

WORKING BODIES: A PHOTO ESSAY ON TULARE COUNTY CITRUS WORKERS

BY: ISAMAR HERNANDEZ

THE PROJECT:

The project is a twelve-page photo essay compromised of selected photography and quotes from a Sunkist Growers, Inc. orange picking crew.

THE PROCESS:

The author contacted various crew leaders in Tulare County, and was able to gain access to one crew. The author gained permission, though not easily, to take photo of the crew as they picked Valencia oranges in December 2016. After the crew was finished, the author spoke to a group of individuals who were willing to speak about their experiences. After the data collection, the author designed a template and she felt would be able to reach her target audience which was the general population of California. After putting the publication together, the author printed and presented the finished product to a small group of friends, family, and coworkers. The author hopes to go digital in the near future and to continue the essay in a blog format.

THE PURPOSE:

The author wanted to give homage to her parents as well as bring awareness to a part of agriculture that is often forgotten to by the general population. The author hopes that through the essay, people will put human faces to a difficult issues in agriculture. The hope is that the general voting population in California will understand that there is a group of people that are often directly affected by the policies they vote on. Through this project, the author hopes to bring awareness to the poverty this group often lives in, as well as the quality of life afforded to the families of the workers as a result of the jobs they work.

REACTIONS TO PROJECT:

The author presented the project to her family, friends, and had her sister present the project to the workers featured in the project. The reactions were varied, but the general consensus was that the project humanized an issue that is often portrayed as black and white. The workers were incredulous of the fact that their stories were being shared with others. People got emotional when reading the stories of struggle, resilience, and lives of the workers featured, which is what the author had hoped for.

SELECTED PHOTOGRAPHY AND QUOTES



Andres Villanueva, 56

"El trabajo no me importa. El frio me llega a los huesos y pues uno de viejo ya no aguanta como antes."

"The labor doesn't matter. The cold gets to my bones, and at my age, I don't tolerate it like I used to."

"Vivo con otros muchachos. No tengo familia aqui. Es triste, sabes? Llega la navidad y uno solo. Llega año nuevo y uno solo. Pero vine a chingarle, y no queda de otra."

"I live with other guys. I don't have any family here. It's lonely, you know? Christmas comes, and I'm alone. New Year's comes and I'm alone. But, I came to work, so I have to get through it."

Jose Olea, 29



Salvador Hernandez, 56, My Father

"Me he perdido de muchas cosas en la vida de mi familia porque me llaman a todas horas y no les puedes decir que no. Me duele el cuerpo, pero tambien el corazon porque mis niñas ya crecieron y uno se hizo viejo en el trabajo"

"I've missed a lot of things with my family because they call me into on weekends and in the afternoons as needed. You can't say no. My body hurts, but so does my heart because my girls grew up and I got old at work."

"No tengo aseguranza. Me duele todo pero no puedo ir al doctor. El mayordomo me deja descansar, pero estoy cansada."

"I don't have insurance. Everything hurts, but I can't go to the doctor. The crew leader lets me rest, but I'm so tired."

Ofelia Gonzales, 65



Martin Ramos, 52

"Me gusta trabajar. Mis hijos me dicen que pare, que ellos me quidan. No me gusta estar en la casa y haci traigo pa mis chelas."

"I like to work. My kids tell me to stop, that they'll take care of me. I don't like to be at home, and this way I get money for my beer."