ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: “EMPIRE OF THE EVERGLADES”: INDUSTRIAL AGRICULTURE, MIGRANT WORKERS, AND THE NATURE OF THE MODERN FOOD SYSTEM

Eugene Charles Fanning, Doctor of Philosophy, 2023

Dissertation directed by: Julie Greene, Professor, History

Taking a longue durée view over the 20th century, “Empire of the Everglades” examines how the consolidation and contestation of the corporate food system and industrial agriculture in South Florida transformed the region from a “river of grass” into an expansive commodity-production hub and moved the region’s farmworkers to build community and organize for change. It bridges the local and global to show how South Florida’s sugar and vegetable growers generated profits by anchoring the region to corporate food supply chains through economic and political organization, the deployment of environmental management technologies that remade the vast Everglades ecosystem, and the construction of new systems of migrant labor recruitment that spanned the Americas. In uplifting the region’s farmworkers’ experiences and organizing, this dissertation also illuminates the resilience of migrant farmworkers and their communities and powerful moments of solidarity amid poverty, exploitation, and social and legal exclusion. Over time, farmworkers built organizations and civil society networks to counter the sector’s means of labor control and forged new community resources and movements for corporate accountability and environmental justice. Examining class formation and conflict in the Everglade’s agricultural sector as it unfolded in a changing environment and amid shifting agribusiness practices and immigration patterns, this work reveals how the corporate food system worked to externalize the costs of low-priced food on the environment, workers, and rural communities, as well as the dynamism and impact of the state’s under-examined farmworkers’ movement.

"EMPIRE OF THE EVERGLADES": INDUSTRIAL AGRICULTURE, MIGRANT WORKERS, AND THE NATURE OF THE MODERN FOOD SYSTEM

by

Eugene Charles Fanning

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2023

Advisory Committee:
Professor Julie Greene, Chair
Associate Professor Perla Guerrero
Dr. Chantel Rodríguez
Professor Karin Rosemblatt
Professor Thomas Zeller

© Copyright by
Eugene Charles Fanning
2024

To my wife and family.

Acknowledgments

I want to express my sincere gratitude to my dissertation committee: Perla Guerrero, Chantel Rodríguez, Karin Rosemblatt, Thomas Zeller, and my advisor and committee chair Julie Greene. Their collective encouragement, keen insights, and invaluable advice made this project possible and got me across the finish line. Chantel's guidance through the nodes of transnational and borderlands history helped establish a foundation for this project. Above all, Julie's steadfast support, including multiple readings of chapters and revisions, wisdom, and mentorship have shaped me as a scholar and strengthened this work tremendously. I am truly thankful for the kindness, generosity, and confidence she has shown me on this journey.

I also thank those friends, mentors, and colleagues, near and far, who have played a part in making this possible. I am grateful to my professors at Florida Southern College, Francis Hodges and James M. Denham, who fostered my passion for the discipline and have remained close, as well as Erick Langer and Joseph McCartin at Georgetown, for supporting me when I sought to leap to a doctoral program. I have learned much from my colleagues in the labor movement and world of work, including Cathy Feingold, Shannon Lederer, Neha Misra, Rachel Micah Jones, and Ana Avendaño, and continue to admire all they do for working people. Nicola Piper has long been a close collaborator and confidant, across oceans and careers. Additionally, I could not have made it through this process without the friendship and solidarity of my comrades in the doctoral program at UMD. You know who you are.

The University of Maryland and the UMD History Department have generously supported my work with several grants and awards, including a critical dissertation completion fellowship and the University's Flagship Fellowship. External awards have

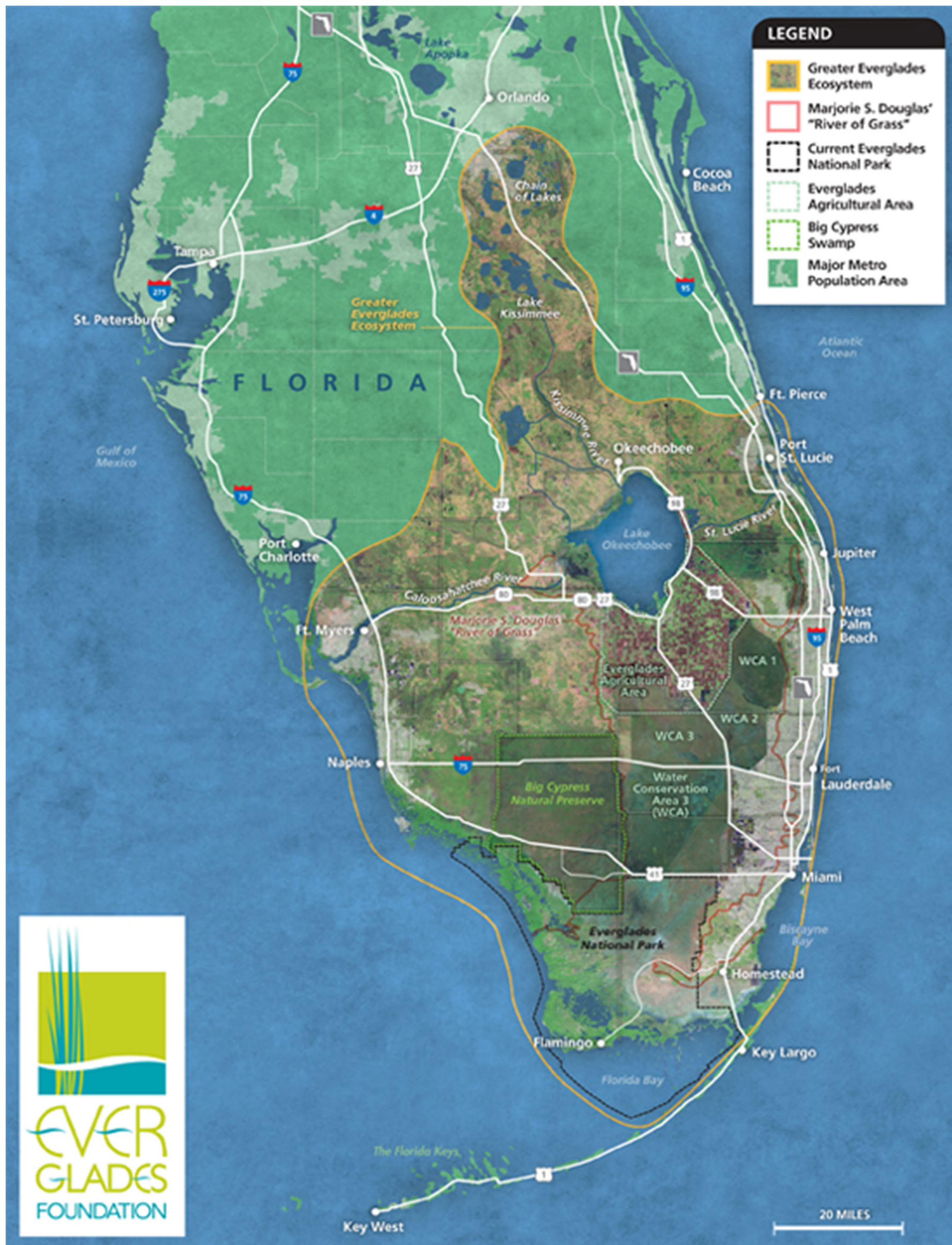
also been essential in completing the research for this project. These include the Human Rights Research Grant from the Rubenstein Library at Duke University, the Sam Fishman Award from the Walter Reuther Library at Wayne State University, and the Chase Family Grant from the P.K. Yonge Library at the University of Florida.

My family has been a source of joy and a bedrock of support. I owe them my deepest thanks. Especially, I thank my mother, Kathy, and father, Michael, who sacrificed to provide for us, encouraged my curiosity, and instilled in me a deep love of reading and learning. Finally, to my wife, partner in crime, and greatest champion, Adrienne, all of my love and thanks for standing by my side in life and putting up with all this.

Table of Contents

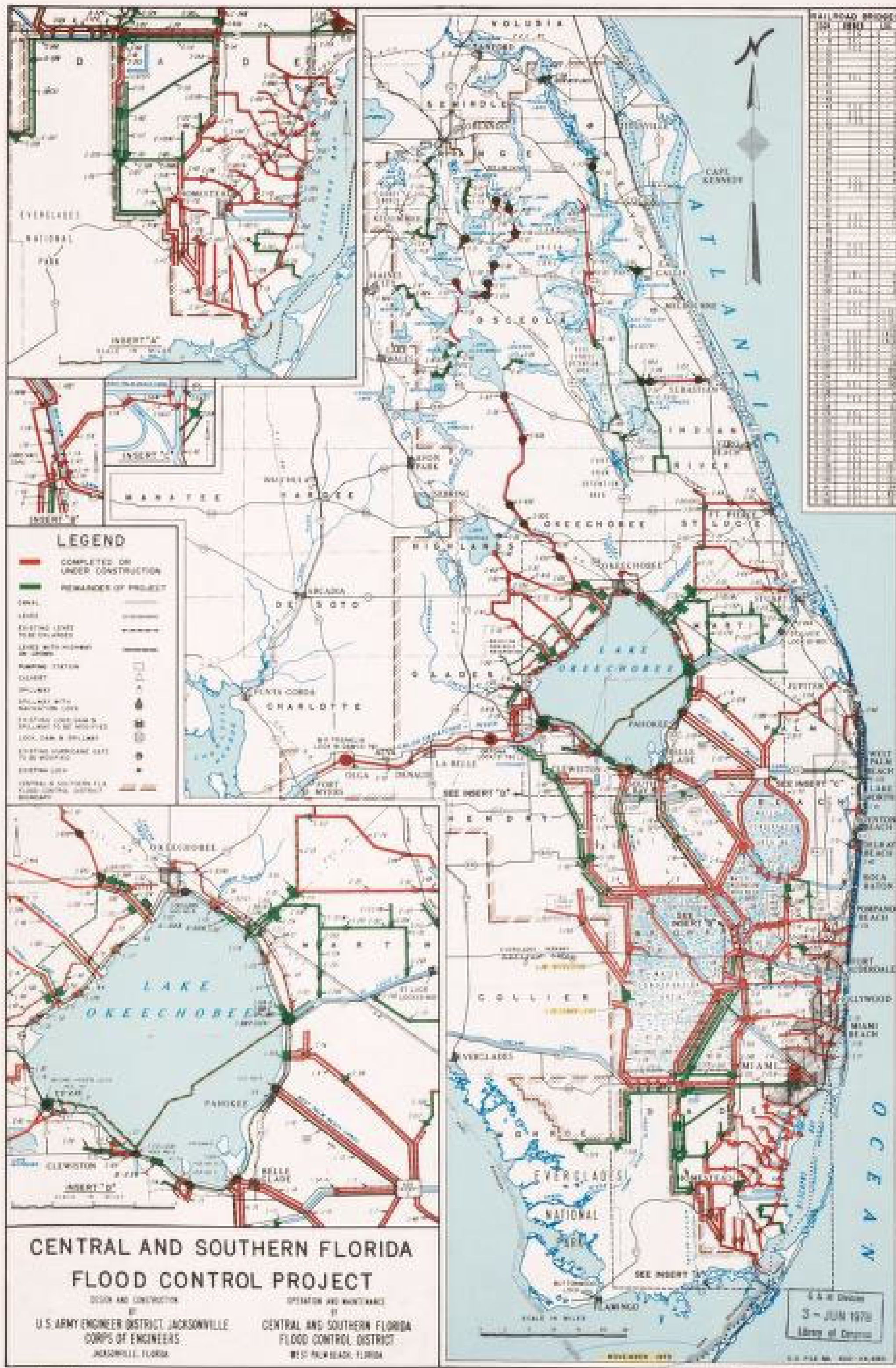
Acknowledgments iii
Table of Contents v
Maps vi
Introduction 1
Chapter 1: The Rise of the "Agro-industrial Empire of the South": Disaster Capitalism, Development, and Environmental and Labor Control in the Everglades, the 1920s-40s 38
Chapter 2: Sunbelt Growth in the Cold War: Agricultural Consolidation and Coordination, the Rise of "Big Sugar," and Farm Labor Relations, 1940s-60s 91
Chapter 3: Contesting "Powerlessness": Farmworker Organizing, Community Change, and Immigration, 1960s-80s 152
Chapter 4: Shifting Terrain: Globalization, the Environment, and Dislocation, 1980s-2000s 204
Chapter 5: Forging a Fairer Food System: Farmworkers' Resilience and New Forms of Organizing, 1990s-00s 245
Conclusion 288
List of References 296

Maps

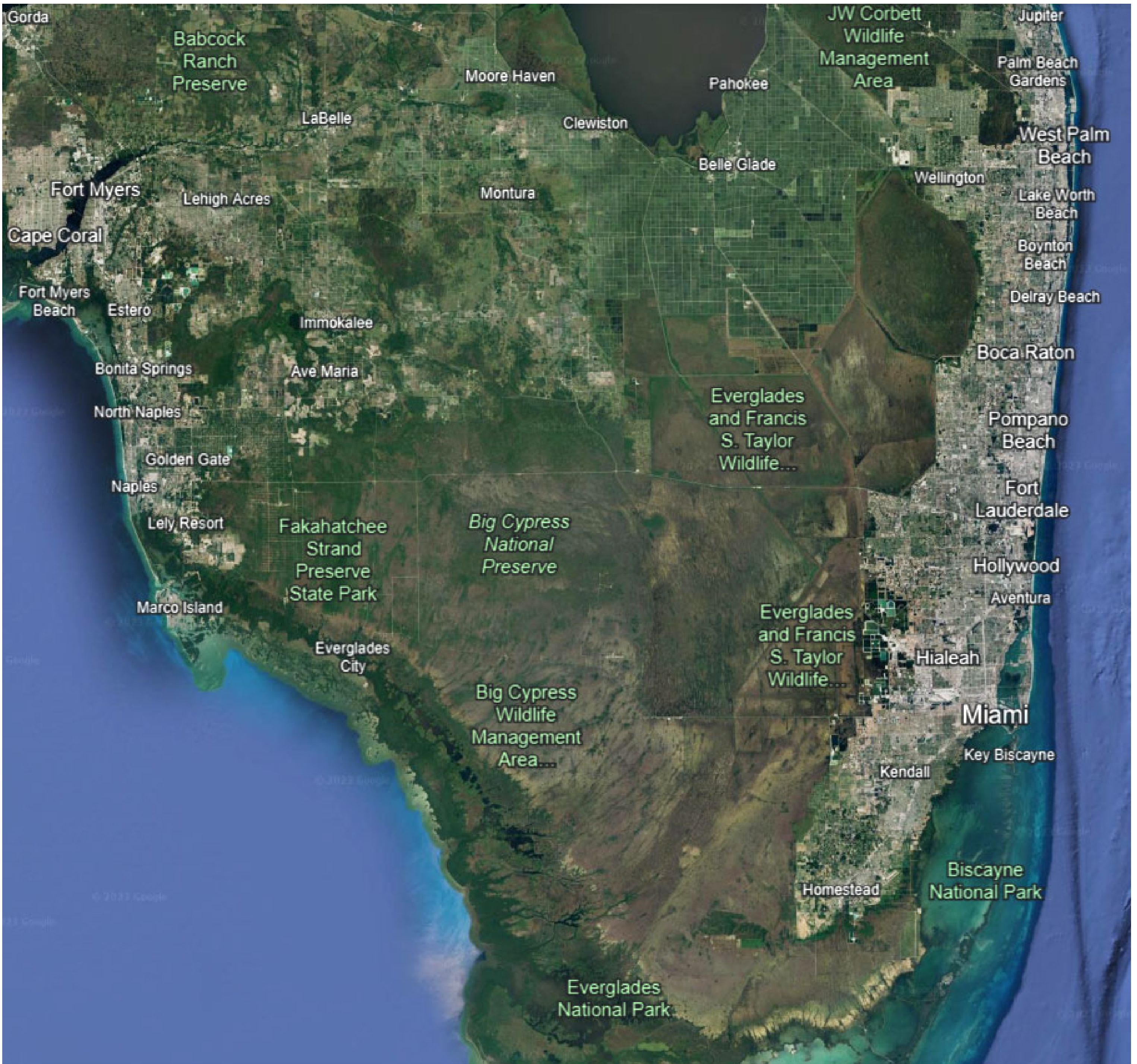


"The Everglades of Today," The Everglades Foundation, accessed October 2023, https://evergladesfoundation.org/the-everglades/maps/.

South Florida Water Management District, Map Gallery, Historic Phytogeography of South Florida with Present Day SFWMD Features, July 2019.
https://sfwmd.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MinimalGallery/index.html?appid=1facf32f199240b49a326432258c102f.



United States Army. Corps Of Engineers. Jacksonville District, and Central And Southern Florida Flood Control District. Central and Southern Florida Flood Control Project. Jacksonville: The District, 1973. Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/78695077/.



Google Earth, South Florida 26°14'17"N,80°40'57," October 2023.

Introduction

In 1904, Florida's Governor Napoleon Bonaparte Broward declared his state at war with the "pestilence-ridden swamp" that covered the southern half of the Florida peninsula. At the time, census officials deemed South Florida "unsettled," as the Everglades ecosystem, a tangled sprawl of wetlands, cypress swamps, and sawgrass prairies, still extended over 11,000 square miles.[1] To bolster his populist appeal and counter the growing influence of railroad tycoons in the state, Broward vowed to create an "empire of the Everglades" in the region by draining the landscape for small farmers. In the following years, Florida's government and land developers lured in out-of-state farmers by marketing the Everglades' tropical climate and seemingly rich, dark "muck" soil—a byproduct of thousands of years of plants decaying beneath the Everglades' shallow water flow—as ideal for growing sugar cane and winter produce. Early attempts to develop the vast wetlands, however, were undermined by dredging and construction difficulties, speculation and fraud, hurricanes in 1926 and 1928, and a real estate bust. Many small farmers folded, after halting drainage left them with worthless, water-sodden plots. Nevertheless, in this period of uncertainty, holding companies, well-financed growers, and out-of-state corporations amassed millions of acres in South Florida and began to establish industrial farming at scale in the form of expansive cane sugar producer-processors and "truck" farms that shipped winter vegetables along the East Coast.[2]

---

[1] The 1899 U.S. Census of Agriculture deemed the Everglades "unsettled"; however, a decade later the region was producing approximately 12 percent of the state's vegetable crop. This designation, of course, ignored the indigenous Seminole bands that had made the Everglades home since the early 19th century. See: Joyce P. McJunkin, "Winter Vegetable Farming in Florida: Its Acreage Patterns and Marketing Flows," MA Thesis (Florida Atlantic University, 1978), 33. Measurements of the historical size of the Everglades ecosystem before widespread development vary. The National Park Service and South Florida Water Management District, measuring the course of sheet water flow from the Kissimmee River Basin to the southern tip of Florida, approximate the area to have been 11,000 square miles. See: "History and Culture," Everglades National Park, National Park Service, accessed: https://www.nps.gov/ever/learn/historyculture/index.htm; "Everglades," South Florida Water Management District, accessed: https://www.sfwmd.gov/our-work/everglades.

[2] See: Nelson Manfred Blake, *Land into Water- Water into Land* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1980), 88-98; Mark Derr, *Some Kind of Paradise: A Chronicle of Man and the Land in Florida* (New York: William Marrow and Co., 1989),

Beginning in the 1920s and accelerating in the post-war period, South Florida's major agricultural interests— which ranged from elite land-holding families to large cooperatives to vertically-integrated sugar and produce operations— transformed the Everglades into a "winter garden" for distant consumers and the nation's "sugar bowl.[3]" Industrial farms in the region proliferated, as growers pioneered systems of labor and environmental control and economic and political coordination to uphold profitability and on-time production. By the 1960s, after eliciting federal interventions in water management and trade and immigration policies, the region's industrial growers, including expatriated Cuban-American sugar concerns, drove Florida to lead the nation with the highest concentration of corporate farms.[4] These corporate farms, industrial operations under corporate management, came to dominate the landscape, produced and marketed tens of millions of tons of sugar and tomatoes and other produce annually, and made South Florida a hemispheric node for migration, investment, and commodity procurement. Beneath the sheen of agro-industrial productivity, however, agricultural development contributed to a 50 percent reduction in Everglades wetlands acreage.[5] Further, growers' labor recruitment practices, over time, drew in a multi-racial U.S. farm workforce and guestworkers, migrants, and refugees from across the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central America. Recruitment simultaneously made the region the anchor of a "migrant stream" that fed farmworkers to East Coast farms and a proving ground for new forms

---

156-74. "Everglades Timeline," Reclaiming the Everglades: South Florida's Natural History, Florida International University Digital Collection, accessed October 2023, http://everglades.fiu.edu/reclaim/timeline/timeline6.htm.

[3] On the transformation of the Everglades, see: Marjorie Stoneman Douglas, *Everglades: River of Grass* (New York: Rinehart & Company, 1947); Charlton W. Tebeau, *Man in the Everglades: 2,000 Years of Human History in the Everglades National Park* (Miami: University of Miami Press, 1968); Blake, *Land Into Water- Water Into Land*; David McCally, *The Everglades: An Environmental History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999); Michael Grunwald, *The Swamp: The Everglades, Florida, and the Politics of Paradise* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006).

[4] According to a 1968 Department of Agriculture survey of corporate farming--the first of its kind--Florida and California had one fifth of the total number of U.S. corporate farms. Corporate-owned farms accounted for 31 percent of the land in farms in Florida and 17 percent in California. See: Philip M. Raup, "Corporate Farming in the United States, "*The Journal of Economic History* 33, No. 1 (1973): 275.

[5] S.E. Ingebritsen, Christopher McVoy, B. Glaz, Winifred Park, "Florida Everglades: Subsidence Threatens Agriculture and Complicates Ecosystem Restoration," in Galloway, D., Jones, D.R., and Ingebritsen, S.E., eds., "Land Subsidence in the United States," *U.S. Geological Survey Circular* 1182 (1999): 95-106.

of farm labor control that ensnared workers in generational cycles of exploitation and poverty.[6]

As vegetables and sugar from the Everglades became ubiquitous in U.S. supermarkets, fast food restaurants, and food and beverage supply chains, farmworkers suffered isolation and persistent patterns of abuse, coercion, wage theft, and forced labor over decades. An early scandal in 1942 saw the U.S. Sugar Corporation, a vertically-integrated cane sugar producer that pioneered agricultural innovations in the Everglades, indicted on peonage charges after it used labor contractors to recruit African-American workers from across the South under false pretenses and deliver them in a state of debt bondage.[7] Archives full of similar cases implicating growers and contractors followed over the years. In the 1990s, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), a grassroots farmworkers' organization, exposed incidents of trafficking on Florida's farms, including one involving a labor contractor who for years had held hundreds of workers, mainly indigenous Mexican and Guatemalan immigrants, under armed guard.[8] The CIW's well-publicized advocacy, which activated a base of multi-ethnic immigrant farmworkers in South Florida's Immokalee, the U.S. "tomato capital," served as a stark reminder of the labor exploitation embedded in food supply chains. Indeed, crews of trafficked farmworkers enmeshed in South Florida's overall low-wage, migratory farm workforce, which worked the harvests on the region's industrial tomato and vegetable fields. Associations, brokers, and processors marketed tomatoes to corporate food buyers, reaching consumers nationwide. While poverty today remains endemic in farmworkers'

---

[6] On Florida's shifting farm workforce, immigration, and international labor recruitment, see: Peter Kramer, *The Offshores: A Study of Foreign Farm Labor in Florida* (St. Petersburg, FL: Community Action Fund, 1966) RG 174, Entry 2, Box 372, Folder: ES-2-6-1 Farm Labor, Aug 1966. National Archives, College Park (NACP); Erin Conlin, "Invisible Hands in the Winter Garden: Power, Politics, and Florida's Bahamian Farmworkers in the Twentieth Century," PhD Diss., (University of Florida, 2014) and, especially: Cindy Hahamovitch, *The Fruits of Their Labor: Atlantic Coast Farmworkers and the Making of Migrant Poverty, 1870-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997) and *No Man's Land: Jamaican Guestworkers in America and the Global History of Deportable Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

[7] See: "Peonage Charged to Sugar Grower," *New York Times*, November 5, 1942.

[8] Nancy Martin, "Farm Labor Suppliers Plead Guilty to Charge of Enslaving Workers," *Sun Sentinel,* May 12, 1997; Department of Justice, "Miguel Flores and Associate Sentenced to 15 Years for Enslaving Migrant Workers," November 14, 1997, accessed October 2023, https://www.justice.gov/archive/opa/pr/1997/November97/482cr.htm.html.

communities, the state's $7.4 billion agricultural sector leads the United States in sugarcane, citrus, and fresh tomato production and is a major supplier of other produce.[9]

From nearly the advent of industrial farming in the Everglades, South Florida's agricultural sector's environmental impact and labor systems have inspired reform campaigns and farmworkers' organizing, as well as press scrutiny and congressional and academic investigations.[10] Although historians and other experts have analyzed aspects of the state's farm operations and labor relations and documented the region's ecological degradation, our understanding of how these dynamics interlink is incomplete. Further, scholars have not sufficiently considered the relationships between South Florida's agricultural sector's extractive practices in the Everglades, the region's class structures and conflict, and broader supply chains and modes of food production, trade, and consumption—i.e. the wider "food system."[11] Exploring these "entangled" concerns through the history of industrial agricultural interests and workers and their communities reveals not only how industrial agricultural interests generated profits from the Everglades, controlled labor, and shaped supply chains, but also illuminates how systems of food production and distribution historically worked locally and externalized the costs of low-priced food. It furthermore illuminates how farmworkers lived, built community, and organized amid shifting regimes of production, farm labor recruitment and control, and immigration policies.[12]

"Empire of the Everglades" examines how the consolidation, operations, and contestation

---

[9] United States Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service, "Florida Agricultural Facts," October 16, 2018; Zhengfei Guan, Trina Biswas, and Feng Wu, "The U.S. Tomato Industry: An Overview of Production and Trade," University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, Publication #FE1027 (September 2017), 3.
[10] A brief overview of journalistic investigations into farmworkers' living and working conditions might include Edward Murrow's "Harvest of Shame" (CBS, 1960), Chet Huntley's "Migrant" (NBC, 1970), Alec Wilkinson's *Big Sugar* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), and Stephanie Black's documentary *H-2 Worker* (1990). Marjorie Stoneman Douglas's *Everglades: River of Grass* remains a pioneering work on the Everglades and conservationism.
[11] For an exception to this, with a focus on the Everglades' sugar sector, see: Gail Hollander, *Raising Cane in the 'Glades: The Global Sugar Trade and the Transformation of Florida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).
[12] On "entangled" history, see: Lara Putnam, "Migrants, Nations, and Empires in Transition: Native Claims in the Greater Caribbean, 1850s-1930s" in *Immigration and National Identities in Latin America* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2014), 31-33. Putnam argues that national immigration policies in the Caribbean were the products of intertwined regional racial, labor, and geopolitical processes.

of industrial agriculture transformed rural South Florida from a "river of grass" into an expansive commodity-production hub and moved the farmworkers who made production possible to organize for change within the sector.[13] Taking a *longue durée* view over the past century, this project explains how the development and defiance of growers' hegemony in South Florida remade the Everglades, reshaped migration processes and the contours of hemispheric commodity production, and inspired farmworkers to build resilient civil society networks and new movements. Growers' profitability hinged on shaping and integrating into emergent corporate food supply chains, externalizing the ecological and social costs of farming, and maintaining predictable, on-time, and low-cost production. To do this, agricultural interests constructed modes of political and economic association and cooperation and labor and environmental control that transformed the Everglades and its communities and shaped markets, policies, migrations, and landscapes across the Americas. Nevertheless, in resisting and responding to the particularities of the region's disempowering labor processes, farmworkers built and sustained durable organizations that uplifted impoverished rural communities and fostered movement innovations.

Indeed, over decades, changing populations of farmworkers, from poor Black and Chicano migratory families to guestworkers and immigrants facing deportation, fought to reorder farm labor relations. In South Florida's fields, labor camps, and rural communities, farmworkers resisted poor living and working conditions, struck, developed new organizations, and built movements. Victories were often fleeting. Unemployment, immigration enforcement, and ethnic divisions at times challenged organizers, and several organizations folded under pressure from growers' anti-union tactics and state repression. Through the latter half of the 20th century, however, the resources, organizations, and movement legacies that emerged from these struggles formed the basis of a

[13] In *Everglades: River of Grass,* Marjorie Stoneman Douglas described the Everglades ecosystem as a river of grass, which popularized the image of long, wet sawgrass expanses covering the southern half of Florida.

lasting rural civil society network in South Florida that sustained farmworkers in periods of disaster and dislocation and supported new organizing. Most prominently, the CIW emerged in the 1990s to lead national boycotts of major grocery and fast-food brands. The Coalition leveraged its position in the food supply chains to pressure these major tomato buyers to pay a "penny per pound" more to improve farmworkers' pay and working conditions. From these campaigns, the CIW pioneered the Fair Food Program (FFP)— a powerful, worker-driven, and independent compliance and monitoring initiative that holds brands and growers accountable for raising standards for farmworkers at the bottom of commodity chains. The FFP has not only moved major brands to compel most of South Florida's tomato growers to adhere to a system of bonus payments to farmworkers, a workplace code of conduct, and regular auditing, but it has also reinvigorated the U.S. farmworkers' movement and inspired new strategies in workers' movements globally.[14]

This dissertation's framework integrates the labor, agricultural, and environmental history of the Everglades and connects it to the historical operations of a greater corporate "food system" that emerged in the 20th century "from below," providing a history of the interests, people, and conflicts within that system, including the workers who made production possible. In doing so, it employs the concept of food systems—the network of activities, actors, environments, and externalities embodied in food and modes of food production, and consumption—and builds on multidisciplinary scholarship on food, commodity chains, agro-industrial regions, and points of consumption.[15] Specifically, this work interrogates the development and machinations of the *corporate*

[14] See: Fair Food Program, "About," accessed October 2023, https://fairfoodprogram.org/about/.

[15] The term "food systems" refers to all the linked activities involved in bringing food from the land to consumers' tables, including growing, harvesting, marketing, transporting, consuming, and disposing food. Food systems include the inputs and externalities associated with food production and consumption, are dependent on natural and human resources, and are shaped by the social, political, economic and ecosystems in which they operate. For a concise definition of food systems, see: Michael Pimbert, "Fair and Sustainable Food Systems: From Vicious Cycles to Virtuous Circles," *International Institute for Environment and Development* (June 2012):1. The literature on the development of commodity chains and production areas is vast. See, for example: John Soluri, *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, and Environmental Change in Honduras and the United States* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006); Sterling Evans, *Bound*

food system, a regime predicated on industrial farming, extended supply chains, supermarkets and concentrated food buyers, and low-cost commodities that came to define the organization of production, markets, and consumption in the United States and beyond in the 20th century.[16] Academic and policy investigations into food systems have been fertile grounds for critiquing the political economy and ecology of food, the climate and biodiversity implications of industrial food production, diets and malnutrition, among other concerns, as well as for uplifting reform proposals and alternative visions for agroecology.[17] Yet, as others have noted, histories of commodities chains and food systems, generally, have paid insufficient attention to workers, class, and labor relations.[18]

Accordingly, this work fuses the transnational, material, and political-economic analyses of agricultural and environmental histories and food systems studies with labor history's interest in agency, experience, and class conflict. Doing so provides a localized history of the food system and an integrated interrogation of production and class conflict in the agricultural sector as it unfolded in the dynamic Everglades environment and in relation to transnational markets, migration, and supply chains. The Everglades region is well-suited for such an exercise. In rural South Florida, global

---

in Twine: The History and Ecology of the Henequen-Wheat Complex for Mexico and the American and Canadian Plains, 1880-1950 (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007). Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2015); Joshua Specht, *Red Meat Republic: A Hoof-to-Table History of How Beef Changed America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019). Classics in the field include: William H. Friedland, Amy E. Barton and Robert J. Thomas, *Manufacturing Green Gold: The Conditions and Social Consequences of Lettuce Harvest Mechanization* (Cambridge University Press, 1981) and Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986).

[16] See: Tore C. Olsson, *Agrarian Crossings: Reformers and the Remaking of the US and Mexican Countryside* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017); Shane Hamilton, *Supermarket USA: Food and Power in the Cold War Farms Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

[17] See: John C. Super and Thomas C. Wright, *Food, Politics, and Society in Latin America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985); Alejandro Colas, Jason Edwards, Jane Levi, Sami Zubaida, *Food, Politics, and Society: Social Theory and the Modern Food System* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018); Carmen Gonzalez, "Climate Change, Food Security, and Agrobiodiversity: Toward a Just, Resilient, and Sustainable Food System," *Fordham Environmental Law Review* 22 (February 2011): 11-19. On world systems and environmental history, see: Alf Hornborg, J. R. McNeill, and Joan Martinez-Alier, *Rethinking Environmental History: World-System History and Global Environmental Change* (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2007).

[18] See: Shane Hamilton, "Analyzing Commodity Chains: Linkages or Restraints?" in Belasco, Warren and Roger Horowitz, *Food Chains: From Farmyard to Shopping Cart* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 16-25: Sarah Besky and Sandy Brown, "Looking for Work: Placing Labor in Food Studies," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 12, Issue 1–2 (2015): 19-42.

dynamics, such as migration, investment, and trade, manifested locally —and the region's agricultural practices, politics, and labor relations had transnational influence. This approach also illuminates the labor relations and migration systems that worked to disempower farmworkers and elevates labor and community resistance. In South Florida, farmworkers built resilient community networks and fashioned generally under-recognized challenges to the structures of agro-industrial power, amid regimes of farm labor recruitment and control and changing immigration policies. At times, farmworkers' organizing compelled agricultural interests to recalibrate labor management strategies or pursue policy changes that brought new forms of oppression. In some instances, however, farmworkers formulated innovative actions, designed in response to the exploitation they experienced and the structures that kept them marginalized, exploited, and impoverished, to win new legal protections, raise wages, and hold agricultural corporations accountable.

Using government and technical sources, civil society and business records, journalistic accounts, and interviews, "Empire of the Everglades" traces how the formation and operations of industrial agriculture and class conflict and community struggles in South Florida reflected and shaped the directions of the expanding corporate food system. It traces these dynamics from the halting attempts to develop the region in the 1920s that drew in federal water control projects to tame the region for industrial agriculture to the end of the 20th century, when the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) remade commodity markets, Everglades restoration efforts became ascendent, and farmworkers devised new campaigns for labor and environmental justice. This investigation demonstrates how growers made the Everglades ripe for capitalist accumulation by transforming it into a hemispheric hub for commodity production, investment, and migration—and underscores the ecological and social costs inherent in our modern food system. It also illuminates the region's farmworkers' experiences and struggles and the catalysts for their organizing, uplifting moments of solidarity among diverse racial and ethnic groups, as well as the organizations

farmworkers built, their legacies, and their ongoing efforts to win decent work and justice.

The sections that follow further develop the historiographical, theoretical, and contextual underpinning of this dissertation, with an analysis of class formation, relations, and conflict providing a through line focusing this interrogation of the corporate food system in South Florida. The first situates South Florida as a node in hemispheric networks and the modern food system, with an emphasis on pinpointing the local contingencies and transnational interpenetrations that drove the corporate reconfiguration of the Everglades for agriculture. The sections that follow examine the connective tissue of the Everglades environment and labor that allowed for the corporate food system to operate in the region and, at times, also challenged it. One provides an overview of the history of environmental politics and water control in the region, interrogates the historical role the dynamic Everglades environment has played in shaping and bedeviling development, and how the materiality of the Everglades shaped production and labor processes and community action. The final illuminates the sector's labor systems and the under-studied labor history of Florida's farmworkers' movement, emphasizing how immigration and community change both figured into growers' means of labor control and inspired new solidarities and movements. Taken together, these concerns shape this work and define its interventions in the field.

South Florida, Agribusiness, and the Corporate Food System

In the Everglades, industrial growers' profitability—and the anchoring of the corporate food system in the region— hinged on remaking the land and managing water, recruiting and controlling labor, and forging connections to distant supply chains. In the process, industrial agriculture disrupted the Everglades ecosystem and reshaped hemispheric immigration patterns, capital movements, trade policy, and consumer and commodity markets. Nevertheless, as growers sought to manage the region's varied connections to the Americas, climatic events, foreign competition, and the organizing of a multi-ethnic farm workforce, at times, also destabilized growers' power in

Florida. To clarify this dialectic between the local and the global, this project builds on insights from scholarship on food systems and agricultural, borderlands, and commodity histories. From the development of industrial agriculture in the Everglades to the NAFTA era, it also toggles from local to global perspectives to provide a more complete understanding of how agro-industrial power and the corporate food system developed and operated in the region and beyond.

The rise of today's predominant corporate food system, a regime defined by the corporate concentration and management of agriculture, food distribution, and consumption patterns, transformed the agricultural sector in Florida, the United States, and globally in the 20th century. Critical assessments of the corporate food system inform this work. They provide insight into the agricultural and trade policies, corporate and technological innovations, and geopolitical decisions that contributed to the growth of expansive food supply chains, multinational food buyers and agribusinesses, and specialized industrial farms under corporate management that define this system.[19] So too do transnational and commodity histories that elucidate the development of global supply chains by exploring the production, transport, marketing, and consumption processes that interpenetrated "periphery" exporting nations and "core" importing countries in the global North.[20]

As agricultural historians have shown, beginning in the 1920s and accelerating after World War II, government and private sector initiatives, market demands, and technical assistance programs encouraged the growth of specialized industrial farming. These farms took on intensive production methods, reliant on the use of fertilizers and chemicals and harvesting, processing, and packaging machinery, across a vast swath of uniform croplands to bring lucrative commodities to

---

[19] See: Jennifer Clapp, "Mega-Mergers on the Menu: Corporate Concentration and the Politics of Sustainability in the Global Food System," *Global Environmental Politics* 18 (2018): 12-33; Jennifer Clapp, "The Problem with Growing Corporate Concentration and Power in the Global Food System," *Nature Food* 2 (2021): 404-408.

[20] Historians, particularly Latin Americanist, have used transnational frames to move away from dependency theory in recent decades and shed light on the historical development and operations of "commodity chains." See: Steven Topik, Carlos Marichal and Zephyr Frank, eds., *From Silver to Cocaine: Latin American Commodity Chains and the Building of the World Economy, 1500-2000* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 3-9.

market. Growers not only adopted mechanization and economies of scale, but also joined networks of agricultural investors and government and university experts in embracing what Deborah Fitzgerald calls "an industrial ideal or logic" in agriculture. Supported by policymakers and drawing from ideas, management and labor-relations practices, and accounting and investment strategies from the industrial sector, corporate-managed industrial farms, with help from federal subsidies, price supports, and trade protections, expanded, remaking landscapes and landholding patterns.[21] By the 1950s, the "agribusiness," a term coined in 1955 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Harvard professor John H. Davis that both described the increasingly industrial and integrated, "off-farm" nature of agriculture and lent a narrative to policymakers to champion programs to encourage their growth, led the coordination of U.S. food production and marketing to meet demands for low-cost food.[22] Meanwhile, many under-capitalized smallholders folded—over 2.5 million farms shuttered from 1945 to 1965—and agricultural consolidation proceeded apace.[23]

At the other end of supply chains, the food retail business, likewise, experienced a transformation. Through the first half of the 20th century, cash-and-carry chain stores and then supermarkets chains gradually replaced local grocers as the primary point of food purchasing for U.S. consumers. By the 1960s, **s**upermarkets accounted for over 70 percent of the food retail business and oversaw huge procurement and logistics operations that directed the distribution of the

[21] Deborah Kay Fitzgerald, Every Farm a Factory: The Industrial Ideal in American Agriculture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 3; 8.
[22] The neologism agribusiness is elaborated upon in John H. Davis and Ray A. Goldberg, *A Concept of Agribusiness* (Boston, Division of Research, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, 1957). With the term agribusiness, Davis sought to describe and promote a food system upheld by corporate organization of agriculture and government subsidies and technical assistance, in contrast to the New Deal's liberal regulatory approach. See: Shane Hamilton, "Agribusiness, the Family Farm, and the Politics of Technological Determinism in the Post–World War II United States," *Technology and Culture* 55, No. 3 (July 2014): 560-64.
[23] In 1945 the overall number of U.S. farms stood at 5,859,000. That number decreased to 3,157,000 by 1964. Consolidation was an important factor in the decline in the number of farms. In 1935, the average size of a farm was 155 acres with 46 acres of cropland. By 1969, the average farm size had increased to 389 acres with 123 acres of cropland harvested. See: U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Census of Agriculture, 1969," General Report, 2 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973): 15; 18 (Farms: Number, Use of Land, Size of Farm).

U.S. food supply.[24] Supply chains that tied together expanding industrial farms and the growing U.S. supermarket sector chains constituted a key component of a highly coordinated corporate food system. Internationally, they also acted as a geopolitical symbol of capitalist superiority and a source of "food power" by driving exports, food aid and technology transfers, and corporate expansion.[25]

To reconstruct the operations of the Everglades agricultural sector as a part of the corporate food system, this work analyzes the local particularities and power dynamics, as well as the cross-border processes, markets, and networks that transformed rural South Florida. Moving beyond borders, it presents a "nodal" view of the region. Drawing from David Chang's definition of borderlands as sites of transnational economic, cultural, and social contact, rather than a space between nation-states, this work demonstrates how the Everglades was transformed into a "node in a network of global processes." Chang posits that from the view of Indigenous peoples, such exchanges and contacts generated borderlands outside the context of national borders.[26] Building on Florida's settler colonial legacy and contributing to the unfinished project of "conquering" the Everglades, agricultural interests and developers established farming operations on lands claimed by the Seminole Indians since the mid-19th century and made the region a hub for agricultural production, migration, investment, and supply chains. As peoples, ideas, and industry converged on the Everglades' muck soil, rural South Florida became connected to hemispheric networks that spanned a "Greater America."[27] Emphasizing this interconnectivity between Latin America and the

---

[24] Rom J. Markin, *The Supermarket: An Analysis of Growth, Development, and Change* (Washington State University Press, 1968), 1-2; William E. Folz and Alden C Manchester, "Chainstore Merchandising and Procurement Practices: The Changing Retail Market for Fruits and Vegetables," U. S. Department of Agriculture (1960).

[25] On the geopolitics of the post-war food system and "food power," see: Hamilton, *Supermarket USA*, 2-5; 18; Bryan L. McDonald, *Food Power: The Rise and Fall of the Postwar American Food System* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

[26] David Chang, "Borderlands in a World at Sea: Concow Indians, Native Hawaiians, and South Chinese in Indigenous, Global, and National Spaces," *Journal of American History* 98, no. 2 (September 2011): 384.

[27] See: Robert Cassanello and Daniel S. Murphree, "The Epic of Greater Florida: Florida's Global Past," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 84, No. 1 (Summer, 2005): 1-4. Drawing inspiration from the early 20th century historian of the Spanish borderlands Herbert Bolton, who called for an integrated history of the Americas, historians of Florida have begun contextualizing the state's history within the "Greater America." Environmental and agricultural development was a main driver connecting South Florida to the wider world.

Caribbean and South Florida in this way illuminates transnational convergences in state and business prerogatives and shared workers' experiences in production regimes, as well as the exclusionary boundaries perpetuated by state policy and corporate strategies.[28]

Placing the Everglades in this line of transnational inquiry is a nascent exercise. Geographer Gail Hollander examines how Florida's agricultural interests, including Cuban-American sugar firms, intervened in international policymaking debates over the political economy of sugar and influenced Cold War geopolitics to win concessions and expand. Hollander centers Florida's sugar interests at the heart of the Everglades' transformation and shows how they reshaped the global geography of sugar production. She documents the competition between Florida's incipient sugar sector and Cuba's well-established industry, as well as how the Cuban revolution and the U.S. trade embargo of the island motivated the repatriation of capital and the creation of new Cuban-American firms in the Everglades. These firms contributed to the exponential growth of sugar production in South Florida beginning in the 1960s and championed the isolation of Cuba and subsidies and protections for U.S. sugar production.[29] Outside of Hollander's work, however, there is little research on how agricultural development and politics in the Everglades connected to global systems.

This study further interrogates the position of Everglades agriculture in the food system by illuminating the complex business and political ties between growers—or the formation of class bonds between the region's agricultural elite—and the agribusiness strategies that drove the transformation of the region. Unlike Hollander, this work illuminates an integrated relationship between sugar and fresh produce production to provide a fuller scope of analysis on the region. This shows how Everglades growers were pioneers in the post-war corporate consolidation of agriculture through sectoral economic and political organization. In Florida, as the number of farms decreased

[28] See: Olsson, *Agrarian Crossings*, 3.
[29] Hollander, *Raising Cane*, 8-13; 151-53.

by over 40 percent between 1940 and 1970, in line with national trends, the average size of the state's farms grew by nearly 200 percent, roughly three-fold over the national average. Corporate entities also took control over a greater share of farmland than anywhere else in the United States.[30] Florida's industrial agricultural interests further stoked and met U.S. consumers' demands for fresh winter produce, orange juice, and sugary processed foods, as chain supermarkets proliferated the country after World War II. Yet, industrial agriculture in the Everglades also proved to lack sustainability as a business model. As food supply chains grew more globalized through the later 20th century, many of South Florida's large firms were pushed to diversify and expand or lost market share to foreign competition, particularly from Mexico's export-oriented produce growers after the implementation of NAFTA removed tariff barriers between the United States and Mexico.

Although the region's growers derived power from Jim Crow laws and Southern racial norms, the corporate-driven transformation of the Everglades sets it apart from the rest of the U.S. South.[31] Agricultural historians have documented well how southern agriculture, long dependent on cotton and tobacco, languished in the first half of the 20th century. Most southern growers, large and small, suffered from low commodity prices due to overproduction, boll weevil infestations that devoured cotton fields, and a lack of capital. Decades of poor returns on monocultures caused southern farmers to fall further behind technological advancements in agriculture and depleted soils.[32] Conversely, in South Florida, the opportunity to secure undeveloped, seemingly fertile land attracted many well-capitalized speculators, corporations, and holding companies to the region,

---

[30] Between 1940 and 1969, the total number of farms in Florida decreased 42.8 percent (35,586 farms in 69), as the average acres per farm increased nearly 200 percent. See: Bill Finger, Cary Fowler and Chip Hughes, "Special Report on Food, Fuel, and Fiber," *Southern Exposure* 2, no. 2 and 3 (Fall 1974): 185. On national trends, see: Bureau of the Census, "Census of Agriculture, 1969," 15; 18

[31] On this point, Julie M. Weise argues that often conceptual frameworks (i.e. borderland, the sunbelt, empire) that go beyond the region are most useful for understanding southern places. See: Julie M. Weise, "Immigration History and the End of Southern Exceptionalism," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 38, No. 4 (Summer 2019): 5-9.

[32] See: Pete Daniel, *Breaking the Land: The Transformation of Cotton, Tobacco, and Rice Cultures since 1880* (Champaign, IL: Illinois University Press, 1985); James C. Giesen, *Boll Weevil Blues: Cotton, Myth, and Power in the American South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

where they outlasted smallholders by investing in drainage and other technologies.[33] Organized advocacy among agricultural interests after disastrous hurricanes in the 1920s, discussed further in the section to follow, motivated the federal government to undertake interventions in flood control to make the region safe for industrial agriculture. Large growers were best placed to take advantage of new opportunities offered by federal interventions and drove an exponential growth of production into the second half of the 20th century. South Florida's agricultural development also benefited from connections to other agro-industries in the state. Prominent growers from the better-established citrus industry in North and Central Florida invested heavily in the region as water control became assured, and the region's proximity to major phosphorus deposits, the core ingredient in fertilizer, facilitated access to key inputs and opportunities for diversification.

The contours of industrial agriculture in South Florida allow for comparison and dialogue with other production "nodes" within the corporate food system. Indeed, in many ways, the Everglades agriculture more closely resembles other modern agro-industrial hubs than contemporary counterparts in the U.S. South. For example, in North American agricultural hubs—like the Imperial Valley of California and the San Quintin Valley in Mexico—and oligopolistic export agricultural regions in Central America, corporations also amassed huge holdings, engineered landscapes, and developed systems of labor control to serve mainly U.S.-based markets.[34] Further, as in major farming communities in California and elsewhere, where technical and scientific approaches to the

---

[33] While the Everglades muck soil contained essential nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus, persistent crop failure in the 1920s led researchers to discover that it was deficient in other key elements and popularize the application of manganese, sulfur, and copper to the soil. Soil erosion and muck fires also proved to be persistent obstacles in establishing predictable crop cycles. SAee: J. Mabry McCray and Ronald W. Rice, "History and Method of the Everglades Soil testing Laboratory," University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS), SS-AGR-477, October 2023. https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/AG473

[34] See: Mark Fiege, *Irrigated Eden: The Making of an Agricultural Landscape in the American West* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1999); Benny J. Andrés, *Power and Control in the Imperial Valley: Nature, Agribusiness, and Workers on the California Borderland*, 1900-1940 (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2015); John Weber, *From South Texas to the Nation: The Exploitation of Mexican Labor in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Soluri, *Banana Cultures*; Christian Zloniski, *Made in Baja: The Lives of Farmworkers and Growers behind Mexico's Transnational Agricultural Boom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019); Casey Lurtz, *From the Grounds Up: Building an Export Economy in Southern Mexico, 1867-1920* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019).

environment sought to engineer "unsanitary" landscapes for production, the drainage of the Everglades generated new infrastructure and ecologies while the application of chemicals and pesticides brought disease to farmworkers and rural communities.[35]

While a food systems framework is used here to draw out transnational linkages, networks, and global processes, this work also emphasizes agency and local contingencies. It reflects not only on how global systems shaped local geographies, but also builds a history of production, labor, and development in the Everglades from below by reconstructing the interworkings of agribusinesses, local social and political structures, and the actions of workers and communities. This illuminates the role of state and corporate power and local actors in *making* the food system in the Everglades by shaping federal policies and cross-border trade and migration dynamics, as well as how migrant farmworkers built movements to resist and, sometimes, counter exploitation, state repression, and corporate power. It also complicates liberal narratives that naturalize free trade and historicizes the diffusion of production. Indeed, as Sidney Mintz posited in his sweeping investigation of the global proliferation of sugar and its role in shaping Caribbean slave colonies and capitalism, "there is nothing natural or inevitable about these processes; they have no inbuilt processes of their own."[36]

The Everglades Environment: Development, Disaster, and Change

From the time the first speculative farmers began tilling South Florida's soil in the early 20th century, the Everglades' landscape, climate, and water flows shaped farms' operations and market placement, as well as the sector's labor demands and class relations.[37] South Florida's relatively warm winters, ideal for off-season vegetable production, dark soil, and abundance of land long appealed to agricultural investors. Yet, the Everglades' environment and climate, often through episodes of

---

[35] See: Linda Nash, *Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease, and Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 1-12; 190-94.
[36] Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, 8.
[37] On the material, environments, and labor, see: John Soluri, "Labor, Rematerialized: Putting Environments to Work in the Americas," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 85 (2014): 162–165.

disaster, challenged predictable production and motivated the implementation of new technologies and schemes to reduce environmental uncertainty. Contributing to runoff pollution and ecological disarray, growers also deployed high levels of fertilizers, pesticides, ripening agents, and new plant variations to cultivate durable (and, in the case of tomatoes, sometimes flavorless) crops and bring them to market.[38] The particularities of the Everglades environment, including its seasonal advantage in vegetable crops in the winter, the challenges the deep soil posed to harvest mechanization, and the need to maintain aesthetic standards on fresh produce made growers' labor demands relatively inelastic and motivated their development of extended labor recruitment networks. Further, the environment shaped work processes, class relations and labor conflict, and organizing in farmworkers' communities, which struggled with isolation, disease, and degraded and dangerous environments. Perspectives from environmental history, therefore, are crucial for understanding the capitalist reconfiguration of the Everglades and the unique characteristics of industrial agriculture and farm labor relations in South Florida.

A survey of modern South Florida provides a glimpse into how agricultural development transformed the region. Some 5,000 years ago, the slow, southward water flow from Lake Okeechobee over a nearly imperceptible downward slope formed the Everglades, a complex wetlands system that connects sawgrass prairies, peat bogs, marshes, cypress swamps, and mangroves.[39] Indicating the importance of water flow from Lake Okeechobee to the Everglades' ecology, the Seminole Indians used the name "Pahokee" for the region, meaning grassy waters. Today, uniform sugar cane and vegetable fields rest below Lake Okeechobee, the "liquid heart" of the Everglades, which is now confined by the 143-mile-long, 30-foot-high Hoover dike. An intricate

---

[38] See: Jim Hightower, "Hard Tomatoes, Hard Times: Failure of the Land Grant College Complex," *Society* 10 (November-December 1972); Barry Estabrook, *Tomatoland: From Harvest of Shame to Harvest of Hope*, 3rd ed. (New York: McMeel Publishing, 2018).
[39] See: McCally, *The Everglades: An Environmental History,* 81.

water management system runs through South Florida and controls flooding and balances water flow between farms, cities, and conservation projects with pumping stations and thousands of miles of canals, reservoirs, and levees. Further south, the Everglades National Park conserves a segment of the historical ecosystem, as sugar and vegetable fields, nurseries, and suburban developments line its border and compete with it for water.[40] And a short drive inland and a world away from affluent coastal cities like Miami, Palm Beach, and Naples, ramshackle trailers and labor camps sprawl in and around rural towns like Homestead, Belle Glade, and Immokalee.

The Everglades has long been a rich text for environmental historians and critics. In 1947, Marjorie Stoneman Douglas' famed *The Everglades: River of Grass,* with its vivid descriptions of the region's landscape, was a clarion call for Everglades conservation in a period when it was becoming apparent that development and agriculture were fueling the ecosystem's deterioration.[41] More recently, others like David McCally, Jack Davis, and Michael Grunwald have skillfully documented the course of development in the Everglades ecosystem, the political economy and ecology of water management, and the state's environmental politics.[42] The pernicious impact of industrial agriculture and development on the Everglades is a core concern of these environmental studies. Indeed, major water management installations, development, and expanding industrial farms disrupted and remade the Everglades ecosystem. The ongoing obstruction of more recent efforts to restore the

---

[40] On water management in the Everglades, see: Matthew C. Godfrey and Theodore Catton, *River of Interests: Water Management in South Florida and the Everglades, 1948-2010* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2011); On the technical aspects of federal water management projects, see: "Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan: The First Major Projects," Hearings, Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, U.S. House of Representatives, July 22, 2004 (U.S. GPO, 2005), 25; Charles V. Stern, "Everglades Restoration: Federal Funding and Implementation Progress," Congressional Research Service, November 18, 2014.

[41] Douglas, *The Everglades: River of Grass*. Douglas' writing bolstered early conservation efforts in the state and her lifelong grassroots activism with her group The Friends of The Everglades supported restoration efforts through the 20th century. On Douglas' evolving career as an environmental advocate, see: Jack E. Davis, 'Conservation Is Now a Dead Word': Marjory Stoneman Douglas and the Transformation of American Environmentalism," *Environmental History* 8, No. 1 (2003): 53-76

[42] McCally, *The Everglades: An Environmental History;* Grunwald, *The Swamp*; Jack E. Davis, *An Everglades Providence: Marjory Stoneman Douglas and the American Environmental Century* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011). See also: Tebeau, *Man in the Everglades*; Blake, *Land into Water-Water into Land*; Derr, *Some Kind of Paradise.*

Everglades, notably state and federal investments in improving water flow, limiting runoff, and protecting and regenerating wetlands beginning in the 1990s, have further illuminated the hold of the agricultural sector on the region's environment.[43] Nevertheless, in general, environmental histories of South Florida do not consider how the region's environment influenced social and labor relations and systems and broader agribusiness strategies.

Strategically foregrounding the environment, as this study does, reveals a link between disaster and development in the Everglades and the environment's causal powers. After the "Okeechobee" hurricane of 1928 passed over Lake Okeechobee and created a massive storm surge that leveled towns and killed thousands of farmworkers, South Florida's agricultural interests successfully pushed the federal government to dike the lake.[44] This project fostered private and local drainage projects and the growth of industrial farming. It also set a precedent for ongoing federal action to tame waterways nationally, as well as in the Everglades, where developers' and growers' demands for more water control grew alongside regional economic and population growth amid fluvial unpredictability.[45] Indeed, after a period of intense flooding, Congress approved the Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project for Flood Control in 1948, a comprehensive water management system in the Everglades. Just a year after the Everglades National Park opened, the Army Corps of Engineers undertook the project, the largest U.S. earth-moving endeavor since the construction of the Panama Canal, and began redirecting the region's water through a complex system of canals, reservoirs, and pumping stations. This facilitated the agricultural conversation of huge swaths of the Everglades, including by establishing the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA), a

[43] See: Godfrey and Catton, *River of Interests*, 213-25

[44] Blake, *Land into Water-Water into Land,* 135-36. Famously, in *Their Eyes Were Watching God,* Zora Neale Hurston's vividly depicts Bahamian and African American farmworkers fleeing the 1928 hurricane that struck Lake Okeechobee and the devastation left in its wake.

[45] Hollander, *Raising Cane in the 'Glades,* 121-23; Douglas, *The Everglades: River of Grass*, 397-8.

700,000-acre expanse of highly-engineered farmland below Lake Okeechobee.[46] Along with low taxes and tourism, water control also fueled Florida's "sunbelt" economic and demographic growth, as the state's population nearly tripled between 1945 and 1960.[47]

While assessing the ecological costs ingrained in the corporate food system and recognizing industrial agriculture's contributions to the deterioration of the Everglades ecosystem, this work seeks to move beyond reproducing declensionist histories of the Everglades environment, and, instead, interrogates the dynamic relationships between human activity, development, and the environment. Drawing from the work of environmental historians like Richard White, it presents the Everglades as a "hybrid landscape," or a shifting environment defined by the interplay of the natural, social, and material.[48] White and others call for the incorporation of humans and labor in environmental history to better understand how people experience nature (most often through work) and how natural endowments shape economic and social structures.[49] South Florida is a quintessential "hybrid landscape," as an environment that has been highly-engineered through human planning and capitalist prerogatives to support farming, commerce, and population growth. The Everglades provided both opportunities—its tropical climate supported winter vegetable growers and the cultivation of sugar cane—and challenges that undermined farm operations.

---

[46] Godfrey and Catton, *River of Interests*, 33-40; Peter Farb, "Disaster Threatens the Everglades," *Audubon Magazine*, September-October 1965.
[47] Sean P. Cunningham, *American Politics in the Postwar Sunbelt: Conservative Growth in a Battleground Region* (Cambridge University Press, 2014)., 38-39.
[48] On "hybrid landscapes," see: Richard White, "From Wilderness to Hybrid Landscapes: The Cultural Turn in Environmental History," *The Historian* 66 No. 3 (September 2004): 557-564. White identifies "hybridity" as a key concern among environmental histories in recent decades, who have been challenging Edenic ideas about "pure" nature and forwarding more complex considerations about the relationships between human activity and the environment, including studies of engineered landscapes. As Paul Sutter argues, while this has been an important corrective, adding complexity and cultural analysis to environmental histories and challenging environmentalists' political narratives, scholars must still employ causal taxonomies that incorporate environmental processes and the material impacts of human activity. See: Paul S. Sutter, "The World with Us: The State of American Environmental History," *The Journal of American History*, June 2013, Vol. 100, No. 1 (June 2013): 94-119. See also: Nash, *Inescapable Ecologies*.
[49] See: Richard White, "Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?" in William Cronon, *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1995), 171-3; Soluri, "Labor, Rematerialized," 162-3.

Accordingly, the regional modalities of farming techniques, infrastructure, land tenure, and sectoral cooperation formed relationally to the particularities of the Everglades ecosystem.

Within South Florida's agro-industrial sector, the structures of class relations, too, developed in relation to the Everglades' hybrid landscape. Intertwining labor and environmental history, Gunther Peck encourages scholars to explore "geographies of labor," the spatial, material, and cultural connections between nature and labor, as well as the relationships between class formation and conflict and the environment.[50] Similarly, examining labor wars in the coalfields of Ludlow, Colorado, Thomas Andrews, finds the region's "workscape," or the hazards and dynamic spatial ordering of the mines and associated communities, fueled grievances and solidarities among mineworkers and fomented unrest.[51] In this line of thinking, an environmental lens on labor helps clarify in the Everglades and beyond such problems as the spatial organization of class relations and inequality and the drivers of labor migration and strategies for labor control, as well as migrant farmworkers' motivations for organizing and movement innovations.

Rural South Florida's exacting terrain, rapid development, and geographic isolation set in motion a geography of labor that influenced farm work over generations. As a whole, in the Everglades, the migrant stream, the farm labor contracting system, and the physical and social isolation of farmworkers converged to create an environment shaped to reinforce growers' power, generate agricultural profitability, and restrict farmworkers' mobility. Growers' limited ability to mechanize sugar and some vegetable harvesting due to the region's soil and produce marketing standards generated a consistent seasonal demand for manual labor and out-of-state and

[50] Gunther Peck, "The Nature of Labor: Fault Lines and Common Ground in Environmental and Labor History," *Environmental History* 11, no. 2 (2006): 212; 224-225; See: Gunther Peck, "Migrant Labor and Global Commons: Transnational Subjects, Visions, and Methods," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 85 (2014):130. Peck posits here that an environmental lens on migration may clarify how migration relates to land tenure in origin communities, how the environment aids or hinders migration, or how ecosystems might isolate workers in abusive jobs.
[51] Thomas G. Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 125-6.

international migrant workers.[52] Initially, growers worked with labor recruiters, or "crew leaders," to bring southern African-American farmworkers to the Everglades. Over time, the geographic scope of recruitment to the Everglades expanded. Caribbean guestworkers, entering under visa programs initially designed to meet war-time labor demands in World War II, buttressed the domestic labor market and provided growers, particularly sugar growers, with a ready and deportable seasonal workforce. In the mid-20th century, as western growers increasingly mechanized harvesting, many Chicano farmworkers looked to South Florida for work, where mechanization was technologically difficult and hand-picking produce was the norm. Later, transnational migration and displacement from Mexico, Central America, and Haiti also fed to growers' labor recruitment systems.

While recruitment and migration constituted, disrupted, and reconstituted the region's farm workforce, farmworkers grappled with sometimes deadly environmental hazards, the vagaries of winter harvests and freezes that undermined incomes and picket lines, and exposure to pesticides and diseases of poverty. The harsh and remote Everglades environment also buttressed growers' control and surveillance. Isolation in distant labor camps served to hinder farmworkers' movements and trap them in abusive jobs and coercive contracting relationships. Indeed, according to Samuel Manston, a former canecutter whom U.S. Sugar contractors held in debt bondage in 1942, recalled that U.S. Sugar's labor camps were "almost the same as prison," guarded by men with blackjacks and rifles, and so deep in the Everglades that there was "no way to run."[53]

Despite these challenges, farmworkers developed bonds of solidarity and new movements based on shared experiences with the environment and disaster. Dilapidated housing, disease, freezes, hurricanes, and pesticide poisoning inspired new movements to win improved living and working conditions, reform, and environmental justice. Farmworkers' organizations led new housing

[52] Phillip Martin, *Importing Poverty: Immigration and the Changing Face of Rural America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 34; 70.
[53] Manston interviewed in Stephanie Black, *H-2 Worker* (New Video, 1990).

and health initiatives, mobilized for state and federal disaster relief, and advocated for reforms to bring dignity and safety to the state's agricultural sector. While at times Florida's farmworkers, facing job competition, protested conservation efforts that threatened to take land out of production, they were also on the front lines of advocating for pesticide control, climate and disaster resilience, and more sustainable farming practices. By the 1990s, the state's farmworkers' movement was a leading force linking farmworkers to a growing movement among marginalized communities for environmental justice and international coalitions to advocate for a more sustainable food system.[54]

Migration, Farm Labor Systems, and Florida's Farmworkers' Movement

Central to this work is a concern with how changing populations of farmworkers in South Florida experienced the region's labor systems and forged organizational and class bonds to confront and overcome harsh forms of exploitation, state oppression and immigrant policing, and geographic and social isolation. Farmworkers challenged the abuses, poor conditions, and precarity embedded in farm work from the earliest days of industrial farming in the Everglades. The barriers to organizing were high. Racial discrimination and Jim Crow, anti-immigrant, and right-to-work laws bolstered growers' power and undermined organizing, as contractors expanded labor recruitment operations to maintain a low-wage labor supply. Public scrutiny of farm labor relations in Florida often emphasized farmworkers' "powerlessness."[55] Over decades, however, farmworkers, from poor Black and Chicano itinerant families to immigrants facing deportation, resisted coercion and organized powerful labor and community movements, often across ethnic and racial boundaries. From these struggles, they established enduring labor and civil society organizations and networks

---

[54] The case of the Florida Association of Farmworkers led in including environmental justice in farmworker advocacy and drawing linkages between the movements. Founded in 1983 in Apopka by workers organizing for better wages and housing, the FWAF later incorporated demands for pesticide protections and reparations, as well as retraining support for those dislocated by conservation projects. See: FWAF, accessed October 2023, https://floridafarmworkers.org/.
[55] U.S. Senate, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare Subcommittee on Migratory Labor, *Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Powerlessness: Hearings*, Ninety-First Congress, 1st and 2nd Sessions, (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970).

that continue to uplift farmworkers and rural communities. This organizational foundation, in turn, has supported persistent organizing—including more-recent leading community and environmental justice initiatives and campaigns for corporate accountability—to counter South Florida's labor control and production regimes and create a more sustainable food system.

Migration and ethnic change were central in shaping farmworkers' lives, communities, and work from the earliest days of commercial farming in the Everglades. As drainage and agricultural investment remade the Everglades, industrial farms' enclosure of the commons generated a need for seasonal harvest labor in remote and rural South Florida. Since no local farm labor market existed, growers first relied on southern "migrant" workers, mainly poor African American families who sought to escape the indignities of tenant farming and began traveling the East Coast to work seasonal harvests at the direction of crew leaders.[56] To immobilize workers during crop cycles, as Cindy Hahamovitch argues, Florida's growers initially administered a Jim Crow labor-relations system that relied on debt peonage and violence. They then moved to a system predicated on international labor recruitment to thwart New Deal-era organizing and reforms, at first aided by a federal emergency labor importation program with the British West Indies (BWI) during World War II.[57] Growers' reliance on immigrant labor additionally drew from pre-war migration networks that extended through the Bahamas and the Caribbean and brought workers into railroad work, construction, and other industries during the early development of South Florida.[58] While African Americans were the majority of Florida's farmworkers in the early 20th century, in the post-war period growers continually remade the workforce by contracting Chicano farmworkers, Caribbean guestworkers, and immigrants and refugees from Mexico, Central America, and Haiti.

---

[56] See: Earl Lomon Koos, *They Follow the Sun* (Florida State Board of Health, 1957).
[57] See: Hahamovitch, *The Fruits of Their Labor,* 200-203; Cindy Hahamovitch, "Sitting Idly By: "Organized" Farmworkers in South Florida During the Depression and World War II," 100-104 in Charles Thompson and Melinda Wiggins, eds., *The Human Cost of Food: Farmworkers' Lives, Labor and Advocacy* (University of Texas Press, 2002).
[58] Conlin, "Invisible Hands in the Winter Garden,"19.

Hahamovitch shows how the exclusion of farmworkers from New Deal labor laws and the recruitment of guestworkers with limited rights and whose legal status was tied to their employers solidified poverty wages and unequal power dynamics in agriculture.[59] Her scholarship also demonstrates how South Florida's sugar interests were instrumental in creating and preserving the BWI program and later the more-permanent H-2 visa program that came from it. She puts Jamaican H-2 guestworkers into a global framework to critique "deportable labor" visa systems that exist in a liminal state between freedom and forced labor. While pressure from labor and civil rights activists led to the termination of the U.S.-Mexico Bracero program, a bilateral scheme that from the 1940s to the 1960s sponsored some two million Mexican migrant workers to work in the United States, mainly in agriculture, the H-2 program grew from serving the Florida sugar sector into a model for the current U.S. guestworker visa system.[60] Under these arrangements, origin countries endorsed guestworker programs to alleviate unemployment and encourage migrants' remittances and U.S. employers secured a captive workforce with no path to permanent immigration. Meanwhile, guestworkers toiled in harsh conditions and were subject to wage theft, debt bondage, and abuse.[61]

This dissertation builds on Hahamovitch's work on labor brokerage and guestworkers, while taking a different approach to South Florida's agricultural labor history by incorporating analyses of broader migration processes, supply chains, and organizing trends. It examines the evolution of growers' labor systems and strategies across crops to undermine workers' power. Considering labor

---

[59] Hahamovitch, *The Fruits of Their Labor,*" 11-12.
[60] Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land*, 2. On the bracero program, see: Ernesto Galarza, *Merchants of Labor: The Mexican Bracero Story; An Account of the Managed Migration of Mexican Farm Workers in California, 1942-1960* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964); Deborah Cohen, *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in the Postwar United States and Mexico*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 219-221; Mireya Loza, *Defiant Braceros: How Migrant Workers Fought for Racial, Sexual, and Political Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).
[61] Similarly, anthropologists David Griffith ethnographic and sectoral case studies of H-2 workforces in sugar, tobacco, fruit, hospitality, and crab processing show how employer capture of an on-demand, immobile workforce has de-incentivized the market impulse to raise wages and undermined remittance-driven development in origin countries. See: David Griffith, *American Guestworkers: Jamaicans and Mexicans in the U.S. Labor Market* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2007) 45-46.

relations outside the sugar sector reveals a concerted agro-industrial program, of which the use of H-2 visas was but one element, to control labor, depress wages, and maintain on-time production in the Everglades. After liberal reforms in the 1960s limited the recruitment of Caribbean guestworkers to sugar harvesting, the region's agricultural interests relied on distant private recruitment channels, layered contracting arrangements, and the threat of immigration enforcement to procure workers and maintain labor discipline. Bringing new perspectives to agricultural labor history, this work illuminates South Florida's growers' role in crafting an undocumented "deportable" farm workforce and the migrations and experiences of undocumented farmworkers, presently the predominant labor force in U.S. agriculture. By delineating the formation and actions of farmworkers' organizations and movements in South Florida, it further shows how the region's farmworkers expanded the geography and strategies of the farmworkers' movement, the history of which has been largely centered on California and, particularly, the United Farmworkers Union (UFW).[62]

This work, moreover, positions migrant workers in the Everglades within a growing body of scholarship on more recent trends in immigration, criminalization, and ethnic and social change in the U.S. South.[63] Although Florida has for decades been the leading destination in the South for Mexican immigrants and displaced Central Americans and Haitians, outside of studies of the state's Cuban diaspora, there has been a relative lack of scholarly attention to migration and Latino

[62] On California, see, for example: Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1935); Ernesto Galarza, *Farm Workers and Agri-Business in California, 1947-1960* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977). On the UFW, see: Jacques E. Levy, *Cesar Chavez: Autobiography of La Causa* (New York: WW Norton and Co., 1975); Miriam Pawel, *The Union of Their Dreams: Power, Hope, and Struggle in Cesar Chavez's Farm Worker Movement* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009); Frank Bardacke, *Trampling Out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers* (New York: Verso, 2012); Lori A. Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farmworker Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

[63] On immigration to the U.S. south, see: Julie M. Weise, *Corazón De Dixie: Mexicanos in the U.S. South Since 1910* (University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Perla M. Guerrero, *Nuevo South: Latinas/Os, Asians, and the Remaking of Place* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017).

migrants in Florida, particularly in the rural sector.[64] Florida's growers—many of whom viewed African Americans as inferior workers—actively recruited Mexican-American families from the Southwest beginning in the late 1960s, and expanded transnational recruitment operations in the decades that followed. As migrant workers, particularly those without documents, moved to South Florida in greater numbers, they entered a society and workforce shaped by anti-Black racism and increasingly policed by an immigration enforcement machinery that coded them "illegal.[65]" Competition and turmoil in the farm labor market kept wages low, as growers and contractors stoked division between migrant groups and engaged immigration authorities to stymie labor activism. Accordingly, social isolation, instability, and poverty pervaded farmworkers' communities in South Florida.

Upon arriving in Florida, migrants found that immigration laws and policies constrained their lives and mobility. As scholars like Douglas Massey and Ana Minian demonstrate, laws like the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) and the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) were incongruent with the social dynamics of U.S.-Mexico migration patterns and advanced immigration restrictions that fueled the expansion of the undocumented population. As the U.S. government militarized the border, migrants were forced to settle permanently rather than risk detention in the pursuit of seasonal work.[66] IRCA was particularly disruptive in farmworkers'

---

[64] Since at least the 1990s, Florida was the top destination for Mexican migrants in the South and East Coast. See: Mize and Swords' analysis of census data in Alicia C. S. Swords and Ronald L. Mize, *Consuming Mexican Labor: From the Bracero Program to NAFTA* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 160. Migration to rural Florida, in particular has not received due attention. On the Cuban diaspora, attention has been mainly focused on urban migration to Ybor City in Tampa and Miami. See: Gary Mormino and George E. Pozzetta, T*he Immigrant World of Ybor City Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007); Robert M. Levine and Moisés Asís, *Cuban Miami* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000); Michael J. Bustamante, *Cuban Memory Wars: Retrospective Politics in Revolution and Exile* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2021); Sarah McNamara, *Ybor City: Crucible of the Latina South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2023).

[65] Perla Guerrero's comparative work on Latina/o and Asian immigration to Arkansas is particularly useful on this dynamic in that she shows how anti-Black racism among white Arkansans translated into racializing Latino workers as "illegals" as they sought to establish communities in rural towns, a process she coins "spatial illegality." See: Guerrero, *Nuevo South,* 163-5.

[66] Ana Raquel Minian, *Undocumented Lives: The Untold Story of Mexican Migration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press,

communities and to a burgeoning farmworkers' movement in Florida, as the law expanded guestworker programs and immigration enforcement and encouraged agricultural associations to use subcontractors to manage the placement of farmworkers to shield growers from sanctions. As this work shows, through coordinated advocacy and cooperation, the state's agricultural interests were influential in "designing" this immigration system over the past century.[67]

Demonstrating the importance of a transnational approach, broader changes in the food system and international relations also contributed to the course of local community formation and change. Beyond the pull factors of jobs and sectoral recruitment, trade, agricultural change, and displacement and conflict were drivers that pushed migrants to South Florida. Increasing mechanization in other major farming regions drove migration to Florida and facilitated the "Latinization" of the workforce through the 1970s and 1980s.[68] Civil wars, instability, and conflict in Central America and Haiti, exacerbated by U.S. interventions, also drove migrants and refugees seeking safety and jobs to the region. Cold War geopolitics, the Cuban Revolution, and the U.S. embargo, too, fueled the growth of South Florida's sugar industry and a spate of Cuban-American firms with their concomitant demands for guestworkers. Concurrently, the liberalization of Mexico's agricultural sector and NAFTA's tariff reductions promoted the transnational integration of North American agriculture and drove families in Mexico from small and communal landholdings and into waged farm work to industrial farms in Mexico, the U.S. West Coast, Florida, and beyond.[69]

2018), 104-106; 209; Douglas S Massey and Karen A. Pren, "Unintended Consequences of US Immigration Policy: Explaining the Post-1965 Surge from Latin America," *Population and Development Review* 38, no. 1 (2012): 2.

[67] Aristide Zolberg holds state policy to be a site of contestation and argues that the engineering, or "design," of immigration policy, in particular, shaped nation building and reflected interest group politics and ideas about national belonging. From this vantage point, it can be seen that Florida's agricultural interests were key actors in designing deportable guestworker and undocumented labor systems. See: Aristide R. Zolberg, *A Nation by Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America* (New York, NY: Harvard University Press, 2008), 432-433.

[68] See: Leo Popipolus and Robert Emerson, "The Latinization of the Farm Labor Market," Staff Paper Series, (Food and Resource Economics Department, University of Florida, 1994): 3; Martin, *Importing Poverty*, 34, 70; David Craig, *The Paths They Follow: The Migrant Worker Streams* (Washington, DC: Migrant Division, Office of Economic Opportunity, 1971), 12, 19.

[69] Mize and Swords, *Consuming Mexican Labor*, 160; Douglas S. Massey, Jacob S. Rugh, and Karen A. Pren, "The Geography of Undocumented Mexican Migration," *Mexican Studies* 26, Issue 1 (2010): 4-5.

Nonetheless, despite these challenges, South Florida's farmworkers forged organizational, community, and class bonds that supported powerful movements for change. Their movement is situated in rich organizing traditions and histories. Transnational scholarship on immigration and U.S. labor organizing in an era of globalization has produced insights into the sources of solidarity among immigrant workers. Scholars like Leon Fink, Lynn Stephens, and others have documented how migrants' shared cultural practices, kinship and linguistic ties, and memories of origin-country movements and conflict have facilitated community and class formation in organizing efforts in agriculture, meat processing, and other low-wage sectors.[70] Since the early 20th century, struggles for civil rights and inclusion, likewise, strengthened Mexican-American labor organizing across sectors and states.[71] Particularly, civil rights traditions and shared Chicano and Mexican cultural ties among California's farmworkers powered the organization and growth of the UFW in the 1960s.[72] While migration and ethnic change may signify disruption, Herbert Gutman's scholarship also suggests that successive waves of immigrant workers formed and reformed class consciousness and solidarities throughout U.S. history. From the "new labor history" school, which analyzed class formation as a relational and experiential process undertaken by workers with common interests, Gutman showed how new immigrant groups generated solidarities through the cultural bonds, continuities, and adaptations they sustained in the face of industrial discipline and social change.[73]

Following in that tradition, this work illuminates how Florida's farmworkers challenged

---

[70] Leon Fink, *The Maya of Morganton: Work and Community in the Nuevo New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 62-74; Lynn Stephens, *Transborder Lives: Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 21; 31-32. See also: David Bacon, *The Children of NAFTA: Labor Wars on the U.S./Mexico Border* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Ruth Milkman, *L.A. Story: Immigrant Workers and the Future of the U.S. Labor Movement* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006).

[71] See: Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

[72] See: Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming*.

[73] Herbert G. Gutman, "Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America, 1815-1919," *The American Historical Review* 78, no. 3, (June 1973): 536-40. E.P. Thompson theorized and popularized this formulation of class as a response to overly structural, Marxian conceptions of class in the 1960s. See: E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1963), 9-11.

power dynamics in the food system and sustained organizing by building resilient civil society networks and community initiatives, forming multi-ethnic alliances, fostering grassroots leadership, and campaigning for environmental and economic justice. It breaks new ground by documenting Florida's under-recognized history of farmworkers' organizing and showing how, from agricultural towns like Immokalee, Belle Glade, and Homestead, changing populations of farmworkers formed and reformed community, class, and movement ties over decades. Beginning in the late 1960s, in particular, farmworkers built on federal anti-poverty initiatives to forge a spate of organizations—such as Organized Migrants in Community Action (OMICA), a Homestead-based membership organization that served as the catalyst for organizing and leadership in this period—to counter low wages, poor living conditions, and exploitation in the migrant stream. While the disasters, immigration policing, and growers' resistance disrupted communities and organizing drives, through these struggles, farmworkers developed durable civil society networks and institutions around common labor and community needs, often despite wavering support from national unions.

By the close of the 20th century, demonstrating the deep roots of more recent organizing innovations, Florida's farmworkers and organizers drew from these resources to empower communities through new housing initiatives, campaigns to win health and safety protections, new regulations, and environmental justice. In the case of the CIW's, migration that had often disrupted past organizing efforts became a strength as new immigrants brought new strategies and skills to the farmworkers' movement and built the Fair Food Program, which aims to reorder food supply chain dynamics, push brands to source from high-road growers, and raise wages. Today, these challenges to the corporate food system inspire workers, organizers, and labor practitioners nationally and internationally, making clear that the history of Florida's farmworkers is not just one of oppression but also one of community and labor resilience, dynamism, and power.

Chapter Outline

Chapter One examines the rise of industrial farming in the Everglades from the 1920s to 1940s, through episodes of disaster, depression, and war, showing how investors, growers, and landed interests established industrial farming by organizing to capitalize on crises to secure federal interventions in environmental and labor control and promote rural development. Despite stubborn flooding, land companies, politicians, boosters, and investors in the 1920s fueled speculative land buying by marketing the Everglades as a potential farming hub of national importance, in line with similar agricultural development projects in the U.S. West. This initiated efforts to remake the land and, absent critical infrastructure, left settlers and farmworkers vulnerable to natural disasters. Deadly hurricanes in 1926 and 1928 inundated farms, shattered infrastructure, burst the state's real estate market, and fueled an economic crisis that preceded and contributed to the Great Depression. Hurricanes also killed thousands of seasonal Black farmworkers from the South and Caribbean, underscoring the inequities ingrained in the region's developing agricultural sector.

Crisis did not doom development; rather, it opened possibilities for a form of "disaster capitalism" that bolstered the growth of industrial farms, as agricultural interests, many connected to Northern capital, came together to stoke public support and political investment in developing the region and positioned the Everglades as a vital to upholding the U.S. food supply. Capitalizing on the fallout from hurricanes, growers won interventions in flood control and, during the depression, expanded by acquiring distressed lands. By the early 1940s, South Florida's major growers were expanding acreage and winning awards for war-time production, while drawing migrant workers into an exploitative, racialized, low-wage labor system. When the New Deal and wartime labor scarcity threatened to raise wages and encourage farmworkers' organizing, organized growers called for emergency federal action to prevent food scarcity. In turn, the government responded by creating the BWI guestworker scheme, which allowed for the seasonal recruitment of deportable migrant workers tied to their employers. By shaping the government's disaster, relief, and wartime actions,

agricultural interests made real their vision of agro-industrial productivity in the Everglades and integrated into an emergent corporate food system. They also simultaneously reinforced rural poverty for decades to come and set in motion a slow-moving ecological crisis that environmentalists readily declare a "disaster" today.

While the first decades of Everglades agriculture saw growers establish the basis of industrial farming, in the post-war period, growers elevated South Florida to become a nationally significant agricultural region. In the decades after World War II, South Florida's industrial growers were at the fore of a major transformation in the U.S. food system. Post-war agricultural policies and subsidies and the increasing concentration of food buyers and marketing encouraged heavy investments in mechanization, corporate consolidation, and industrial production in the agricultural sector. As many small farms industrialized or shut down, industrial farms grew across the country, driven, in part, by policymakers and investors' embrace of technological and corporate management ideals, to meet the demands of consumers and supermarkets. The Everglades' agricultural sector was at the forefront of this post-war movement toward corporate consolidation and coordination, as large industrial growers formed diversified corporate operations and exiled Cuban sugar magnates rebuilt empires. By the 1960s, South Florida's agricultural sector was a national leader in corporate farming, dominated the winter produce market, and became the top U.S. producer of sugar cane.

Chapter Two reconstructs corporate consolidation and organization in the Everglades' agricultural sector, illuminating the central role corporate entities and sectoral associations played in managing production and the environment, shaping farmworkers' lives, and advancing political agendas that influenced hemispheric markets and the food system during the Cold War. This chapter shows how growers' coordination and associations in the 1950s and 1960s fueled agribusiness growth and profitability in South Florida. To confront ongoing water problems and crop loss, organized growers championed another expansion of federal water control infrastructure

with the C&SF Project, which reconfigured the Everglades and shaped the state's overall sunbelt development. Additionally, associations managed the recruitment of guestworkers, surveilled and contracted migratory U.S. farmworkers, and colluded to keep wages low and stymie union organizers. After the Cuban revolution, these processes reached a mature stage, as an influx of Cuban capital and expertise to Florida fueled an exponential expansion of cane production. Cuban-American firms erected new mills and growers' associations championed the geo-strategic importance of Everglades agriculture to secure trade protections. In these ways, enmeshed in the calculus of the Cold War, associations generated changes to the landscape, secured favorable policies and focused growers' class interests, and managed farm labor and undermined reform, while situating the region as a node for migration, capital investment and profitability, and supply chains.

