarely perceive the efforts as something for themselves, but one to create an alternate future for their loved ones.

The fight for immigration reform has been a roller coaster ride. After the mobilization of millions in 2006 against the Sensenbrenner bill, there were high hopes for something good to happen in 2006-2007 only to be let down by legislative postponement and inaction. With the election of President Obama in 2008, once again hopes were high with the promise for change that still remains to be seen.

Things have not necessarily played out as many had hoped. Immigration enforcement in the absence of a comprehensive federal policy has continued and new collaborations between local police and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) have emerged around the county, including in Philadelphia.

Article continues on page 4
A Letter from Nelson’s Desk…

Dear Friends and Allies of CATA,

By the year 2020 we strive to enable our membership to be a proactive force and play a significant role within their community and workplace. This strategy is grounded in the idea that the way we engage in the present struggle will determine and ensure the way to a brighter future.

This past year CATA celebrated our 30th Anniversary. 30 years of struggle in which we have strived to provide a space where farmworkers and migrants could learn to be their own spokesperson and actively engage in justice issues. We recognize that there are barriers which prevent our efforts from being fully realized, yet we still take up the challenge of contributing to and achieving the aspiration of justice for all.

The isolation from American society that migrants face has been our main barrier to promoting immigrant and workers’ rights. There is a need for awareness among the migrant worker community and our allies and friends to understand that in order to make our society better, there must be a conscious effort to be in solidarity with each other. We want all of us to stand side by side together in this effort. This will be the benchmark of our work.

By the year 2020 we will strive to enable our membership to play a significant role within their community and workplace. We expect that in the year 2010 a Comprehensive Immigration Reform will be passed and that many of those who currently are in the shadows due to our broken immigration system will become active participants in all aspects of civil society.

In order to be successful, our friends and allies must be engaged and involved every step of the way. We seek your involvement and participation. We want to promote awareness of the need to bring down the barriers of discrimination and racism that prevent us from moving forward.

Towards this end, our English Siembra and our website will become our conduits so that necessary information is available for your use so that the ally community can engage with us in achieving our goals.

We are asking for you all to continue to be friends and supporters of CATA; to continue to spread awareness and promote the participation of other allies of the immigrant community.

We also ask you to help us build our financial capability so that we are able to do what needs to be done in order to accomplish our goals and continue this struggle for justice.

Please donate today through our website at cata-farmworkers.org.

Thank you.
Nelson Carrasquillo

Join us on Facebook to keep up with what’s going on with CATA! Search for CATA - The Farmworkers’ Support Committee.
On December 2, 2009, the Workers’ Committee of LaMonica Foods held a press conference at CATA’s Bridgeton office about being unjustly fired from LaMonica Fine Foods, a clam processing plant in Millville, New Jersey.

During the press conference, workers reported that they were paid below the Federal minimum wage. The workers also reported that they were working under very poor health and safety conditions, stating that they were told to scoop up any clam meat that had fallen to the ground and place it back on the tables and machines.

On November 12th, a group of 32 workers held a work stoppage to protest their low wages and the poor working conditions. They proposed a 20 cent raise to management, however, instead of discussing a fair wage, they were fired and told to leave immediately.

With the help of CATA, these workers have filed an unfair labor practices complaint with the National Labor Relations Board and have also called for an investigation by the U.S. Department of Labor.

About half of the workers have returned to work at LaMonica due to the poor economy and lack of other job opportunities. Because they had been fired for complaints about workplace conditions, they had the legal right to go back to work and many have done so.

Currently, the workers continue to meet and strategize on their next steps in the process. Although the situation is frustrating, they persevere in supporting one another and remain committed to fighting for their rights.

Did you know?

- According to a 2005 survey, 53% of farmworkers are undocumented 25% are United States citizens, and 21% are legal permanent residents. There are two to three million farmworkers in the United States.
- Less than one percent of all farmworkers use general assistance welfare, only two percent use social security, and fewer than 15% are Medicaid recipients.
- A 2007 report from the White House Council of Economic Advisers concluded that immigration as a whole increases the U.S. Gross Domestic Product by roughly $37 billion each year.
- Immigration to the United States has increased notably since the 1994 signing of NAFTA, a free trade agreement that has driven over two million Mexican farmers out of business.
Kaolin Workers Union Update

The time has come again for the Kaolin Workers Union (KWU) to renegotiate their contract, which expired on July 31st of last year. Negotiations are under way, but unfortunately they are not moving very quickly, seeing as it has been almost six months without a signed contract.

For this contract period, the workers are pushing for four main points: wage increases each year, paid holidays rather than the four non-paid holidays that are in the current contract, better ability to take unpaid leave, and a clause that mandates subcontracted workers who have been at the company for 60 or more days to join the union.

The company has responded to a few of these proposals. Specifically they have claimed that due to the economy, they are uncertain as to what they can offer economically and that the use of subcontracting workers, who as of right now, do not have to join the union, which diminishes the existing union's strength.

President of KWU, Efren Diego, states, “We are looking for flexibility on the part of the company so that the workers can be able to enjoy the benefits that we have achieved throughout time.”

The most recent negotiation was at the end of January, and the next will be coming soon. KWU hopes to achieve a signed contract as soon as possible but anticipate needing community support for the workers to achieve a just and fair contract that respects the union and preserves the gains they have made through their struggles.