As South Florida's agricultural sector rose to national prominence, its profitability and its control over the farm workforce may have appeared overdetermined; however, from the late 1960s, diverse and shifting populations of farmworkers in South Florida organized and mobilized to challenge growers' power. In this period, there was a surge of farmworkers' organizing in Florida, which dovetailed with a promising period for organized labor and the national farmworkers' movement, represented by the UFW's successful boycotts and union drives in California. Florida's farmworkers' activism enticed the UFW to the state, where it won a union drive at Coca-Cola's Minute Maid subsidiary in 1972. In rural towns, as growers brought change to the farm workforce through new labor contracting arrangements, Black and Latino farmworkers built on federal anti-poverty initiatives to advance labor and community movements and forge new organizations. Grassroots groups, such as OMICA, staged strikes and pickets, pushed for reform, and mobilized unionization campaigns, engaging thousands of farmworkers. They also established new housing developments, community resources, and advocacy and legal aid initiatives. Nevertheless, by the 1980s, corporate growers, associations, and contractors increasingly leveraged immigration

enforcement and used the implementation of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) to combat to undermine the burgeoning movement and frustrate farmworkers' organizing.

Chapter Three reconstructs the trajectory of Florida's farmworkers' movement from the late 1960s to the 1980s, as well as growers' resistance strategies, which were strengthened by immigration systems. It illuminates both the underrecognized rise of Florida's farmworkers' movement and examines how immigration policy, particularly IRCA's implementation, closed space for civil society and labor. While Chicano and immigrant communities forged new solidarities, movements, and organizations, ethnic change and migration also made possible new forms of repression grounded in immigration laws. Eventually, growers and contractors capitalized on IRCA's expansion of guestworker visas and enforcement framework to expand diffuse contracting arrangements, chill farmworkers' activism, and reinforce their power. Although farmworkers' struggles in this period failed to achieve widespread collective bargaining, farmworkers nonetheless built an array of organizations and programs that formed lasting rural civil society networks in South Florida.

Bridging the local and the global, Chapter Four examines interconnected dislocations and shifting economic and environmental terrain in the food system that challenged both South Florida's growers and immigrant farmworkers and communities at the close of the 20th century. The 1994 implementation of NAFTA and concurrent state and federal initiatives to restore the Everglades unsettled the position of the region's industrial growers on the landscape and in commodity markets. In the 1990s, South Florida's industrial farms obstructed politicians' efforts to restore the Everglades' waterflow and lost market share to Mexico as NAFTA lowered tariff barriers, undermining the historical claim that Everglades farming was essential in upholding the U.S. food supply. Many Everglades growers divested from the sector in this period of turmoil. Yet, the region's leading agricultural interests managed these threats by winning concessions, consolidating, and, in some cases, capitalizing on trade provisions to incorporate their Everglades holdings into

diversified, transnational portfolios. Through business and political organization, agricultural interests protected their position and profits in the Everglades ecosystem and further entrenched their operations within the corporate food system in a period of growing globalization. From South Florida, major agribusinesses leaned into the increasingly transnational nature of agriculture by extending their farming operations, sourcing, and supply chains into Mexico and the Caribbean (and beyond) and spreading extractive modes of farm labor management and industrial production.

While growers adapted to changing conditions, trade and economic restructuring, civil wars and political conflict, and poverty continued to generate migration to South Florida, where migrants encountered harsh new federal immigration enforcement technologies. Many of the same policies that facilitated the spread of industrial farming internationally also displaced rural communities across borders and drove workers and families to enter transnational migratory networks that placed them in industrial farming hubs. Instead of finding opportunity and refuge in South Florida, however, migrants faced systemic criminalization. After the implementation of IRCA, federal agencies used the region to pilot new immigration detention practices that spread nationwide as the U.S. government dramatically increased the incarceration of immigrants. These practices eroded already narrow pathways for social mobility in rural South Florida's immigrant communities. Considering the recalibrations of Everglades agribusiness together with dislocations and discrimination suffered by immigrant communities, illuminates, from above and below, how the region interfaced with a globalizing corporate food system at the close of the century. As globalization buttressed corporate power, migrant farmworkers bore its costs at the local level.

In the context of migration, displacement, and globalization, Chapter Five examines how farmworkers reconstituted communities and forged new organizing efforts through the 1990s that put Florida at the center of the revitalization of the farmworkers' movement. In this period, immigration policing, exploitation, displacement, and disaster made community, mutual aid,

solidarity, and new movements essential to improving Florida's farmworkers' lives. Farmworkers relied on organizational networks forged in past struggles, as well as the cultural resources and organizing skills migrants brought with them to the region, to sustain their communities and support renewed organizing. Building from these foundations, farmworkers fashioned models and movements designed to surmount dislocation, disaster, and South Florida's extractive agricultural labor and production systems. As local organizations generated change in rural communities, these challenges to agro-industrial power corporate food system reverberated across borders.

To illuminate farmworkers' resilience and this movement turning point, three case studies follow farmworkers' community organizing and new campaigns for labor and environmental justice. The first case explores how farmworkers rebuilt after Hurricane Andrew struck south of Miami in 1992 and devastated rural South Florida. In the months following Hurricane Andrew, farmworkers' organizations mobilized to provide relief, motivate state and federal action, and assist in reconstruction. Following these efforts, organizations like Centro Campesino expanded social services and nationally-recognized housing initiatives. Meanwhile, in Central Florida's farming region around Lake Apopka, farmworkers suffered from a slower-moving disaster, as mass pesticide poisoning inflicted their community. In response, the Farmworker Association of Florida (FWAF), launched far-reaching campaigns for farmworkers' health and safety and pesticide control, linking farmworkers with popular movements across the United States and the Americas for environmental justice. Concurrently, in Immokalee, the CIW animated a diverse community of farmworkers to take direct action, combat human trafficking, and, eventually, campaign to pressure major food brands to pay more for tomatoes and raise farmworkers' wages. While the CIW is widely recognized for compelling fast food and supermarket companies to raise wages and standards in their supply chains, the Coalition did not emerge from a vacuum, or act alone in empowering farmworkers' communities and challenging corporate agriculture in this period. Indeed, these cases show that the state had

become fertile ground for farmworkers' organizing innovations in the food system.

***

The history of the development and operations of the corporate food system in South Florida and conflict within it shows how agro-industrial power remade a vast and unique wetlands ecosystem, influenced far-reaching production trends and policies, and motivated tenacious farmworkers' movement for change. The organization of power in the region's agricultural sector made possible new modes of land consolidation and environmental engineering, corporate and political association, and labor control and exploitation. Yet, echoes of the history of the Everglades agricultural sector reverberate globally across the corporate food system, as agribusinesses across regions and borders have routinely externalized the ecological and social costs of industrial farming on communities, the environment, and workers. Within this system, food production has endangered critical ecosystems. Farmworkers have also endured poverty, coercion and abuse, and marginalization to support profits, produce low-cost foods for major multinationals, and feed consumers. As the long record of Florida's farmworkers' struggles demonstrates, however, over time and through dedicated organizing, power dynamics can shift within communities, economic sectors, and supply chains and movements can forward, however incrementally, a more sustainable and just food system.

Chapter 1: The Rise of the "Agro-industrial Empire of the South": Disaster Capitalism, Development, and Environmental and Labor Control in the Everglades, the 1920s-40s

To make the Everglades a productive and profitable farming region, agricultural interests needed to address persistent water control and labor supply problems, while establishing farming operations on an industrial scale. Early 20th-century private and state-sponsored drainage projects designed to remake the Everglades, however, began inauspiciously. Technological and financing difficulties as well as hurricanes in 1926 and 1928 halted construction, flooded farms, and led to a real estate bust in the state that forced out many smallholders and contributed to the onset of the Great Depression.[74] Thousands of seasonal farmworkers, who migrated to the state from throughout the Southeast and the Caribbean seeking opportunity, perished in the hurricanes. Nevertheless, rather than derailing development, these and future crises bolstered the growth of industrial farms, as growers organized to stoke popular and political support for settlement and investment in the region and position farming in the Everglades as essential to the nation's food supply. Beginning in the 1920s, this chapter shows how the region's early industrial growers, land companies, boosters, and investors used disasters, like hurricanes, and crises, like economic collapse and World War II, as catalysts to expand land holdings and secure federal interventions in water control, labor, and immigration. By the early 1940s, South Florida's major growers were expanding acreage and winning awards for war-time agricultural production, while drawing in migrant farmworkers from across the South and Caribbean into an exploitative and racialized low-wage labor system, which impoverished rural communities and generations of migrants.

Centering the development of industrial farming, a process that was contingent on capital-

[74] See: Christopher Knowlton, *Bubble in the Sun: The Florida Boom of the 1920s and How It Brought on the Great Depression* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2020).

driven modes of disaster response, and its impact on workers, rural communities, and the environment, this chapter tracks the transformation of South Florida from the 1920s to 1940s through episodes of disaster, economic and political crisis, and reconstruction and growth. The speculative drive among land companies, politicians, and settlers to develop the Everglades for agriculture faced environmental challenges, fostered conditions that favored large landholders, and left inhabitants vulnerable to deadly hurricanes in 1926 and 1928. The impact and aftermath of those storms revealed the economic and social inequities built into the region's developing agricultural sector, particularly in the lack of aid to farmworkers and the violent conscription of Black men in reconstruction efforts. In the 1920s and 1930s, growers, investors, and developers, many with ties to Northern capital, leveraged the fallout from major hurricanes to win long-desired federal interventions in flood control and, during the subsequent economic depression, expanded by acquiring distressed land holdings. Later, with the onset of World War II, labor scarcity and New Deal programs threatened the profitability and power of new industrial growers. Drawing from tactics used in past disasters, organized growers called for emergency intervention to strengthen their control over the farm workforce to prevent food scarcity. The government responded by creating a scheme for recruiting Caribbean guestworkers, whose employment and legal status were tied to individual growers, undermining a brief moment of mobilization and rising wages among U.S. farmworkers. In this way, agricultural interests entangled farmworkers into a brutal labor regime structured to uphold growers' power and began transforming the region's wetlands and waterways to support production. Agro-industrial interests, in the process, provided proof of concept that the Everglades could serve distant consumer markets as a nationally significant agricultural region.

In transforming the Everglades environment, South Florida's agricultural interests appropriated and deployed prominent progressive and developmentalist discourses cultivated in dialogue and competition with growers in the U.S. West. In a period when federal damming and

irrigation projects were reconfiguring arid western regions into major agricultural hubs, Everglades boosters' narratives presented the development of the region as a boon for the production of otherwise imported commodities, a place for small farmers to prosper, and a civilizing and egalitarian mission. These narratives, which excluded the Seminole Indian tribes that had long called the Everglades home and did not divert from Jim Crow norms, eventually served to justify the infusion of federal assistance in the region. After hurricanes tore through South Florida, twice flooding the banks of Lake Okeechobee, growers and investors warned that this vision for the Everglades was in jeopardy. President Hoover, Congress, and the Army Corps of Engineers heeded this warning and initiated construction on a 30 feet-high, 66-mile-long earthen dike (later expanded to 143 miles and renamed the Hoover Dike) around Lake Okeechobee, restricting its historical southward overflow to promote safe settlement and stable production.[75]

Despite the centrality of small farmers in boosters' marketing campaigns—such as the Chicago-based Everglades Land Company's promise that "a five-acre farm will give better returns than a twenty acre[s]" in the North and West—in the wake of disaster, small-holding "pioneer" farmers largely folded by the 1930s as industrial farming took shape.[76] Industrial farms that could meet high capital requirements and produce across vast acreage came to dominate the sector, often by acquiring lands from economically-distressed growers. These industrial operations were generally expansive, family-owned businesses that encompassed several farms or vertically-integrated sugar and produce operations controlled by distant corporations. Not only did industrial growers increase South Florida's produce and sugar output, but they also organized to mediate federal priorities concerning the Everglades environment, farm labor, and agricultural and trade policies. Indeed, as

---

[75] See: Andrés, *Power and Control in the Imperial Valley*; Verónica Castillo-Muñoz, *The Other California: Land, Identity, and Politics on the Mexican Borderlands* (University of California Press, 2016); Henry Knight, *Tropic of Hopes: California, Florida, and the Selling of American Paradise, 1869-1929* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013).
[76] J.H. Witney, "Florida Everglades Land Company," *Florida Everglades Review* (September 1910): 8. Florida Historical Agriculture and Rural Life, University of Florida Digital Collections (UFDC).

Gail Hollander shows, in the inter-war period, Florida's growers convinced lawmakers that, to avoid future sugar rationing and promote food security, the sugar sector needed import protections, a policy that encouraged further capital investment in South Florida.[77]

The demimonde of the development of industrial farming in the Everglades was the construction of a labor system designed to control workers' mobility and suppress activism and wages through racialized violence and exploitative labor recruitment**.** As farms expanded in the 1920s and 1930s, growers perennially struggled to secure a seasonal, low-wage workforce in the remote Everglades. Over time, growers engaged international and domestic migratory networks, recruiting Caribbean workers, largely from the Bahamas, and U.S. migrant workers, mainly southern Black workers and families, dislocated from tenant farming or desperate for work in the depression. Florida gradually became the anchor of an East Coast migrant stream. In the stream, where peonage and forced labor thrived under Jim Crow laws and norms, migrants worked the state's winter harvest and then traveled north, often at crew leaders' direction, following the seasonal timing of harvests.

South Florida's growers' systems of labor control proved to be highly adaptable. While farmworkers suffered the brunt of the devastation of hurricanes in the 1920s and years of deplorable living and working conditions, their plight did not receive meaningful federal attention until the New Deal. Under President Roosevelt, reformers established sanitary government labor camps and other migrant service programs in the region.[78] From these camps, less dependent on farm work for basic security, migrant workers pressed for higher wages. In response, as Hahamovitch and others have shown, South Florida's growers moved to replicate a "western" model of international labor

[77] Gail M. Hollander, "Securing Sugar: National Security Discourse and the Establishment of Florida's Sugar Producing Region," *Economic Geography* 81, No. 4 (2005): 347-8 and Hollander, *Raising Cane in the 'Glades*. On the involvement of Michigan's sugar beet growers in sugar geopolitics, see: Kathleen Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny: Migrant Labor, Industrial Agriculture, and Imperial Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 2009).
[78] Donald H. Grubbs, "The Story of Florida's Migrant Farm Workers," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 40, No. 2 (1961): 103-122.

recruitment in the region, capitalizing on established migration networks with the Caribbean, by securing an emergency labor importation program with the British West Indies during World War II.[79] The BWI labor program provided farms with temporary, deportable guestworkers and supported growers in reasserting control over the farm workforce.

The rise of industrial agriculture in South Florida upon the twin foundations of environmental and labor control illuminates how disasters and crises and the subsequent political responses to them facilitated rural capitalist development. In other words, it demonstrates "disaster capitalism" at work in the agricultural sector. Naomi Klein popularized the term disaster capitalism to describe how politicians and corporations use political and environmental crises to forward neoliberal policies and extractive agendas.[80] As historians and other scholars have argued, disasters and disaster response have long played a role in shaping modern capitalism by reinforcing the power of political and economic elites, prompting modernization schemes, remaking built environments, and exacerbating inequality.[81] At times, they have, likewise, generated community solidarity, collective demands on the state, and reform.[82] Yet, with some exceptions, how these dynamics shaped rural regions, and, particularly, the rise of industrial farming, the production base of the modern corporate food system, are under-analyzed questions.

Agricultural interests used disasters to foster labor and production regimes that were both particular to the Everglades' vexing environment and allowed them to meet the needs of an emergent national food system. Beyond the geopolitics of sugar and the formation of guestworker programs, to understand the rise of the region's diversified agricultural sector, one also must account

---

[79] See: Hahamovitch, *The Fruits of Their Labor,* 200-203 and "Sitting Idly By," 100-104; Conlin, "Invisible Hands in the Winter Garden,"19.
[80] Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008).
[81] See: Kevin Rozario, *The Culture of Calamity: Disaster and the Making of Modern America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 3-10; Joanna Leslie Dyl, *Seismic City: An Environmental History of San Francisco's 1906 Earthquake* (Seattle: University of Washington Press. 2017), 166-7.
[82] See: Jacob A.C. Remes, *Disaster Citizenship: Survivors, Solidarity, and Power in the Progressive Era* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 19-20; 196.

for how growers organized around discursive threats to food security to shape development and class relations. Elite disaster response fostered the rise of flood control infrastructure in the region. With a war on, growers also drew from a discourse perfected in past disasters to make rising wages and workers' organization a perceived threat to food security and undermine reform. An examination of the remaking of the Everglades, thus, elevates disaster capitalism as a causal discursive force in the development of industrial agriculture in the early 20th century and the political construction of the labor relations regime it relied upon.

In Florida, agricultural interests presented the Everglades as an emergent agricultural "empire" to investors, food buyers, and lawmakers. While boosters and growers understood that environmental and labor control was incomplete in the region, agricultural interests generated federal interventions and investment in the region by decrying the loss of the Everglades' productive *potential.* In representing the Everglades agriculture as essential to the nation, growers shaped federal policies and willed their collective agenda into reality, transformed the Everglades ecosystem, and tapped into expanding national markets.[83] This, in turn, isolated and impoverished farmworkers within a harsh labor regime of labor control in an unforgiving landscape. It also decimated the complex Everglades ecosystem and unleashed a slower-moving ecological disaster in the region.

Development in the Eye of the Storm

In South Florida, growers and developers manifested their version of disaster capitalism on a landscape that, in many ways, was inhospitable to concentrated economic activity and replete with natural and climatic hazards. Despite some limited 19th-century canaling efforts, water essentially flowed freely over the Everglades ecosystem from the early 1900s to the early 1920s. Florida's

[83] In his examination of the integration of the West into what the "cattle-beef complex" centered in Chicago in the late 19th century, Joshua Specht finds that boosters' "ability to ... represent an ecosystem for investment capital may be more important for initially integrating a landscape into an economy than actually transforming that landscape." The case of the Everglades bears out this observation. See: Specht, *Red Meat Republic*, 117.

progressive politicians embraced an ethos that draining the "swamp" would spur a migration of small farmers to the region and economic and population growth. The promise of profits from agriculture and real estate initially fueled financial speculation and population growth upon a difficult landscape. In time, it became clear that state officials, land companies, and other boosters had seriously overestimated the ease with which the Everglades could be drained, while underestimating the labor, chemical, and capital inputs required to farm profitably in the region.[84] An examination of the early development of the Everglades into the 1920s shows how the region's environment shaped nascent production, marketing, and labor processes in the Everglades. Ultimately, the state's reclamation priorities, the rapid growth of South Florida in the 1920s, and the speculative nature of land and agricultural development reproduced social inequality and proved to be disastrous.

The state's early efforts to make the Everglades fit for settlement and farming produced only limited tangible infrastructure improvements while it empowered corporate investors and speculators. After newly-elected Governor Napoleon Bonaparte Broward declared war on the Everglades, the populist established the Everglades Drainage District (EDD) in 1905 to undertake reclamation projects and open land for his support base of small farmers. At that time, only some 200 Seminole Indians and a scattering of hardscrabble farmers, plume hunters, and fugitives called the Everglades home.[85] To finance drainage, Broward initially sought to tax absentee Everglades landowners, mainly railroad magnates like Henry Flagler, a former Standard Oil executive who had secured over two million acres in state land grants to build his Florida East Coast Railroad line down the coast. Although unsuccessful in enacting a tax, the state settled with the railroads and other large landholders, who returned some 2 million acres to the state. While Broward wrested back some

[84] See: John A. Heitmann, "The Beginnings of Big Sugar in Florida, 1920-1945," Florida *Historical Quarterly* 77, No. 1 (Summer, 1998): 45.
[85] National Park Service, "Drain the Swamp: Reclaiming the Everglades," accessed October 2023, https://www.nps.gov/subjects/southfloridacollections/drain-the-swamp.htm; On Broward's life and career, see: Samuel Proctor, *Napoleon Bonaparte Broward: Florida's Fighting Democrat* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1950).

public control of the land he intended to drain, during his administration the state faced funding problems and only managed to cut around six miles of canals. Ultimately, Broward turned to selling off state land to large land companies and investors to finance continued dredging.[86]

As a result, private land companies led in marketing the region to potential investors and growers and coordinating development patterns in the Everglades. In one of the first major sales made in Broward's term, Richard Bolles, a developer who held large Colorado mining and Oregon agricultural holdings, purchased 500,000 acres of Everglades swampland for $1 million. The Southern States Land and Timber Company, a concern based in New Orleans that claimed Arthur Lehman as its largest stockholder, acquired some 1,060,000 in South Florida, including 25 percent of Palm Beach County by 1920.[87] In Southwest Florida, Barron Collier, an advertising tycoon based in New York, also purchased over one million acres by the early 1920s, becoming the single largest private landowner in the state. Meanwhile, Flagler's Model Land Company, formed to sell off his massive holdings, promoted development as Flagler continued to extend the construction of his railroad line from Jacksonville to Key West, a feat he accomplished in 1912, inspiring the establishment of several resorts, hotels, and railroad towns along the line.[88] With the endorsement of state officials, land companies advertised widely, attempting to lure in large agricultural investors and selling plots ten acres at a time to both speculators and small farmers, who hoped to turn a profit as drainage progressed.[89]

Yet, drainage was slow, and many investors and would-be farmers were disappointed to

---

[86] Christopher F. Meindl, "The Origin of Early Everglades Landowners," *The Florida Geographer* 33 (2002): 18; Blake, *Land into Water*, 88-105; F.T. Izuno, "A Brief History of Water Management in the Everglades Agricultural Area," University of Florida IFAS Extension, Circular 815 (June 1989): 3.

[87] Joe Earman, "Edgar B. Stern," *Palm Beach Post*, February 4, 1920; Joe Earman, "Arthur Lehman," *Palm Beach Post*, February 10, 1920.

[88] Les Standiford, *Last Train to Paradise: Henry Flagler and the Spectacular Rise and Fall of the Railroad that Crossed an Ocean* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2002).

[89] Charlton W. Tebeau, *Florida's Last Frontier: The History of Collier County* (Miami: University of Miami Press, 1957), 84; Meindl, "The Origin of Early Everglades Landowners."

learn that most land companies' claims ranged from exaggerated to outright false. While drainage was largely rhetorical in many areas, land companies, such as the Chicago-based Palm Beach Farms Company, enticed potential buyers with the promise of cheap land with soil "ready for the plow.[90]" In 1912, a group of investors, who purchased five-acre tracts from the company for $250, traveled to Florida to find that many of their plots were still submerged underwater.[91] Similarly, Bolles' Florida Fruit Lands Company advertised tracts in the western Everglades as a tropical "Garden of Eden," enlisting buyers to pay $240 to bid on land. At the company's 1911 auction in Ft. Lauderdale, some 3,000 buyers found that most of the lands in question were water-logged, prompting one Iowa man to complain that he had never before "bought land by the gallon." A class of buyers subsequently sued Bolles, settling out of court, and federal prosecutors indicted him for mail fraud and other charges. Bolles ultimately evaded a guilty verdict by redirecting blame to the state government for its failure to drain the region.[92]

The controversy generated by disappointed buyers moved Florida lawmakers to commission an engineering report to bolster confidence in Everglades reclamation. Led by the famed engineer Isham Randolf, who designed the canal system that reversed the flow of the Chicago River and served as an engineer on the Panama Canal project, the 1914 report guided the state's drainage projects until 1928. It disputed the notion that drainage could be attained at a low per-acre cost by simply siphoning water out of the Everglades into the ocean through canals.[93] Instead, Randolf,

---

[90] Palm Beach Farms Company, "With the Camera in Florida: A Collection of Photographs Showing Land and Products in Palm Beach County," 1910 (est.). Historical Florida Brochures, Pamphlets, and Promotional Materials, Special Collections, Digital Collections, University of Miami Library.
[91] "Lake Worth Beach, Florida," Palm Beach County History Online. Accessed October 2023, https://www.pbchistoryonline.org/page/city-of-lake-worth.
[92] Grunwald, *The Swamp*, 154-55; "Everglades Biographies: Richard "Dicky" J. Bolles," Everglades Information Network & Digital Library at Florida International University Libraries, PALMM State Universities of Florida, accessed October 2023, http://everglades.fiu.edu/reclaim/bios/bolles.htm
[93] Randolph's report was part of the consistent politicization of official engineering reports since the initiation of Everglades drainage. A 1911 USDA report written by mid-level engineer James Wright gave a scientific basis to Broward's early vision for draining the Everglades. Although riddled with errors, and initially shelved by Wright's

accounting for rainfall and other geological factors in the region for the first time, called for more extensive canaling and land moving, while ultimately endorsing the feasibility of the drainage project. The government-backed report fueled land companies' advertising campaigns and continued speculative investment in the Everglades. Meanwhile, presciently, experts with the Everglades Land Company, which continued to market muck land, found that drainage would cause soil erosion and fires and that, in general, small-scale farming would be impractical due to the capital needed for equipment, wages, and private irrigation and drainage systems.[94]

Although many land buyers only invested in the Everglades hoping to realize quick profits, a small number of farmers and other settlers began to form towns around Lake Okeechobee, like Belle Glade, Pahokee, Clewiston, Canal Point, and Moore Haven. Early settlements grew off the increased war-time demand for vegetables from 1917 to 1918.[95] The nature of small-scale Everglades farming into the mid-1920s was difficult, ephemeral, and high-risk. Northern and Mid-western farmers— southerners mostly avoided speculative swampland farming— attempted to eke out a profit near Lake Okeechobee, laboriously clearing tangles of custard apple trees to access the muck soil near the lake's shore.[96] By 1921, about 2,000 people lived in 16 new towns around Lake Okeechobee, where hard work was often rewarded with flooded fields or crop failures related to soil

---

supervisor until a Florida Senator published it in 1911 in the Senate record, the report claimed that that eight canals dug Southeast from Lake Okeechobee would drain the region and reveal rich soil at a low per-acre cost. Although the controversy around the report forced Wright out of his federal job, the report featured in Land company's advertising and eventually earned Wright a job with the state government. Christopher F. Meindl, Derek H. Alderman, and Peter Waylen, "On the Importance of Environmental Claims-Making: The Role of James O. Wright in Promoting the Drainage of Florida's Everglades in the Early Twentieth Century," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 92, no. 4 (2002) 689-96; Aaron D. Purcell, "Plumb Lines, Politics, and Projections: The Florida Everglades and the Wright Report Controversy," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 80, No. 2 (2001): 190-95.

[94] Meindl, "The Origin of Early Everglades Landowners," 18-19; Daniel W. Mead, et al., "Report on the Drainage of the Everglades of Florida with Special Reference to the Lands of the Everglade Land Sales Company," November 12, 1912, 56-7; 90-92. Ernest R. Graham Papers, University of Florida Digital Collections (hereafter, UFDC).

[95] See: Blake, *Land into Water- Water into Land*, 128-30; Lawrence E. Will, *Swamp to Sugarbowl: Pioneer Days in Belle Glade* (Great Outdoors Publishing, 1968).

[96] Meindl, "The Origin of Early Everglades Landowners," 19; Junius Dovell, "The Everglades, A Florida Frontier," *Agricultural History Society* 22, no. 3 (July 1948): 191.

nutrition.[97]

Despite persistent drainage and soil problems, growers started profiting by shipping "truck" crops like green beans, leaf vegetables, and tomatoes to northern markets and two sugar companies began milling in South Florida. As agricultural profitability and productivity declined in much of the U.S. South, Florida's productivity outpaced the region and, by the mid-1920s, the state was the number two source, behind California, for shipments of fruits and vegetables.[98] Although citrus production in Central and Northern Florida accounted for much of the state's agricultural productivity, South Florida's Dade and Palm Beach counties led the state— and the nation in the winter months— in tomato and bean shipments, respectively.[99]

Improvements to transportation, facilitating access to markets and key inputs, continued canaling, and government-sponsored research into farming techniques aided growers in their endeavors. By 1925, the state had dredged nearly 435 miles of canals for $15,000,000, which, along with relatively low rainfall in the early 1920s, opened more Everglades acreage for production.[100] While canals offered growers the ability to transport crops by barge, water travel was unreliable and proved to be an obstacle for both growers shipping crops and wholesale buyers who sought to procure vegetables from the region.[101] When the Florida East Coast Railroad extended spurs to Canal Point, Clewiston, and Belle Glade in the mid-1920s and a toll highway was completed in 1924,

---

[97] U.S. Department of Commerce, 15th Census of the United States, Vo. 1, "Table 4: Population of Counties by Minor Civil Divisions: 1930, 1920, 1910," (Washington DC: GPO, 1931) in Box 6, "hurricanes" 7, John Attaway Collection, McKay Archives, Florida Southern College (hereafter, FSC).

[98] For example, in 1925, Florida had an estimated one million acres dedicated to agriculture valued at 105 million. In comparison, Georgia's agricultural sector generated $234 million on 9.6 million acres while Louisiana 161 million on 4.3 million acres. See: Joe Hugh Reese, "Farm Opportunities in Florida," South 6 (January 1926), 4 in "Belle Glade," Box 2, "Magazine articles," Palm Beach County Historical Society (hereafter, PBHS). On shipments, see: Bureau of Agricultural Economics, US Department of Agriculture, "Car-Lot Shipments of Fruits and Vegetables from Stations in the United States for the Calendar Years 1932 and 1933," Statistical Bulletin No. 50 (Washington, D.C.: US GPO, 1936), 4; 12; 14; 25.

[99] Neill Rhodes, "From Field to Market with Florida Vegetables and Citrus Fruits," Florida Department of Agriculture, no. 88 (October 1938), 11; 77.

[100] Jeanne Bellamy, *Taming the Everglades: A Report on Water Control* (Miami: Miami Herald, 1949) in "Everglades" Box 1, Booklets, PBHS.

[101] See: Will, *Swamp to Sugarbowl,* 176.

connecting Lake Okeechobee to West Palm Beach, growers had more reliable access to transportation hubs and markets. A spate of packing houses popped up in the mid-1920s to take advantage of this new market access. Centralized marketing, in turn, assisted growers in securing higher prices for their produce by instituting standardized cleaning, grading, and packing on crops.[102] To address persistent crop failures, Frank E. Bryant, a partner in the Palm Beach Farms Company, successfully lobbied the USDA to establish a field station at Canal Point in 1920 dedicated to researching ideal sugar cane varieties, while the state additionally established an experiment station in nearby Belle Glade in 1921 dedicated to studying soil nutrition in the Everglades.[103] Additionally, the Everglades' proximity to Central Florida's "bone valley"— a 1.3 million acre region rich in phosphate deposits that has made the state the leading U.S. producer of this key ingredient in fertilizers—facilitated growers' access to key inputs and provided future opportunities for diversification.[104]

By the mid-1920s, a speculative land boom had come to Florida, which saw development and investment in both rural lands and coastal cities, exponential population growth, and the rise of Florida's tourism sector, with some 6 million people visiting the state over three years.[105] Cities like Miami, Coral Gables, and Palm Beach expanded by canaling off the perimeters of the Everglades and undertaking coastal dredge-and-fill operations that attracted new residents and real estate investment. While the Florida East Coast Railroad provided growers with access to northern

---

[102] "Notes from Files of *Everglades News*," 1-3 in "Everglades" Box 1, Historic Manuscripts, PBHS; L. LeMar Stephan, "Vegetable Production in the Northern Everglades," *Economic Geography* 20, No. 2 (1944): 96; Douglas, *Everglades*, 344. See also: Bruce D. Epperson, *Roads through the Everglades: The Building of the Ingraham Highway, the Tamiami Trail, and the Conners Highway, 1914-1931* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2016)

[103] "Canal Point," Palm Beach County History Online, Historical Society of Palm Beach, accessed October 2023, www.pbchistoryonline.org/page/canal-point. See also: James L. McCorkle, Jr., "Agricultural Experiment Stations and Southern Truck Farming," *Agricultural History* 62, No. 2 (Spring 1998): 234-43.

[104] See: Ted Ehman, *Florida's Gray Gold the Phosphate Mining Boom in the Deep South, 1868-2018* (Sarasota: Pineapple Press, 2020); Dan Egan, *The Devil's Element: Phosphorus and a World Out of Balance* (New York: WW Norton, 2023)

[105] Christopher Knowlton, *Bubble in the Sun: The Florida Boom of the 1920s and How It Brought on the Great Depression* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2020), xvi-xix.

markets, it also shipped new residents, tourists, investors, and construction materials south. Miami, the center of the boom, led the nation in per-capita housing construction by 1924. So-called "binder boys" converged on the city, selling real estate options, or "binders," which investors often traded several times for increasingly higher prices before the first payment on the property in question came due.[106] Easy credit, a 1924 amendment to the state constitution prohibiting a state income tax, increased road building, and marketing campaigns and speeches by the likes of William Jennings Byran drove frenzied speculation and construction. Through 1925, investors found that they could turn a quick profit in an environment where, with some luck, $1,000 options could be sold for $50,000. Urban lots in Miami that sold for $2,000 in the early 1900s went for $500,000 to $1,000,000 in 1925. That year, the Tatum Brothers Company, one of Miami's first real estate firms, declared "the boom is on" as it logged $40,000,000 in sales and expanded holdings south of Miami to sell to out-of-state investors by acquiring 50,000 acres from the Model Land Company.[107]

In the developing "winter garden" around Lake Okeechobee, where land prices rose to $1,000 an acre in 1925, large agricultural concerns and rural towns expanded.[108] A few corporate interests established industrial farms, remaking the landscape by installing pumps and private canals to tap into the state's network of canals. For example, the Brown Paper Company, based in New England, acquired some 70,000 acres and installed dikes and a pumping system to support a peanut and truck farming operation. The Brown Company Farms, held by the local press to be the largest and most promising industrial concern in the Everglades in this period, established a village on its land, employed over 500 farmworkers, and shipped over 600 carloads of peanuts and vegetables in

[106] Paul S. George, "Brokers, Binders, and Builders: Greater Miami's Boom of the Mid-1920s," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 65, No. 1 (1986): 30-35.
[107] George, "Brokers, Binders, and Builders," 30, 41; Kenneth Ballinger, *Miami Millions: The Dance of the Dollars in the Great Florida Land Boom of 1925* (Miami: The Franklin Press, inc., 1936), 6, 63.
[108] "Notes from Files of *Everglades News*," 3.

its first years.[109] Henry Ford and Harvey Firestone jointly purchased 18,000 acres west of the lake and began experimenting with rubber cultivation.[110] Taking advantage of improved market access, out-of-state "suitcase farmers" also flocked to the region, leasing improved plots from land companies in the winter months before leaving for greener pastures. Tenants farmed about 75 percent of the agricultural land around Lake Okeechobee into the 1930s.[111]

Sugar production, too, slowly began to take shape, a project given weight by domestic sugar shortages during World War I[112]. Frank E. Bryant founded the Florida Sugar and Food Products company and built the first sugar mill near Lake Okeechobee in 1922 at Canal Point, making use of the field station he pushed the USDA to establish there.[113] Facing financing troubles almost immediately, Bryant soon sold his holdings to Bror Dahlberg's New Orleans-based Celotex company, which sought to manufacture building materials from sugarcane byproducts and formed the subsidiary Southern Sugar company in Clewiston in 1925. Over 43,000 acres, the Southern Sugar Company built a private 31-mile dike and installed 3 major pumps capable of moving over 100,000 gallons of water a minute to and from the state's canals as needed, a feat that showcased the Everglades' agricultural possibilities to investors.[114] Nearby, the Pennsylvania Sugar Company, a Philadelphia sugar refiner that processed sugar for some of Cuba's largest producers, established a mill and cane fields on 75,000 acres purchased from the Tatum Brothers northwest of Miami.[115] Though the early 1920s, "Pennsuco" invested heavily in machinery, water pumps, and canals and

[109] "Brown Company Farms Designed to Produce Quantity of Peanuts; Potato Crop Success," *Palm Beach Post*, April 21, 1929; Emilie Keyes, "Shawano Illustrates Agricultural Possibilities in County, " *Palm Beach Post*, September 21, 1930" in "Business and Industry: Agriculture," Box 3, PBHS.
[110] Frank Parker Stockbridge and John Holliday Perry, *Florida in the Making* (New York: The de Bower Publishing Co., 1926), 233.
[111] Steve Davis and John Ogden, *Everglades: The Ecosystem and Its Restoration* (Boca Raton: CRC Group, 1994), 92-4.
[112] See: Hollander, *Raising Cain in the 'Glades*, 62-3.
[113] "Notes from Files of *Everglades News*," 1, 6.
[114] Dovell, "The Everglades, a Florida Frontier," 195; "Sugar Firm Erected Own Drain Works," *Tampa Daily Times*, January 12, 1929.
[115] William A. Graham " The Pennsuco Sugar Experiment," *Tequesta* 11 (1951): 28-30.

dikes, proclaiming, despite frequent flooding and crop failures, that it had initiated "a new epoch in the industrial and agricultural history of the East Coast of Florida."[116]

Gradually, South Florida's growers, large and small, entered a national and international market in fresh produce and sugar and began competing and corresponding with other major agricultural hubs. California, in particular, acted as a foil of sorts for South Florida. At the turn of the century, while Florida's politicians and landed interests promoted draining the swamp, in Southern California, similar actors, including the Imperial Land Company, were engaged in conquering the Colorado River to irrigate the region's desert landscape—later named the Imperial Valley. After private canaling collapsed, diverting the Colorado River and creating the Salton Sea, the state stepped in to manage irrigation in 1911. Boosters presented irrigation of the Imperial Valley as a "civilizing" mission, aimed at creating a "land of promise for rich and poor.[117]" Employing similar, and sometimes competing, developmentalist discourses and marketing campaigns around agricultural opportunity, California's growers became Florida's main domestic competitors, as well as national leaders in fruit and vegetable production.[118] Internationally, South Florida's growers faced competition from Mexico and Cuba, with Cuba, infused by U.S. capital, being the world-leading producer of sugar after World War I and the largest supplier to the United States.[119]

To satisfy the demands of new supermarket firms and distant consumers, growers in states like Florida, California, and Texas, drawing inspiration from the successful mechanization of wheat and corn harvesting after World War I, embraced industrial production practices and economies of

[116] John A. Heitmann, "The Beginnings of Big Sugar in Florida, 1920-1945," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 77, No.1 (Summer, 1998): 46.
[117] Henry Knight, *Tropic of Hopes: California, Florida, and the Selling of American Paradise, 1869-1929* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2013), 152.
[118] Knight, *Tropic of Hopes,* 5-15. See also: Henry Knight, "Water in Paradise: California, Florida, and Environmental Rivalry in the Gilded Age," *Environmental History* 20, No. 4 (October 2015): 619-20; US Department of Agriculture, "Car-Lot Shipments of Fruits and Vegetables from Stations in the United States for the Calendar Years 1932 and 1933," 4.
[119] Rhodes, "From Field to Market with Florida Vegetables and Citrus Fruits," 80; Hollander, "Securing Sugar," 347.

scale and the business culture and practices of industrialization.[120] As industrial agricultural enterprises grew through the 1920s, so too did growers' demands for labor policies and infrastructure projects designed to bring a degree of predictability to production. Ultimately, growers' industrialization and integration into expanding commodity markets fueled ecological degradation, such as deforestation in Cuba, and social stratification, seen in the exploitation of Mexican labor in Texas and California. It also undermined more egalitarian visions of agriculture in regions like the Everglades and the Imperial Valley.[121]

Like other centers of commodity production, the expansion of industrial farming in South Florida gradually enclosed the commons and generated a demand for seasonal labor. Growers faced several challenges in procuring labor. The region's rapid development meant that a robust farm labor market did not exist locally. Growers also had to compete with urban construction and tourism employers. Further, the Great Migration, the exodus of six million African Americans from the South was underway, during which roughly 90,000 African Americans, or 27 percent of Florida's Black population, left the state in the early 1920s.[122] Everglades growers benefited, however, from agricultural stagnation, dislocation, and decline in the rest of the South and positioned the region as the winter hub for migratory labor recruitment networks. In the early 1920s, crew leaders began recruiting to Florida "migrant" workers, mainly African-American families who sought to escape poverty and tenant farming in the South. From the South, crews seasonally contracted with Northeastern truck farmers, who had relied on itinerant farmworkers since the late 19th century, which led to the formation of an East Coast "migrant stream.[123]"

---

[120] Fitzgerald, *Every Farm a Factory*, 3-7.
[121] Knight, 150-3; Andrés, *Power and Control in the Imperial Valley*, 8-10, 45; Reinaldo Funes Monzote, *From Rainforest to Cane Field in Cuba: An Environmental History Since 1492* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008). See also: Richard P. Tucker, *Insatiable Appetite: The United States and the Ecological Degradation of the Tropical World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 37-50.
[122] Conlin, "Invisible Hands in the Winter Garden," 87.
[123] "Interstate Migration: New York City Hearings," Select Committee to Investigate the Interstate Migration of

Caribbean workers, too, mainly from the Bahamas, gradually entered the farm workforce. Bahamians and others had long migrated seasonally to the state to work on fishing, wrecking, and sponging boats, as well as railroad and construction projects. Many Caribbean migrants also settled and established enclaves in Miami, the Keys, and other coastal cities.[124] Between 1900 and 1920, 10,000 to 12,000 Bahamians, or one-fifth of the island's total population, had left for Florida at some point, with most engaging in seasonal, circular labor migration. While the 1924 Immigration Act imposed quota restrictions on the West Indies, some 6,000 Bahamians still migrated to the state annually in the 1920s, using Great Britain's unfilled quotas or moving irregularly, to work during the state's boom years. Over time, the growing truck farms and sugar concerns near Lake Okeechobee worked to recruit Bahamian workers to the fields as well.[125]

South Florida's multi-ethnic, predominately Black migratory farm workforce faced social isolation, segregation, and poor living conditions. Rapid development and a focus on short-term gains meant that growers and local officials invested little in farmworkers' housing. Workers lived in shacks, make-shift camps, lean-tos, and rural slums.[126] The transient nature of farm work, low wages, and Jim Crow oppression meant farmworkers had few resources and little social capital in Florida, where debt peonage, forced labor, and racial violence were common.

Nevertheless, as Zora Neale Hurston observed, these workers were central to transforming the "sparsely inhabited" Everglades into a "hothouse for the nation." The construction of a low-wage, seasonal workforce allowed growers to expand acreage with a degree of confidence and keep

---

Destitute Citizens, July 29-31, 1940 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1940), 537; Verónica Martínez-Matsuda, *Migrant Citizenship: Race, Rights, and Reform in the U.S. Farm Labor Camp Program* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 111.

[124] N. D. B. Connolly, *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 25.

[125] Conlin, "Invisible Hands in the Winter Garden," 70, 85.

[126] Marian Moser Jones, "Tempest in the Forbidden City: Racism, Violence, and Vulnerability in the 1926 Miami Hurricane," *Journal of Policy History*, 26, No. 3 (2014): 389; Martínez-Matsuda, *Migrant Citizenship*,198-9.

consumers "stocked with vegetables and fruit in the winter."[127] It was also South Florida's farmworkers who disproportionately bore the ravages of hurricanes in 1926 and 1928.

Disasters Strike

While for some South Florida represented a land of "almost unlimited agricultural potential," in the words of the University of Florida's Agricultural College Dean P.H. Rolfs, when disastrous hurricanes struck the region in 1926 and 1928, they revealed the contradictions and inequities built into the Everglades' nascent agro-industrial sector.[128] As has become a common refrain in disaster studies, the occurrence of natural hazards, like hurricanes, does not necessarily result in disasters. Rather, disasters are social phenomena, the result of the deadly failures and chaos that hazards trigger due to poor government planning, business avarice, human neglect, and the like.[129] In the early 20th century, investors and settlers sought to profit from Everglades lands that historically flooded and were situated in the tropical cyclone zone of the greater Caribbean.[130] Development and population growth decoupled from effective flood controls exacerbated risks near Lake Okeechobee, a shallow lake that regularly overflowed its banks and quickly swelled in the direction of high winds. This not only made life difficult for so-called pioneer farmers, but also set the stage for the devastation of rural towns, an economic crisis, and the mass loss of farmworkers' lives. After the hurricane struck, sky-rocketing land values based on speculative investments proved to be illusory, as the limited extension of public infrastructure in the region undermined real capital investments in the agricultural sector and beyond. In the agricultural communities, where migrant workers lived in shabby housing around Lake Okeechobee, subsequent recovery and reconstruction

---

[127] Zora Neale Hurston, "The Migrant Worker in Florida," 195x in Zora Neale Hurston collection, MS Group 6, Box 10, University of Florida, Special Collections, PK Yonge Library of Florida History (hereafter, PKY).
[128] U.S. Railroad Administration, Florida (St. Augustine: The Record Company, 1919), iii. Florida Historical Agriculture and Rural Life, UFDC.
[129] E. L. Quarantelli, "The Importance of Thinking of Disasters as Social Phenomena," *University of Delaware Disaster Research Center*, Preliminary Paper 184 (1992).
[130] On the history of hurricanes in this zone, see: Stuart B. Schwartz, *Sea of Storms: A History of Hurricanes in the Greater Caribbean from Columbus to Katrina* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015)

efforts prioritized business interests and reinforced racial hierarchies.[131]

Even before a hurricane struck South Florida in September of 1926, a calamity had threatened Florida's land boom. In January of that year, the Prins Valdemar, a 240-foot 19th-century sailing transport, capsized in Miami harbor. Hoteliers were retrofitting the vessel to open a floating cabaret and inn when high wind overturned it. The Prins Valdemar blocked the harbor's turning basin for six weeks before it was removed. During that time, no building materials could enter the city's harbor, and construction and trading on real estate slowed for the first time in over a year.[132] Still, after a period of almost unprecedented population and capital movement to the state, most investors expected the market to recover in the spring or fall tourist seasons. Indeed, real estate firms like the Tatum Brothers continued to see healthy sales in early 1926.[133]

This cautious optimism came crashing down in September 1926, when a hurricane rocked Miami with 125-mile-per-hour winds and a massive storm surge, flattening resort hotels, homes, and businesses. The fierce storm then passed over the town of Moore Haven, on the southeastern shore of Lake Okeechobee, where it pushed the lake's water through the town's earthen dikes and unleashed a roaring flood throughout the area.[134] After the storm, dead bodies and destroyed homes littered the Everglades. The storm caused over $100 million in damage, turning development into rubble along the coast, and left Moore Haven and nearby Everglades towns, where approximately 300 people perished, flooded for months. In total, up to 800 died in the storm; although, estimates of the death toll vary considerably as many bodies were lost and Black storm victims were not

[131] See: Theodore Steinberg, "Do-It-Yourself Deathscape: The Unnatural History of Natural Disaster in South Florida," *Environmental History* 2, No. 4 (1997): 420-22; Christopher M. Church, "The 1928 Hurricane in Florida and the Wider Caribbean" in Cindy Ermus, ed., *Environmental Disaster in the Gulf South* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2018).
[132] George, "Brokers, Binders, and Builders," 47; Ballinger, *Miami Millions*, 137.
[133] According to Ballinger, the Tatum Brothers reported $1,800,000 in sales over the first six weeks of 1926, a mark ahead of the same period of 1925. See: Ballinger, *Miami Millions*, 147.
[134] The 1926 storm would be measured as a category four hurricane on the modern Saffir–Simpson scale.

consistently tracked.[135]

It is not surprising that the 1926 hurricane proved disastrous. Storm forecasting was still rudimentary and newcomers to the state were not familiar with hurricanes— the last major one to hit South Florida was in 1909. The region's growing system of canals and levees further contributed to a sense of security, even as development had stripped from the coast protective mangroves, which naturally slow tidal flows.[136]

Recovery efforts were equally shortsighted. Soon after the storm, boosters and state officials demonstrated a commitment to economic growth at all costs along with a callousness toward Black workers and families. Newspaper editors downplayed the hurricane's destruction, as Miami hoteliers announced that the city would be prepared and open for the upcoming winter tourist season. Florida's Governor John Martin, to temper alarm, refused to call a special legislative session to allocate emergency funds, leading the Red Cross to charge lawmakers with putting economic interests ahead of storm victims. Indeed, as officials downplayed damage and death, the Red Cross fell $2 million short of its $5 million fund-raising goal for hurricane relief. But even the Red Cross reproduced the state's racial hierarchy and bent to its economic interests. The organization disproportionately directed funds to white coastal neighborhoods, while farmworkers faced an acute housing shortage caused by the destruction of labor camps ahead of the winter harvest season.[137] Additionally, while rural towns were still flooded, the organization released $25,000 and deployed work crews to reset and prune downed citrus trees and restore hundreds of valuable groves throughout rural Dade County.[138]

---

[135] Lawrence E. Will, *Okeechobee Hurricane and the Hoover Dike* (Belle Glade: The Glades Historical Society, 1990), 12; James D. Snyder, *Black Gold and Silver Sands: A Pictorial History of Agriculture in Palm Beach County* (Historical Society of Palm Beach County, 2004), 79.
[136] See: Steinberg, "Do-It-Yourself Deathscape," 420.
[137] "$100,000 sent for Relief by Red Cross," *New York Times*, September 28, 1926; Steinberg, "Do-It-Yourself Deathscape," 420.
[138] "Red Cross Saves Florida Fruit Groves," *The Citrus Industry* 22 (November 1926) in John Attaway Collection, Box 7, folder 7 1926-27, FSC.

Adding to the turmoil and despair in Black communities after the hurricane, the Governor and local officials ordered the conscription of Black workers into reconstruction efforts. Conscription was largely conducted by armed white citizens and soldiers and led to resistance and violent clashes in Black communities, particularly in Bahamian communities in Miami. In one instance, a group of sailors in Miami attempted to violently conscript a group of Black men, who met them with gunfire. Soon a demonstration of 2,000 people gathered, and groups of protesters and soldiers exchanged gunfire until police and soldiers put down the unrest. Florida's National Guard eventually began patrolling Black neighborhoods to suppress protests. In rural South Florida, similar small-scale clashes occurred, but Black men also frequently fled from conscription into the safety of the Everglades. And many Caribbean workers simply left for their home islands. As elites sought to downplay post-hurricane disorder, violence and the discriminatory application of relief funds prompted petitions and denunciations from the NAACP and Black newspapers nationwide.[139]

Although investment in South Florida had slowed before the hurricane, the storm put a definitive end to the land boom and halted construction.[140] Land deals collapsed, unemployment grew, and a wave of foreclosures and bankruptcies spread, which sent the state into an economic depression years before the rest of the country. In Florida, between 1926 and 1929, 125 out of 335 banks failed, resulting in a loss of $375 million in assets.[141] In rural South Florida, many investors were left with worthless plots submerged in water as state drainage proved to be a failure.[142]

This is not to say that boosters and investors went completely quiet. The Miami Chamber of Commerce, in an attempt to revitalize interest in South Florida real estate, staged a farcical ceremony

---

[139] Orville Dwyer, "Troops Patrol Miami Streets; Fear Race War," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 25, 1926; Jones, "Tempest in the Forbidden City," 390-95.
[140] Ballinger, *Miami Millions*, 156.
[141] David J. Nelson. *How the New Deal Built Florida Tourism: The Civilian Conservation Corps and State Parks* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2019), 16.
[142] Blake, *Land into Water- Water into Land,* 88-98; Derr, *Some Kind of Paradise*, 156-74.

in early 1927 with a small group of Seminole Indians that the Chamber billed as a transfer of sovereignty over the Everglades from the Seminole to their "pale-faced brothers." Ernest "Cap" Graham, manager of the Pennsylvania Sugar Company and chair of the Miami Chamber's Everglades Committee, orchestrated the event with Tony Tommie, an English-speaking Seminole Indian who was the first in the tribe to attend public school in Florida and who often played the role of "chief" in roadside attractions. Some 5,000 spectators watched as Tommie and 20 other Indians performed rituals in front of city officials and endorsed a treaty giving the white man control of 150,000 acres of drained Everglades land. While the Tommie had no authority to make these commitments, and tribal elders later denounced him, the ceremony threatened Seminoles' land claims amid expanded white settlement and construction in the Everglades.[143]

Construction also finished on the long-running Tamiami trail project in 1928. At the expense of many workers' lives, the road became the first to cross the South Florida peninsula, extending from Tampa along the Gulf and then carving through historical Seminole lands in the Everglades west to Miami. The road increased Seminoles' exchange with motorists, tourists, and settlers, as well as shops, trading posts, and attractions geared toward outsiders and promised to generate increased economic activity in the region.[144] Final financing of the trail came after Barron Collier dedicated land and funds for its construction, securing from the state the moniker "Collier" for the new county established on the road's western stretch in return. Connecting the Gulf and Atlantic coasts provided a basis for future development and opened market access for landed producers in South Florida, like Collier, who owned a massive timber business, and burgeoning vegetable growers in the remote town of Immokalee. Unfortunately for Collier, though the Collier family is today one of the largest landowning families in the United States, he would not live to see his investments thrive, as

---

[143] "Controversial "Chief"," *The Seminole Tribune*, April 14, 2000.; Patsy West, *The Enduring Seminoles: From Alligator Wrestling to Ecotourism* (University Press of Florida, 1998), 71-72; Connolly, *A World More Concrete*, 64.
[144] Patsy West, *Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes of Southern Florida* (Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2012) 71-77.

the land bust and depression left him in a poor financial state until he died in 1939.[145]

After the bottom fell out of the state's economy, the agricultural and landed interests that remained solvent mobilized for infrastructure improvements in the Everglades. Landowners withheld taxes due on land, criticizing the EDD for not maintaining its canals and levees, and pushed state officials to act. Under pressure, Governor Martin, after touring the destruction, proposed floating $20 million in bonds to pay for canalling and a larger dike around Lake Okeechobee. The Governor justified the bonds with another engineering report, which aimed to reassure investors that the region could be made secure for development with more extensive canaling and by ringing Lake Okeechobee with a massive dike to prevent future flooding, an idea that was previously rejected by the state for being too costly. The bond issue sparked debate in the state legislature and among interest groups. Litigation ultimately stalled their issuance, leaving the EDD insolvent by 1927 and drainage work at a standstill when disaster struck the region again.[146]

The "Okeechobee" hurricane hit South Florida in September 1928, almost exactly two years after the previous one. It was among the deadliest disasters in U.S history, claiming some 2,500 lives in South Florida, with Black migrant farmworkers accounting for three-fourths of the deaths. Again, however, casualty estimates vary as Black bodies were frequently lost or dumped in mass graves and many of the victims were migrants from out of state or the Bahamas and left behind few records. The storm was also a hemispheric disaster. On its destructive path to Florida, it killed over 1,000 people in Guadalupe and hundreds in Puerto Rico.[147]

After tearing through the Caribbean and Florida's coast, the eye of the hurricane passed over

---

[145] Tebeau, *Florida's Last Frontier*, 252-2; Epperson, *Roads through the Everglades;* On early Black settlement in Collier County, see also: Maria Stone, *We Also Came: The Black People of Collier County* (Butterfly Press, 1992).
[146] Syder, *Black Gold and Silver Sands,* 82-84; Dovell, "The Everglades, A Florida Frontier," 192; Blake, *Land into Water-Water into Land,* 135.
[147] Church, "The 1928 Hurricane in Florida and the Wider Caribbean." See also: Robert Mykle, *Killer 'Cane: The Deadly Hurricane of 1928* (New York: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2002).

Lake Okeechobee's southern rim, unleashing a vicious flood that ran through Belle Glade and other nearby towns. Heavy rain that year had left the lake's water level high, and the flooding reached nearly 12 feet in some areas. With little warning, "the beast had left his bed," as Zora Neale Hurston described the storm surge in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, her classic novel set in Belle Glade. The flooding generated a vast wall of water that washed away migrant workers and their shanties and camps, as well as solid buildings and homes, animals, and fields of crops.[148]

In the aftermath of the storm, water and muck covered roads and railroads near Lake Okeechobee for weeks, some 15,000 people were left homeless, and, once again, state and local officials conscripted Black workers into work crews. For weeks, crews excavated the area to restore communications and transportation and recover and dispose of dead bodies. Some 4,000 storm refugees were forced to undergo inoculation to halt the spread of disease, while the American Legion, police, and groups of armed white men enforced ordinances against vagrancy in Black communities. Armed groups shot some Black men who refused work and officials ordered that food and supplies only be provided to those who worked. Adding to the indignities facing conscripted Black workers, who toiled for weeks in the heat in flooded towns and fields, officials ordered that they burn or bury in mass graves the bodies of Black storm victims, while white corpses were interred in local cemeteries.[149] One survivor recalled that "bodies were stacked like cordwood" at the dock in Pahokee for days after the storm before residents were forced to burn them.[150]

---

[148] Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God,* 75th Anniversary Edition (Harper Perennial Classics, 2013), 161. For a local account of the storm, see: Will, *Okeechobee Hurricane and the Hoover Dike.*

[149] "Hurricane Dead 300; Florida Digs Self Out," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 20, 1928; "Hurricane Fund Nears $1,500,000," *New York Times*, September 25, 1928; National Weather Service, Weather Forecast Office, "Memorial Web Page for the 1928 Okeechobee Hurricane," accessed October 2023, https://www.weather.gov/mfl/okeechobee; Equal Justice Initiative, "On This Day-- September 16, 1928-- Hundreds of Black Victims of Hurricane Denied Proper Burial in West Palm Beach, Florida," A History of Racial Injustice, accessed October 2023, https://calendar.eji.org/racial-injustice/sep/16. According to EJI, the mass grave at West Palm Beach went unmarked and was later sold for industrial use, becoming a garbage dump, a slaughterhouse, and then a sewage treatment plant until the town purchased the land and put up a commemorative site in 2000.

[150] Liz Doup, "1928- Okeechobee," *Sun Sentinel*, September 11, 1988.

Although initially, state and local lawmakers attempted to minimize publicity of the destruction caused by the storm, heat, flooding, and storm damage made recovery slow and highly visible. Journalists closely monitored the situation, as did the NAACP and civil rights leaders like Mary McLeod Bethune. While Bethune, a pioneering educator in Florida, reported favorably on the Red Cross's activities and distribution of funds, more radical Black workers' groups organized independent relief outreach and accused the Red Cross, the state government, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Klu Klux Klan of colluding to discriminate against Black communities.[151] Reports of the destruction soon spread nationwide. The accumulated bad news from two hurricanes and a real estate crisis further depressed tourism and investment in Florida for over a decade, coinciding with the worst years of the Great Depression.[152]

Amid Florida's economic woes, some of Florida's political and business elites abandoned Everglades boosterism and opposed spending more public funds to support habitation and agriculture in the Everglades. For example, Joshua Chase, a former United Fruit executive and partner in Chase and Company, a major citrus firm in Central Florida, proposed letting "the waters of Lake Okeechobee spread over the surrounding counties as they have for centuries" and letting those who stayed behind "live in houseboats.[153]" North Florida politicians, who, through electoral malapportionment, held control of the state legislature, were critical of the Northern and other out-of-state settlers in the Everglades (whose very presence threatened the electoral balance and Northern Florida's political power) and were reluctant to invest further in flood control.[154] Indeed, the state's Attorney General, Frederick Davis, made this sentiment clear, stating to Congress, "it is

---

151 "Red Cross Workers in Florida Accused of Discrimination by Relief Committee, "*New York Amsterdam News*, October 10, 1928; Jones, "Tempest in the Forbidden City," 397.
152 Church, "The 1928 Hurricane in Florida and the Wider Caribbean," 95; Nelson, *How the New Deal Built Florida Tourism,* 16-17.
153 Quoted in: Church, "The 1928 Hurricane in Florida and the Wider Caribbean," 96. Further on Chase, see: "Joshua Coffin Chase (1858-1948)," Florida Citrus Hall of Fame, accessed October 2023, https://floridacitrushalloffame.com/inductees/joshua-coffin-chase/.
154 Will, *Okeechobee Hurricane and the Hoover Dike*, 181.

mighty hard to get people in other parts of the state interested in whether [Everglades residents] perish or not."[155]As migrants, who were drawn to the region by the promise of jobs, lay buried in the muck, once thriving truck-farming towns like Chosen and Bean City never recovered from flooding and storm damage and became ghost towns.[156] At a crossroads, South Florida's major growers and landed interests needed federal intervention to rebuild and thrive.

Taming the Beast: Inaugural Federal Interventions in Flood Control

With the state government providing uneven support and the EDD rendered idle, South Florida's major economic interests mobilized to secure federal assistance after the 1928 hurricane. In audiences with federal officials and Congress, local officials, growers, and businessmen warned that commerce and agriculture in the Everglades were in jeopardy due to inadequate flood control. They found an ally in the newly-elected President Herbert Hoover, a career engineer and former Commerce Secretary and relief administrator, who toured the Everglades before taking office. After Congress approved funding for the Army Corps to construct a dike around Lake Okeechobee and expand canaling, by the early 1930s, enhanced water control propelled agricultural production and fundamentally altered the region's ecology. Nationally, South Florida's campaign contributed to a reshaping of federal flood control policy, elevating it for the first time as a federal priority and an official charge of the Army Corps, with consequences for waterways throughout the country.

Not long after the Okeechobee Hurricane wrecked South Florida, the mayors of Palm Beach and Miami convened a flood control congress that brought together an array of interest groups to press for federal action.[157] From this congress, one hundred prominent citizens, including growers, mayors, Chamber of Commerce heads, developers, bankers, and railroad executives formed the

[155] Quoted in: Grunwald, *The Swamp*, 196.
[156] Barbara Marshall, "What happened to the Lost Ghost Towns of Palm Beach County?" *Palm Beach Post*, April 5, 2017.
[157] "Flood Control Conference Will Be Largely Attended," *Palm Beach Times*, October 18, 1928. Newspapers, Everglades Box 1, PBCHS.

Florida Navigation and Flood Control Association in November 1928. The purpose of the association was to appeal to the federal government to "assume the direction and cost inherent in the control, for navigation, flood, and safeguarding purposes, of the waters of Lake Okeechobee.[158]" The Association took its appeal straight to the top and successfully convinced President-elect Hoover to visit the region.

The Southern Sugar Company was instrumental in this effort. Frank E. Bryant, who was serving as an executive with the Southern Sugar Company, directed the Association's outreach.[159] The company's president, Dror Dahlberg, was also a key political fixer in promoting the Republican party during the 1928 election. According to a 1930 Congressional investigation into lobbying, Dahlberg funneled personal and corporate money into building local Republican committees in Florida. These local organizations capitalized on anti-Catholic sentiment and helped to turn Democratic Florida away from that party's nominee, the New York Catholic and anti-prohibitionist Al Smith, and win the state for Hoover. In turn, Dahlberg made it clear through intermediaries that he hoped for the new administration's support for investments in flood control in the Everglades, as well as for import duties on foreign sugar.[160]

When Hoover toured the still-ravaged area around Lake Okeechobee with the Governor and federal engineers in February 1929, local interests gave him the hard sell. He met with politicians, flood control officials, growers, and businessmen, accepted a gift of vegetables from orphans in Pahokee, and dined in Clewiston at the headquarters of Southern Sugar.[161] He was also accompanied, at various points, by Thomas Edison and Henry Ford, who traveled to the region

---

[158] U.S. Congress, "Flood control in Florida and elsewhere: hearings before the Committee on Flood Control," House of Representatives, Seventieth Congress, January 10-February 1, 1929 (Washington: U.S. GPO., 1929), 60-61.
[159] Ibid.
[160] U.S. Senate, "Lobby Investigation: Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary," Seventy-first Congress, Part 10, May 6-12 (Washington DC: GPO, 1931), 5058-5078.
[161] Grunwald, *The Swamp*, 197-8.

from their Ft. Myers winter estates to endorse the development in the region, and by Dahlberg, who promoted his new sugar mill in Clewiston and the promise of Everglades agriculture. The local press praised the visit as the most important event in the "permanent development" of the Everglades. While Hoover made no commitments on his trip, he was clearly moved as he announced days later that he favored the federal government taking over flood control on Lake Okeechobee.[162]

In taking on the cause of flood control in the Everglades, Hoover was on familiar ground. In his career, Hoover tackled complex food security challenges and public engineering problems and reshaped environments and agricultural landscapes across the country. Hoover led relief efforts in Belgium and served as head of the U.S. Food Administration during World War I. In that role, he popularized the slogan "food will win the war" and tightly regulated and rationed food to further the war effort and aid in the post-war reconstruction in Europe. Besides shaping consumption trends, as "food czar" during the war, Hoover stimulated industrial wheat farming and lent support to increasing domestic sugar production, reinforcing boosters and investors' interest in establishing cane fields in the Everglades, to reduce imports amid rationing and global shortages. Later, as Secretary of Commerce, Hoover organized relief efforts along the Mississippi River in 1927 after one of the river's biggest recorded floods.[163]

During his presidency, Hoover championed major infrastructure projects to promote economic development and agriculture. His administration oversaw the work of the Army Corps as they began straightening the Mississippi and installing levees along its entire lower half to make the river safe for commerce, settlement, and agriculture, as well as the construction of the hydroelectric dam at Boulder Canyon (later named the Hoover Dam) and the All-American canal. The later projects transformed the American West, irrigating the Imperial Valley and providing power to the

[162] "Notes from Files of *Everglades News*," 15.
[163] Hollander, *Raising Cane in the 'Glades*, 77-79; Almon R. Wright, "Food and Society: War-Time Archives of the U. S. Food Administration," *The American Scholar* 7, No. 2 (1938): 243-44.

growing city of Los Angeles.[164] Thus, the Hoover administration initiated federal support for the development of major commodity-producing hubs nationwide and transformed landscaped and agricultural policies to foster large-scale industrial farming.[165]

To achieve flood control in the Everglades, however, plans still needed to be approved by the Army Corps and funded by Congress. As the Corps was legally conscribed to improving waterways for navigation purposes, state and local stakeholders needed to justify using federal money for diking Lake Okeechobee to prevent flooding and protect life and economic activity. Soon after Hoover's visit in 1929, the state legislature created a new Okeechobee Flood Control District to formulate construction plans with the Army Corps of Engineers and the Florida Department of Agriculture brought in experts from the Brown Company Farms and the Southern Sugar Company to shape reports and proposals to the federal government. Eventually, Florida's stakeholders settled on a plan for flood control that proposed both constructing a dike to surround Lake Okeechobee and deepening the Caloosahatchee River and installing locks along it. These improvements would both regulate the lake's water level and allow for cross-state barge travel from the Gulf to the Atlantic coast, giving the project a navigation component.[166]

When the flood control proposal moved to Congress for approval, South Florida's politicians and interest groups warned federal lawmakers that government inaction in the Everglades would result in the loss of a rich source of agricultural potential. Speakers argued that water problems in the Everglades were causing farms to fold and depressing land values and investor confidence. In one hearing, the Mayor of Ft. Myers, whose coastal city on the mouth of the

---

[164] J.R. McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World* (New York: Norton, 2000), 183; Michael Duchemin, "Water, Power, and Tourism: Hoover Dam and the Making of the New West," *California History* 86, No. 4 (2009): 60-63.

[165] See: Joseph L. Arnold, "The Evolution of the 1936 Flood Control Act," Office of History, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Washington DC: U.S. GPO, 1988): 18-22.

[166] "Selby Speaks on Everglades," *Palm Beach Times*, November 22, 1929.Newspapers, Everglades Box 1, PBCHS; Blake, *Land into Water- Water into Land*, 130-33.

Caloosahatchee River would benefit from increased trade from the region, explained to lawmakers that the federal government had a stark choice to make. It could either take responsibility for protecting a unique subtropical farming region that produced sugar, fruits, and vegetables that "we are now obliged to import from other countries" or through "police regulation forbid its settlement and habitation."[167] Back in Florida, local flood control officials predicted that the project would promote trade and championed Hoover's commitment to the "nationwide enlargements of waterways" as a "farm relief" measure.[168] Congress eventually found a back door to funding flood control when it approved a Rivers and Harbors bill in 1930 that funded navigation improvements to the Caloosahatchee River and the proposed dike on the rim of Lake Okeechobee as "incidental flood protection."[169] From that moment in 1930, the federal government has continued to play a major role in financing and managing water control in the Everglades.

Construction on the subsequently named Hoover Dike, which ran from November 1930 to 1937, both eliminated the threat from Lake Okeechobee and wreaked ecological havoc on the Everglades. At a cost of $16 million, the Army Corps barricaded the southern rim of the lake. In the years to come, the dike's footprint expanded considerably. Excess drainage, as new canals jettisoned fresh water into the ocean, lowered water tables by as much as six feet in parts of South Florida. In dry weather, this caused soil erosion and saltwater intrusion problems, as well as widespread muck fires that smoldered underground in newly drained tracts.[170]

Nevertheless, federal flood control infrastructure finally made the region reasonably safe for agriculture. Despite environmental challenges, the Army Corps' project provided growers with new

---

[167] U.S. Congress, "Flood Control in Florida and Elsewhere," 73.
[168] "Selby Speaks on Everglades."
[169] Blake, *Land into Water- Water into Land*, 130-33.
[170] Godfrey and Catton, *River of Interests*, 19; Central and South Florida Flood Control Districts, "Beyond Disaster," (Key Productions, 1972). Florida Memory, State Library and Archives of Florida, accessed October 2023, https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/232414; Geological Survey (USGS), South Florida Information Access (SOFIA), "Development of Water-Management System and Impact on the Hydrology of Southeastern Florida," Circular 1275 (2013).

opportunities to tap into water control systems, with numerous flood control subdistricts forming after 1930, expand production and acreage, and invest in new technology with some security. It supported the exponential growth of the region's primary agricultural pursuit, vegetable production, as well as the firm establishment of a sugar sector for the first time. From 1929 to 1943, vegetable acreage in the Okeechobee region grew from 17,000 to 110,000 acres, while sugar production expanded from 7,000 to 30,000 acres.[171] By the late 1930s, South Florida's agricultural sector grew to account for nearly half of the state's revenue from vegetable crops.[172]

Federal involvement in South Florida additionally helped establish a permanent role for the Army Corps in flood control nationwide. During the construction of the Hoover Dike, Congress passed the Flood Control Act of 1936, after a series of floods in 1935 and 1936 in multiple areas of the country. The law officially recognized flood control as a proper federal activity and expanded the charge of the Army Corps to include constructing flood control projects, building on the New Deal era's expansion of federal powers and public works. Since then, the Army Corps has undertaken hundreds of flood control and channelization projects that have contributed to the growth of farms, rural towns, and cities, while transforming landscapes and environments nationwide.[173]

Capitalizing on Collapse

Disasters and how federal authorities responded to them facilitated the expansion of industrial farming and proved to be the direct or proximate causes of the collapse of many small farms by the 1930s. Two hurricanes and the long wait for water control, as well as muck fires, soil erosion, and other environmental challenges largely ended the short-lived era of the smallholder in the Everglades. Those that remained struggled to meet the economies of scale and capital requirements necessary to be profitable in the vegetable market in the Great Depression. Successful

[171] Davis and Ogden, *Everglades: The Ecosystem and Its Restoration*, 97.
[172] McJunkin, "Winter Vegetable Farming in Florida," 34.
[173] Arnold, "The Evolution of the 1936 Flood Control Act," v-vii.

growers had to assume climate and market risks, absorb losses, often through diversification in cattle and sugar, account for labor costs and taxes, and invest in harvesting machinery and packing houses to ready crops for market. Pumping stations and private canals needed to use public flood control systems and keep fields either irrigated or drained added to these capital demands.[174] Through the 1930s, some of the state's most influential agricultural interests established themselves by capitalizing on the crises of the late 1920s to acquire foreclosed or distressed land at bargain prices. This advanced the region's development and its integration into distant markets and supply chains, while drawing more of the Everglades into agro-industrial production. Benefiting from New Deal agricultural policies and, later, increased demand in the lead-up to World War II, South Florida's industrial farms were well-positioned to reach new levels of production and profitability.

The 1930s were a period of transformation for South Florida's agricultural sector. Accounting for all of the turmoil and risks in the Everglades agricultural sector, conservationist and journalist Marjorie Stoneman Douglas reported that as the "mucklands came more and more into the hands of larger corporations," the "day of the small farmer. . . was over."[175] Suitcase and tenant farming, too, began to decline by the late 1930s. Howard Haney, the owner of a large Belle Glade vegetable concern, observed that "wildcat operators" started to disappear as vegetable production grew in the 1930s because successful operators "settled down . . . opening up new areas which required heavy investments in drainage facilities."[176] In the case of Palm Beach County, which includes much of the farmland around Lake Okeechobee, farm acreage expanded over 130 percent from 1930 to 1940, coinciding with the installation of federal water controls. Simultaneously, the amount of farmland owned by operators in the county, as opposed to land rented to contract

---

[174] Davis and Ogden, *Everglades: The Ecosystem and Its Restoration*, 97
[175] Douglas, *Everglades: River of Grass*, 348.
[176] US Congress, House Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, Hearing Before the Select Committee, Parts 32-34," May 7-8, 1942, 12907-8.

farmers, increased by approximately 240 percent, with many tilling tracts of 1,000 acres or more.[177]

Outside of flood control projects, state and federal technical and economic support for the agricultural sector was essential in driving this transformation. For example, in 1927, researchers at the Belle Glade agricultural experiment station found that the region's dark muck soil was, in fact, nutrient-poor and responsible for much of the crop loss in the Everglades. To promote increased farm productivity in the region, agents with the state's agricultural extension service spread the practice of adding sufficient amounts of fertilizer with copper sulfate to sustain harvests. Experiment station officials also conducted cooperative experiments with growers to maximize crop yields and disseminated information on the latest harvesting and storage technologies and techniques.[178]

The Roosevelt administration's New Deal programs further introduced an element of state planning on farms that upended rural social and economic structures and facilitated the transition from small-holding and tenant farming to industrial production.[179] Expanding on the Hoover-era Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC), a public corporation organized to provide liquidity to banks, state and local governments, and railroads, Roosevelt greatly increased federal lending to the private sector. Under Roosevelt, the RFC provided loans to growers to make capital improvements on their farms, which favored economies of scale in agriculture by encouraging investment in costly equipment.[180] Additionally, Roosevelt's Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA), passed in 1933 (and

---

[177] Stephan, "Vegetable Production in the Northern Everglades," 83-4.

[178] R.V. Allison, O.C. Bryan, and J.H. Hunter, "The Stimulation of Plant Response on the Raw Peat Soils of the Florida Everglades Through the use of Copper Sulphate and Other Chemicals," University of Florida Agricultural experiment Station, Bulletin 190 (September 1927) 36-40. UF/IFAS Experiment Station Publications Archive, UFDC; "Canal Point," Palm Beach County History Online, Historical Society of Palm Beach, accessed October 2023, www.pbchistoryonline.org/page/canal-point. See also: James L. McCorkle, Jr., "Agricultural Experiment Stations and Southern Truck Farming," *Agricultural History* 62, No. 2 (Spring 1998): 234-43.

[179] On the New Deal in South Florida, see: John A. Stuart and John F. Stack Jr., eds., T*he New Deal in South Florida: Design, Policy, and Community Building, 1933-1940* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2008).

[180] James Butkiewicz, "Reconstruction Finance Corporation," Economic History Encyclopedia, July 19, 2002, accessed October 2023, http://eh.net/encyclopedia/reconstruction-finance-corporation/; Stephan, "Vegetable Production in the Northern Everglades," 83-4.

later revised in 1938 after being ruled unconstitutional), aimed to stabilize crop and livestock prices, stem soil depletion, and reduce surpluses by paying farmers and ranchers to curb production. The involvement of southern Democrats in the AAA's implementation meant that most of its benefits went to white farmers, and, while payments were intended to be shared with tenant farmers, landowners rarely shared their checks. This led to a dramatic reduction in sharecropping in the South and a major dislocation of rural workers to Northern cities and into waged farm work in regions like South Florida.[181]

The state government did its part by bailing out landed and real estate interests. In the depression years of the early 1930s, the state government struggled to recoup delinquent tax bills on land. State tax sales on distressed property were of little use as back taxes on most properties often exceeded the market value of the land. Thus, in 1937, state lawmakers enacted a widespread tax jubilee, returning millions of acres to delinquent landowners for a nominal fee in exchange for future right-of-way reservations for state infrastructure projects. The state government reclaimed and resold acreage not redeemed by deed holders, which cleared property titles and gradually restored real estate activity and tax revenue in the state.[182]

This moment represented a missed opportunity for conservationists. In 1934, Congress authorized the creation of a National Park in the Everglades. After years of lobbying for the park, conservationists in the state were eager to see it established quickly to stem encroaching development. In the park's authorization, however, Congress did not allocate funds to secure land and charged the state government with handing over acreage for the park to the federal government.

---

[181] F. Raymond Daniel, "AAA Seen as Hurting the Tenant Farmer; Sharecropper's Acres Reduced and Thus His 'Furnish' at Company Store Is Cut," *New York Times*, April 21, 1935; Keith J. Volanto, "Leaving the Land: Tenant and Sharecropper Displacement in Texas during the New Deal," *Social Science History* 20, No. 4 (1996): 533-550; Donald Grubbs, *Cry from the Cotton: The Southern Tenant Farmers' Union and the New Deal* (Little Rock: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 19-22.

[182] Henry M. Brown and Rebecca E. Brown, "Murphy Deed Right-of-Way Reservations: A 1930s Taxpayer Bailout Yields Right-of-Way Cost Savings," *Florida Bar* Journal 83, no. 7 (July/ August 2009).

With the size and shape of the park left undetermined, many champions of preserving the Everglades, like Ernest Coe, the founder of the commission that led the campaign for the park, advocated for a maximalist plan that would protect over two million acres of the interconnected Everglades ecosystem. Although the National Park Service largely endorsed this approach, conservation was low on the state government's list of priorities for the Everglades. At a time when the state government could have easily set aside land burdened with tax debt for the park, as a lawyer with the National Parks Association later observed, it instead worked to make landowners financially whole and revitalize the market in land. This decision stalled the creation of the Everglades National Park for a decade and reduced its hypothetical boundaries as development progressed.[183]

While the long depression years, coming on the heels of two hurricanes, were certainly hard on growers and overall economic development, these intertwined crises also unleashed a wave of "creative destruction," fueled, in part, by government largess, in an agricultural sector with depressed land values. From 1925 to 1935, the total combined value of farms in Florida decreased by 36 percent. Land value accounted for nearly all the drop in the value of farms, as the price for machinery, equipment, and other inputs continued to rise in that period.[184] Although most did not experience this period as one of opportunity and growth, well-positioned investors could make money by buying up cheap Everglades muck and taking over failed farming ventures.[185] Several cases reflect these dynamics well.

For example, Southern Sugar, in both its short-lived expansion and ultimate takeover and

---

[183] U.S. Senate, "Everglades National Park, Fla: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Public Lands of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs," Eighty-fifth Congress, First Session, June 11-12, 1957 (Washington, D.C.: US GPO), 44-46; Douglas, *Everglades: River of Grass*, 280-83.

[184] The value of farm machinery and equipment increased 12 from 1925-35. "A Graphic Review of Florida Agriculture," Florida Department of Agriculture, 193x, 43. in "Business, Agriculture," Box 3, PBHS.

[185] On the gap between disaster capitalism as post-disaster creative destruction and the negative experiences of working people during relief and reconstruction, see: Dyl, *Seismic City*, 12.

reorganization, was subject to the wave of creative destruction that roiled through the Everglades agricultural sector in this period. Concurrent with his campaign to secure Republican support for flood control, Southern Sugar's Dahlberg opened a new mill in Clewiston in 1929. He broke ground on the state-of-the-art mill, capable of grinding 5,000 tons of cane a day, in 1927, after purchasing and relocating the Pennsylvania Sugar Company's mill. Pennsuco called it quits on producing cane that year and began liquidating its assets after several years of washed-out plantings.[186] At the mill's inauguration, the state's powerful secretary of Agriculture Nathan Mayo, who served in his role from 1923 to his death in 1960, spoke. A longtime Everglades booster, he praised Southern Sugar for demonstrating that "the correct way to handle this Everglades land is to be master of water supply" and congratulated the firm on opening the promising new "industrial" plant that would surely boost the U.S. sugar supply "for many years to come."[187] Yet, only a year later Southern Sugar was forced to declare bankruptcy and went into receivership. After spending liberally on its mill and water control, Southern Sugar had struggled to meet its debt obligations in the depression years, a time of low global sugar prices.[188]

Soon after, Charles Stewart Mott, the multi-millionaire cofounder of General Motors and a major stockholder in Southern Sugar, orchestrated a takeover of the company, bringing it to new levels of power and profitability. Under Mott, executives renamed Southern Sugar to U.S. Sugar—a name that, according to Hollander, aimed to associate the firm with nationalism and domestic food security—and deployed Northern industrial and labor strategies and a sophisticated marketing and political operation to grow the company. Much of the success of U.S. Sugar rested on securing concessions in trade and agricultural policies. U.S. Sugar was a consistent advocate for Florida

[186] Graham " The Pennsuco Sugar Experiment," 47; "Notes from Files of *Everglades News*," 11.
[187] "Address of Nathan Mayo, On the occasion of the opening of the sugar plant constructed by the Southern Sugar Company," January 14, 1929, at Clewiston Florida. Box 6, Nathan Mayo Papers, Subject File: Everglades, Southern Sugar Co., PKY.
[188] Heitmann, "The Beginnings of Big Sugar in Florida, 1920-1945," 53-4.

growers in shaping the U.S. Sugar Program, originally developed in a 1934 amendment to the AAA, which imposed a system of import quotas and marketing allotments to protect sugar beet and cane producers from declining prices. The company's executives fought for expanded domestic marketing allotments, believing the program was suppressing their growth, while pushing for continued import protections. Despite its misgivings, U.S. Sugar benefited from the program, which inflated domestic prices and made sugar one of the most lucrative U.S. commodities during the Depression, despite low global prices.[189] With market stability ensured, the firm became the largest cane producer in Florida and eventually the United States for decades. As it shaped markets, the environment, and farm labor systems, U.S. Sugar did much to make the Everglades, which the company heralded as an "agro-industrial empire of the South" in promotional materials, a farming region of national and international significance.[190]

The gradual demise of the Pennsylvania Sugar company in the late 1920s also gave Ernest Graham his start as an independent operator after serving as the firm's manager, an opportunity he would parlay into a farming and real estate fortune and great political influence for himself and his family. After failing to establish viable cane fields, Pennsuco transitioned to growing truck crops from 1928 to 1931. While the firm was profitable growing vegetables, its core business was refining sugar, so it withdrew from the region and transferred Graham 7,000 acres near Hialeah, inland from Miami, as severance.[191] Graham worked with investors to establish a dairy operation to serve Miami, which had few milk suppliers, and set up a ranch and dairy and vegetable fields on the land.[192] His successful ventures supported forays into politics. Graham won elections to the Dade Drainage

---

[189] Hollander, "Securing Sugar," 348-8. On the U.S. Sugar Program, generally, see: Donald C. Horton, "Policy Directions for the United States Sugar Program," *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 52, No. 2 (1970): 185; John C. Beghin and Amani Elobeid, "Analysis of the US Sugar Program," American Enterprise Institute (November 2017), 3-4.
[190] Clarence Bitting, *Sugar and the Everglades* (Clewiston: U.S. Sugar Corporation Pamphlet: January 1941), 1-4.
[191] Graham " The Pennsuco Sugar Experiment," 41-48.
[192] Ballinger, *Miami Millions*, 116.

district, the board of the state's road department, and the state senate from 1936 to 1944. In 1944, he narrowly lost a gubernatorial primary race. Wealth from the land also supported his sons' careers in business and politics. His eldest son, Phil Graham, became publisher of *The Washington Post*, while his middle son, William, took charge of the family company and spearheaded the construction of Miami Lakes, a major suburban residential and commercial development carved from the family's holdings. And, most notably, Bob Graham, his youngest son, served as Florida's 38th governor from 1979 to 1987 and its U.S. Senator from 1987 to 2005.[193]

Further south in Dade County, James Sotille, a Sicilian immigrant and real estate investor, became the benefactor for the growth of the farming centers of Florida City and Homestead after he acquired some 20,000 acres in 1927 from Miami's Tatum Brothers' Company after the firm folded under the weight of an IRS lien and losses incurred during the land bust.[194] Sottile, after borrowing heavily from the RFC, incorporated South Dade Farms on the land in 1934 and installed over 50 miles of canals, as well as pumps and levees to facilitate vegetable and citrus production and ranching. Encouraging other Italian immigrants to settle in Dade County, Sottile rented much of the land to tenant farmers and promoted cooperative farming. He also deeded land to benefit commerce in Homestead and Florida City, opened a network of banks, and led the creation of a farmers' market to connect local growers to shippers. In part to settle his RFC loan, Sottile further transferred land to the federal government to build the sprawling South Dade Farm Labor Camp, which seasonally housed some 5,000 migrant farmworkers who worked winter harvests in the area. Consequently, Sottile expanded the agricultural production area of South Florida and, much like Collier in Southwest Florida, promoted the general development of South Dade County.[195]

---

[193] Connolly, *A World More Concrete,* 69; 252.
[194] Connolly, *A World More Concrete,* 69; 252.
[195] US Congress, House Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, Hearing Before the Select Committee, Parts 32-34," May 7-8, 1942, 12832-43; Seth H. Bramson, Bob Jensen, *Homestead, Florida: From Railroad Boom*

Low land prices also allowed Herman Wedgworth to transition from his role as a plant pathologist at the Everglades Experiment Station, where he studied soil productivity, to become a fertilizer producer and the largest farmer and packing house operator in the Lake Okeechobee area in the 1930s. After acquiring federal loans and credit lines from a Miami credit association where he served as director, Wedgworth purchased nearly 2,000 acres of land in Belle Glade in 1932. Wedgworth was soon shipping out a half million boxes of beans a year, as his fertilizer plant commercialized and disseminated the knowledge produced at the experiment station for profit and expanded the use of fertilizer in the Everglades.[196] He also elevated Belle Glade's centrality to farming around Lake Okeechobee by establishing a packing house and cooling plant in the town to better coordinate marketing from the area. A falling ice machine fatally crushed Herman Wedgworth in 1938. Nevertheless, by that time, he had laid a path for his family’s success in agribusiness. After Herman’s death, Wedgworth's wife, Ruth, and son, George, eventually added some 20,000 acres to the family's holdings and became highly influential in various agricultural associations. By the 1940s, the Wedgworths' packing house was processing and grading more vegetables for other growers than their own and shaping the patterns of production near the lake.[197]

The growers and investors who turned crises into opportunities in the depression years began to give credence to the marketing of the Everglades as a southern "agro-industrial empire." By the end of the 1930s, Everglades growers had led the state to become the top U.S. producer in the winter months of tomatoes, beans, and other fresh vegetables. Florida shipped out nearly one-third of all vegetables in the country in the winter, with South Florida's Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, and

---

to Sonic Boom (Charleston SC: The History Press, 2013), 70-5; Bob Jensen, "James Sotille Changes Florida City," *South Dade News Leader*, March 28, 2014.