According to a new study by UCLA’s Dr. Raúl Hinojosa-Ojeda, legalizing undocumented workers through comprehensive immigration reform would yield $1.5 trillion to the U.S. GDP over a ten year period, generate billions in additional tax revenue and consumer spending and support hundreds of thousands of jobs.

Achieving this is essential to the future well being of the immigrant community. Obtaining legal status is the first step towards building power among the community which will allow them the space and opportunity to negotiate better conditions in their workplaces and communities – to giving them the confidence to step out of the shadows and speak up for their basic rights. This, in essence, is our Vision 2020 – to create the mechanisms for this process. And this process, to empower the immigrant community, is necessary to safeguard all of our rights and well being.

¡Gracias!

A big thank you goes out to Ruth Schultz, who worked with the Kaolin Workers Union this past summer. Her work was greatly appreciated, and we wish her luck on all her future endeavors!
CATA: Celebrating 30 Years of Struggle

The Kaolin Workers’ Union March to Harrisburg in 1993.

Community allies turn out to support the Vlasic Workers in 2000.

CATA members mobilize more than 700 people for an immigrant rights march in Philadelphia in 2006.

At a rally in Washington, DC in October 2009 to push for immigration reform.
CATA has made strong progress this past year in our work to promote social justice certification and domestic fair trade certification of farms here in the U.S.

In our own project, the Agricultural Justice Project, CATA along with our AJP partners, focused on training local organizations to implement AJP in their own regions. In the Upper Midwest (Minnesota and Wisconsin) we have been training Centro Campesino and MOSA (Midwest Organic Services Association) in conducting AJP assessments, ensuring that while farmers receive fair contracts and prices, any workers on their farms will be treated with dignity and respect and have their rights recognized. CATA has also moved forward with our work in Canada, establishing a partnership with the Agricultural Workers Alliance to verify worker justice on farms in western Canada.

AJP is also revising its standards this year to improve existing language and also to add new sections to include workers in the processing, distribution, and retail settings. To learn more or to submit your comments, go to http://agriculturaljusticeproject.org

This year CATA has continued its leadership position in the Domestic Fair Trade Association. For the past year CATA has served as Chair of the board of directors of this association of over thirty grassroots organizations and progressive businesses. DFTA’s mission is to promote and protect the integrity of Domestic Fair Trade Principles through education, marketing, advocacy and endorsements. The DFTA held its annual meeting in La Farge, Wisconsin this past December. To learn more, go to http://dftassociation.org/

Workers from Featherstone Farms in Rushford, MN, one of the pilot farms for the Agricultural Justice Project

Throughout all of this work, CATA’s organic committee, comprised of active board and Concilio members, oversees the work and provides guidance to staff. This year the committee has gained new members and has been meeting on a monthly basis at CATA’s Kennett Square office.

One high priority for the committee going into 2010 is to develop opportunities to bring AJP and domestic fair trade to the mid-Atlantic region. We will be working to identify other organizations, progressive farmers and food businesses who are interested in partnering with us to bring justice to our regional food system. If you know of potential partners, please contact Richard Mandelbaum at richardmandelbaum@hotmail.com

Also of note: Some of our work is featured in “Fair Food: Field to Table” a multimedia presentation promoting a more socially just food system in the U.S., created by the California Institute for Rural Studies. http://www.fairfoodproject.org/main/
My name is Enoc and my wife’s name is Dalia. We have three children, and they are 5, 4, and the youngest is 9 months old. We are Mexican from the state of Tabasco. We have now lived in the United States for 8 years.

We came to this country to look for a better future because at that time in my country was very hard. Money had been devalued so much that buying beans and corn was not possible.

I started working on a tree farm and planting flowers for two years. Afterwards I worked in construction. This new job went broke, and I was left without a job, so I went back to working in the fields. The problem, however, was in the pay, which was not as high as my previous job.

My dream was to be able to save enough money to buy a house in Mexico, and I have already achieved this. Now I have to work harder in order to be able to take my family back to Mexico and have enough money for the basics, such as food, clothing, housing, and electricity.

The challenges of life are always going to be wherever we are but here, in the U.S., we have to make extra sacrifices because we are not in our own country. In Mexico I feel freer to do things whereas here I cannot do them because I am undocumented. There is always the risk that the police will stop us and call immigration.

I have now been an active member of CATA for three years. I have participated in various activities related to immigration in Washington D.C., Philadelphia, Trenton, and more locally in Bridgeton.

We have been fighting to achieve Immigration Reform for all that do not have legal documentation, and we hope to achieve this in the beginning of this year.
Yes, I want to be part of CATA’s history in the farmworkers’ struggle for justice!

Here is my donation of:

$30* _____ $50____ $75___ $100___ $250___ Other_____

Name:________________________________________________

Address:______________________________________________

City/State/Zip:__________________________________________

Phone:______________     Email:__________________________

Organization (if applicable):______________________________________

You can mail your tax deductible checks payable to: “CATA”, P.O. Box 510, Glassboro, NJ 08028

If you prefer, you can donate online through our secure website: www.cata-farmworkers.org

*For a donation of $30.00 or more, we will send you our 30th Anniversary T-shirt!  (While supplies last.)

Please check color and size of T-shirt desired.

☐ Green          ☐ Blue

☐ Small         ☐ Medium         ☐ Large             ☐ Extra Large

☐ Check here if you do not wish to receive a T-shirt.