[196] US Congress, House Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, 12616-7.

[197] John M. Gledhill, "HH Wedgeworth Dies After Fatal Accident, *Pahokee News*, October 14, 1938. People- Wedgworth HH, Ruth and George, PBHS; "The Wedgeworths," Palm Beach County History Online, 2009, accessed October 2023, www.pbchistoryonline.org/page/the-wedgworths.

Collier counties accounting for the bulk of production.[198] Meanwhile, U.S. Sugar had cracked the code of growing and milling sugar in the Everglades and was poised to expand. Sugar and produce from South Florida, along with other commodities produced from ventures in ranching and dairy, citrus and tropical fruits, and fertilizers, touched consumers nationwide.

South Florida's industrial farming sector was also increasingly a vital node in expanding U.S. food supply chains that fed into chain stores and supermarkets. Serving financially-strapped consumers and acting as an endpoint for industrial farms, new chains like A&P, Kroger, King Kullen, and Piggly Wiggly began replacing local grocers and grew in popularity. Into the Depression and war years, supermarket chains, operating on the basis of high product turnover and low prices, worked to centralize buying power to increase efficiency and price stability. In this period, chain grocers' buyers and networks of warehouses also began to serve as key intermediaries in agricultural supply chains and encouraged the industrialization of agriculture to meet demand.[199]

In turn, South Florida's major agricultural interests, which coordinated the cultivation, packing, and distribution of commodities from the region, along with industry and government marketing campaigns raised consumers' expectations that they could purchase fresh produce throughout the year. As South Florida's growers took on an increasing share of the fresh produce market, produce like leafy greens and tomatoes saw increasing consumption nationally through the 1920s and 30s and were viewed by grocery merchandisers as important "traffic builders.[200]" From 1920 to 1945, the consumption of leafy vegetables increased by 37 percent, while the consumption of tomatoes increased by 23 percent.[201] Yet, while rising demand and productivity enriched growers,

---

198 Rhodes, "From Field to Market with Florida Vegetables and Citrus Fruits," 11; 77.
199 Markin, *The Supermarket*, 9-15; Hamilton, *Supermarket USA*, 6-18.
200 On merchandising, see: William E Folz and Alden C Manchester, "Chainstore Merchandising and Procurement practices: The Changing Retail Market for Fruits and Vegetables," U. S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service, Marketing Research Report No. 417 (1960), 4.
201 John L. Fulmer, "Trends in the per Capita Consumption of Foods in the United States since 1920," *Southern Economic Journal* 14, No. 4 (1948): 406.

who enjoyed substantial public subsidies, prosperity was not widely shared with the farm workforce that made the region's agricultural growth possible.

The Migrant Stream and the Making a Labor "Crisis"

Migratory farmworkers, recruited into a predictable, low-wage seasonal farm-labor system, made South Florida's agricultural profitability and expansion possible. From growers' perspective, the sector's market position and brief climatic advantage as the leading winter vegetable producer, combined with the difficulty of mechanizing harvesting on the region's deep muck soil, made labor control essential. For farmworkers, South Florida represented both a place to find work and, particularly for Black farmworkers, a region marked by poverty, racism, and oppression. Jim Crow and violence underpinned growers' means of labor control, as did the profit-driven spatial reconfiguration of the Everglades, which isolated farmworkers in remote camps and fields and within political jurisdictions dependent and deferential to the sector. Coercion backed up by Jim Crow laws and norms and depression-era labor surpluses allowed growers to pay low wages. Yet, by the 1940s, New Deal reforms and a tighter labor market in World War II threatened growers' control, generated upward wage pressure, and sparked farmworkers' resistance. South Florida's agricultural interests responded by fighting back against social programs, particularly the expansion of government-run labor camps, and pushed federal officials to create a wartime labor recruitment program with the British West Indies that tied guestworkers to their employers. In doing so, they raised challenges to the sector's labor-management prerogatives to the level of a political and production crisis and linked threats to agriculture in the Everglades to threats to national food security, a familiar discursive strategy from earlier decades of disaster. As a result, agricultural interests secured a captive international workforce—initially conceived by federal officials as an "emergency" measure— and stymied collective action and improving conditions for all farmworkers.

In 1939, youthful Stetson Kennedy, at the time supervising the collection of Florida folklore

for the Works Progress Administration's (WPA) Federal Writers Program, railed against his editors, who argued that Florida was not "properly part of the old South or deep South" and should not be associated with its regional economic underdevelopment. Kennedy, who would go on to infiltrate the KKK and write several works illuminating social problems and labor and civil rights causes in the South, fought to include in the WPA guide, the "horrible images" of poverty, peonage, migratory and child labor, lynching, police brutality, chain gangs, and other injustices that he encountered in his fieldwork. While Florida's boosters had carefully cultivated an image for the state that foregrounded modern industry and tropical delights, Kennedy astutely uncovered the ongoing repression of poor and working people, Black communities, and Seminole Indians in the state.[202] Even if the 1930s saw the state undergo many transformations, as federal investments expanded and improved infrastructure, roadways, and public works, "old South" social, racial, and class structures persisted in the state, which was still predominantly rural and agricultural.[203]

Indeed, Florida's systems of forced labor, reinforced by racist laws and violence, actually bolstered the development of many "modern" enterprises. The major turpentine industry of North Florida was notorious for its use of the convict leasing system, outlawed in state prisons in 1923 but still in use into the 1940s, and officials with Flagler's East Coast Railroad were indicted for peonage charges for recruiting immigrants under false terms and confining them in construction camps throughout the Florida Keys.[204] In many industries, networks of recruiters, crew leaders, and manhunters ensnared workers into exploitative work arrangements with false promises, fraudulent contracts, and threats. When private coercion was insufficient, local sheriffs enforced harsh vagrancy

---

[202] Stetson Kennedy, "South of the Deep South," 1939. Stetson Kennedy Papers, MSS 0403, Box 6, Articles by Stetson Kennedy, PKY. The final product WPA product includes a mix of stark realism and boosterism, depicting the state as "replete with contrasts" See: *The WPA Guide to Florida: The Sunshine State* (Washington DC: The Federal Writers' Project, 1939), 3. On Kennedy's career and methods, see also: Paul Ortiz, "Tearing Up the Master's Narrative: Stetson Kennedy and Oral History," *Oral History Review* 41, Issue 2 (2014): 279-89.

[203] According to the 1930 census, half of Florida's population lived in rural areas and farmed, and the top industry was agriculture, followed by manufacturing. See: Nelson. *How the New Deal Built Florida Tourism*, 7.

[204] Pete Daniel, *The Shadow of Slavery: Peonage in the South, 1901-1969* (University of Illinois Press, 1972), 4; 95-107.

laws, subjecting workers to charges if they absconded from contracts, and upheld Jim Crow and business class prerogatives.[205] Meanwhile, on a per capita basis, African Americans were more likely to be lynched in Florida during the period 1880-1930 than in any other state, with labor disputes often inspiring white mobs to take fatal and extra-legal violence.[206]

South Florida's modern and expanding industrial farms were a part of the systems of forced labor that had been endemic in Florida's agricultural sector since the era of chattel slavery. Old South labor practices extended further southward to the Everglades, as development penetrated the region. Sheriffs in Broward and Dade counties deployed convict labor and vigorously enforced vagrancy laws in Miami and Ft. Lauderdale, at times shipping Black men detained on such charges to vegetable farms in the Everglades.[207] As the region became the winter staging grounds for the migrant stream in the 1920s, crew leaders played a large part in organizing the placement of workers on farms, often using coercive means. Crew leaders, who secured a fee for each worker provided during harvests, contributed to labor oversupply and low wages by transporting a surplus of workers to the region. They also widely perpetuated the practice of holding workers in debt bondage by charging migrants fees for provisions, transportation, and alcohol, and running gambling and prostitution rackets. Threats and violence met workers who resisted. As agro-industrial development in the Everglades intensified, naked exploitation and coercion kept migrants at work and provided growers with a relatively predictable and tractable labor supply.[208] To navigate the harsh conditions and poverty of the migrant stream, southern migratory farmworkers, most often from Georgia in

---

[205] Jerrell H. Shofner, "The Legacy of Racial Slavery: Free Enterprise and Forced Labor in Florida in the 1940s," J*ournal of Southern History* 47, no. 3 (1981):413-4; James A. Schnur, "Caught in the Crossfire: African Americans and Florida's System of Labor During World War II," *Sunland Tribune* 19, Article 8 (1993): 2-3.
[206] David H. Jackson Jr. and Kimberlyn M. Elliott, "African Americans in Florida, 1870-1920: A Historiographical Essay," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 95, No. 2 (2016): 162-3; Stewart E. Tolnay and E. M. Beck, *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings, 1882-1930* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois, 1995).
[207] Shofner, "The Legacy of Racial Slavery," 414; 417
[208] Grubbs, "The Story of Florida's Migrant Farm Workers," 112-3; U.S. Congress, "Interstate Migration: New York City Hearings," Select Committee to Investigate the Interstate Migration of Destitute Citizens, July 29-31, 1940 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1940): 535.

this period, formed social and kinship bonds and practiced mutual aid in travel, work, and lodging.[209]

The Everglades landscape and geography of labor exacerbated workers' vulnerability to peonage and other forms of economic coercion. In rural South Florida, the physical and social isolation, contracting practices, and the harsh landscape conspired to reinforce growers' means of labor control. The details of the aforementioned 1942 peonage charges against U.S. Sugar illuminate these dynamics well. The company, which cultivated an image for itself as a progressive agricultural innovator and publicized the modern barracks it built for canecutters, used labor contractors to recruit African-American workers from across the South under false pretenses and deliver them in a state of debt bondage.[210] Company agents, sometimes claiming to be government officials, promised workers high-wage jobs in the cane fields and free transportation, housing, and provisions. Upon arrival at U.S. Sugar's remote labor camps, however, workers learned that they had to work off high fees for transportation and accommodations at low wages. Fleeing from U.S. Sugar into the Everglades was largely futile, as camps were far from the nearest towns and the county sheriff colluded with the company to return workers to the fields— and, during the investigation into U.S. Sugar, was found to be putting prisoners to work on his farm.[211]

Adding to migrants' troubles, growers, confident that the migrant stream would continue to provide a ready supply of seasonal labor, neglected responsibility for the social reproduction of their workforce. Stoneman Douglas, painting a grim and racialized picture of Belle Glade in the 1940s, reported that the town resembled a "human jungle" and was an Everglades slum replete with jukes and pool halls "where the water once crept." For this, she blamed labor contractors for bringing in

---

209 Martínez-Matsuda, *Migrant Citizenship*, 111.
210 On the company's marketing of canecutter's "modern" working and living conditions, see: Bitting, *Sugar and the Everglades*.
211 "Everglades Sugar Company Indicted for Holding Negro Cane Workers in Peonage," *St. Petersburg Times*, November 5, 1942; "Peonage Charged to Sugar Grower," *New York Times*, November 5, 1942. See also: Schnur, "Caught in the Crossfire," 3; Shofner, "The Legacy of Racial Slavery," 417. The case was ultimately dismissed on a technicality regarding jury placement.

masses of Black migrants as growers and public authorities neglected to provide sanitary housing.[212]

For farmworkers, however, the New Deal and an expanding labor movement offered some opportunity for change. In the 1930s, industrial workers across the United States launched strikes, formed powerful unions, and won new labor law protections in the form of the 1935 National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) and the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Because the Roosevelt administration left farmworkers and domestic workers out of the transformational laws to placate southern Democrats, these predominately Black workers lacked minimum wage and hour and union protections. Still, farmworkers, cannery and packinghouse workers, and tenant farmers organized to combat dislocation and depression-era wages and claim some of the New Deal's social democratic promise. In 1937, the AFL reported that 64 new unions formed for agricultural, cannery, or citrus workers covering some 22,000 members in California, Washington, and Florida.[213] The Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU), a multiracial organization of sharecroppers formed in Arkansas in 1934, expanded throughout the South placing organizers along the migrant stream from Florida to New Jersey. By the 1940s, the STFU, in partnership with the Amalgamated Meat Cutters Union, was winning contracts at packing and processing plants, which were covered by the NLRA, of some of the largest industrial growers, like New Jersey's Seabrook Farms.[214] In Florida, some 33,000 citrus workers joined the United Citrus Workers Union. Migratory vegetable workers, though unorganized, increasingly refused to work for poverty wages, including in the winter of 1936-7, when growers had to advertise throughout the South to secure workers after they cut piece rates for beans. Persistent, low-scale strikes, walkouts, and sit-downs bedeviled South Florida's growers into the early 1940s.[215]

---

[212] Douglas, *Everglades: River of Grass*, 356-7.
[213] US Congress, House Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, May 7-8, 1942, 12860.
[214] "The Voice of the Disinherited: A Brief History of the Agricultural Workers Union, 1934-59," 1959. RG 28-002 Organizing, folder 54/10 National Agricultural Workers Union 1957, Special Collections, Hornbake Library, University of Maryland (hereafter, UMD). See also: Andrew J. Hazelton, "Open Shop Fields: The Bracero Program and Farmworkers Unionism, 1942-1964," PhD Diss. Georgetown University, Washington, DC October 31, 2012, 61-2; Grubbs, *Cry from the Cotton*.
[215] Hahamovitch, "Sitting Idly By," 94-5.

Moreover, in 1940, reformers with the Farm Security Administration (FSA), a New Deal agency established in 1937 to provide temporary housing and other aid to destitute tenant farmers and farmworkers, moved to address the rural social and housing problems in the Everglades. That year, the FSA opened sanitary labor camps near Belle Glade—one 176-unit camp for white families and one 356-unit camp for African Americans—and set up other migrant services in the region.[216] John Beecher, the FSA camp administrator in the state, called South Florida the "most acute migrant situation in the region," the result of an agricultural "boom" in "an area of little agricultural importance" 20 years prior. And with the boom came an array of social problems. Pointing to open refuse and toilet pits and filthy barracks and shacks, Beecher reported that it was a “miracle” that no epidemic disease swept through the area, as migrants doubled or tripled the population of small towns during the winter season.[217] Migrant children, who generally began to work in the fields around age ten, lacked access to education and ate a nutrient-deficient diet that might include some cold produce, beans, molasses, and beer.[218] For FSA officials, the underdevelopment of children and the conditions of migrants were foremost a question of citizenship and disenfranchisement, as migrant families could not meaningfully participate or advance in society in such circumstances.[219]

U.S. wartime mobilization and entrance into World War II profoundly tightened the farm labor market, as farmworkers left the fields for the armed forces and defense industries. According to the state farm placement service's measurements, the migrant stream, which consisted of approximately 25,000 workers before the war, dropped to around 10,000 workers by 1943.[220] Nationally, according to one economist's estimate, the wartime farmworker population declined

[216] U.S. Congress, "Interstate Migration," 518; 543.
[217] Ibid, 538; 541.
[218] Grubbs, "The Story of Florida's Migrant Farm Workers," 107.
[219] Martínez-Matsuda, *Migrant Citizenship*, 200.
[220] William H. Metzler, "Migratory Farm Workers in the Atlantic Coast Stream: A Study in the Belle Glade area of Florida," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Circular no. 966 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1955): 5.

some 6 percent, while wage rates tripled. In Florida, amid labor shortages, farmworkers' wages increased three-fold during the war.[221]

Those workers who remained in the migrant stream discovered new leverage. Growers complained to the state defense council that too many migrants were taking work in defense industries while others refused to continue to work after earning enough money for the week. While federal authorities promoted increased production under "food for freedom" campaigns, Belle Glade's growers warned they would have to cut production in coming seasons unless drastic measures were taken to compel workers to the fields.[222] In Belle Glade, where strikes were becoming common, Ruth Wedgworth went so far as to lament, "we've tried everything but holding a gun to their heads, but they still won't work."[223] Similarly, sugar industry representatives criticized the FSA migrant camps for exacerbating the labor shortage by providing Black migrants secure housing and, at times, work in the camps, which made it impossible to entice them to cut cane.[224] Pervading growers' concerns was anxiety over losing control over farmworkers' time and movements.

Through 1942 and 1943, Florida's agricultural interests inundated state and federal officials, as well as war authorities, with demands to immobilize the farm workforce, framed as a necessity to meet high war-time food demands. In doing so, they capitalized on the political consensus in Washington that increasing agricultural production—what President Roosevelt called "the lifeline of the forces that fight for freedom"— was central to the war effort.[225] Everglades growers warned Palm Beach County's Selective Service Board that some 40 percent of vegetables could be lost due to the lack of harvest labor and decried the many "sit down and slow down strikes in the bean field

---

[221] Walter W. Wilcox, "The Wartime Use of Manpower on Farms," *Journal of Farm Economics* 28, No. 3 (1946): 735.
[222] US Congress, "Investigating National Defense Migration," 12862.
[223] David Eurgess, "The Joads--Still Out of Luck," *New Republic* 110, Issue 2 (January 10, 1944): 46.
[224] Conlin, "Invisible Hands in the Winter Garden," 123.
[225] Samuel Rosenman, ed., *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt* 12 (New York: Harper*, 1950) 1943,* 34-6; Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, "To the Rescue of the Crops: The Woman's Land Army During World War II, *Prologue Magazine* 25, no. 4 (1993).

of the Glades." In turn, the Board labeled farmworkers unpatriotic, accusing them of "effective sabotage of the war effort," and called for police powers to conscript workers into farm labor.[226] Elsewhere in the state, growers petitioned the governor and war authorities to halt the movement of workers out of state and to limit the military draft to bolster the supply of farm labor.[227] In the spring of 1943, policemen and growers' agents even took matters into their own hands by halting trucks heading north, beating migrants, and ordering them back to Everglades labor camps.[228]

Besides calls for farm labor conscription, growers looked beyond U.S. borders to secure labor. Luther L. Chandler, a tomato grower and representative of Dade County growers, aggressively lobbied lawmakers, military officials, and British colonial authorities to import Bahamian workers, becoming a de-facto spokesman for East Coast growers interested in recruiting Caribbean labor.[229] Throughout 1942, he sought federal backing to "solve our labor problem in one move forever" through the lifting of immigration restrictions and the recruitment of BWI workers.[230]

Still reeling from its recent peonage scandal, U.S. Sugar supported the vegetable lobby's campaign and called on the War Manpower Commission and the USDA to begin recruitment from the Caribbean. Although early in the war the federal government had lifted production quotas on domestic sugar—an important food staple and also a common ingredient in weapons materials—the company blamed labor troubles for its relatively flat output.[231] Pressing federal authorities to start recruitment in the Bahamas, U.S. Sugar's general manager Jay Moran warned that without foreign

[226] US Congress, "Investigating National Defense Migration," 12860.
[227] Hendrix, B. K. Telegram from Farmer B. K. Hendrix to Governor Spessard Holland, 1942. 1942-04-18. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, accessed October 2023, https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/343120; Resolution by the Palatka Chamber of Commerce calling for measures to restrict the migration of laborers, 1942. 1942-08-19. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, accessed October 2023, https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/343119.
[228] Eurgess, "The Joads," 46-7.
[229] Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land*, 24-28.
[230] US Congress, House Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, May 7-8, 1942, 12815-7.
[231] Hollander, "Securing Sugar," 339-58.

labor a crop of "100,000 tons of vitally needed sugar is menaced by the tight labor situation."[232]

While growers were almost certainly facing a tighter labor market and upward pressure on wages, their claims of impending disaster and collapsing production were overblown, even according to some federal officials. Throughout most of 1942, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) resisted calls to lift restrictions on immigration, surveying South Florida and finding that enough domestic labor was available to meet growers' needs.[233] During the 1942-1943 season the USDA and the Army even awarded Palm Beach County's growers an "A" award for agricultural achievement for high production numbers—a feat achieved without the use of Caribbean labor. A ceremony in Belle Glade featuring a color guard and 45-piece military band marked the achievement and circulars celebrated the news that the "vast agricultural empire on the shore of Lake Okeechobee" had generated $22,000,000 in agricultural receipts over 84,000 acres that season.[234]

Nevertheless, consistent pressure on the government, declining imports, and the perceived threat of food shortages eventually compelled federal action on farm labor. In February 1943, federal authorities shipped thousands of white workers to Florida from Tennessee and Missouri under no-strike contracts.[235] After the Secretary of Agriculture negotiated the bilateral "Bracero" labor importation program with Mexico in August 1942, Florida's growers also saw action on their demands for Caribbean labor when the State Department began negotiations with British colonial officials in the fall of 1942 to initiate a similar program. High unemployment on the islands motivated colonial officials to come to an agreement. Thus, in April 1943, Bahamians, Jamaicans, and others from the British West Indies began arriving, and, under the supervision of colonial and U.S. officials, were transported around the East Coast to harvest crops. In the first year of the BWI

---

232 "Labor Shortage Threatening Full Cane Crop," *Clewiston News*, February 12, 1943.
233 US Congress, House Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, May 7-8, 1942, 12815-7.
234 "Special Agricultural Achievement Award to be Presented in Ceremony at Belle Glade," *Everglades News*, November 29, 1943. Belle Glade, Box 2, PBHS.
235 Eurgess, "The Joads," 46.

emergency labor importation program, some 8,800 workers arrived from Jamaica and 4,700 workers arrived from the Bahamas (all while 52,100 Braceros crossed into the United States from Mexico). Most were bound for Florida that winter.[236]

The BWI program dovetailed with the undermining of the minimal social protections farmworkers enjoyed during the pre-war New Deal. To codify the Bracero and BWI programs, in April 1943, Congress passed PL 45, a law largely drafted by the American Farm Bureau, which transferred control of war labor importation programs from the FSA to the War Food Administration (WFA). An agency dominated by Southerners, the WFA coordinated food production and distribution, rationing, and farm labor during the war. In formulating the law, congressional liberals, prioritizing food security over migrants' welfare, allied with conservative lawmakers who opposed organized labor and championed the efficiency of industrial farms. PL 45 further cut appropriations to the FSA's migrant programming, halted construction on new camps, and blocked funds from being used to improve labor standards or promote collective bargaining. The WFA soon recalibrated the FSA's migrant camps to house BWI workers (and Braceros in the West) and removed family housing and community programming space for returning migrants.[237]

During the war years of the BWI program, the U.S. Government directly negotiated governmental agreements and recruited and transported workers, who did not pay for subsistence or transport costs and had access to colonial liaisons during their engagement.[238] With these protections, the program's early months were its most humane as BWI workers traveled through the North and Midwest and were often treated with the respect afforded to "war" workers. Yet, as they moved to South Florida in the winter, they began to experience the threats, armed guards, and filthy

---

[236] Wilcox, "The Wartime Use of Manpower on Farms," 732.
[237] Martínez-Matsuda, *Migrant Citizenship*, 228-232; Grubbs, "The Story of Florida's Migrant Farm Workers," 109; Eurgess, "The Joads," 46.
[238] See: Joyce C. Vialet, T*he West Indies (BWI) temporary alien labor program, 1943-197*7 (Washington D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1978), 3-4.

accommodations that characterized the region's labor regime. The WFA was complicit in perpetuating these conditions and even threatened Jamaican officials with removal from the program when they resisted allowing their workers, unaccustomed to segregation, to move below the Mason-Dixon line. With BWI workers' legal status tied to the individual growers they were assigned, they had little recourse to contest harsh treatment. This solved, for a time, growers' labor control problems by consolidating a recruitment system that structurally kept wages low, limited worker agency, and drew its power from the threat of deportation.[239]

Throughout the war, Florida's growers also tightened their grip on the U.S. migrant workforce and organized new associations and arrangements to better coordinate labor recruitment and placement. Even after the initiation of the BWI program, the Florida Vegetable Committee, an independent organization the state's produce growers formed from the state farm bureau in 1943, continued to press for harsher vagrancy laws and a labor draft. These laws were needed to compel workers to spend "less time laying out drunk," according to Luther Chandler, the committee's head of labor relations.[240] Eventually, Atlantic Coast growers developed a cooperative program that lasted for decades and harmonized the recruitment, transport, and placement of migrants out of Florida after the winter season. With oversight from state extension services, growers' agents from Southeastern states contracted with various crew leaders in Florida to keep migrants working through the summer while not disrupting Florida's winter season.[241]

The New Deal and a tighter war-time farm labor market inspired conflict and represented both opportunity for farmworkers and a "crisis" for South Florida's agricultural interests. In navigating this conflict, growers used the well-worn discourse of disaster to heighten tensions and

---

[239] Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land*, 50; 67-71.
[240] Florida Vegetable Committee Bulletin, March 23, 1944. Business- Agriculture, Hufty Farms, Belle Glade Florida, PBHS; LL Chandler, "To all Users of Agricultural Labor," N.D. (Approx. 1944). Ernest R. Graham Papers, Box 33, Folder 3, PKY.
[241] Metzler, "Migratory Farm Workers in the Atlantic Coast Stream," 5-7.

generate federal action on their behalf. While theoretically growers could have improved wages and conditions to attract and retain domestic farmworkers, the wartime BWI labor importation program obviated that need while reducing farmworkers' bargaining power and boosting growers' competitiveness on the national market. Compared to shipments in 1940, Florida's growers increased their output of vegetables by nearly 50 percent, citrus by 46 percent, and sugar by 30 percent by 1948.[242] Statewide, immediately after the war, growers were shipping out enough fruits and vegetables to fill 25 train carloads an hour every hour of the year and had increased farm income to over $300 million a year, a nearly three-fold increase since 1925.[243]

***

By the end of World War II, South Florida's agricultural sector had reached a size and level of profitability and productivity that was once only expressed in land companies' promotional materials or boosters' speeches. Yet, the post-war agricultural landscape diverged greatly from the aspirations of those who imagined smallholders enjoying the bounty of the Everglades. By 1946, corporate ownership was on the rise and nearly 90 percent of South Florida's farmland was claimed by a farm over 1,000 acres.[244] Thousands of U.S. migratory and BWI farmworkers made this production possible and continued to feed into South Florida's agro-industrial complex, marked by poverty wages, harsh conditions, and, often, peonage, forced labor, and violence.

Over roughly a quarter century, growers, landed interests, investors, and politicians transformed rural South Florida for capitalist accumulation—in large part by organizing to shape

---

[242] U.S. Senate, "Migratory Labor," Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Labor and Labor-Management Relations of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, Parts 1-2 (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 1952),486. Compared to the 1940 season, 1948-9 car lot shipments from Florida rose for vegetables from 58,500 to 87,400, for sugarcane from 47,500 to 61,700, and for citrus from 149,900 to 219,500.
[243] Nathan Mayo "Florida, Today and Tomorrow," State of Florida Department of Agriculture, Bulletin No. 128 (February 1946), 6. Business and Industry- Agriculture, Brochures 4, PBHS. In 1925, Florida agriculture was valued at $105 million. See: Reese, "Farm Opportunities in Florida," 4.
[244] Additionally. the size of the average farm over 1,000 acres in South Florida was nearly 8,000 acres. Daniel E. Alleger, "Rural Land Ownership in Florida," Bulletin 460, University of Florida Agricultural Experiment Station (1949): 60-63.

federal disaster response. In the process, they developed industrial farms in the Everglades and South Florida's integration into national consumer markets and commodity supply chains. Marketing the regions' productive potential and securing needed federal support by warning of its loss, South Florida's growers joined other modern high-production agricultural regions, like those in California, Texas, the Midwest, and Latin America, in remaking broader trends in production, consumption, trade, and labor and environmental control. On the ground, the emergence of the "agro-industrial empire" in the Everglades caused ecological disarray in the region, displaced indigenous peoples, and reproduced social inequities and systems of labor exploitation.

Assessing the state of Florida's agricultural sector and global commodity markets after the war, Florida's Agriculture Secretary Nathan Mayo predicted that "this state should have a greater future than all its past." Citing Florida's climate, its recent agricultural innovations, and its independence from European markets, he claimed the state would soon become "the nation's foremost industrial laboratory and proving ground."[245] In the coming decades, as Florida emerged as a growing "sunbelt" state, corporate and industrial farming concerns expanded and thrived, building upon investment patterns, infrastructure projects, and labor systems established in the pre-war period. Growers would also embrace new forms of economic and political organization and cooperation to adapt to the changing post-war political and business landscape, consolidate their progress, and maintain control over the Everglades environment and the region's farmworkers.

[245] Mayo "Florida, Today and Tomorrow," 1; 6.

Chapter 2: Sunbelt Growth in the Cold War: Agricultural Consolidation and Coordination, the Rise of "Big Sugar," and Farm Labor Relations, 1940s-60s

In the two decades after World War II, the Everglades' agricultural sector assumed a market position, long imagined by boosters, as the nation's "winter garden" and "sugar bowl." As the United States entered into the Cold War, Florida, like other "sunbelt" states, began a period of economic growth, buoyed by population growth, tourism and construction, and federal spending, that extended to the agricultural sector. In South Florida, growers formed highly-capitalized and diversified corporations, exiled Cuban sugar magnates rebuilt empires, and an increasingly concentrated agricultural sector flourished at the expense of the Everglades and farmworkers. By the 1960s, Florida's agricultural sector led the nation with the highest concentration of corporate-owned farms—with roughly one-third of all farmland in Florida controlled by a corporate entity.[246] It also drove the state to become the top U.S. producer of sugar cane and continued to dominate the winter produce market.[247] The growth and profitability of South Florida agribusiness rested on growers' economic and political coordination to promote harmonious production, secure favorable policies, manage the environment and farm labor, and undermine reform. In this way, the region's agricultural interests, facilitated by the movement of Caribbean labor and capital, fed into expansive supply chains and became powerful actors within a highly-coordinated Cold War food system.

In the prosperity of the post-war period, the U.S. food system transformed, as New Deal state planning in the agricultural sector gave way to the corporate management of farming, food processing, distribution, and consumption. While the New Deal encouraged economies of scale in

[246] Raup, "Corporate Farming in the United States," 275.
[247] "Florida Sugar Cane Profits, Costs, and Welfare; United Farmworkers Project Real," Box 17, UFW FL Boycott Records, LR0027, Reuther Library, Wayne State University (Hereafter, Reuther); Krueger, "The Political Economy of Controls: American Sugar," 22; 57. Production numbers in Krueger derived from the annual USDA, *Sugar and Sweeter Situation* report (1986). See: Raup, "Corporate Farming in the United States," 275.

agriculture, in the post-war period, expanding consumer markets, changing management ideals, business innovations, and government policies accelerated consolidation and coordination in the sector. Increasingly, corporate agribusinesses, integrated firms that encompassed diversified industrial farms as well as packing, processing, marketing, and other operations, took a leading role in coordinating agricultural production to supply growing supermarket chains and major food brands and processors.[248] In the context of the Cold War, well-stocked supermarkets and highly-coordinated industrial farms and food supply chains also served to uphold U.S. geopolitical power by serving as a foil to state planning in the Communist bloc and by supporting trade expansion, food aid and technical assistance, and international business partnerships.[249] In Florida, where the number of farms decreased by over 40 percent in the 15 years after World War II, Everglades growers were pioneers in the movement toward corporate consolidation and coordination in agriculture that transformed the food system in the United States and beyond.[250]

South Florida's growers' associations, cooperatives, and industry groups played a particularly vital role in driving these changes. To sustain industrial agriculture in South Florida, organized growers and their associations championed expanded federal water control projects that overhauled the Everglades ecosystem and shaped the state's overall sunbelt development. To promote on-time, low-cost production, associations further managed the recruitment and placement of migrant crews and Caribbean guestworkers, surveilled and disciplined farmworkers, and colluded to keep wages low and counter reform efforts. Agribusiness power and coordination in the region heightened with

[248] See: Davis and Goldberg, *A Concept of Agribusiness;* Hamilton, "Agribusiness, the Family Farm, and the Politics of Technological Determinism in the Post–World War II United States," 560-64.
[249] See: Hamilton, *Supermarket USA,* 2-5; 18. See also: McDonald, *Food Power, 2-15*.
[250] On growers' early efforts at organization in the state, see: H. G. Hamilton, "Integration of Marketing and Production Services by Florida Citrus Associations," *Journal of Farm Economics* 29, No. 2 (1947): 495-505; James L. McCorkle Jr., "Southern Truck Growers' Associations: Organization for Profit," *Agricultural History* 72, No. 1 (1998): 77-99. Between 1940 and 1969, the total number of farms in Florida decreased 42.8 percent (35,586 farms in 69), as the average acres per farm increased nearly 200 percent. See: Bill Finger, Cary Fowler and Chip Hughes, "Special Report on Food, Fuel, and Fiber," *Southern Exposure* 2, no. 2 and 3 (Fall 1974): 185.

the influx of Cuban capital and expertise to the Everglades after the Cuban Revolution. The rise of "big sugar" in the Everglades in the 1960s saw growers reorganize to fuel an exponential expansion of cane production, Cuban-American firms erect several new mills in South Florida, and associations champion the Everglades as a geo-strategic agricultural region in their pursuit of federal concessions.[251] Enmeshed in the calculus of the Cold War, organized agricultural interests accumulated sufficient power to shape trade patterns, foreign policy, and immigration laws, while continuing to fashion the Everglades and local labor relations to meet production demands.

Nevertheless, as poverty and exploitation continued to be endemic in Florida's farm workforce, reformers, trade unions, and a growing farm labor movement challenged the practices of South Florida's growers in this period. On Thanksgiving Day 1960, journalist Edward R. Murrow aired an investigative report on farmworkers' living and working conditions that dug below the post-war sheen of agro-industrial productivity. Murrow's famed *Harvest of Shame* sought to expose the "best-fed people in the world," to the plight of the "workers in the sweatshops of the soil." Scenes from the report filmed in Belle Glade and other Everglades towns, the East Coast migrant stream, and California showed filthy migrant camps, back-breaking work, child labor, dehumanizing crew leaders, hunger, and poverty. They also ignited public outrage and calls for reform.[252] By the mid-1960s, liberal reformers had pushed Congress to extend limited minimum wage protections to farmworkers and phase out the Bracero program. In 1966, regulators restricted the recruitment of Caribbean guestworkers outside of sugar harvesting. In South Florida, community and faith groups and national organizations like the AFL-CIO and NAACP formed a Coordinating Committee for Farmworkers that mounted a vigorous organizing campaign among migrant workers centered in Belle Glade. For two years, migrants took increasingly militant action, at times without the

[251] For a concise overview of Cuban and other sugar investments in the Everglades in this period, see: Davis and Ogden, *Everglades: The Ecosystem and Its Restoration*, 101-2.
[252] CBS Reports, *Harvest of Shame* (CBS Television, 1960).

endorsement of national leaders, in the pursuit of improved livelihoods and a union. To weather this wave of organization and reform, growers' associations were again instrumental. Associations centralized the recruitment and placement of non-striking crews to undermine pickets, exacerbated division within the union drive, and mobilized the state's political systems against organizers. Many growers also recalibrated production practices to maintain profits and labor control.

While scholars have done important work exploring environmental change in the Everglades, guestworkers, and the state's sugar industry, the central role corporate organization and sectoral associations in the region played in structuring production, shaping farmworkers' lives, and advancing growers' class interests and political agendas is generally overlooked.[253] By centering corporate agribusinesses and their cooperative and sectoral associations, this chapter shows how growers' political and economic organization generated changes to the landscape, facilitated intensive production, controlled labor, and situated the region as a node for migration, investment, and supply chains. This approach also illuminates the ties between the sector's drive for on-time production and class relations, class conflict, and social change. In this vein, it can be seen that growers' associations and cooperatives were not only instrumental in maintaining labor control, but also strengthened growers' class bonds. Associations and cooperatives clarified and advanced growers' political interests and facilitated business relationships and harmonized competition.

This chapter reconstructs the corporate consolidation and organization of agriculture in the Everglades, its consequences for the environment and workers, and the region's position and influence within the Cold War-era food system. Echoing pre-war episodes of "disaster capitalism," it begins with an environmental crisis in South Florida. After catastrophic floods in 1947, agricultural and landed interests led in eliciting the construction of the C&SF comprehensive water control

[253] See: Kramer, *The Offshores*; Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land;* Conlin, "Invisible Hands in the Winter Garden"; Hollander, *Raising Cane in the 'Glades*.

project to make the Everglades secure for economic development, which conflicted with the charge of the region's new National Park and fueled the rapid expansion of farms, suburbs, and cities. This chapter then traces how corporate consolidation in agriculture unfolded upon a remade environment within the context of Florida's sunbelt development in the 1950s and 1960s, with a focus on how growers' organizations and business and labor management practices met changing supply chain demands. With the migration of Cuban sugar growers and capital to the region in the 1960s, the Everglades' agricultural sector increased its profits and political power in line with expanding sugar production. Amid the shifting geopolitics of trade and the Cold War, agricultural interests wielded their influence to encourage the construction of a complex and highly-regulated agricultural trade regime. Yet, to secure their market position in the Cold War food system, growers also had to coordinate to navigate national reforms and stave off farmworkers' organization.

Reengineering Florida's Sunbelt Environment

As World War II concluded, Florida was on the verge of another economic boom and was taking its place in the emerging U.S. "sunbelt," the regions, states, and cities in the South and Southwest that became magnets for demographic growth and new private and public investment in this period.[254] Yet, environmental crises and heavy flooding in the late 1940s made clear that the existing drainage infrastructure in the Everglades was not up to the task of supporting South Florida's urban and agricultural development and growth. This post-war period of turmoil in the Everglades environment ultimately produced two closely related but ultimately incompatible federal projects: the establishment of the Everglades National Park in December 1947 and the initiation of the massive Army Corps of Engineers-led C&SF Flood Control Project a year later. With the C&SF

---

[254] Sean P. Cunningham, *American Politics in the Postwar Sunbelt: Conservative Growth in a Battleground Region* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1-13; On regional variations and the south within the "sun belt," see: Bruce J. Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South, 1938-1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 174-7.

Project, the Army Corps of Engineers undermined conservation and further carved up the landscape of South Florida by installing a complex system of canals, levees, dams, reservoirs, and pumping stations covering some 15,000 square miles.[255] Organized agricultural interests and associations shaped the boundaries, funding, and missions of both the Everglades National Park and the C&SF Flood Control Project to streamline future urban and agricultural development and reinforce the sector's position in the Everglades ecosystem.

World War II had been good for Florida. Defense jobs and federal infrastructure investments dragged the state out of its long depression, and post-war prosperity was palpable late in the decade. Florida had hosted several military training sites and thousands of returning soldiers, enticed by the state's semi-tropical charms and low taxes, moved to Florida after the war, increasing land prices and housing demand. Between 1940 and 1950, the state's population grew from 1,897,700 to 2,735,000, with new growth mainly concentrated in Tampa Bay and South Florida. In that period, Miami added over 110,000 people to its census roles and supplanted Jacksonville as the state's largest city.[256] Concurrently, the state's agricultural sector grew over 300 percent— from a $ 100,000,000-a-year industry in 1935 to a $401,000,000 one by 1949.[257] With the promised safety of the Hoover dike enclosing Lake Okeechobee and improved drainage canals, South Florida's agricultural sector drove much of that growth.[258]

Nevertheless, South Florida's budding sunbelt growth rested upon a shaky ecological foundation, a legacy of past decades of short-sighted development, and was hampered by climatic

---

[255] See: R.V. Allison, Vice-Director Everglades Experiment Station, "The Significance of Water Conservation to the Agricultural Development of South Florida," *The Citrus Industry,* 5 (November 1946): 7-8 in *The Citrus Industry*, vo. 26-27, 1945-6 PKY; 15,000 square mile figure referenced in: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Central and South Florida Flood Control District, *Waters of Destiny* (International Sound Films, Inc., 195x). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIi4OzKsFiU

[256] U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1950 Census of Population, Series PC-2, no. 9, "Population of Florida, By Counties, April 1, 1950" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1950); Derr, *Some Kind of Paradise,* 337-8.

[257] Earle L. Rauber, "Pillars of Progress" in Allen Morris, ed., *The Florida Handbook* (Tallahassee: Peninsular Publishing Co., 1951), 31-32.

[258] McJunkin, "Winter Vegetable Farming in Florida: Its Acreage Patterns and Marketing Flows," 34.

calamities. From 1943 to 1946, South Florida suffered one of the worst droughts in the state's history. The Hoover dike and new canaling exacerbated water shortages by choking back the natural north-south flow of water from Lake Okeechobee and removing surface water too rapidly from the Everglades. In this period, urban residents worried about access to drinking water and farmers saw their soil erode several feet. Plants and animals died, and the muck soil became so dry that it blew away or turned to peat kindling and burned.[259] Regarding the drought, the Army Corps of Engineers reported that "cattle died in the pastures of the Kissimmee Valley for lack of water; smoke from burning muck lands of the Everglades darkened the coastal cities; and saltwater moved inland along drainage canals."[260]

While heavy rains in 1947 were initially a welcome sight, a new spate of water problems arose after two hurricanes and a tropical disturbance impacted South Florida between September and October of that year. Floods inundated the region, overwhelmed drainage infrastructure, and covered over 5 million acres in the Everglades. Farmworkers evacuated the Lake Okeechobee area and townspeople, growers, and ranchers on opposing sides of dams, levees, and locks filed for legal injunctions and took up arms to compel drainage district officials to move water away from them (and onto their neighbors). Caught in the middle of competing interests, the EDD chief engineer Lamar Johnson received death threats and was unsuccessfully brought before a grand jury on criminal charges.[261] When the waters began to subside in November 1947, it was clear that more federal intervention was necessary to better manage the region's environment and overcome the chaotic organization of Everglades drainage.[262]

---

[259] David McCally, "The Everglades and the Florida Dream," 152-3 in David McCally and Ray Arsenault, eds., *Paradise Lost? An Environmental History of Florida* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2005); Derr, *Some Kind of Paradise,* 327.
[260] Quoted in: Godfrey and Catton, *River of Interests*, 22.
[261] "Hurricane Flag Up Here," *Fort Myers News-Press,* September 17, 1947; "The Great South Florida Flood," *Orlando Sun-Sentinel,* September 9, 1990.
[262] At this time, drainage governance was largely decentralized and featured 12 separate sub-drainage districts covering over 100,000 acres. Godfrey and Catton, *River of Interests,* 21.

The first such intervention was the establishment of the Everglades National Park, an important, if partial, victory for the conservation movement, as well as a product of contemporary perspectives on the relationship between conservation and development. With the ground still sodden in December 1947, President Truman dedicated the Everglades National Park, after flying in from his retreat in Key West and meeting with local officials and Seminole leaders. Truman praised the Everglades as "tranquil in its quiet beauty" and called for conservation to be measured in "popular use" and extended to maintain the water table alongside the expansion of irrigated agriculture.[263] The Everglades National Park, of course, had a charge to preserve the unique ecosystem of South Florida, including its endangered plant and animal life, which had been ravaged by drainage, farming, construction, and overhunting. Yet, as Truman indicated, resource management was also central to the park's mission. Like Truman, even leading conservationists in the state, like Marjorie Stoneman Douglas, who also published her *Everglades: River of Grass* in 1947, viewed the park as a natural resource and recreational space within a larger context of development and environmental management in South Florida. Indeed, while Douglas warned that the Everglades' out-of-balance ecosystem was in its "eleventh hour," she also advocated for the creation of a central authority to manage competing demands for water and maintain productive use of the region to restore the "river of grass."[264]

The park's dual charges and final boundaries reflected the significant political compromises that led to its creation, as well as the influence of the agricultural sector. As the 1934 Congressional authorization for the park did not allocate funds to secure land for it, sweeping proposals for preserving over two million acres of the Everglades in a park from the likes of Ernest Coe, founder

[263] Log of President Harry S. Truman's Third Visit to Key West, Florida, December 1947, 13-16, 79443357, Rose A. Conway Papers, US National Archives Research Catalog; "Address on Conservation at the Dedication of Everglades National Park," December 6, 1947. The American Presidency Project, UC Santa Barbara. https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-conservation-the-dedication-everglades-national-park.
[264] Douglas, *River of Grass*, 383; See also: Godfrey and Catton, *Rivers of Interest,* 19-20.

of the Everglades Park Commission, faced steep obstacles. For one, the Seminole tribes opposed Coe's view that humans had no place in the Everglades and later worked to secure federal recognition of their right to use parkland according to tribal custom, the tribe's first major interactions with the federal government since the Seminole wars of the 19th century.[265] Moreover, key political players like Secretary of Agriculture Nathan Mayo, large landowners like the Colliers, and developers balked at preserving potentially profitable land.[266] Florida's Governor (from 1941-45) and later U.S. Senator (from 1946 to 1971) Spessard Holland arbitrated between interested parties and marshaled the $2 million of state funding needed for land purchases for the park. Holland, a conservation-minded lawmaker with rural roots, nonetheless believed that the region should be put to productive use and made several concessions to growers and landowners. The final perimeter of the park, which encompassed 1.3 million acres, excluded vast swaths of the Everglades ecosystem including the Kissimmee River valley, the prairies of Big Cypress, the northern Everglades with its productive vegetable and sugar fields, coastal islands and keys, and a 22,000-acre eastern tract occupied by truck farms known as the "hole in the donut."[267]

Soon after the establishment of the Everglades National Park, in 1948, Congress approved the ambitious C&SF Project for Flood Control, which realized the goal of a half-century of earlier drainage efforts and laid the infrastructure for South Florida's explosive growth in the decades that followed. With supreme confidence in their technical abilities, the Army Corps of Engineers led construction on the C&SF Project, an interconnected system of water control installations designed to control the water in the Everglades "to do the bidding of man and his machines," in the words of

---

265 See: Allison M. Dussias, "The Seminole Tribe of Florida and the Everglades Ecosystem: Refuge and Resource," *Florida International University Law Review* 9, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 234-5.
266 Layburr to Schaller, 15 April 1936, box 2, 1936 campaign correspondence, Nathan Mayo Collection, PKY; Douglas, *Everglades: River of Grass*, 280-83.
267 Grunwald, *The Swamp*, 212-14.

a melodramatic 1950s Army Corps of Engineers film.[268] In total, to complete the C&SF Project, the Army Corps would build some 2,100 miles of canals, 2,000 miles of levees, 600 water control structures, major water conservation areas, and 70 pumping stations. To manage the project, the state legislature replaced the EDD and created the C&SF Flood Control District (renamed the South Florida Water Management District in 1972) a five-person, politically-connected board with the power to make decisions about how to move water in the Everglades.[269]

The C&SF Project was, as Hollander argues, a "high modernist" solution to decentralized and piecemeal drainage that reflected an unfaltering belief in using technology to meet environmental challenges.[270] It also ushered in a regime of “water management” in the Everglades, that went beyond drainage or flood control, and relied on expert planning and tremendous physical infrastructure to control environmental uncertainty.[271] From a political standpoint, Holland's deal-making also informed the contours of the project, which aimed to balance the demands of nearly all of South Florida's major stakeholders by preventing over-drainage, protecting development, and providing water for agriculture, coastal residents, and, lastly, the new National Park.[272]

Yet, South Florida's major landed and agricultural interests had perhaps the greatest influence in building political support for the project and shaping its ultimate implementation. While

---

[268] U.S. Army Corps and the C &SF Flood Control District, *Waters of Destiny*. On the C&SF project's jurisdiction, see: Izuno, "A Brief History of Water Management in the Everglades Agricultural Area," 6.

[269] Central and Southern Florida Flood Control District, "Flood Control District 20 Years this July," *Water Management Bulletin*, no. 6 (June/ July 1969) in *Water Management Bulletin* 1967-72 PKY; See also: John P. Mitnik, "How SFWMD Manages Levees in South Florida," South Florida Water Management District, 2012. sfwmd.gov/sites/default/files/documents/sfwmd_levee%20presentation.pdf

[270] Hollander, *Raising Cane*, 7. To describe the project, Hollander draws from James Scott's concept of "high modernism," or a late 19th and 20th century paradigm that held that scientific and technical knowledge should bring order to society and nature. See: James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

[271] McCally finds Everglades reclamation falls into 3 periods: drainage (1904-28), flood control (1928-48), and comprehensive water management (1948 to present). See: McCally, *The Everglades*, 87.

[272] U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), South Florida Information Access (SOFIA), "Development of Water-Management System and Impact on the Hydrology of Southeastern Florida," Circular 1275 (2013); Izumo, "A Brief History of Water Management in the Everglades Agricultural Area," 6. On the project, generally, see also: Blake, *Land into Water- Water into Land*, 175-80; Grunwald, *The Swamp,* 221-2; McCally, "The Everglades and the Florida Dream," 152.

the Army Corps' Hoover Dike had provided basic security, growers pressed for more federal involvement in water control, particularly once the dike proved to bring its own environmental problems in the mid-1940s. Throughout the 1940s, U.S Sugar had advocated for comprehensive improvements to the state's canaling to stave off soil erosion. The company employed engineers to craft water control recommendations and forwarded widely circulated reports and memos to state and federal lawmakers on the subject.[273] Company executives held water control to be essential to the future of a diverse agricultural sector in the Everglades and often presented proposals and demands on behalf of the sector as a whole. During the floods of 1947, U.S. Sugar and the region's growers' associations put pressure on congressional lawmakers by holding public hearings and inundating congressional offices with telegrams, petitions, and reports on conditions in their fields.[274] Additionally, the new Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association (FFVA), formerly the Florida Vegetable Committee, put its sophisticated political operation to work to lobby for water control, an issue it deemed "vitally important to all vegetable and tropical fruit producing areas."[275]

From the state level, Everglades agricultural interests marshaled the financing for the project and secured advantageous terms for the sector. Associations activated political allies in the state to support the cause of water control. Secretary of Agriculture Mayo called on Florida's congressional delegation to procure federal funds to bring order to the region's water.[276] Further, drainage boards, city councils, and county commissions throughout South Florida pushed federal lawmakers to rapidly release funds for the project.[277] Once federal funding was secured, to meet the state's

[273] See: US Sugar to Gov. Caldwell, 17 September 1946, Box 49, 4c Army Corp of Engineers, General, Spessard Holland Papers, MS o55, PKY; Clarence Bitting, *U.S. Sugar Corporation, Sugar and the Everglades* (Clewiston, FL: U.S. Sugar Corporation: Jan 1941).
[274] See, for example: Telegram U.S. Sugar to Sen. Holland, 20 March 1947; A Resolution Concerning the Everglades of Florida 1947 in Box 49, 4c "Flood control, Statewide," Spessard Holland Papers, MS o55, PKY.
[275] "Water Control," *Market Grower's Journal* 78 (1949): 18.
[276] Nathan Mayo to Dwight Rogers, 9 August 1946, Box 49, 4c Army Corp of Engineers, General, Spessard Holland Papers, MS o55, PKY.
[277] See: Correspondence in Spessard L. Holland Papers, MS 055, Box 49, 4c flood control statewide, PKY.

designated 18.5 percent funding contribution to the project, Florida lawmakers also had to broker a deal with some of the state's largest landowners and ranching interests. Ernest Graham, the Lykes Brothers, a Tampa-based shipping line and large agricultural holding company, and the Collier family initially opposed the project out of fear that it would raise the water table on their lands. To placate the ranchers, state lawmakers agreed to impose a uniform ad valorem tax on lands within the proposed C&SF district to meet the state's funding obligations. This funding scheme put the burden for raising the state funds to pay for the C&SF project disproportionately on urban areas, although growers and large landowners in the Everglades received a disproportional benefit from enhanced water management in the region.[278]

The design of the C&SF project reflects the influence of agricultural interests in this period. As part of the proposed $208 million, ten-year C&SF project— which ran ten years late and far over budget— the Army Corps established the EAA, a prime 700,000-acre expanse of engineered farmland below Lake Okeechobee, covering some 27 percent of the Everglades ecosystem. The EAA represented a boon to growers. With it, the state created a special district board for landowners with power over the EAA's intricate, interlocking water control system that spanned the Lake Okeechobee basin and included farming hubs like Belle Glade and Pahokee, and much of the land owned by U.S. Sugar. Below the EAA, the Army Corps built three massive water conservation areas on nonproductive land to store water and recharge the aquifer for farms and cities. Additionally, a new 105-mile-long levee running parallel to the coast provided expanding cities and exurban industries and farms with more robust flood protection.[279]

Over the next twenty years, as the Army Corps built new canals and levees throughout the

[278] McCally, *The Everglades*, 150-2; Tom Swihart, *Florida's Water: A Fragile Resource in a Vulnerable State* (New York: Routledge/ RFF Press, 2011), 126; Blake, *Land into Water,* 177-80.
[279] Central and Southern Florida Flood Control District, "Flood Control District 20 Years this July."; Godfrey and Catton, *River of Interests*, 33-40.

Everglades, the C&SF project opened up 726,000 acres of new agricultural and residential land and laid the groundwork for rapid population growth and a major expansion of industrial farming and urban and suburban development.[280] With the National Park occupying only a fraction of the Everglades ecosystem, the C&SF project signaled to the investors, developers, and growers who moved in behind the Corp's dredging equipment that the acreage outside of the park was ripe for the taking. These interests quickly made their mark on the re-engineered landscape. In the mid-1950s, South Florida's developed areas covered less than 150 square miles, a measure that quadrupled by the late 1960s.[281] In this new sunbelt environment, Everglades growers and their associations ushered in a remarkable period of growth and consolidation.

Corporate Consolidation, Agricultural Organization, and the Food System in the Cold War

In the 1950s, large agricultural interests, old and new, thrived in the reengineered Everglades. Capitalizing on the improved infrastructure, growers acquired and improved newly available lands, leased acreage, vertically integrated, and diversified their holdings. Likewise, they adapted their business operations and strategies to account for the region's changing landscape, increasing urbanization, and shifting trends in consumer markets and supply chains. To do so, successful growers embraced corporate organization and sectoral coordination, often under the auspices of agricultural associations and large cooperative organizations. Corporate organization as well as growers' high degree of economic and political coordination promoted harmonious production and competition and further integrated the Everglades into major supply chains, as food production and consumption practices took on increased geopolitical significance in the Cold War.

In the context of South Florida's rapid development in the 1950s, corporate expansion and consolidation in agriculture unfolded in tandem with urban growth. Land made available or secure

[280] L. Boyd Finch, "The Florida Swamp That Swallows Your Money," *Harper's Magazine*, February 1, 1959, 77.
[281] Grunwald, *The Swamp,* 232-3.

through the C&SF project attracted vast amounts of capital investments both on the coast and on tracts abutting the National Park and water conversation areas.[282] The Army Corps project put no acreage limit on purchases of improved state lands— as was policy for Bureau of Reclamation projects in Western states— and investors procured tens of thousands of acres at a time as land values soared.[283] Echoing the speculative land buying of the 1920s, land companies sold plots on installment sight unseen to out-of-state middle-class families, retirees, and snowbirds for as little as $10 a month, scraping away pine forests and wetlands to build planned communities, particularly near the southwest coast of Florida.[284] Meanwhile, the state government promoted the Everglades as a rapidly developing "tropical southern frontier" and encouraged prospective residents to find their "place in the sun" in new suburban communities.[285]

While urban and suburban growth filled space between the coasts and the Everglades and often subsumed rural and agricultural acreage, residential development was not incompatible with agricultural development in South Florida.[286] Many large citrus and vegetable growers based in Central and North Florida began investing in the Everglades, along with land developers and well-capitalized holding companies. These rural landholders received the bulk of the benefits of the flood control project, subsidized by federal funds and a growing base of urban taxpayers.[287] As land prices shot up, diversified agribusiness took advantage of corporate partnerships and the prevailing tax environment and increasingly concentrated production on available land.

---

[282] C&SF Flood Control District, "A Report on Area B, Dade and Broward Counties," April 1959. PKY.
[283] Finch, "The Florida Swamp That Swallows Your Money," 78.
[284] Jason Vuic, *The Swamp Peddlers: How Lot Sellers, Land Scammers, and Retirees Built Modern Florida and Transformed the American Dream* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 3-8.
[285] William Roy Shelton, "Land of the Everglades: Tropical Southern Frontier," Florida Department of Agriculture (1957), 40.
[286] Indeed, nationally, more than one million acres of farmland was converted for urban, suburban, or industrial use on an annual basis in these years. See: Shaw E. Grigsby, ed., "Agricultural Growth and Urban Expansion in Dade County, Florida," Circular 265, University of Florida Agricultural Extension Service, June 1963, 7.
[287] On the inequities of cost sharing and tax burdens related to the construction of the EAA, see: Luther J. Carter, *The Florida Experience: Land and Water Policy in a Growth State* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press,1975), 96-7.

Dade County, which includes Miami, presents a useful case study of this dynamic. As suburbs sprawled from Miami in the 1950s and 1960s, developers and speculators purchased lands based on 20-year growth projections, including large tracts of viable farmland. To cover the cost and upkeep of this acreage, most investors leased tracts out to growers at prices approximating their annual tax bill. Thus, citrus and tropical fruit growers in Redlands and large tomato concerns in Homestead, major agricultural areas south of Miami, stayed ahead of urbanization and formed mutually reinforcing relationships with developers and urban investors.[288]

Despite low leasing costs, much capital was required to make farming profitable on these finite land tracts, which encouraged the corporate consolidation of farming operations in the county. As the structures of the post-war food system increasingly compelled growers to embrace highly-specialized monoculture, Dade's growers anchored the state's winter tomato production—producing some 40 percent of its total annually in the 1950s. While Dade County enjoyed an advantageous growing season, much of its farmland consisted of nutrient-poor, limestone-based "rockland" soil. To make tomatoes grow, growers had to break the land with expensive tractors and chisel plows, use loads of fertilizers, and implement complex irrigation systems. At harvest time, labor costs added to these expenses. Additionally, to bring crops to market, growers had to invest in packing and refrigeration equipment to prevent spoilage and prepare crops for long-distance transport. These combined capital outlays priced most small farmers out of the county.[289]

[288] Dade county's urban-rural development dynamic was of particular interest to researchers associated with University of Florida's agricultural program and extension service during this period. See: Shaw E. Grigsby, ed., "Agricultural Growth and Urban Expansion in Dade County, Florida," University of Florida Agricultural Extension Service, Circular 265 (June 1963):11-15; 53-55; Aaron Hutcheson, "Some Selected Agribusiness Components of the Dade County Tomato Industry" (MA Thesis, University of Florida, 1965), 16-17; Charles Walker and Richard M. Hunt, "Analysis of Costs for Tomato Production on The Rockdale Soils of South Florida," Department Food and Resource Economics, University of Florida, Economics Report 45 (1973)

[289] Grigsby, ed., "Agricultural Growth and Urban Expansion in Dade County, Florida," 53-55; Hutcheson, "Some Selected Agribusiness Components of the Dade County Tomato Industry," 1-3. On labor, labor-saving technology, and refrigeration, generally, see: "The Blight of the Countryside: America's Hired Farm Workers," 1959 [approx.], Bo 49, Folder 41, Organizing Department Records 1955-1975, Meany AFL-CIO Collection, UMD.

Beyond Dade County, it took money to make money in the redesigned Everglades, where farms further inland covered thousands of acres. In addition to the costs of farm equipment, fertilizer and pesticides, and labor, agriculture in the Everglades required large capital investments in water infrastructure. As had been the norm since the early days of Everglades drainage, the C&SF project not only provided protection from flooding and irrigation in dry months, but also further subsidized growers by allowing them to freely tap into the district's infrastructure and pump from canals and the aquifer at no cost.[290] Nevertheless, to access and harness water resources, farms often needed to use expensive pumping equipment and construct supplemental irrigation canals and levees. By the late 1950s, when the Army Corps finished construction on four canals and 107 miles of levees in the EAA, most small operators had left the fertile mucklands south of Lake Okeechobee.[291] Others[292] were incorporated into joint or contract farming ventures with larger corporate concerns, which covered input and marketing costs in exchange for a percentage of the harvest's profits. Meanwhile, specialized corporations like U.S. Sugar in Clewiston and diversified agribusinesses like the Lykes brothers, whose ranch west of the lake represented one of the largest contiguous tracts of private land in the state, remained entrenched.[293]

In addition to incumbent landowners, various types of corporate enterprises blossomed in the Everglades in the 1950s. Large holding companies, like that of Arthur Vining Davis, the chairman of the Aluminum Company of America, who acquired approximately one-eighth of usable land in Dade County, also added farms, groves, and ranches to their South Florida portfolios.[294] The Gerry family of New York, a dynasty heavily involved in investment banking extending back to the

---

290 On water use permitting, see: Swihart, *Florida's Water,* 172-76.
291 See: Uriel L Manheim, "The Florida Everglades: Their Farming Prospects," Bureau of Business and Economic Research, Area Development Series no. 5, (University of Miami, 1954), 13-19.
292 On the EAA, see: C&SF Flood Control District, "Report to the Bureau of the Budget," October 1958 (West Palm Beach, FL: C&SF FCD), 1. PKY. Like the C&SF Flood Control Project as a whole, the construction of the EAA's infrastructure was completed late and far over budget.
293 On the Lykes family, see: Mike Vogel, "Family Feud," *Florida Today,* September 1, 2001.
294 Finch, "The Florida Swamp That Swallows Your Money," 79.

founding era, acquired for $14 an acre in 1953 over 290,000 acres of Everglades land, stretching from Collier County to the Lake Okeechobee area. The Gerrys flipped approximately 42,000 of semi-submerged land for $129 and dedicated the rest to development.[295]

The Everglades also offered incorporated family farming operations opportunities for growth. West of the National Park in Immokalee, James Guant established the Gaunt company, a large truck farming concern, and the town's first packing house in 1940, connecting the town to national markets for the first time. Through the 1950s, tomato farmers priced out of Dade County set up farms on Immokalee's sandy soil and put approximately 26,500 acres in the area into production, making the town one of Florida's major agricultural centers.[296] Near Belle Glade, A. Duda and Sons began farming on 350 acres around 1950. The family corporation, founded in 1926 by a Czech immigrant on 40 acres near Lake Apopka in Central Florida, specialized in celery and made additional profits by developing and selling harvesting and processing equipment and vertically integrating marketing operations. The Duda's Everglades section eventually doubled the size of their Lake Apopka farms, as the company expanded into citrus, cattle, and other leaf vegetables. In time, the firm grew to become the largest producer of celery in the world. [297]

Chase and Company, a family company with ties to Philadelphia banking incorporated in 1914 and liquidated in the late 1970s, offers another instructive case. The family's trove of archived records at the University of Florida reveals much about the operations of corporate farming in South Florida during this period. Successful citrus growers, shippers, and fertilizer suppliers based in Central Florida, the Chases invested in the Everglades in 1954, growing a variety of vegetables and,

---

[295] Vuic, *The Swamp Peddlers*, 19.
[296] U.S. Senate, "Hearings, Reports and Prints of the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs," Parts 1-2 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1951): 251-2; Carlene Thissen, *Immokalee's Fields of Hope* (New York: Universe Star, 2004), 27-7; Hearings Before the Florida Citizens Advisory Committee on Migrant Agricultural Labor, "Immokalee, Florida," March 28, 1956, 2. PKY.
[297] "Razed Glades Packing Plant Conducts Business as Usual as Harvests Continue Light," *Tampa Tribune*, December 10, 1950; Rolland Dean, "Man of the Week: Debt and Another Try," *Orlando Sentinel*, October 23, 1955. See also: Duda Fresh, "Our Farms." https://www.dudafresh.com/our-farms.

later, some sugarcane.[298] Chase and Co.'s financial records show that the company's varied farming operations encompassed farming on its own land, farming in joint-ventures with other growers on leased land, and earning indirectly by advancing credit or equipment to other growers.[299] The company was also diversified, organized into autonomous vegetable, citrus, fertilizer, and building departments to promote the company's long-term financial viability.[300] While Chase and Co. was not as large as some of its partners and competitors in South Florida, this approach allowed Chase to be responsive to new opportunities and scale to the point where the company profited over the million-dollar mark on various joint ventures, while covering losses and expenses.[301]

Although the business environment for small farmers was prohibitive, Florida's large agricultural interests generally emphasized cooperation over competition. U.S. Sugar, for example, fostered the growth of the state's sugar industry as a whole to combat potential anti-trust charges and build a more effective lobby in the state for its policy priorities. Accordingly, the firm founded a state sugar association in 1939 and encouraged medium-sized vegetable growers in the Everglades to diversify by planting sugar cane.[302] To strengthen its mutually-beneficial relationships with smaller operators, U.S. Sugar, which owned the largest U.S. sugar mill, provided market access to association members by processing and trading cane for them, which accounted for about 10 percent of the mill's production, much of it for use in commercial food processing.[303]

Building on pre-war efforts among truck farmers to negotiate lower shipping rates and

---

[298] A brief discussion of the family starting in the Everglades (Pahokee) is found in: Randall Chase to Sales Department, 20 December 1968. Box 94, Glades Farm 1972. Chase Collection RG1, Series 4, PKY. For background on the Chase family, see: Carl Van Ness, " A Guide to the Chase Collection," University of Florida Smathers Libraries - Special and Area Studies Collections April 2009. http://www.library.ufl.edu/spec/pkyonge/chase.htm.

[299] Memo: Policy Regarding Farming Operations, 10 June 1966, Box 94, Chase Finance Committee, Chase Collection RG1, Series 4, PKY.

[300] Further on the organization of the company: "Corporate Farming: How Chase & Company Has Grown into a Dominant Force in Florida Agri-Business," 196x, Chase and Co. Annual Stockholders Meeting, 1969, Box 84 Chase Collection RG1, Series 4, PKY.

[301] See: "Joint Venture Farms," P&L Chart, Box 97, Chase and Co. Finance Committee 1967, Chase Collection RG1, Series 4, PKY

[302] Heitmann, "The Beginnings of Big Sugar in Florida, 1920-1945," 57-8.

[303] See: Hollander, *Raisin' Cane in the Glades,* 128; 260-1; Bitting, "Sugar and the Everglades," 7; 31.

shielded from anti-trust laws by New Deal-era agricultural regulations that promoted cooperation in agriculture to lift crop prices, several other state-wide growers' associations also formed in the 1940s and grew in influence in the post-war period[304].

Associations including the Florida Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association (FFVA), the Florida Farm Bureau, and Florida Citrus Mutual sought to amplify growers' political voice, rationalize competition among its members to combat low prices, harmonize production in line with federal acreage allotments, and coordinate transportation, marketing, and grading standards. In the realm of labor relations, they worked to contest New Deal labor protections and undermine farmworkers' organizing. As will be discussed further, growers' associations also supplanted the federal government after World War II as the central intermediaries for the international recruitment of BWI guestworkers.[305]

In addition to advancing political agendas through associations, growers used these spaces to devise business partnerships, share market opportunities, industry best practices, and technological advances, and form relationships and a sense of shared class identity. The FFVA, for example, developed an array of crop committees, committees on labor, water, marketing, and district offices across the state to advance the interests of produce, sugar, and citrus growers.[306] Cooperation generally led to increased profits. On this, Andrew Duda reported in 1970 that profiting on celery had been difficult until he and other growers in the region stabilized competition by forming an exchange to build "as much bargaining power as the chain stores got buying power" and press buyers for higher prices.[307]

---

[304] On growers' early efforts at organization in the state, see: H. G. Hamilton, "Integration of Marketing and Production Services by Florida Citrus Associations," *Journal of Farm Economics* 29, No. 2 (1947): 495-505; James L. McCorkle Jr., "Southern Truck Growers' Associations: Organization for Profit," *Agricultural History* 72, No. 1 (1998): 77-99.
[305] See: Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land,* 90-1.
[306] See: Florida Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association Directory and 25th Anniversary Resolution, 1968, Florida Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association, Labor, 1968, Box 127, Chase Collection, Series 4, RG 1, PKY.
[307] *Migrant: An NBC White Paper* (NBC, July 16, 1970).

In this period, large corporate supermarkets began to dominate the food retail business and direct the movement of food for U.S. consumers.[308] Joining firms like A&P and Kroger, Florida chain stores like Winn Dixie, which grew from a small family-run chain in Miami to a public corporation that acquired other chain stores beginning in the 1930s, and Publix, which established a large central Florida warehouse and opened dozens of stores in the 1950s, began shaping commodity purchasing trends. To exercise greater price control and maintain inventory, supermarkets like these and their subsidiaries replaced most wholesalers as the main direct buying agents of fruits and vegetables.[309] This gave them a great deal of concentrated buying power and market knowledge that allowed them to dictate product requirements and delivery schedules.

Thus, associations, horizontal cooperation, and vertical integration became essential for corporate growers. Growers' associations and cooperatives collectively negotiated with grocers and retailers and met the needs of those same firms by issuing standard grades on produce, ensuring product quality, and centralizing purchasing through contractual arrangements. Large individual firms, likewise, often vertically integrated by taking on their own processing and marketing functions to bypass wholesalers.[310] Industry-wide, associations encouraged the growth of "produce sections" and other marketing tactics in supermarkets to generate demand. For example, the United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association, a national trade organization for major produce concerns, established the United Merchandising Institute to work with supermarkets to shape the display,

---

[308] Markin, *The Supermarket,* 1-2. On the major regulatory and industry developments regarding supermarket growth, see: "The Growth Years 1952-77, 25 Years of News from Supermarket News," *Supermarket News*, Section 2, October 24, 1977

[309] On the growth years of Publix, see: George Jenkins, *The Publix Story* (NY: The New Comen Society in North America, 1979); Glenn Emery, "Winn-Dixie," Jacksonville Historical Society. https://www.jaxhistory.org/portfolio-items/winn-dixie/.

[310] Willard F. Mueller and Norman R. Collins, "Grower-Processor Integration in Fruit and Vegetable Marketing," Journal of Farm Economics 39, no. 5 (1957): 1477-81; Hamilton, *Supermarket USA*, 38; For an in-depth examination of a single commodity from Florida, see: Kary Mathis, "Marketing Florida Celery: A Wholesale and Retail Analysis," Florida Agricultural Market Research Center Report, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (University of Florida, 1976), 10-13.

presentation, and marketing of fresh fruit and vegetables in stores.[311]

Through sectoral associations, as well as consolidation, vertical integration, and horizontal cooperation, South Florida's agricultural sector rationalized and coordinated production for distant industry food buyers and consumers, and aligned with and contributed to broader national and international transformations in the food system. In the United States, government policies to rationalize agriculture contributed to a doubling of farm productivity rates, in what Shane Hamilton has dubbed a Cold War "farms race." Industrial farms tied to expanding supermarket supply chains to meet growing U.S. consumer demand, while U.S. policymakers elevated industrial farms and supermarkets as models for the globe that demonstrated that a capitalist agricultural system could outperform Communist central planning.[312]

U.S. agricultural and international development policies also aimed to advance U.S. hegemony in the Cold War by spreading industrial farming technologies globally. Beginning in the 1930s, U.S. policymakers and philanthropic organizations, like the Rockefeller and Ford foundations, frequently in conversation with Mexican reformers, spearheaded research and promoted industrial approaches to agriculture and new cultivation technologies in an effort to eliminate hunger and increase production. By the 1950s and 1960s, assistance and research programs pioneered in the U.S. South and Mexico had grown to reshape production regimes in both countries and disseminated the use of labor-saving technologies, high yield crops, wage labor, and chemical agricultural inputs.[313] To demonstrate the superiority of capitalist production globally, spreading this "green revolution" became a cornerstone of U.S. technical assistance and aid to developing countries during the Cold War.[314] In the 1950s, the Eisenhower administration began sending agricultural

---

[311] C.W. Kitchen, "Can We Sell More Fruits and Vegetables," *The Citrus Industry* 10 (October 1948): 9
[312] Hamilton, *Supermarket USA*, 2-5; 18; McDonald, *Food Power,* 1-15.
[313] Olsson, *Agrarian Crossings,* 192-5.
[314] For a critical examination of the Green Revolution's detrimental impact on smallholders and its ecological and social

surpluses as aid to allies around the world as part of a "food for peace" program and created the International Cooperation Administration (ICA) to direct nonmilitary aid and send "how-to" men around the globe to supervise food distribution and transfer rural technologies in-country.[315] The ICA became the Agency for International Development (USAID) in the 1960s, and, through the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, the agency increasingly conditioned food aid on recipient countries aligning with U.S. geopolitical prerogatives and adopting technical and agricultural reforms.[316]

Beyond the "soft power" influence of food and agricultural assistance and propaganda that featured bountiful U.S. farms and supermarkets, corporate agricultural interests also contributed to heating up Cold War geopolitics in the 1950s. For example, after Guatemala's President Jacobo Arbenz Guzman pursued land reforms to modernize the country's semi-feudal land system, the United Fruit Company (UFCO), Guatemala's largest landowner, launched a public relations campaign against him and pressed for U.S. intervention. Labeled a "Communist" for his reformist agenda, on June 27, 1954, Arbenz, after months of isolation and psychological warfare directed at his government, resigned as a CIA-backed rebel army bore down on him. In his resignation speech, Arbenz spoke defiantly against the coup plot, the UFCO, and the CIA. He explained that the plotters "used the pretext of anti-communism," but the true motivation for his removal was "to be found in the financial interests of the fruit company and the other U.S. monopolies which have invested great amounts of money in Latin America and fear that the example of Guatemala will be followed by other Latin American countries.[317]" In the 1960s, Cuban-American sugar interests based

disruptions, using the Punjab region as a case study, see: Vandana Shiva, *The Violence of the Green Revolution: Third World Agriculture, Ecology, and Politics* (University Press of Kentucky, 2016).

315 "How-To Men," The Shield: International Cooperation Administration (August 1960): 4. Record Group 469, Series: Newsletters, 11/1951-10/1960, National Archives Identifier 2844455, NACP.

316 U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, "USAID and PL-480, 1961-1969." https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/pl-480

317 Quoted in: Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Dynamics of U.S. - Latin American Relations,* (New York: Oxford

in South Florida would deploy similar tactics against the Castro government in Cuba.

As they navigated transformations in the food system, South Florida's growers and associations drove the environmental and economic transformation in the region, created economies of scale in agriculture, and took their crops to market by linking up with increasingly sophisticated supermarket supply chains through the 1950s. Riding on the strength of the U.S. consumer market in these years and the consistency of demand for year-round fresh produce, Florida's growers reigned as the nation's leading producer of vegetables in the winter months; though, farm profits were shared among fewer growers.[318] South Florida's sugar appeared in bags in supermarkets and as an additive in an array of processed foods across the country. Major growers had finally stabilized market access, competition and production, and environmental control as the Cold War set in. Yet, the modes of labor control they deployed to uphold production kept the region's farmworkers in poverty during this period of prosperity.

Migrant Labor, Immigration Policy, and Seasonal Production

Days before Christmas in 1957, a harsh freeze wiped out the vegetable crop in Immokalee. Soon after, growers directed farmworkers to replant their fields, but unseasonable rains flooded the fields and caused crops to fail yet again. On January 2, after the local newspaper put out a call for aid, the Red Cross arrived at the farming boom town and declared it a disaster zone after finding some 8,000 farmworkers out of work and migrant families suffering from hunger and outbreaks of diarrhea and typhoid. Immokalee was particularly susceptible to this kind of crisis. The town's population ballooned by over 6,000 with the arrival of migrant farmworkers at the height of harvest season (the residential population of the whole of Collier County, where Immokalee lies, was only

---

University Press, 2000), 137. See also: Thomas P., McCann, Henry Scrammel, ed. *An American Company: The Tragedy of United Fruit*, (New York: Crown Publishers Incorporated, 1976); Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*, (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1982)

[318] McJunkin, "Winter Vegetable Farming in Florida: Its Acreage Patterns and Marketing Flows," 3-9; 30.

about 10,300 in 1955) and migrants lacked decent housing options— there were no public housing facilities and nearly all farmworker housing was owned by growers or their intermediaries. Migrant workers and families, mainly African Americans but also a growing number of "Texas Mexicans" who began working in Immokalee in the 1950s, were left to cram into leaky shacks on unpaved streets that collected refuse, sewage, and standing water. Through January and February of 1958, the Red Cross, Florida's Board of Health, the National Guard, and other state and county officials mobilized to sanitize the town. Public health officials mandated that migrants receive typhoid immunization shots and the state tied aid to work requirements. Under state supervision, migrant work crews dug some 20,000 feet of drainage ditches, eradicated rats and stray dogs, and removed mounds of trash. Over 25 truckloads of trash left Immokalee daily for two months until the migrants streamed north for work in the spring.[319]

The unemployment and public health crisis in Immokalee laid bare that, despite the modern facade of agricultural production in the region, the sector continued to rely on exploited labor and perpetuated poverty in farmworker communities. Concurrent with their efforts to expand in the Everglades, South Florida's major growers, and associations, building off of war-time labor programs, organized to maintain a reliable, low-wage system of seasonal farm labor in the post-war decades. Agricultural profitability in the region hinged on successful recruitment, placement, and control of migrant farmworkers and guestworkers from the Caribbean. Accordingly, growers' associations worked the levers of the federal bureaucracy and the halls of Congress to preserve the emergency wartime BWI labor importation program, and later made it permanent as the "H-2" guest worker program with the passage of the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). In this process, they ensured that growers would control the international recruitment and placement of

[319] Wilson Sowder and Joseph Lawrence, "A Migrant Labor Crisis in Immokalee," *Public Health Reports* 74, No. 1 (1959): 77-80; Hearings Before the Florida Citizens Advisory Committee on Migrant Agricultural Labor, "Immokalee, Florida," 2-4.

guestworkers. While U.S. Sugar relied exclusively on guestworkers to harvest cane, most produce growers only contracted guestworkers in peak season to supplement the local and migratory domestic farm workforce. Associations also managed the movements of the domestic migrant farmworkers by contracting with networks of crew leaders and coordinating the placement of migrant crew with federal and state employment officials and growers. International and domestic recruitment, often managed by growers' associations, worked together in this way to provide growers with power and predictability in farm labor relations and support cost-efficient, on-time seasonal production in line with supply chain demands.

While labor-saving harvesting and processing technologies were increasing efficiency and eliminating farmworkers' jobs in other U.S. agricultural regions in the 1950s, the Everglades' agricultural sector stood apart as a consistently labor-intensive enterprise. Brief winter harvest windows, the deep muck soil, and the need to handpick much of the fresh produce produced in the region to prevent damage, in many cases, made mechanical solutions to labor relations impractical. This made growers' demands for seasonal migrant workers relatively inelastic.[320] Growers' associations worked, perhaps as their primary charge, to systematically meet these labor demands. For example, the FFVA derived the vast majority of its revenue from fees charged for the recruitment of domestic farmworkers and Caribbean guestworkers.[321]

By the 1950s, growers, associations, and networks of labor intermediaries had constructed a well-functioning system of labor recruitment and control that brought some 60,000 to 80,000 U.S. farmworkers from the East Coast migrant stream to the Everglades for the winter harvest. Migrant

[320] On Florida's agricultural market position, see: McJunkin, "Winter Vegetable Farming in Florida: Its Acreage Patterns and Marketing Flows," 3-4; On labor, labor-saving technology, and refrigeration, generally, see: "The Blight of the Countryside: America's Hired Farm Workers," 1959 [approx.], Bo 49, Folder 41, Organizing Department Records 1955-1975, AFL-CIO UMD.
[321] "FFVA, Analysis of Revenue, September 30, 1950 through August 31, 1974." Box 117, "FFVA Annual Convention 1974," Chase Collection, RG-1, Series 4, PK Yonge Library, University of Florida (PKY).

crews formed the basis of this seasonal workforce, as there were few so-called "freewheelers" in the migrant stream, and were attached to broader systems of labor recruitment.[322] To make the Everglades the winter base of the East Coast migrant stream, associations liaised with U.S. employment services as well as crew leaders. Once in Florida, with crew leaders and other intermediaries, associations oversaw networks of labor camps, over 90 percent of which lacked plumbing, and worked to control farmworkers' mobility during harvests. When the season ended, Florida's associations worked with their out-of-state counterparts and state and federal employment agents to move crews north, meeting the demands of growers along the East Coast while eliminating the need to support more-permanent housing and community resources.[323] Ceding East Coast growers more control over farmworkers' mobility, soon after the war, the federal government sold some 52 permanent and 72 temporary New Deal-era labor camps to growers' associations for a dollar each.[324] Observing the operations of the state's farm labor system in her fieldwork, Zora Neal Hurston described it as "a production machine, a device, and apparatus, an invention, under the supervision of . . . government," which made agriculture "the top economic factor in the state."[325]

Farmworkers' social isolation and exclusion from basic labor laws facilitated labor control and contributed to poverty, desperation, and disease. Associations regularly lobbied Congress to keep farmworkers excluded from federal minimum wage and collective bargaining protections. The FFVA, for example, fought against the extension of FLSA's minimum wage and hour standards to farmworkers, arguing that it would be an unbearable cost to growers and consumers, and

---

[322] "Freewheelers" were often described by growers, public officials, and academic and press sources as single men and women, often drifters, alcoholics, gamblers, and young and undereducated people, who were attracted to farm work as a way to travel and engage in informal work.
[323] RH Browning and TJ Northcutt, Jr., *On the Season*, Monograph Series, No. 2 (Tallahassee: Florida State Board of Health, 1961), 5; William H. Friedland and Dorothy Nelkin, "Technological Trends and the Organization of Migrant Farm Workers," *Social Problems* 19, No. 4 (Spring, 1972): 511; United Farm Workers, Columbus Boycott Office, "Farmworker Facts," 197x, 2, available in the University of California, San Diego, Farmworker Movement Documentation Project.
[324] Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land*, 97.
[325] Zora Neale Hurston, "The Migrant Worker in Florida," 195x, 4 in Zora Neale Hurston. MS Group 6, Box 10, PKY.

championed the restrictions on sit-down and sympathy strikes included in the 1947 Taft Hartley Act, which had bedeviled packing houses in the 1930s and 40s.[326] Meanwhile, Florida law isolated farmworkers by permitting farm labor camp proprietors to ban visitors, including lawyers, outreach workers, and labor organizers.[327] Without protections from minimum wage and child labor laws, farmworkers often worked in family groups to survive and boost household earnings. Children over twelve years old were permitted to work legally, and 90 percent of children in migrant families never finished school.[328] In the fields, pesticide use—which doubled in the United States every decade from 1945 to the 1980s—was largely unregulated until 1972.[329] All of this combined to make farm work a deadly enterprise. In the 1960s, farmworkers' life expectancy was only 49 years (compared to the national average of 70 years), and farmworkers were three to four times more likely to die from contagious diseases than the average American.[330]

Alongside the migrant stream, growers' associations expanded the farm labor market by managing and preserving international labor recruitment systems in the Caribbean. As discussed, the BWI labor importation program—organized as an emergency government-to-government guestworker scheme in World War II— undermined farmworkers' increased bargaining power in the tighter war-time labor market. Through the 1950s and early 1960s, associations worked to ensure the program's survival. With the end of World War II, the federal government planned to phase out the BWI program in 1945, which threatened to disrupt growers' access to international seasonal labor in a period of immigration restriction. In rapid fashion, the National Farm Bureau and Florida growers'

---

[326] See: U.S. Senate, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, "Fair Labor Standards Act Amendments of 1949,"April 11-14; 18-22, 1949 (Washington, D.C.: US GPO): 1121-2.
[327] Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land*, 97; "Equality Under the Law in Florida," *El Malcriado*, March 1, 1969. UMD, UFW collection, Box 1 (unprocessed).
[328] "Senators View Florida Poverty," *El Malcriado*, March 1, 1969. UMD, UFW collection, Box 1 (unprocessed); United Farm Workers, "Farmworker Facts, 2.
[329] Marion Moses, "Farmworkers and Pesticides," (1992): 2-3 in National Center for Farmworker Health Library, Resource ID 2759, http://lib.ncfh.org/pdfs/2016/2759.pdf.
[330] Hal Kantor, "Florida's Forgotten People: The Migrant Farmworkers," *University of Florida Law Review* 23 (1971): 769.

associations warned of imminent labor shortages that could threaten the post-war economy. This persuaded lawmakers to temporarily extend the program for a year and, later, extend it once more to 1947.[331] To sustain BWI recruitment and address the "problem" of labor supply beyond these extensions, both the FFVA and U.S. Sugar, which was entirely dependent on guestworkers for harvest labor, worked to find more permanent solutions.

According to Fred Sikes, U.S. Sugar's Vice President in charge of personnel matters, a nationwide group of agricultural employers of offshore labor worked to continue the BWI program on a "private basis" after the war. They found that "extreme unemployment" in the Caribbean meant that government officials in the British West Indies were more than willing to extend the program through "government-to-grower" contracts.[332] In 1947, the INS commissioner signaled to growers that BWI workers could still be recruited on temporary visas under the Immigration Act of 1917, so long as DOL certified a labor shortage and labor contractors paid a bond and workers' transportation costs. Under these arrangements, the U.S. government would no longer serve as a labor recruiter for BWI workers. Instead, beginning in 1948 with the blessing of the INS, growers began directly negotiating employment terms with government officials in Jamaica, the Bahamas, Barbados, and other Caribbean islands and arranging for workers' transport and housing.[333] Growers were apparently satisfied with their private recruitment arrangements, since they blocked the inclusion of BWI workers in the 1951 law (PL 78) that reauthorized the U.S.-Mexico Bracero program, which prevented U.S. authorities from resuming a role in the BWI program.[334]

Democratic party liberals and organized labor opposed guestworker programs since their

---

331 See: Hahamovitch, *The Fruits of Their Labor,* 200-203.
332 "The Cane Contract: West Indians in Florida," *NACLA Report on the Americas*, September 25, 2007.
333 BWI workers were granted visas under the 9th proviso of the 1917 INS, which allowed the Attorney General to waive entrance requirements for temporary workers on a discretionary basis with the approval of DOL. Kramer, *The Offshores*, 33: Vialet, *The West Indies (BWI) Temporary Alien Labor Program, 1943-1977,* 8-9.
334 Vialet, *The West Indies (BWI) Temporary Alien Labor Program, 1943-1977,* 12-13.

creation. In 1950, the Truman Administration established a Commission on Migratory Labor to explore ways to combat undocumented migration and raise labor standards for farmworkers. In its findings, the commission called for severely curtailing international farm labor recruitment, mainly focusing on the Bracero program, which labor organizers grew increasingly focused on terminating.[335] Florida's growers joined their counterparts in California against reform proposals. In congressional hearings, the FFVA stood out as one of the more radical voices among growers by calling for the end to all immigration barriers and the establishment of a permanent bracero program.[336] Although this did not come to pass, lawmakers also did not enact reforms and soon Florida grower's access to BWI workers was codified in federal law.

The passage of the 1952 INA affirmed the value of Jamaicans, Bahamians, and other Caribbean migrants as labor while denying them opportunities for permanent settlement in the United States. In the lead-up to the law's passage, liberal lawmakers who sought to overturn the race-based immigration quotas established by the 1924 INA were largely thwarted by reactionaries in Congress like Sen. Pat McCarran and Rep. Walter, the namesakes of the 1952 INA.[337] While the law lifted outright Asian exclusion, it also preserved the quota system and established minuscule immigration quotas for countries outside of Western Europe to ease "racial discriminations in a realistic manner," in McCarran's words. This arrangement extended to British colonies in the Caribbean, previously included within Great Britain's generous quotas, which were limited for the

---

[335] Peter N. Kirstein, "Agribusiness, Labor, and the Wetbacks: Truman's Commission On Migratory Labor," *The Historian* 40, No. 4 (1978): 662-4; Report from the Congress of Industrial Organizations and the Arizona State Federation of Labor to President Truman's Commission on Migrant and Alien Labor, August 7, 1950, Subject Files, 1950 - 1951; Records of Temporary Committees, Commissions, and Boards, Record Group 220; Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, MO. https://catalog.archives.gov/id/68866013

[336] Kirstein, "Agribusiness, Labor, and the Wetbacks," 660.

[337] Immigration reform in this period was backed by a diverse coalition of Jewish and ethnic civil rights organizations and the Truman administration, which viewed the 1924 INA as detrimental to the U.S. image and resettlement priorities in a Cold War context. See: Maddalena Marinari, "Divided and Conquered: Immigration Reform Advocates and the Passage of the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 35, no. 3 (2016): 9-40.

first time to an annual quota of 100.[338] Simultaneously, in a concession to Western agricultural interests, the law kept most immigration from the Western Hemisphere outside of the quota system. For growers in Florida and the East Coast, the law, in section H-2, provisioned for the admission of nonimmigrant, temporary agricultural workers in cases of domestic labor shortages. The INA's section H-2 provided a new legal basis for the recruitment of Caribbean farmworkers and essentially made permanent growers' standing private recruitment arrangements in the BWI program. It also gave the program a new moniker: the H-2 guestworker program.[339]

By capturing this component of federal *non-immigrant* policy, Florida's agricultural sector, the main employer of H-2 workers, achieved a higher degree of control, stability, and predictability in labor relations that allowed them to meet the demands of consumers and corporate buyers like food processors and supermarkets. Although many growers returned to hiring domestic workers in the 1950s, and the number of Caribbean workers recruited annually fell from a war-time high of around 20,000, the use of the H-2 program remained routine in Florida. Sugar growers and the FFVA recruited between 5,000 and 9,000 workers annually from Jamaica (which provided about two-thirds of H-2 workers), the Bahamas (which only provided workers to vegetable growers), Barbados, and other Caribbean islands through the 1950s. The size of the H-2 program paled in comparison to the reach of the U.S.-Mexico Bracero program, which brought in between 1.5 and 2 million Mexican guestworkers between 1942 and 1964. The H-2 program, however, proved to be more resilient, perhaps due to its lower public profile and establishment in the 1952 INA, which meant it was not subject to treaty or congressional reauthorization. It also relied less on DOL certifications—the Attorney General could override DOL labor shortage determinations— and supervision and put

[338] Marinari, "Divided and Conquered," 13. McCarran quoted therein.
[339] Vialet, *The West Indies (BWI) Temporary Alien Labor Program, 1943-1977*, 14-15.

more power in the hands of diffuse private actors in the agricultural sector.[340]

Oversight of the H-2 program was often largely a formality that served to support agricultural efficiency and productivity. Under the H-2 program, the migrant-sending governments of the West Indies ostensibly jointly supervised the program in the United States. By deploying liaisons with the British West Indian Central Labour Organization (BWICLO), an organization financed with deductions made from workers' wages, BWI governments serviced guestworkers' grievances and inspected working conditions. Yet, the largely white BWICLO officials, who worked from offices in major agricultural communities in South Florida, generally worked to maintain labor peace. They occasionally removed workers from abusive situations, but also discouraged strikes and other labor actions. While BWICLO officials lauded the safeguards in the H-2 program, growers' association held real power over the program and workers frequently complained that the liaisons underrepresented them and too frequently sided with management.[341]

In recruiting H-2 workers and placing them in the fields, cooperation and organization among growers, again, proved to be essential. Most of Florida's growers who wished to contract H-2 workers lacked the capacity to negotiate with BWI governments and make international travel arrangements, and, instead, relied on associations to do so. On a fee-based system, the FFVA secured H-2 workers on behalf of most vegetable growers, while U.S. Sugar executives, nominally through an industry association, served as self-proclaimed "tsars" of the program within the sugar sector and placed H-2 cane cutters around South Florida after meeting their own needs. These associations contracted with in-country intermediaries and airline companies, maintained paperwork

---

[340] Vialet, *The West Indies (BWI) Temporary Alien Labor Program, 1943-1977,* 15-16; "Report on the British West Indies Labor Program," Inter-American Labor Bulletin VII, no. 4, April 1956. Box 50, Folder 34, Organizing Department Records RG-28, AFL-CIO UMD; Joyce Vialet and Barbara McClure, "Temporary Worker Programs: Background and Issues," Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1980): 62.
[341] Kramer, *The Offshores*, 22-25; 53-4; U.S. Congress, Senate Select Committee on Small Business, "Agricultural Labor Certification Programs and Small Business," 95th Congress (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), 71-74.

and contracts, arbitrated disputes, and managed regulatory compliance and government relations. Once in South Florida, guestworkers also circulated between farms at their direction.[342]

The racial norms of the Jim Crow South and the lack of protections in the H-2 program structured the social and labor relations that H-2 workers entered into in Florida. Growers undertook recruitment informed, in part, by their racial ideas about the acuity and pliability of workers. Sugar growers, for example, eschewed Bahamians after instances of labor unrest during the war in favor of Jamaicans, who were "excitable and born griper[s]," according to one U.S. Sugar official, but ultimately well-suited for cane cutting.[343] Growers' associations also practiced employment discrimination beginning in workers' origin communities. They placed H-2 workers who spoke out or struck on an "undesirable list," kept in cooperation with origin-country governments, and denied them future visas. Associations' in-country screenings also generally filtered out urban and industrial workers and those with experience working in countries like Cuba or Panama, who were seen as more likely to be union or political activists, in favor of rural workers. Women were also systematically excluded from the H-2 program.[344]

In the 1950s, official observers of the program reported that relations between guestworkers and crew leaders in the fields had deteriorated after the goodwill generated by World War II faded. Black Caribbean workers often resisted poor treatment and spoke out against poor living conditions. White crew leaders bristled at affronts to the prevailing racial order or any other form of resistance, large or small, and pushed for activist workers to be removed to other farms or have their visas revoked.[345] For example, James Moss, who worked in Florida under "the contract" in the 1950s, recalled staying awake all night in a labor camp after cutting celery as the muck soil "would get on

---

342 Conlin, "Invisible Hands in the Winter Garden, 169-70; Kramer, *The Offshores,* 19-20.
343 Conlin, "Invisible Hands in the Winter Garden," 153. Kramer, *The Offshores,* 28.
344 Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land,* 100-01.
345 Conlin, "Invisible Hands in the Winter Garden," 182.

the skin and eat you all up." Despite his difficulties finding work in the Bahamas, he risked deportation and refused to work the celery harvest the next day. He was subsequently sent home with six cents in his pocket, which he spent on a cigar so that he might be seen as a "bit shot" upon his repatriation in Nassau.[346] Nevertheless, while H-2 workers' visas were contingent on their continued employment, some absconded for better opportunities, seeking to blend in Black communities in Miami or in coastal areas of Georgia and the Carolinas, and many more resisted poor conditions, refused work, and, at times, engaged in collective action

Besides providing growers with a captive pool of offshore labor, the H-2 program also suppressed wages in the overall farm labor market. Although H-2 workers were guaranteed an adverse wage rate that surpassed prevailing local wages, as determined by the DOL, the availability of H-2 visas, and a lack of federal oversight, disincentivized growers from improving farm labor conditions and wages for U.S. farmworkers. Growers, after exhausting domestic recruiting opportunities with state and federal employment services, often only a formality, were relieved of the need to make extraordinary wage adjustments to attract new workers once petitions for H-2 workers were approved. As a result, those who could not avail themselves of new job opportunities and leave the migrant stream remained on the economic and social margins.[347]

Through the 1950s, Florida's growers' associations fine-tuned their control over the mobility of U.S. migrant workers and the transnational H-2 workforce to achieve on-time production at optimal labor costs. These systems of labor recruitment provided growers with reliable harvest labor while obviating the need to improve conditions, invest in community resources for U.S. migrant

---

[346] James M. Moss, " A tribute to Contract Workers" in "The Contract," Bahamas Folklore Collection. https://gullahgeecheeconnection.wordpress.com/about/

[347] "Report on the British West Indies Labor Program," Inter-American Labor Bulletin VII, no. 4, April 1956. Box 50, Folder 34, Organizing Department, 1955-75 RG 28, AFL-CIO, UMD; State of Florida Legislative Council, "Migrant Farm Labor in Florida," January 1963, 12.; "The Blight of the Countryside: America's Hired Farm Workers," 1959 [approx.]. Box 49, Folder 41, Organizing Department Records 1955-1975 RG 28, AFL-CIO, UMD.

farmworkers, or confront the social or political complexities that might be associated with the permanent immigration of Caribbean workers. Thus, the seasonal recruitment of U.S. migrants and H-2 workers became, like machine maintenance and fertilizer costs, a predictable and reoccurring input on growers' balance sheets needed to bring crops to market. In the 1960s, exiled Cuban sugar interests and other investors would build on this proof of concept to expand sugar production in the Everglades.

The Rise of "Big Sugar"

The ascent of the Everglades' agricultural sector to international importance was completed in the 1960s, when Cold War geopolitics aligned to yield unprecedented new market opportunities. The Cuban revolution and the U.S. government's subsequent isolation of revolutionary Cuba unsettled hemispheric commodity markets and eliminated a primary international competitor for Florida's growers in sugar and other commodities. With U.S. sugar production quotas potentially up for grabs, exiled Cuban sugar elites, transferring capital and technology to the Everglades, joined established growers and other investors to fuel an exponential growth in sugar production and agricultural profits in Florida. To capitalize on this market opening and the world-leading U.S. demand for sugar, U.S. and Cuban-American interests deployed established agribusiness strategies for association and horizontal cooperation, vertical integration and diversification, and labor control, while forging new organizations and ventures to reshape production patterns in the region.

After Fidel Castro and his guerrilla army marched into Havana in January 1959, relations rapidly broke down between his revolutionary government and the United States. For a brief time, normal diplomacy continued between the countries, but tensions flared around the Castro regime's increasing nationalization of businesses, particularly after it appropriated U.S. oil refineries. To destabilize the revolution, President Eisenhower suspended Cuba's sugar importation quotas in July

1960, seeking to cut off the lifeblood of the Cuban economy.[348] Under the 1948 Sugar Act, which extended the New Deal's sugar program's complex system of tariffs, price supports, domestic production allotments, and importation quotas, Cuba had previously enjoyed over 90 percent of sugar importation rights. Cuban sugar imports met some 40 percent of U.S. market demand, and regularly exceeded 3 million tons (a mark that exceeded combined U.S. sugarcane production in the 1950s).[349] Under these arrangements, Cuban sugar exports were central to both Cuba's economic stability and meeting U.S. demand.[350] With the Cuban sugar exports to the United States halted, the Cuban government entered into a trade agreement with the Soviet Union and accelerated the nationalization of the sugar sector, while U.S. consumers faced potentially higher food prices.

To make up for the loss of Cuba's sugar, the U.S. government temporarily allowed domestic production allotments to lapse and lifted restrictions on planting new cane and beet sugar acreage, which prompted a mad dash among domestic growers and exiled Cuban producers to set up cane fields and sugar mills in the Everglades. Between 1960 and 1962, the year of the Kennedy administration's embargo of all trade with Cuba, annual sugarcane production in Florida more than doubled, from 160,000 tons to 380,000. While the restrictions on Cuban trade benefited sugarcane growers in Louisiana and Midwestern beet sugar producers, Florida led the way in growth. In the 1960s, sugar interests erected eight new mills in Florida, all in the Everglades region, and oversaw a five-fold expansion of sugarcane acreage from 1948 levels. By the end of the decade, Florida was the leading U.S. producer of cane sugar, displacing Louisiana, which in 1960 produced almost three

---

348 On the Castro government's progressive nationalization policies, U.S. attempts to destabilize the regime, and Cuba's movement into the Soviet trading bloc in the critical 1960-61 period, see: Lillian Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959-1971* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 135-7.

349 Anne O. Krueger, "The Political Economy of Controls: American Sugar," National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper No. 2504 (1988): 16-18; 58; see also: Lynn Darrell Bender, "Cuba, the United States, and Sugar," *Caribbean Studies* 14, No. 1 (1974): 155-60.

350 Indeed, as Dye and Sicotte argue, a small reduction to Cuba's importation quotas in the 1956 amendment to the Sugar Act in favor of domestic producers was enough to cause significant stock devaluations in the Cuban sugar sector and political instability during the final years of the Batista regime. See: Alan Dye and Richard Sicotte, "The U.S. Sugar Program and the Cuban Revolution," *The Journal of Economic History* 64, No. 3 (2004): 673-704.

times as much cane as Florida.[351]

After the Cuban embargo, South Florida's industrial growers also captured a greater share of the U.S. winter vegetable market, within which they had historically competed with Cuban imports. Florida's tomato production, for example, grew 60 percent from 1960 to 1965, from 450 million pounds of tomatoes harvested annually to 720 million. Between 1960 and 1967, the value of the tomato crop also almost doubled, from $47 million to $92 million.[352] Increased profits from the vegetable sector were often reinvested to support diversification into sugar.

Most of the new sugar enterprises in the Everglades would be organized as vertically-integrated firms (grower-processors) or as cooperatives of smaller producers of sugarcane organized around a jointly-owned processing mill. From the bottom of the sugar supply chain, once cane was processed in these mills, about 60 percent of it would be marketed as raw sugar or molasses to major food conglomerates for use in processed foods or beverages while the rest would be sold as to sugar refiners to be made into consumer-grade table sugar under a variety of brand names.[353] Both of these supply chains fed into an expansive national market driven by increasing U.S. sugar consumption. On average, U.S. consumers consumed approximately 100 pounds of sugar annually in the early 1960s.[354]

A cadre of some of Cuba's leading sugar families, transnational investors and brokers, and Cuban agricultural experts, engineers, and foremen generated much of the growth in sugar production in the Everglades. In the years immediately following the revolution, with domestic

---

351 "Florida Sugar Cane Profits, Costs, and Welfare; United Farmworkers Project Real," Box 17, UFW FL Boycott Records, LR0027, Reuther Library, Wayne State University (Reuther); Davis and Ogden, *Everglades: The Ecosystem and Its Restoration*, 101-2. Krueger, "The Political Economy of Controls: American Sugar," 22; 57. Production numbers in Krueger derived from the annual USDA, *Sugar and Sweeter Situation* Report (1986).
352 Estabrook, *Tomatoland,* 9; "Florida Crops," Florida Department of Agriculture, Bulletin 1 (1969), 15. PALMM
353 Donald C. Horton, "Policy Directions for the United States Sugar Program," *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 52, No. 2 (1970): 189; For an analysis of the market and supply chain for Florida sugar, see: "Sugar Report, 1975." Box 17, Sugar Report, UFW Boycott Records, LR 00277, Reuther Library.
354 Dennis O'Rourke, "Sugar Situation: 1963," *Financial Analysts Journal* 19, No. 4 (1963), 17.

expansion largely unregulated, barges from Louisiana made routine trips to South Florida with equipment and building materials to erect new mills at the direction of new Cuban-American sugar interests. One early example of this trend was Okeelanta Sugar, a firm established in South Florida in 1952 by Cuban investors. In anticipation of turmoil in Cuba, Okeelanta purchased a mill and refinery at Fellsmere in 1959, among the first built in South Florida, which was then owned by a Puerto Rican concern and produced the Florida Crystal brand of table sugar. Between its two Florida mills and cane acreage, the Okeelanta corporation's Florida portfolio soon grew to be more lucrative than the $27 million sugar holdings and five mills it lost during the Castro government's nationalization of the Cuban sugar industry.[355]

Other dislocated Cuban sugar capitalists followed a path similar to Okeelanta and formed definitively Cuban-American enterprises.[356] Executives with the Cuban-American Sugar company, a U.S. firm that previously owned extensive operations in Cuba, and two cooperatives organized around Cuban investors and growers, the Glades County Sugar Growers Cooperative and the Atlantic Sugar Association, erected mills in the early 1960s.[357] Cuban exiles with the backing of Henry Ford II also established The Talisman Sugar Corporation in 1961, which was rescued from bankruptcy soon after its founding by William Pawley, a former U.S. diplomat, real estate and aviation investor, and right-wing political operator with links to anti-communist covert operations.[358]

Of all of the expatriated Cuban sugar growers to relocate to South Florida in the early 1960s, the Fanjul family was the most consequential. In the Everglades, the Fanjuls rebuilt a business

---

[355] Gordon Patterson, "Raising Cane and Refining Sugar: Florida Crystals and the Fame of Fellsmere," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 75, No. 4 (Spring, 1997), 428; Hollander, *Raising Cane in the Glades,* 176. See also: George Salley, *A History of the Florida Sugar Industry* (Clewiston, FL: Sugar Cane League, 1984).
[356] See: Hollander, *Raising Cane in the Glades,* 174-77.
[357] "Preliminary Information in Relation to the Erection of a New Sugar mill in the Everglades," 1961. Box 11, Florida Sugar Mill Project 1961. Braga Brothers Collection, RG3, Series 63, PKY. "New Mill for Clewiston," *Clewiston News*, June 22, 1961. Box 11, Florida Sugar Mill Project 1961. Braga Brothers Collection, RG3, Series 63, PKY.
[358] Pawley background in "Sugar Report, 1975." Box 17, Sugar Report, UFW Boycott Records, LR 00277, Reuther Library; Hollander, *Raising Cane in the Glades*, 190; Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land,* 141-2.

empire and eventually displaced U.S. Sugar as the top sugar producer in Florida by the 1980s. Before the revolution, the Fanjuls claimed ten sugar mills, a refinery, alcohol distilleries, cattle ranches, and extensive real estate holdings in Cuba— the result of the marriage between the family's patriarch Alfonso Fanjul Sr. and Lillian Gomez-Mena, which united two of the most powerful sugar dynasties on the island.[359] The Fanjuls' extended family also owned the New York-based Czarnikow-Rionda Company (CRCO), one of the largest U.S. sugar-importing houses and brokerage companies. Alfonso Fanjul Sr. served as president of CRCO's Cuban subsidiary, the Cuban Trading Company. Together, these interlocked companies handled approximately 20 percent of Cuba's sugar exports.[360] When Castro's government nationalized the family's Cuban properties, Alfonso Sr. made a relatively soft landing in the United States, as his family and business contacts in New York deposited money in his U.S. accounts, secured a Cadillac and apartment for him, and provided legal and immigration assistance.[361] Fanjul's two sons Alfonso Jr., who was evicted from his Cuba office at gunpoint, and José "Pepe" Fanjul joined him in Florida in 1960 and the family went to work to reestablish their sugar business.

Like many of their competitors, Fanjul Sr. and his sons contracted a barge to transport milling equipment from Louisiana and, pooling capital with two other Cuban investors and the CRCO, purchased 4,000 acres near Pahokee as the Osceola company. After a profitable inaugural year, flooding in 1962 nearly derailed the Fanjuls' company.[362] Nevertheless, they secured a regular

---

[359] Marie Brenner, "In the Kingdom of Big Sugar," *Vanity Fair,* February 2001; "Alfonso Fanjul Sr." Palm Beach History Online. http://www.pbchistoryonline.org/page/alfonso-fanjul-sr.
[360] See: Carl Van Ness, "A Guide to the Braga Brothers Collection," Finding Aid, University of Florida Smathers Libraries, April 2010.
[361] For example, see: George Braga to Alfonso Fanjul, 22 December 1958. Box 1, Fanjul, Alfonso (others) 1953-1969, Braga Brothers Collection, RG 3, Series 19, PKY. See, generally: Box 10, "Alfonso Fanjul, 1960," Braga Brothers Collection, RG 3, Series 63, Box 10. PKY. Fanjul was in regular correspondence with his cousin, George Braga, president of the CRCO in New York, who marshalled the resources of the company to assist his Alfonso and his other relatives in migrating from Cuba. Michael J.P. Malone, and executive with the CRCO, was also an important contact of ample assistance during this period.
[362] Brenner, "In the Kingdom of Big Sugar."; "Alfonso Fanjul Sr." Palm Beach History.

line of credit with Northwestern Mutual and negotiated reduced interest terms with their noteholders through the 1960s, which allowed them to recover and expand. Between 1961 and 1966, the Fanjuls bought and leased land throughout the Everglades and oversaw a five-fold increase in sugar production from approximately 10,000 tons to over 50,000.[363] Additionally, the Fanjuls' connection to the CRCO gave the company an outlet for their product, as the brokerage company won contracts for the Fanjuls with trading and distribution firms like Cargill that purchased molasses for the production of processed foods.[364]

U.S. growers, too, expanded sugar production and diversified to capitalize on this new market opportunity. Large agribusinesses like the Lykes company and King Ranch, the largest landowners in Texas, aimed to cover losses from their expropriated ranches and cane fields in Cuba by establishing sugar fields covering tens of thousands of acres in the EAA in the early 1960s. U.S. Sugar also finished construction on a new, state-of-the-art mill in 1962 to keep up with its increasing production. Around this time, U.S. Sugar secured an enviable market position by entering into a long-term contract with the Savannah Foods Corporation— one of the largest U.S. sugar refiners and the makers of the consumer brand Dixie Crystals— which erected a new refinery in Clewiston in 1964. Under the agreement, Savannah Foods purchased nearly all of U.S. Sugar's milled raw sugar on an annual basis, giving U.S. Sugar the security to expand production.[365]

Large vegetable growers in South Florida also got in on the action. In 1960, George Wedgeworth, who by this time oversaw his family's vast vegetable operations in Belle Glade,

363 Alfonso Fanjul to Reed Clark, CRCO, 12 June 1967. Box 1, Fanjul, Alfonso (others) 1953-1969, Braga Brothers Collection, RG 3, Series 19. PKY. Alfonso Fanjul to George Braga, 20 January 1977. Box 3, Fanjuls, Alfonso (others, 1974-81), Braga Brothers Collection, RG 3, Series 19. PKY

364 Alfonso Fanjul to Michael Malone, 10 July 1962. Box 11, Florida Talisman Sugar Corporation, Braga Brothers Collection, RG 3, Series 41, PKY See also: "Misc" in Box 11. A. Fanjul to Malone, 14 August 1962. Box 23, Sugar Cane Growers Coop, 1961-62, Braga Brothers Collection RG 3, Series 63, PKY.

365 U.S. Sugar Corp. SEC Annual Report in U.S. Congress, "International Sugar Agreement: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Trade," 96th Congress, 1st Session, March 16, 1979 (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), 155-165. See also: "Savannah Sugar Refinery Timeline," *Savannah Morning News*, February 7, 2008; Arthur Gordon, *How Sweet it is: The Story of Dixie Crystals and Savannah Foods* (Savannah Food and Industries, 1992).

founded the Florida Sugar Cane Growers Cooperative with other large vegetable growers like the Duda and Chase companies to promote "stability through diversification." After U.S. Sugar refused to mill sugar cane for the Cooperative, it also built a mill and processed cane and marketed molasses and raw sugar for its 56 members. This allowed those without the capital to operate as independent grower-processors to feed into the larger milling and marketing operations of the Cooperative.[366] According to Wedgworth, compared to sugar production, "vegetables were like going to Las Vegas," with wild swings in profit margins and prices, but the federal government "put stability in sugar prices and managed the program ... to keep a pretty level price.[367]" With government support and private sector cooperation and coordination, Everglades growers recalibrated the agricultural landscape and secured a greater degree of security and profitability.

In this process, Cuban expertise was also central. In the early 1960s, Wedgworth had befriended the Fanjuls, who introduced the Cooperative's members to the engineering company that designed their mill. As the Fanjuls assisted other Cubans with ties to the sugar industry to leave Cuba and resettle in South Florida, the family often set up Cuban managers, engineers, and experts with jobs in the Cooperative. Wedgworth later found it "impossible to overstate just how important the Cubans were in our early days," recalling that while many Florida growers had previously grown sugar cane "we had no experience in running a raw sugar plant or a refinery. The Cubans knew the details of running a sugar mill; they understood the business.[368]" Cooperation begot success. Along with U.S. Sugar, the Fanjuls and the Cooperative came to constitute the core group of sugar interests popularly known, or derided, as Florida's "Big Sugar" lobby, which also grew to account for the bulk of U.S. cane production

---

[366] Pamphlet, Sugar Cane Growers Cooperative, N.D. Box 16, Cane Growers Cooperative and Employee handbook, undated, UFW Florida Boycott records, LR002777, Reuther.

[367] Heather Dewar, "Sugar's Rebel Not Giving up Fight," *Miami Herald*, April 24, 1994, in People, Wedgworth HH, Ruth and George, PBCHS.

[368] Charles Johnson, "George Wedgworth: Fifty years of Progress for Florida Sugar Cane," *Farm Progress*, August 3, 2012.

Still, many of these early new ventures in sugar were speculative, and corporate holdings passed between firms regularly, a reflection of ongoing agricultural consolidation in the region and an overall trend toward business conglomeration in the "merger wave" of the 1960s.[369] For example, by the end of the 1960s, Talisman Sugar had expanded to acquire Cuban-American Sugar and another firm. Talisman was then acquired in 1972 by the St. Joe Paper Company, a Florida entity tied to the Dupont family that controlled vast timber and real estate holdings in North Florida.[370] Similarly, Okeelanta Sugar's portfolio passed in 1965 to the South Porto Rico Sugar Company, a New York business that founded two of the largest sugar plantations in the world in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico in the early 20th century. In 1967, Okeelanta again changed hands when Charles Bluhdorn, the founder of the conglomerate Gulf and Western, which owned Paramount Pictures, sports teams, and manufacturing and apparel firms, purchased South Porto Rico's property in Florida and the Dominican Republic. This arrangement made Gulf and Western the largest landholder in the Dominican Republic and allowed it to generate profit from both domestic sugar production quotas and the importation quotas assigned to the Dominican Republic.[371] With access to credit and markets, the Fanjul's sugar enterprise, under the leadership of Alfonso Jr. and Pepe Fanjul after their father died in 1980, continued to expand and eventually acquired Gulf and Western's sugar holdings in Florida and the Dominican Republic in 1984, which reestablished the family business's transnational reach.[372]

[369] According to business historian Benjamin Waterhouse, "the dominant theme of American business after World War II was bigness--large-scale, integrated, multidivisional organizations . . . [and] the roaring post-war economy and soaring stock market created an environment ripe for continued expansion, and many successful corporations redirected their profits toward acquiring other firms . . . The total number of mergers per year jumped from just over one thousand in 1963 to six thousand when the [merger] wave peaked in 1969." See: Benjamin Waterhouse, *The Land of Enterprise: A Business History of the United States* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2017), 168-9.
[370] See: Kathyrn Ziewitz and June Wiaz, *Green Empire: The St. Joe Company and the Remaking of Florida's Panhandle* (Gainesville: University of Florida, 2004).
[371] Brenner, "In the Kingdom of Big Sugar."; Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land,* 141-2. On the SPRSC, see also: Humberto García Muñíz, *Sugar and Power in the Caribbean: The South Porto Rico Sugar Company in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, 1900-1921* (La Editorial, 2010).
[372] Marcia Pounds, "Okeelanta Owner Heads Sugar Group," *Orlando Sun Sentinel,* November 26, 1986.

The advantages of staking a claim in Florida's sugar sector were clear. As a 1961 CRCO prospectus on building a sugar mill in the Everglades laid out, the region had climatic and environmental advantages over Louisiana. These included improved water control, a longer harvest season, more fertile soil, and cane varieties that produced higher sugar yields. In contrast to Louisiana's numerous smaller family-run sugar farms, for the CRCO, the U.S. Sugar corporation also represented the promise that a "corporate enterprise," employing modern technology and centralized management, could make the region productive.[373]

While the Everglades muck soil was not conducive to mechanized harvesting, the H-2 program offered a ready solution to potential labor shortages. Indeed, the use of the program more than doubled between 1959 to 1964, with the number of guestworkers recruited rising from 6,600 to 14,361.[374] As will be discussed further, in the 1960s, liberal lawmakers and trade unions increasingly critiqued the Bracero and H-2 guestworker programs and the federal government eventually terminated the Bracero program in 1964 and stopped approving H-2 visas for produce growers two years later. Yet, sugar companies preserved their ability to recruit guestworkers in this period of liberal reform by swaying federal officials that domestic workers truly would not accept the grueling work of cutting cane.[375] Accordingly, the H-2 workforce would remain a principal component of sugar production in the Everglades and support the sector's growth.

Access to land, water, and political favors also benefited the sugar industry in Florida. As the C&SF project made more land available for agriculture, state officials charged with negotiating the leasing and sales of state-owned land regularly leased land to sugar growers below market prices. According to a 1971 investigation by Florida Rural Legal Services, several major growers, including U.S. Sugar, Talisman, A. Duda and Sons, and the Lykes company, secured long-term leases on state-

[373] "Preliminary Information in Relation to the Erection of a New Sugar mill in the Everglades," 1961.
[374] Vialet, "The West Indies (BWI) Temporary Alien Labor Program, 1943-1977," 16.
[375] Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land,* 147-8

owned land covering some 26,000 acres at lower-than-market prices and simultaneous collected federal payments under the U.S. sugar program on that same acreage.[376] These growers also enjoyed the ability to pump water freely— usage which U.S. Sugar estimated to be about 6 million gallons a day, or one ton of water per pound of refined sugar.[377]

Driven by the rise of "Big Sugar," the growing importance of South Florida as a production hub for national supply chains shifted the dynamics of the state's overall agricultural sector. Diversified agribusiness firms with assets throughout the state placed increasing emphasis on their Everglades' operations. Executives at the Chase Company, for example, which had historically been anchored to its citrus groves in Central Florida, recognized in the mid-1960s that the "whole complexion" of the company had changed, as its Everglades department, which was expanding over new acreage and opened a new pre-cooling station, had "become the major operation of [the] company."[378]

Shaping Geopolitics and Trade in the Americas

To secure their new market-leading position, Florida's growers and their associations mobilized to move U.S. foreign and trade policies in their favor. In the process, they reshaped the contours of trade and commodity production in the Western Hemisphere and further isolated Cuba in the geopolitical landscape of the Cold War. As South Florida attracted international capital and labor to its agricultural sector, further bringing the region into contact with the Americas, growers' organizations pursued a political agenda that ran counter to hemispheric integration. Through advocacy around the U.S. sugar program, the Cuban embargo, and international trade in vegetables,

[376] "Florida Rural Legal Services, Memorandum: Lease of Lands owned by the State of Florida," 11 May 1971. Box 16, Sugar: General Info, UFW Boycott Records, LR002777, Reuther.
[377] R. Chase Memo Meeting with C&SF Flood Control Office, 22 January 1965. Box 133, Florida Water Topics 1960-9, Chase Collection, RG 1, Series 4, PKY
[378] Lee Moore to Randall Chase, 29 March 1966. Box 94, Board of Directors, Finance committee 1966, Chase Collection, RG 1, Series 4, PKY.

growers motivated the construction of a complex and highly-regulated trade regime. Simultaneously, the region's sugar interests supported staunch anti-Communist policies in the region, and even bankrolled anti-Castro political groups and covert operations. As with immigration policy, the agricultural sector's trade policy advocacy and Cold War machinations both reflected its close ties to the Americas and sought to mediate and control hemispheric processes.

South Florida's growers had long pushed for import duties and other protections from international competition by painting their main competitors in sugar and produce as backward and exploitative. For example, the FFVA opposed the liberalization of trade with Cuba and Mexico, major competitors in fresh tomatoes in the winter months, on the basis that those countries' "competitive advantage" was based on the "availability and use of cheap labor." As Lamont Graw, an FFVA manager, put it to Congress in 1949: "we believe in high living standard and good wages in this nation.[379]" The association's work to deny U.S. farmworkers minimum wage and other labor protections, of course, belied this statement. Likewise, Clarence Bitting, of U.S. Sugar Corporation, framed Florida sugar as "wholesome" compared to cane produced in Cuba or the insular territories. He further claimed that Everglades growers maintained the "highest standards of living in agriculture [that] can be maintained in the South" in contrast to "those who would deprive Americans of their livelihood . . . so that they may exploit labor in other parts of the world.[380]"

The protectionist positions of Florida's growers contrasted with the general trend toward export-oriented agriculture and the use of U.S. commodity surpluses to advance foreign policy and geo-political priorities. In the 1950s, for example, 35 percent of U.S. wheat production went toward exports, which made the United States the leading wheat exporter, claiming about one-third of the global export market. Wheat producers benefited from New Deal-era price supports, which included

[379] U.S. Congress, Committee on Ways and Means, "1949 Extension of the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act. Hearings on H.R. 1211" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1949): 369.
[380] Bitting, *Sugar and the Everglades*, 35-40; 67.

regular federal acquisitions of large stocks of surplus wheat to be used for aid. "Food for peace" programs provided an outlet for U.S. producers, particularly producers of grain, and proved to be an effective diplomatic tool. For a time in the late 1950s and early 1960s, U.S.-directed international food aid and concessional sales also accounted for one-third of total U.S. agricultural exports.[381]

In the 1960s, however, the Cuban embargo added political weight and urgency to growers' crusade for preferential treatment. The growth of South Florida's sugar sector, met several strategic U.S. policy goals, including replacing a portion of Cuban imports, contributing to lower global sugar prices to limit an important source of foreign exchange for Cuba, and establishing a bulkhead of funding for Cuban-American anti-Castro activists. Thus, policymakers championed trade and agricultural policies that encouraged the growth of South Florida's sugar sector as part of a broader Cold War strategy.[382]

With sugar prices on the rise in the early 1960s, U.S. Sugar, the region's long-established firm, joined with a growing lobby of sugar interests in the state to advocate for lifting restrictions on domestic sugar production. Facing similar pressure from beet growers and Louisiana's sugar companies, federal officials lifted most restraints on domestic sugar production, which helped to spark the rapid growth of sugar acreage in the Everglades. To represent Florida's sugar sector in Washington, D.C., George Wedgeworth founded the Florida Sugar Cane League in 1964, which worked to ensure that Florida's sugar growers would have a role in shaping future regulations and legislation affecting the sugar sector. Lobbying USDA officials and deploying Florida's legislators, the state's sugar growers soon after secured a larger portion of the domestic sugar quota in

---

[381] Bruce Gardner, "The Political Economy of U.S. Export Subsidies for Wheat," 291-334 in Anne O. Krueger, ed., *The Political Economy of American Trade Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 293-4; "Public Law 480: "Better Than a Bomber"," Middle East Report 145 (March/ April 1987); USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, "The Wheat Situation" 171 (October 1960): 1.

[382] Steve Hach, "Cold War in South Florida: Historic Resource Study," U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service (October 2004): 54-5. https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/coldwar/florida.pdf

amendments to the Sugar Act in 1962 and 1965.[383]

Ultimately, by 1965, the federal government regularized increased domestic sugar production quotas in the sugar program— calculated at 65 percent of U.S. consumption— while cooling down the speculative growth in the sector with new restrictions on production and acreage. Although the Sugar Cane League continued to pressure federal bureaucrats to secure better terms for Florida's producers in annual quota allotments, for those growers that initiated production in the early 1960s, the sugar program ensured market stability.[384] Further, growers continued to enjoy the sugar program's direct subsidies and importation quotas, which maintained U.S. sugar prices that often doubled those on the world market.[385]

The sugar program held Cuba's importation quota at zero and redistributed preferential importation quotas mainly among U.S. trading partners in Latin America to further foreign policy goals and strengthen alliances in the region.[386] One such beneficiary of increased importation quotas was the Dominican Republic. In part due to pressure from Gulf and Western's Charles Bludhorn, who pushed for the country to receive an increased share of importation quotas after he purchased the South Porto Rico Sugar Company.[387] By 1971, the Dominican Republic was the top sugar exporter in the Western Hemisphere to the U.S. market, a trading position that would later be enjoyed by the Fanjul family when they purchased Gulf and Western's sugar portfolio.[388]

Cuban-American growers' advocacy around U.S. sugar policy fell in line with their broader anti-Castro activities. Cuban advocacy groups and the Sugar Cane League worked to harden the

---

383 See: Wedgeworth to Hutchinson, 5 July 5, 1966. Box 133, Sugar Cane League 1966-70, Chase Collection MS 14, RG 1, Series 4, PKY.
384 Hollander, *Raisin' Cane in the Glades*, 174-90; Krueger, "The Political Economy of Controls: American Sugar," 19-20. Through these amendments, domestic producers of both beet and cane sugar were allotted quotas equivalent to 65 percent of estimated national consumption, up from 55 percent in the 1950s.
385 Bender, "Cuba, the United States, and Sugar," 159.
386 Bender, "Cuba, the United States, and Sugar," 159.
387 Brenner, "In the Kingdom of Big Sugar."; Hollander, *Raisin' Cane in the Glades,* 233-4.
388 U.S. Department of the Army, *Latin America and the Caribbean: Analytical Survey of Literature* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), D5.

embargo and were active in blocking the U.S. importation of Cuban molasses through international brokers and subsidiary companies.[389] Soon after landing in Florida, Cuban-American sugar growers like the Fanjuls became active participants in the anti-Castro exile community, in turn, funding anti-Castro political groups, communicating intelligence to federal officials, and pursuing legal action to reclaim lost property.[390] Claiming five of the ten largest corporate claims against the Cuban government for expropriated property, amounting to approximately $401 million, nationalized Cuban sugar firms that had had significant U.S. ownership worked with the Department of Justice's Foreign Claims Settlement Commission to be made whole. Alongside other "injured" corporations like Exxon, the ITT corporation, and hotel and gaming conglomerates, these sugar interests effectively tied compensation for lost property to the lifting of the Cuban embargo.[391]

Outside the realm of conventional politics, declassified CIA records indicate that some of South Florida's major agricultural interests also supported covert actions against Cuba. For example, Robert Kleberg, who owned King Ranch, and a member of the Lykes family, whose shipping company relied on Cuban trade and holdings included over 16,000 acres of ranch land in Cuba, reportedly sought to fund a scheme to assassinate the Castro brothers in the early 1960s.[392] Perhaps most notoriously, William Pawley of Talisman Sugar helped bankroll the ill-fated Bay of Pigs Invasion, which included several Talisman employees. Pawley, who had lost significant assets in Cuba and had previously provided support for the 1954 coup in Guatemala, also privately funded

---

[389] Wedgeworth to Hutchinson, 5 July 5, 1966. See also: Box 10, "Publicker" Braga Brothers Collection RG 3, Series 41 PKY. Folder covers a 1961 incident of the Publicker company purchasing a shipment of Cuban molasses in New Orleans from a Norwegian shipper.

[390] See: George Braga to White House, 16 December 1974. Box 3, Cuba 1970s, Braga Brothers Collection, RG 3, Series 19. PKY. On the historic role of the national security discourse in shaping U.S. sugar policy, see: Gail M. Hollander, "Securing Sugar," 339-358.

[391] Richard E. Feinberg, "Reconciling U.S. Property Claims in Cuba Transforming Trauma into Opportunity," Latin America Initiative, Brookings Institute (2016): 9-10; 16-7. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Reconciling-US-Property-Claims-in-Cuba-Feinberg.pdf

[392] "Memo: Cuban Revolutionary Activity in Florida," January 15, 1960, Document ID 32373867, JFK Assassination Records, NARA. https://www.archives.gov/files/research/jfk/releases/2021/docid-32373867.pdf; Paul Guzzo, "Tampa's Lykes family is Mentioned in JFK Assassination records," *Tampa Bay Times*, December 29, 2021. The plot, which the Lykes family today denies, was never carried out.

Cuban dissident saboteurs and even, to the chagrin of the Kennedy administration, personally participated in a failed mission to Cuba to rescue Soviet defectors.[393]

Shifting market dynamics outside of the sugar trade also motivated Florida's growers' organizations to lean on the government. In the tomato market, Florida's growers faced increasing competition from Mexico, which capitalized on the isolation of Cuba and secured nearly one-third of the U.S. winter tomato market by the late 1960s.[394] Although robust consumer demand for fresh produce ensured Florida's growers' profitability, the FFVA argued that Mexican exporters dumped an interior product in the U.S. market to depress prices. USDA officials eventually partially restricted Mexican imports in the winter by imposing Florida's tomato grade and aesthetic standards on them.[395] To ward off the possible imposition of hard tariffs on Mexican exports, the Mexican government also slowed tomato exports on a voluntary basis in the winter.[396]

In this way, Florida's tomato growers stood fast against the growing transnational character of produce production and marketing in North America. In response to rising U.S. labor costs after the Bracero program's termination in 1964, southwestern U.S. agribusiness interests and importers began partnering with growers and investors in Sonora and Sinaloa to establish industrial farms in Mexico. Through the offshoring of U.S. capital and technology, transnational producer-importer coordination, and the use of low-cost Mexican land, water, and labor, export-oriented industrial tomato production took root in Mexico.[397] The Mexican government additionally facilitated the rise

---

[393] David D, Gries Memo for Deputy Director for Operations, CIA "Release of William Pawley's Name," June 22, 1993, Document ID 104-10332-10013, JFK Assassination Records, NARA. https://www.archives.gov/files/research/jfk/releases/104-10332-10013.pdf; Max Holland, "Private Sources of U.S. Foreign Policy," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 7, No. 4 (Fall 2005): 55-63; 69-70.
[394] McJunkin, "Winter Vegetable Farming in Florida," 42.
[395] U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Supplying U.S. Markets with Fresh Winter Produce: Capabilities of U.S. and Mexican Production Areas," Agricultural Economic Report no. 154 (197x?) in: Box 9, "Mexican Tomato Imports," James A. Haley Papers, McKay Archives, Florida Southern College (FSC).
[396] Minutes: Directors Meeting, FFVA, 30 September 1969. Box 120, FFVA, SO Chase Jr, 1969, Chase Collection MS 14, RG1, Series 4, PKY.
[397] Steven Sanderson, *The Transformation of Mexican Agriculture: International Structure and the Politics of Rural Change*

of industrial farms in the 1960s by targeting federal spending, in consultation with U.S. development experts, to the northwest and northern border states to "modernize" agricultural practices. Without federal support in the communal ejido sector, hundreds of thousands of campesinos were gradually forced from lands in central and southern Mexico and into waged work in new agricultural hubs in Sinaloa and Sonora and in the nascent maquila manufacturing sector at the border.[398]

Grade restrictions on Mexican exports not only protected Florida's growers in their peak marketing season, but also reconfigured production decisions in Mexico. Nogales-based U.S. importers and brokers continued to challenge tomato regulations at the federal level, while Mexican growers, adjusted production schedules to respond to seasonal grade standards.[399] To further accommodate U.S. regulations, Sinaloa growers with ties to Dole Foods and other U.S. importers sent representatives to Florida to study growing techniques in the 1960s and began surveying other regions in Mexico to establish export-oriented farms. These agricultural concerns would later be instrumental in establishing export production in Baja California, a state that had the advantage of a year-round growing season and proximity to the U.S. market.[400]

While Florida's agricultural interests secured federal support and a degree of protection in the 1960s, growers' advantageous market position would require constant vigilance to maintain in the face of globalization and liberalizing U.S. trade policy. For decades to come, the associations formed to serve Florida's corporate growers continued to influence what political scientist Steven Sanderson labeled the "high politics of produce.[401]" Sugar, produce, citrus, and other crops produced in Florida would be major sticking points in governmental negotiations over future trade

---

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 85-86; Sterling Evans, "Baja and Beyond Toward an Environmental and Transnational history of the Tomato Industry in Baja California" in Evans, ed., *Farming Across Borders: A Transnational History of the North American West* (Texas A&M Press, 2017), 150

398 Olsson, *Agrarian Crossings*, 192-96.

399 See: Florida Tomato Committee, News Release 'Tomato Prices Skyrocket,'" 8 January 1972. Box 9, Agriculture; Mexican Tomato Imports, James A. Haley Collection, FSC.

400 Zlolniski, *Made in Baja*, 33-37.

401 Sanderson, *The Transformation of Mexican Agriculture,* 114.

agreements, as Florida's growers sought to limit exposure to imports. Concurrently, as important geopolitical actors in the Cold War, South Florida's sugar growers would continue to influence U.S. foreign policy, as Cuba became increasingly isolated within the international order.

Countering Reform

In the 1960s, growing liberal reform movements and a surge in farmworkers' organizing came into conflict with the labor systems that upheld South Florida's agricultural productivity.[402] After decades of efforts, and bolstered by the public outcry generated by *Harvest of Shame,* farmworker organizers and advocates, began to move lawmakers toward reform. Officials in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations moved to raise standards for farmworkers and end the Bracero program, putting a target, in turn, on the H-2 visa program. In the mid-1960s, Congress took up these issues, phasing out the Bracero program and extending limited contracting and minimum wage protections to farmworkers, while regulators limited the use of H-2 visas outside the sugar sector by 1966.[403] Buoyed by post-war prosperity and hardy membership rolls, organized labor, too, increased investments in organizing the agricultural sector. In 1959, the AFL-CIO formed the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) in California, where Filipino and Mexican-American farmworkers were increasingly self-organizing. By the 1965 Delano Grape Strike, the California farmworkers' movement united and formed the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC), eliciting the AFL-CIO and large unions like the United Auto Workers (UAW) to make greater commitments to expand farmworkers' organizing nationally.[404]

---

[402] See: J. Craig Jenkins and Charles Perrow, "Insurgency of the Powerless: Farm Worker Movements (1946-1972)," *American Sociological Review* 42, No. 2 (1977): 249- 268

[403] Congress passed the Farm Labor Contractor Registration Act (FLCRA) in 1963, implementing some minimal oversight on contracting activities for the first time, and extended the FLSA to farmworkers in 1966 (while excluding small farms and denying farmworkers overtime benefits). See: "Unfinished Harvest: The Agricultural Worker Protection Act at 30," Farmworker Justice, " 2013, 6-7. https://www.farmworkerjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/FarmworkerJusticeUnfinishedHarvest.pdf

[404] See: Miriam Pawel, *The Union of Their Dreams: Power, Hope, and Struggle in Cesar Chavez's Farm Worker Movement* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2009); Bardacke, *Trampling Out the Vintage.*

These challenges to the corporate food system in California and at the federal level reverberated in South Florida. Federal reforms, particularly the curtailing of H-2 visas, and a growing union organizing campaign centered in South Florida targeting U.S. migrant workers jeopardized growers' profitability and means of labor control. In coalition with community and faith groups, the AFL-CIO's Industrial Union Department (IUD), the federation's post-merger hub for industrial union organizing headed by UAW President Walter Reuther, led the union drive in South Florida and added significant political heft to the effort. Facing these threats, associations supported growers in managing class conflict and changing farm labor regulations. Associations deployed concerted anti-union tactics, fostered division within the union effort and mobilized political attacks against it, and helped growers recalibrate production to maintain profitability. By the late 1960s, South Florida's agricultural sector had weathered the IUD's organizing campaign, which suffered from internal disorganization and uneven national support, and reinforced the status quo.

In the years after the airing of *Harvest of Shame* in 1960, it was increasingly clear to South Florida's growers that farm labor reforms were coming, in one form or another. While federal policy strongly favored agribusiness in the 1950s, by the 1960s, the political environment had shifted with the Democratic Party at near hegemonic status in U.S. politics and organized labor at the height of its influence. The growth of the civil rights movement and farm labor organizing victories in California, likewise, spelled trouble for growers' agenda. Liberal federal officials were openly supportive of curtailing guestworker recruitment and raising farm wages, and proposals for tighter farm labor regulations circulated in Congress.[405] Indeed, in 1960, the Democratic party platform condemned the Bracero program. AWOC directly targeted the program by conducting some 150 strikes to spur DOL intervention to enforce the ban on Bracero employment during labor

[405] Jenkins and Perrow, "Insurgency of the Powerless," 249-51.

disputes.[406] For liberal reformers and farm labor organizers, the time was ripe for change.

On the legislative front, reformers moved to end the Bracero program in the early 1960s. The AFL-CIO, labor unions, and state and central labor councils mobilized to pressure lawmakers to vote against a reauthorization of the program. Arguing that the Bracero program pit "poverty against poverty and create[d] more poverty," Andrew Biemiller, the AFL-CIO's Legislative Director, further called for expanding non-wage benefits included in the Bracero program, like guaranteed housing, to U.S. workers. After the Senate approved an extension of the Bracero program that gave U.S. workers the same non-wage benefits as Braceros, the House responded with a final one-year extension with no benefits to U.S. workers. Regardless of the prevailing conditions for Braceros, which were often below formal standards, extending their protections and benefits to all farmworkers would have been significant progress.[407] Yet, lawmakers backed away from this proposal, essentially upholding separate, low-road employment terms for U.S. farmworkers, and renewed the Bracero program with the understanding that this would be its final reauthorization. In 1964, Congress declined to take up its reauthorization and effectively terminated the Bracero program.[408]

The minimum wage for farmworkers was next. With the firm support of organized labor, which aimed to extend the minimum wage to "all workers engaged in commerce," the Johnson administration proposed bills extending minimum wage protections to a variety of industries like construction, laundries, hotels, restaurants, taxi operations, logging, and agriculture. These efforts failed in 1964 and 1965. The American Farm Bureau and other agricultural interest groups argued that the exceptional nature of the agricultural sector made the implementation of minimum wages

---

[406] Cohen, *Braceros*, 168; Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 164-165.
[407] "Alianza to Biemiller," 5 June 1963, "Mexican Labor" Box 022, Folder 24, AFL-CIO Archives, UMD; "Biemiller to Sen. Norris Cotton," 11 June 1963, RG-21 Dept. of Legislation, Box 35, Folder 35, AFL-CIO Archives, UMD.
[408] Cohen, *Braceros*, 214-216; Joyce Vialet and McClure, "Temporary Worker Programs: Background and Issues," 46.

impractical and would lead to higher food prices, shuttered farms, and increased mechanization and agricultural unemployment. By 1966, however, momentum was again on the side of reformers and Congress passed an amendment to the FLSA that broadened the minimum wage coverage to several new sectors and set farmworkers' wages to $1 an hour, to be increased to $1.30 by 1969.[409]

The expansion of the FLSA was a limited victory. It contained major loopholes, like denying farmworkers overtime coverage, and its enforcement was weak, which allowed growers to game wage regulations. It also continued to exclude workers under age 17 and migrants' working dependents (effectively ignoring child labor in the sector), local casual workers, and any farm that used less than 500-man days of labor annually. Therefore, the new minimum wage extension only covered about two percent of farms and 30 percent of farmworkers.[410] Furthermore, the DOL only employed about 1,200 wage-and-hour investigators, who were mainly focused on industrial employers, so relatively few farms were even inspected.[411] Growers who were charged with violating the law, could avoid paying fines with legal challenges, which made the risk of fines for violating labor laws a small cost of conducting business. For example, Chase Farms, which was cited for violating minimum wage laws in its processing operations, retained legal counsel to fight fines and legal injunctions. After years of wrangling in the courts, and with the assistance of attorneys retained by the FFVA, the company negotiated to have injunctions lifted and its fines reduced from $55,000 to $15,000, after spending $6,150 on legal fees.[412]

Nevertheless, across the country, large agricultural interests mobilized against increasing

[409] See: "Minimum Wage." In CQ Almanac 1964, 20th ed., 574-75. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1965. http://library.cqpress.com/cqalmanac/cqal64-1303405; "Minimum Wage, Overtime." In CQ Almanac 1965, 21st ed., 858-61. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1966. http://library.cqpress.com/cqalmanac/cqal65-1258026.
[410] See: Karen Shallcross Koziara, "The Agricultural Minimum Wage: A Preliminary Look," *Monthly Labor Review* 90, No. 9 (1967): 26-29
[411] Donald Janson, "Minimum Wages Elude U. S. Farm Help", *New York Times*, September 12, 1971.
[412] See: Chase and Company Memorandum, Beardall Wage and Hour Case, November 2, 1965 and associated documents in RG 1, Series 4, Chase Collection, Chase and Company, Labor- Beardall Wage and Hour Case 1962-65, PKY.

oversight and reforms and defended guestworker programs. As lawmakers considered terminating the Bracero program, representatives from the FFVA and the Citrus Industrial Council collaborated with growers in Arizona, California, and Texas to lobby lawmakers and DOL officials in opposition to any limits on guestworker recruitment. Associations warned of rising food prices and passed resolutions denouncing DOL oversight as government overreach.[413] Others, like bean farmer Howard Jones of Belle Glade, interviewed in *Harvest of Shame*, claimed growers were "trapped between what society expects and what the market demands" and called for reformers to focus instead on retail chains, which set prices low and left leaving little room for raising wages.[414]

After the phase-out of the Bracero Program, Labor Secretary William Wirtz, who served as the DOL's head from 1962 to 1969, warned Florida's growers that the Johnson administration was moving to curtail the H-2 visa program too. Under Wirtz, DOL officials gradually tightened their certification of labor shortages, particularly in the vegetable sector. Growers inundated federal offices with reports that they would be forced to leave crops rotting in the fields and curb future plantings without H-2 workers.[415] The claims of the FFVA, sugar growers, and others, that restrictions on H-2 visas would cause devastating crop losses were echoed by Florida's congressional delegation. In the spring of 1965, South Florida's celery growers even sued the DOL, unsuccessfully seeking to enjoin the DOL from refusing to certify H-2 visas for celery cutters. Nonetheless, by 1966, the administration stopped certifying H-2 visas for all vegetable growers.[416]

Still, in the sugar sector, growers maintained access to H-2 visas by persuading federal officials, with the assistance of Florida's lawmakers, that U.S. workers refused to take backbreaking

---

[413] "Minutes, Joint Meeting of FFVA Labor Committees and Citrus Industrial Council," February 21, 1963. Box 174 James A. Haley Papers, Labor: Agriculture, McKay Archives, Florida Southern College (FSC).
[414] Quoted in *Harvest of Shame*
[415] Statement of D.B. Watkins, 10 May 1965. Box 96, "Labor Costs 1963-66," Chase Collection RG 1, Series 4, PKY; FFVA Labor Bulletin No. 215/64-65, January 5, 1965 in labor costs and reception 1963-66, box 96, RG 1, series 4, Chase Collection, PKY.
[416] Vialet and McClure, "Temporary Worker Programs: Background and Issues," 66; U.S. Congress, The Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States 111, Part 17 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1965): 23510.

cane-cutter jobs.[417] Indeed, Secretary Wirtz, after witnessing cane cutting, declared it the "worst job in the world." U.S. diplomats were also reluctant to strain ties with Jamaica, which had gained independence from Great Britain in 1962, by closing off access to U.S. jobs and exacerbating discontent among the unemployed so soon after the Cuban Revolution.[418] By the late 1960s, H-2 workers were primarily recruited from Jamaica—roughly 10,000 such workers annually— to work in South Florida's sugar sector. Thus, in a period of expanding civil rights, for the next two decades, South Florida was largely exceptional in its use of guestworkers.[419]

With the end of the H-2 program in the produce sector, U.S. migrant workers found new leverage and opportunities for organizing. In the Everglades, growers reported an uptick in demands for higher wages and "sit-down strikes" in the fields in 1965.[420] Building on migrants' activism, in 1966, the AFL-CIO's IUD launched a program to organize Florida's farmworkers. As part of a larger push to expand unionization in the South, IUD organizers conducted education and outreach meetings with local churches and community organizations, eventually getting some 25,000 migrants in the Southeast to sign IUD union cards, according to Jim Pearce, IUD coordinator in the region.[421] Centered in Belle Glade, the campaign mobilized marginalized Black migrants and inspired strikes, marches and pickets that defied growers' threats and the region's rural white power structure. It also

---

[417] See: U.S. Senate, Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, "Importation of Foreign Agricultural Workers: Hearings, Eighty-ninth Congress, First Session, On the Proposed Criteria for the Importation of Foreign Agricultural Workers, the Difficulties in Securing Domestic Help, And the Immediacy of the Problem," January 15 and 16, 1965 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1965): 137-150.
[418] Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land*, 133-34; 145-147; Cindy Hahamovitch, "The Worst Job in the World': Reform, Revolution, and the Secret Rebellion in Florida's Cane Fields," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 35, no. 4 (2008): 785-6.
[419] Florida sugar growers were by far the primary user of the H-2 program from the late 1960s to the late 1980s. In more limited numbers, apple growers also employed some H-2 Jamaican workers after they finished work harvesting cane. A small number of H-2 visas were also issued for Canadian guestworkers in the timber industry, Basque sheepherders, and construction workers in Guam. See: Vialet and McClure, "Temporary Worker Programs: Background and Issues," 59-61.
[420] Peter Trammer, "Offshore Labor Fight Weighed by U.S. Court," *St. Petersburg Times*, 7 May 1965
[421] Oral History Interview with Jim Pierce, July 16, 1974. Interview E-0012-3. Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) in the Southern Oral History Program Collection, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; "Management Research Institute, 'Role of Some Churchmen in the Farm Worker Union Effort,'" June 7, 1967, RG 1, Box 96, Series 4, "Christian migrant Ministry," Chase Collection, PK Yonge Library, University of Florida; "Statement of George Wedgeworth to Florida Christian Migrant Ministry," June 7, 1967, RG-1, Box 96, Series 4, "labor, Christian migrant ministry," Chase Collection, PK Yonge Library, University of Florida.

organized hundreds of crew leaders, who formed an association and, later, secured a separate charter with the Laborers Union.[422] While many crew leaders, as employment intermediaries, contributed to the exploitation of migrants, others also worked the fields and served mainly as spokespeople for small groups of migrants and, thus, in the eyes of organizers, could be powerful activists and put additional pressure on growers.[423] By May 1966, some 260 crew leaders that worked in Florida and along the migrant stream affiliated with the Laborers Union, distributed union cards among their crews, and collectively demanded higher piece rates from growers.[424]

Through 1966 and 1967, organizers reported a newfound militancy among farmworkers in the fields, which, for a time, seemed to match a national-level commitment from organized labor. In June 1966, Pearce reported that the IUD had 50 organizers circulating around Belle Glade's fields and signing farmworkers on to the union, which would be the first successful union of migrants in the state and would operate outside the realm of the NLRA. He claimed further that the "entire labor movement" was behind the effort and was prepared to "spend as much money as necessary to organize the farm laborer."[425] That fall, the IUD formed a "Coordinating Committee for Farm Workers" with the NAACP, the migrant ministry and local churches, the American Friends Service Committee, and anti-poverty groups to negotiate with growers' associations and push for a spate of state legislative reforms. The Coordinating Committee signaled both a broad labor and community commitment to farmworker organizing and the importance of civil rights, anti-poverty, and faith groups in reaching and activating Black migrant workers and their families.[426] In a powerful display of unity, on election night in November 1966, the Committee mobilized farmworker leaders from

[422] "South Florida Migrant Labor Getting Restive," *St. Petersburg Times*, March 6, 1967. "FFVA Activities Report," 15 June 15, 1966, 2. Box 117, FFVA Activities Report, 1966, Chase Collection RG 1, Series 4, PKY.
[423] Linda Lewis Tooni, et al., *Farm Labor Organizing 1905-67: A Brief History* (New York: National Advisory Committee on Farm Labor, 1967), 62.
[424] Travis C. Tullos, Jr., "Florida: Staging Ground for Farm Unionists," *Virginia Farm Bureau News*, February 1, 1968.
[425] "Florida Farm Workers Target of Union Drive," *Tampa Tribune*, June 23, 1966.
[426] Tooni, et al., *Farm Labor Organizing 1905-67*, 62-3; "The Time Has Come for Farmworkers to Unite," CCFW/ IUD Flyer, approx. 1966. Chase Collection, RG1, Box 96, Labor, Christian Migrant Ministry, 1967, PKY.

communities across South and Central Florida, who, after a full day working in the fields, marched for "rights and dignity" through downtown Miami to pressure newly-elected Governor Claude Kirk to take action to improve labor camps and working conditions.[427]

Yet, organizational difficulties, internal divisions, and bureaucratic disputes beset the promising union drive. Migrant workers acted before the Committee's organizational leadership was prepared to support escalating campaign tactics. Within the AFL-CIO, Reuther was also increasingly feuding with AFL-CIO President George Meany, which translated into disarray in field operations. In the winter season of 1966-67, just as a cadre of migrant leaders in Belle Glade called for a "general strike" to win a raise from $1.15 to $1.35 an hour, the IUD began recalling organizers and reducing investments in Florida. Still, some 2,000 migrant workers struck and rallied to demand higher pay. Belle Glade's Sheriff sent the riot squad to break up the migrants' picket of a job pickup lot.[428] To cool down the situation, Pierce admonished the "wildcat" action and unsuccessfully sought to negotiate a settlement with George Wedgworth, then president of the FFVA.[429]

With no settlement forthcoming, in the spring of 1967, an estimated 4,500 farmworkers struck the bean and corn harvest, again demanding higher wages and walking out without the IUD's endorsement. Tension in the organizing drive then arose between migrant activists and organized crew leaders, who sought compromise with growers and aimed to secure higher placement charges, a strategy based on raising wages by controlling migrants' access to work that ultimately undermined the strike.[430] To turn up the pressure on growers, migrants, and organizers attempted to blockade

---

[427] News Release: Farmworkers; Rally for Basic Rights and Dignity, November 8, 1966, CCFW, 1966, 4-37, Box 4, FL Christian Migrant Ministry, 868, Reuther Library.

[428] AFL-CIO, *To Clear the Record: AFL-CIO Executive Council Report on the Disaffiliation of the UAW* (Washington, DC: AFL-CIO, 1969), 69; Nixon Smiley, "Farm Strike Idles 2,000 at Belle Glade," *Miami Herald*, January 11, 1967.

[429] Iz Nachman, "New Glades Strike Rumored, Denied," *Palm Beach Post*, January 20, 1967.

[430] Irving Cohen, "La Huelga! Delano and After," US Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Monthly Labor Review* 91 (US GPO, 1968), 15, Series: Area Wage Surveys and Industry Wage Surveys and Other Occupational Employment Statistics Publications, 2014 - 2017, Record Group 257: Records of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1885 - 2007, National Archives at College Park - Electronic Records (RDE); "Farm Labor Dispute May Hit Peak Today," *Palm Beach Post*, April 13,

busses leaving migrant pickup lots in Belle Glade, which led to further clashes with crew leaders that, at times, turned violent. Although industry reports indicate that growers may have been close to agreeing to a settlement with the striking migrants, organized crew leaders ultimately sided with growers and decided to continue to supply them with field labor. In subsequent deliberations with migrants and IUD representatives, crew leaders ruled out further cooperation with the migrants' organizing due to leadership and tactical differences.[431]

Beyond divisions among organizers, growers' concerted anti-union resistance over two years fomented disarray in the IUD campaign. Growers' associations worked with a management consulting firm, which had Fanjul and Duda family members on its board, to disseminate intelligence reports on organizers and lobby state and local officials to suppress union activity.[432] During the strikes, Wedgworth steadfastly refused to negotiate with the IUD, or migrant activists, who he claimed lacked "responsible leadership," while growers asserted in the press that Communist influences were behind the campaign.[433] Prominent growers, who claimed extensive social capital in rural South Florida, likewise, pressured church leaders to withdraw support for the union drive.[434] Growers in Belle Glade further organized to establish a "labor office" in the area, which centralized the contracting and placement of non-striking work crews.[435]

Growers also deployed political and legal attacks against the campaign. Local law enforcement sided with growers and worked to break up pickets and tracked organizers' activities to maintain labor peace. In April 1967, growers sued organized crew leaders, despite their efforts to

---

1967.Press and organizational reports vary significantly in their estimates of the size of the spring 1967 strike. Ranges run from 1,500 to 9,000. I used the number reported in the *Palm Beach Post.*

431 Tullos, Jr., "Florida: Staging Ground for Farm Unionists."

432 See: See: "Management Research Institute, 1967 Officers"; MRI, "Role of Some Churchmen in the Farm Worker Union Effort," June 7, 1967, Box 96, "Labor, Christian migrant ministry, 1967" Chase Collection, RG-1, Series 4, PKY.

433 "Winds of Change in the Mucklands," *Tampa Tribune*, January 15, 1967.

434 See: "Statement of George Wedgworth to Florida Christian Migrant Ministry" 7 June 1967, Box 96, "Labor, Christian migrant ministry, 1967" Chase Collection, RG-1, Series 4, PKY and "Labor, Christian migrant ministry 1967" folder, generally.

435 Tullos, Jr., "Florida: Staging Ground for Farm Unionists."

compromise with growers, for violating Florida's right-to-work laws. Florida's Congressional delegation, too, successfully pushed for a Government Accountability Office investigation into two organizations in the Coordinating Committee for Farm Workers—the Community Action Fund and American Friends Service Committee—for using federal grants to engage in union activity. The investigation found that representatives of the organizations assisted with coordinating a December 1966 rally and called on them to reimburse the government for grant-funded employees' time spent working with the committee.[436]

Despite the militancy of migrants, the union drive in Belle Glade eventually came apart. Amid organizational turmoil in 1967, Reuther decided to hand off the migrant campaign and IUD's membership lists to the Packinghouse Workers Union, prompting outrage among on-the-ground organizers and allies. By 1968 the campaign was inactive.[437] The Coordinating Committee appears to have also dissolved by the late 1960s.

While the IUD's efforts in Florida did not bear fruit, when combined with the loss of the H-2 visa, it raised apprehension among vegetable growers and motivated many to reorganize production patterns and invest more heavily in sugar.[438] Many vegetable growers increasingly diversified their holdings in sugar, where profits and labor supply were more predictable. The nine mills in Florida produced their most successful harvest at the time in 1967, an almost one million ton increase from the previous year.[439] As the sugar sector boomed, the result for H-2 canecutters was a brutal stretching of their labor, as the federal government continued to limit the issuance of H-2 visas. Over time, H-2 workers, confronting wage theft and abuse, staged strikes and other

---

[436] "2 Florida Anti-Poverty Groups Accused of Conducting Unlawful Union Activity," *Tampa Times*, May 30, 1967; IZ Nachman, "Farm Crew Chiefs' Union Hit by Suit" *Palm Beach Post*, April 14, 1967.
[437] AFL-CIO, *To Clear the Record,* 76-77.
[438] Fact Sheet "Division of Migrant Labor, Department of Community Affairs" (197x), 2. Box 10, Admin Files: Migrant Labor, 000100. s. 1172, Florida State Archives; Cohen, "La Huelga! Delano and after," 15.
[439] "Florida Sugar Cane League Newsletter vol 2, no. 4, April 5, 1967." Box 113, FL Sugar Cane League, inc. 1966-70, Chase Collection RG I, Series 4, PKY.

protests, but guestworkers' activism was routinely met with deportation.[440] As will be discussed in Chapter 3, growers' associations and contractors, furthermore, began to expand the scope of labor recruitment operations to promote labor surpluses and strengthen growers' control over farm labor crews.

***

Growers' political and economic organization made intensive production in the Everglades possible. By resisting reform and halting farmworkers' organization, growers' associations supported on-time agricultural production and demonstrated, again, their centrality to the operations of the Everglades' agricultural sector. In the post-war era, South Florida's growers' coops and associations were the main vehicle through which agricultural interests forwarded their class interests and remade the region into a major hub in the food system. From ushering in the C&SF Project, one of the 20th century's most extensive infrastructure and water control projects, to refashioning immigration and trade policies, organized growers won key policy concessions to generate unprecedented new levels of diversified agricultural production. In the process, they remade the Everglades ecosystem, the economic geography of South Florida, hemispheric production, immigration, and trade patterns.

In these decades, the growth of the Everglades' agricultural sector was both locally contingent and tied to transnational movements and the broader operations of the Cold War-era food system. Local systems of land and labor control facilitated Everglades' growers' integration into corporate supply chains that distributed Everglades commodities to supermarkets, sugar refineries, food processors, and consumers' tables across the country. In the Everglades, these expanding supply chains intersected with the East Coast migrant stream and labor recruitment chains tied to the Caribbean, as well as the flow of global capital, particularly after the exodus of Cuban industry from the island in the 1960s. With sugar production and profit increasing dramatically for both

---

[440] Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land*, 170-171.

established growers and new Cuban-American agricultural interests after the Cuban Revolution, the Everglades' agricultural sector elevated and fortified its position in the food system. In turn, the regions' growers' associations and lobby groups accumulated enhanced geopolitical power and influence, which they used to advance a more hawkish U.S. posture towards Cuba, maintain the recruitment of guestworkers, and construct a highly-regulated agricultural trade regime—thus mediating and managing the sector's varied relationships with the Americas.

By the end of the 1960s, South Florida's agricultural interests had outlasted a robust organizing effort and adapted to reforms, while concentrating land holdings and expanding production and profits. Over decades of organization, South Florida's growers developed sophisticated and systematized modes of association and cooperation, bending markets, policy, labor, and the environment to their collective will. Agricultural interests' profitability also reached new heights. Measured in farm cash earnings, agricultural profits nearly doubled in Florida between 1960 and 1970, from $761 million to over $1.3 billion.[441] Nevertheless, growers' means of control were never total and would require consistent fortification as they faced renewed farmworkers' challenges from below.

---

[441] Sunshine State Agricultural Research Report, Agricultural Experiment Stations, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, 1961, 5; "Florida Agriculture by the Numbers," Florida Department of Agriculture, 2011, 9.
https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Florida/Publications/Annual_Statistical_Bulletin/FL_Agriculture_Boo k/2011/2011%20FL%20Ag%20by%20the%20Numbers.pdf.

Chapter 3: Contesting "Powerlessness": Farmworker Organizing, Community Change, and Immigration, 1960s-80s

In April 1971, on a balmy night that foretold the end of the winter vegetable season, nearly 1,000 farmworkers met in Immokalee and agreed to strike the area's tomato growers. Unsatisfied with their $10 a day wage and fed up with crew leaders' persistent abuses, farmworkers formed picket lines early the next morning at two pick-up lots in town and refused to board buses bound for the fields until growers acceded to their demands for a $4 raise. Despite the menacing presence of the sheriff and local police, farmworkers held up the buses until growers sent word that they would pay up. Not far outside of town, a similar scene unfolded at a farm owned by A. Duda and Sons, the leading U.S. celery producer. There, some 150 farmworkers and local activists affiliated with the group Organized Migrants in Community Action (OMICA), a growing farmworkers' organization with a largely Chicano membership, made the same demand. They picketed the farm, waving signs like "Duda wants Slaves, Not Workers," and recruited replacement workers to join their cause. Police threatened the workers with arrest, and a farmer attempted to run through their picket with his truck. Yet, the farmworkers stood firm and halted all harvest work for the day. That night, Duda agreed to their demands. Without the benefit of a union, in this instance, Immokalee's farmworkers had overcome state and private coercion to organize and raise wages.[442]

This chapter examines how diverse and changing populations of farmworkers in South Florida forged organizational and class bonds while confronting growers' opposition, geographic and social isolation, and state oppression from the late 1960s to the 1980s. It illuminates an underrecognized surge of farmworkers' organizing in Florida, growers' resistance strategies, which

---

[442] United Farmworkers of Florida, Newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 4 (May/ June 1971): 3-4 in Newsletters, Chicano Studies Collection, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley (hereafter CS, UCB). See also: "Immokalee Migrant Group Strikes," *Tampa Tribune*, April 27, 1971.

were bolstered by enhanced federal immigration enforcement, and the legacy of these struggles. In this period, Florida's farmworkers built on government reforms to form a spate of grassroots labor organizations in the region. They also led lasting community initiatives, opened new clinics and housing developments, and staged powerful strikes, seeking to upend the systems that kept them poor, often despite wavering support from national unions. By the 1980s, however, agricultural interests expanded their anti-union tactics to leverage immigration enforcement and the implementation of IRCA in 1986 to undermine the burgeoning movement.[443]

Although often left out of mainstream labor and working-class histories, the experience of farmworkers in this period largely reflects the broader trajectory of union organizing in this period.[444] As Lane Windham contends the 1970s began with promise for organized labor, as women and people of color "reconfigured" the working class by using civil rights legislation to break into new occupations and leading new organizing in the South and non-union sectors.[445] In agriculture, the UFW and the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) led successful boycotts against major growers and brands and won union contracts covering tens of thousands in the West and Midwest. Smaller farmworkers' organizations in Texas and Arizona also led union drives in their states. In Florida, farmworkers built on federal anti-poverty initiatives to advance labor and community struggles and forge new organizations, and the UFW successfully won a collective bargaining agreement covering Coca-Cola's Minute Maid subsidiary in 1972. While growers resisted union efforts at every turn, for a brief time, local movements and organizations, with the support of the

---

[443] See: Carl Lindskoog, *Detain and Punish : Haitian Refugees and the Rise of the World's Largest Immigration Detention System* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2018); Martin, *Importing Poverty?*; Allan Burns, *Maya in Exile: Guatemalans in Florida* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993); Bruce Bernstein, "Migration, Health, and Nutrition: Haitians in Immokalee, a South Florida Farmworker Town" (PhD Diss., University of Connecticut, 1986); Brent Ashabranner, *Dark Harvest: Migrant Farmworkers in America* (Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1985).

[444] See: Cindy Hahamovitch and Rick Halpern, "Not a 'Sack of Potatoes': Why Labor Historians Need to Take Agriculture Seriously," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, No. 65, (Spring, 2004): 3-10.

[445] Lane Windham, *Knocking on Labor's Door: Union Organizing in the 1970s and the Roots of a New Economic Divide* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 30-31.

UFW, threatened to remake farm labor relations in the state. As with the rest of the labor movement, however, by the 1980s, farmworker organizing in Florida had stalled.

At the same time, a reconstruction of farmworkers' organizing in Florida complicates the narrative, frequently articulated by contemporary liberal reformers, which portrayed migrant farmworkers as existing in a state of impotence and quasi-slavery. For instance, after the failure of the AFL-CIO's IUD to organize migrants in South Florida in the 1960s, Sen. Walter Mondale led a congressional investigation into farmworkers' "powerlessness" in the state in 1970.[446] Yet, at this time, the character of the farm workforce was changing. Chicano and Mexican farmworkers were arriving in South Florida due to displacement from harvest mechanization in the West and shifts in labor contracting, joining a younger generation of Black migrants. Together, Black and Chicano migrant farmworkers built new, often radical movements and organizations to counter the disempowering employment structures of the migrant stream. They challenged not only labor exploitation and low wages, but also hunger, disease, poor housing, and other inequities. In the Everglades, class conflict often took the form of contests over local autonomy as farmworkers' solidarities in the fields developed in line with community formation. This burgeoning movement belied the conceit of migrants' "powerlessness," and clashed at times with UFW leaders, who struggled to square the efforts of local organizers with their institutional prerogatives.[447] To the detriment of both the UFW and the broader farmworkers' movement, these moments of discordance over resources, immigration, and local leadership weakened efforts to build power and win collective bargaining in Florida's increasingly diverse workforce.[448]

---

[446] See: U.S. Senate, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare Subcommittee on Migratory Labor, *Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Powerlessness: Hearings, Ninety-First Congress*, 1st and 2nd Sessions, (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970).
[447] On the rise and fall of the UFW, including the union's conflicts with local organizers, see: Matthew Garcia, *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); Bardacke, *Trampling out The Vintage.*
[448] On the tensions between movement and institution in more recent labor organizing, see: Ana Avendaño and Jonathan Hiatt, "Worker Self-Organization in the New Economy: The AFL-CIO's Experience in Movement Building

Nevertheless, to fully understand the frustration of Florida's farmworkers' movement in this period, it is essential to account for how immigration systems closed space for labor organizing in this period. As historians make clear, from various perspectives, offshoring and global competition, fissures in labor-liberal alliances, and new union-busting tactics contributed to the decline of workers' power in the 1980s.[449] On immigration and labor standards in this period, others seek to counter nativists' claims that immigration was responsible for declining wages in sectors like hospitality and construction by demonstrating how employers' degradation of wages and conditions in these sectors repelled U.S. workers and acted as a "pull factor" for low-wage undocumented immigrant workers.[450] Yet, employers' tactics for suppressing labor power manifested differently in the agricultural sector, where conditions had been poor for decades and growers used international labor recruitment, immigration policy, enforcement, and deportation to fragment employment relationships and suppress farmworkers' organizing and wage growth. Of course, immigrants did not make farm work hazardous, low-paying, and precarious. But the systems that shaped workers' migratory experiences also eroded the conditions of farm work and limited the efficacy of collective action. Changing demographics in South Florida's farm workforce indeed cut two ways. Chicano and immigrant communities brought new organizing energy and tactics to the region and new solidarities emerged as the workforce changed. Conversely, shifting recruitment and immigration patterns also supported new forms of repression grounded in immigration laws.

Growers, associations, and contractors undermined farmworkers' organizations by exploiting

---

with Community-Labour Partnerships," *Labour, Capital and Society* 45, no. 1 (2012): 67-71; 75-78; Dorothy Sue Cobble, "Betting on New Forms of Worker Organization," *Labor Studies in Working Class History of the Americas* 7, 3 (2010): 17-23; Charles Heckscher, "Organizations, Movements, and Networks," *NYLS Law Review* 50, Issue 2 (2006): 313-336.

[449] Several historians, like Windham, Jefferson Cowie, and Judith Stein, have argued from various perspectives, the transition from the 1970s to the 1980s represented an erosion of workers' economic power. See: Jefferson R. Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 2012); Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); Windham, *Knocking on Labor's Door.*

[450] Ruth Milkman, *Immigrant Labor and the New Precariat* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020), 10-13.

the vulnerabilities of Florida's increasingly immigrant farm workforce, immigration enforcement, and the implementation of IRCA in the 1980s. Examining Florida’s farmworkers, Hahamovitch rightly notes that sugar growers’ use of the H-2 program enhanced their control over labor and sapped resources from farmworker organizers in the state.[451] While this is a certainty, it is not the full picture, as the majority of Florida’s farmworkers worked in the produce sector and confronted contracting arrangements outside of the H-2 visa system. Acting for the region’s top growers, labor recruiters encouraged the transformation of Florida's farm workforce in the late 1960s, by extending contracting to the U.S. West, and again in the 1980s, through the contracting of Mexican migrants and asylum seekers from Guatemala and Haiti. While undocumented workers lived with the threat of deportation, making activism risky, contractors shielded growers from immigration law enforcement by obscuring employment relations. Eventually IRCA's expansion of guestworker visas, immigrant policing, and sanctions against employers who hired undocumented workers, which encouraged diffuse contracting arrangements, chilled farmworkers' organizing. Tellingly, farmworker organizers were some of the earliest critics in the labor movement to call attention to immigration enforcement’s impact on organizing and the possibility that IRCA, which received support from the AFL-CIO, would harm an increasingly immigrant working class.[452] The experiences of Florida's farmworkers are, therefore, important for understanding not only how employers relied on immigration policies to undermine organizing, but also labor history in this period.

This chapter foregrounds class formation and actions among diverse and changing farmworkers' communities, as well as the civil society organizations farmworkers forged, amid flagging labor leadership, growers' resistance, and workforce turmoil. Beginning in the late 1960s, it traces the escalation of labor conflict in the region and considers how farmworker organizers

[451] Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land*, 200-201.
[452] See: "Immigration Reform" AFL-CIO Policy Resolutions, 17th Constitutional Convention, October 1987. AFL-CIO, UMD.

channeled discontent to build new organizations. Through these struggles, and despite opposition from agricultural interests and adverse immigration and employment systems, farmworkers built durable rural civil society networks in the region, consisting of labor organizations and a spate of housing, legal, health, and educational initiatives. These networks supported immigrant farmworkers during the turmoil of the 1980s and the disruption of IRCA and continue to work to improve farmworkers' lives today. The story of Florida's farmworkers in this period, accordingly, is not fully one of oppression, but also one of workers' resilience and community power.

The Changing Face of Farm Work

In the mid-1960s, South Florida's vegetable growers increasingly looked to the U.S. West and beyond for a stable supply of seasonal labor. This was largely a response to the IUD's union campaign in Florida, migrants' wildcat strikes, and the federal curtailing of H-2 visas. Labor contractors and other intermediaries capitalized on changes to federal immigration law and agricultural production practices to transform the region's farm workforce, a process that would replay through the 1980s. The geographic expansion of farm labor recruitment networks drew Mexican and Mexican-American families to South Florida and the East Coast migrant stream, which reshaped the region's ethnic and cultural landscape in the 1970s. It also perpetuated precarity and distanced, subcontracted employment relations—a dynamic that would further entrench the role of crew leaders and vex farmworker organizers in the years to come.

While the IUD and Farmworker Coordinating Committee's organizing drive among migrants faded from the region in the late 1960s, and ultimately secured few concrete gains, it seems to have unsettled agricultural interests. Predictions circulated among growers, associations, and state officials that labor unrest would soon return and that there could be a shortage of some 22,000

farmworkers within ten years.[453] The continued development of industrial farms as well as the relocation of many citrus operations to South Florida after major freezes in the 1960s further extended the length of time migrant labor was needed in the region. Growers saw that many older Black farmworkers were beginning to age out of farm work and Black workers of a younger generation were less inclined to take on farm work as their access to education and new job opportunities improved in the civil rights era. The termination of the H-2 guestworker program outside of the sugar sector by 1966 also complicated the search for labor for many growers. Yet, for growers, labor shortages were mostly synonymous with upward wage pressure and some tightening of the farm labor market could likely have been overcome with higher wages. For decades, between BWI guestworkers and U.S. migrant workers, growers had reliably enjoyed seasonal labor surpluses that allowed them to keep wages low and labor on demand.[454]

To meet these potential labor challenges, agricultural interests took measures to maintain a labor surplus and hedge against future disruptions to production by expanding the breadth of their recruitment operations. For example, according to company documents, Chase and Company began working with a "Mexican" crew leader in 1966 to contract Mexican workers and their families— likely actually Chicano workers— for its Everglades farms and secured and upgraded a labor camp to accommodate them.[455] By 1968, the FFVA was distributing information on labor contracting out of San Antonio to procure "Texas-Mexican" farmworkers.[456] Increasingly, Texas became a major hub and throughway for farm labor migration and recruitment from the West and U.S.-Mexico

[453] Cohen, "La Huelga! Delano and after," 15; Fact Sheet "Division of Migrant Labor, Department of Community Affairs," 197x, 2. 000100. s. 1172, Box 10, Admin Files: Migrant Labor, Florida State Archives.
[454] David Griffith, "Unions without Borders: Organizing and Enlightening Immigrant Farm Workers," *American Anthropological Association* 30, No. 2 (2009): 57.
[455] See: Broughton Correspondence in Box 94, Chase and Company Glades Farm, 1966, Chase Collection, PKY. Based on the time period of the letter and references to Texas, the crew leader referenced in this correspondence was most likely Mexican-American.
[456] "Sorn to Castanuela," 9 February 1968. RG I, Series 4, Box 128, FFVA Labor Committee 1968, Chase Collection, PKY.

border to South Florida. At the behest of growers, additionally, labor agents also began traveling to the interior of Mexico to encourage migration for farm work in Florida.[457]

Growers' recruitment systems changed the makeup of the state's farm workforce and rural communities. By the early 1970s, Mexicans and Mexican-Americans made up approximately 32 percent of the roughly 100,000 migrant farmworkers in Florida with Black workers constituting 56 percent of the workforce (white, Puerto Rican, and other workers made up the rest).[458] Single men and women—women made up about 30 percent of Florida's farm workforce in the early 1970s—worked the field alongside family units.[459] With extended harvest periods, migrants and their families also began to stay in the state longer, often seven to eight months out of the year, or set down roots permanently. More and more, South Florida became the center of gravity in the East Coast migrant stream and a place where migrants made their home.[460]

Changes to immigration laws and trends and production practices in Texas, California, and the West, too, contributed to the reshaping of Florida's farm workforce. In 1965, amid the Civil Rights movement, immigration reformers set on eliminating the discriminatory national-origins quotas in the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act won a victory with the passage of the Hart-Celler Act (the Immigration Nationality Act, INA). Although President Johnson assured the public that the 1965 INA would "not reshape the structure of our daily lives," in fact, it proved to be transformational.[461] The bedrock of today's immigration system, the 1965 INA was a product of 1960s Cold War

---

457 U.S. Senate, "Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Powerlessness: Who are the migrants?" Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, Subcommittee on Migratory Labor (Washington, D.C.: US GPO, 1970):100-102

458 Kantor, "Florida's Forgotten People: The Migrant Farmworkers," 776.

459 U.S. Senate, "Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Powerlessness: Who are the migrants?" 179-89. Fact Sheet "Division of Migrant Labor, Department of Community Affairs," 1.

460 "Those Who Remained: A Study of Migrant Agricultural Workers Who Did Not Follow the Migrant Stream," Cultural transformation Center, Florida Atlantic University and the Florida State Department of Education, 1967, 868, Box 5, "Migrant Workers, Palm Beach County Study," Florida Christian Migrant Ministry, Reuther Library; See also: "Regresa para quedarse" *Nuestra Lucha* (OMICA), June 4, 1970, CS, UCB.

461 "President Lyndon B. Johnson's Remarks at the Signing of the Immigration Bill, Liberty Island, New York October 3, 1965," LBJ Presidential Library. http://www.lbjlibrary.org/lyndon-baines-johnson/timeline/lbj-on-immigration.

prerogatives, civil rights commitments, ethnic loyalties, and labor market concerns. Bolstering the U.S. image abroad and responding to both the advocacy of U.S. ethnic organizations, the 1965 INA equalized immigration entries by country, allotting annual immigration visa caps of 170,000 for the Eastern Hemisphere and 120,000 for the Western Hemisphere. It also established an admissions preference system that favored family reunification over employment; yet, despite lobbying from organized labor for its elimination, the H visa category remained.[462]

Although the 1965 INA ostensibly promoted equality and stimulated a massive increase in new immigration and the diversification of the U.S. polity, it perpetuated restrictions in overall admissions and visa priorities and imposed a numeric ceiling on immigration from the Western Hemisphere for the first time.[463] Along with the termination of the Bracero program in late 1964, these changes in immigration law tightly restricted Mexican migration and established the conditions for a rise in undocumented immigration. Indeed, Mexico's access to legal migration channels went from approximately 450,000 guestworker visas annually under the Bracero program and a theoretically unlimited number of green cards, or legal permanent resident visas (in practice averaging around 50,000 per year), in the early 1960s to 20,000 green cards annually outside of family unification channels by the end of the decade.[464] Thus, immigration law and policy changes contrasted with the dynamics of U.S.-Mexico migration patterns, which had often been seasonal and circular. As migration from Mexico continued, often at the behest of U.S. agricultural interests, this

---

[462] The law exempted immediate relative from visa caps and allotted 74 percent of visas to family reunification and only 20 percent to employment. See: David S. FitzGerald and David Cook-Martín, "The Geopolitical Origins of the U.S. Immigration Act of 1965," Migration Policy Institute, February 4, 2015; Philip Eric Wolgin, "Beyond National Origins: The Development of Modern Immigration Policymaking, 1948-1968," PhD diss., (University of California, Berkeley 2011), 116-17.
[463] See: Margaret Sands Orchowski, *The Law that Changed the Face of America. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015); Maddalena Marinari, "Americans Must Show Justice in Immigration Policies Too: The Passage of the 1965 Immigration Act," *Journal of Policy History* 26, No. 2 (2014): 219-245; Mae Ngai, "The Civil Rights Origins of Illegal Immigration," International *Labor and Working-Class History*, No. 78 (Fall 2010): 93-99.
[464] Massey and Pren, "Unintended Consequences of US Immigration Policy," 2.

contributed to the racial and social stratification of Mexicans in the United States as an "illegal" out-group. Additionally, because migration from Mexico became riskier, Mexican migrants began staying in the United States for longer periods and foregoing circular routes.[465]

Meanwhile, the termination of the Bracero program combined with labor organizing and rising wages in the agricultural sector led to a sharp rise in harvest mechanization in California, Texas, and the Southwest. Mechanization created a slow-moving jobs crisis among farmworkers. Indeed, from 1950 to 1970, the number of hired farmworkers dropped from 4.3 to 2.5 million nationwide.[466] While tobacco and grain had become largely mechanized in earlier decades, the mechanization of cotton and fruit and vegetable production increased in the post-war years, and particularly accelerated in the late 1960s. In the lower Rio Grande Valley and California's desert agricultural hubs, home to many Mexican and Mexican-American farmworkers, cotton and fruit and vegetable harvest mechanization put many farmworkers out of work in regions with few non-farm job opportunities.[467] Conversely, as discussed, Florida's vegetable growers serviced a fresh produce market and imposed aesthetic standards on many of their crops like tomatoes that necessitated manual harvesting.[468] As farm jobs dissipated in Western states and along the East Coast, where mechanization also increased, more and more Chicano and Mexican farmworkers relocated to Florida, where business was booming, labor demands were relatively consistent, and growers and labor contractors were eager for a new labor supply.[469]

On the Mexican side of the border, changing agricultural systems and government policy further drove migration to the United States and U.S. farms. The corporate enclosure of rural

---

[465] See: Douglas Massey, "Racial Formation in Theory and Practice: The Case of Mexicans in the United States," *Race and Social Problems* 1, no. 1 (2009): 12-26.; Ngai, "The Civil Rights Origins of Illegal Immigration," 93-99.
[466] Hightower, "Hard Tomatoes, Hard Times," 14.
[467] Massey and Pren, "Unintended Consequences of US Immigration Policy," 2; See also: Friedland, Barton and Thomas, *Manufacturing Green Gold.*
[468] Martin, *Importing Poverty*, 34, 70; Barry Estabrook, *Tomatoland*, 20-30.
[469] Craig, *The Paths They Follow*, 12, 19.

landscapes in Mexico drove Indigenous peoples and campesinos from communal holdings and small plots, as U.S. brokers and investors partnered with Mexican firms to expand export-driven industrial farms. Displaced families formed a seasonal workforce 350,000 strong for corporate farms in states like Sinaloa, Sonora, and, gradually, Baja California.[470] While Mexican export producers captured a greater share of U.S. markets, through the 1970s and 80s, Mexico gradually became a net importer of food.[471] Concurrently, to stem rural unemployment in the 1970s, the Mexican government reversed its opposition to undocumented emigration and began to view it as a way to promote development. Despite the increasing risk of deportation in the United States, undocumented migration became a survival strategy in rural central and southern Mexico. Meanwhile, government officials encouraged migrants to maintain ties to their origin communities and transmit remittances to generate economic activity.[472] For many Mexican migrants, the U.S. agricultural sector provided easy access to employment, and labor contractors on both sides of the border facilitated their placement on farms across the United States.

The migration and recruitment of Mexican and Mexican-American families to South Florida in the late 1960s and early 1970s not only began a decades-long process of ethnic change, but also reorganized work arrangements and encouraged dependency on immigrant farmworkers in the agricultural sector.[473] Farmworkers unoriented to the region grew more reliant on crew leaders. Over 80 percent of farmworkers surveyed in Florida in 1971 worked under a crew leader or labor contractor, who negotiated employment with growers, ran payroll, arranged housing, and extracted

[470] Olssen, *Agrarian Crossings*, 192-96; "US Agribusiness Reaps Mexican Harvest of Anger" Nuestra Lucha (FLOC), November 1976. CS, UCB.
[471] For example, during the winter of 1969, due to adverse weather conditions in Florida, Mexican tomato imports accounted for over half of the winter market. USDA, "Supplying U.S. Markets with Fresh Winter Produce: Capabilities of U.S. and Mexican Production Areas," vi; Sanderson, *The Transformation of Mexican Agriculture*, 5-6.
[472] Ana Raquel Minian, *Undocumented Lives: The Untold Story of Mexican Migration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 104-106.
[473] See: Friedland and Nelkin, "Technological Trends and the Organization of Migrant Farm Workers," 509-512.

fees off services, and inflated alcohol and food sales.[474] Law enforcement, too, upheld the contracting system—going so far as to release on probation one major crew leader who was convicted of murdering his wife.[475] While growers frequently complained about the state of U.S. farmworkers, labeling them as shiftless drunks and drifters, they did little to improve farm work to allow workers to change their conditions. Instead, their drive for a mobile and low-wage workforce empowered crew leaders to prey on those with few resources and little social capital.[476] Indeed, in 1972, DOL officials surveying Florida's fields reported that recruitment patterns had set in motion a cycle of wage depression that discouraged local employment.[477]

A Labor Powder Keg: Resentment, Reform, and Rural Radicals in South Florida

During Florida's 1970 harvest season, NBC producer Martin Carr found himself staring down the barrel of a crew leader's gun in a remote, fenced-off labor camp near Lake Okeechobee. Carr and his team were interviewing children outside a shack for the prime-time exposé *Migrant*—billed as a follow-up to Edward Morrow's 1960 *Harvest of Shame*. Carr left the camp unscathed but revealed that he, the program's host Chet Huntley, and NBC staff were met with "open hostility" from growers, crew leaders, and local politicians throughout the state. Despite objections from industry and state officials, NBC aired the program, which, like Murrow's report, featured stark scenes of the hard lives of migrants and framed farmworkers' poverty as a subsidy to both growers and consumers, as, based on DOL calculations, doubling farmworkers' wages would only raise produce prices for consumers by two cents on average.[478] *Migrant* inspired renewed scrutiny of

[474] Kantor, "Florida's Forgotten People: The Migrant Farmworkers," 758.
[475] "Rich Labor contractor gets away with Murder," *El Malcriado*, March 1, 1969. Box 1, UFW collection, UMD.
[476] William H. Friedland and Dorothy Nelkin, *Migrant Agricultural Workers in America's Northeast* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971); Friedland and Nelkin, "Technological Trends and the Organization of Migrant Farm Workers," 511.
[477] D. Marshall Barry, "The Adverse Impact of Immigration on Florida's Farmworkers," Center for Labor Research and Studies, Florida Caribbean Institute, FIU, Occasional Paper no. 3 (November 1, 1989): 7-8.
[478] "The Migrants: An NBC White Paper," hosted by Chet Huntley, NBC, 1970; Martin Carr, "Shame Is Still the Harvest," *New York Times*, July 12, 1970.

Florida's growers and a series of investigations led by Sen. Walter Mondale. After site visits in Florida and extensive hearings, Sen. Mondale's Senate Subcommittee concluded that the main obstacle to improving farmworkers' lives was their "economic and political powerlessness," a condition perpetuated laws and government policies that bent to the demands of agribusiness.[479]

Although growers exerted considerable influence, by 1970, a new cadre of farmworker organizers confronted the status quo. Despite the growth in Florida of industries like tourism, exemplified by the opening of Disney World in the late 1960s, agriculture remained the state's top industry in the early 1970s, nearing nearly $2 billion in value.[480] As the average farmworker family lived below the poverty line, younger Chicano and African-American activists built on federal anti-poverty and civil rights initiatives of the 1960s to challenge these inequities. They leveraged new federal resources like legal services, rural assistance grants, and education and training programs to mobilize communities and organize in the fields. Unlike the aborted IUD organizing campaign in South Florida a few years earlier, organizers formed and led nascent farmworkers' organizations that were accountable and responsive to the concerns of local communities. While reliance on government programs left new organizations open to political attacks that, at times, undermined their stability, farmworkers nonetheless used federal programs as a vehicle to establish organizing campaigns and multi-racial alliances in the region.

In the late 1960s, farmworkers' communities were smoldering with dissatisfaction. After the IUD's campaign faded from South Florida, the AFL-CIO panned Walter Reuther for leaving a "residue of suspicion and distrust of unions" among disappointed migrants, ministers, and community activists in Florida. Soon, the affair devolved into a proxy battle in the deepening rift between Reuther and the AFL-CIO's President Meany, which eventually led the UAW to disaffiliate

[479] U.S. Senate, *Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Powerlessness: Hearings, Ninety-First Congress*, 5636.
[480] "Farmworkers in Florida," Division of Community Affairs, Department of Community Affairs," 1974. Box 11, Admin Files: Migrant Labor, 000100. s. 1172, Florida State Archives.

from the federation in 1969.[481] The region's farmworkers, however, did not retreat from collective action. For example, Mexican families new to the region struck on the Chase Family's Glades farm in 1967 over the use of machines harvesting equipment eliminating work for some in their crew.[482] Jamaican H-2 workers struck at the Sugar Cane Coop on New Year's Day 1968 over the piece rate they had been offered— and were summarily detained by local authorities and deported.[483] In the summer of 1969, moreover, after a harsh winter season, Immokalee farmworkers who did not follow the migrant stream struck the melon harvest at a critical juncture, forcing growers to pay up to $5 an hour to keep their crop from spoiling in the fields.[484]

Indeed, while journalists and politicians fixated on the destitution and powerlessness of the rural poor in Florida, farmworkers themselves understood that they often had the upper hand on growers during peak harvest times. Andrew Duda, the celery magnate, admitted as much on NBC's 1970 broadcast, when he argued that agreements with farmworkers' unions would be unworkable because of the perishability of crops. He also pointed to discontent and a changing culture in his fields in a diatribe about how in recent years "our darkies" particularly "the young people" lacked respect and laughed when asked to work for low wages.[485]

As the civil rights movement, Black power struggles, and labor and left activism reshaped the national political scene, farmworker leaders and allies creatively used new federal resources to harness unrest in rural communities.[486] During the Johnson administration's "war on poverty," Congress passed the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which established the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) and a myriad of community action programs and grants that flowed down to

---

481 AFL-CIO, *To Clear the Record*, 76-77.
482 Glades Farm Memorandum, 21 April 1967. Box 94, folder "Glades Farm DB Watkins 1972," Chase Collection, PKY.
483 Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land*, 135.
484 Larry Vickers, "Immokalee Revisited," *The Floridian*, September 14, 1969.
485 Duda interviewed in "The Migrants: An NBC White Paper," 1970.
486 On local organizers leveraging and reinterpreting federal anti-poverty programs, see: Annalise Orleck, *Storming Caesars Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty* (2005).

rural South Florida. In South Florida, the OEO funded South Florida Migrant Legal Services (SFMLS) in 1966 to provide legal services to farmworkers.[487] Legal aid and federal grants and assistance programs proved to be a catalyst for farmworkers' activism and organizing. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Black and Chicano organizers in the region latched on to these initiatives to build community power.

Rudolfo "Rudy" Juarez, for example, a farmworker and former crew leader who relocated to South Florida from Texas in the 1950s with his wife Josephina and seven children, took a job as an SFMLS investigator in the 1960s. The position allowed him to address injustices and connect with migrant families throughout the region. In 1967, Juarez began to form the independent farmworkers' organization OMICA in secret to activate his base of Chicano farmworkers outside of the political constraints of the SFMLS, which prohibited labor organizing. Soon after, Juarez dedicated himself full-time to OMICA. In the tough early years of OMICA, organizers reported being blacklisted, chased out of labor camps, and shot at. Yet, by the summer of 1970, OMICA claimed over 5,000 members in South Florida, with many paying its $6 dues, and was settling grievances with growers and contractors and picketing farms accused of wage theft.[488]

OMICA's growing presence made growers jittery and Juarez became a prominent spokesperson for migrant families. OMICA was initially headquartered in Homestead, but soon expanded to Immokalee, with the support of philanthropic grants and church donations. The organization worked to represent farmworkers politically and offered an array of services to farmworkers including daycare and education, health clinics, and housing assistance.[489] Juarez used

---

487 Florida Rural Legal Services, "Our History," accessed October 2023, https://www.frls.org/about-frls.
488 U.S. Senate, *Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Powerlessness,* 1479-1487; Bruce Galphin, "Peaceful Revolutionary," *Tampa Tribune*, May 3, 1970; Jan Hillegas, "Florida: Farmworkers Organize," *Regeneracion* 1, no. 5, 1970; "OMICA Research Project," 197x in S. 568 Migrant Labor Program, Box 3, Community Affairs, Migrant Labor (OMICA Survey) 56, Florida State Archives.
489 Organized Migrants in Community Action, Prospectus to Farmworker Ministry, n.d., LR002515, Box 1, OMICA, National Farmworker Ministry, Florida Office records, Reuther Library.

his invitation to Sen. Mondale's hearings on migrant workers to denounce the inept state and federal officials, abusive growers, and labor contractors, many Chicanos themselves, who exploited the unemployment situation to remove activists from the fields.[490] OMICA's newsletter *Nuestra Lucha,* edited by Josephina Juarez, circulated in rural towns, publicizing farmworkers' poems and essays, local struggles and resources, and cases of abusive growers, contractors, and landlords. While Rudy Juarez professed a commitment to nonviolence, he associated OMICA with more radical activists, and multi-racial organizing, and telegraphed in the press that conflict was possible. In a direct challenge to the vestiges of Jim Crow in South Florida, OMICA organizers sought to grow beyond its Chicano base and build unity with Black organizers around labor issues, unemployment, and access to services.[491] In Immokalee, OMICA joined with Civic Workers of Immokalee, a Black-run community organization, to administer social programs in diverse communities.[492] OMICA also partnered with a young crew of brown-beret-clad Latino activists known as Los Chicanos, Black militant organizations, and others as part of a "rural coalition" to support the organization of Florida's increasingly diverse migrant population.[493]

Other organizations sprouted from the discontent in Florida’s fields during this period. In the citrus belt of Central Florida, Newlon Lloyd, a former H-2 worker, formed the Florida Farmworkers Organization in 1971. With seed funds from the Christian Migrant ministry, Lloyd and his organizers built a membership base of 7,000 Black citrus workers. The organization pressed growers for higher wages and led demonstrations in Tallahassee and Lakeland, the business center for the citrus industry. Lloyd also participated in Mondale's hearings and used his time to call for more oversight of payroll deductions, regulations on crew leaders' charges, and an end to the H-2

---

[490] "Mondale: the hope of the migrants," *Nuestra Lucha*, no 5, July 1970 CS, UCB. U.S. Senate, *Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Powerlessness*, 1479-1487.
[491] Bruce Galphin, "OMICA: A Nonviolent Way to Equality," *Washington Post*, April 26, 1970.
[492] Organized Migrants in Community Action, Prospectus to Farmworker Ministry.
[493] "Cry of Black Youth," *Southern Legal Action Movement* 3, no. 4 (December 1970): 1-2.

visa program.[494]

Another Black-led organization called Cry of Black Youth (COBY) formed around the same time as OMICA in Belle Glade and shook up the power structure in that town. In Belle Glade, authorities heavily policed the Black community, hospitals denied African Americans care, and an active Klavern existed. Although COBY was short-lived, succumbing to political attacks and the targeted arrests of activists in 1971, the organization bridged labor organizing and the Black Power movement to challenge poor farm labor conditions, social problems in the slums of Belle Glade, and the local political system. Formed by a few dozen Vietnam veterans, who were fed up with police harassment, and Black college students who returned to town and published the organization's newsletter *Muck Rake*, COBY recruited hundreds to its cause. Jerry Roberts, one of the organization's leaders, also worked as a legal services investigator, and pushed lawyers to sue over discrimination at the local hospital and police brutality. COBY organized armed groups to monitor the police, led marches on city hall, worked to reform the city commission to enhance Black representation, and joined with farmworkers to push for higher wages and resolve disputes.[495]

The case of COBY is instructive as it demonstrates how reliance on federal programs could also undermine organization. Across Florida, growers and their political allies attacked the SFMLS for its advocacy. With the election of Richard Nixon, the organization came under increasing scrutiny and the OEO restructured the SFMLS in 1970 as Florida Rural Legal Services (FRLS) and imposed additional restrictions on outreach work.[496] The Nixon administration attempted to block funding for the OEO completely in 1973, when most of its programs were transferred to other

---

[494] Hahamovitch, No Man's Land, 174; Tom Policano, *Slim Pickins* (Ifitiz, Inc.: 2014), 93-4; U.S. Senate, "Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Powerlessness: Who are the migrants?" 179-200.
[495] "Cry of Black Youth," *Southern Legal Action Movement,* 1-2; "COBY Chief Lashes Out at Politics," *Palm Beach Post*, November 27, 1970; Raymond A. Hamilton, "Muckraking and C.O.B.Y (Cry of Black Youth): Uncovering a History of Organizing in Belle Glade," MA Thesis (University of South Florida, 2015).
[496] Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land*, 168-70.

cabinet departments.[497] FRLS also came under fire for its support of COBY, and, at the behest of a local congressional candidate, OEO Director Donald Rumsfeld threatened to shutter FRLS.[498] In front of a House committee, Belle Glade's Mayor also charged FRLS with chartering COBY, a "hostile and revolutionary youth organization."[499] FRLS was forced to disassociate from COBY, just as four of COBY's leaders were arrested on questionable charges of extortion after soliciting donations from local businesses. Without legal support to defend against these charges, COBY eventually disbanded in 1971.[500]

Despite resistance from Florida's political and economic establishment, the new decade saw a flourishing of rural organizing in South Florida that reflected growth and energy in the farmworkers' movement nationally. By 1970, the UFW had won several contracts in California and had opened field offices across the country, including several in Florida, to support its national grape boycott. In line with the rise of California's movement, the expectations of Florida's farmworkers grew, with many adopting the UFW Aztec eagle as a symbol for the broader farmworkers' movement. For example, a group based in Delray Beach, formed in response to unemployment and evictions in a labor camp, adopted the eagle and the moniker of The United Farmworkers of Florida. As they led rent strikes in Palm Beach County, the organization made clear it was only connected to the UFW "in spirit" through "the struggle for human rights that is taking place all over the nation."[501] OMICA, likewise, flew the UFW Aztec-eagle flag over its buildings.

In Immokalee in October 1970, several activist groups and farmworkers' organizations

---

[497] See: Mark McLay, *The Republican Party and the War on Poverty: 1964–1981* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), 207-10. Although the courts forced the administration to spend funds appropriated by Congress, eventually, the Ford Administration replaced the OEO with the Community Services Administration in 1974, which maintained many OEO legal services and community programs.
[498] "Cry of Black Youth," *Southern Legal Action Movement*, 1-2.
[499] U.S. House of Representative, Committee on Education and Labor, "Economic Opportunity Amendments of 1971," 1st session, 92nd Congress, April 20-May 4, 1971, 1971-2.
[500] Hamilton, "Muckraking and C.O.B.Y," 61-66.
[501] United Farmworkers of Florida, Newsletter, (May/ June 1971): 1. CS, UCB.

gathered at OMICA to form a united front and advance organizing in the region. Billed as a Farmworker Youth Conference, Ramon Rodriguez, the leader of Los Chicanos, called the meeting to unite Black and Mexican-American farmworkers and activists in the area. Rodriguez, who had recently completed a hunger strike at a White House Conference on Children and was a regular feature at local picket lines, sought to get groups like OMICA, COBY, and other radical outfits like the Black Afro Militant Movement and Black Rights Fighters to "march united under one banner." Uniting a new generation of Black and Chicano activists posed a serious threat to the South Florida power structure. As Rudy Juarez announced, "Florida is a labor powder keg," the assembly called for a full-scale union organizing campaign in the next two years. Confidently predicting that Florida would be easier to organize than California due to the confrontational style of Florida's activists, Juarez declared that UFW president "[Cesar] Chavez will cooperate."[502] Soon after, Ramon Rodriguez came on as director of OMICA's Immokalee office and was hosting weekly meetings with hundreds of Black and Chicano families to strengthen solidarity between communities and stimulate the rising confrontation with growers.[503]

Nuestra Lucha: Farmworker Organizing in a New Decade

In the early 1970s, OMICA and similar groups were at the forefront of a growing farmworkers' movement in Florida. Increasingly dissatisfied with the efficacy of anti-poverty initiatives, farmworker organizers formed innovative community networks to root out social problems, advocated for representation in federal programs, protested inept state and federal agencies, and mobilized communities to tackle social problems related to housing, health, education, and unemployment. To combat the power of growers and contractors, these organizations also took collective action, experimented with new organizing strategies, and encouraged community

[502] Peggy Poor, "Florida Called a 'Labor Powder Keg,'" *Orlando Sentinel*, January 3, 1971. See also: Jack Hillhouse, "Farmworkers Eye Union," *Fort Myers News-Press*, October 18, 1970.
[503] Ramon Rodriguez, phone call with author, November 11, 2018.

formation around organizing campaigns. Growers' bad publicity and the actions of local organizers enticed the UFW to the state, where it established a foothold in citrus by winning a contract with Minute Maid in 1972. Florida's farmworkers' movement of the early 1970s achieved concrete gains in the fields and rural communities and strengthened the UFW. At times, however, tensions between local organizers and the UFW over competing objectives also limited progress. By the mid-1970s, Florida's farmworkers' organizations had shown their potential to create change, but also struggled to overcome persistent problems with unemployment and turmoil in the farm workforce and unreliable organizational and financial support. During this time, immigration debates also emerged as an obstacle to building solidarities within the farmworkers' movement, as deportations increased in Florida's farmworkers' communities.

On March 12, 1971, facing a second straight year of widespread crop freezes, lost wages, and hunger, 500 farmworkers marched on President Nixon's winter retreat at Key Biscayne. During a freeze the previous winter, activists with OMICA had failed to shake loose relief funds from federal officials, who were reluctant to grant benefits to migrant farmworkers without a permanent home. The farmworkers and young Chicano radicals of OMICA knew dramatic action would be necessary to secure aid for rural communities. On Key Biscayne, Nixon refused to meet with the OMICA, while marchers huddled in blankets on the beach and held a vigil near his complex. Yet two days later, under mounting pressure, the president declared Florida a disaster zone and released $5 million in federal relief and unemployment benefits to farmworkers.[504]

OMICA's 1971 march on President Nixon's vacation home on Key Biscayne built confidence in the region's farmworkers' movement. According to Ramon Rodriguez, a lead organizer of the march, the families who traveled to Nixon's compound returned with a new sense

---

[504] "Mass of Thanksgiving Victory March Follow News of U.S. Aid," *The Voice* XII, no.2, March 19, 1971, 5; "Florida Migrants Get Federal Help" *New York Times*, March 28, 1971.

of what they could collectively accomplish.[505] After the march, the organization remained mobilized in the disaster relief efforts. Food stamp distribution was slow and the surplus commodity foods the government provided were making children sick, so OMICA members seized control of the local employment agency and assistance distribution center and took on many of the jobs themselves.[506] Later, in April of that year, OMICA activists and allies mobilized approximately 1,000 farmworkers to strike against A. Duda & Sons and other Immokalee growers and won a $14-a-day wage.[507]

Although OMICA's direct actions, readiness to lead strikes, and potential to become a union sparked the most press coverage and alarm from agribusiness, the organization's mission, as transmitted in *Nuestra Lucha*, also centered on empowering workers to achieve “freedom," escape the migrant stream, and "make a home" in South Florida.[508] Juarez and other OMICA leaders were not sentimental about farm work and, in addition to challenging farm labor systems, sought to enable migrant workers to find better jobs, obtain decent housing and health care, and shape local, state, and federal programs. Part of this mission entailed making migrants legible to federal authorities, who generally directed aid to geographically-fixed communities, through persistent protests and advocacy.[509] OMICA also pioneered its own programs. In the first few years of its existence, OMICA partnered with advocates in Black communities to establish job training programs, a community housing corporation, and a network of health clinics.[510] And in Homestead's Everglades Labor Camp, which the local housing authority had constructed with federal funds to offer a public housing alternative to farmworkers, OMICA opened an office in a trailer to

505 Ramon Rodriguez, phone call with author, November 11, 2018.
506 Jonathan Olmsted, "We Used to Own Our Slaves, Now We Rent Them," *East Village Other*, April 13, 1971; "Migrants Votes Not to Accept Handouts of Surplus Food," *Orlando Evening Star*, March 18, 1971.
507 Immokalee Migrant Group Strikes," *Tampa Tribune*, April 27, 1971, 1.
508 See: Stratton Douthat, "Rudy Juarez: The Magic Word is Strike!" *Floridian*, July 4, 1971, 5; Hillegas, "Florida: Farmworkers Organize."; "Farmworker Services Project," *Nuestra Lucha* 2, no. 1, October 1975. CS, UCB.
509 Hahamovitch, No Man's Land, 199-200; See also: Warren Canon, "Migrant Farm Workers March in Collier," *Tampa Tribune,* April 10, 1970.
510 "Clinica Campesina Migrant Health Center" *Nuestra Lucha*, no. 9, November 1970; "30 Homes for Farmworkers," *Nuestra Lucha* 2, no. 1, October 1975. CS, UCB.

systematically address farmworkers' needs and grievances.[511]

The multifaceted nature of OMICA's mission lent itself to nontraditional organizational structures and strategies. Internally, OMICA adopted a horizontal leadership model. Migrants made up the board of directors; staff members and volunteers were trained to learn every job function; and leadership roles were interchangeable. This approach fostered women's leadership, dedication to OMICA's mission, democratic programming, and a readiness to experiment. Women frequently led initiatives, and OMICA staff facilitated farmworkers' access to federal programs and developed clinics and job training, housing, and childhood education programs.[512] For example, Susan Reyna, a 19-year-old, third-generation migrant worker who joined the OMICA as a typist in 1975 after a staffer helped her at the food stamp office, started organizing domestic violence support groups and interventions and went on to be a leading field organizer and housing advocate.[513]

While activists were eager to take collective action, Juarez was reluctant to turn OMICA itself into a union. He believed it would jeopardize government and foundation funding and put burdensome legal obligations on the organization. Instead, he aimed to establish a foundation for union organizing in the state and facilitate UFW affiliation among farmworkers.[514]

As OMICA was growing in South Florida, the UFW, capitalizing on the momentum in Florida, launched a campaign to organize Coca-Cola's Minute Maid subsidiary. This project soon engulfed local organizing efforts. Coke was a relative newcomer to Florida, but it became the state's largest citrus producer after it acquired Minute Maid and over 30,000 acres of citrus groves in Central Florida in 1960. Coke was also vulnerable. Minute Maid's squalid labor camps had featured

---

511 OMICA, OMICA's current projects, 197x. 00855, Migrant Labor Subject Files, Series 568, Community Affairs- Box 3, OMICA, 55, Florida State Archives; Jan Hillegas, "Florida: Farmworkers Organize," *Regeneracion* 1, no. 5, 1970; Sandra Mohl, "Migrant Farmworkers in America: A Florida Case Study," MA Thesis (Boca Raton: Florida Atlantic University, 1981): 55.
512 Juanita Mainster, phone call with author, November 30, 2018.
513 Susan Rubio Rivera (Previously Reyna), Zoom interview with author, July 29, 2022.
514 Ramon Rodriguez, email to author, November 28, 2018; Edith Robertson, "Migrant Leader Resigns Post to Head Cultural Organization," *Miami News*, June 2, 1977.

prominently on NBC's *Migrant*, and Coke executives, facing a public relations problem and under pressure from Sen. Mondale, declared themselves neutral on the question of collective bargaining. In 1972, the UFW mobilized a broad coalition of faith, student, and community activists to organize workers, building on its boycott operations throughout Florida.[515] To lead new organizing in Florida, Cesar Chavez sent his cousin Manuel Chavez, who soon recruited Ramon Rodriguez and other local organizers to join "la causa" in Minute Maid's groves.[516] Coke tried to deflect criticism through a corporate welfare program called the Agricultural Labor Project. The consultant-led program attempted to improve Minute Maid's image by cleaning up camps, retraining crew leaders, and opening company-led clinics and other services.[517] Wages, however, remained flat and the UFW threatened to boycott Coke products. Organizers began clandestinely meeting with workers and collecting signatures in support of the union. Unlike in the UFW's protracted organizing battles in California, after only six weeks of on-the-ground campaigning, the UFW signed up 76 percent of Minute Maid's approximately 1,400 workers.[518]

After winning a contract with Minute Maid, UFW leaders worked to establish the union in the state with hopes that their new contract would lift standards across the state's citrus sector. The Minute Maid contract set the highest piece rates in the citrus industry at $1.03 a box (the prevailing rate was $0.31 a box), gave the UFW control over hiring, and established grievance procedures. The UFW's contract cut out the role of labor contractors and relied on hiring halls to control the placement of workers, which incentivized union membership and helped defend workers' contract.

---

[515] Dick Meister and Anne Loftis, *A Long Time Coming: The Struggle to Unionize America's Farm Workers* (New York: MacMillan, 1977), 174-75; D. Marshall Barry, "Farmworkers and Farmworkers' Unions in Florida," Proceedings of Florida's Labor Symposium (Florida International University, November 18, 1989), 36; Terrell Orr, "Now We Work as One: The United Farm Workers in Florida Citrus, 1972-1977," *Southern Cultures* 25 (Winter 2019): 140-157.
[516] Ramon Rodriguez, phone call with author, November 11, 2018.
[517] See: Sara Harris and Robert Allen, *The Quiet Revolution: The Story of a Small Miracle in American Life* (New York: Signet, 1978).
[518] Meister and Loftis, *A Long Time Coming*, 174-75; D. Marshall Barry, "Farmworkers and Farmworkers' Unions in Florida," 36; Orr, "Now We Work as One," 140-157.

Mack Lyons, an African-American farmworker and union leader from California, came to Florida as the director of UFW's hiring halls and contract administration, and his wife Diana took charge of statewide fundraising and legislation.[519] As the Lyons worked to build a multi-racial union in conservative Central Florida, UFW organizers sought to replicate the movement and energy they had generated in California to win new contracts.[520]

After their relatively smooth victory at Minute Maid, however, UFW organizers soon found that growers' anti-union resistance was fierce in Florida. The UFW next endeavored to expand in citrus by organizing harvesters at the groves owned by H.P. Hood, a family-run dairy and agricultural conglomerate based in Massachusetts. Remote management had led to labor disputes at H.P. Hood, but the company employed a series of anti-union tactics to ward off the UFW. It barred organizers from entering its labor camps—the only organizers who spoke to workers were nuns supporting the UFW who came in at night—and threatened to call the INS on immigrant farmworkers. After the union election, organizers were surprised to learn they had won. Rather than deal with the UFW, however, H.P. Hood sold its groves. Without a succession clause in the union contract, it was nullified with the sale and workers were again without representation.[521] The UFW retrenched after the H.P. Hood campaign at the behest of Manuel Chavez to focus on strengthening the union at Minute Maid.[522]

By late 1972, the UFW was also enmeshed in a fight to organize machine operators and cane haulers at Talisman Sugar. The mainly Cuban haulers and machine workers at Talisman had walked out on strike before contacting the UFW. The union stepped into the labor dispute and worked to recruit farmworkers to join the picket. This conflict introduced the UFW to the isolated H-2

[519] Barry, "Farmworkers and Farmworkers' Unions in Florida," 47-48.
[520] Orr, "Now We Work as One," 140-157.
[521] Nancy Hickey Hughes, 1971–1976, Personal Essay (undated), Essays, Farmworker Movement Documentation Project, UCSD. https://libraries.ucsd.edu/farmworkermovement/essays/essays/101%20Hughes_Nancy_Hickey.pdf.
[522] Ramon Rodriguez, email to author, November 28, 2018.

workforce in the cane fields, a group that the Cuban Talisman workers viewed as racially separate "campesinos." After deciding that organizing the sugar industry's deportable guestworkers would be futile, the UFW undertook an ultimately unsuccessful legal battle to stop the certification of H-2 visas and force Florida's cane growers to hire local union supporters. During the faltering campaign, Eliseo Medina, the UFW's top organizer, took over Florida organizing duties from Manuel Chavez.[523] While the UFW's sugar campaign failed to expand unionization and diverted resources from citrus, the union's picket of Talisman further illuminated the plight of Florida farmworkers on a national stage. When Nan Freeman, a student activist from New College in Sarasota, was accidentally killed by a trucker crossing the picket line, the incident made national headlines and galvanized support from student activists.[524] Additionally, the ongoing litigation, pickets, and bad publicity was enough to drive the cold warrior William Pawley, Talisman's head who frequently clashed with Manual Chavez, to divest from the company at a loss.[525]

Although the UFW's early record was mixed, the union's Florida campaign was a crucial step toward legitimizing it as a national-level farmworkers' union. The AFL-CIO approved an affiliation charter for the UFW in 1972, upgrading it from an organizing committee and giving autonomy to UFW leadership, in part due to the UFW's demonstrated ability to win in a multi-ethnic workforce outside of California. At its first convention in 1973, delegates elected Medina and Mack Lyons to the UFW executive board, where Lyons was the sole African-American representative.[526] Further elevating the union's national profile, at the 1972 Democratic National Convention in Miami, the UFW recruited George McGovern to their Talisman picket, and mobilized state delegations to

---

[523] Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land*, 180-85; "Clash Likely Between Sugar Industry and Farm Union," *New York Times*, October 10, 1972.
[524] Billy Cox, "New College to Honor Student Activist," *Herald Tribune*, January 24, 2012.
[525] Anthony R. Carrozza, *William D. Pawley: The Extraordinary Life of the Adventurer, Entrepreneur, and Diplomat Who Cofounded the Flying Tigers* (Sterling, VA: Potomac Books, 2012), 298-307.
[526] Cesar Chavez to Alan Kistler, March 22, 1978. RG28-003, box 2, folder 39, AFL-CIO, UMD; Barry, "Farmworkers and Farmworkers' Unions in Florida," 36.

declare support for UFW boycotts.[527]

Florida growers sought to chill farmworkers' unionization by introducing a bill in the state legislature to ban union hiring halls in late 1972. The bill would have crippled the UFW's ability to place its members in unionized groves, putting power back in the hand of crew leaders, and would have nullified the UFW's Minute Maid contract.[528] Local growers' associations, the state Farm Bureau, U.S. Sugar, and other agricultural interests came together as the Florida Citizens for Right to Work to forward the bill. Medina led the opposition for the UFW, activating organizers, student and church supporters, and farmworkers to lobby legislators and flood the capitol with letters.[529]

Public support for the UFW's legislative push grew when, in short succession, a typhoid outbreak tied to a sewage-infested well struck Homestead's South Dade Labor Camp and, in a nearby labor camp, authorities arrested a crew leader named Joe Brown for "imprisoning" 28 farmworkers and running a debt bondage racket.[530] In the spring of 1973, the UFW sent over 20,000 letters to lawmakers. Adding moral weight to their position, Medina found two farmworkers who escaped Brown's trafficking ring to testify in hearings on the bill. Theodore Johnson, one of the survivors, recounted that he was jobless when recruited by Brown, who promptly locked him in a bus, beat him, and demanded repayment for arbitrary debts. In front of an audience of agricultural association representatives, Johnson lambasted "the growers" as "the ones hiring these people." Lawmakers quietly withdrew support from the bill, and it was defeated 15-7[531].

Back in the South Dade Labor Camp, OMICA took charge of relief and recovery efforts for the nearly 300 typhoid victims and the local community. After a slow governmental response,

---

[527] Nancy Hickey Hughes, 1971–1976, Personal Essay.
[528] Dorothy Johnson, "Florida Farmworkers Fight Anti-Union Legislation," *El Malcriado*. VI, no. 3, February 9, 1973, UCSD.
[529] Levy, *Cesar Chavez: Autobiography of La Causa*, 452-57.
[530] On the Brown case, see: Wayne King, "Florida Peonage Charges Reflect Plight of Migrants," *New York Times*, March 17, 1973.
[531] As recalled by Eliseo Medina in: Levy, *Cesar Chavez: Autobiography of La Causa*, 460-61.

OMICA established a typhoid emergency fund, coordinated the distribution of federal, state, and local aid, and supervised Red Cross volunteers. As Juarez and other OMICA leaders fought to get workers hospitalized, clean the camp, and distribute aid, according to one farmworker ministry leader, OMICA provided a "spiritual refuge" for migrants of all races and "matured . . . into a viable, responsible community force.[532]" After years of advocating for improved housing and oversight of labor camps, farmworkers mobilized around the outbreak to push for an expansion of clean farmworker-run public facilities and end growers' power over their housings.[533]

With public outrage focused on the deplorable living conditions of farmworkers, OMICA deepened its advocacy for tenants and pressured county and state authorities to condemn out-of-code labor camps. With FRLS and UFW, OMICA won a suit against A. Duda and Sons allowing advocates and organizers into company-owned camps.[534] In 1974, the Florida Department of Health withdrew its certification from nearly half of the migrant labor camps in the state.[535] In cities like Belle Glade and Pahokee, many migrant families from condemned labor camps simply moved into shoddy apartment buildings in the town.[536] Others likely benefited from new farmworker-led housing projects. In the mid-1970s, Juarez created an autonomous OMICA housing corporation to bring stability to OMICA's community development initiatives and build affordable homes for

---

532 Redlands Christian Migrant Association, Annual Narrative Report of the Executive Director, 1973 LR002515, Box 1, RCMA Reports, 1973-1975, NFWM Florida Office Records, Reuther Library.
533 The typhoid outbreak occurred in the South Dade Migrant Labor Camp, which housed some 2,000 seasonal farmworkers. While the camp was a federally-funded, it was managed by the Homestead Housing Authority, where four out of five board members were growers. As the camps' manager only rented to those referred by local crew leaders, it operated much like the grower and farm labor contractor-owned private camps prevalent in the state. According to farmworkers' reports, camp and county officials were aware of the contaminated drinking water as far back as 1971, but failed to act until contaminated water and typhoid threatened to spread to Miami Beach. U.S. Congress, Committee on Education and Labor, "Typhoid Outbreak in Dade County, Florida, Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Agricultural Labor," April 6-7, 1973, 15; 31-35. For more on community activism based around the region's labor camps, see: Charlie Fanning, "The Everglades Labor Camp and the Farmworkers' Movement in Florida." *Activist History Review*, April 2019.
534 Albert Lee et al., v. A. Duda and Sons, inc., District Court of Appeal of Florida, Second District, February 14, 1975, accessed October 2023, https://www.leagle.com/decision/1975701310so2d3911539.
535 Jerry Brown and Robert Stulberg, *The Farmworkers: A Cry for Justice from Florida's Fields* (United Farmworkers Report, 1974), 9, Farmworker Movement Documentation Project, UCSD. https://libraries.ucsd.edu/farmworkermovement/.
536 See: Chris Wallace, Morton Silverstein, NBC, NBC Reports, "The Migrants 1980."

farmworkers.[537] Soon after, OMICA marshaled state and federal grants to buy sixty acres and build 30 affordable homes for farmworkers, the beginning of more extensive housing projects to come.[538]

Regrettably, while OMICA was mitigating polluted labor camps and campaigning for a form of environmental justice in terms of sanitation and disaster resilience, persistent structural unemployment in the farm workforce undermined the potential for broader alliances with environmentalists critical of agribusiness. This limitation was illuminated in 1975, when the National Park Service was ending farming leases in a 6,300-acre agricultural tract fully surrounded by National Park lands known as the "Hole in the Donut." By ending farming in the "hole," park officials and environmentalists sought to expand the park's coverage and eliminate the flow of fertilizers and pesticides like DDT from tomato farms into the rest of the Everglades. To dispute the claims of the Park Service's scientists, the South Dade Tomato Growers Association hired environmental consultants, who minimized the ecological impact of farming on the region and exaggerated its economic benefits. Conversely, park officials and organizations like the Wilderness Society downplayed the hardship that closing farms would impose on the approximately 3,000 migrant workers who worked the tract in the winter season.[539] Local churches endorsed the position of the Dade farmers and stressed to middle-class reformers that migrants needed more employment training and assistance to weather the loss of farm jobs, while OMICA led a 150-person protest in the National Park, featuring signs like "the survival of people is more important than enlarging a park." Despite the discord surrounding the takeover of the "hole," the Park Service and

---

[537] "Dade County in Loss" *Nuestra Lucha* 2, no. 1, October 1975. CS, UCB.

[538] OMICA Housing Corporation Turnkey III Project, August 29, 1975, Series 568, Community Affairs- Migrant Labor Subject Files 00855, Box 3 OMICA, 55, Florida State Archives; "30 Homes for Farmworkers," *Nuestra Lucha,* October 1975. CS, UCB.

[539] See. conversely: Raye-Page, "Everglades National Park Hole-In-The-Donut Farming," The Wilderness Society, 1975, Box 91, Environment, Everglades National Park, Hole in the Donut Land, 1975, James A. Haley Papers, FSC.; Eco Impact, Inc, South Florida Tomato and Vegetable Growers, "Impact of Evicting Farmers from Everglades National Park's Hole-in-the-Donut," 1975, Everglades Digital Library, State University System of Florida, PALMM Project, accessed March 2022, http://fiu.digital.flvc.org/islandora/object/fiu%3A4196#page/FI05030302_cover4/mode/2up.

environmentalists prevailed by the end of the year and began restoration efforts.[540]

On multiple fronts, progress for farmworkers' organizations by the mid-1970s was slowing. The UFW renegotiated its lone contract with Minute Maid, but failed to organize any new groves. The union was also beset by internal strife. Chavez's increasingly autocratic management of the UFW and the union's structure, which was formed as a single entity without union locals, restricted the autonomy of leaders like Mack Lyons to build state and local institutions and campaigns. After an energetic launch in Florida, Chavez pulled Eliseo Medina from Florida to coordinate UFW boycotts in the Midwest. From Florida, Medina took with him many seasoned boycotters, student and religious supporters, and organizers, like Ramon Rodriguez. In response, several boycotters wrote to the UFW's headquarters to object to the union's retreat from the South.[541] Meanwhile, a fire and financial problems forced Juarez to shutter OMICA's Immokalee office twice in the mid-1970s. This came after the Florida branch of the National Farmworker Ministry, the ecumenical farmworker-support organization that served as a quasi-auxiliary of the UFW, revoked its funding for OMICA to concentrate its resources on supporting UFW organizing.[542]

Exacerbating tensions, in May 1974, Chavez sent a memo to UFW's staff ordering boycotters to give top priority to a national "campaign against illegals," which aimed to increase deportations of immigrant farmworkers and funding for the INS. Chavez's strategy of siding with the INS alienated local organizers, who came to see immigration enforcement as counter to the goals of farmworker organization. At this time, the Miami UFW boycott committee was actively

---

540 RCMA to EPA, February 20, 1975, Box 91, Environment, Everglades National Park, Hole in the Donut Land, 1975, James A. Haley Papers, FSC; Everglades National Park, "Protesting to Keep Farming in the Hole-in-the-Donut," National Park Service, June 24, 2021, accessed March 2022, https://www.nps.gov/articles/protesting-to-keep-farming-in-the-hole-in-the-donut.htm.
541 Randy Cecil, "Florida UFW 1975-1993," UFW Stories, April 25, 2013, accessed November 2018, http://ufwstories.com/story/view/florida-ufw-1975-1993; Garcia, *From the Jaws of Victory*, 133.
542 Allen Bartlett, "Migrant Aid to Be Offered by Two Agencies" *Naples Daily News*, January 23, 1976; Allen Bartlett, "Cloud Covered OMICA Future," *Naples Daily News*, March 5, 1976; "Unionless Migrants are Tired of Waiting for Chavez," *Tampa Times*, July 14, 1978.

working with faith and refugee organizations to provide legal assistance, food, and shelter to a group of 800 Haitian refugees, who preceded a wave of tens of thousands of Haitians who fled the repression, violence, and poverty in Haiti under successive Duvalier regimes in the 1970s and 1980s. Three boycott leaders in Florida sent an open letter against Chavez's policy, calling for a regional meeting to unify the union and criticizing the INS for targeting undocumented workers who were not strikebreaking (the alleged reason for Chavez's campaign). Instead, Chavez ordered Lyons to fire the staffers.[543] Other farmworkers' organizations were likewise grappling with immigration. While OMICA, like the UFW, had at times called on immigration authorities to remove Mexican immigrants from the fields to alleviate steep job competition, farmworker activists increasingly viewed the nature of enforcement as arbitrary and terroristic to rural communities.[544] For example, the Redland Christian Migrant Association in Immokalee declared that the INS's aggressive tactics, including traffic checkpoints, its separation of families, and its frequent raids on farm labor camps, "smacked of the Gestapo."[545]

The reality on the ground was that undocumented Mexican migrants were becoming an increasing segment of the agricultural workforce throughout the country in the 1970s. A faltering economy in Mexico, due to declining oil revenue and a subsequent devaluation of the peso in 1976, pushed Mexican workers to seek a better life in the United States.[546] By mid-decade, Florida's farm labor contractors were regularly working at the U.S.-Mexico border, transporting migrants in rental trucks to Florida's fields, and charging them high recruitment fees from their future salaries. A 1976 OMICA survey of the labor camps in South Florida found that 34 percent of the camps' residents

---

[543] "Haitians face Deportation," *Tampa Boycott News*, UFW, July 1974, 2183, Box 2, Newsletters 2-80, Agricultural Workers History Collection, Part 2, Reuther Library; Bardacke, *Trampling out The Vintage*, 488; 503-5.
[544] See: U.S. Congress, "Typhoid Outbreak in Dade County," 41-41.
[545] Jack Roberts, "Raids on Migrants called Gestapo-Like," *Miami News*, January 4, 1973.
[546] Martin, *Importing Poverty*, 36.

were born in Mexico.[547] These workers were increasingly threatened by the INS, as the agency deported thousands of undocumented immigrants from Florida through the 1970s. From 1971 to 1972 alone, INS deportations from the state, which mainly targeted Mexican farmworkers, increased from 1,134 to 3,804. INS raids, however, generally coincided with the end of the harvest season so as not to disrupt growers' labor supply.[548]

In 1976, Lyons lamented, "conditions in Florida are about ten times worse than in California."[549] Florida's UFW organizers and supporters viewed the union as stuck in California, and Lyons publicly conceded that the UFW's lettuce and Gallo Wine boycotts against California growers "hampered" its organizing in the South.[550] In 1976 and, again, in 1978, the UFW failed to win legislation that would have extended collective bargaining rights to Florida's farmworkers, as they had in California in 1975.[551] With the UFW disengaging from organizing in the state and the movement seemingly stalled, local organizers and activists forged ahead.

Not Waiting for Chavez

Although the UFW had largely paused new investments in the state and INS enforcement increasingly challenged farmworker organizers, in the late 1970s, another burst of organizing and strikes briefly reinvigorated the farmworkers' movement in Florida. Local organizers and activists undertook confrontational labor actions to advance the organization of farmworkers, with or without the UFW. Collective action fostered the growth of new farmworkers' organizations and coalitions in the region and state, even as others began to disintegrate, and further developed an emergent rural civil society network to empower farmworkers. The uptick in direct action also

---

547 OMICA Research Project, Results from the OMICA Survey, 1976, 00855, Series 568, Box 3, Department of Community Affairs, Migrant Labor Program, 54, Florida State Archives.
548 Roberts, "Raids on Migrants called Gestapo-Like."; Mohl, "Migrant Farmworkers in America: A Florida Case Study," 124-25.
549 Lyons quoted in: "Latin America & Empire Report," *North American Congress on Latin America* X, No. 10, 1976, 12.
550 "Mack Lyons," *The Great Speckled Bird* 7, issue 28, July 15, 1974; "Ben Maddock Tape," UFW Oral History, Farmworker Movement Documentation Project, UCSD.
551 "Unionless Migrants are Tired of Waiting for Chavez," *St. Petersburg Times*, July 14, 1978.

attracted dissident former UFW organizers from Arizona and Texas and organizers from FLOC, out of Ohio, to support the union drive in South Florida. A successful 1978 strike in Homestead, which secured both local and national support, raised piece rates on tomatoes, and demonstrated the promise of a unified farmworkers' movement in the state. While this victory was short-lived, the rural civil society networks that emerged in this period endured and continued to support farmworkers' communities in the tumultuous years to come.

In April 1976, OMICA hired Juan Velasquez, a brash organizer from Chicago, to direct its Immokalee office. According to Velasquez, he and Rudy Juarez had agreed to do "whatever necessary" to organize workers, with the understanding that Juarez would eventually be forced to fire Velasquez for union activity.[552] In his first months, Velasquez began laying the groundwork for a new union in Immokalee, announcing to the press "we don't have to wait for Chavez."[553] Velasquez met with FLOC director Baldemar Velasquez (no relation), who traveled to Florida in December 1976 to help develop an organizing plan. FLOC considered the state an important target to protect many of the farmworkers, who lived in Florida for much of the year, covered by its 33 contracts in Ohio's tomato industry. The organizers discussed the possibility that an Immokalee union might affiliate with FLOC after it won some contracts with growers. Soon after, citing inflation and flat wages, OMICA demanded that Immokalee's growers raise wages and piece rates.[554]

Echoing the IUD's organizing strategy in the 1960s, Juan Velasquez sought to organize farmworkers alongside small-time crew leaders into one union to jointly press growers for higher wages.[555] Tensions must have been high in Immokalee's fields and camps, as Velasquez had little time to prepare before farmworkers took on wildcat actions themselves. In early January 1977,

---

552 "Migrants," *News-Press*, January 11, 1977.
553 Pete Johnson, "Organizing is Urged for Farmworkers," *News-Press*, December 21, 1976.
554 Migrants sought a $0.45 piece rate and a $22.50 a day guaranteed wage, a raise of about $5. Steve Herendeen, "Workers and Growers Set Wage Hike Talks," *Naples Daily News*, December 29, 1976.
555 Herendeen, "Workers and Growers Set Wage Hike Talks."

farmworkers working the pepper harvest demanded a higher piece rate at Hendry Farms, 15 miles outside of Immokalee. Fighting erupted when the Chicano workers struck and Black workers from a separate crew continued working. The grower called the police, who arrested 40 strikers for trespassing.[556] The next day, 160 farmworkers and crew leaders voted at the Our Lady of Guadalupe church in Immokalee to picket vegetable farms outside of Immokalee and near Lake Okeechobee. Workers formed an organizing committee and established the Organization of United Migrants (OUM), as a distinct organization from OMICA, to serve as the bargaining agent representing farmworkers. Velasquez invited about 90 growers to meet with the newly-formed group, but they uniformly refused to attend. Activists then formed pickets at local farms to pressure growers to negotiate with the OUM.[557] At the peak of the 13-day strike, Velasquez claimed to have signed up 3,000 farmworkers and 50 of the 127 crew leaders active in Immokalee.[558]

Yet, during the strike, national support was not forthcoming. While FLOC assisted in formulating strategy, it did not contribute staff to the effort. UFW staffers, who observed the strike for Chavez and the national office, viewed Juan Velasquez with suspicion and argued that the campaign did not justify a major UFW investment. Instead, to ward off potential union competitors (including FLOC and the Teamsters) and better manage local organizations using the Aztec-eagle flag, UFW state director Stephen Roberson recommended opening a UFW organizing office in Immokalee.[559] This proposal was not taken up and Roberson later resigned from the UFW after becoming disillusioned with its lack of investment in new organizing.[560]

Eventually, an ill-timed winter freeze chilled the simmering farmworkers' strike. The

[556] Pete Johnson, "About 40 Arrested in wage dispute at Hendry farm," *News-Press*, January 7, 1977.
[557] "FLOC se prepara para Florida," *Nuestra Lucha* (FLOC), January 1977, CS, UCB; Beverly Merchant, "Farmworkers, Crew Leaders Plan Strike," *News-Press*, January 8, 1977.
[558] Jim Fisher, "Farmworker Strike Outcome Being Watched" *Tampa Tribune*, January 15, 1977.
[559] Stephen Roberson to Cesar Chavez, Gilbert Padilla, January 18, 1977 and enclosed Immokalee reports from Carl Webster, January 1977, LR002777, Box 6, Organizing reports, articles 1976-1980, UFW FL Boycott Records, Reuther Library.
[560] Jeff Coplon, "Cesar Chavez's Fall from Grace, Part II," *Voice*, August 21, 1984.

OMICA office struggled to provide food to strikers, and many picket lines fell apart in the icy temperatures. By the end of the month, non-striking crew leaders had enticed farmworkers back to the fields. The season promised to be a short one and most farmworkers could not endure the financial burden of a long strike.[561] Instead of celebrating a victory in Immokalee, Juarez, attempting to preserve grant funding, fired Velasquez and, once again, called for a state of emergency to secure federal aid for farmworkers.[562]

Organizational disarray and political attacks on organizers and their allies followed the unsuccessful strike. Citing its labor organizing activity and allegations of financial malfeasance, growers successfully pushed county officials to revoke a major employment training grant from OMICA and Juarez had to eliminate three staff positions.[563] The FRLS was also under fire. One of its lawyers was arrested for trespassing during a picket and Immokalee's congressman, Rep. "Skip" Bafalis, called for federal sanctions of the FRLS for its union support.[564] In the summer of 1977, Juarez resigned as director of OMICA to start a cultural outreach program to help migrant children escape a "dead-end life" in agriculture. Juarez stayed on the boards of OMICA and its housing corporation, but he left the union work for those "who will remain farmworkers."[565] For a time, OUM continued out of OMICA's Immokalee office to support that union drive.

OMICA only managed to survive as a membership organization until 1980, but its housing arm was beginning to hit its stride in the late 1970s. Under the leadership of former Peace Corp volunteer and builder Steve Mainster, in 1977, OMICA housing— renamed Centro Campesino in 1980— constructed over 500 affordable homes for low-income families in South and Central

---

561 David Holmberg, "Finances and Freeze Kill migrant Strike," *Miami News*, January 19, 1977.
562 "Freeze Disaster Declared," *Florida Today*, January 23, 1977.
563 Pete Johnson, "Migrant Groups Lose Funds for Eight Jobs," *News-Press*, February 2, 1977.
564 "Skip" Bafalis to Thomas Erlich, January 14, 1976. Organizing reports, articles 1976-1980, Box 6, UFW FL Boycott Records, LR002777, Reuther Library.
565 Edith Robertson, "Migrant Leader Resigns Post to Head Cultural Organization," *Miami News*, June 2, 1977.

Florida.[566] Centro Campesino gradually became a hub for employment training, education and childcare, and tenant and housing advocacy in the region— crucial resources in supporting the increasingly diverse and immigrant farm workforce.

Meanwhile, in the late 1970s, the UFW was also in turmoil at a point when it should have been on the ascent. In the early 1970s, the UFW battled the Teamsters union, which represented haulers and packers, over sweetheart contracts with California's lettuce and grape growers that undermined the UFW. The unions eventually signed a truce agreement in 1977 that ceded jurisdiction over organizing farmworkers to the UFW. Nevertheless, despite the detente with the Teamsters, the passage of California's 1975 Agricultural Labor Relations Act, which authorized and regulated farmworkers' collective bargaining in the state, and nationwide boycott support, Chavez decided in the late 1970s to halt new organizing to focus on the union's "consolidation."[567] Both Lyons and Medina resigned due to disagreements with Chavez's organizing decisions and the elimination of the UFW's legal department over personal disputes. Chavez's embrace of the drug rehabilitation program-cum-cult Synanon, and its practice of publicly reprimanding members for their personal and professional failures, had additionally sown distrust in the UFW by this time.[568]

In Florida, Arizona, and Texas, local farmworker organizing efforts moved ahead without the UFW, and at times conflicted with it. In Arizona and Texas, organizers broke from the UFW to form their own organizations—the Arizona Farmworkers (AFW) and the Texas Farmworkers—in response to the UFW's retreat and positions on immigration. Indeed, the UFW's harsh stance toward undocumented immigrants resulted in scandal during a mid-1970s organizing campaign in

---

[566] "Centro Campesino, "40 Years of Accomplishments," accessed October 2023, centrocampesino.org/?page_id=46; Corporate DB, "Centro Campesino," accessed October 2023, https://corporatesdb.com/business/fl/homestead/centro-campesino-farmworker-center-inc/6284787.
[567] Coplon, "Cesar Chavez's Fall from Grace, Part II."
[568] "UFW Fills Two Vacancies on National Executive Board," *UFW President's Newsletter* 1, no. 56, January 22, 1979, Farmworker Movement Documentation Project, UCSD; Marshall Ganz, *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 244-46.

Arizona that saw Manual Chavez establish a "wet line" made up of UFW men set on turning back undocumented migrants thought to be strikebreakers. For months, according to reports, the wet line intimidated, beat, sexually abused, and kidnapped undocumented workers, while committing acts of terror in migrants' origin communities in Mexico. The AFW clashed with the UFW over its treatment of undocumented immigrants, whom the AFW was trying to integrate into its union effort and was deploying cross-border strategies to organize. In Immokalee, the OUM opened a line of communication with these dissident groups and exchanged about forming a broad-based farmworkers' organizing campaign independent of the UFW.[569]

Around this time, another independent farmworkers' organization emerged in Central Florida. In 1977, Benito Lopez, a former farmworker and federal agricultural outreach worker from Indiana, began a complementary effort to organize farmworkers in the sprawling berry, citrus, and vegetable operations in the area. Lopez was fired from his government job for leading pickets and formed the United Mexicans Association to organize farmworkers in Indiana. In 1977, he decided to "follow the people" to Florida, where they worked nine months out of the year, renaming his organization United Migrants Association (UMA) to reflect the state's diverse farm workforce. After a year in Wauchula, a small town southeast of Tampa, Lopez was familiar with farmworkers across the region, who attended the dances and outreach events he hosted.[570]

In April 1978, a wildcat strike erupted in Fulwood Farms' strawberry fields on the outskirts of Tampa after three women reported being assaulted by a supervisor. Lopez attempted to involve the DOL to support the aggrieved farmworkers. When no support was forthcoming, farmworkers

---

[569] Robert Lindsey, "Criticism of Chavez Takes Root in Farm Labor Struggle," *New York Times*, February 7, 1979; Coplon, "Cesar Chavez's Fall from Grace, Part II"; Dan Williams, "Human Harvest, Out-of-State Unions Move to Organize Florida Fields," *Miami Herald* [clipping n.d., approx. 1979] MSS 0649, Herman Baca Papers, Special Collections and Archives, UCSD (digital, hereafter Herman Baca Papers); Guadalupe Sanchez and Jesus Romo, "Organizing Mexican Undocumented Farm Workers on Both Sides of the Border," *Working Papers in U.S.-Mexican Studies* 27 (La Jolla: Program in United States-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1981): 1–12.
[570] Fay Joyce, "Organizer Concentrates on Migrants' Latent Power," *St. Petersburg Times*, January 30, 1978.

struck Fulwood farms and formed a massive picket at the peak of strawberry harvest season. The resulting eight-day strike saw police arrest 55 workers, counter-protests organized by growers, and, eventually, DOL mediation.[571] Fulwood began evicting over 200 strikers from its labor camps and brought in strikebreakers, prompting the NAACP to call on Black farmworkers to respect the picket line. While Fulwood eventually broke the strike, the picket caused over $1 million in crop losses and state and federal investigations into the farm that led to improvements in Fulwood's camps.[572] Despite these limited gains, Lopez and the strikers expanded the geographic scope of organizing and positioned the UMA to build an organizing base—with thousands claiming membership in the loose-knit UMA a year after the strike.[573]

In the summer of 1978, the OUM, OMICA, and the UMA agreed to work together throughout Central and South Florida to "organize the people to form a sole union."[574] That winter, farmworkers executed one of the most successful labor actions of the decade in Homestead. After growers set piece rates at only $0.30 a bucket for the tomato harvest, on December 7th, nearly 1,000 workers living in the Everglades Labor Camp struck, refusing to work on any farm in the region. OMICA opened its office in the county-owned camp as the strike's headquarters, and Lopez led the strike committee under the UMA banner. Growers' agents and police menaced the strikers, as did a KKK Klavern, which burned a cross outside of the labor camp.[575] Undeterred, farmworkers staged roving pickets from the camp, as growers were unable to evict strikers, and mobilized hundreds of nearby farmworkers to the cause. The next day, police arrested more than 300 strikers, including Lopez, but supporters quickly raised $1,400 to bail them out. Dolores Huerta, co-founder and vice

---

571 Report: Fulwood Farms, March 28- April 7, 1978, 00100 s.1172, Box 11, Admin Files, Migrant Labor, Florida State Archives; Zita Arocha, "Migrants' Strike More Than Simple Dispute to Marta," *St. Petersburg Times*, April 14, 1978.
572 Brad Thomas Massey, "Defying the Sunbelt: An Economic and Environmental History of Tampa, 1950-1980," PhD Diss., (Gainesville: University of Florida, 2017), 230-35.
573 Walt Belcher, "Only Eviction Will End the Line Outside Migrant Headquarters," *Tampa Tribune*, December 6, 1979.
574 "Unionless Migrants are Tired of Waiting for Chavez," *Tampa Times*, July 14, 1978.
575 "Farmworkers Strike in Homestead," UFW Support Committee--Tampa, Newsletter, Nov- Dec 1978, LR002515, Box 2, UFW Support Committee, Tampa, National Farmworker Ministry, FL Office Records, Reuther Library.

president of the UFW, traveled to meet with the strike committee and pledged the UFW's organizing and financial assistance. Working with OMICA housing staff, Juanita Mainster led rent strikes in the area's other camps to pressure growers. Growers soon offered to raise piece rates to $0.40, and after police broke up another march and arrested 60 strikers on December 14, the strike committee accepted the offer along with further concessions reducing labor contractors' fees.[576]

The successful tomato strike in the winter of 1978 demonstrated that organizers could overcome growers' resistance, racist violence, and state oppression by unifying local organizations, drawing community aid, staging actions outside of grower-controlled camps, and securing national union support. After the strike, Chavez promised to hold an organizing convention in Florida in 1979, but the UFW withdrew from the state again to support lettuce strikes in California. Yet organizers made advances without the UFW. In 1979, the UMA, OMICA and six other major farmworker organizations and service providers established the Coalition of Florida Farmworker Organizations (COFFO) to coordinate activities in Florida.[577] AFW and FLOC organizers moved to the state intending to finally establish a union in the vegetable sector. Jesus Romo, from the AFW, later took charge of the Farmworker Rights Organization (FRO), the successor organization of the OUM in Immokalee. Additionally, FLOC opened an office in Plant City, outside of Tampa, to conduct training for workers entering the migrant stream.[578]

Despite the influx of support and the unity of purpose among Florida's organizers, the movement was unable to force growers to the bargaining table in the decade to come. After the 1978 strike, growers moved to reassert their power. Homestead's growers' associations charged the

---

[576] "Florida Migrants Win Tomato Fight," *Workers Voice* 2, no. 1, January 1979; "Tomato Strikers Gain Support," *News Press*, December 12, 1978; Juanita Mainster, phone call with author, November 30, 2018.
[577] Martin Merzer, "Migrants See Greener Fields in Union Movement," *Tallahassee Democrat*, March 11, 1979; Williams, "Human Harvest, Out-of-State Unions Move to Organize Florida Fields."
[578] W. K. Barger and Ernesto M. Reza, *The Farm Labor Movement in the Midwest: Social Change and Adaptation among Migrant Farmworkers* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), 91-94; Bernstein, "Migration, Health, and Nutrition: Haitians in Immokalee," vii-x.

Everglades Labor Camp with mismanagement for allowing the strike and lobbied to take control of the county-owned facilities. OMICA activists in Homestead redirected their efforts to prevent the takeover, which threatened to impede workers' autonomy and reverse the advances made in housing since the 1973 typhoid outbreak.[579]

Organizers throughout South Florida also grappled with an increasingly precarious labor market, as farm labor contractors were continually deepening recruitment operations between Florida and Mexico, systematically transporting thousands of indebted immigrant workers to work in crews across the state without immigration documents. Tens of thousands of new asylum seekers and migrants from Guatemala and Haiti also began entering Florida, where crew leaders often served as their initial entry point into the state's labor market. While Florida's farmworker organizations worked to integrate, organize, and protect immigrant workers, growers capitalized on the vulnerabilities of undocumented farmworkers.

From "Migrants" to "Illegal Aliens": Migrations of the 1980s and IRCA's Impact on Florida's Farmworkers

In the 1980s, growers hardened a farm labor system based on the exploitation of undocumented immigrants, which continues to uphold agricultural production today. Situated at the intersection of labor recruitment systems, migration networks, and refugee movements from Central America and Haiti, South Florida became the terminus for tens of thousands of new immigrants and refugees from the late 1970s through the 1980s. Farm work, despite its shortcomings, served as a gateway to the labor market for many new arrivals. While some found a degree of refuge in the region, the Reagan administration's politicization of immigration and increasingly robust INS enforcement tactics also menaced immigrant families and communities. Amid social disruption,

[579] Juanita Mainster, phone call with author, November 30, 2018; Patrice Gaines-Carter, "Tomato Farmers Knock Camp's Use as Strike Center," *Miami News*, January 9, 1979.

heightened immigration enforcement, and demographic shifts, farmworker organizers activated the civil society networks that farmworkers and activists had formulated to support labor organizing to integrate and defend new immigrants and, later, support their asylum and amnesty claims. When lawmakers moved to address undocumented immigration with IRCA in 1986, farmworkers' organizations dissented from much of the rest of the labor movement, which supported the law's sanctions on employers of undocumented workers. Farmworkers warned that enhanced immigration enforcement, at the workplace, at the border, and in communities, would only undermine freedom of association among immigrant workers. After IRCA's passage, growers managed the law's implementation to avoid sanctions through increased subcontracting and tightened their hold over the farm workforce by controlling migrants' access to amnesty.

In the early 1980s, South Florida was the center of a perceived "refugee crisis" and a major immigration destination. It was not uncommon to see new immigrants sleeping in cars, parks, and tents across Immokalee and other rural towns during the winter harvest.[580] Fleeing the oppression of the Duvalier regime, thousands of Haitian "boat people" began leaving the island for Florida in 1979, which coincided with the Mariel boatlift, the mass exodus from Cuba after Fidel Castro briefly permitted out-migration in response to political and economic pressure on the island. More than 125,000 Cuban and some 15,000 Haitian asylum seekers arrived in South Florida by 1980. While the Carter administration initially detained both groups, processing thousands in the Orange Bowl Stadium in Miami and the newly established Krome Detention Center in the Everglades, Cuban migrants widely received asylum. Conversely, many Haitians were kept in long-term detention or put into deportation proceedings. Thus, many Haitians fled to the relative safety of secluded farm labor camps.[581] Through the 1980s, some 20,000 Guatemalans also came to Florida, displaced by the

---

580 See: "Migrants Make a Pitch for Tent City of Own" *Miami Herald*, July 23, 1980.
581 Lindskoog, *Detain and Punish*, 33-35; 43-45.

brutal civil war at home.[582] Father Frank O'Loughlin, the parish priest in Indiantown, a small town west of Lake Okeechobee that became a refuge for indigenous Guatemalans, described Florida's crew leaders as "vultures ready to prey" on the new migrants to the region.[583]

Concurrently, the farm workforce in Florida ballooned to between 150,000 and 200,000 workers, which fueled worker turnover, demographic change, and insecurity. Many of those who could find better-paying work outside of agriculture, particularly younger African Americans, left the sector in the 1980s. Along the East Coast migrant stream, immigrant crews largely replaced crews of African-American migrant workers, as increasingly professionalized transnational recruitment operations directed the placement of Mexican, Central American, and Haitian migrants in the agricultural sector. By the mid-1980s, Latino workers represented nearly 70 percent of Florida's farm workforce, Haitians about 10 percent, and African American workers only 15 percent.[584] With many lacking immigration documents—in 1980, the state government estimated that undocumented workers made up as much as 60 percent of the farm workforce— migratory farmworkers, long on society's margins, increasingly became "illegal aliens" in legal and social terms.[585]

Meanwhile, inequality deepened in the sector. Between 1982 and 1986, real wages for farmworkers declined by over 13 percent, as Florida's growers increased sales from $3.3 billion to $4.2 billion in roughly the same period.[586] Agricultural production and labor demand also further

---

582 Burns, *Maya in Exile*, 87-88.
583 Ashabranner, *Dark Harvest*, 130-32.
584 Leo Popipolus and Robert Emerson, "The Latinization of the Farm Labor Market," Staff Paper Series, (Food and Resource Economics Department, University of Florida, 1994): 3. Estimations of the size of Florida's farm workforce are inconsistent in this period. Contemporary press accounts and the number of agricultural workers legalized under IRCA in Florida suggest the number of farm labor supply grew by at least 50 percent from the late 1970s to 1990. While family networks often facilitated Mexican migration to urban areas, recruitment intermediaries remained central to moving Mexican farmworkers into the agricultural sector. On labor brokerage, see: See: David Spener, *Clandestine Crossings: Migrants and Coyotes on the Texas-Mexico Border* (Cornell University Press, 2009), 109-12.
585 Mary Ann Lindley, "Talk Won't Soothe Misery of Migrants," *Tallahassee Democrat*, November 11, 1980; Bernstein, "Migration, Health, and Nutrition: Haitians in Immokalee,"1-3; Ashabranner, *Dark Harvest*, 96.
586 Barry, "The Adverse Impact of Immigration on Florida's Farmworkers," 6; "Florida Agriculture by the Numbers," Florida Department of Agriculture, 2011, 9, accessed November 2018, https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Florida/Publications/Annual_Statistical_Bulletin/FL_Agriculture_Book/2011/2011%20FL%20Ag%20by%20the%20Numbers.pdf.

concentrated in South Florida, after freezes in 1977 and nearly every winter in the early 1980s drove citrus production further south. For example, between 1980 and 1990, in Collier County, acreage dedicated to citrus grew from less than one million acres to between 3 and 5 million acres, while Dade County added over one million acres of citrus groves.[587]

During this period of desperation, farmworkers' labor and community organizations mobilized against deportations and immigrant policing. In contrast to the UFW's support for the INS, FLOC had for years critiqued the INS for interfering in organizing and established a "Mid-West Commission for the Defense of Undocumented Workers" in the late 1970s to lobby against proposed employer sanctions. Many farmworker organizers rightly predicted that sanctions against employers who hired undocumented workers, a proposal that became a key component of IRCA, would lead to racial profiling and give employers legal cover and a cudgel to fire undocumented workers who spoke out or organized.[588] In 1980, Jesus Romo coordinated with the AFW and Texas Farmworkers to plan a "U.S.-Mexico Conference on Undocumented Workers" in Mexico City. Attended by FLOC organizers and representatives from Texas, Arizona, California, and Florida, as well as Mexican unions and human rights groups, the conference sought transnational cooperation to organize and protect undocumented workers.[589] Later that year, 77 civil rights, labor, and farmworkers' organizations, including the FRO and UMA, filed a complaint with Florida's DOL, calling on it to enforce state laws to curb labor trafficking in agriculture. Pointing to Florida's

[587] Major freezes struck the citrus producing areas of Florida in 1977, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1985, and 1989. See: Jim McNair, "Citrus Moves South," *Miami Herald*, December 10, 1990; John Attaway, "Long-Range Impacts of Florida Freezes," Box 2, Industry Moves South 1934-94 Folder 7, John Allen Attaway, Sr. Florida Freeze and Hurricane Research Files, FSC.

[588] "Undocumented Workers," *Nuestra Lucha* (FLOC) 2, no. 1, January 1978, CS, UCB. Indeed, while the AFL-CIO and most of organized labor supported such sanctions at this time, decades later the federation identified employer sanctions and I-9 "self-audits" among employers as a major impediment to organizing immigrant workers and a tool frequently used remove immigrant workplace activists. See: Rebecca Smith, Ana Avendaño, Ana Ortega, Julie Martínez, "Iced Out: How Immigration Enforcement Has Interfered with Workers' Rights," AFL-CIO, October 2009.

[589] "Invitation: US-Mexico Conference on Undocumented Workers," January 30, 1980, MSS 0649, Herman Baca Papers, UCSD.

grower-friendly labor law regime, the organizations criticized the state for not revoking a single crew leader's license in the previous nine years.[590] While Florida's Governor Bob Graham, who served between 1979 and 1987, ordered an investigation into labor law violations, state officials who oversaw crew chief compliance found that they lacked the legal authority to prosecute crew leaders on a variety of fronts without federal cooperation, which was not forthcoming.[591]

Florida's position as a major INS jurisdiction, as well as public support for harsher immigration enforcement, which Ronald Reagan championed in his 1980 election campaign moved against organizers' efforts to extend protections to immigrants.[592] Florida was in the cross-hairs of the INS, since an INS policy, adopted in 1953, considers land within 100 miles of the coast an "external boundary" for the purposes of immigration enforcement. The "100-mile rule" gives the Border Patrol officers broad powers to operate far from land borders and ports of entry and establish interior immigration checkpoints— and covers the entirety of Florida's geography.[593] Upon Reagan's election, the administration's enforcement policies and cuts to social programs increasingly threatened immigrant communities. Over two years in Florida, the number of Border Patrol agents increased four-fold and apprehensions doubled to 800 a month.[594] The Border Patrol was regularly conducting sting operations in public facilities, grocery stores, and health clinics.[595] Exacerbating migrants' vulnerabilities, the Reagan administration abolished the Community Services Administration, the successor to the OEO, in 1981, eliminating or downsizing many of its programs,

---

[590] Lindley, "Talk Won't Soothe Misery of Migrants."
[591] Activity Reports, Rural Manpower Services, Issues on Governor Graham's Briefing Labor Law Review, Executive Office of the Governor, Migrant Labor Program, 1978, 000100. s. 1172, Box 11, Carton 88-11, Florida State Archives.
[592] Beginning in the late 1970s, several public opinion polls found respondents favored more restrictive immigration policies than in the past. See: Edwin Harwood, "American Public Opinion and U. S. Immigration Policy," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 487 (1986): 201-2.
[593] 8 U.S.C. § 1357(a)(3). See: ACLU in Cooperation with American Friends Service committee, National Immigration and Alien Rights Project, Report No. 2. "The Hand That Feeds Us: Undocumented Farmworkers in Florida, April 1986, 86; "Customs and Border Protection's (CBP's) 100-Mile Rule," ACLU, Fact Sheet, accessed May 2022, https://www.aclu.org/other/aclu-factsheet-customs-and-border-protections-100-mile-zone.
[594] Robert Press, "Tracking Illegal Aliens, Tactics Under Fire in Florida," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 11, 1983.
[595] Mary Toothman, "Graham Vows to Help Prevent Abuses of Migrants," *Tampa Tribune*, May 26, 1983; Ashabranner, *Dark Harvest*, 130-32; Ashabranner, *Dark Harvest*, 130-32.

and barred the FRLS from representing undocumented clients in 1982.[596]

In addition to the fear and social disruption caused by immigrant policing and deportations, with agricultural unemployment high and new workers crowding into rural towns, farmworkers in South Florida faced a housing crisis in the early 1980s. While Centro Campesino sought state aid to provide emergency housing, Homestead's growers continued a campaign to take control of the Everglades Labor Camp, which had accrued $2 million in debt by 1982. Dade County officials were prepared to sell the camp and its trailers to an association of growers, but the 1,800 farmworkers residing in the camp fought back, organizing with Centro Campesino to establish an independent association to take control of the camp. Steve Mainster and Centro Campesino staff worked with national housing and civil rights groups, churches, and banks to raise the money to pay the camp's debt and acquire its holdings, subsequently forming the Everglades Community Association to manage the camp. This victory fortified Centro Campesino and allowed it to advance future housing development projects throughout South Florida.[597] Still, farmworkers and community organizations, churches, and service providers were stretched thin in rural towns. Farmworkers in the Everglades Labor Camp struggled to make rent payments to the new association, which had thin margins without government subsidies, and farmworkers on its board struggled to pay for camp services like nighttime safety patrols.[598] Meanwhile, the COFFO and UMA made a routine of calling for federal disaster aid after major freezes in 1981, 1983, and 1985, and Benito Lopez was working out of a Mexican restaurant he opened after struggling to establish a permanent home for the UMA.[599]

Jesus Romo and the FRO sought to relieve unemployment by securing jobs for Haitians

---

[596] Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land*, 200.
[597] Juanita Mainster, phone call with author, November 30, 2018; Rural Neighborhoods, "The 1980s," accessed November 2018, www.ruralneighborhoods.org/what-we-do/about-us/our-story/the-1980s/; "Migrants Make a Pitch for Tent City of Own" *Miami Herald*, July 23, 1980.
[598] Susan Faludi, "The Migrants: Everglades Labor Camp in Turmoil, *Miami Herald*, March 31, 1983.
[599] See: Allen Bartlett, "Farmworker Leaders Urge Quick Jobless Aid," *News-Press*, February 13, 1981; Greg Raver, "Migrant Leader Lopez's Key to Clout is 'Experience'" *Tampa Tribune*, July 6, 1985.

residing or detained in South Florida that growers were filling with Jamaican H-2 cane cutters. Despite provisions in the H-2 program meant to encourage the hiring of local workers, the DOL still certified that labor shortages existed in the sugar sector, which allowed cane growers to recruit H-2 guestworkers. The FRO, working with FRLS, joined Governor Graham in suing the U.S. government in 1981 to stop the recruitment of H-2 workers. Romo hoped to secure work permits for Haitians and replace the 16,000 guestworkers in the cane fields with some of the 22,000 unemployed Haitians in the state, including those held in detention centers.[600] Yet, the jobs Romo was fighting for were terrible. U.S Sugar had hired some 2,000 Haitians to cut cane the previous year, who promptly walked out on strike to protest the brutal work speeds that led to injuries and the low piece rates that made earning decent wages nearly impossible. FRLS lawyer Greg Schell and the FRO tried to publicize the strike to activate rules preventing the DOL from certifying H-2 visas during a labor dispute, but Reagan's DOL ignored these efforts. Schell doggedly pursued legal battles with the sugar industry over H-2 visas in future cases, but only managed to open jobs for Haitians on the margins of the fields, in cane processing and hauling, as sugar growers maintained harsh conditions and low wages for its deportable H-2 workforce.[601]

While the Reagan administration's policies generally favored agribusiness, terror grew among the immigrant farmworkers who made harvests possible. In the 1970s, the INS had mainly policed farmworkers' communities in South Florida at the end of the winter season, but in the 1980s the INS operated year-round and used aggressive tactics to detain immigrants. As raids on labor camps became more frequent, the ACLU accused INS agents in Florida of ignoring search warrants and due process and pressuring immigrants to sign voluntary departure forms without consulting an

---

[600] Susan Ornstein, "Rights Group Joins Suit Over Immigration, *News-Press*, July 25, 1981; Jo Thomas, "Florida's Refugees Challenging Plan to Use West Indians in Cane Harvest," *New York Times*, October 11, 1981.
[601] Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land*, 196; Vivian Terrell, "Work Conditions Not So Sweet as Claimed, Cane-Cutters Contend," *News-Press*, October 7, 1981.

attorney.[602] In 1983, Benito Lopez delivered a 3,300-signature petition to Governor Graham protesting the Border Patrol's "cruel and inhumane" practices, which included separating families, harassment, and physical abuse. Responding to the petition and entreaties from the Catholic church, Graham vowed to stem abuses and established a hotline for separated families.[603]

With immigration increasingly politicized, contradictory impulses manifested in Congress, as lawmakers undertook a bipartisan immigration reform effort in 1982. Proponents of what became IRCA in 1986 sought to address undocumented immigration with both carrots and sticks by sanctioning employers who knowingly hired undocumented workers, increasing funding for immigration enforcement, and extending amnesty and a path to citizenship to undocumented immigrants who had arrived in the United States before 1982. To secure the support of agricultural interests, which had grown reliant on undocumented labor, lawmakers sought to ease growers' transition to a legal workforce. IRCA contained both a streamlined legalization process called the Special Agricultural Workers (SAW) program, which allowed farmworkers who could document at least 90 days of farm work in the year prior to May 1986 to regularize their statuses, and an expanded guestworker program with no numeric restrictions to meet potential future labor shortages. Essentially an outgrowth of the H-2 program, lawmakers proposed the new visa program for agriculture, called the H-2A program, alongside a new H-2B guestworker program for nonagricultural seasonal work to solidify business support for the bill.[604]

The labor movement was divided over the components of the immigration reform package. Although the AFL-CIO supported employer sanctions in IRCA, farmworkers' unions and

---

[602] ACLU, "The Hand That Feeds Us: Undocumented Farmworkers in Florida," 86.

[603] Mary Toothman, "Graham Vows to Help Prevent Abuses of Migrants," *Tampa Tribune*, May 26, 1983.

[604] Muzaffar Chishti and Charles Kamasaki, "IRCA in Retrospect: Guideposts for Today's Immigration Reform," Issue Brief, Migration Policy Institute, January 2014, 1-2, accessed May 2022, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/irca-retrospect-immigration-reform; Market J. Edward Taylor and Dawn Thilmany, "Worker Turnover, Farm Labor Contractors, and IRCA's Impact on the California Farm Labor," *American Journal of Agricultural Economics American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 75, No. 2 (May 1993): 350-51.

organizations stood resolute that such sanctions would only punish undocumented workers and give unscrupulous employers an excuse to bring in immigration enforcement during workplace disputes and organizing drives.[605] Even the UFW lobbied against employer sanctions after 1981, pushed by Chicano civil rights activists and its growing undocumented membership to revise its previous stance.[606] The labor movement, however, was generally unified in support of legalization and in opposition to new guestworker programs that would, in the words of Jesus Romo, "displace an already large unemployed farmworker population."[607]

In late 1986, IRCA became law and established general and SAW amnesty programs, expanded guestworker visa programs, and enhanced funding for border and work-site immigration enforcement. Despite their ambivalence on the issue of reform—the FFVA preferred the status quo— Florida's agricultural interests had lobbied extensively to shape the bill and successfully secure the expansion of guestworker visas and a grace period of two years to comply with IRCA's employer sanctions. A FRLS lawyer described the final law as an "incredible bonanza for farmers." According to a COFFO official, however, farmworker leaders were still hopeful that IRCA's legalization provisions would make organizing easier by removing the threat of deportation.[608]

The implementation of IRCA belied the optimism of organizers and immigrant farmworkers. The same growers, contractors, landlords, and INS agents who made farmworkers' lives miserable for years had nearly complete control over the SAW legalization process. To prove they had been working in the agricultural sector, farmworkers had to produce documents like paystubs, rent receipts, and employers' affidavits. The farm labor system, however, had long acted to keep them isolated and in informal, obscured employment relationships. Contractors and growers,

---

605 9 "Reagans Immigration Plan" *Nuesta Lucha* (FLOC), July 1982, CS, UCB.
606 Carolyn Wong, *Lobbying for Inclusion: Rights Politics and the Making of Immigration Policy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); Philip L. Martin, *Immigration Reform and U.S. Agriculture* (Davis, CA: UCANR Publications, 1995), 23.
607 Ornstein, "Rights Group Joins Suit Over Immigration."
608 Mark Stephens, "Law May Sow Change in Farming," *News-Press*, November 16, 1986.

fearing punishment for social security irregularities or employment law violations despite immunity protections in IRCA, frequently disavowed undocumented farmworkers. Crew leaders and landlords failed to document rent payments and, worse, contractors pressured undocumented farmworkers to purchase fake green cards to continue to work, which jeopardized their chances at legalization.[609]

Farmworkers' organizations, churches, advocates, and community groups supported farmworkers in the SAW process, but the INS officials in charge of the SAW program in Florida denied applications at a particularly high rate. Agents headquartered near Lake Okeechobee conducted interviews in English and applied vague standards and a broad assumption of fraud to applications and recommended denial for over 10,000 applications in the first months of the program. Haitian SAW applicants represented the bulk of denials, due to language barriers, scams, and the disorganized operations of Haitian farm labor crews. Indeed, the INS denied so many applicants that the Haitian Refugee Center, based in Miami, filed a class action lawsuit against the Justice Department to expand and reorder the appeals process, eventually winning in the Supreme Court. Immigrant communities and farmworkers also organized to overcome barriers to amnesty. Building on support from faith leaders and legal service organizations, in 1985, some 300 Guatemalan Mayans in Indiantown formed the short-lived Kanjobal Association to defend against deportations, educate indigenous Mayans about the changing immigration system, and assist them in applying for asylum and amnesty. Groups like the COFFO similarly conducted public outreach, assisted farmworkers in collecting employment documents from uncooperative contractors and growers, and reported fraudulent notaries, immigration agencies, and other scammers.[610]

---

[609] Bette S. Orsini, "Amnesty a Nightmare for Farmworkers," *St. Petersburg Times*, July 12, 1987.
[610] U.S. House of Representatives, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees, and International Law of the Committee on the Judiciary, "Extension of the Legalization Program," Second Session on H.R. 4222 and H.R. 3816, March 30, 1988 (Washington D.C.: US GPO, 1988), 340-42; Burns, *Maya in Exile*, 60-65; "Father Frank O'Loughlin and His Work with Farmworkers," interview with Santa Barbara Crossroads Media Group, July 10, 2018, accessed May 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M6VdTU2iESk. See also: Gene McNary, Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization, et al., Petitioners, v. Haitian Refugee Center, Inc., et al., No. 89-1332, 498 U.S. 479 (U.S. Supreme Court, 1991).

While farmworkers fought for amnesty, Florida's growers' associations navigated the transition period before the imposition of IRCA's sanctions regime to insulate growers from liability and reassert control over migrants' access to work. With the INS, in 1987, growers' associations in Dade and Collier counties organized a "badge system" to centralize IRCA record keeping and compliance. The associations issued some 43,000 plastic identification "badges" to farmworkers that affirmed that they had provided proof of work authorization and could work for a grower or contractor. The system put the burden of documentation on farmworkers and made them more reliant on contractors for work. Meanwhile, contractors simultaneously continued to employ undocumented farmworkers under fraudulent documents provided for a fee or by paying cash under the table. Growers tested the INS's willingness to enforce sanctions, but IRCA's "stick" never came. In the five years after the passage of IRCA, the border patrol only conducted one major raid in the region, which came at the end of the harvest season in Immokalee.[611]

By the end of the decade, growers had restructured farm labor systems to accommodate IRCA's mandates and further entrenched multi-layered labor contracting relationships made up of associations, contractors, subcontractors, and labor smugglers. After IRCA, growers' associations and large labor contractors consolidated as so-called "super labor contractor" operations, centralizing bookkeeping and overseeing subcontractors, to place farmworkers across the state. Beneath these operations, a slew of "nickel" contractors survived servicing farms with off-the-books payrolls.[612] After IRCA, complex contracting networks shielded growers from sanctions and largely eliminated direct employment relationships between industrial growers and farmworkers.[613]

---

[611] Douglas Bagby, "Selective Effects of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 on Farmworker Living and Working Conditions in the U.S.,"MA Thesis (University of Florida, 2003), 37-44; Monica L. Heppel and Sandra L. Amendola, *Immigration Reform and Perishable Crop Agriculture: Compliance or Circumvention?* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992), 168; 174-76.
[612] Ibid.
[613] Leo C. Polopolus and Robert D. Emerson, "Immigration and Employment Policy Impacts: The Florida Citrus Case," *Choices*, 4th Quarter (1991): 16-17; Heppel and Amendola, *Immigration Reform and Perishable Crop Agriculture*, 168.

Nationally, over one million immigrants received permanent residency status under the SAW program, 85 percent of total applicants. In Florida, over 122,000 farmworkers applied for SAW status, including over 51,000 Mexicans and 41,000 Haitians.[614] Of those applicants, some 98,000 farmworkers secured SAW status.[615] Lawmakers had hoped that those with SAW status would remain in agriculture and the sector would convert to a documented workforce. But growers made little effort to retain the SAW workforce through improved wages or conditions. Instead, they continued to rely on international labor recruiters and contractors to bring immigrant farmworkers to South Florida. Adding to this labor pool, the H-2A program allowed growers to recruit guestworkers to work vegetable harvests for the first time since the 1960s. For new immigrants in South Florida, agriculture remained a low-barrier entry point into the labor market, reinforcing high-turnover workforce "churn" in the sector. Concurrently, farmworkers with documents left the agricultural sector *en masse*, the second major transformation from farm work in two decades.[616]

Farmworker groups engaged in organizing like the UMA and FRO began to fade from the historical record around the time of IRCA. While funding was unreliable for organizers in the 1970s, the Reagan administration's cuts to social programs and attacks on organized labor made funding scarce. The combination of growers' resistance, state oppression, and farm labor turnover by the late 1980s made sustaining membership organizations untenable in most cases. Meanwhile, in the two decades after IRCA, tomato piece rates remained at 1978 levels.[617]

---

614 Barry, "The Adverse Impact of Immigration on Florida's Farmworkers," 39; Nancy Rytina, *IRCA Legalization Effects: Lawful Permanent Residence and Naturalization through 2001* (Office of Policy and Planning, U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, October 25, 2002), 7.

615 Florida had the third highest number of SAW recipients among states after California and Texas. Pew Charitable Trusts, "Immigration and Legalization: Roles and Responsibilities of States and Localities," Report, April 2014, 5, accessed April 2022, https://www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs_assets/2014/immigrationandlegalizationreport2014pdf.pdf

616 Barry, "The Adverse Impact of Immigration on Florida's Farmworkers," 29-31; Popipolus and Emerson, "The Latinization of the Farm Labor Market," 9-10; Griffith, "Unions without Borders," 57-59.

617 The Coalition of Immokalee Workers, "Facts and Figures on Florida Farmworkers," 2007, accessed November 2018, www.ciw-online.org/images/Facts_and_Figures_07.pdf

***

From the late 1960s to the 1980s, changing farmworkers' communities struck for higher wages, advocated for federal resources, challenged agro-industrial power structures in South Florida, and built labor and civil society organizations while facing steep barriers and staunch resistance. A reconstruction of organizing in this period reveals the strengths and limitations of Florida's farmworkers' movement, as well as the agribusiness practices and forms of state oppression that undermined farmworker organizers. Building on the Great Society, organizers established membership organizations to advance labor organizing and community initiatives, forming, in the process, a durable farmworkers' civil society network in rural Florida. While internal conflicts and funding difficulties perhaps limited the movement's efficacy—and exposed tensions between the prerogatives of the UFW and local movements of Florida's farmworkers— organizers won concrete gains for farmworkers. Moreover, through two major demographic transformations in the farm workforce, farmworkers from different racial, ethnic, and immigrant backgrounds forged class bonds and took collective action to challenge the dynamics of farmworkers' "powerlessness."

Agricultural interests' opposition to unionization was consistent in this period; however, as labor contractors extended their recruitment networks internationally, immigration, enforcement, and immigration policy played an outsized role in limiting the ability of farmworkers in Florida to organize. Without accepting the logic behind IRCA's provisions as sound or moral, the fact that growers shaped the implementation of the law to perpetuate low wages and precarity in the farm workforce and avoided sanctions, counter to the design of the law, further demonstrates their power over the regulatory state. While offshoring and union busting became prevalent in the 1980s, ravaging highly-unionized industrial sectors and limiting opportunities for workers, particularly women and minorities, in non-union sectors, agro-industrial strategies for undermining organizing were made standard practice with the implementation of IRCA. After IRCA, South Florida's

growers' associations consolidated a multi-tiered labor recruitment and contracting system that shielded growers from immigration law enforcement while facilitating their access to undocumented and H-2A workers. The reconfiguration of the agricultural labor system also served as a harbinger for much the rest of the workforce, as IRCA contributed to a fissuring of employment relationships in the agricultural sector and beyond, pushed the employment of undocumented workers further into the informal economy, and drove the growth of contract, temp, and "gig" work.[618]

Although organizers in the 1970s and 1980s ultimately failed to achieve widespread collective bargaining coverage for Florida's farmworkers and the membership organizations of the 1970s have largely faded from memory, the palimpsests of farmworkers' struggles in this period are evident throughout rural South Florida. They exist in expansive farmworkers' housing developments in the region; in the nonprofit clinics and daycare and training centers serving low-income Black and Latino communities; and in the advocacy and service organizations that remain active today. While farmworkers' strikes and pickets were the most visible manifestations of the farmworkers' movement in this period, the broad-based campaigns in rural communities and labor camps to achieve freedom in housing, improved community resources, and a voice in the political sphere were just as important in coalescing the movement. Indeed, farmworkers' struggles in this period to "make a home" and build power in rural communities perhaps left a more substantial legacy and a more durable foundation to support farmworkers' efforts to confront agro-industrial power in the decades to come.

[618] On these broader trends in the U.S. labor market, see: David Weil, *The Fissured Workplace: Why Work Became So Bad for So Many and What Can Be Done to Improve It* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

Chapter 4: Shifting Terrain: Globalization, the Environment, and Dislocation, 1980s-2000s

Paul J. DiMare, president of the family-owned corporation DiMare Companies, an integrated produce grower, packer, and distributor, came before a 1997 U.S. House Hearing styled a "Report Card on NAFTA" to give the new trade agreement a "failing grade." Due to tariff reductions and increased competition in the U.S. market from cheaper Mexican tomatoes, Florida's produce interests were floundering. Hundreds of produce operations in Florida, including DiMare's own 70-year-old business based in Homestead, were divesting and taking thousands of acres out of production. According to DiMare, Mexico's comparative advantage of longer growing seasons and lower regulations and wages, with Mexican growers paying as little as $3.00 a day to migratory farmworkers, had also forced Florida's growers to eliminate some 6,000 harvesting jobs.[619]

Yet, while South Florida's agricultural sector may have lost some of the U.S. vegetable market to Mexico after NAFTA's implementation, in reality, more complex production and labor dynamics were at work in the food system at the end of the 20th century. The region's major agribusinesses, including sugar firms that faced new threats from increasing environmental restoration efforts in Florida, were adapting through well-established strategies of diversification and expansion. Expansion came through consolidation in South Florida as smaller firms left the market, and the extension of farming and brokering operations nationally and globally, including in Mexico. In time, DiMare's own company, which also had farms and distribution hubs in Texas, New York, and California, even began contracting with Mexican firms and shipping citrus from Mexico through a McAllen, Texas processing center.[620] Meanwhile, migrant farmworkers from Mexico, often

---

[619] U.S. House of Representatives, Hearing Before the Subcommittees on International Economic Policy and Trade of the Committee on International Relations, "Report Card on NAFTA," First Session, March 5, 1997 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1998), 81-85.
[620] "DiMare Indio Fills Supply Gap with Lemons from Mexico," *Perishable News*, August 4, 2015.

displaced from small holdings by market liberalization and corporate land encroachment, entered into transnational farm labor markets and recruitment systems that spanned from Mexico to the U.S. West and Florida. In South Florida, Mexican and other migrant farmworkers, including many who fled from violence, civil wars, and political conflict in Central America and Haiti, faced stiff job competition and enhanced policing and criminalization by INS authorities.[621]

Transversing the local and the global, this chapter explores interconnected dislocations and policy developments that challenged South Florida's growers and immigrant farmworkers and their communities at the close of the 20th century. It examines how trade and environmental policy changes shifted the economic and environmental foundations of the Everglade's agricultural sector in the 1990s, fissuring ties between place and production and leading growers to reconfigure, consolidate, expand, and globalize production systems and supply chains. Furthermore, it illuminates how the migrant farmworkers, who upheld production and had often experienced displacements of a different nature, saw immigration laws and enforcement restrict and erode their mobility, health and security, and opportunities in the region. Taken together, these histories of agribusiness operations, capital and labor migration, and community marginalization illustrate how the region's agricultural sector, environment, and workers interfaced with a globalizing food system and hemisphere from above and below. While corporate agribusinesses and major industrial growers mobilized to maintain influence over the region's environment and took advantage of trade provisions and transnational business and supply chain strategies to profit in this new era, conflict, economic displacement, and criminalization beset migrant farmworkers.

In the 1990s, two interrelated policy transformations unsettled the logic and fixity of the Everglades agricultural sector. The 1994 implementation of NAFTA increased economic integration

[621] On agribusiness consolidation, migration, and migrant workers after NAFTA, see: David Griffith, "Work and Immigration: Winter Vegetable Production in South Florida" in Mark Rosenberg, ed., *Poverty or Development? Global Restructuring and Regional Transformations in the U.S. South and the Mexican South* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 172-4.

in North America and exposed South Florida's growers to new levels of competition. Concurrently, state and federal lawmakers, after decades of pressure from environmental groups, began to act to restore the Everglades. New proposals to reclaim Everglades lands for restoration, water cleanup, and conservation threatened the agricultural sector's future, particularly in the sugar industry near Lake Okeechobee. Once, Florida's boosters had uplifted Everglades agriculture as the highest purpose for the region and a key component in upholding the U.S. food supply. At the end of the century, however, farming obstructed efforts to save the endangered Everglades ecosystem and was proving for many growers to be an unsustainable business model in an era of liberalizing markets.

Although agricultural associations fought NAFTA and Everglades restoration, carving out trade concessions, and slowing down the implementation of restoration programs, they could not fully turn back these intertwined economic and environmental reforms. In response to these potential existential threats, some growers sold out to the government in restoration programs or to larger firms, cashed in on real estate development opportunities in South Florida, or otherwise divested from the sector. NAFTA, in the end, disrupted growers more profoundly than Everglades restoration. Although Everglades restoration programs took some land out of production and tightened environmental regulations, agricultural interests, led by sugar firms, delayed and undermined their most transformative components for decades. NAFTA, meanwhile, eroded the region's market share in the produce sector in real, if sometimes overstated, terms.

Nevertheless, many of the region's largest sugar and produce concerns recalibrated to their new operating environment by capitalizing on NAFTA and other trade policies to expand their operations across the country and internationally. These business maneuvers allowed the region's top growers to integrate Everglades farms into global portfolios that included investments and operations in Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and beyond. Thus, growers continued to profit from the imperiled Everglades while exporting exploitative labor and production practices across borders.

Meanwhile, economic restructuring, civil wars and political conflict, poverty, and displacement continued to generate migration to South Florida. As migrants came to the region after the implementation of IRCA—and after its pathways to legalization had closed— INS repression continued to disrupt rural immigrant communities and grew more severe into the 1990s. The Clinton administration—which championed NAFTA, a pact that unleashed economic restructuring in Mexico that dislocated rural communities and fueled migration—enacted harsh "anti-crime" and immigration enforcement measures that expanded immigrant policing, detention, and deportation. In this period, federal agencies used South Florida as a proving ground to develop and sharpen new immigration enforcement and detention strategies that later spread nationwide. This systematic criminalization of migrants limited their already narrow avenues for social mobility in South Florida.

This chapter reconstructs this transformative period for the Everglades and its agricultural sector and workforce within a globalizing food system. It lays out the politics of NAFTA and Everglades restoration and illuminates how agricultural interests managed these threats to their market position and production practices. Using South Florida's major agribusiness as a starting point, it then explores the increasingly transnational nature of industrial agriculture, following commodity chains to Mexico and the Caribbean, where agribusinesses deployed extractive modes of farm labor management and production. In South Florida and beyond, the environmental and social costs of industrial farming and cheap food were high. As globalization buttressed corporate power, at the local level, the food system externalized costs on the environment and migrant farmworkers, who often faced social and legal exclusion, poverty, and state repression.

The Agricultural Politics of NAFTA from South Florida

NAFTA's implementation in 1994 marked a shift in the basic market structures and political economy that had shaped the logic and operations of the Everglades' agricultural sector, particularly its industrial produce concerns. For decades, agricultural investments in South Florida rested on the

assumptions that the region's fruit and vegetable harvests would face little competition in the U.S. consumer market in the winter months and that international imports would remain limited. Thus, the economic integration of North American agriculture, and exposure to open competition with Mexico's export agricultural sector, which had comparative advantages in lower wages and a nearly year-long growing season, was a profound threat to the market share that South Florida's growers had long enjoyed. A reconstruction of the agricultural politics of NAFTA as they ran through South Florida demonstrates how the region's agricultural interests mobilized their political alliances and associations to manage the threat of NAFTA. Their resistance to the trade deal put them at odds with most of the U.S. agricultural sector and resulted in some concessions from the Clinton administration. The implementation of NAFTA resulted in a decline in Florida's share of the U.S. produce market in real terms, as production from Western Mexico's export agricultural sector squeezed Everglades' growers. Yet, even as some growers divested from the sector, this transnational reorganization of the market still offered the largest firms opportunities to profit.

In June 1990, when Presidents George Bush and Carlos Salinas initiated negotiations on the free trade agreement that became NAFTA, they signaled a formal endorsement of an economic integration in North America that was already decades in the making. The Mexican government's border industrialization policies, which extended back to the mid-1960s and, in part, sought to stem unemployment caused by the termination of the Bracero program, with support from U.S. capital, had supported the growth of the low-wage, export-oriented maquiladora manufacturing sector in Northern Mexico. Shipping and logistics operations sprung up on the border to serve Mexico's maquiladoras and U.S. buyers and transnational business partnerships, brokerage arrangements, and investments, likewise, tied the elite economic interests of the countries closer together. Meanwhile, the Canadian government, which already had a trade agreement with the United States, joined in NAFTA talks in 1991. These developments created the basis for an integrated regional production

and trade zone in North America.[622]

Yet, NAFTA negotiations also marked a multi-directional change in the political economy of the Western Hemisphere as the Cold War closed. With the threat of global Communism in the past, U.S. policymakers sought to construct a U.S.-led neoliberal hemispheric and global order based on economic ties and commerce. Meanwhile, in Mexico, Salinas and his allies worked to transition the country's economy from a development framework based on import-substitution industrialization to one based on export-led growth. Thus, national interests and geopolitical priorities converged on a vision for free trade in the Americas.[623]

Agriculture and the food industry were sectors central to North American economic integration. Billion-dollar corporate mergers in the food industry through the 1970s and 1980s increasingly globalized food supply chains, with consolidated brands and major traders like General Foods, RJR Nabisco, and Cargill leading the way. From the Nixon administration, whose Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz encouraged and subsidized the expansion of grain farms and fueled a ten-fold expansion of the agricultural trade surplus in the 1970s, U.S. policymakers worked to lower trade barriers in agriculture.[624] This trend, along with the increasing prevalence of brokerage, import, and agricultural production partnerships between U.S. firms and Mexican growers, smoothed the path for free trade and for U.S. corporations to invest in and profit from Mexican agriculture.[625] For instance, by the 1980s, producers in Baja California, by connecting to U.S. investment capital and brokerage operations, winning government largess, and deploying large-scale water infrastructure

622 Alexis McCrossen, "Disrupting Boundaries: Consumer Capitalism and Culture in the U.S.- Mexico Borderlands, 1940-2008," in Alexis McCrossen, ed., *Land of Necessity: Consumer Culture in the United States-Mexico Borderlands* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 48-49.
623 Peter Hakim, "President Bush's Southern Strategy: The Enterprise for the Americas initiative," *The Washington Quarterly*, 15:2 (1992): 93-4; Clyde H. Farnsworth, "Free-Trade Talks Seen for Mexico," *New York Times*, June 11, 1990.
624 See: Lloyd Slater, "Food: US perspective" in Sidney Weintraub, Luis Rubio, Alan Jones, eds., *US- Mexico Industrial Integration: The Road to Free Trade* (Westview Press, 1991), 261-66; E. Melanie Dupuis, Matt Garcia, and Don Mitchell, "Food Across Borders: An Introduction," in E. Melanie Dupuis, Matt Garcia, and Don Mitchell, eds., *Food Across Borders* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2017), 17.
625 Sterling Evans, "NAFTA Agriculture and the Greater West," 434-5 in Evans, ed., *Farming Across Borders*.

projects had built extensive export-oriented industrial farms specializing in fresh fruit and vegetables that supplied U.S. traders and retailers.[626]

Since the 1960s, Florida's agricultural interests, particularly its produce sector, resisted the integration of North American agriculture and found some success in limiting Mexican imports, which fostered expansion and rising profits even during down periods for U.S. agriculture as a whole. By filing anti-dumping charges with the Treasury Department and lobbying U.S. officials to uphold grade regulations that limited Mexican imports, Florida's agricultural associations limited competition with Mexico. Concerted lobbying from Florida further pressured the Mexican government and tomato industry to voluntarily restrict tomato exports in the winter to avoid the imposition of steep tariff duties.[627] In the 1980s, as U.S. consumption of tomatoes grew, Florida continued to lead the nation in fresh tomato production and the state's growers expanded to capture greater market share.[628] At this time, declining global grain prices decreased the value of U.S. exports, devastated indebted farmers throughout the Midwest, and spurred a U.S. "farm crisis." Thousands of grain farmers became dispossessed and farming communities collapsed.[629] Conversely, South Florida's farmers, who served domestic markets from acreage coveted by developers, saw land values rise.[630] By 1990, Florida's farms claimed $6 billion in gross sales, the top national position in dollar value per farm acre, and the number two position, behind California, in both farm sales and net income per farm.[631] Few agricultural interests had potentially more to lose than Florida's produce growers from the liberalization of agricultural imports from Mexico.

---

626 Zlolniski, *Made in Baja*, 10; 33-37.

627 Slater, "Food: U.S. Perspective," 283; Sanderson, *The Transformation of Mexican Agriculture*, 49-50.

628 John Love, "U.S. Vegetable Industry in the 1980s," *National Food Review*, USDA Economic Research Service 31 (Fall 1985): 10-11.

629 See: Kathryn Marie Dudley, *Debt and Dispossession: Farm Loss in America's Heartland* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

630 Charles Moss and Andrew Schmitz, *Government Policy and Farmland Markets: The Maintenance of Farmer Wealth* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 371-2.

631 Pete Packett, Florida's Gross Farm Income Exceeds $6 Billion," *Business Wire*, September 8, 1989.

Nevertheless, through the Bush and Clinton administrations, the ground shifted beneath Florida's growers on trade policy. President Bush made steady progress on advancing a deal on NAFTA before he lost his 1992 reelection campaign. Backed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and a "Coalition for Trade Expansion" that included more than 500 corporations, Bush won fast-track authority from Congress, meaning that the final trade agreement with Mexico and Canada would not be subject to lawmakers' amendments upon ratification.[632] In August 1992, U.S., Canadian, and Mexican leaders finished negotiations and signed a preliminary accord. This left NAFTA's passage in U.S. Congress as the biggest obstacle remaining before the formalization and implementation of the trade agreement.[633] Although as a presidential candidate Bill Clinton had expressed misgivings about NAFTA and the Democratic Party platform condemned the deal as a "disaster for workers," upon taking office, President Clinton sided with free traders and declined to reopen negotiations. Instead, the Clinton administration endorsed formulating side agreements on labor and environmental standards to allay opposition to NAFTA, mitigate its potential negative impacts, and encourage high-road competition with Mexico. [634]

Through 1992 and 1993, Florida's produce interests waged war on NAFTA, making strange bedfellows with unions, environmentalists, and public interest groups. The AFL-CIO threw its political resources behind defeating NAFTA. Like many NAFTA critics, the labor federation argued the agreement would boost U.S. unemployment, encourage the growth of sweatshops in Mexico, and encourage "social dumping" by encouraging multinationals to relocate production to Mexico and exploit its lower wages, safety, and environmental standards while profiting from U.S.

---

[632] William P. Avery, "Domestic Interests in NAFTA Bargaining," *Political Science Quarterly* 113, No. 2 (Summer, 1998): 284-6.
[633] Keith Bradsher, "Bush Acts on the Trade Pact," *New York Times*, September 19, 1992.
[634] Avery, "Domestic Interests in NAFTA Bargaining," 298-9; Jagdish Bhagwati, "Beyond NAFTA: Clinton's Trading Choices," *Foreign Policy*, No. 91 (Summer, 1993): 155.

consumers.[635] Similarly, the FFVA warned that the "unfair" deal would devastate the produce industry and put thousands of farmworkers out of work. The association, and its allies among agricultural interests like avocado and tomato growers in California, called for stronger labor and environmental agreements, a longer tariff phase-out period, and mechanisms to safeguard prices.[636]

Organized interests in the produce sector conflicted with the position of the National Farm Bureau, which represented the bulk of U.S. farmers in supporting NAFTA. Driven in large part by grain and corn growers who saw Mexico as a prime market, the Farm Bureau worked to sell the deal as an overall win for agriculture. Meanwhile, in Florida, the FFVA and other associations— some like the state's Farm Bureau defecting from their national organization's position— pressed to keep the state's critical congressional delegation on their side in what was expected to be a tight vote on NAFTA in Congress.[637]

Despite the breadth of resistance to the deal, in the final months of 1993, the Clinton administration prevailed over NAFTA's opponents by brokering side deals and making non-trade concessions to interest groups. While NAFTA's labor accord, which contained weak and cumbersome enforcement provisions, did not win over organized labor, the Clinton administration brought several mainstream environmental groups to its side by formalizing a similarly flawed side agreement on environmental standards with Mexico. It also found ways to allay resistance in Florida’s agricultural sector.[638]

Ultimately, with Florida's congressional votes potentially a deciding factor, agricultural interests used the Clinton administration's strategy of political bartering to maximize their bargaining

---

[635] See: Sheldon Friedman, "NAFTA as Social Dumping," *Challenge* 35, No. 5 (September? October 1992): 27.
[636] U.S. Senate, “How NAFTA Will Affect U.S. Agriculture," Hearing Before the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, First Session, September 21, 1993 (Washington D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1994), 127-8.
[637] David Orden, "Agricultural Interest Group Bargaining over the North American Free Trade Agreement," 73 in Anne O. Krueger, ed., *The Political Economy of Trade Protection* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
[638] Avery, "Domestic Interests in NAFTA Bargaining," 301-2.

power and soften the blow of NAFTA.[639] Initially, all but one member of Florida's congressional delegation opposed NAFTA, largely in deference to agriculture. To neutralize the growers' associations standing against NAFTA, Clinton administration officials moved the levers of government to provide Florida's agricultural sector with scores of giveaways. These concessions included: price and volume-based duties on Mexican citrus and tomatoes; a cap on Mexico's sugar quotas, a delay on the prohibition of the fumigant methyl bromide, an ozone-depleting pesticide and neurotoxicant widely used in Florida; funding for agricultural research; and a doubling of federal purchases of tomatoes and sweet corn for school lunches and food programs. In the week before the vote, Florida Citrus Mutual and the FFVA quietly withdrew their opposition to the deal. After a critical closed-door meeting, Florida's congressional delegation voted 13 to 23 in favor of passing NAFTA. NAFTA passed by a margin of 234 to 200 in the House and breezed through the Senate. In total, an estimated 30 votes on NAFTA switched in the House due to concessions to regional agricultural interests.[640]

NAFTA proved to be immediately disruptive to South Florida's agricultural sector after the deal went into effect in January 1994. U.S. investment in Mexico's export agricultural sector, combined with Mexico's 1994 Peso devaluation, fueled a stream of low-cost produce exports to the U.S. market. The FFVA reported that Florida's tomato shipments and market share fell steadily: in the 1992-3 winter season, Florida's growers enjoyed a 52 percent market share, a measure that fell to 35 percent in the 1995-6 season.[641] With Mexico exporting vegetables all year, many Everglades vegetable operations shut down.[642] According to an official with Florida Tomato Exchange, which

---

[639] See: William Gibson, "NAFTA May Hinge on Florida," *South Florida Sun- Sentinel*, November 17, 1993.

[640] Orden, "Agricultural Interest Group Bargaining over the North American Free Trade Agreement," 78-80; Avery, "Domestic Interests in NAFTA Bargaining," 303-4.

[641] Mexico's market share rose from 28 percent to nearly 50 percent in the same period. U.S. House of Representatives, "President's Comprehensive Review of the NAFTA," Hearing before the Subcommittee on Trade of the Committee on Ways and Means, 1st Session, September 11, 1997, 212-3.

[642] One of these was South Bay Growers, a U.S. Sugar subsidiary, which had pioneered the production of leaf vegetables

handled marketing for about 90 percent of Florida's tomato growers, its membership rolls fell from 230 in 1991 to fewer than 75 in 1997.[643]

After NAFTA, competition increased across most of the major crop categories in Florida. Between 1993 and 2000, farm acreage dedicated to vegetables in Florida declined over 10 percent. The state's iconic citrus industry also felt the squeeze of NAFTA, which contributed to an over 200 percent increase in fresh citrus imports from Mexico. Simultaneously, between 1993 and 2000, exports of Florida oranges dropped by nearly one-third.[644]

Yet, the state's powerful Big Sugar lobby managed to maintain the sector's charmed position in a highly-regulated sugar market by spending freely on bipartisan political donations. The U.S. Sugar Program and its multifaceted system of import quotas and guaranteed price support loans designed to maintain a floor on sugar prices survived NAFTA. Indeed, in negotiations around the 1996 Farm Bill, which saw Congress eliminate most agricultural subsidies to align with NAFTA, sugar interest successfully defended the program against challenges from free traders, food manufacturers that sought lower prices on sweeteners, and environmentalists incensed over the industry's pernicious impact on the Everglades.[645]

While NAFTA notably cut into Florida's growers' share of the fruit and vegetable market, it did not spell the end of the industry and even fueled an increase in corporate profits and an upward redistribution of wealth within the sector. In 1995, despite the grave forecasts coming from sectoral associations, Florida still produced more tomatoes on more acreage than in 1980.[646] Meanwhile, the

---

near Lake Okeechobee in the 1940s. Se: Robert McCabe, "South Bay Growers to Close," *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, July 7, 1994.

643 U.S. House of Representatives, "President's Comprehensive Review of the NAFTA," 218. See also: Helen Dewar, "Florida Torn Over 'Fast Track' Trade-offs," *Washington Post*, November 29, 1997.

644 "Down on the Farm: NAFTA's Seven-Years War on Farmers and Ranchers in Florida," *Public Citizen* (August 2001): 3; 5, accessed: https://www.citizen.org/wp-content/uploads/acf18b.pdf.

645 Gail M. Hollander, "Agricultural Trade Liberalization, Multifunctionality, and Sugar in the South Florida Landscape," *Geoforum* 35, Issue 3 (2004): 299-312.

646 U.S. House of Representatives, "H.R. 2795, Safeguard Investigations of Perishable Agricultural Products," Hearing

net income for all farms actually increased in the five years after NAFTA's implementation. As some 1,000 small and medium-sized farms in Florida shut down in that period, however, nearly all of those income gains were captured by large corporate farming operations.[647] As time passed, these successful firms further consolidated the state's agricultural sector and found new opportunities to expand throughout the United States and across borders.

The Everglades Forever with Big Sugar: The Perilous Course of Everglades Restoration

As NAFTA came into being, Florida's state government bent to pressure from environmentalists and litigators and undertook efforts to restore the Everglades. From the early 1990s, state and federal policymakers sought to build consensus among key stakeholders, including the agricultural sector, and develop plans to clean and improve water flow in the Everglades, enforce tougher standards on agricultural pollution, and reclaim developed land for restoration projects. While vegetable growers were most threatened by NAFTA, and the politics of trade and environmental restoration intertwined at times, sugar interests were the main target of environmentalists' critiques, as sugarcane fields most directly impeded water flow from Lake Okeechobee. Through the 1990s, the state and federal government committed billions of dollars to "saving" the Everglades, as environmentalists campaigned for more sweeping programs and new taxes on agricultural polluters. The high-water mark for restoration efforts was the passage of the federal Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) in 2000, a multi-billion-dollar Army Corps project designed to improve water flow through the Everglades ecosystem. Yet, throughout this period, Florida's sugar industry fought to preserve its footprint in the Everglades, spending freely on donations to state and national lawmakers in both parties. That sugar production in the Everglades persisted in much the same form after the CERP shows the profundity of the

---

Before the Subcommittee on Trade of the Committee on Ways and Means, House of Representatives, Second Session, April 25, 1996 (Washington, D.C. U.S. GPO), 94-7.
[647] "Down on the Farm," 2.

agricultural sector's influence and has made Everglades restoration into a case study of concentrated economic interests trumping environmental commitments.[648]

A major turning point for the Everglades environment came in 1991 when Democratic Governor Lawton Chiles appeared before a District Judge to unilaterally surrender in a federal lawsuit that he had inherited when he took office that year. Dexter Lehtinen, a U.S. Attorney and former Florida legislator, initiated the suit in 1988, charging state officials and the South Florida Water Management District with neglecting their obligations under the Clean Water Act to curb agricultural pollution in the Everglades. Chiles, who wished to redirect state resources from litigation to new restoration initiatives, brought an end to the three-year legal battle by ceremoniously laying down a sword in the courtroom and asking to come to a settlement with the federal government. After some negotiations, Chiles settled the suit by agreeing in a consent decree with the federal government to commit the state to a nearly $700 million plan to improve water flow in the Everglades and to enforce higher standards on agricultural pollution. Included in the settlement was a plan to buy 40,000 acres of agricultural land in the Everglades to create filtration marshes to collect and clean farm runoff before it flowed into the rest of the ecosystem.[649]

From the start, the prerogatives of industrial agricultural interests in the Everglades clashed with environmental goals. Environmentalists put a target on the Big Sugar—the moniker for the politically-influential sugar lobby in the state— led by the country's largest producers of cane sugar, U.S. Sugar, the Fanjul family's Flo-Sun Corporation, and the Florida Sugar Cane Growers Cooperative. As their cane fields mainly sat within the EAA, the highly engineered tract of

---

[648] See: William H. Rodgers Jr., "Deception, Self-Deception, and Myth: Evaluating Long-Term Environmental Settlements," *University of Richmond Law Review* 29, no. 3 (May 1995).

[649] Keith Schneider, "Returning Part of Everglades to Nature for $700 Million," *New York Times*, March 11, 1991; Yvonne Gsteiger, "A Clean Everglades—Near the Finish Line or Another Watery Mirage?," *ABA Trends* 25, No. 1 (September/ October 2013); See also: Cheryl Lynn Jamieson, "Protection of the Everglades Ecosystem: A Legal Analysis," *Pace Environmental Law Review* 6, no. 1 (Fall 1988): 23-78

agricultural land on the southern rim of Lake Okeechobee, sugar growers were among the largest consumers of the region's water and obstructed and polluted the southward flow of water through the Everglades. For the state to meet restoration targets, it needed to purchase major tracts of cane fields and convert them into wetlands. Foreshadowing the legal and political wrangling that would bedevil Everglades restoration efforts in the years to come, before the state even reached a settlement in 1991, growers' associations filed an unsuccessful lawsuit seeking to block negotiations with the federal government.[650]

Not satisfied with the scope of the state's commitment to improve water quality in the Everglades, environmental groups mobilized to expand restoration efforts and hold agricultural polluters accountable. Joe Podgor, then director of the Friends of the Everglades (FOE), the environmental advocacy group established by Marjory Stoneman Douglas, reflected many environmentalists' views on the settlement when he announced: "it should have been 100 percent farmer money to pay for the damage." As the settlement committed taxpayer money to the Everglades cleanup, activists felt that growers were getting off easy.[651] The Everglades Coalition, an alliance formed in 1986 of some 40 local and national environmental advocacy and conservation groups like the FOE, the Sierra Club, and the Audubon Society, advocated for a broader agenda of Everglades restoration. federal action, and corporate accountability. In 1993, the Coalition pushed the Clinton administration to undertake over 100 specific actions to undo 50 years of federal engineering and restore water flow through the interconnected Everglades environments from the Kissimmee River near Orlando, through the Everglades of South Florida, and into the Florida Keys. To achieve this vision, the Coalition called for the acquisition of over 100,000 acres of wetlands, including agricultural and residential land, and for sugar and vegetable growers to finance water

---

650 "Everglades Settlement is in Danger," *Tampa Bay Times*, August 10, 1991.
651 Anthony Depalma, "U.S. and Florida Settle Suit on Everglades Water," *New York Times*, July 12, 1991.

cleanup in tracts and waterways polluted by decades of agricultural runoff.[652]

Growers' long-time sweet deal in the Everglades had come at a high ecological cost. In the EAA, sugar firms, as well as produce growers, sod producers, and ranchers paid nothing to extract water from the Everglades outside of investments in pumping and irrigation equipment. Agricultural water users accounted for nearly 70 percent of all freshwater used in South Florida's water management district, which claimed the state's highest regional rate of freshwater consumption.[653] For decades sugar growers had also "back-pumped" excess water laced with fertilizers and pesticides from their fields into Lake Okeechobee and surrounding waterways, until that practice was banned in 1979. Still, phosphorous concentrations, the key ingredient in fertilizers, in Lake Okeechobee had approximately doubled between the 1970s and early 2000s and had altered the chemical makeup of the watershed. This degree of pollution led scientists to worry that Lake Okeechobee might soon become eutrophic, a toxic state in bodies of water caused by excess vegetation and plant decomposition starving out sunlight and oxygen, often caused by runoff nutrients from fertilizers fueling excess plant and algae growth.[654]

There was visible evidence that the Everglades' ecological health was dire. In a tract in Palm Beach County where sawgrass once thrived, nitrates and phosphates had encouraged the growth of some 20,000 acres of invasive cattails, which grow quickly and densely and hoard oxygen and water. In Lake Okeechobee, algae blooms and cattails spread across large swaths of the shoreline. Such

---

[652] House of Representatives, Joint Oversight Hearing before the Subcommittees on Oversight and Investigations and National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands of the Committee on Natural Resources and the Subcommittee on Environment and Natural Resources of the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, One Hundred Third Congress, "Efforts to Protect and Restore The Everglades Ecosystem with Special Emphasis on Florida Bay Florida," First Session, July 31, 1993 (Washington D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1993), 310-17; "Everglades Coalition" folder 1 1980-88, Box 70, Florida Defenders of the Environment, MS 204, Series 2, PKY.
[653] Richard L. Marella, "Water Use in Florida, 2005 and Trends 1950–2005," Fact Sheet 2008–3080, U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey (2006); Natalie Bauta, "Priceless: Would Putting a Small Price on Florida's Groundwater Help Stop Overpumping?" accessed October 2023, https://www.wuft.org/specials/water/pricing-floridas-groundwater/. See also: Carter, *The Florida Experience: Land and Water Policy in a Growth State*, 100.
[654] Davis, 'Conservation Is Now a Dead Word," 66-67; Egan, *The Devil's Element,* Chapter 8.

growth threatened to kill off fish by starving them of oxygen, dry up significant parts of the Everglades, and jeopardize the water supply to coastal cities.[655]

Big Sugar balked at suggestions they should pay for the cleanup or divest from agricultural land. Agricultural associations forwarded dire predictions that Everglades restoration would hurt the regional economy. As the state government sought to implement its legal settlement on the Everglades through legislation, sugar interests filed nearly a dozen more lawsuits to halt the state's plans to buy land for conservation areas and filtration marshes.[656]

Ultimately, however, Big Sugar came to the negotiating table with the state looking to make a deal. What likely motivated sugar growers to engage with the state on restoration was the threat that instead of coming to an agreement on the environment they could live with, growers would lose political backing for the U.S. Sugar Program and face an inhospitable open market. As legal challenges to Everglades restoration dragged on, the Clinton administration charged Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt with assisting the state government in negotiations with sugar growers and formulating policy. Environmentalists by this point, were also advocating for eliminating federal price supports and trade protections for sugar as a way to let market competition drive Big Sugar from the Everglades. With a deal on NAFTA on the horizon and trade liberalization a bipartisan priority, the idea garnered support from free traders and many policymakers like Babbitt.[657]

Understanding the business risk they faced, in 1993, the Fanjuls became the first among major sugar growers to seek compromise. The Fanjul brothers, Alfonso and José, were major players in the state's political scene and were infamous for their bipartisan political contributions, which

---

[655] James Carney, "Last Gasp for the Everglades-- A Surprise Lawsuit May Keep Florida's Wetlands from Choking on Pollution," *TIME Magazine* September 25, 1989; Mike Clary, Essential Florida Lake in Life-Death Struggle," *Los Angeles Times*, May 26, 1990.
[656] Carney, "Last Gasp for the Everglades;" Robert McClure and David Beard, " Kingdom of Cane," *Sun Sentinel*, October 20, 1996.
[657] Aaron Schwabach, "How Free Trade Can Save the Everglades," *Georgetown International Environmental Law Review* 14, 301 (2001): 306; 310. On Babbitt's support for cutting sugar subsidies, see: William Booth, "The Everglades Forever?" *Washington Post*, May 3, 1994.

grew after they took over the family's businesses after their father died in 1980. Alfonso served as the Clinton campaign's Florida co-chair in 1992, while José spent heavily for Republican candidates. Additionally, millions of dollars in political contributions flowed from the brothers, their relatives, and their corporate entities to state lawmakers from both political parties in the 1990s.[658] The political goodwill these donations generated served the Fanjuls well in negotiations with the state. Together, the Fanjuls marshaled their considerable influence to moderate resistance among Everglades growers and preserve industrial agriculture in the Everglades.

The bargain agricultural interests struck with the state on restoration came in the form of the 1994 Everglades Forever Act, the legal framework for implementing the state's consent decree. The new law mandated that sugar interests pay a capped annual tax, in total some $320 million, to improve water quality in the Everglades, including through new land acquisitions for water treatment areas. Yet, it made taxpayers responsible for the rest of the cleanup, set modest targets for reducing phosphorus contamination, and failed to mandate a deadline for achieving targets. In sum, the limited scope of regulations, land acquisitions, and agricultural taxation in the law ensured that Everglades growers mainly could conduct business as usual.[659]

After being overwhelmed by Big Sugar's influence during the formulation of the Everglades Forever Act, environmentalists led new campaigns to make agricultural polluters pay and pushed for an expanded federal role in restoration efforts. Forming a new campaign outfit, Save Our Everglades, environmental groups launched a multi-year ballot initiative campaign to win two amendments to the state constitution that would impose a penny-per-pound tax on Florida sugar

---

[658] See: Dwight L. Morris, "Playing it Safe," *Washington Post*, June 10, 1996; McClure and Beard, " Kingdom of Cane"; Katherine Mohr, "How Sweet It Isn't: Big Sugar's Power Politics and the Fate of the Florida Everglades," *Florida A&M University Law Review* 7 (2015): 339.

[659] Booth, "The Everglades Forever?"; Max Kirsch, "The Politics of Exclusion: Place and The Legislation of The Environment in The Florida Everglades," *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 32, No. 1 (2003): 103; Rodgers Jr., "Deception, Self-Deception, and Myth: Evaluating Long-Term Environmental Settlements," 567; 580.

producers for restoration and require that agricultural polluters pay their full share of state water cleanup programs. The cause of the Everglades drew in high-profile celebrities, financiers, and politicians. Even Marjorie Stoneman Douglas herself, at over 100 years old, served as a key spokesperson for the state's environmental movement and lent her name to the efforts.[660]

Concurrently, the Clinton administration escalated federal action to restore the Everglades and came out in favor of a comprehensive plan to finally "save" the Everglades. Within the executive branch, Vice-President Al Gore championed the cause, in part to bolster the administration's environmental bona fides in an election year. In early 1996, Gore announced in the Everglades National Park a new $1.5 billion program to purchase 100,000 acres of land to improve water flow in the Everglades. During the speech, he also endorsed the penny-per-pound ballot initiative, calling on the "sugar industry to contribute its fair share to this historic plan."[661]

Putting these funds to work, the next year, the administration paid $133 million to buy the Talisman Sugar Company from its parent company, the St. Joe Corporation. The acquisition of Talisman was a major step forward in restoration as it included 50,000 acres of farmland in the heart of the Everglades that the government could use for conservation and water storage. Yet, the deal was also an anomaly, as St. Joe had long desired to divest from the sector and solicited federal officials to purchase Talisman. Big Sugar, meanwhile, roundly rejected the move. The Flo-Sun and U.S. Sugar Corporation both sought to buy the land before a deal went through, and unsuccessfully sued to stop the sale. Nevertheless, both companies secured multi-year leasing rights to parcels of the land, which halted the initiation of water improvement projects for several years.[662]

---

[660] Amy Green, *Moving Water: The Everglades and Big Sugar* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 115-119; Elizabeth Wilson, "Glades Icon Calls Law a Blunder," *Tampa Bay Times*, March 3, 1994.

[661] "Statement by Vice President Al Gore Announcing a New Plan to Restore the Florida Everglades," The White House, Office of the President, February 19, 1996, https://clintonwhitehouse3.archives.gov/CEQ/Record/021996speech.html.

[662] John H. Cushman Jr., "Land Purchase to Help Restore the Everglades," *New York Times*, December 7, 1997; "Big Sugar's Tough Stance Aids Glades," *South Florida Sun Sentinel*, December 14, 1997; "Large Sugar Growers to Give Up Land Parcel to Glades Project," *Sarasota Heral Tribune*, April 30, 2004.

Overall, Big Sugar's influence remained profound in the fight over the Everglades. Infamously, Alfonso Fanjul expressed his dissatisfaction with Gore's advocacy for a sugar tax during a phone call with Clinton, which later became public when Monica Lewinsky testified during investigations into Clinton before his impeachment that he took the call with her in the room. As the 1996 election approached, the administration muted its support for a sugar tax.[663]

At the level of state politics, in 1996, Florida's voters considered the ballot initiatives on taxing sugar and agricultural polluters and sugar interests spent heavily to defeat them—ultimately winning on the more impactful "penny-per-pound" question. The ballot fights proved to be the most expensive in state history at the time, as agricultural associations and environmental groups unleashed over $36 million in political spending. In its public relations campaign, U.S. Sugar paid its employees to canvass thousands of Florida households to argue against the proposed tax, which would have cost growers an estimated $900 million.[664] Although the "polluter pays" amendment to the state constitution passed, which mandated that the agricultural firms tied to water pollution would be held "primarily responsible" for its clean-up, state legislators refused to implement it with enabling legislation. Finally, in 2003, the legislature passed a modest new capped tax on sugarcane acreage, neutralizing the amendment's intent, and declared the job done.[665]

Even so, upon reelection, the Clinton administration persisted in developing a comprehensive federal Everglades restoration plan. From 1997-1999, the administration empowered the leadership of Army Corps of Engineers and Interior Department officials to coordinate with dozens of federal, state, and local agencies and devise a plan for the embattled ecosystem. The administration sent its complex Everglades restoration proposal to Congress in 1999, where Gore

663 See: Donald L. Barlett and James B. Steele, "Corporate Welfare: Sweet Deal," *TIME Magazine*, November 23, 1998.
664 David Olinger, "Sugar Growers Beat Penny-a-Pound Tax," *Tampa Bay Times*, November 6, 1996; Ted Levin, "Bitter Sweets: A Politically Connected Industry Devastates the Everglades." *Earth Action Network* 14, no. 4 (2003): 34.
665 Mary Ellen Klas, "Sugar's Decades-Long Hold Over Florida Everglades Came with a Price," Tampa Bay Times, July 16, 2016.

served as its lead promoter.[666]

By 2000, under the bipartisan banner of saving America's Everglades, congressional lawmakers passed CERP, the most expensive environmental restoration project in U.S. history. The law, which Clinton signed as the Supreme Court heard challenges to Florida's 2000 election results, empowered the Army Corps to rework the plumbing of the Everglades once again at a cost of $8.2 billion.[667] Resting on unproven technological assumptions, CERP contained some 60 projects to be led by the Army Corps designed to "get the water right" over 18,000 square miles. In the years to come, the Corps undertook projects that ranged from installing water storage and treatment areas to preserving threatened habitats.[668]

Nonetheless, CERP did not fundamentally change the power dynamics that had long defined Everglades politics. "Restoration" largely served as a stand-in for an updated vision of water management, and moneyed agricultural interests and developers obstructed, reshaped, and delayed CERP projects. Keystone plans to build a massive reservoir in the EAA to capture and filter water from Lake Okeechobee before its dispersal throughout the southern Everglades remains unfulfilled. Moreover, sugar growers have declined to sell off land for restoration. Since 2000, the timeline for the project has extended from 30 to 50 years and cost estimates for completing CERP have ballooned to $23.3 billion.[669]

There has further been little accountability for agricultural polluters. According to a 2012

---

[666] Tom Kenworthy, "Pumping Billions into the Everglades," *Washington Post*, July 1, 1999.
[667] CERP passed by margins of 394 to 14 in the House and 82 to 1 in the Senate. Grunwald, *The Swamp*, 346; 50-2.
[668] Mohr, "How Sweet It Isn't," 342. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, "Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan," 1-2, accessed, npshistory.com/brochures/ever/fs-cerp.pdf; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, "Overview: Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP)," Fact Sheet, July 2018. For an overview of the project's history and ongoing programs, see: "Restoring America's Everglades: Restoring, Preserving, and Protecting the South Florida Ecosystem," National Park Service and Office of Everglades Restoration Initiatives, May 27, 2022, accessed, https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/dfd3e4261602415683015a919dfbafec.
[669] Notably, U.S. Sugar walked away from a $1.75 billion deal brokered by Gov. Charlie Crist in 2008 to buy the company's nearly 300 square miles of Everglades land. Green, *Moving Water*, 166-70; Anna E. Normand and Pervaze A. Sheikh, "Recent Developments in Everglades Restoration," Congressional Research Service, August 30, 2022, accessed, https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11336; Greg Allen, "Whatever Happened to The Deal to Save The Everglades?" *NPR*, October 10, 2013.

study, 76 percent of phosphorus found in the southern Everglades was linked to agriculture, but through various tax loopholes and deductions, industrial growers have paid for only 24 percent of the costs of cleanup.[670] All the while, sugar production continues in the EAA, as periodic algae blooms, the spread of invasive flora and fauna, and habitat failure plague the Everglades.

The Corporate Food System in the New Millennium: From Above and Below

At the end of the 20th century, the corporate food system saw corporate agribusiness and food buyers in the Americas recalibrate production practices, business holdings, and supply chains to capitalize on new trading and market conditions. Trade policy and changing environmental priorities had diminished the stature of Everglades agriculture and its part in upholding the U.S. food supply. Nevertheless, in response to international competition and uncertain environmental terrain, instead of selling off their acreage, many large South Florida agribusinesses further embraced diversification, expansion, and transnational modes of agricultural production. In a globalizing food system, they entrenched their Everglades operations in diversified, transnational agricultural portfolios, distancing the corporate management of production from place. From South Florida to Dominican sugar plantations, to new agro-industrial hubs emerging in Mexico and beyond, these firms joined a transnational agglomeration of corporate growers and traders that serviced the supply chains of major supermarkets, fast food companies, and food brands. As new opportunities emerged in a globalizing, hemispheric agricultural sector, top growers and traders profited while reshaping distant landscapes and spreading industrial farm labor control techniques. Viewed from below, however, rural communities and an increasingly transitional farm labor workforce carried the negative externalities of the globalizing food system in terms of rural displacement, ecological degradation, and labor exploitation.

Although Everglades restoration efforts and NAFTA had belied historical justifications for

---

[670] Klas, "Sugar's Decades-Long Hold Over Florida Everglades Came with a Price."

corporate agriculture in the Everglades, and pushed many growers to divest from the sector, the most successful firms tied to the region adapted to their changing operating environment. In Florida, profits could still be made. Indeed, the agro-chemical giant Monsanto was bullish enough on the market that it doubled its land holdings in the state to produce genetically-modified tomatoes.[671] Other growers moved to producing different commodities less exposed to foreign competition or shifted to the nursery, ranching, or sod business. Consolidation also proved to blunt market competition. By the end of the decade, the top ten tomato growers in Florida accounted for 70 percent of production.[672]

From the Everglades, some of the largest firms also expanded operations in the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Europe. The Fanjuls were early adopters of this strategy to mitigate risk and secure global influence in the sugar market. Their acquisition of the 166,000-acre Central Romana sugar plantation from Gulf and Western in the 1980s had made them the largest landholders and employers in the Dominican Republic. Over time, it also allowed the family to ship over 200 million pounds of sugar annually from the Dominican Republic and claim nearly two-thirds of that country's sugar import quota to the United States.[673]

Industry cooperation in the sugar sector also fueled global expansion. In 1998, the relationship between the Fanjul family and the Sugar Cane Growers Cooperative of Florida under the leadership of George Wedgworth bore fruit when they entered into a formal partnership and began a series of acquisitions under a new conglomerate called the American Sugar Refining (ASR) Group. The ASR Group went on to collect sugar mills in Mexico and Belize and major refineries

---

[671] U.S. House of Representatives, "H.R. 2795, Safeguard Investigations of Perishable Agricultural Products," Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Trade of the Committee on Ways and Means, House of Representatives, Second Session, April 25, 1996 (Washington, D.C. U.S. GPO), 94-7; Charles Lunan, "Monsanto Picking its Spots," South Florida Sun-Sentinel, March 1, 1996.

[672] "Like Machines in the Fields: Workers without Rights in American Agriculture," Report, *Oxfam America* (March 2004): 36

[673] See: Brenner, "In the Kingdom of Big Sugar;" Sandy Tolan with Euclides Cordero Nuel, "The High Human Cost of America's Sugar Habit," *Mother Jones*, September 17, 2021.

and brands like Domino Sugar and the U.K. firm Tate and Lyle. The ASR Group is today the world's largest integrated sugar business.[674]

Of course, the U.S. Sugar program continued to subsidize the profitability of Big Sugar and extract a high price from U.S. consumers and taxpayers. Through the 1990s, the U.S. Sugar Program maintained the U.S. per-pound price of raw sugar twice that of global sugar prices and obligated the federal government to buy and warehouse domestic sugar to maintain a price floor on the commodity. This kept Florida's sugar magnates rich and, likewise, facilitated expansion: on an annual basis, the U.S. Sugar Corporation took in $55 million in price supports while the Fanjul's Flo-Sun company took in $65 million.[675] In one study, agricultural economists estimated the termination of the program would save consumers up to $3.5 billion each year.[676]

Yet, farmworkers and communities continued to pay the highest costs for sugar production in terms of their health, livelihoods, and freedoms. The Dominican Republic's sugar sector was almost entirely dependent on Haitian migrant labor to cut cane. From the late 1930s to 1986, the Dominican state and military actively conscripted and coerced Haitian laborers into contract labor programs to harvest sugar. On isolated *batays*, sugar mill-owned outpost towns and labor camps, Haitians often lived for generations in poverty and without citizenship, under the watch of company guards, as forced and child labor abounded on sugar plantations. Once private recruitment became the norm in the late 1980s, the military and police still conspired with companies' agents to drive Haitians to the sugar fields. Besides being subject to physical coercion, canecutters found themselves in conditions of forced labor due to the prevalence in the sector of deceptive contracts, subminimum wages based on piece rates, and mounting debt from fees tied to transport, housing,

---

[674] Johnson, "George Wedgworth: Fifty years of Progress for Florida Sugar Cane"; "About Us," ASR Group, accessed October 2023, https://www.asr-group.com/about-us/our-owners.
[675] Schwabach, "How Free Trade Can Save the Everglades," 306; Brenner, "In the Kingdom of Big Sugar."
[676] John C. Beghin and Amani Elobeid, "The Impact of the U.S. Sugar Program Redux, "Faculty Publications: Agricultural Economics, University of Nebraska, Lincoln (May 2013): 1-2.

and provisions. The deplorable labor standards in the Dominican sugar sector prompted activist campaigns and investigations from the International Labour Organization and the U.S. DOL beginning in the 1990s.[677] On the Central Romana holdings— where the company acted as a state onto itself, controlling some 100 batays, as well as railroads, security forces, and infrastructure— exploitative recruitment and labor practices, as well as the forced deportations of problem workers, also persisted. Nevertheless, Central Romana, as part of the ASR Group, regularly sent shiploads of sugar from the Dominican Republic to the iconic Domino Sugar refinery in Baltimore, where it was refined and packaged or sold in bulk to commercial bakeries and confectionery producers, including Hersey's Chocolate.[678]

Outside of sugar supply chains, major Florida produce firms also entered the global arena. Many industrial producers adapted to changing market conditions through expansion and diversification, in some cases capitalizing on liberal trade provisions created by NAFTA. A. Duda and Sons, for one, opened a real estate development arm, expanded citrus production, made investments in Mexico and Australia, and acquired operations in Texas, California, Arizona, Michigan, and Georgia. The firm also contracted with U.S. farms, and citrus operations in Chile, Uruguay, Argentina, Peru, and Morocco to process and market their produce to companies like Wal-

[677] "Half Measures: Reform, Forced Labor and the Dominican Sugar Industry," Human Rights Watch and the National Coalition for Haitian Refugees (March 1991), 1-4; Samuel Martinez, "From Hidden Hand to Heavy Hand: Sugar, the State, and Migrant Labor in Haiti and the Dominican Republic," *Latin American Research Review* 34, no.1 (1999): 70-75. See also: "Public Report of Review of U.S. Submission 2011-03 (Dominican Republic)," Office of Trade and Labor Affairs, Bureau of International Labor Affairs, U.S. DOL, September 27, 2013. https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/legacy/files/20130926DR.pdf.

[678] Tolan with Cordero Nuel, "The High Human Cost of America's Sugar Habit;" Sandy Tolan and Euclides Cordero Nuel, "Paramilitary-Style Guards Instill Fear in Workers in Dominican Cane Fields, *The Intercept*, October 14. 2022, accessed, https://theintercept.com/2022/10/14/dominican-sugar-central-romana-fanjul-domino/. In 2022, U.S. Customs imposed an order under the Tariff Act of 1930, which prohibits the importation of goods made with slave labor, blocking the importation of the company's sugar due to its ties to forced labor. CBP found that Central Romana violated "five of the International Labour Organization's 11 indicators of forced labor . . . abuse of vulnerability, isolation, withholding of wages, abusive working and living conditions, and excessive overtime." See: U.S. Customs and Border Protection, "CBP Issues Withhold Release Order on Central Romana Corporation Limited," Press Release, November 23, 2022.

Mart under Duda brand labels.[679] In time, members of the Florida Tomato Exchange, some of the most vocal critics of NAFTA, even contracted with Mexican firms and invested in transnational processing and marketing operations.[680] Expansion in Mexico allowed the largest U.S. firms operating in Florida, like Dimare Fresh, to market proprietary-branded fresh fruits and vegetables to retail buyers year-round at a low price. Pacific Tomato Growers, another major Florida operator, invested heavily in shipping and packing technology to draw from "mirror" facilities in Florida and Sinaloa and Baja California to bring uniform tomatoes to consumers across U.S. markets.[681]

Into the 2000s, transnational contract farming and investments in irrigation technology, greenhouses, and packing facilities bolstered the reliability and quality of Mexican produce. With foreign capital, state water control projects, and the availability of low-wage migrant farmworkers, industrial, export-oriented farms in Western Mexico expanded and transported fruits and vegetables passed through Nogales, Arizona, and other major North American produce exchanges.[682] Concurrently, to support the cultivation of fresh produce, industrial growers' use of pesticides and herbicides grew in Mexico, as did their intensive water use in arid regions.[683] Agricultural commodity exports from Mexico, therefore, embodied a massive transfer of water and resources from arid regions of Mexico north to the United States.[684]

These developments in Mexico's agricultural sector, in large part, realized the warnings of

---

[679] Cynthia Barnett, "Keys to Survival," *Florida Trend*, September 1, 2006; Duda Fresh Farm Foods, "Duda Farm Fresh Foods Brings Imported Citrus to the U.S. for the 17th Season," Press Release, July 30, 2019, accessed, https://www.dudafresh.com/news/duda-farm-fresh-foods-brings-imported-citrus-to-the-u.s.-for-the-17th-season; "Ferdinand Duda; Family Built Agribusiness Giant," *Los Angeles Times*, September 21, 1996.

[680] From the Exchange, Lipman Produce, Pacific Growers, Procacci Brothers (Ag-Mart), and DiMare Fresh are notable examples of this. See: Tom Karst, "Tomato Leaders Spar before the International Trade Commission," *The Packer*, October 29, 2019; "Pacific Tomato bumping up grape tomato production in Mexico," *The Produce News*, December 17, 2013. "DiMare Indio Fills Supply Gap with Lemons from Mexico," *Perishable News*, August 4, 2015.

[681] "Pacific Tomato bumping up grape tomato production in Mexico," *The Produce News*, December 17, 2013.

[682] Zlolniski, *Made in Baja*, 4-9; 44-48; Stephen, *Transborder Lives*, 124-7.

[683] Silvina J. Vilas-Ghiso; Diana M. Liverman, "Scale, Technique and Composition Effects in the Mexican Agricultural Sector: The Influence of NAFTA and the Institutional Environment," *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics* 7, no. 2 (June 2007): 138; 165.

[684] Sterling Evans, "Baja and Beyond: Toward an Environmental and Transnational history of the Tomato Industry in Baja California," 161 in Evans, ed., *Farming Across Borders*.

NAFTA's critics about "social dumping," as U.S. distributors and retailers profited from the low-cost vegetables and fruits produced on Mexican farms with fewer environmental and labor regulations and lower wages. In a hearing before lawmakers, Tirso Moreno, Director of the Farmworkers Association of Florida, pledged his solidarity with the farmworkers of Mexico, while identifying NAFTA as "just another trick for agricultural interests to . . . move to some poor place in Mexico where land is cheap, and they can pay workers a few dollars a day." For Moreno, NAFTA empowered corporate growers to move production at will chasing low wages in a race to the bottom, essentially "continuing the bracero program without importing the labor."[685]

Although NAFTA's backers had expected the trade agreement to promote development, social stability, and employment in Mexico, the liberalization of land policy and the influx of U.S. corn exports in Mexico proved to be significant drivers of displacement. In 1992, Mexico formalized a constitutional amendment that allowed for the private ownership of communal ejidos for the first time since the Mexican Revolution, which encouraged the privatization of over half of Mexico's land base.[686] Cheap and subsidized U.S. corn exports subsequently flooded the Mexican market, drove down the price of corn, and washed out smallholders. Export dumping and corporate enclosures of rural landscapes in Mexico displaced rural communities and generated migration. Nearly 5 million smallholders left the land between 1991 and 2007, as the seasonal migrant workforce in Mexico's export agricultural sector increased by approximately 3 million.[687]

The case of the rise of industrial farming for export in the San Quintin Valley, a desert farming region in Baja California, is instructive of how displacement and transnational investment

---

[685] "Hearings and Workshops Before the Commission on Agricultural Workers 1989-1993," Appendix II to Accompany the Report of the Commission, Volume I (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Commission on Agricultural Workers, 1993), 621-2.
[686] Rodolfo García Zamora, "Crisis, NAFTA, and International Migration: From Massive Migration to Growing Repatriation," *International Journal of Political Economy* 42, No. 2 (2014): 29-33.
[687] Mark Weisbrot, Lara Merling, Vitor Mello, Stephan Lefebvre, and Joseph Sammut, "Did NAFTA Help Mexico? An Update After 23 Years," *Center for Economic and Policy Research* (March 2017): 3, accessed, https://cepr.net/images/stories/reports/nafta-mexico-update-2017-03.pdf?v=2.

remade markets, communities, and landscapes in this period of economic liberalization. As deregulation opened up Mexico, to foster off-season production, U.S. growers and traders began to invest in San Quintin, which offered an abundance of land and labor, state subsidies for irrigation and desalination plants, and a climate ideal for growing fresh produce like tomatoes, berries, and peppers. Major agricultural distributors like Driscoll's and Andrews and Williamson developed contract systems with Mexican growers in which U.S. firms marketed and distributed produce and provided greenhouse and irrigation technology, capital, and seeds, while their Mexican counterparts managed labor, the land, and production.[688] These commercial relationships supported the transformation of the San Quintín valley into a networked and highly-capitalized commodity-producing region and a leading exporter to the United States of cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers, and berries, produce destined to fill the shelves of retailers like Wal-Mart, Whole Foods, and Safeway.[689] The growth of industrial farms in San Quintin, moreover, concentrated land and profit among a handful of 10 to 12 powerful corporate agricultural firms that grew to control the export market and labor force in the region, as well as the majority of the valley's arable land.[690]

Rural dislocation provided San Quintín's growers with an ample labor supply. Tens of thousands of Indigenous workers, men, and women from Southern Mexican states like Oaxaca, Puebla, and Chiapas, who in the past generally migrated for seasonal work to supplement

---

[688] Christian Zlolniski, "Growers, Unions, and Farm Laborers in Mexico's Baja California" in E. Paul Durrenberger, ed., *Uncertain Times: Anthropological Approaches to Labor in a Neoliberal World* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2017), 152; Christian Zlolniski, "Economic Globalization and Changing Capital-Labor Relations in Baja California's Fresh-Produce Industry" in Durrenberger and Reichart, *The Anthropology of Labor Unions* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2010), 159.

[689] Richard Marosi, "Hardship on Mexico's Farms, a Bounty for U.S. Tables," *Los Angeles Times*, December 7, 2014.; Manos Spyridakis, *Market Versus Society: Anthropological Insights* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 249. By 2015, San Quintín ranked first in the export of cucumbers and second in tomatoes to the U.S. The region is also a growing leader in strawberries and blueberries exports.

[690] While there are more than 15,000 producers in Baja California, very few compete in export agriculture, where 10 to 12 ranches control the market and much of the labor force. AFL-CIO, Corporate Strategic Research on "Strawberry Industry," 2015. In author's files. See also: Agustín Escobar Latapí, Elisa Alejandra Martínez Rubio and Diana Haidé López, "Industrial Agriculture and Working and Living Conditions in San Quintín, Baja California, Mexico," Jornaleros *en la Agricultura Mexicana de Exportación*, Wilson Center, Regional Notebook Series 3 (November 2021).

subsistence farming, began to settle in San Quintín in the 1980s and 90s. Migrant families moved from seasonal labor camps to more-permanent homes in informal settlements near production zones, known as colonias, to take advantage of the longer periods of work made possible by greenhouse cultivation, irrigation improvements, and other industrial farming techniques. As the population of the valley grew from 8,500 in 1970 to over 90,000 in the early 2000s, migration brought diversity and social change to San Quintín.[691] The expanding workforce in San Quintín also faced resource challenges and social and labor strife.

While industrial agriculture generated employment in San Quintín, it also extracted high costs from workers, communities, and the environment. In the fields, through the 1990s, growers adopted U.S. management techniques to improve productivity, including the use of subcontracting arrangements to enhance labor flexibility and piece-rate wages to encourage faster work. In the colonias, a lack of infrastructure, land access, and water scarcity were persistent problems. In the 1980s and 1990s, workers organized to occupy land and compel the government to provide basic services and reliable drinking water in the colonias and led demonstrations for higher wages and improved working conditions.[692] Nevertheless, intensive, specialized agriculture extracted groundwater at approximately six times the sustainable limits, as a 2001 study found, and contributed to saltwater intrusion in the aquifer that limited communities' access to clean water. As industrial farming grew and profited in San Quintín, the imposition of systems of labor control expanded, as did competition for water between farms, communities, and native habitats.[693]

---

[691] Zlolniski, "Growers, Unions, and Farm Laborers in Mexico's Baja California," 152-3; "San Quintín: Una region marcada por la migracion y la lucha por la identidad," El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 2015, accessed October 2023, https://www.colef.mx/estemes/de-jornaleros-a-colonos-residencia-trabajo-e-identidad-en-el-valle-de-san-Quintín /
[692] Christian Zlolniski, "Water Flowing North of the Border: Export Agriculture and Water Politics in a Rural Community in Baja California," *Cultural Anthropology* 26, no. 4 (2011): 566.
[693] Sula Vanderplank, Exequiel Ezcurra, Jose Delgadillo, Richard Felge, and Lucinda A. McDade, "Conservation challenges in a Threatened Hotspot: Agriculture and Plant Biodiversity Losses in Baja California, Mexico," *Biodiversity and Conservation* 23, no. 9 (2014): 2173–2182; Alfonso Aguirre-Muñoz, Robert W. Buddemeier, Victor Camacho-Ibar, et al., "Sustainability of Coastal Resource Use in San Quintin, Mexico," *AMBIO* 30, no. 3 (2001): 142-9.

The migrants of San Quintín worked and moved within a broader transnational labor market and migration and recruitment networks that encompassed farms in Baja California and Sinaloa, maquila manufacturing centers on the U.S.-Mexico border, and agricultural hubs in the United States. Mexican migrant families often moved from jobs in regions like San Quintín to harvesting jobs along the U.S. West coast, or engaged recruiters to secure agricultural guestworker visas. Of course, migrants also sought out work in farming regions in Texas, the East Coast, and Florida.[694]

South Florida and its agricultural sector continued to be a magnet for migrants seeking work opportunities and refuge and a node in these hemispheric migratory networks in this period. Florida was, in fact, the top destination in the U.S. South and on the East Coast in the 1990s for migrants from Mexico, with many more coming from rural Central and Southern Mexico than in the past.[695] In rural South Florida, Mexican migrants entered a diverse farm labor market alongside other migrant groups, many who fled from deadly violence and political conflict in Haiti and Central America. Tens of thousands of Haitians escaped to Florida to leave behind the murderous, U.S.-backed Jean-Claude Duvalier dictatorship and persistent instability, poverty, and violence on the island in the decades after his fall in 1986. By the 1990s, after years of civil wars and repression on the Isthmus, South Florida had also become a top three destination in the United States for thousands of Central American asylum seekers.[696] Yet, life in South Florida presented its challenges, including stiff job competition, abuse at work, and enhanced policing and criminalization by immigration authorities.[697]

---

[694] Stephen, *Transborder Lives*, 124; García Zamora, "Crisis, NAFTA, and International Migration," 29-30; Massey, Rugh, and Pren, "The Geography of Undocumented Mexican Migration," 4-5.
[695] Ronald L. Mize, Alicia C. S. Swords, *Consuming Mexican Labor from the Bracero Program to NAFTA* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 160; Massey, et al., "The Geography of Undocumented Mexican Migration," 4-5.
[696] U.S. House of Representatives, "Central American Asylum-Seekers," Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees, and International Law of the Committee on the Judiciary, 101st Congress, First Session, Vol. 4, March 9, 1989, 52-55.
[697] On agribusiness consolidation, migration, and migrant workers after NAFTA, see: David Griffith, "Work and Immigration: Winter Vegetable Production in South Florida" in Mark Rosenberg, ed., *Poverty or Development? Global Restructuring and Regional Transformations in the U.S. South and the Mexican South* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 172-4.

Opportunity Lost and New Forms of Immigrant Punishment

Immigrants who arrived in South Florida from the late 1980s through the 1990s entered communities grappling with immigration authorities' increasingly harsh policing and detention practices. In this period, IRCA and subsequent laws and policies bolstering enforcement criminalized tens of thousands of farmworkers and locked them into a legally and socially constructed outsider, "illegal" status. Although IRCA had offered a path to legal status, through both a general amnesty and the SAW program, guestworkers and those undocumented immigrants who entered the United States after the law's passage had little hope for the provision of future regularization programs in a climate of rising nativism. In the agricultural sector, which historically offered limited social mobility, farmworkers saw opportunity further evaporate and experienced social and economic marginalization. Life for new immigrants was made especially difficult in South Florida as the U.S. government used the region as a proving ground to test new technologies of immigrant policing, punishment, and incarceration on its way to building the world's largest immigrant incarceration system.[698]

In February 1991 in West Palm Beach, farmworkers, lawyers, and organizers testified before the U.S. Commission on Agricultural Workers to the disastrous fall out of IRCA, including the pain wrought by its narrow pathways to legalization and expansion of immigration enforcement. The Commission, an expert investigatory body established by Congress to examine the impact of IRCA on farmworkers and employers, traveled the country from 1989 to 1993 to hear from stakeholders in major agricultural communities.[699] In South Florida, growers and associations like the FFVA mainly used their time to lobby for more H-2A visas, the post-IRCA agricultural guestworker visa.

---

[698] Shalini Goel Agarwal, Sawyeh Esmaili, Maia Fleischman, Jessica Shulruff Schneider and Leslie Vallarta, "Prison by Any Other Name: A Report of South Florida Detention Facilities," Southern Poverty Law Center (2019), 5.
[699] U.S. Commission on Agricultural Workers, *Report of the Commission on Agricultural Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Commission on Agricultural Workers, 1993), 2-5. See also: Philip Martin, "The CAW at 30, Wilson Center, September 29, 2020. https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/caw-30.

Meanwhile, farmworkers and advocates explained how IRCA's provisions had undermined farmworkers' upward mobility. On this point, Daniel Azemar, the leader of a Haitian diaspora organization in Miami, stated: "We have taken the ladder away from farmworkers. . . Illegal status, sometimes just an accent, or the shade of one's skin trap newcomers and their children permanently at the bottom."[700]

From the start, IRCA offered little to guestworkers, who engaged in circular migration to Florida's cane fields year after year, or those workers who would cross borders in the future under the H-2A program. Although lawmakers intended to include longtime H-2 workers in the SAW program and, after the passage of IRCA, 6,459 Jamaican cane cutters applied for legalization. Yet, Florida's sugar growers—fearing that permanent legal status for H-2 workers would cause growers to lose control over their seasonal, visa-contingent workforce— challenged their inclusion in the SAW legalization program. Their technical objection was based on the grounds that IRCA restricted SAW eligibility to those working in "perishable commodities," as defined by the USDA.[701] Under pressure from Big Sugar, and counter to legislative intent, the USDA's labor head Al French, who had previously worked for the Florida Farm Bureau, ruled sugarcane to be a nonperishable crop and derailed the legalization process for Jamaican canecutters, some of whom had already received green cards[702]. For future guestworkers, agricultural interests worked to limit protections. In the early 1990s, the FFVA argued to lawmakers that IRCA's legalization and enforcement provisions had pushed farmworkers from the fields and caused labor shortages. To counter these challenges,

---

[700] "Hearings and Workshops Before the Commission on Agricultural Workers 1989-1993," 627. On the lobbying effort from agricultural interests to expand H-2A visas in the context of farmworkers' declining opportunities, see: Jon Nordheimer, "Migrant Farm Workers' Unexpected Worry: New Alien Law," *New York Times*, May 12, 1988.

[701] See: Jeffery Weiss, "Sugar Cane Workers Fight Resident Rule, *Miami Herald*, July 29, 1987, and related clippings in RL.00035, Box 29, Sugar Cane Workers Suit 1 1989, Americans for Immigrant Justice, Human Rights Archive, Rubenstein Library, Duke University (Hereafter, RLDU); Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land*, 214.

[702] U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, Northwest Forest Workers Association, Jack Viscardi, et al. v. Richard E. Lyng, Secretary of Agriculture, et al., Class Action No. 87-1487, Memorandum of Points and Authorities in Support of Application for Preliminary Injunction, 1988, RL.00035, Box 29, Sugar Cane Workers Suit 1989, Americans for Immigrant Justice, RLDU; Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land*, 207-8; 213-16; Brenner, "In the Kingdom of Big Sugar."

according to the FFVA, a dramatic expansion of the H-2A program, alongside a paring down of guestworker recruitment and labor regulations, was needed.[703]

Meanwhile, FRLS, the NAACP, and public interest lawyers redoubled efforts in a largely unsuccessful campaign to win back wages for guestworkers who were cheated by sugar growers in decades past. In 1989, lawyers filed class action lawsuits against Florida's largest sugar interests, including U.S. Sugar, the Fanjuls' Flo-Sun corporation, and the Florida Sugar Cane Growers Coop.[704] At the core of the lawsuits was the argument that growers failed to pay H-2 canecutters the adverse wage rate—the minimum wage DOL set in the H-2 program to encourage the hiring of U.S. workers. As a standard practice, growers paid by a "task rate" that measured workers' remuneration by the number of rows of sugar cane cut per hour, with a row reported to be the equivalent of one ton of cane. Company foremen set the standard that workers cut eight rows of cane in a day. Because rows of sugar cane varied in tonnage, however, workers often cut more than eight tons of cane a day and were not receiving DOL's adverse wage rate based on the daily task rate. In August 1992, a Florida judge ordered growers to pay some 20,000 workers $1,000 to $1,500 in back wages, $52 million in total. While U.S. Sugar sought "labor peace" by paying out a $5.6 million settlement and adopting a higher task rate, the Fanjuls and the Cooperative appealed the ruling. After a long and complex legal battle, the sugar companies won jury trials on appeal and H-2 workers were denied justice and back wages.[705]

Fed up with litigation and resistant to wage hikes, South Florida's sugar interests did what they had long claimed would be technologically unworkable: mechanized the sugar cane harvest. By

---

703 U.S. Congress, "Agricultural Guest Worker Programs," Joint Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Risk Management and Specialty Crops of the Committee on Agriculture and the Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims of the Committee on the Judiciary, First Session, December 14, 1992 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1996), 181-85.
704 See: Okeelanta Corp. v. Bygrave, Florida District Court of Appeal, Nos. 92-2773, 92-2792 and 92-2807 660, August 2, 1995.
705 Martin, *Importing Poverty*, 75-77; Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land*, 202-203; Brenner, "In the Kingdom of Big Sugar."

the mid-1990s, decades after their counterparts in Louisiana and Hawaii, every sugar operation in the Everglades transitioned from using manual labor performed by guestworkers to mechanical harvesting. Sugar growers introduced new, more upright cane stalks, balloon tractor tires, and redesigned cutting blades to accommodate harvesting on muck soil. In turn, Everglades sugar growers increased productivity by 50 million tons annually, producing half of the U.S. production of cane sugar. In doing so, they again underscored the disposability of the guestworkers who had long made their businesses profitable.[706]

As Florida's sugar growers stopped recruiting guestworkers, the use of the H-2A program grew across the country without any meaningful expansion of labor protections. For decades, an average of 12,000 H-2 workers entered the United States annually, mainly to work in sugar. Using the uncapped H-2A program, by the end of the 1990s, growers across commodities and regions were recruiting nearly 40,000 guestworkers annually.[707] The points of origin of agricultural guestworkers also shifted significantly from the Caribbean to Mexico.[708] Unfortunately, H-2A workers, regardless of their country of origin, faced patterns of abuse in recruitment that mirrored the past, including retaliation, discrimination, and debt bondage. At the same time, the H-2A program's housing, wage, and other contract protections were largely ignored or unenforced.[709]

Although IRCA's expanded guestworker program and sanctions were meant to deter the

---

[706] Florida Sugar growers produced 1.8 million tons of sugar in 1the 1993 season, up from the 1.3 million average of the 1980s. "Agriculture's Changing Horizon: Agriculture Outlook 1993," Proceedings , 69th Annual Outlook Conference (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1993), 734-5.; "H-2 Guest Workers and Florida Sugar," Migration Dialogue, *Rural Migration News*, Blog 201, February 2021, accessed, https://migrationfiles.ucdavis.edu/uploads/rmn/blog/2021/02/Rural%20Migration%20News%20Blog%20201.pdf.
[707] Congressional Research Service, "H-2A and H-2B Temporary Worker Visas: Policy and Related Issues," R44849, June 9, 2020, 5; U.S. General Accounting Office, "H-2A Agricultural Guestworker Program Changes Could Improve Services to Employers and Better Protect Workers," Report to Congressional Committees, GAO/ HEHS 98-20, September 1997 (Washington, D.C.: GAO, 1997), 100.
[708] While Jamaicans represented about 80 percent of H-2A workers in 1987 and Mexicans were essentially unrepresented in the program, by 1996, Mexican workers made up approximately 70 percent of the H-2A workforce, while Jamaicans only 30 percent. U.S. General Accounting Office, "H-2A Agricultural Guestworker Program," 45.
[709] See: Farmworker Justice, *No Way to Treat a Guest: Why the H-2A Agricultural Visa Program Fails U.S. and Foreign Workers* (FWJ, 2012); Southern Poverty Law Center, "Close to Slavery: Guestworker Programs in the United States," February 19, 2013, accessed, https://www.splcenter.org/20130218/close-slavery-guestworker-programs-united-states

hiring of undocumented farmworkers, through the 1990s, undocumented workers performed the bulk of the labor in Florida's fields. They also withstood the worst of the INS's enhanced enforcement charge. With many of the farmworkers who had secured SAW legal status leaving the farm workforce for better-paying jobs, in Florida and across the country, labor contractors placed new immigrants, asylees, and refugees in farm jobs. In the 1990s, the share of undocumented farmworkers in the U.S. farm workforce grew from approximately 14 percent to 55 percent, while in Florida the figure reached perhaps 70 percent by the end of the decade.[710] The INS did not aggressively target farms—in fact, less than 5 percent of its worksite enforcement actions involved agriculture in the 1990s—undermining growers' claims of imminent labor shortages due to sanctions.[711] Instead, bolstered by IRCA and later punitive laws and policies, such as the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA), the INS directed its enforcement capacity toward land and water borders and policing immigrant communities.

In South Florida, migrants seeking work, opportunity, and safety often encountered harsh new modes of immigration law enforcement, punishment, and detention, which the INS honed and sharpened in the state. Beginning with the temporary detention of thousands of Haitians and Cuban asylum seekers who arrived in South Florida by boat in 1980, the INS laid the foundations in the region for the nationwide mass jailing and warehousing of immigrants. In the 1980s, policymakers and the INS began using detention policies as both a deterrent and punishment, as the INS's budget grew from $15.7 million to nearly $150 million. In the 1990s, the INS budget reached the $1 billion mark. With these resources, INS went from housing an average of 30 detainees on a daily basis from

[710] U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, "Farm Labor," March 2022. https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farm-labor/#legalstatus; "70% of Farm Workers Illegal," *UPI*, April 27, 2000.
[711] U.S. General Accounting Office, "H-2A Agricultural Guestworker Program Changes Could Improve Services to Employers and Better Protect Workers," 5. From 1989 to 1995, the number of SAW workers in the US farm labor market fell from 33 percent to 19 percent (See page 12).

the 1950s to the early 1980s, to holding over 8,500 detainees on a daily basis by the mid-1990s, with most staying for lengthier periods.[712]

South Florida's Krome detention center was often at the center of implementing these harsh, new detention and removal policies. In 1981, the INS transformed Krome, a complex situated on a former military nuclear launch site on the periphery of the Everglades outside Miami, from a temporary processing center to a detention facility that held mostly Haitian migrants. Krome quickly became unsanitary and overcrowded. Detainees, at times, slept in tents. Immigrant rights advocates also found that Krome's guards humiliated and abused migrants and routinely violated due process rights.[713] With more Haitian women migrating to Florida in the 1980s than in the past, Krome was also the first facility to systematically detain immigrant women.[714] With thousands of migrants passing through Krome, its detention practices influenced enforcement strategies in other borderlands destinations in the United States. Its transformation into a notorious immigrant jail also reflected a broader transition in the Reagan administration. While, at the level of foreign policy, the administration supported the Duvalier regime's repression of the left in Haiti and other anti-communist tyrants in the Caribbean, it also forwarded a domestic agenda that marked Caribbean migrants as undesirable invaders.[715]

After the 1991 coup d'état against the first democratically-elected President of Haiti Jean Bertrand Aristide unleashed a wave of paramilitary violence in the country, the United States

---

712 Michael Welch, "The Immigration Crisis: Detention as an Emerging Mechanism of Social Control," *Social Justice* 23, No. 3 (Fall 1996): 170; Cheryl Little, "INS Detention in Florida," *The University of Miami Inter-American Law Review* 30, No. 3 (Winter - Spring, 1999): 574; Agarwal, Set al., "Prison by Any Other Name," 5.

713 Cheryl Little and Joan Friedland, "Krome's Invisible Prisoners: Cycles of Abuse and Neglect," Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, Inc., July 1996, 2; 6-7 in L.00035, Box 9, Krome's Invisible Prisoners: Cycles of Abuse and Neglect, 1996, Americans for Immigrant Justice, RLDU.

714 "Social and Economic Problems Among Cuban and Haitian Entrant Groups in Dade County, Florida: Trends and Indicators," Dade Country Report, 198x, 1; 75 in RL.00035, Box 27, c.1, Folder 1, Discrimination Against U.S. Women, Americans for Immigrant Justice, RLDU.

715 Jana K. Lipman, "'The Fish Trusts the Water, and It Is in the Water That It Is Cooked': The Caribbean Origins of the Krome Detention Center," *Radical History Review* 1 (January 2013): 115.

continued its harsh treatment of the Haitian people. The Bush administration lent support to the military junta. Upon his election, President Clinton changed course and pressed for a transition back to democratic governance in Haiti. The Clinton administration eventually led a 1994 intervention on the island that brought Aristide back to power, but only after he committed to sign IMF and World Bank loan agreements. These development loans bound Aristide to abandon his reform agenda and undertake structural adjustment policies that opened Haiti's markets to foreign trade and investment and led to the proliferation of sweatshop manufacturing on the island and food scarcity.[716] Violence and crushing poverty on the island in these years drove thousands more to migrate. Together, the Bush and Clinton administrations interdicted some 37,000 Haitian asylum seekers, who were sent to the U.S. naval base on Guantanamo Bay for detention and processing or relocated to Krome, where they joined many more of their compatriots who were detained in Florida.[717]

Blowback from years of U.S. support of Central American right-wing military dictatorships, paramilitary groups, and rebels also manifested in South Florida. Widespread imprisonment, civilian torture, and mass murder by anti-communist regimes in El Salvador and Guatemala, and the U.S.-backed Contra war in Nicaragua, drove Central American asylum seekers to the United States, where labor recruiters and family connections often directed them to South Florida. Initially, there were few pathways for legal status for these groups. As Guatemala and El Salvador were receiving U.S. economic and military aid, the U.S. government officials looked past the human rights situations in those countries and widely denied the asylum claims of those Central American migrants. Most Central American migrants in this period also arrived outside the time window of IRCA's general

[716] Rachel Bunyan, "25 Years After 'Operation Uphold Democracy,' Experts Say the Oft-Forgotten U.S. Military Intervention Still Shapes Life in Haiti," *Time*, September 24, 2019.
[717] Jana K. Lipman, *Guantanamo: A Working-Class History Between Empire and Revolution* (University of California Press, 2008), 206; Carlos Ortiz Miranda, "Haiti and the United States During the 1980s and 1990s: Refugees, Immigration, and Foreign Policy," *San Diego Law Review* 32, 673 (1995): 676-7: 691; Mary B. W. Tabor, "Judge Orders the Release of Haitians," *New York Times*, June 9, 1993.

amnesty provisions, which were limited to those who arrived before 1982.[718] In South Florida, INS officials rejected asylum claims as a matter of course and even established a Miami task force by 1990 to expedite Central Americans' asylum claims and detain and deport those deemed to have "frivolous" ones.[719]

In 1996, the Clinton administration exacerbated the criminalization of immigrants by shepherding the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act and the IIRIRA through a Congress drifting rightward on immigration and crime in the 1990s. Together, the laws expanded the definition of "aggravated felony" to include minor, nonviolent offenses like drug possession, shoplifting, prostitution, and, importantly, undocumented entry after removal. Immigrants, with or without documents, were suddenly subject to expedited removal if they had a criminal record, even if their crimes were long in the past, minor, or related to the act of migration. The IIRIRA also provided for the hiring of 5,000 new border agents and promoted INS partnerships with local police agencies through its 287(g) program. Agreements between local police and the INS under the 287(g) program gave police the power to enforce immigration laws and trained police to interrogate noncitizens in custody and to execute INS warrants, solidifying the linkages between criminality and undocumented status.[720] The IIRIRA further marginalized the undocumented by denying them social security benefits (even after they paid into the program), launched state programs to deny them drivers licenses, and limited their access to higher education benefits.[721]

---

[718] For example, some 75,000 Nicaraguan immigrants arrived in South Florida during the Contra War and were unable to IRCA's amnesty program and faced systematic rejection of their asylum claims. U.S. House of Representatives, "Central American Asylum-Seekers," 194-195.

[719] Ibid, 54-55.

[720] Leisy Abrego, Mat Coleman, Daniel E. Martínez, Cecilia Menjívar, Jeremy Slack, "Making Immigrants into Criminals: Legal Processes of Criminalization in the Post-IIRIRA Era," *Journal on Migration and Human Security* (SMSNY) 5, No. 3 (2017): 695; 697-8.

[721] Ellen G. Yost, "Immigration and Nationality Law," *The International Lawyer* 31, No. 2 (Summer 1997): 596. Additionally, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 remade U.S. welfare programs at the behest of the Clinton administration, including by prohibiting noncitizens from accessing federal assistance and permitting states to excluded them from state programs.

On society's margins, South Florida's farmworkers' communities not only struggled with poverty, but also increasingly the HIV/AIDS pandemic. From the 1980s and into the 1990s, Belle Glade, long a center of migrant slums, juke joints, and a thriving sex industry near Lake Okeechobee, had the highest per-capita incidence of HIV/AIDS in the United States. When African-American and Haitian men began to contract the then-mysterious disease in the 1980s, community and health officials suspected that rats or unsanitary living conditions spread the illness. As more information became known about HIV/AIDS and more men, and eventually women and children, fell sick, epidemiologists identified intravenous drug use, prostitution, and non-monogamous sex as the cause of most transmissions in the area.[722] Haitians, in particular, were stigmatized with the disease. In Haitian communities, many worked to stop the spread of "bad blood" through popular education and folk medicine and women challenged patriarchal cultural norms around sex to keep themselves and their children safe.[723]

In the Krome detention center, the discriminatory treatment of detainees replicated these stigmas. Guards treated all Haitian detainees as if they were HIV positive and failed to provide gloves to detainees charged with cleaning bathrooms, because they were all "HIV positive anyway," according to a 1992 legal complaint.[724] Detainees who actually had the virus languished without proper medical care in Krome. For example, Pedro Arreola Sanchez, an HIV-positive Mexican farmworker detained for removal for a 15-year-old drug charge despite having a green card, told a reporter he was weak and constantly sick from the smoking and unsanitary conditions in Krome. According to Arreola Sanchez, caught up in the INS's roundup of immigrants with criminal

---

[722] Clyde B. Mccoy, Lisa R. Metsch, James A. Inciardi, Robert S. Anwyl, Judith Wingerd, Keith Bletzer, "Sex, Drugs, and the Spread of HIV/AIDS in Belle Glade, Florida," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 10, Issue 1 (March 1996): 83.
[723] Tim Collie, "Coping with 'Bad Blood,'" *Tampa Tribune*, April 1, 1990.
[724] Haitian Refugee Center, "Haitian Detainees in the Krome Detention Facility are Currently Being Subjected to Humiliation, Harassment, and Suffering, Press Release, June 2, 1992 in RL 00035, Box 9, Krome 1992, Americans for Immigrant Justice, RLDU.

infractions after IIRIRA, his detention in Krome was a "death sentence."[725]

The expanded criminalization of immigrant communities dovetailed with these health disparities and declining wages and social mobility for undocumented workers. Demographers with the Mexican Migration Project, collating survey data from 39 Mexican sending communities, found that wages for undocumented Mexican immigrants fell about three percent a year from the 1970s to 1995. Researchers identified discrimination tied to immigration status and the increasing prevalence of labor contractors— associated with a 23 percent wage penalty— as driving the downward spiral of undocumented workers' wages. Changes to immigration law particularly penalized undocumented Mexican farmworkers, who earned one-third less than their undocumented counterparts in other sectors.[726] Year later, researchers found that wages continued declining for undocumented Mexican workers through the 1990s as the value of their human capital (in terms of education, English proficiency, and skills) diminished in the labor market.[727]

In South Florida, images and stories of Krome's overflowing cells and tents, increased INS activity, and police collaboration in immigration enforcement inspired fear and distrust of public authorities in immigrant communities. Migrants, from diverse backgrounds, sought familial or community connections to navigate the harsh enforcement environment and find jobs. Often immigrants regularized through the SAW program facilitated journeys for family members or took on work as labor contractors. This both eased the movement of a new cohort of migrant workers to growers' fields and replicated the prevailing, often exploitative labor relations systems.[728]

***

---

725 Alisa Soloman, "Locked Up in Limbo," *POZ*, September 1999 in RL 00035, Box 9, Krome 1999, Americans for Immigrant Justice, RLDU.
726 Julie A. Phillips and Douglas S. Massey, "The New Labor Market: Immigrants and Wages after IRCA," *Demography* 36, Issue 2 (May 1999): 239; 243-4.
727 Douglas S. Massey and Julia Gelatt, "What Happened to the Wages of Mexican Immigrants? Trends and Interpretations," *Latino Studies* 8, no. 3 (Autumn 2010): 354.
728 See: Philip L. Martin, "Good Intentions Gone Awry: IRCA and U. S. Agriculture," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 534 (1994): 56.

At the close of the 20th century, South Florida's major agricultural interests navigated and mitigated the implementation of NAFTA and Everglades restoration efforts. Although environmental regulations increased and some growers divested as their market share declined in this period, top growers continued to extract returns from the exhausted Everglades environment. Changing market dynamics resulted less in the dissolution of the region's leading agricultural operations than their consolidation in the region. The new market landscape also motivated new agribusiness strategies, investments, and partnerships that embedded Everglades farms in transnational corporate investment portfolios and procurement networks.

As commodity supply chains spread across borders, so too did the social and ecological costs of industrial agricultural production. From South Florida, multinational agribusinesses linked to industrial commodity production hubs in Mexico and the Caribbean and beyond. Capital migration and transnational investments not only generated new sources of profit for growers, but they also fostered extractive production and labor-management technologies in places like Central Romana and San Quintin. Across the Americas, it was rural workers and communities that paid the price of economic integration in terms of labor exploitation, environmental injustice, and poverty, as the fruits of their labor moved from the fields to processing facilities and supermarket shelves.

While growers navigated market changes, dislocation, and migration looked different at the community level. As NAFTA uprooted rural Mexican communities, many displaced workers and families were drawn to rising export agricultural hubs in Mexico. Mexican migrants also continued on to gateway U.S. destinations, including South Florida, where agriculture often served as an entry point to low-wage work and subsistence. In the Everglades, they joined Haitian and Central American migrants in a multi-ethnic farm workforce, shaped by distant conflicts, shared histories of displacement, and decades of U.S. geopolitical interventions in the Americas. Rather than finding sanctuary and safety, these immigrants and their communities endured widespread criminalization as

authorities piloted draconian immigrant policing, punishment, and detention practices in the region.

Yet, even in the most desperate situations, immigrants found ways to organize and resist oppression. In the Krome detention center, detainees spoke out to immigrant rights advocates, public interest lawyers, and the press about the inhumane conditions they were facing. They also took direct action. In 1991, some 180 detainees of over 20 different nationalities undertook a hunger strike to protest abuse by Krome guards and unjust parole policies. Nearly 200 Haitian detainees, the following year, organized another hunger strike after a fellow detainee died in custody. They called for an end to physical abuse and harassment and access to medical care, legal aid, and outside communication channels. And in 1993, another hunger strike of 150 detainees disrupted operations at Krome.[729] Community protests over the years further brought attention to cases of prolonged detention, civil rights violations, and family separations, including in 2000 when Haitian community groups pressed the INS to release 48 asylum seekers to family members.[730] From South Florida's immigrant communities, too, in these years of crisis and change, came an unlikely swell of organizing and movement building among farmworkers.

---

[729] Cheryl Little, "Continuing Problems at Krome Service Processing Center," *In Defense of the Alien* (Center for Migration Studies of New York, Inc.) 20 (1997): 144

[730] “INS Frees 48 Haitians at Krome," *Sun Sentinel*, September 30, 2000.

Chapter 5: Forging a Fairer Food System: Farmworkers' Resilience and New Forms of Organizing, 1990s-00s

During the winter of 1995, the farm labor pickup lot in front of downtown Immokalee's weathered grocery store filled with strikers. Pacific Growers, one of the largest tomato growers in South Florida, had lowered its base pay rates, citing falling profits brought on by international competition. Aggrieved farmworkers occupied the lot and refused to board buses bound for local fields. Instead, they coalesced around the CIW, a small coop and organizing collective formed in 1993, which was operating out of the Our Lady of Guadalupe church, a space that had served as a sanctuary for strikers in decades past.[731] For six weeks, CIW organizers fostered solidarity between Guatemalan, Mexican, and Haitian immigrant families as pickets grew into a general strike of thousands of farmworkers. Growers eventually rescinded wage cuts and the CIW emerged from the strike with a battle-tested and confident membership base.[732] Alongside the CIW, other farmworkers organizations in this period mobilized to forward impactful and far-reaching community initiatives and environmental justice campaigns. Over the next decade, organized farmworkers proved to be a credible force for change in South Florida's agricultural sector and beyond.

Upon first consideration, South Florida in the 1990s was an unlikely place and time for a revitalization in farmworkers' organizing. Economic uncertainty in the agricultural sector, displacement, and heightened immigrant policing and detention were persistent challenges in farmworkers' lives. Further, the national farm labor movement was in a crisis. When Cesar Chavez died in 1993, the UFW claimed only 10,000 members, down from a peak of 70,000. Citrus workers

---

[731] At the time, the CIW went by the name of the Southwest Florida Farmworker Project. Political pressure forced the church to evict the organizers after the strike, which served as an impetus for members to formalize the Project as an independent organization and rename it the CIW. See: Jane M. Walsh, "'Our Struggles are Not the Same, But They Converge': Farmworkers, Allies, and the Fair Food Movement," Ph.D. Diss., (University of Pittsburgh, 2014), 18-22

[732] Interview with Greg Asbed, CIW, September 13, 2023. "Fighting for fairness," *Fort Myers News Press*, November 19, 1995; Teresa Burney, "Learning Their Worth," *St. Petersburg Times*, December 29, 1995.

in Minute Maid's Florida groves could no longer be counted in the UFW's membership roll. That year, Coca-Cola also sold its citrus holding, which terminated the UFW's contract with its Minute Maid subsidiary and the sole collective bargaining agreement for farmworkers in Florida.[733]

Adding to these difficulties, in 1992, Hurricane Andrew, a category-five storm with winds exceeding 160 miles per hour, struck south of Miami and swept away homes and rural communities. Hundreds of farmworkers were homeless after the storm, the most expensive disaster in U.S. history at the time, and went without federal aid for days. Reports from the storm's strike zone raised the alarm that farmworkers—deprived of housing and work— had been "uprooted." In the wake of disaster, South Florida's farmworkers' communities braced for tough times and looked to rebuild.[734]

Farmworkers may well have been in a state of desperation at this time; however, community disaster relief efforts illuminated their resilience, while subsequent farmworkers' campaigns for labor and environmental justice generated innovative new forms of advocacy and organizing to counter long-standing oppression in the food system. After Hurricane Andrew, farmworkers' organizations came together to administer direct aid to farmworkers, advocate for state and federal action, and support rural communities in reconstruction. In time, organizations like Centro Campesino leveraged recovery efforts to build long-term community and housing initiatives, creating a national model for quality, sustainable farmworker housing. Meanwhile, a mass pesticide poisoning of farmworkers and their families near Central Florida's Lake Apopka catalyzed the FWAF into action. Through the 1990s, FWAF organizers spearheaded campaigns for reparations and healthcare for chronically-ill farmworkers, new health and safety protections, and pesticide control. From these efforts, the FWAF won concrete policy victories, forged a state-wide organization, and linked the farmworkers movement to popular U.S. and Latin American movements for environmental justice.

---

733 Lou Cannon, "UFW Struggle Will Continue, Hispanic Officials Told," *Washington Post*, June 27, 1993; "U.S. Sugar Mechanizes in Florida," *Rural Migration News* 1, no. 4, October 1995.
734 Mike Clary, "Migrant Workers' Lives Are Uprooted by Storm," *Los Angeles Times*, September 1, 1992.

For its part, the CIW's diverse membership base mobilized to combat exploitation and trafficking in agriculture, raise wages, and empower farmworkers. Over the course of multiple campaigns, the CIW moved to circumvent labor contractors and growers and devised new tactics to pressure major multinational food brands, South Florida's growers' primary buyers, to sign on to its Fair Food Program (FFP). The FFP, in short, compels its signatories to pay an additional "penny-per-pound" for tomatoes to raise farmworkers' pay, while sourcing from growers who agree to abide by a workplace code of conduct that is monitored and enforced through worker-to-worker education, a complaint hotline, and auditing through an independent body, the Fair Food Standards Council. Major food buyers that are signatories to the FFP agree to drop growers who violate the code, tying standards compliance to real market incentives. In these ways, the FFP, which the CIW calls a "worker-driven social responsibility" model, stands apart from corporate social responsibility initiatives designed to mitigate brands' reputational risks for serious violations of labor standards in their supply chains that lack worker representation and real enforcement mechanisms.[735]

This period of community and movement advances marked a turning point, whereby farmworkers' organizations devised theories of change and effective actions to disrupt prevailing local class relations and confront the corporate food system and its deleterious consequences for workers and the environment. As globalization generated migration to Florida and reshaped work and production across borders, farmworkers' communities had to navigate shifting environmental and economic landscapes, immigrant policing and detention, and disaster—as well as flat wages and scarce jobs. These dynamics made community, mutual aid, and solidarity, as well as new organizing, essential to improving farmworkers' lives. Renewal came as farmworkers drew from organizational networks formed in past struggles and the cultural resources migrants carried with them to build

---

[735] See: "About: The Power of Prevention," Fair Food Program, accessed, https://fairfoodprogram.org/about/. For an in-depth examination of the CIW and the evolution of its organizing tactics, see: Susan L. Marquis, *I Am Not a Tractor! How Florida Farmworkers Took on the Fast Food Giants and Won* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017).

movements and models tailored to address instability, disaster, and the exploitation ingrained in the sector. In time, these movements began to reverberate and generate change across the food system.

During this period, change did not materialize spontaneously; rather, farmworkers' organizations and networks sustained communities in crisis and undertook deep organizing work to support the actions needed to overcome dislocation and poverty. Farmworkers' resilience, or a community's ability to withstand adversity by drawing on local cohesion, leadership, networks, and shared knowledge, was essential in developing new initiatives and was fostered by embattled rural civil society organizations forged in past struggles and migrants' experiences and organizing skills.[736] Moreover, decades of reform, relief, and organizing effort motivated the expansion of rural social programs and resources and the establishment of community and farmworkers' organizations, which laid the foundations for a base-line of social protections in the region that reduced farmworkers' vulnerabilities. Churches, clinics, daycares, and housing, immigration, and legal organizations abounded in South Florida, which claimed one of the highest regional per-capita ratios of service-provider agencies in the country.[737] Many of these organizations, such as Centro Campesino, were forged in a history of labor organizing. These networks helped meet farmworkers' basic needs and, both directly—through leadership and service provision—and indirectly— by upholding social protections— facilitated new community and labor organizing. Besides these established resources, consciousness raising and leadership development within multi-ethnic farm workforce activated the organizing histories, expertise, and skills of migrants and fueled movement revitalization.

To shed light on how Florida's farmworkers mobilized for both local and systemic change, this chapter presents three case studies of farmworkers' organizing. These cases showcase Florida's

---

[736] See: Lucy Faulkner, Katrina Brown and Tara Quinn, "Analyzing Community Resilience as an Emergent Property of Dynamic Social-Ecological Systems," *Ecology and Society* 23, No. 1 (2018): 1.
[737] According to Kirsch, "The Glades Interagency Directory lists 92 service-provider agencies, or one agency for every 152 residents." See: Kirsch, "The Politics of Exclusion," 120.

farmworkers' innovations in organizing and advocacy and indicate how they forged class bonds and impactful new initiatives, campaigns, and movements. They examine farmworkers' organizations' response after Hurricane Andrew and their expansion of housing and community programs; the FWAF's advocacy for victims of pesticide poisoning and its local, national, and transnational campaigns that integrated the farmworkers' movement into an emerging environmental justice movement; and the CIW's rise in the 1990s to the conclusion of its successful boycott of Taco Bell in 2005. Today, the CIW is widely recognized for compelling fast food and supermarket companies to raise wages and standards in their supply chains, and has earned praise, honors, and awards from government leaders, UN officials, celebrities, and philanthropic organizations.[738] Yet, the Coalition was not alone in challenging the corporate food system in this period. Indeed, in each of these interlinked cases, farmworkers' organizations designed and forwarded models or movement innovations to empower farmworkers and their communities, demonstrating the power inherent in the region's civil society networks and the collective experiences of immigrant organizers. As the state became a hotbed for organizing, Florida's farmworkers have supported and inspired national and transnational organizing and reform efforts, the outcomes of which are still contested today.

Rising from the Wreckage

In the early hours of August 24, 1992, Hurricane Andrew bore down on South Florida. The hurricane caused extensive wind damage to coastal cities like Miami and Ft. Lauderdale, but urban residents evaded the worst of Andrew's wrath. As the eye of the storm passed over rural Dade County, agricultural communities like Homestead and Florida City endured the worst of the storm's winds and storm surge, which reached nearly 17 feet and washed out 80 percent of the region's farms.[739] In farmworkers' communities, Hurricane Andrew swept away mobile homes, housing

---

[738] See: "Highlights," CIW, accessed October 2023, https://ciw-online.org/highlights/.
[739] William Claiborne," Andrew's Fury Leveled Prized Tropical Crops," *Washington Post*, September 12, 1992.

complexes, and labor camps, including Homestead's Everglades Labor Camp, home to hundreds of families. The next day's morning light revealed that Hurricane Andrew destroyed some 126,000 homes, left over 180,000 homeless, and caused over $30 billion in damage.[740]

As the winds faded, Susan Rubio Rivera (then Reyna) drove through a landscape of leveled homes, uprooted trees, and shattered infrastructure to the headquarters of Centro Campesino. Deputy Director of the organization at the time, Rubio Rivera came upon a gathering of farmworker families and staff assembled at Centro Campesino's still-standing office building and warehouse. Before the group laid the remnants of farmworkers' homes and the dawning realization that help was not coming for storm victims in remote Everglades towns. Organizers and farmworkers at Centro Campesino began gathering supplies and erecting makeshift shelters, while attempting to communicate to the outside world that they had survived and were in dire need of provisions and assistance. One intrepid member of the group climbed on the roof of the organization's warehouse and painted in large letters "we need food" to attract the attention of the news helicopters surveying the damage from above.[741] From that day forward, farmworkers' organizations, like Centro Campesino, led relief efforts in farmworkers' communities, coordinated resources, and advocated for farmworkers in recovery programs and initiatives.

Not only did farmworkers' organizations save lives and secure relief, they also were pivotal in rebuilding and strengthening communities after the storm. Indeed, beyond the immediate disaster response, many farmworkers' groups which had weathered years of political attacks, disruption, and repression, used recovery efforts after Hurricane Andrew as a basis to build enduring programs and initiatives to improve farmworkers' lives. Farmworkers and organizers in this period drew from a long organizing history as well as a deep well of experience in disaster response and advocacy to

---

740 Anne Hull and David Olinger, "Have to Keep from Crying," *St. Petersburg Times*, August 27, 1992; Marty Jordan, President Orders Military to Aid Florida," *Washington Post*, August 28, 1992.

741 Susan Rubio Rivera, Zoom interview with author, July 29, 2022.

advance the interests of their communities. In doing so, they showed that decades of struggle had produced a hardened and effective rural civil society network in South Florida, while expanding its reach and impact.

From the start, the distribution of the disaster reflected the inequities ingrained in South Florida's economy and geography. As coastal developments, suburbs, and industrial farms drew profits from the landscape, the risk to human life in low-lying, hurricane-prone South Florida persisted after the mass-casualty hurricanes of the 1920s. In some ways, Hurricane Andrew could have been even more cataclysmic. With modern advance warning systems and evacuation planning, as well as Hurricane Andrew's path toward rural areas, the storm only caused 32 deaths in South Florida.[742] Had the eye of the storm struck slightly north in Miami it may have caused another $35 billion in damages and many more deaths.[743] Yet, Hurricane Andrew ravaged many of the poorest and most vulnerable communities in the region. It destroyed approximately 90 percent of Dade County's 10,593 mobile homes. While gas, clean water, and supplies were relatively plentiful in coastal cities in the days after the storm, officials reported that it would take up to two months to restore power to southern Dade County. The migrant workers made the region's agricultural prosperity possible, historically isolated and in shabby housing far from public resources, were among those hardest hit. In the Everglades Labor Camp, just a scattering of trailers survived the hurricane and sat in a wasteland of debris stretching some 50 acres.[744]

In the first week after the storm, disaster assistance and federal aid were slow to arrive in rural southern Dade County. Hurricane Andrew damaged the Homestead air force base and military

---

[742] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Preliminary Report: Medical Examiner Reports of Deaths Associated with Hurricane Andrew — Florida, August 1992," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 41, No. 35 (September 4, 1992): 642.
[743] Steinberg, "Do-It-Yourself Deathscape," 415.
[744] Steinberg, "Do-It-Yourself Deathscape," 432; Anne Hull and David Olinger, "Have to Keep from Crying," *St. Petersburg Times*, August 27, 1992.

personnel had to spend time clearing it. Inadequate emergency planning meant that in the days after the storm there was poor coordination between federal and local agencies, the Red Cross, the National Guard, and other emergency response services.[745] Further, political squabbling between Governor Chiles, a Democrat, and Republican President George Bush, who was in the heat of a reelection campaign, hampered communication and cooperation. Once runways were cleared, military rations sent to the region rotted in the sun as the roads were impassable. Police roadblocks and check points established to stop looting slowed the distribution of supplies and the Red Cross could not erect enough shelters to meet the needs of the area's displaced population. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), headed by political appointees with little experience, understaffed field offices, failed to establish an effective system for distributing aid and loans, and only managed to transport some 2,800 trailers for the homeless in the region. Local officials criticized the national response, including Dade County's Director of Emergency Operations, who, at a press conference, demanded to know from the feds: "where the hell is the calvary?" Under pressure, President Bush eventually ordered the military to the region, sending equipment and 23,000 troops to support relief efforts.[746]

Federal neglect of Dade County was magnified in remote farmworkers' communities, which waited a full week to see any federal assistance. Even after the arrival of the military to South Florida, there was a clear deficit of coordination, capacity, and planning in Homestead and Florida City. Local public health officials recorded deteriorating sanitary conditions and rising cases of dehydration. Domingo Torres, a farmworker and longtime resident of the Everglades Labor Camp, expressed his frustration with emergency management efforts to a reporter in this way: "I bet

---

[745] Interview with an Anonymous person conducted by Hafsa Dandia on November 19, 1992, Miami, FL, Voices of Andrew Oral History Project, University of Miami. http://scholar.library.miami.edu/andrew/html/anonymous.html.
[746] Kristine C. Harper, *Environmental Disasters: Hurricane Andrew* (New York: Facts on File Science Library, Inc., 2005), 28-30; Marty Jordan, President Orders Military to Aid Florida," *Washington Post*, August 28, 1992.

George Bush eats some of the tomatoes we pick, [but] where was he?"[747]

In these critical days, mutual aid between farmworkers and coordination among the region's civil society organizations were essential to overcome government inaction and save lives. From the start, Centro Campesino activated its membership base in the area to build a tent city for farmworkers and used its networks to coordinate the distribution of aid as it trickled into Homestead. The tents initially consisted of tarps draped over makeshift structures. Later, the Mexican Consulate delivered a shipment of tents to the over 400 people who had settled in the area around the former Everglades Labor Camp. Centro Campesino's warehouse became a center for the distribution of tents, clothes, food, and supplies. Farmworkers and their families shared resources, formed cleanup crews, and applied their skills in reconstruction projects, a camp barbershop, and communal kitchens.[748] Down the road, the COFFO, the statewide umbrella group established in 1980, opened up to support in the recovery. When the electric company unexpectedly hooked up a large generator to COFFO's office, COFFO staff set up a phone bank and office for organizers to coordinate logistics and communicate with outside agencies and allies elsewhere in the state.[749] This convening space quickly evolved into a formal coordinating body focused on disaster relief called the South Dade Hispanic and Farmworkers Coordinating Council.[750] The faith community was also a major factor in early recovery efforts, with many local church and migrant ministry volunteers taking time away from their own post-hurricane needs to collect food and supplies and brave debris-strewn roads to bring aid.[751]

---

[747] Catherine S. Manegold, "In a Migrant Labor Camp, Relief Is Slow and Chaotic," *New York Times*, September 1, 1992.
[748] Susan Rubio Rivera, Zoom interview with author, July 29, 2022; Juanita Mainster and Susan Rubio Rivera, "Hurricane Andrew, A Force to be Reckoned With: The Story of a Farmworker Tent City," MUJER power point presentation, N.D. Shared with author.
[749] "Migrant Service Providers: A Partnership of South Dade Migrant Service Providers" https://www.coffo.org/migrant-service-providers/.
[750] U.S. Senate, "Lessons Learned from Hurricane Andrew," Hearing Before the Committee on Environment and Public Works, Subcommittee on Toxic Substances, Research and Development, 1st Session, Homestead, Florida, April 19, 1993 (Washington, DC: US GPO), 49.
[751] Susan Rubio Rivera, Zoom interview with author, July 29, 2022

Women's leadership was a central force in the community response to Hurricane Andrew's destruction. Not only did women serve in many leadership positions in farmworkers' organizations, but women also met daily in the camp to forward recommendations and lists of needed supplies, started a day care center, and organized events to uplift the spirits of those living in the tent city erected at the Everglades Labor Camp.[752] On the other hand, gendered social expectations shaped women's experiences in the recovery and often made them responsible for social reproduction in the camp. While dealing with trauma from the storm, women continued to act as caregivers, provide household labor, and maintain social and kin networks.[753]

When the federal "calvary," in the form of military aid and enhanced FEMA initiatives, began to arrive to the Everglades, it came with additional complexities for immigrant families. After a desperate week, medical units, volunteers, and FEMA and military personnel established a regular presence in rural Homestead and Florida City. National Guard troops cleared trees from roadways and lots around the Everglades Labor Camp and distributed generators to support operations. The military also established six tent cities with hundreds of beds to accommodate storm refugees.[754] Yet, FEMA crews reported that immigrants were reluctant to enter relief shelters.[755] Undocumented immigrants, many who fled state oppression in Haiti or Central America and feared the INS, lived their lives avoiding government officials and were reticent to embrace federal aid. Some sent their young, English-speaking children to interact with federal officials and unfamiliar volunteers. Federal interventions, though desperately needed, also stirred suspicion and animosity among immigrants when INS agents began patrolling the area and questioning those seeking aid. Some uniformed INS

---

[752] Mainster and Rivera, "Hurricane Andrew, A Force to be Reckoned With: The Story of a Farmworker Tent City."
[753] See: Elaine Enarson and Betty Hearn Morrow, "A Gendered Perspective: The Voices of Women" in Walter Gillis Peacock, Betty Hearn Morrow and Hugh Gladwin, Eds., *Hurricane Andrew: Ethnicity, Gender, and the Sociology of Disaster* (London: Routledge, 1997), 116-139.
[754] Guy Gugliotta, "In Migrant Camp, Relief Is Met with Caution," *Washington Post*, September 3, 1992; "Tent City Will Open at Indian Reservation, *Associated Press*, September 8, 1992.
[755] Interview with an anonymous person conducted by Hafsa Dandia on November 19, 1992, Miami, FL, Voices of Andrew Oral History Project, University of Miami.

staff were also activated to assist in the recovery, further eroding farmworkers' trust in government officials.[756]

Faced with this dilemma, farmworkers' organizations worked to establish a firewall between the INS and emergency management, and to tailor FEMA programs to meet the needs of farmworkers. Arturo Lopez, COFFO's Director, and other local organizers became intermediaries between relief officials and farmworkers and pushed FEMA to hire Spanish and Creole interpreters and establish mobile units to service farmworkers located far from town. Crucially, organizers also convinced the Department of Justice to order the INS to remove uniformed officers from the area for a time.[757]

For those immigrants in INS custody, life became even more difficult. In the Krome detention center, parole hearings were long delayed, and detainees lost touch with legal representatives. Meanwhile, after a brief closure to make repairs, officials installed razor wire and increased security around the facility's dormitories upon receiving transferred prisoners from the Bureau of Prisons, adding to Krome's carceral built environment.[758]

As time passed, farmworkers who had lived in and around the Everglades Labor Camp rebuilt community in their tent city. Volunteers organized a Mexican Independence Day celebration and a Halloween party, complete with a bounce house for the camp's children. The camp's day care center remained bustling through the fall, as families pitched in to make the camp habitable and repair salvageable trailers and homes. Organizers continued to coordinate aid distribution and assisted farmworkers with complex insurance claims and FEMA applications. They also began

---

[756] Gugliotta, "In Migrant Camp, Relief Is Met with Caution."; U.S. Senate, "Lessons Learned from Hurricane Andrew," 50-53.
[757] U.S. Senate, "Lessons Learned from Hurricane Andrew," 50-53.
[758] Little and Friedland, "Krome's Invisible Prisoners: Cycles of Abuse and Neglect," 46; Cheryl Little to Mayor Suarez, September 23, 1992 in RL 00035, Box 9, Krome 1992, Americans for Immigrant Justice, RLDU.

making plans to construct more durable, sustainable housing for farmworkers.[759]

The urgent need for upgraded housing stock was further illuminated as migrant workers began to stream back to rural South Florida for the winter harvest season. While citrus groves and plant nurseries were severely damaged in the region, vegetable planting resumed that fall in a diminished capacity as crews repaired equipment and infrastructure.[760] Hundreds of construction workers and day laborers drawn to the area by reconstruction work joined these farmworkers. Since FEMA shut down most of its tent cities that October, Miami-Dade officials urged the agency to reestablish temporary housing for the thousands without shelter. FEMA determined migrant workers and others who arrived after the storm were ineligible for emergency assistance, but still released some tents to the county. Centro Campesino managed to secure an additional 65 FEMA tents to augment its growing tent city. Many, however, were forced to sleep in their cars or other makeshift shelters.[761]

The rural housing crisis after Hurricane Andrew served as an impetus for Centro Campesino to expand its housing work in Homestead. With the Everglades Community Association, the body that managed the Everglades Labor Camp, Steve Mainster, Director of Centro Campesino, worked with builders, banks and business leaders, nonprofits, and government officials to organize financing for a major new farmworker housing development, the Everglades Farmworker Villages. Mainster and his partners intended the Everglades Farmworker Villages to be a new model for farmworkers' housing, one that migrant families could be proud to live in. The largest such project in the country, it came to encompass nearly 500 high-quality units, including well-maintained single-family homes

---

[759] Mainster and Rivera, "Hurricane Andrew, A Force to be Reckoned With: The Story of a Farmworker Tent City"; Juanita Mainster, phone call with author, November 30, 2018.
[760] Mary Lamberts and Herbert Bryan, "Non-Cultural Factors Affecting Dade County Vegetable Production after Hurricane Andrew," Florida State Horticultural Society 106 (1993): 175-76 in John Attaway Collection, Box 8, Folder 4 (Andrew Ecological), FSC.
[761] Chuck Clark and Joanne Cavanaugh, "Dade Seeking New Tent City Survey Found People Still Homeless, FEMA Officials to Be Told," *Sun-Sentine*l, December 18, 1992.

and dormitories, as well as a day care center, a legal aid office, and retail and recreation spaces.[762] Through the 1990s, Centro Campesino continued to develop low-income housing, rehabilitated and retrofitted thousands of homes, and implemented education and job training programs in the region. At the same time, the non-profit management association for Everglades Farmworker Villages, built high-road farmworker housing projects in Immokalee, Okeechobee, and Central Florida. Thus, these organizations worked to eradicate rural slums and challenged the prevailing system of labor camps controlled by growers or contractors. They further advanced a national model for sustainable community-controlled housing and rural development that provided farmworkers and their families a safe and clean living environment and access to opportunity.[763]

The rise of improved farmworker housing also contributed to the reconstruction and redevelopment in southern Dade County. As many higher-income residents of Homestead and Florida City chose to relocate after the storm, immigrant communities remained in place to rebuild. Over 100,000 people fled southern Dade County after Hurricane Andrew, including approximately 40 percent of Homestead's residents. Population loss drained some $500 million in income from the region. Homestead's Air Force base, a major employer in the area, was downsized after sustaining damage in the storm, eliminating some 7,500 jobs, while many other employers, like the city's minor league baseball team, left the area completely.[764] In Florida City, the tax base declined by 60 percent after the storm.[765] Yet, by 2000, the population in the region mostly returned to pre-hurricane levels, with the Latino population climbing from 30 percent to 45 percent of the population in that time.

---

[762] Juanita Mainster, phone call with author, November 30, 2018; Larkin M. Moore, "Stranded Again: The Inadequacy of Federal Plans to Rebuild an Affordable New Orleans After Hurricane Katrina," *Boston College Third World Law Journal* 27, Issue 1 (January 2007): 254-5. See also: Barry Estabrook, "Home Economics," *Gastronomica* 11, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 72-75.

[763] "Centro Campesino, "40 Years of Accomplishments," accessed October 2023, centrocampesino.org/?page_id=46; Rural Neighborhoods, "Our Story: The 1990s," accessed October 2023, https://www.ruralneighborhoods.org/what-we-do/about-us/our-story/the-1990s/.

[764] Harper, *Environmental Disasters: Hurricane Andrew*, 61; 63.

[765] "City Finds Rebirth After Fury of Andrew," *Tampa Bay Times*, May 29, 2001.

Latino families rebuilt Homestead and Florida City home by home. They also reconstituted the local culture and economy, opening ethnic restaurants and groceries, plant nurseries, and other small businesses.[766]

Recovery efforts in the region also broadened the farmworkers' movement, brought new organizations into South Florida, and heightened the focus within the movement on environmental justice and disaster resilience. The FWAF joined in disaster response efforts soon after the hurricane struck, eventually establishing a local office in Homestead to support farmworkers in the region over the long term.[767] Additionally, the disaster relief coordinating council chaired by the COFFO grew to consist of 15 farmworkers' organizations and over 30 state and local agencies dedicated to supporting migrant and rural families in future disasters and improving emergency management in rural Dade County.[768]

For Susan Rubio Rivera, the period after Hurricane Andrew was transformative. The life-long activist, who rose up through OMICA and Centro Campesino, credited the recovery efforts with helping her "find her voice." After the storm, Rubio Rivera saw how her community had marshaled unprecedented resources to the region. She also saw how the storm stressed families, which illuminated the need to break cycles of domestic violence and sexual abuse. A survivor herself, Rubio Rivera had once tried to address these problems as a young activist with OMICA, but lacked the resources and experience to sustain her advocacy. At this point in time, however, she was ready. In 1994, Rubio Rivera founded Mujeres Unidas en Justicia, Educación, y Reforma (MUJER), a social service organization in Homestead committed to rooting out sexual and gender-based

---

766 Peter T. Kilborn, "Immigrants Rebuild a City That Others Fled," *New York Times*, February 21, 2000.
767 Farmworker Association of Florida, "Our History," accessed October 2023, https://floridafarmworkers.org/about/our-history/; FWAF, "Area Offices," accessed October 2023, https://floridafarmworkers.org/contact/area-offices/.
768 National Council of La Raza, *Poverty Project Newsletter*, 2-8 (1993): 3; COFFO, "Migrant Service Providers: A Partnership of South Dade Migrant Service Providers," accessed October 2023, https://www.coffo.org/migrant-service-providers/.

violence in agricultural and rural communities. MUJER has since transformed into a "one-stop" center for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and has intervened in hundreds of cases, partnered with legal aid groups and health clinics, and implemented counseling, education, relocation, and leadership training programs.[769]

In the crucial year after Hurricane Andrew, farmworkers' organizations united first to ensure the survival of farmworkers and their families. Later, they worked to strengthen disaster resilience in the region and to uplift their communities by building leading farmworker housing initiatives, independent from growers' control, and developing new social services and organizations. Outside of Hurricane Andrew's path, the resilience of farmworkers' communities also undergirded new organizing to advance environmental and economic justice.

The FWAF: A Movement for Labor and Environmental Justice

North of the Everglades a slower-moving environmental disaster was killing and sickening farmworkers in rural communities near heavily-polluted Lake Apopka in Central Florida. Farmworkers who lived near the 48-square mile lake and worked the vegetable fields and citrus groves that lined its shores had long suspected that the pesticides they were exposed to were dangerous. They often found dead snakes, turtles, and birds dotting the fields, and, too often, people in the community suffered from ailments like asthma, lupus, heart disease, cancer, and kidney failure. Linda Lee, a longtime farmworker from the town of Apopka, recalled to a researcher that she once attended 18 funerals in a week, a high mark in a regular procession of local funerals, often for young people and babies.[770] In the mid-1990s, a declining alligator and fish population and a thick pea-green sheet of algae over Lake Apopka motivated the state to step in to clean up its most polluted lake and remediate agricultural pollution. While lawmakers set aside millions of dollars to buyout

[769] Susan Rubio Rivera, Zoom interview with author, July 29, 2022. For more, see: MUJER webpage, accessed October 2023, mujerfla.org.
[770] Dale Finley Slongwhite, *Fed Up: The High Costs of Cheap Food* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014), 22.

farms near the lake, clean the water, and protect wildlife, they provided almost nothing for farmworkers, who faced both job loss and chronic illness.

Amid this crisis, African American and immigrant farmworkers mobilized through the FWAF to curtail the use of pesticides, advocate for poisoned communities, and improve farmworkers' livelihoods, putting their fight in terms of environmental and labor justice. Farmworkers inserted themselves in environmental policy debates and challenged government officials and middle-class environmentalists to recognize their community and human needs. In turn, they contributed to and shaped a growing transnational environmental justice movement led by marginalized communities of color who had similarly been exposed to dumping, pollution, and toxins in their communities. Through the 1980s and 1990s, the environmental justice movement grew to address the racist systems that disproportionately polluted and poisoned Black, Brown, and poor communities and shake up a staid environmental movement that often overlooked them.[771] From Apopka, the FWAF built on farmworkers' shared experiences with environmental racism, disaster, and exploitation to form five chapters across the state claiming some 10,000 members. By building networks, coalitions, and campaigns for pesticide control and sustainable food systems, the FWAF advanced farmworker health and safety and labor protections and was central in integrating the farmworkers' movement into the environmental justice movement and amplifying the struggles of Florida's farmworkers nationally and globally.

The FWAF emerged from the legacy of the UFW's organizing in the state and established strong roots in Central Florida in the 1980s. Tirso Moreno, a farmworker from Mexico who arrived in Florida in the 1976, led the founding of the Association. While working in Minute Maid's orange

---

[771] On the rise of the environmental justice movement, see: Robert D. Bullard, *The Quest for Environmental Justice: Human Rights, and the Politics of Pollution* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2005); Luke W. Cole and Sheila R. Foster, *From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2001); On farmworkers and the movement, see: Rebecca E. Berkey, *Environmental Justice and Farm Labor* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

groves near Apopka, Moreno became an active UFW member and local organizer. In 1983, after years struggling unsuccessfully to use "an organizing style from California" to win new union contracts, Moreno quit his job in the groves to organize full time outside the UFW.[772] With support from the sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and the Farmworker Ministry, Moreno joined with other activists in Apopka to form the Farmworker Association of Central Florida, later renamed the FWAF when the organization expanded to South Florida in 1992 after Hurricane Andrew. The Association, in its early years, formed cooperative, farmworker-owned labor crews to negotiate better contracts with citrus growers. While its labor crews were often blacklisted, the FWAF found some success and built its membership, going on to win a legal battle to include fern-cutters in IRCA's SAW legalization program and open an office in Pierson, a fern-growing center. By the 1990s, circumstances conspired to move the FWAF to put health and safety and disaster resilience at the center of its mission.[773]

The environmental crisis on Lake Apopka in the 1990s emerged from a similar alchemy of political decisions, private influence, and hubris that drove the degradation of the Everglades. In the early 20th century, the region around the lake, which also claimed rich muck soil, was sparsely settled and tended mainly by "suitcase" farmers, who led seasonal operations on leased land, sharing the shore with fish camps that thrived on the lake's extensive bass population. While many struggled to turn a profit due to frequent flooding, some farms persevered in Apopka, like the Duda family's operation which grew into a business empire from a few hundred acres of vegetable fields in the area. The unpredictable nature of production in Apopka changed when, during World War II, the state government intervened to boost food supplies. The state created a drainage district, built a

[772] Slongwhite*, Fed Up*, 136-7.
[773] Nezahualcoyotl Xiuhtecutli and Annie Shattuck, "Crisis Politics and U.S. Farm Labor: Health Justice and Florida farmworkers Amid a Pandemic," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 48, no. 1 (2021); 83-4; "Hearings and Workshops Before the Commission on Agricultural Workers 1989-1993," 621-2. See also: FWAF, "Our History," accessed October 2023, https://floridafarmworkers.org/about/our-history/.

levee along the lake, subsidized flood control installations, and gave away some 19,000 acres of drained land to about a dozen families. Soon farms were regularly discharging fertilizers and pesticides into Lake Apopka. By the 1960s, algae blooms and water hyacinth bedeviled local waterways, fish kills became widespread, and commercial fish harvesting halted due to high DDT levels detected in fish stock. State and federal officials negotiated with growers through the 1970s and 80s over plans to restore the lake, with little success, as fish and wildlife died off and Lake Apopka and its tributaries became progressively more polluted.[774] Compounding the crisis, a massive DDT spill in 1980 from the Tower Chemical Company plant and run off from the Drum Chemical company, another pesticide producer, created two super-fund sites on opposite shores of the lake.[775]

While government officials focused solely on the health of the lake, farmworkers, too, suffered from the toxic externalities of industrial agriculture in the region and began working to protect themselves. The extent that the high rates of cancer, reproductive problems, and immune and respiratory ailments in the community were linked to exposure to organochloride pesticides like DTT was not yet fully known or documented.[776] Farmworkers knew, however, that pesticides burned their skin, caused them migraines, and stole their breath and strength. To them, it was clear there was a growing health problem in the Apopka region. Thus, during the early 1990s, the FWAF became increasingly engaged in pesticide control and health and safety advocacy. The Association led local and regional workshops to educate farmworkers about pesticide safety—initiatives that would go on to touch thousands in the state— and began engaging in regulatory advocacy to push for better pesticide safety standards. Organizers with the FWAF also connected farmworkers to

---

[774] Barry Estabrook, "Of Money and Muck," *Gastronomica* 12, No. 1 (Spring 2012): 30; "Lake Apopka Timeline," Lake County Water Atlas, University of South Florida, accessed October 2023, https://lake.wateratlas.usf.edu/upload/documents/Lake-Apopka-Timeline.pdf.
[775] Ron Habin and Geraldean Matthew, "Lake Apopka Farmworkers Environmental Health Project, Report on Community Health Survey," Farmworker Association of Florida (May 2006): 32.
[776] On the negative health impacts of organochlorides, see: Wissem Mnif, Aziza Ibn Hadj Hassine, Aicha Bouaziz, Aghleb Bartegi, Olivier Thomas, and Benoit Roig, "Effect of Endocrine Disruptor Pesticides: A Review," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 8, No. 6 (2011): 2265–2303.

health clinics and conducted train-the-trainer exercises with farmworkers in Florida to propagate good pesticide safety practices.[777]

Building on this local and state work, Moreno committed the FWAF to lead efforts to bring the farmworkers' movement into the environmental justice movement.[778] In 1991, FWAF sent a delegation to the First National People of Color and Indigenous People Environmental Leadership Summit, a landmark meeting of local organizations engaged in environmental fights. The summit built on the growing U.S. environmental justice movement, which emerged in the early 1980s when a national civil rights campaign formed around local protests over the dumping of carcinogenic waste in a low-income Black community in Warren County, North Carolina. The summit aimed to bring new organizations into the environmental movement including those dedicated to workers' health and safety, indigenous land sovereignty, and human and immigrants' rights and foster the formation of regional, national, and international networks to fight environmental racism.[779] The FWAF carried on this charge and formed the Farmworker Health and Safety Institute with the New Jersey-based Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas (CATA) in 1992 to conduct popular education trainings along the East Coast. The next year, with FLOC, CATA, and several other organizations, it led the formation of a broader Farmworker Network for Economic and Environmental Justice to build national and international advocacy campaigns to transform agricultural, environmental, and economic policies.[780]

These efforts generated some progress. In 1994, the Clinton Administration issued an Executive Order that laid out "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice" in minority and

[777] Berkey, *Environmental Justice and Farm Labor*, 110-14.
[778] Antonio Tovar, Zoom interview with author, December 5, 2022.
[779] Daniel Faber, *Capitalizing on Environmental Injustice: The Polluter-Industrial Complex in the Age of Globalization* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 222-4. On the campaign in Warren County, NC and environmental justice, see: Robert Bullard, *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1990).
[780] Xiuhtecutli and Shattuck, "Crisis Politics and U.S. Farm Labor," 84; Berkey, *Environmental Justice and Farm Labor*, 110-14; The Farmworker Network, 1994 Declaration, accessed October 2023, https://www.farmworkers.org/fwspage.html.

low-income communities. The order mandated that federal agencies incorporate environmental protection and community consultations in policymaking and to review federal actions and programs to prevent and remediate adverse environmental impacts in communities.[781] At this time in Florida, the FWAF and allies also led a successful campaign to pass a Right-to-Know Law, which mandated growers and contractors inform farmworkers about the dangers and potential health effects of the chemicals used on crops.[782] The next year, after a long delay, the EPA implemented the Worker Protection Standard for Agricultural Pesticides, a comprehensive regulation that, for the first time, extended basic rules requiring safety training and posters, hazard communication, and entry and space restrictions during pesticide application.[783]

Simultaneously, other disasters necessitated the growth of the FWAF into a state-wide organization and pushed the association to develop expertise on community disaster response and resilience. Early on, harsh freezes in Apopka and Pierson in the 1980s that devastated the citrus crop encouraged farmworkers to seek assistance from and join the Association. In 1992, when Hurricane Andrew tore through Homestead and Florida City, a contingent of FWAF's organizers and members brought their knowledge of disaster aid to Homestead, assisting in food and clothing distribution, the provision of emergency housing, and helping storm victims navigate FEMA application processes. Later, the FWAF supported the development of the Everglades Farmworker Village, opened an ethnic food store in the community, and established a local office in Homestead to

781 "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations," Executive Order 12898 of February 11, 1994, Federal Register, Presidential Documents 59, No. 32 (February 1994). https://www.archives.gov/files/federal-register/executive-orders/pdf/12898.pdf.

782 The 1994 law was formally named the Florida Agricultural Worker Safety Act. "Florida: Tomatoes, Pesticides, Housing," *Rural Migration News* 9, No. 2 (April 2003), accessed, https://migration.ucdavis.edu/rmn/more.php?id=13; FWAF, "Our History."

783 Frederick M. Fishel, "A Summary of Revisions to the Worker Protection Standard—20151," Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Extension, University of Florida PI261 (December 2015), 1-5. https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/PI/PI26100.pdf.

support ongoing vocational training, pesticide safety, and immigrant rights programming.[55784] In 1995, when major flooding struck farming communities near the gulf coast, leaving many farmworkers homeless, the FWAF opened another field office in Immokalee to assist disaster with relief and extend the Association's organizing reach. Through these years, the FWAF trained farmworkers to form "community emergency response teams" to carry forward lessons learned in past disasters, mediate between farmworkers and government actors, and promote disaster preparedness.[785]

While the FWAF expanded through Central and South Florida and forged national networks, farmworkers around its base in Apopka were facing joblessness, as the state moved to buyout growers in the area to halt pollution and restore the toxic lake. In 1996, after years of fighting with the state over consent decrees on backpumping and agricultural runoff into Lake Apopka, growers signaled they were willing to cash out. Lawmakers responded by passing the Lake Apopka Restoration Act, earmarking funds to create filtration marshes and habitat sanctuaries on former farmland. Over the next two years, the state paid over $101 million to growers for land that was essentially given away a generation prior.[786] The Dudas were the first to accept a buyout (for nearly $20 million), and other growers soon followed—with some negotiating even higher per-acre prices with the state.[787] The state was also obligated to overpay millions for growers' vehicles, packinghouses, coolers, and defunct farm equipment, which were appraised at higher "in-use" values for accounting purposes.[788] While the state's environmental groups generally praised the passage of the Lake Apopka Restoration Act as a landmark in conservation, the over 2,500 farmworkers who

---

[784] [55] Monica Unseld, "Farmworkers—Always Essential, Always at Risk: An Interview with Jeannie Economos," *NEW SOLUTIONS: A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy* 30, No. 4 (2021): 305; FWAF, "Area Offices."
[785] Jeannie Economos, "Integrating Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers in Disaster Response and Relief Efforts" in John Twigg, ed., *Migrants in Disaster Risk Reduction: Practices for Inclusion* (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2017), 53-55.
[786] Estabrook, "Of Money and Muck," 32; Estabrook, *Tomatoland*, 48-50.
[787] Ericson, Edward Jr., "Mucked Up," *Orlando Weekly*, August 21, 1997.
[788] Ericson, Edward Jr., "Buying the Farm Equipment," *Orlando Weekly*, September 18-24.

had worked the region's land received only news of their impending unemployment and eviction orders to move out from growers' labor camps and trailers. In the last years of agriculture around Lake Apopka, growers even fought to halt job retraining program, fearing that farmworkers might not show up for the final harvests.[789]

According to Jeanie Economos, then the Lake Apopka Project Coordinator for the FWAF, the farm closures caused "total pandemonium" for displaced farmworkers and deep rifts between environmental and farmworkers' organizations. During the negotiations that resulted in the Lake Apopka Restoration Act, the FWAF had sought alliances with groups like the Sierra Club and the Friends of Lake Apopka (FOLA), the local association that led the campaign for the restoration plan, to no avail. Environmentalists rejected the Association's proposal to repurpose some of the land for sustainable, organic farming and declined to throw their weight behind a push for increased financial support for farmworkers. Ultimately, only about 70 families received government relocation assistance.[790] After farming ceased in the area, most families were forced to leave Apopka, with or without aid, meaning that few farmworkers could take advantage of the limited retraining programs the state eventually funded. The FWAF became the safety net for most farmworkers. Organizers like Economos and Geraldean Matthew worked day and night, often droving hours across the state to host community meetings, to help farmworkers find replacement housing, new job opportunities, and to apply for assistance.[791]

To make matters worse, the environmental commitments of many of those behind the restoration plan were hardly pristine. Investigative reporting later revealed that the FOLA had ties to

---

[789] Estabrook, "Of Money and Muck," 32; Vanessa Calcano Thomas, "¡PELIGRO! Si Usted No Entiende La Etiqueta, Busque a Alguien Para Que se la Explique a Usted en Detalle: The Need for International and Domestic Implementation of Bilingual Pesticide Labeling to Enhance Protection of Migrant Farmworkers in Florida," *Florida A&M University Law Review* 9, No. 2 (Spring 2014): 472.
[790] Jeannie Economos, Zoom interview with the author, November 11, 2022.
[791] Farmworkers Association of Florida, "Apopka Loses an Iconic Farmworker Advocate," *Apopka Voice*, September 11, 2016; Economos, Zoom interview with the author.

real estate developers, and that over half of the organization's board members owned land near the lake and stood to gain from the rezoning of agricultural acreage for development and the possibility that the restoration would increase land values. Indeed, the FOLA in part marketed restoration as an economic development plan, as board members sold land to the state for preservation, while developing water-front housing nearby. In the years that followed, citrus growers (financially stressed after the freezes of the 1980s) and other big landowners undertook a variety of real estate development ventures, fueling exurban sprawl around Apopka. Meanwhile, the state did not compel a single company or individual responsible for polluting the lake to pay for its restoration.[792]

FWAF activists continued to advocate for the consideration of farmworkers' basic needs and health in environmental policy when, in late 1998, over 1,000 migratory birds died after nesting on artificial marshes created from flooded former farmlands near Lake Apopka. This event, the nation's largest recorded bird mortality incident, alarmed scientists and government officials, who began investigating what killed so many pelicans, eagles, herons, and other birds. The state also quickly drained the fields to avoid further calamity. Yet, Apopka's farmworkers, who feared that the same toxins that had killed the birds caused their own health problems and had called for pesticide exposure research in their community, were left out of governmental responses. In 2000, the Fish and Wildlife Service reported that the birds had died from ingesting fish contaminated with DDT that "had bio-accumulated up the food chain."[793] For decades, farmworkers had lived, worked, and eaten fruits, vegetables, and fish in Apopka, inadvertently exposing themselves to the same toxic, endocrine-disrupting pesticides like DDT. Still, state and federal agencies refused to conduct studies on the matter. Legal attempts to hold growers or the government accountable proved futile—growers argued they had only followed government regulations and that no one farm could be liable

[792] Edward Ericson, Jr., "The Color of Money," *Orlando Weekly*, September 18-24, 1997.
[793] Thomas, "¡PELIGRO! Si Usted No Entiende La Etiqueta, Busque a Alguien Para Que se la Explique a Usted en Detalle," 472.

for pesticide exposure in a migratory population, while government officials claimed they had only followed the science at the time.[794]

Nevertheless, the FWAF continued to fight to increase the visibility of the health crisis facing farmworkers. Moreno, angered by government inaction, formed partnerships with academic researchers to generate data on farmworkers' health to drive change and hold policymakers accountable.[795] In the absence of a government study, Matthew coordinated a major health survey with anthropologist Ron Habin. They interviewed 148 former Apopka farmworkers about their health conditions and histories of pesticide expose. The results of the 2006 study were both clear and jarring. The research found that of respondents: 92 percent were exposed to pesticides; 83 percent said their health was fair or poor; 70 percent had arthritis; 60 percent had a breathing or throat problem; 50 percent had diabetes; 11 percent reported at least one person at home had lupus; 16 percent had a miscarriage; and 13 percent reported having a child with a birth defect.[796] Using this model, the Association conducted many more research and popular education projects on farm labor issues with partners in Florida universities and student farmworker support organizations.[797] Concurrently, the FWAF initiated a training project to teach hundreds of health care providers how to identify, treat, and report pesticide-related illnesses among farmworker populations.[798] Matthew, who would later pass away from multiple chronic illnesses, and other farmworkers went on to make a memorial quilt with patches sewn by Apopka's dispossessed farmworkers, complete with patches that illustrated farmworkers' experiences with illness and losing a community. The FWAF shared this artwork in public education and cultural events across the state.[799]

---

[794] Slongwhite*,* *Fed Up*, 8-11; Economos, Zoom interview with the author. Moreno quoted in Slogwhite, *Fed Up*, 11.
[795] Antonio Tovar, Zoom Interview with author.
[796] Habin and Matthew, "Lake Apopka Farmworkers Environmental Health Project, Report on Community Health Survey," 3-5.
[797] See: FWAF, Annual Report, "2019 in Review: Making an Impact," 2019.
[798] "Tirso Moreno, Farmworker Organizer, Answers Questions," *Grist*, March 21, 2006.
[799] Slongwhite*,* *Fed Up*, 141-163; Farmworkers Association of Florida, "Apopka Loses an Iconic Farmworker Advocate." See also: Lake Apopka Memorial Quilt Blog, accessed October 2023, https://apopkaquiltproject.blogspot.com/.

FWAF leaders also did not give up on building alliances with environmental organizations. In the late 1990s, the Association launched a "Sustainable Tomatoes" campaign with Friends of the Earth and the Florida Consumer Action Network. Battling growers' associations, lawmakers, and EPA officials, the campaign (unsuccessfully) called on state and federal agencies to ban methyl bromide spraying by conducting high profile demonstrations and forums, educating consumers, and publicizing measures of pesticide drift in communities.[800]

Throughout this period, the FWAF incorporated global strategies to support its work on the ground and strengthened international networks to advance progress on pesticide control, labor rights, and creating food system change. The association engaged UN processes and agencies and amplified their advocacy with the Pesticide Action Network, an alliance of over 600 organizations in 90 countries committed to pesticide control and sustainability. With the Network, the FWAF supported a corporate campaign targeting major pesticide producers and a multi-year legal investigation into pesticide poisoning that connected the Florida case with instances of community poisoning throughout the global South.[801] The FWAF also advanced global knowledge sharing on agroecology and food sovereignty through La Via Campesina, a transnational network of peasants' organizations, and built linkages with North American unions and workers' centers in the Food Chain Workers Alliance, which has won agreements committing local governments, including in Florida, to ethical food sourcing standards.[802]

---

[800] Adam Tompkins, *Ghostworkers and Greens: The Cooperative Campaigns of Farmworkers and Environmentalists for Pesticide Reform* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 141-2; Corinna Gilfillan and Tom Bethell, "Reaping Havoc: The True Cost of Using Methyl Bromide on Florida's Tomatoes," Friends of the Earth, Farmworker Association of Florida, Farmworker Self-Help, Inc., Florida Consumer Action Network, and Legal Environmental Assistance Foundation, August 1998.

[801] "Farmworkers of Florida Are Up Against the 'Big Six Pesticide Companies,'" La Via Campesina, September 26. 2017, accessed October 2023, https://viacampesina.org/en/farmworkers-florida-big-six-pesticide-companies/; The Permanent People's Tribunal on Agrochemical Transnational Corporations: Indictment and Verdict, PAN International, 2015.

[802] Antonio Tovar, Zoom Interview with author. See also: Bob Maschi, "Featured Member: FWAF," Food Chain Workers Alliance, accessed October 2023, https://foodchainworkers.org/2010/09/post-1/; "What is La Via Campesina," La Via Campesina, accessed October 2023, https://viacampesina.org/en/who-are-we/what-is-la-via-campesina/.

In Florida, the FWAF was also instrumental in forging coalitions to protect and empower immigrant workers. In 1998, the association cofounded the Florida Immigrant Coalition (FLIC) to serve as an advocacy and campaign hub for some 65 member organizations in the state fighting for immigrant rights. The FWAF soon after joined an informal coalition with CIW, FLOC, and UFW, the largest farmworkers' organizations in the state, to support Immokalee farmworkers' growing strikes and push for state-level reform. As will be discussed further, these collaborative campaigns helped propel the CIW into the national spotlight, shake up food supply chains, and win wage increases and reform. In 2005, these farmworkers' groups also celebrated the passage of Florida's Alfredo Bahena Act, a law named for a FWAF organizer who died in a car accident, which promulgated stronger regulations on labor contractors and pesticide use, banned price gouging in labor camps, and revamped a farmworkers' advisory commission.[803]

From local chapters in Central and South Florida, FWAF organizers sustained rural communities, won legal protection frameworks for farmworkers, and developed local, national, and global movements for environmental justice. The Association built grassroots organizing and advocacy campaigns and empowered farmworkers to challenge the environments and systems of agricultural production that shaped their lives. Its work contributed to revitalizing the state's farmworkers' movement in a challenging period and continues to this day.

The CIW's Movement and Model: From "Sweatshops in the Fields" to "Worker-Driven" Social Responsibility

The CIW's well-documented achievements since its 1995 general strike in Immokalee make it perhaps the most successful case of farmworkers' organizing since the heyday of the UFW in the late 1960s. Through creative and strategic corporate campaigns, high-profile demonstrations,

[803] "Farm Worker Groups Join Forces," *Tampa Bay Times*, November 21, 2000; "Law Helps Protect Migrant Workers," *Tampa Bay Times*, August 28, 2005.

popular education, wide-ranging alliances, and boycotts, the Coalition activated South Florida's farmworkers and pushed major fast-food brands and supermarkets to improve wages and conditions in their supply chains. The CIW first targeted Yum Brands, the parent company of Taco Bell as well as KFC and Pizza Hut, demanding that the company pay "a penny per pound" to raise farmworkers' income and that it compels its suppliers to adhere to a code of conduct. The need to monitor and enforce the redistribution of value down the supply chain and growers' compliance to higher standards gave rise to the Coalition's FFP, a "worker-driven" social responsibility initiative. Yum Brands became the FFP's first signatory in 2005. Since then, the CIW has refined and expanded the program and won agreements with McDonald's, Burger King, Subway, Whole Foods, Walmart, and other major food buyers.[804]

In its formative years, the Coalition built power, unmatched by earlier organizing efforts in Florida, and transformed local wage struggles and anti-trafficking activism into a campaign that moved major food brands to raise standards. The rise of the CIW was contingent on its ability to respond to farmworkers' needs, activate their organizing and leadership skills, and counter the structures of South Florida's growers' regimes of labor control. The CIW's accomplishments, in a period of globalization, diffuse transnational supply chains, and declining union density, have rightly garnered it widespread recognition and attention. Many academics and labor organizers and practitioners have identified the CIW's FFP as a potential new "model" for corporate accountability with, in the words of the MacArthur Foundation, "the potential to transform workplace environments across the global supply chain.[805]" Accordingly, studies of the CIW often focus on delineating its tactics, the reproducibility of the FFP across sectors, or the significance of the

[804] See: "Partners," Fair Food Program, accessed October 2023, https://fairfoodprogram.org/partners/; "About: The Power of Prevention," Fair Food Program, accessed October 2023, https://fairfoodprogram.org/about/.
[805] "CIW's Greg Asbed named 2017 MacArthur Fellow," CIW, October 19, 2017, accessed October 2023, https://ciw-online.org/blog/2017/10/greg-asbed-macarthur/.

Coalition's rise in relation to international processes like migration and globalized production.[806] Works that do consider the CIW's local roots, tend to be ethnographic in nature and examine discrete dynamics of the movement such as farmworkers' alliances with the faith community, local protest and popular education practices, or the local translation of social movement praxis from Latin America and the Caribbean.[807] These approaches miss a bigger picture of how the CIW forged campaigns responsive to South Florida's rural communities and the region's distinct production and labor relations practices and position in the food system. They also tend to frame the CIW's organizing power as disconnected from local history and, in particular, South Florida's rural communities and organizational networks.

The CIW's ascent is attributable to not only the group's deft organizing and cultural power, but also to the design of the Coalition's organizing model, which addressed the persistent and particular forms of labor exploitation endemic in South Florida's agro-industrial complex and allowed it to remain relevant and effective in an ever-changing migrant workforce. The CIW's commitment to consciousness-raising and workers' leadership, a product of its founders' grounding in peasant movements, offered social capital and fostered confidence and organizing innovations in an often transitory workforce accustomed to abuse, exploitation, and isolation.[808] By building mobilizing capacity through popular education and collective decision-making, confronting real

---

[806] On this, see, for example: Fabiola Mieres and Siobhán McGrath, "Ripe to be Heard: Worker voice in the Fair Food Program," *International Labour Review* 160, No. 4 (2021), 631-47; Janice Fine and Tim Bartley, "Raising the Floor: New Directions in Public and Private Enforcement of Labor Standards in the United States," *Journal of Industrial Relations* 61, No. 2 (2018): 252–276; Annelise Orleck, *"We Are All Fast-Food Workers Now": The Global Uprising Against Poverty Wages* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018); Marquis, *I Am Not a Tractor!*, 194-226; James J. Brudney, "Decent Labour Standards in Corporate Supply Chains: The Immokalee Workers Model," 351–376 in Joanna Howe and Rosemary Owens, eds., *Temporary Labor Migration in the Global Era: The Regulatory Challenges* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2016).

[807] See: Walsh, "'Our Struggles are Not the Same"; Colleen M. Valentine, "Prosperity in the Fields: Migrant Workers and the Role of Social Capital," MA Thesis (Georgetown University, 2012); Melissa C. Gouge, "Generating Solidarity: The Playful Politics of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers," Ph.D. Diss., (George Mason University, 2011); Randall Sean Sellers, "'Del pueblo, para el pueblo': The Coalition of Immokalee Workers and the Fight for Fair Food," MA Thesis, (University of Texas, Austin, 2009).

[808] On social capital, the CIW, and immigrant workers, see: Griffith, "Unions without Borders," 58; Valentine, "Prosperity in the Fields."

problems, and providing a social network and community to isolated farmworkers, the CIW harnessed the leadership and organizing skills migrants brought with them to the region, continually engaged a changing workforce, and built a powerful movement. Importantly, the historical social protections and civil society networks that had developed in South Florida also created an enabling environment that supported, directly and indirectly, the rise of the CIW. In these ways, the CIW won concrete gains that facilitated the rise of its FFP. From deliberations in cramped meeting rooms and hot tomato fields, the FFP has evolved into a "worker-driven" social responsibility model tailored to address the root causes of exploitation, poverty, and forced labor in the region and multinational supply chains.

Of course, in the early 1990s, CIW's future was unknown, as its organizers worked to grow trust and bridge ethnic divides among farmworkers. Mobility, diversity, and precarity intersected in Immokalee, where most farmworkers were single immigrant men engaged in the migrant stream, in equal numbers from Haiti and Guatemala as from Mexico.[809] In its first years, the CIW, then known as the Southwest Florida Farmworker Project, slowly grew its membership through a food cooperative, offering fair prices in a market with rampant price gouging, and by holding community meetings. Laura Germino, a legal services attorney, Greg Asbed, her husband and an outreach worker who once worked in Haiti's peasants' movement, Lucas Benitez, an activist farmworker from Guerrero, and a small, multi-ethnic cadre of immigrant farmworkers were at the core of the project's founding. Germino and Asbed had come to Immokalee seeking to make systemic change after working in legal services in Maryland and hearing from exploited farmworkers working the migrant stream that Immokalee was home. The pair joined FRLS and, eschewing the office's focus on "impact" cases, took on a slew of wage claims to make connections in the community and create a

[809] Douglas Bagby, "Selective Effects of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 on Farmworker Living and Working Conditions in the U.S.," MA Thesis, (University of Florida, 2003),36-7.

base for organizing. Soon, farmworkers like Benitez and others were regularly meeting in a borrowed room in the Our Lady of Guadalupe church and had formed committees of Haitian, Mexican, and Guatemalan farmworkers to build linkages in the diverse and often divided workforce. In these spaces, farmworkers discussed the injustices they faced and undertook collective analysis that, in Asbed's words "put together the little fires" that migrants carried with them to fuel one big fire in Immokalee.[810]

Many of these early activists had experience in liberation theology and Indigenous and rural organizing, including several who had been educators in Haiti's Peasant Movement of Papay. This core group sought to animate the movement in Immokalee using tools from those struggles like popular education and consciousness-raising and pursued a vision of all members being leaders, driven by the theory that "consciousness plus commitment equals change." Systematic consciousness-raising and continual community analysis, practices rooted in these rural movements, both served as the basis for action and as a mechanism to bring in new activists from the stream of migrant farmworkers who passed through Immokalee year after year.[811] To identify and formulate actions that would raise consciousness and unite Immokalee's farm work force, organizers conducted community surveys, which pointed to the perennial problems of wage theft, and violence and abuse from crew leaders as top concerns. In 1994, the nascent project began organizing farmworkers to collectively confront unscrupulous crew leaders and brought legal cases against some that won over $100,000 in back pay.[812]

During the general strike in the winter of 1995, the project's ethnic committees came together as a "coalition," and the CIW relocated to a small building in Immokalee and continued

[810] Greg Asbed, Zoom interview with the author, September 13, 2023.
[811] Ibid.
[812] Sellers, "'Del pueblo, para el pueblo," 62-66; Kathleen Wood and Kate Mitchell, "Farmworker Justice: Select Tools for Allies of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers," National Hunger Center, February 2007, 4; David Bacon, "Interview with Lucas Benitez of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers," *Labor Notes*, May 31, 2002.

efforts to reign in labor contractors' abuses.[813] A unifying moment came in November 1996, when a 17-year-old farmworker stumbled into the CIW's office covered in blood. The young man reported that his crew leader had beat him for requesting a water break in a nearby tomato field. That night, the CIW mobilized some 500 farmworkers to march to the crew leaders' home with their beaten comrade's bloodied shirt serving as a banner, making clear to the assailant and all contractors in the area that "an injury to one is an injury to all." The next day, farmworkers stopped working for the offending crew leader.[814]

That the CIW's early actions often centered on halting exploitation in farm labor contracting is not surprising. Multi-layered contracting operations historically played a larger role in Florida's farm workforce than almost anywhere else in the country— one that only grew in the 1990s. In 1993, the U.S. Commission on Agricultural Workers reported that all of the state's winter vegetable growers used contractors, often several, and 98 percent of vegetable harvesters surveyed worked for one.[815] Around Immokalee, approximately 560 crew leaders managed 15,660 farmworkers in the winter season.[816] Post-IRCA immigrants, many from Indigenous communities, were both more dependent on crew leaders, due to their immigration status and cultural and language barriers, and more vulnerable to exploitation. Networks of recruiters, contractors, crew leaders, and camp managers surveilled and controlled workers' movements.[817] The squeeze that contractors put on farmworkers—through rents and fees, price gouging, and wage theft —was harder than ever, too, as Mexican imports depressed the price of tomatoes and increased job competition. Indeed, the

[813] Interview with Greg Asbed, CIW, September 13, 2023.
[814] Rob Gurwitt, "Power to the Pickers," *Mother Jones*, July/ August 2004; "'Not 1996 anymore…' Worker beaten at packing house near Immokalee," CIW, March 25, 2012, accessed October 2023, https://ciw-online.org/blog/2012/03/not_1996_anymore/.
[815] U.S. Commission on Agricultural Workers, *Report of the Commission on Agricultural Workers*, 123-4. As stated in Chapter 3 of the report, in 1971, 80 percent of farmworkers reported working for a crew leader. See also: Kantor, "Florida's Forgotten People: The Migrant Farmworkers," 758.
[816] Fritz Roka and Dorothy Cook, "Farmworkers in Southwest Florida," Final Report, Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council, September 30, 1998, 19.
[817] Stephen, *Transborder Lives*, 143-4; Martin, "Good Intentions Gone Awry," 56.

number of major packing houses in Immokalee dropped from 15 to four in the three years after the implementation of NAFTA.[818]

The CIW progressively escalated direct action to raise wages for farmworkers pressed by extractive labor intermediaries, growers, and transnational commodity markets. In 1997, organizers moved from targeting individual growers and contractors to launch a "Campaign for Dignity, Dialogue, and a Living Wage," which, for three years, deployed work stoppages, marches, and hunger strikes in an attempt to move the state's tomato industry as a whole to increase piece rates and bargain with the CIW.[819] During the 1997-1998 winter season, the CIW initiated another strike— this time supported by a small group of hunger strikers who went 30 days without food. Several churches from the affluent neighboring town of Naples endorsed the campaign and formed Interfaith Action to support and resource farmworkers on an ongoing basis.[820] While the hunger strike moved only a few growers raise wages, it garnered national attention when Jimmy Carter called for the FFVA to negotiate with farmworkers.[821] That fall, during his gubernatorial campaign, Jeb Bush intervened and brokered an industry-wide 5 cent piece-rate increase. The CIW struck again in November 1999, but in this instance, they were met with only police repression, growers' intransigence, and silence from Governor Bush's office.[822]

In tandem with these efforts, the CIW heightened the moral urgency and national profile of its organizing by bringing forward cases of labor trafficking and leading highly-visible advocacy campaigns to end "modern slavery" in agriculture. As the CIW won farmworkers' trust, it became a

---

818 U.S. House of Representatives, "President's Comprehensive Review of the NAFTA," 225.
819 Marquis, *I Am Not a Tractor!* 29.
820 Walsh, "'Our Struggles are Not the Same, But They Converge,'" 22-3.
821 Bryan Long, "Hunger Strike Feeds on Despair," *Sarasota Herald Tribune*, January 3, 1998; "3 Fla. Farm Workers Give Up Hunger Strike After Carter Plea," *Washington Post*, January 19, 1998.
822 Sellers, "'Del pueblo, para el pueblo," 85-7; David Solnit, "Eleven Years After the WTO Uprising: Seattle, Detroit, Cancun and the Immokalee Workers," The Independent, December 1, 2010. Incidentally, the CIW's 1999 strike coincided with the "Battle in Seattle," the major anti-globalization protests that took place outside WTO trade negotiations in Seattle.

clearing house for information on labor trafficking and a refuge for farmworkers who had escaped forced labor. Germino began an "Anti-Slavery" program and started collecting farmworkers' testimony and liaising with law enforcement to apprehend and prosecute crew leaders engaged in trafficking.[823] In 1997 and 1999, the CIW assisted survivors, collected evidence, and pushed for investigations in two major trafficking cases that involved immigrant farmworkers caught up in contractors' debt bondage schemes and subject to confinement and violence, at times at gunpoint.[824] In subsequent years, the CIW aided investigations of five more trafficking cases involving Florida contractors, who had overseen some 1,200 workers.[825] These farmworkers' cases revealed to national allies and policymakers the dark underside of food production. Working with networks of anti-trafficking organizations, the CIW helped pass the 2000 Trafficking Victims Protection Act, which extended new protections to undocumented immigrants who were victims of trafficking for labor or sexual exploitation.[97][826]

Simultaneously, the CIW looked beyond Immokalee to expand alliances to pressure growers to bargain. In February 2000, the CIW led a 15-day march to the headquarters of the FFVA in Orlando. The march engaged church networks, hundreds of farmworkers, supporters, and students from Florida universities engaged in anti-sweatshop activism.[827] The CIW then held a two-day fast and vigil at the state capitol that October, calling on Governor Bush to act on behalf of

---

[823] Katy Torralbas, "Hillary Clinton Presents Immokalee Woman with 'Anti-Trafficking' Honor," *Naples Daily News*, June 14, 2010.

[824] In 1997's U.S. v. Flores, two crew leaders were charged with 25 counts of enslavement for keeping migrants in debt bondage and under armed guard on the migrant stream. And in 1999, Abel Cuello received fines and 33 months in prison on peonage charges for confining 30 farmworkers in two trailers near Immokalee as they paid off smuggling fees. See: "Miguel Flores Sentenced to 15 Years for Enslaving Migrant Workers," press release, Department of Justice, November 14, 1997; "Two Men Plead Guilty in Southwest Florida Slavery Ring," press release, Department of Justice, May 26, 1999.

[825] Sean Sellers and Greg Asbed, "The History and Evolution of Forced Labor in Florida Agriculture," *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts* 5, no.1 (2011): 38-40.

[826] [97] "Slavery in the Fields and the Food We Eat," Fact Sheet, CIW, accessed October 2023, www.ciw-online.org/Resources/tools/general/10Slavery%20in%20the%20Fields.pdf. See also: Erin C. Heil, *Sex, Slaves, and Serfs: The Dynamics of Human Trafficking in a Small Florida Town* (First Forum Press, 2012).

[827] Walsh, "'Our Struggles are Not the Same, But They Converge,'" 25-6; Marquis, *I Am Not a Tractor!* 35

farmworkers.[828] Under the name "United Community of Florida Farmworkers," the CIW joined in coalition with the FWAF, UFW, and FLOC to intensify demands on growers and lawmakers and present "a voice that represents farm workers from across the state."[829] Soon after, the United Community mobilized a 22-mile march from Quincy Farms, the state's largest mushroom producer where the UFW had recently won a union contract, to Tallahassee, where some 300 farmworkers and activists filled the streets. Around the march, students formalized the Student Farmworker Alliance (SFA) as a national auxiliary organization supporting the Coalition. The groups continued public education and rallies into early 2001. Nevertheless, growers continued to refuse to bargain, and the governor's office stonewalled farmworkers.[830]

It is at this hinge point in the CIW's history that its members, recognizing that they were at an impasse with the state's tomato growers, set a new course. In strategic meetings in early 2001, members took stock of their progress. While the actions from the 1990s to 2001 had lifted wages and piece rates for the first time since the 1970s, the average farmworker still only made $9,000 a year.[831] Farmworkers knew the CIW needed to change tactics. In deliberations involving over 800 farmworkers, CIW members determined they would circumvent recalcitrant crew leaders, growers, and industry associations. Instead, they would demand that Taco Bell, which farmworkers had discovered penned a long-term contract with a major Immokalee tomato concern, redistribute profit down the supply chain. The CIW launched the boycott of Yum Brands in April 2001, calling for an end to "sweatshops in the field" and for the company to pay a penny-per-pound more for tomatoes and respect farmworkers' rights. To support the boycott, organizers undertook a "Taco Bell Truth Tour," a series of public education events and actions across the country designed to mobilize allies

---

[828] Bill Maxwell, "Farm Workers Get Short Shrift Over Fair Wages," *Tampa Bay Times*, October 29, 2000.
[829] "Farm Worker Groups Join Forces."
[830] Wood and Mitchell, "Farmworker Justice: Select Tools for Allies of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers," 4; Ryan Davis, "Coalition of Farm Workers to March," *Tampa Bay Times*, November 30, 2000.
[831] Ibid.

and tie the plight of farmworkers to the brand.[832]

The boycott recognized how shifting dynamics in the food system refracted locally. As Asbed reflected, the campaign recognized "the food system doesn't stop at the growers" and it was firms like "Taco Bell mak[ing] farmworkers poor.[833]" While the region's produce sector was influential and lucrative, it could not match the oligopsony market power of major fast food and supermarket buyers. As imports depressed the price of tomatoes, major food buyers insisted on contracting with domestic growers at lower per-unit costs, eroding growers' share of the retail price of tomatoes by about 15 percent between 1990 and 2000.[834] The region's growers had long sought to evade accountability for farmworkers' poverty by blaming low wages on market pressures even as they amassed profits and perfected systems to minimize labor costs. Nevertheless, with multinational food brands playing an increasingly significant role in the tomato value chain, the opportunity was ripe to demand more from buyers like Taco Bell—which purchased over 10 million pounds of Florida tomatoes.[835]

Over the next four years, the CIW mobilized its members, activated allies, and nationalized and globalized their local struggles to bring the fast-food giant to the table. The CIW strengthened ties with churches and the farmworker ministry, and with students, unions, and left activists discontented with neoliberal globalization. By linking their struggles to slavery and "sweatshops," the CIW grew support among fair trade, sustainability, and global justice groups. At boycott events, farmworkers tied their struggle to resistance against NAFTA, which displaced peasants in Mexico, and multinational food companies, which exploited workers and made consumers sick. The CIW's

---

[832] Elly Leary, "Immokalee Workers Take Down Taco Bell," *Monthly Review* 57, no. 5 (October 2005): 14; Sellers, "'Del pueblo, para el pueblo," 90-2; 97-8.
[833] Bret McCabe, "Farmworkers to the Table," *Johns Hopkins Magazine* 70, No. 3 (Fall 2018). https://hub.jhu.edu/magazine/2018/fall/greg-asbed-coalition-immokalee-workers/.
[834] "Like Machines in the Fields: Workers without Rights in American Agriculture," Report, Oxfam America (March 2004): 34-36. According to Oxfam, "in 1990 grower-shippers received 41% of the retail price of tomatoes, by 2000 they were receiving barely one quarter."
[835] "Florida Tomato Pickers, Taco Bell Reach Agreement," *Vegetable Growers News*, March 10, 2005.

alliances with national networks encouraged decentralized actions at universities (the SFA successfully worked to "boot the bell" off of 25 U.S. campuses), franchise locations, corporate events, and communities. Resources and support flowed from the churches, donors, and unions. The UFW endorsed the boycott, as did the AFL-CIO, which released researchers to assist in collecting corporate data.[836] Marches, pickets, and hunger strikes, as well as high-profile support from celebrities and politicians put increasing pressure on Yum Brands. Shareholder activism, too, played a vital role—on two occasions during the boycott, over 40 percent of Yum Brand's shareholders voted for resolutions supporting the CIW.

In March 2005, before the CIW planned massive demonstrations and a "Conference on Global Justice" in Louisville, Yum Brands' headquarters, the company's executives finally buckled. Taco Bell's Vice President announced that the firm, which previously professed it was unable to get involved in suppliers' labor relations, would "take a leadership role within our industry . . . and work with the CIW for social responsibility." Then, alongside Lucas Benitez, he endorsed an agreement to pass bonus payments for tomatoes directly to workers.[837]

Once its agreement was in place with Taco Bell, the CIW undertook new campaigns to implement and expand the reach of the FFP to other major food brands. In 2011, after winning agreements with McDonald's, Subway, Burger King, and Whole Foods, the CIW made a major breakthrough when it moved the Florida Tomato Growers Exchange to participate in the FFP and facilitate the transfer of brands' "penny-per-pound" bonus payments to farmworkers. This agreement supported the CIW in refining FFP procedures and expanded the coverage of the program to approximately 90 percent of Florida's tomato farms.[838]

---

836 Leary, "Immokalee Workers Take Down Taco Bell," 15-6; SFA, "Our History."
837 Marquis, *I Am Not a Tractor!* 64.
838 McCabe, "Farmworkers to the Table;" CIW, "Historic Breakthrough in Florida's Tomato Fields," Press release, November 16, 2010.

The full history of CIW and the FFP is beyond the scope of this work. Yet, the CIW's ascendance is worth examining further here to fully address an animating question of this chapter. How did the CIW make sustainable change where other farmworkers' organizations had historically faltered?

For one, the CIW's operating environment was not the same as the one that farmworker organizers navigated in past decades. Popular and scholarly coverage of the CIW's campaigns has often framed the Coalition as emerging in a state without a rural organizing tradition and from conditions unchanged since the 1960s "harvest of shame."[839] From its earliest days, CIW organizers, themselves, contributed to this understanding and framed the Coalition as a historically distinct movement built on consciousness raising and workers' leadership and held "advocacy" and service groups at arm's length.[840] Generations of farmworkers struck, mobilized, and built organizations before the CIW, however. The CIW also worked alongside and in parallel to other farmworkers' organizations in Florida. The Coalition's rise, therefore, must be considered in relation to the history and landscape of South Florida's rural civil society, while considering how the CIW built from past struggles in a changing economy. Movement legacies and social protections— in form of the organizational networks, policies, and programs built over time that reduced farmworkers' vulnerability in South Florida— created an enabling environment for the CIW's organizing model to flourish. Indeed, organizational networks and resources opened space for the Coalition to maintain a singular focus on movement building and deploy tactics shaped by both past struggles and responsive to changing times.

While targeting Yum Brands was a long shot, the CIW used new tools and movements to

---

[839] See: Evelyn Nieves, "Fla. Tomato Pickers Still Reap 'Harvest of Shame'," *Washington Post*, February 28, 2005; Sellers, "'Del pueblo, para el pueblo," 60-61; Marquis, *I Am Not a Tractor!* 197-8.
[840] See: Burney, "Learning Their Worth"; André C. Drainville, "Present in the World Economy: The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (1996–2007)," Globalizations 5, Issue 3 (2008) 368-70.

amplify its message and the power of its dedicated base of mobilized farmworkers. The CIW was an early adopter of social media and nearly all of the CIW's communications, petitions, and campaign announcements occurred on its volunteer-run website, which also featured a regularly updated blog. The Coalition's digital innovations platformed farmworkers and elevated their voices to a wider audience. This gave wide visibility to the Coalition's anti-slavery advocacy and actions tying "modern slavery" to major food brands among distant sets of political actors, media contacts, and allies and added to the moral weight of its boycotts.[841]

Further, the CIW's Taco Bell boycott occurred as both corporate social responsibility schemes designed to protect brand reputations and anti-globalization and anti-sweatshop activism were on the rise. Thus, the CIW's target was well-placed, in terms of Taco Bell's ability to improve conditions of farmworkers in Immokalee, and its campaign was well-timed to exert pressure on the food brand. Multinational corporations like Coca-Cola, Nike, and the Gap, which had come under fire for human rights violations in their overseas operations, established codes of conduct for suppliers in the 1990s and 2000s. Third-party social auditing outfits like the Fair Labor Association, operating with corporate funding, formed to protect brand reputations and monitor supply chains for labor rights violations and certify complaint suppliers. Yet, their record of identifying and remediating labor and human rights violations in supply chains was poor. Auditors were often cursory in their investigations and lent a veneer of responsibility to companies that continued to source from dangerous sweatshops.[842] With the support of student and anti-globalization groups, the CIW inverted the big business of supply chain auditing and used multinationals' recognition that

---

[841] According to Asbed, some 98 percent of the CIW's communications occurred online. Valentine, "Prosperity in the Fields," 50.

[842] See: Mauricio Andrés Latapí Agudelo, Lára Jóhannsdóttir, and Brynhildur Davídsdóttir, "A Literature Review of the History and Evolution of Corporate Social Responsibility," *International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility* 4, No.1 (2019): 7-12; Brian Finnegan, *Responsibility Outsourced: Social Audits, Workplace Certification and Twenty Years of Failure to Protect Worker Rights*, AFL-CIO (2013). The Fair Labor Association was a pioneer in this field, forming from a task force sponsored by Bill Clinton to eliminate child labour in garment supply chains.

they had the power to lift standards among suppliers to generate pressure on them to reorient incentives in their supply chains. Once established, the FFP centered workers' representation, voice, and leadership and integrated popular education in implementing its code of conduct.[843]

While innovative, the CIW's corporate campaign strategies did not emerge from a vacuum. For one, the CIW's boycott drew from battle-tested tactics. The UFW had pioneered the boycott as a tool to advance farmworker organizing by directing local boycott committees to target grocery stores and pressure grape growers to bargain with the union in the 1960s. The UFW successfully used the tactic again in 1990s to win a contract Quincy Farms in Florida after pressuring major buyers like Pizza Hut to stop buying the farm's mushrooms.[844] In the 1980s and 1990s, FLOC built on the boycott to win union recognition and contractual protections from both growers and food brands, the first such multi-party U.S. collective bargaining agreements. By leading boycotts and shareholder campaigns against major purchasers and processors of tomatoes and cucumbers like Campbell's, Heinz, and the Mt. Olive Pickle Company, FLOC secured agreements between the union, growers and their associations, and brands. With all relevant parties as signatories, FLOC's contracts raised raise wages, extended safety protections and health care coverage, and established grievance mechanisms for farmworkers in the Midwest and North Carolina.[845]

More importantly, South Florida's rural civil society acted as an incubator for new organizing. Since at least the 1960s, farmworkers' communities had advocated for the extension of social programs and assistance to South Florida and had developed new organizations to address poverty, discrimination, and exploitation. Organizations like the FRLS took on important class-

[843] Marquis, *I Am Not a Tractor!* 110; Greg Asbed and Steve Hitov, "Preventing Forced Labor in Corporate Supply Chains: The Fair Food Program and Worker-driven Social Responsibility," *Wake Forest Law Review* 52 (2017): 509-26.
[844] Judy Gross, "Mushroom Plant, Union Settle 4-year Dispute," *National Catholic Reporter*, June 18, 1999; Mireya Navarro, "Florida Farm a Labor Battleground," *New York Times*, April 11, 1996.
[845] See: Melinda F. Wiggins, "An Invocation to Act," 286-8 in *The Human Cost of Food;* Steven Greenhouse, "North Carolina Growers' Group Signs Union Contract for Mexican Workers." *New York Times*, September 17, 2004.

action lawsuits for exploited farmworkers and provided critical legal outreach and advocacy in rural communities. Faith groups, community health clinics, daycares, and schools further served farmworkers where public services were lacking. The networks of farmworker, faith, and community organizations, programs, and services had illuminated injustices, met needs in under-served communities, and developed a base layer of social protections where vulnerability was the norm.

Although the CIW eschewed the tendency in many organizations to professionalize services and staff, it benefited, directly and indirectly, from the historical development of a rural civil society in South Florida. Local allies, mainly from community and faith organizations, demonstrated with the CIW and offered material and political support. Service organizations also supported the CIW's constituency of migrant farmworkers. While CIW's organizers committed to radical change and viewed service provision as limiting and ineffective, civil society groups filled gaps not fully addressed with CIW's programming, particularly in the fields of housing, healthcare, childcare and education, food aid, and immigrant services.

Therefore, the CIW, unlike many of its predecessors, did not need to develop programs and capabilities to meet a much wider spectrum of farmworkers' needs and could focus more directly on movement building and organizing. With this clarity of focus, the CIW's organizers crafted an organization responsive to the aspirations of immigrant farmworkers with little social capital in the region and, in turn, developed an impressive mobilizing capacity. Consciousness-raising and popular education in the CIW consistently activated new migrants in the region and reproduced leaders in the migrant stream. It also inspired creative campaign tactics that led to concrete wins and brought more members and allies into the movement.

The efficacy of the CIW's worker-driven social responsibility model has become apparent. The CIW now counts 14 major food buyers as signatories to the FFP. The CIW has lent technical assistance to other Worker-Driven Social Responsibility initiatives, from Vermont to Bangladesh,

and has used its leverage to expand the FFP outside of Florida. In recent years, the coverage of the FFP has expanded to tomato and vegetable farms along to East Coast and to the cut flowers sector, with participating farms in Virginia, Mexico, Chile, and South Africa.[846] Moreover, since 2011, the FFP has transferred nearly $40 million in bonus payments to farmworkers, resolved over 3,000 complaints on FFP farms, and reached over 70,000 farmworkers in trainings.[847] As a movement and a model, the CIW has effectively eliminated forced labor in Florida's tomato fields, transformed the lives of farmworkers, and opened new possibilities for raising labor standards in supply chains.

***

The efforts of Florida's farmworkers movement from the 1990s into the early aughts made material change in farmworkers' lives, families, communities, and the food system as a whole. In this period, NAFTA, immigration laws, and disasters produced dislocation and desperation in South Florida and compelled farmworkers to draw upon community resilience and develop new movements and initiatives. Building on past struggles, responding to changing conditions, and addressing the historical systems that disempowered farmworkers, organizations like the CIW, FWAF, and Centro Campesino among others, met the moment. Collectively, if not always together, these organizations elaborated innovative models to strengthen communities, advance labor and environmental justice, and organize and empower workers in expansive food supply chains.

To shift power dynamics within communities, the agricultural sector, and supply chains, farmworkers' organizations built movements and initiatives designed to counter the injustices and class relations that structured farmworkers' lives by drawing from resources generated from past struggles and the collective skills and knowledge of the region's migratory workforce. Farmworkers' organizations and civil society networks in South Florida activated in the wake of Hurricane Andrew

[846] Fair Food Standards Council, "Fair Food Program: Annual Report 2021," 2021, 25-29.
[847] Fair Food Program, "Results," accessed October 2023, https://fairfoodprogram.org/results/.

and demonstrated their capacity and reach in the region by mobilizing resources in recovery and reconstruction. They also forwarded scalable models to improve conditions— like Centro Campesino's launch of community housing and rural developments that provided an alternative to rural slums and predatory housing arrangements. Disaster also motivated the FWAF to take on long-standing environmental discrimination and mobilize to support the farmworkers of Apopka, who were poisoned by pesticides and lost their community and livelihoods. Farmworkers with the FWAF centered their shared experiences with deadly pesticides to build campaigns that challenged stagnant environmental organizations and bureaucrats, win new health and safety protections, and mobilize, educate, and organize farmworkers as part of a broader movement for environmental justice. The CIW, likewise, addressed the historical structures of exploitation in the region's agricultural sector, moving from combating abuse in the labor contracting system to taking on the major multinationals shaping the food system. Concrete victories drew thousands of farmworkers and allies into the movement, as the Coalition, through intentional consciousness raising and popular education processes, built power and leverage by activating the organizing skills and leadership of the region's multi-ethnic migrant farm workforce.

Change also came from organizers building alliances and networks beyond the state, in recognition that local modes of production and labor control were tied to the operations of a greater corporate food system. Indeed, immigrant farmworkers, bringing memories of displacement as well as movement experiences to South Florida, knew that their status in a society that criminalized and exploited them was a product of forces that spanned borders. To counter corporate power, farmworkers organizations nationalized their struggles, deployed transnational strategies, and built bonds with communities and movements of those similarly harmed, impoverished, and marginalized by neoliberal economics and corporate practices. The FWAF forged far-reaching networks, coalitions, and alliances to take on major pesticide producers and agribusinesses, advance labor and

immigrant rights, and advocate for environmental justice and a more sustainable food system. Building on faith and student partnerships and the energy of anti-sweatshop activism, the CIW's FFP has recalibrated supply chain incentives in the agricultural sector and beyond and has supported other worker-driven social responsibility initiatives nationally and internationally.

These cases speak to the legacies of the long history of struggle in the region and the capacity of migrant workers, over decades, to form and reform class bonds and organizations. Activists from long-past, and largely oppressed, union organizing efforts, had retrenched in rural South Florida's communities and worked to build homes, clinics, and daycares that served thousands of families and programs that provided a foundation of social protections for farmworkers. Over time, new migrants to the region brought with them new cultural resources, organizing backgrounds, and movement perspectives that broke down ethnic divisions and fueled new campaigns. While practitioners, philanthropic organizations, UN agencies, and governments seek out models for addressing poverty in the global economy, it must be remembered that movements and models for empowering workers draw from the histories, people, and communities that make them real through the challenging work of organizing.

Conclusion

During the writing of this dissertation, the coronavirus pandemic illuminated the complexities and fragility of the food system, as well as society's reliance on the low-paid, vulnerable workers who labor within diffuse supply chains. COVID-19 claimed the lives of millions and disrupted everyday interactions, work, travel, and global trade. As grocers struggled to stock their shelves with basic goods, governments designated workers in the food system like farmworkers, meat cutters, grocery store clerks, fast-food and delivery workers, and truck drivers as "essential." Yet, these essential workers often lacked basic protections and living wages.

In South Florida, COVID-19 had an out-sized impact on farmworkers, sickening thousands and killing hundreds who traveled the migrant stream and lived and worked in close quarters without the ability to practice social distancing. During the pandemic's worst months, state and federal officials were slow or unwilling to provide protective equipment, tests, or streamlined access to new vaccines. As they had in the past, farmworkers' organizations like the FWAF, the COFFO, and the CIW supported farmworkers through disaster. In this instance, farmworker organizers built on the trust they had in rural communities and formed partnerships to fight misinformation, distribute food and protective gear, and open testing centers and vaccine sites.[848] Still, according to Pastor Miguel Estrada of Misión Peniel in Immokalee, one of the many organizations that contributed to the COVID-19 response in farmworkers' communities, for farmworkers "[the] most difficult part is to be called essential and at the same time experience that you are disposable."[849]

---

[848] Reflecting the state's overall antipathy to reaching vulnerable rural communities, early in the pandemic, Gov. Ron DeSantis indicated that "overwhelmingly Hispanic" farmworkers were the primary spreaders of the virus in the state. See: Patricia Mazzei, "Florida's Coronavirus Spike is Ravaging Migrant Farmworkers," *New York Times*, June 18, 2020; Colby Silvert, Whitney A. Stone, John M. Diaz, and LaToya J. O'Neal," Pandemic Impacts on Florida Farmworkers: Emerging Takeaways to Inform Outreach and Policymaking," University of Florida, IFAS, Extension, Publication AEC741 (December 2021); Janine Zeitlin, "How Florida Left Farmworkers out of it COVID-19 Response," *Naples Daily News*, March 28, 2021.

[849] Zeitlin, "How Florida Left Farmworkers out of it COVID-19 Response."

The historical operations of the corporate food system in South Florida formulated and perpetuated this duality in both human and ecological terms over the last century. While the Everglades' major industrial growers reaped profits from the Everglades by making the region a prominent node in the corporate food system, farmworkers and their communities and the environment bore the externalized costs of agricultural production. Drawn to the Everglades' tropical climate and dark muck soil, essential inputs for winter vegetable and sugar production, agricultural interests, developers, and boosters, for decades, treated the region's environment as disposable. Growers' procurement of water control infrastructure and intensive land and water use disrupted and degraded the interconnected Everglades ecosystem to a point where it may be irremediable through "restoration" efforts. Manual farm labor was also, of course, essential to uphold agricultural production in the Everglades. Nevertheless, agricultural interests used political influence, extended labor recruitment networks, coercion, and other means to disempower farmworkers, depress wages, and reinforce the deportability and disposability of migrants.

The history of the development of the Everglades from a grassy river to a highly-engineered agricultural hub is significant, in large part, due to the role industrial farming played in devastating a unique ecosystem, the region's agribusinesses' political and economic influence, and the persistence of labor exploitation in the sector over time. Governor Napoleon Bonaparte Broward's 1904 call for South Florida to be drained for the creation of an "empire of the Everglades" inspired many ill-fated ventures to establish industrial agriculture on the swampy landscape. Nevertheless, after hurricanes in 1926 and 1928, growers and developers elicited federal interventions in water control and, by the mid-20th century, the C&SF Project and the EAA had made agricultural production, as well as development and population growth, possible at scale. Through coordination, organization, and cooperation, agricultural interests also consolidated in the region, countered reforms, and moved the levers of government to secure trade protections, subsidies, and access to guestworker visas. As a

result, generations of farmworkers toiled within exploitative contracting arrangements and lived in poverty, while forced labor persisted beneath South Florida's sunbelt economy and embedded in supply chains. All the while, farming in the re-engineered Everglades contributed to the halving of the historic footprint of the Everglades ecosystem and ecological disarray.

As this dissertation has demonstrated, examining the consolidation and contestation of the corporate food system in South Florida shows how growers' associations and cooperation gave rise to industrial agriculture in the Everglades, facilitated on-time, profitable production over decades, and shaped hemispheric production trends. Class consolidation among the region's leading sugar and vegetable interests allowed them to transform the Everglades ecosystem, integrate the region into distant supply chains, and direct farmworkers' labor. Although environmental hazards and disasters persistently often undermined the logic of industrial agricultural production, growers' regulatory capture and wresting of federal interventions in water management, trade protections, and subsidies protected the Everglades' agricultural sector's geographic footprint and lucrative market position. Often contradicting geopolitical trends towards liberal trading arrangements and the transnational distribution of production, South Florida's organized agricultural interests and their political allies played an influential role in shaping the terms of globalization as it refracted in South Florida. Trade protections shaped production trends and supply chains in sugar and vegetables throughout the Americas. Meanwhile, multinationals' dictates for on-time, low-cost production motivated South Florida's growers' development of new forms of environmental and labor control in the region that had national and transnational influence. In particular, the systems of labor recruitment that South Florida's growers and contractors devised drew in migrant farmworkers from across the hemisphere into a multi-ethnic workforce that grappled with persistent poverty, exploitation, precarity, and criminalization.

From the global vantage point of the corporate food system, however, there is also a certain

tragic irony to the history of the Everglades' agricultural sector in that, in certain respects, its history is not so extraordinary. Although advances in technology and agricultural science have supported growing populations and a historic reduction of hunger and famine across the globe, the costs of modern food production and consumption are high in the aggregate. Indeed, labor and environmental exploitation are ingrained in the mechanics of the corporate food system.

The agricultural sector's debasement of the Everglades threatens the long-term viability of the sector. In the past ten years, vaporous toxic algae in Lake Okeechobee, fed by phosphorus-laden fertilizers, has regularly bloomed in the summer and dispersed through canals to Gulf and Atlantic coastal cities, causing widespread bird and fish kills, respiratory ailments, and beach closures.[850] International competition, the negative economic impacts of agricultural pollution, and government restoration prerogatives have undermined early justifications for Everglades drainage that envisioned farms contributing to widespread prosperity and the security of the U.S. food supply. Yet, growers' political influence has preserved the sector's hold over the region for the foreseeable future.

Slow-moving disasters tied to extractive and polluting industrial farming operations —like the nearly seasonal algal spread through the Everglades—reproduce across regional nodes in the corporate food system. In Baja California, intensive water use by export-oriented farms has led to salt-water intrusion in the aquifer, widespread habitat failure, and native plant biodiversity loss.[851] In the Brazilian Amazon, called the "lungs of the earth" due to its contribution to carbon capture and oxygen production, farmers and ranchers have encroached on indigenous lands and cleared some 20 percent of the rainforest in the past 50 years, largely to support Brazil's world-leading beef and soybean production.[852] In the U.S. West, the flow of the mighty Colorado River, which provides

[850] Dan Egan, "It's Toxic Slime Time on Florida's Lake Okeechobee," *New York Times*, July 9, 2023.
[851] Vanderplank, Ezcurra, Delgadillo, et al., "Conservation Challenges in a Threatened Hotspot: Agriculture and Plant Biodiversity Losses in Baja California, Mexico," 2173.
[852] Diana Roy," Deforestation of Brazil's Amazon Has Reached a Record High. What's Being Done?" *Council on Foreign Relations*, August 24, 2022.

drinking water for seven states, 30 tribal nations, and 40 million people, has slowed to a crisis point due to shrinking snowpack and droughts linked to climate change and heavy water use, largely for agriculture. Major farming hubs like the Imperial Valley, Coachella, and Yuma draw about 80 percent of the total water consumed from the Colorado River. Scientists predict that, at current allocations, the river might soon be depleted so low, to what is called the "deadpool" level, that it is no longer able to pass through dams to downstream communities, farms, and cities.[853]

In the context of a changing climate, environmental disasters, and rising sea levels, in its current form, industrial farming and a food system reliant on specialized production distributed through international supply chains will be an increasingly costly, risky, and, perhaps, unsustainable enterprise. Through activities like land clearing and tilling, the use of machinery and chemicals, the output of animal waste, and the operation of complex logistics networks, the global food system is responsible for an estimated 21 to 37 percent of annual greenhouse gas emissions.[854] Nutrient (primarily phosphorus) pollution, from ranching, concentrated animal feeding operations, and crop production threatens to choke off major lakes, rivers, and other major sources of fresh water by fueling toxic algal blooms and eutrophication.[855] Climate risks are becoming particularly acute in regions like low-lying South Florida, where sea levels are estimated to rise by 12 inches by 2050.[856] With rising global temperatures, farmworkers also face increasingly health and safety risks. Heat-

---

853 Rebecca Falconer, "Drought-hit Colorado River Water Supplies Near 'Moment of Reckoning,'" *Axios*, June 15, 2022; Joshua Partlow, "The Colorado River drought crisis: How did this happen? Can it be fixed?" *Washington Post*, February 5, 2023.

854 John Lynch, Michelle Cain, David Frame, and Raymond Pierrehumbert, "Agriculture's Contribution to Climate Change and Role in Mitigation Is Distinct from Predominantly Fossil CO2-Emitting Sectors," *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems* 4 (2021): 518039. See also: G.J. Nabuurs, R. Mrabet, A. Abu Hatab, et al., "Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Uses (AFOLU)," in P.R. Shukla, J. Skea, R. Slade, A. Al Khourdajie, et al. (IPCC), Climate *Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2022), 750-1.

855 Ken Ashley, D. Cordell, and D. Mavinic, "A Brief History of Phosphorus: From the Philosopher's Stone to Nutrient Recovery and Reuse," *Chemosphere* 84, no. 6 (2011): 737–746.

856 "Sea Level Rise and Coastal Risk," Florida Climate Center, Florida State University, accessed October 2023, https://climatecenter.fsu.edu/topics/sea-level-rise.

related deaths at work among farmworkers are 35 times higher than in other occupations.[857]

Further, while Florida's agricultural interests developed and refined widely used guestworker visa programs and expansive systems of labor recruitment that functioned to control and disempower migrant workers, labor exploitation in the agricultural sector is hardly unique to Florida. According to the International Labour Organization, globally, violations of fundamental labor rights are commonplace in agriculture. Indeed, currently some 2.1 million workers are in conditions of forced labor in the agriculture sector; many of these workers are migrants trapped in debt bondage due to fees and costs imposed by labor recruitment intermediates.[858] Meanwhile, some 70 percent of child labor occurs in agriculture, with approximately 122 million children, many between the ages of 5 and 11, compelled to work in the sector.[859]

Yet, this work's interrogation of class conflict in the food system also shows how, at the end of multinational supply chains and multilayered contracting arrangements, in South Florida's fields, labor camps, and rural communities, farmworkers built bonds of solidarity, resisted exploitation, struck, and organized to counter growers' power. Organizing and activism among farmworkers often inspired concerted reaction and anti-union repression from growers, and agricultural interests recalibrated recruitment systems and capitalized on changing immigration laws and enforcement strategies to quell promising organizational advances in the 1960s and 1970s. Nevertheless, exploitative labor and recruitment practices, poor living conditions, poverty, discrimination, and criminalization inspired the construction of resilient farmworkers' organizations and civil society networks dedicating to upholding social protections for farmworkers. These networks gave rise to

[857] Moussa El Khayat, et al., "Impacts of Climate Change and Heat Stress on Farmworkers' Health: A Scoping Review," *Frontiers in Public Health* 10, no. 782811 (February 2022).
[858] International Labour Organization (ILO), Walk Free, and International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage* (Geneva, 2022), 32. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_854733.pdf.
[859] International Labour Office and United Nations Children's Fund, *Child Labour: Global Estimates 2020, Trends and the Road Forward* (New York, 2021), 9. https://www.ilo.org/ipec/Informationresources/WCMS_797515/lang--en/index.htm.

new movements dedicated to empowering communities and labor and environmental justice.

Within South Florida's agricultural history, the under-recognized struggles of the region's farmworkers demonstrate that concrete and systemic change is possible. Over generations, shifting populations of farmworkers, from African Americans from the South and Jamaican guestworkers to Mexican and Chicano migrants and Central American and Haitian asylum seekers, ensured poverty, discrimination, and exploitation perpetuated by immigration policies, anti-labor politicians, and agricultural interests. Still, South Florida's farmworkers persevered, maintained cultural and family ties, and fashioned labor and community challenges to the structures of agro-industrial power. The organizations that grew from farmworkers' movement building uplifted rural communities in moments of disaster, provided resources for workers and families on the margins, raised wages, and won new environmental and safety protections and systems of corporate accountability. As globalization changed the shape of markets at the close of the 20th century, farmworkers' organizations built on community resources and transnational alliances to advance campaigns to hold food brands and growers accountable and raise wages and standards in the fields, joining and strengthening movements for change across the corporate food system.

In December 2018, farmworkers from across Mexico and the United States gathered in California to devise organizing strategies to take on global food brands and improve farmworkers' livelihoods. They came from the CIW and organizations like the Washington-based Familias Unidas por la Justicia and the Sindicato Independiente Nacional Democrático de Jornaleros Agrícolas (SINDJA), an independent union of farmworkers organized after farmworkers' 2015 general strike of industrial farms in Baja California.[860] Many of the migrant workers shared similar origin communities and harvested the same crops—tomatoes, strawberries, peppers, and other fresh

[860] See: Noémie Taylor-Rosner, "De los campos de San Quintín a los supermercados de Estados Unidos: los trabajadores agrícolas mexicanos piden solidaridad," *Desinformémono*, December 15, 2018.

produce—for the same corporate brands in agricultural hubs in Baja California, California, the Pacific Northwest, and Florida. In the case of SINDJA, one of its leaders had even spent time picking tomatoes in Immokalee and organizing with the CIW in the 1990s. Others had experience with UFW in California and organizing in Washington.[861] Continued exchanges followed on how farmworkers might hold multinationals accountable for the actions of their suppliers in regions with weak rule of law, including dialogues between the CIW and SINDJA on using worker-driven social responsibility models.[862] As calls for a U.S.-Mexico border wall and attacks on the rights of workers, immigrants, and asylum-seekers proliferated across the United States, these farmworkers recognized that they shared both collective struggles and power that transcended borders. More recently, SINDJA has mobilized to hold growers accountable for paying government-mandated pay raises and has struck to dislodge company-backed unions from the fields and win recognition.[863]

"The planet will not survive the food system we have," Antonio Tovar, a former Director of the FWAF, posited to me when reflecting on the urgency of the Association's global environmental justice organizing.[864] As the corporate food system's high costs grow more apparent, so too does the need to develop alternative, more socially and ecologically sustainable modes of agricultural production. The history of how agricultural interests transformed the Everglades underscores these costs and the urgency for change. In South Florida and beyond, farmworkers and rural communities have paid some of the highest costs for the corporate food system's drive for profits and low-cost food. Yet, in the history of their labor and community struggles lies a vision for justice in the food system and a more sustainable future.

---

861 Richard Morosi, "Baja Labor Leaders Learned Tactics from Their Efforts in the U.S.," *Los Angeles Times*, March 28, 2015.

862 Norma Cacho, ProDESC, phone interview with author, May 29, 2018.

863 James Daria, "Spring of Discontent: Mexican Berry Pickers Strike for a Bigger Share of Profits," *Labor Notes*, July 5, 2022; Blanca Juárez, "Sindicatos independientes enfrentarán prueba clave de supervivencia," *El Economista*, April 10, 2023.

864 Antonio Tovar, Zoom Interview with author, December 5, 2022.

List of References

Manuscript collections

Duke University, David M. Rubenstein Library, Human Rights Archive

Americans for Immigrant Justice

National Coalition for Haitian Rights records

Student Action with Farmworkers

Florida Southern College, Sarah and L. Kirk McKay Archives Center

Florida Freeze and Hurricane Research Files

James A. Haley Collection

John Attaway Collection

Florida Department of State, State Archives of Florida

Administrative Files: Migrant Labor Program

Office of the Governor

Subject Files: Migrant Labor Program

National Archives at College Park, MD

Record Group 174: General Records of the Department of Labor

Record Group 257: Records of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1885 – 2007

Palm Beach Historical Society

Historical Manuscripts

Business and Industry, Agriculture

Belle Glade

People: Wedgworth HH, Ruth and George

University of California, Berkeley, Ethnic Studies Library

Chicano Studies Collection, Newsletters

University of Florida, PK Yonge Library of Florida History

Braga Brothers Collection

Chase Collection

Ernest R. Graham Papers

Florida Defenders of the Environment

Nathan Mayo Collection

Spessard Holland Papers

Stetson Kennedy Papers

Zora Neale Hurston collection

University of Maryland, College Park, Hornbake Library, Special Collections

George Meany Memorial Archives

UFW Publications

Wayne State University, Reuther Library

Agricultural Workers History Collection

Florida Christian Migrant Ministry

National Farmworker Ministry, Florida Office record

UFW Florida Boycott Records

Digital collections

Florida International University Digital Collection

Reclaiming the Everglades: South Florida's Natural History, Collection

National Archives at College Park

JFK Assassination Records

Record Group 469, Series: Newsletters, 11/1951-10/1960

Rose A. Conway Papers

National Center for Farmworker Health Library

State Library and Archives of Florida

Florida Memory

State University System of Florida, PALMM Project

Everglades Information Network and Digital Library

University of California, San Diego,

Farmworker Movement Documentation Project

Herman Baca Papers

University of Florida, Digital Collections

Florida Historical Agriculture and Rural Life

University of Miami, Special Collections

Historical Florida Brochures, Pamphlets, and Promotional Materials

Voices of Andrew Oral History Project

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Wilson Library

Southern Oral History Program Collection

Congressional Records

U.S. Senate. Committee on Labor and Public Welfare. Subcommittee on Migratory Labor. Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Powerlessness: Hearings, Ninety-First Congress, 1st and 2nd Sessions. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970.

U.S. Congress. House. Select Committee to Investigate the Interstate Migration of Destitute Citizens. "Interstate Migration: New York City Hearings". Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1940.

U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Flood Control. "Flood Control in Florida and Elsewhere: Hearings Before the Committee on Flood Control". 70th Cong., 1st sess., January 10-February 1, 1929. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1929. 60-61.

U.S. Senate. Committee on the Judiciary. Subcommittee on Lobbying. "Lobby Investigation: Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary". 71st Cong., 3rd sess., May 6-12, 1931. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1931.

U.S. Congress. House. Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration. "Hearing Before the Select Committee, Parts 32-34". May 7-8, 1942.

U.S. Senate. Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. Subcommittee on Public Lands. "Everglades National Park, Fla: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Public Lands of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs". 85th Cong., 1st sess., June 11-12, 1957. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957.

U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. "Hearings, Reports and Prints of the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs", Parts 1-2. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1951.

U.S. Congress. Senate. Select Committee on Small Business. "Agricultural Labor Certification Programs and Small Business". 95th Cong., 2nd sess. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978.

U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Ways and Means. Subcommittee on Trade. "International Sugar Agreement: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Trade". 96th Cong., 1st sess., March 16, 1979. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979.

U.S. Senate. Committee on Agriculture and Forestry. "Importation of Foreign Agricultural Workers: Hearings, Eighty-Ninth Congress, First Session, On the Proposed Criteria for the Importation of Foreign Agricultural Workers, the Difficulties in Securing Domestic Help, And the Immediacy of the Problem". January 15 and 16, 1965. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965.

U.S. Senate. Committee on Labor and Public Welfare. Subcommittee on Migratory Labor. Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Powerlessness: Hearings, Ninety-First Congress, 1st and 2nd Sessions. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970.

U.S. Senate. Committee on Labor and Public Welfare. Subcommittee on Migratory Labor. "Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Powerlessness: Who are the migrants?" Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970.

U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Education and Labor. "Typhoid Outbreak in Dade County, Florida, Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Agricultural Labor." April 6-7, 1973.

U.S. House of Representatives. Committee on International Relations. Subcommittees on International Economic Policy and Trade. "Report Card on NAFTA". 1st sess., March 5, 1997. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1998.
U.S. Senate. Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. "How NAFTA Will Affect U.S. Agriculture". 1st sess., September 21, 1993. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994.
U.S. House of Representatives. Committee on Ways and Means. Subcommittee on Trade. "President's Comprehensive Review of the NAFTA." 1st sess., September 11, 1997.
U.S. House of Representatives. Committee on Ways and Means. Subcommittee on Trade. "H.R. 2795, Safeguard Investigations of Perishable Agricultural Products." 2nd sess., April 25, 1996. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996.
U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries. Subcommittee on Environment and Natural Resources. "Efforts to Protect and Restore the Everglades Ecosystem with Special Emphasis on Florida Bay Florida." 1st sess., July 31, 1993. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993.
U.S. House of Representatives. Committee on Ways and Means. Subcommittee on Trade. "H.R. 2795, Safeguard Investigations of Perishable Agricultural Products." 2nd sess., April 25, 1996. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996.
U.S. Commission on Agricultural Workers. Hearings and Workshops Before the Commission on Agricultural Workers 1989-1993, Appendix II to Accompany the Report of the Commission, Volume I. Washington, DC: U.S. Commission on Agricultural Workers, 1993.
U.S. House of Representatives. Committee on the Judiciary. Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees, and International Law. "Central American Asylum-Seekers." 1st sess., Vol. 4, March 9, 1989.
U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Agriculture. Subcommittee on Risk Management and Specialty Crops; U.S. Congress. House. Committee on the Judiciary. Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims. "Agricultural Guest Worker Programs." 1st sess., December 14, 1992. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996.
U.S. Senate. Committee on Environment and Public Works. Subcommittee on Toxic Substances, Research and Development. "Lessons Learned from Hurricane Andrew." 1st sess., Homestead, Florida, April 19, 1993. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993.

Periodicals

Apopka Voice (Apopka, FL)
Clewiston News (Clewiston, FL)
El Malcriado (UFW)
Farm Progress (Minneapolis, MN)
Florida Trend (Tampa, FL)
Floridian (Fort Lauderdale, FL)
Fort Myers News-Press (Fort Myers, FL)
Harper's Magazine (New York City, NY)
Labor Notes (Portland, OR)
Los Angeles Times (Los Angeles, CA)
Miami News (Miami, FL)
Monthly Labor Review (Washington, DC)
Mother Jones (San Francisco, CA)
Naples Daily News (Naples, FL)
New Republic (New York City, NY)

New York Times (New York City, NY)
News-Press (Fort Myers, FL)
Nuestra Lucha (FLOC)
Nuestra Lucha (OMICA)
Orlando Weekly (Orlando, FL)
Pahokee News (Pahokee, FL)
Palm Beach Post (West Palm Beach, FL)
Perishable News (New York City, NY)
Rural Migration News (Davis, CA)
South Dade News Leader (Homestead, FL)
St. Petersburg Times/ Tampa Bay Times (St. Petersburg, FL)
Sun Sentinel (Fort Lauderdale, FL)
Supermarket News (New York City, NY)
Tampa Tribune (Tampa, FL)
The Intercept (New York City, NY)
The Packer (Kansas City, MO)
The Produce News (New York City, NY)
TIME Magazine (New York City, NY)
Washington Post (Washington, DC)

Films

Black, Stephanie. *H-2 Worker*. New York: New Video, 1990.
Carr, Martin and Huntley, Chet. *Migrant: An NBC White Paper*. NBC. New York: NBC, 1970.
Murrow, Edward R. *CBS Reports, Harvest of Shame*. New York: CBS Television, 1960.
Wallace, Chris and Silverstein, Morton. *NBC Reports, The Migrants 1980*. New York: NBC, 1980.

Secondary Sources

Abrego, Leisy, Mat Coleman, Daniel E. Martínez, Cecilia Menjívar, Jeremy Slack. "Making Immigrants into Criminals: Legal Processes of Criminalization in the Post-IIRIRA Era." *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 5, No. 3 (2017): 694-715.

Aguirre-Muñoz, Alfonso, Robert W. Buddemeier, Victor Camacho-Ibar, et al. "Sustainability of Coastal Resource Use in San Quintin, Mexico." *AMBIO* 30, no. 3 (2001): 142-9.

Alleger, Daniel E. "Rural Land Ownership in Florida." *Bulletin 460, University of Florida Agricultural Experiment Station* (1949).

Allison, R.V. "The Significance of Water Conservation to the Agricultural Development of South Florida." *The Citrus Industry* 5 (November 1946): 21-31.

Andrés, Benny J. *Power and Control in the Imperial Valley: Nature, Agribusiness, and Workers on the California Borderland, 1900-1940*. College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2015.

Andrews, Thomas G. *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008.

Arnold, Joseph L. "The Evolution of the 1936 Flood Control Act." *Office of History, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers* (Washington DC: U.S. GPO, 1988).

Asbed, Greg, and Steve Hitov. "Preventing Forced Labor in Corporate Supply Chains: The Fair Food Program and Worker-driven Social Responsibility." *Wake Forest Law Review* 52 (2017): 497-532.

Ashabranner, Brent. *Dark Harvest: Migrant Farmworkers in America*. New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1985.

Ashley, Ken, D. Cordell, and D. Mavinic. "A Brief History of Phosphorus: From the Philosopher's Stone to Nutrient Recovery and Reuse." *Chemosphere* 84, no. 6 (2011).

Avendaño, Ana, and Jonathan Hiatt. "Worker Self-Organization in the New Economy: The AFL-CIO's Experience in Movement Building with Community-Labour Partnerships." *Labour, Capital and Society* 45, no. 1 (2012): 15-35.

Avery, William P. "Domestic Interests in NAFTA Bargaining." Political Science Quarterly 113, no. 2 (Summer, 1998): 219-240.

Bacon, David. *The Children of NAFTA: Labor Wars on the U.S./Mexico Border*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

Bagby, Douglas. "Selective Effects of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 on Farmworker Living and Working Conditions in the U.S." MA Thesis, University of Florida, 2003.

Ballinger, Kenneth. *Miami Millions: The Dance of the Dollars in the Great Florida Land Boom of 1925*. Miami: The Franklin Press, inc., 1936.

Bardacke, Frank. *Trampling Out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers*. New York: Verso, 2012.

Barger, W. K., and Ernesto M. Reza. *The Farm Labor Movement in the Midwest: Social Change and Adaptation among Migrant Farmworkers*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993.

Barry, D. Marshall. "Farmworkers and Farmworkers' Unions in Florida." *Proceedings of Florida's Labor Symposium*, Florida International University, November 18, 1989.

Barry, D. Marshall. "The Adverse Impact of Immigration on Florida's Farmworkers." *Center for Labor Research and Studies, Florida Caribbean Institute, FIU, Occasional Paper* no. 3 (November 1, 1989): 35-57.

Beckert, Sven. *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*. New York: Penguin Random House, 2015.

Beghin, John C., and Amani Elobeid. "The Impact of the U.S. Sugar Program Redux." Faculty Publications: Agricultural Economics, University of Nebraska, Lincoln (May 2013).

Bender, Lynn Darrell. "Cuba, the United States, and Sugar." *Caribbean Studies* 14, no. 1 (1974): 15-30.

Berkey, Rebecca E. *Environmental Justice and Farm Labor*. New York: Routledge, 2017.

Bernstein, Bruce. "Migration, Health, and Nutrition: Haitians in Immokalee, a South Florida Farmworker Town." *PhD Dissertation*, University of Connecticut, 1986.

Besky, Sarah and Sandy Brown. "Looking for Work: Placing Labor in Food Studies." *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 12, Issue 1–2 (2015).

Bhagwati, Jagdish. "Beyond NAFTA: Clinton's Trading Choices." Foreign Policy, no. 91 (Summer, 1993): 101-116.

Bitting, Clarence. *U.S. Sugar Corporation, Sugar and the Everglades*. Clewiston, FL: U.S. Sugar Corporation, 1941.

Blake, Nelson Manfred. *Land into Water - Water into Land*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1980.

Bramson, Seth H., Bob Jensen. *Homestead, Florida: From Railroad Boom to Sonic Boom*. Charleston SC: The History Press, 2013.

Brown, Henry M., and Rebecca E. Brown. "Murphy Deed Right-of-Way Reservations: A 1930s Taxpayer Bailout Yields Right-of-Way Cost Savings." *Florida Bar Journal* 83, no. 7 (July/August 2009).

Brown, Jerry, and Robert Stulberg. *The Farmworkers: A Cry for Justice from Florida's Fields*. United Farmworkers Report, 1974.

Browning, R.H., and T.J. Northcutt Jr. *On the Season,* Monograph Series, No. 2. Tallahassee: Florida State Board of Health, 1961.

Bullard, Robert D. *The Quest for Environmental Justice: Human Rights, and the Politics of Pollution*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2005.

Burns, Allan. *Maya in Exile: Guatemalans in Florida*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993.

Bustamante, Michael J. *Cuban Memory Wars: Retrospective Politics in Revolution and Exile.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021.

Calcano Thomas, Vanessa. "¡PELIGRO! Si Usted No Entiende La Etiqueta, Busque a Alguien Para Que se la Explique a Usted en Detalle: The Need for International and Domestic Implementation of Bilingual Pesticide Labeling to Enhance Protection of Migrant Farmworkers in Florida." *Florida A&M University Law Review* 9, No. 2 (Spring 2014).

Carrozza, Anthony R. *William D. Pawley: The Extraordinary Life of the Adventurer, Entrepreneur, and Diplomat Who Cofounded the Flying Tigers*. Sterling, VA: Potomac Books, 2012.

Carter, Luther J. *The Florida Experience: Land and Water Policy in a Growth State.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975.

Cassanello, Robert, and Daniel S. Murphree. "The Epic of Greater Florida: Florida's Global Past." *Florida Historical Quarterly* 84, no. 1 (Summer 2005).

Castillo-Muñoz, Verónica. *The Other California: Land, Identity, and Politics on the Mexican Borderlands.* University of California Press, 2016.

Chang, David. "Borderlands in a World at Sea: Concow Indians, Native Hawaiians, and South Chinese in Indigenous, Global, and National Spaces." *Journal of American History* 98, no. 2 (September 2011).

Clapp, Jennifer. "Mega-Mergers on the Menu: Corporate Concentration and the Politics of Sustainability in the Global Food System." *Global Environmental Politics* 18 (2018).

Clapp, Jennifer. "The Problem with Growing Corporate Concentration and Power in the Global Food System." *Nature Food* 2 (2021).

Cobble, Dorothy Sue. "Betting on New Forms of Worker Organization." *Labor Studies in Working Class History of the Americas* 7, no. 3 (2010): 3-10.

Cohen, Deborah. *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in the Postwar United States and Mexico.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011.

Cohen, Irving. "La Huelga! Delano and After." US Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Monthly Labor Review* 91 (US GPO, 1968): 18-23.

Colas, Alejandro, Jason Edwards, Jane Levi, Sami Zubaida. *Food, Politics, and Society: Social Theory and the Modern Food System.* University of California Press, 2018.

Cole, Luke W., and Sheila R. Foster. *From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement*. New York: New York University Press, 2001.

Conlin, Erin. "Invisible Hands in the Winter Garden: Power, Politics, and Florida's Bahamian Farmworkers in the Twentieth Century." PhD diss., University of Florida, 2014.

Connolly, N. D. B. *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.

Cowie, Jefferson R. *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class.* New York: The New Press, 2012.

Cowie, Jefferson R. Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class. New York: The New Press, 2012.

Craig, David. *The Paths They Follow: The Migrant Worker Streams.* Washington, DC: Migrant Division, Office of Economic Opportunity, 1971.

Cronon, William. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature.* New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1995.

Cunningham, Sean P. *American Politics in the Postwar Sunbelt: Conservative Growth in a Battleground Region.* Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Cunningham, Sean P. *American Politics in the Postwar Sunbelt: Conservative Growth in a Battleground Region.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Daniel, Pete. *Breaking the Land: The Transformation of Cotton, Tobacco, and Rice Cultures since 1880.* Champaign, IL: Illinois University Press, 1985.

Daniel, Pete. *The Shadow of Slavery: Peonage in the South, 1901-1969*. University of Illinois Press, 1972.

Davis, Jack E. "'Conservation Is Now a Dead Word': Marjory Stoneman Douglas and the Transformation of American Environmentalism." *Environmental History* 8, No. 1 (2003).

Davis, Jack E. *An Everglades Providence: Marjory Stoneman Douglas and the American Environmental Century.* Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011.

Davis, John H., and Ray A. Goldberg. *A Concept of Agribusiness.* Boston, Division of Research, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, 1957.

Davis, Steve, and John Ogden. *Everglades: The Ecosystem and Its Restoration.* Boca Raton: CRC Group, 1994.

Derr, Mark. *Some Kind of Paradise: A Chronicle of Man and the Land in Florida.* New York: William Morrow and Co., 1989.

Douglas, Marjorie Stoneman. *Everglades: River of Grass.* New York: Rinehart & Company, 1947.

Dovell, Junius. "The Everglades, A Florida Frontier." *Agricultural History Society* 22, no. 3 (July 1948): 191-8.

Drainville, André C. "Present in the World Economy: The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (1996–2007)." *Globalizations* 5, Issue 3 (2008).

Duchemin, Michael. "Water, Power, and Tourism: Hoover Dam and the Making of the New West." *California History* 86, No. 4 (2009).

Dupuis, E. Melanie, Matt Garcia, and Don Mitchell, eds. Food Across Borders. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2017.

Dussias, Allison M. "The Seminole Tribe of Florida and the Everglades Ecosystem: Refuge and Resource." *Florida International University Law Review* 9, no. 2 (Spring 2014).

Dye, Alan, and Richard Sicotte. "The U.S. Sugar Program and the Cuban Revolution." *The Journal of Economic History* 64, no. 3 (2004): 699-724.

Dyl, Joanna Leslie. *Seismic City: An Environmental History of San Francisco's 1906 Earthquake.* Seattle: University of Washington Press. 2017.

Economos, Jeannie. "Integrating Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers in Disaster Response and Relief Efforts." In John Twigg, ed., *Migrants in Disaster Risk Reduction: Practices for Inclusion*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2017.

Egan, Dan. *The Devil's Element: Phosphorus and a World Out of Balance.* New York: WW Norton, 2023.

Ehman, Ted. *Florida's Gray Gold the Phosphate Mining Boom in the Deep South, 1868-2018*. Sarasota: Pineapple Press, 2020.

El Khayat, Moussa, et al. "Impacts of Climate Change and Heat Stress on Farmworkers' Health: A Scoping Review." *Frontiers in Public Health* 10, no. 782811 (February 2022).

Epperson, Bruce D. *Roads through the Everglades: The Building of the Ingraham Highway, the Tamiami Trail, and the Conners Highway, 1914-1931*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2016.

Ermus, Cindy, ed. *Environmental Disaster in the Gulf South*. Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2018.

Estabrook, Barry. "Home Economics." *Gastronomica* 11, no. 2 (Summer 2011).

Estabrook, Barry. "Of Money and Muck." *Gastronomica* 12, No. 1 (Spring 2012).

Estabrook, Barry. *Tomatoland: From Harvest of Shame to Harvest of Hope,* 3rd ed. New York: McMeel Publishing, 2018.

Evans, Sterling, ed. *Farming Across Borders: A Transnational History of the North American West*. Texas A&M Press, 2017.

Evans, Sterling. *Bound in Twine: The History and Ecology of the Henequen-Wheat Complex for Mexico and the American and Canadian Plains, 1880-1950*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007.

Faber, Daniel. *Capitalizing on Environmental Injustice: The Polluter-Industrial Complex in the Age of Globalization*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008.

Fanning, Charlie. "The Everglades Labor Camp and the Farmworkers' Movement in Florida." *Activist History Review*, April 2019.

Farmworker Justice. *No Way to Treat a Guest: Why the H-2A Agricultural Visa Program Fails U.S. and Foreign Workers*. FWJ, 2012.

Faulkner, Lucy, Katrina Brown, and Tara Quinn. "Analyzing Community Resilience as an Emergent Property of Dynamic Social-Ecological Systems." *Ecology and Society* 23, No. 1 (2018).

Fiege, Mark. *Irrigated Eden: The Making of an Agricultural Landscape in the American West*. Seattle: University of Washington, 1999.

Fine, Janice, and Tim Bartley. "Raising the Floor: New Directions in Public and Private Enforcement of Labor Standards in the United States." *Journal of Industrial Relations* 61, No. 2 (2018).

Fink, Leon. *The Maya of Morganton: Work and Community in the Nuevo New South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

Fitzgerald, Deborah Kay. *Every Farm a Factory: The Industrial Ideal in American Agriculture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.

Flores, Lori A. *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farmworker Movement*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016.

Friedland, William H., Amy E. Barton, and Robert J. Thomas. *Manufacturing Green Gold: The Conditions and Social Consequences of Lettuce Harvest Mechanization*. Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Friedland, William H., and Dorothy Nelkin. "Technological Trends and the Organization of Migrant Farm Workers." *Social Problems* 19, no. 4 (Spring 1972): 501-515.

Friedland, William H., and Dorothy Nelkin. *Migrant Agricultural Workers in America's Northeast*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971.

Friedman, Sheldon. "NAFTA as Social Dumping." *Challenge* 35, no. 5 (September? October 1992): 4-11.

Fulmer, John L. "Trends in the per Capita Consumption of Foods in the United States since 1920." *Southern Economic Journal* 14, No. 4 (1948).

Galarza, Ernesto. *Farm Workers and Agri-Business in California, 1947-1960*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977.

Galarza, Ernesto. *Merchants of Labor: The Mexican Bracero Story; An Account of the Managed Migration of Mexican Farm Workers in California, 1942-1960*. Berkeley: University of California, 1964.

García Muñíz, Humberto. *Sugar and Power in the Caribbean: The South Porto Rico Sugar Company in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, 1900-1921*. La Editorial, 2010.

García Zamora, Rodolfo. "Crisis, NAFTA, and International Migration: From Massive Migration to Growing Repatriation." *International Journal of Political Economy* 42, no. 2 (2014): 130-155.

Garcia, Matthew. *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014.

George, Paul S. "Brokers, Binders, and Builders: Greater Miami's Boom of the Mid-1920s." *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 65, No. 1 (1986).

Giesen, James C. *Boll Weevil Blues: Cotton, Myth, and Power in the American South.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Godfrey, Matthew C. and Theodore Catton. *River of Interests: Water Management in South Florida and the Everglades, 1948-2010*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2011.

Gonzalez, Carmen. "Climate Change, Food Security, and Agrobiodiversity: Toward a Just, Resilient, and Sustainable Food System." *Fordham Environmental Law Review* 22 (February 2011).

Gordon, Arthur. *How Sweet it is: The Story of Dixie Crystals and Savannah Foods*. Savannah Food and Industries, 1992.

Gouge, Melissa C. "Generating Solidarity: The Playful Politics of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers." Ph.D. Diss., George Mason University, 2011.

Graham, William A. "The Pennsuco Sugar Experiment." *Tequesta* 11 (1951): 28-30.

Green, Amy. M*oving Water: The Everglades and Big Sugar*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Griffith, David. "Unions without Borders: Organizing and Enlightening Immigrant Farm Workers." *American Anthropological Association* 30, no. 2 (2009): 286-301.

Griffith, David. *American Guestworkers: Jamaicans and Mexicans in the U.S. Labor Market.* University Park: Penn State University Press, 2007.

Grubbs, Donald H. "The Story of Florida's Migrant Farm Workers." *Florida Historical Quarterly* 40, No. 2 (1961).

Grubbs, Donald. *Cry from the Cotton: The Southern Tenant Farmers' Union and the New Deal.* Little Rock: University of Arkansas Press, 2000.

Grunwald, Michael. *The Swamp: The Everglades, Florida, and the Politics of Paradise.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006.

Gsteiger, Yvonne. "A Clean Everglades—Near the Finish Line or Another Watery Mirage?." *ABA Trends* 25, no. 1 (September/October 2013): 24-27.

Guerra, Lillian. *Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959-1971*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Guerrero, Perla M. *Nuevo South: Latinas/Os, Asians, and the Remaking of Place.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017.

Gutman, Herbert G. "Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America, 1815-1919." *The American Historical Review* 78, no. 3 (June 1973).

Hahamovitch, Cindy, and Rick Halpern. "Not a 'Sack of Potatoes': Why Labor Historians Need to Take Agriculture Seriously." *International Labor and Working-Class History* 65, no. 3 (2004): 3-10.

Hahamovitch, Cindy. "The Worst Job in the World': Reform, Revolution, and the Secret Rebellion in Florida's Cane Fields." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 35, no. 4 (2008): 599-623.

Hahamovitch, Cindy. *No Man's Land: Jamaican Guestworkers in America and the Global History of Deportable Labor*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.
Hahamovitch, Cindy. *The Fruits of Their Labor: Atlantic Coast Farmworkers and the Making of Migrant Poverty, 1870-1945*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.
Hakim, Peter. "President Bush's Southern Strategy: The Enterprise for the Americas Initiative." *The Washington Quarterly* 15, no. 2 (1992): 127-146.
Hamilton, H. G. "Integration of Marketing and Production Services by Florida Citrus Associations." *Journal of Farm Economics* 29, no. 2 (1947): 495-505.
Hamilton, H. G. "Integration of Marketing and Production Services by Florida Citrus Associations." *Journal of Farm Economics* 29, no. 2 (1947): 495-505.
Hamilton, Raymond A. "Muckraking and C.O.B.Y (Cry of Black Youth): Uncovering a History of Organizing in Belle Glade." MA Thesis, University of South Florida, 2015.
Hamilton, Shane. "Agribusiness, the Family Farm, and the Politics of Technological Determinism in the Post–World War II United States." *Technology and Culture* 55, no. 3 (July 2014): 560-590.
Hamilton, Shane. *Supermarket USA: Food and Power in the Cold War Farms Race*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018.
Harper, Kristine C. *Environmental Disasters: Hurricane Andrew*. New York: Facts on File Science Library, Inc., 2005.
Harris, Sara, and Robert Allen. *The Quiet Revolution: The Story of a Small Miracle in American Life*. New York: Signet, 1978.
Harwood, Edwin. "American Public Opinion and U. S. Immigration Policy." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 487 (1986).
Heckscher, Charles. "Organizations, Movements, and Networks." *NYLS Law Review* 50, no. 2 (2006): 343-393.
Heil, Erin C. *Sex, Slaves, and Serfs: The Dynamics of Human Trafficking in a Small Florida Town*. First Forum Press, 2012.
Heitmann, John A. "The Beginnings of Big Sugar in Florida, 1920-1945." *Florida Historical Quarterly* 77, No. 1 (Summer, 1998).
Heppel, Monica L., and Sandra L. Amendola. *Immigration Reform and Perishable Crop Agriculture: Compliance or Circumvention?* Lantham, MD: University Press of America, 1992.
Hightower, Jim. "Hard Tomatoes, Hard Times: Failure of the Land Grant College Complex." *Society* 10 (November-December 1972).
Hollander, Gail M. "Agricultural Trade Liberalization, Multifunctionality, and Sugar in the South Florida Landscape." Geoforum 35, no. 3 (2004): 331-348.
Hollander, Gail M. "Securing Sugar: National Security Discourse and the Establishment of Florida's Sugar Producing Region." *Economic Geography* 81, No. 4 (2005).
Hollander, Gail. *Raising Cane in the 'Glades: The Global Sugar Trade and the Transformation of Florida*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
Hornborg, Alf, J. R. McNeill, and Joan Martinez-Alier. *Rethinking Environmental History: World-System History and Global Environmental Change*. Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2007.
Horton, Donald C. "Policy Directions for the United States Sugar Program." *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 52, No. 2 (1970).
Horton, Donald C. "Policy Directions for the United States Sugar Program." *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 52, no. 2 (1970): 224-232.
Howe, Joanna, and Rosemary Owens, eds. *Temporary Labor Migration in the Global Era: The Regulatory Challenges*. Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2016.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God, 75th Anniversary Edition.* Harper Perennial Classics, 2013.
Hutcheson, Aaron. "Some Selected Agribusiness Components of the Dade County Tomato Industry." MA Thesis, University of Florida, 1965.
Jackson Jr., David H., and Kimberlyn M. Elliott. "African Americans in Florida, 1870-1920: A Historiographical Essay." *Florida Historical Quarterly* 95, No. 2 (2016): 162-3.
Jamieson, Cheryl Lynn. "Protection of the Everglades Ecosystem: A Legal Analysis." Pace Environmental Law Review 6, no. 1 (Fall 1988): 17-60.
Jenkins, George. *The Publix Story.* NY: The Newcomen Society in North America, 1979.
Jenkins, J. Craig, and Charles Perrow. "Insurgency of the Powerless: Farm Worker Movements (1946-1972)." *American Sociological Review* 42, no. 2 (1977): 249-268.
Jones, Marian Moser. "Tempest in the Forbidden City: Racism, Violence, and Vulnerability in the 1926 Miami Hurricane." *Journal of Policy History* 26, No. 3 (2014).
Kantor, Hal. "Florida's Forgotten People: The Migrant Farmworkers." *University of Florida Law Review* 23 (1971): 587-612.
Kirsch, Max. "The Politics of Exclusion: Place and The Legislation of The Environment in The Florida Everglades." *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 32, no. 1 (2003): 9-32.
Kirstein, Peter N. "Agribusiness, Labor, and the Wetbacks: Truman's Commission on Migratory Labor." *The Historian* 40, no. 4 (1978): 589-611.
Klein, Naomi. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism.* New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008.
Knight, Henry. "Water in Paradise: California, Florida, and Environmental Rivalry in the Gilded Age." *Environmental History* 20, No. 4 (October 2015).
Knight, Henry. *Tropic of Hopes: California, Florida, and the Selling of American Paradise, 1869-1929.* Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2013.
Knowlton, Christopher. *Bubble in the Sun: The Florida Boom of the 1920s and How It Brought on the Great Depression.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 2020.
Koos, Earl Lomon. *They Follow the Sun.* Florida State Board of Health, 1957.
Koziara, Karen Shallcross. "The Agricultural Minimum Wage: A Preliminary Look." *Monthly Labor Review* 90, no. 9 (1967): 10-17.
Kramer, Peter. *The Offshores: A Study of Foreign Labor in Florida.* St. Petersburg, FL: Community Action Fund, 1966.
Krueger, Anne O., ed. *The Political Economy of American Trade Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
Krueger, Anne O., ed. The Political Economy of Trade Protection. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
Lamberts, Mary, and Herbert Bryan. "Non-Cultural Factors Affecting Dade County Vegetable Production after Hurricane Andrew." *Florida State Horticultural Society* 106 (1993).
Latapí Agudelo, Mauricio Andrés, Lára Jóhannsdóttir, and Brynhildur Davídsdóttir. "A Literature Review of the History and Evolution of Corporate Social Responsibility." *International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility* 4, No.1 (2019).
Levine, Robert M., and Moisés Asís. *Cuban Miami.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000.
Levy, Jacques E. *Cesar Chavez: Autobiography of La Causa.* New York: WW Norton and Co., 1975.
Lindskoog, Carl. *Detain and Punish: Haitian Refugees and the Rise of the World's Largest Immigration Detention System*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2018.

Lipman, Jana K. "'The Fish Trusts the Water, and It Is in the Water That It Is Cooked': The Caribbean Origins of the Krome Detention Center." *Radical History Review* 1 (January 2013).
Lipman, Jana K. *Guantanamo: A Working-Class History Between Empire and Revolution*. University of California Press, 2008.
Litoff, Judy Barrett, and David C. Smith. "To the Rescue of the Crops: The Woman's Land Army During World War II." *Prologue Magazine* 25, no. 4 (1993).
Little, Cheryl. "Continuing Problems at Krome Service Processing Center." *In Defense of the Alien* (Center for Migration Studies of New York, Inc.) 20 (1997).
Little, Cheryl. "INS Detention in Florida." *The University of Miami Inter-American Law Review* 30, No. 3 (Winter - Spring, 1999).
Love, John. "U.S. Vegetable Industry in the 1980s." National Food Review, USDA Economic Research Service 31 (Fall 1985): 15-24.
Loza, Mireya. *Defiant Braceros: How Migrant Workers Fought for Racial, Sexual, and Political Freedom*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016.
Lurtz, Casey. *From the Grounds Up: Building an Export Economy in Southern Mexico, 1867-1920*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019.
Lynch, John, Michelle Cain, David Frame, and Raymond Pierrehumbert. "Agriculture's Contribution to Climate Change and Role in Mitigation Is Distinct from Predominantly Fossil CO2-Emitting Sectors." *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems* 4 (2021).
Manheim, Uriel L. "The Florida Everglades: Their Farming Prospects." *Bureau of Business and Economic Research, Area Development Series* no. 5, University of Miami, 1954.
Mapes, Kathleen. *Sweet Tyranny: Migrant Labor, Industrial Agriculture, and Imperial Politics*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 2009.
Marinari, Maddalena. "Americans Must Show Justice in Immigration Policies Too: The Passage of the 1965 Immigration Act." *Journal of Policy History* 26, No. 2 (2014).
Marinari, Maddalena. "Divided and Conquered: Immigration Reform Advocates and the Passage of the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 35, no. 3 (2016): 21-46.
Markin, Rom J. *The Supermarket: An Analysis of Growth, Development, and Change*. Washington State University Press, 1968.
Marquis, Susan L. *I Am Not a Tractor! How Florida Farmworkers Took on the Fast Food Giants and Won*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017.
Martin, Philip L. "Good Intentions Gone Awry: IRCA and U. S. Agriculture." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 534 (1994).
Martin, Philip L. *Immigration Reform and U.S. Agriculture*. Davis, CA: UCANR Publications, 1995.
Martin, Phillip. *Importing Poverty: Immigration and the Changing Face of Rural America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.
Martinez, Samuel. "From Hidden Hand to Heavy Hand: Sugar, the State, and Migrant Labor in Haiti and the Dominican Republic." *Latin American Research Review* 34, no. 1 (1999): 227-252.
Martínez-Matsuda, Verónica. *Migrant Citizenship: Race, Rights, and Reform in the U.S. Farm Labor Camp Program*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020.
Massey, Brad Thomas. "Defying the Sunbelt: An Economic and Environmental History of Tampa, 1950-1980." PhD Dissertation, University of Florida, Gainesville, 2017.
Massey, Douglas S. "Racial Formation in Theory and Practice: The Case of Mexicans in the United States." *Race and Social Problems* 1, no. 1 (2009): 12-26.

Massey, Douglas S., and Julia Gelatt. "What Happened to the Wages of Mexican Immigrants? Trends and Interpretations." *Latino Studies* 8, no. 3 (Autumn 2010): 354.
Massey, Douglas S., and Julie A. Phillips. "The New Labor Market: Immigrants and Wages after IRCA." *Demography* 36, Issue 2 (May 1999).
Massey, Douglas S., and Karen A. Pren. "Unintended Consequences of US Immigration Policy: Explaining the Post-1965 Surge from Latin America." *Population and Development Review* 38, no. 1 (2012).
Massey, Douglas S., Jacob S. Rugh, and Karen A. Pren. "The Geography of Undocumented Mexican Migration." *Mexican Studies* 26, Issue 1 (2010).
McCally, David, and Ray Arsenault, eds. *Paradise Lost? An Environmental History of Florida.* Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2005.
McCally, David. *The Everglades: An Environmental History.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999.
McCann, Thomas P. *An American Company: The Tragedy of United Fruit,* edited by Henry Scrammel. New York: Crown Publishers Incorporated, 1976.
McCorkle Jr., James L. "Southern Truck Growers' Associations: Organization for Profit." *Agricultural History* 72, no. 1 (1998).
McCoy, Clyde B., Lisa R. Metsch, James A. Inciardi, Robert S. Anwyl, Judith Wingerd, Keith Bletzer. "Sex, Drugs, and the Spread of HIV/AIDS in Belle Glade, Florida." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 10, Issue 1 (March 1996).
McCrossen, Alexis, ed. Land of Necessity: Consumer Culture in the United States-Mexico Borderlands. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.
McDonald, Bryan L. *Food Power: The Rise and Fall of the Postwar American Food System.* Oxford University Press, 2016.
McJunkin, Joyce P. *Winter Vegetable Farming in Florida: Its Acreage Patterns and Marketing Flows.* MA Thesis, Florida Atlantic University, 1978.
McLay, Mark. *The Republican Party and the War on Poverty: 1964–1981*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021.
McNamara, Sarah. *Ybor City: Crucible of the Latina South.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2023.
McNeill, J.R. *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World.* New York: Norton, 2000.
McWilliams, Carey. *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1935.
Meindl, Christopher F. "The Origin of Early Everglades Landowners." *The Florida Geographer* 33 (2002).
Meindl, Christopher F., Derek H. Alderman, and Peter Waylen. "On the Importance of Environmental Claims-Making: The Role of James O. Wright in Promoting the Drainage of Florida's Everglades in the Early Twentieth Century." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 92, no. 4 (2002).
Meister, Dick, and Anne Loftis. *A Long Time Coming: The Struggle to Unionize America's Farm Workers*. New York: MacMillan, 1977.
Merling, Vitor Mello, Stephan Lefebvre, and Joseph Sammut. "Did NAFTA Help Mexico? An Update After 23 Years." *Center for Economic and Policy Research* (March 2017).
Metzler, William H. "Migratory Farm Workers in the Atlantic Coast Stream: A Study in the Belle Glade area of Florida." *U.S. Department of Agriculture,* Circular 966 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1955).

Mieres, Fabiola, and Siobhán McGrath. "Ripe to be Heard: Worker voice in the Fair Food Program." *International Labour Review* 160, No. 4 (2021).

Milkman, Ruth. *Immigrant Labor and the New Precariat*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020.

Milkman, Ruth. Immigrant Labor and the New Precariat. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020.

Milkman, Ruth. *L.A. Story: Immigrant Workers and the Future of the U.S. Labor Movement.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006.

Minian, Ana Raquel. *Undocumented Lives: The Untold Story of Mexican Migration.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018.

Minian, Ana Raquel. *Undocumented Lives: The Untold Story of Mexican Migration*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018.

Mintz, Sidney. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History.* New York: Penguin Books, 1986.

Miranda, Carlos Ortiz. "Haiti and the United States During the 1980s and 1990s: Refugees, Immigration, and Foreign Policy." *San Diego Law Review* 32, 673 (1995).

Mize, Ronald L., Alicia C.S. Swords. *Consuming Mexican Labor from the Bracero Program to NAFTA.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010.

Mnif, Wissem, Aziza Ibn Hadj Hassine, Aicha Bouaziz, Aghleb Bartegi, Olivier Thomas, and Benoit Roig. "Effect of Endocrine Disruptor Pesticides: A Review." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 8, No. 6 (2011).

Mohl, Sandra. "Migrant Farmworkers in America: A Florida Case Study." MA Thesis, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, 1981.

Mohr, Katherine. "How Sweet It Isn't: Big Sugar's Power Politics and the Fate of the Florida Everglades." Florida A&M University Law Review 7 (2015): 539-574.

Monzote, Reinaldo Funes. *From Rainforest to Cane Field in Cuba: An Environmental History Since 1492.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008.

Moore, Larkin M. "Stranded Again: The Inadequacy of Federal Plans to Rebuild an Affordable New Orleans After Hurricane Katrina." *Boston College Third World Law Journal* 27, Issue 1 (January 2007).

Mormino, Gary, and George E. Pozzetta. *The Immigrant World of Ybor City Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985.* Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007.

Morris, Allen, ed. *The Florida Handbook.* Tallahassee: Peninsular Publishing Co., 1951.

Moss, Charles, and Andrew Schmitz. Government Policy and Farmland Markets: The Maintenance of Farmer Wealth. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2008.

Mueller, Willard F., and Norman R. Collins. "Grower-Processor Integration in Fruit and Vegetable Marketing." *Journal of Farm Economics* 39, no. 5 (1957).

Mykle, Robert. *Killer 'Cane: The Deadly Hurricane of 1928.* New York: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2002.

Nash, Linda. *Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease, and Knowledge.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

Nelson, David J. *How the New Deal Built Florida Tourism: The Civilian Conservation Corps and State Parks.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2019.

Ngai, Mae. "The Civil Rights Origins of Illegal Immigration." *International Labor and Working-Class History*, No. 78 (Fall 2010).

Ngai, Mae. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Olsson, Tore C. *Agrarian Crossings: Reformers and the Remaking of the US and Mexican Countryside.* Princeton, 2017.

Orchowski, Margaret Sands. *The Law that Changed the Face of America: The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965*. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.
Orleck, Annalise. *Storming Caesars Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty*. 2005.
Orleck, Annelise. *We Are All Fast-Food Workers Now: The Global Uprising Against Poverty Wages*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2018.
O'Rourke, Dennis. "Sugar Situation: 1963." *Financial Analysts Journal* 19, no. 4 (1963): 47-55.
Orr, Terrell. "Now We Work as One: The United Farm Workers in Florida Citrus, 1972-1977." *Southern Cultures* 25 (Winter 2019).
Patterson, Gordon. "Raising Cane and Refining Sugar: Florida Crystals and the Fame of Fellsmere." *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 75, no. 4 (Spring 1997): 461-480.
Pawel, Miriam. *The Union of Their Dreams: Power, Hope, and Struggle in Cesar Chavez's Farm Worker Movement.* New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009.
Pawel, Miriam. *The Union of Their Dreams: Power, Hope, and Struggle in Cesar Chavez's Farm Worker Movement*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2009.
Peacock, Walter Gillis, Betty Hearn Morrow, Hugh Gladwin, Eds. *Hurricane Andrew: Ethnicity, Gender, and the Sociology of Disaster*. London: Routledge, 1997.
Peck, Gunther. "Migrant Labor and Global Commons: Transnational Subjects, Visions, and Methods." *International Labor and Working-Class History* 85 (2014).
Peck, Gunther. "The Nature of Labor: Fault Lines and Common Ground in Environmental and Labor History." *Environmental History* 11, no. 2 (2006).
Policano, Tom. *Slim Pickins*. Ifitiz, Inc., 2014.
Polopolus, Leo C., and Robert D. Emerson. "Immigration and Employment Policy Impacts: The Florida Citrus Case." *Choices*, 4th Quarter (1991).
Popipolus, Leo, and Robert Emerson. "The Latinization of the Farm Labor Market." Staff Paper Series, Food and Resource Economics Department, University of Florida, 1994.
Popipolus, Leo, and Robert Emerson. "The Latinization of the Farm Labor Market." *Staff Paper Series*, Food and Resource Economics Department, University of Florida, 1994.
Proctor, Samuel. *Napoleon Bonaparte Broward: Florida's Fighting Democrat.* Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1950.
Purcell, Aaron D. "Plumb Lines, Politics, and Projections: The Florida Everglades and the Wright Report Controversy." *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 80, No. 2 (2001).
Putnam, Lara. "Migrants, Nations, and Empires in Transition: Native Claims in the Greater Caribbean, 1850s-1930s." In *Immigration and National Identities in Latin America.* Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2014.
Raup, Philip M. "Corporate Farming in the United States." *The Journal of Economic History* 33, no. 1 (1973).
Remes, Jacob A.C. *Disaster Citizenship: Survivors, Solidarity, and Power in the Progressive Era.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016.
Rhodes, Neill. "From Field to Market with Florida Vegetables and Citrus Fruits." *Florida Department of Agriculture*, no. 88 (October 1938).
Rodgers Jr., William H. "Deception, Self-Deception, and Myth: Evaluating Long-Term Environmental Settlements." University of Richmond Law Review 29, no. 3 (May 1995): 613-642.
Rosenberg, Mark, ed. *Poverty or Development? Global Restructuring and Regional Transformations in the U.S. South and the Mexican South*. New York: Routledge, 2000.
Rozario, Kevin. *The Culture of Calamity: Disaster and the Making of Modern America.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Rytina, Nancy. *IRCA Legalization Effects: Lawful Permanent Residence and Naturalization through 2001*. Office of Policy and Planning, U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, October 25, 2002.

Salley, George. *A History of the Florida Sugar Industry*. Clewiston, FL: Sugar Cane League, 1984.

Sanderson, Steven. *The Transformation of Mexican Agriculture: International Structure and the Politics of Rural Change*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986.

Schlesinger, Stephen, and Stephen Kinzer. *Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala.* New York: Doubleday and Company, 1982.

Schnur, James A. "Caught in the Crossfire: African Americans and Florida's System of Labor During World War II." *Sunland Tribune* 19, Article 8 (1993).

Schulman, Bruce J. *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South, 1938-1980*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Schwabach, Aaron. "How Free Trade Can Save the Everglades." Georgetown International Environmental Law Review 14 (2001): 301-344.

Schwartz, Stuart B. *Sea of Storms: A History of Hurricanes in the Greater Caribbean from Columbus to Katrina.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.

Scott, James C. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

Sellers, Randall Sean. "'Del pueblo, para el pueblo': The Coalition of Immokalee Workers and the Fight for Fair Food." MA Thesis, University of Texas, Austin, 2009.

Sellers, Sean, and Greg Asbed. "The History and Evolution of Forced Labor in Florida Agriculture." *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts* 5, no.1 (2011).

Shiva, Vandana. *The Violence of the Green Revolution: Third World Agriculture, Ecology, and Politics.* University Press of Kentucky, 2016.

Shofner, Jerrell H. "The Legacy of Racial Slavery: Free Enterprise and Forced Labor in Florida in the 1940s." *Journal of Southern History* 47, no. 3 (1981).

Slongwhite, Dale Finley. *Fed Up: The High Costs of Cheap Food.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014.

Smith, Peter H. *Talons of the Eagle: Dynamics of U.S.-Latin American Relations.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Snyder, James D. *Black Gold and Silver Sands: A Pictorial History of Agriculture in Palm Beach County.* Historical Society of Palm Beach County, 2004.

Soluri, John. "Labor, Rematerialized: Putting Environments to Work in the Americas." *International Labor and Working-Class History* 85 (2014).

Soluri, John. *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, and Environmental Change in Honduras and the United States.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006.

Specht, Joshua. *Red Meat Republic: A Hoof-to-Table History of How Beef Changed America.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019.

Spener, David. *Clandestine Crossings: Migrants and Coyotes on the Texas-Mexico Border*. Cornell University Press, 2009.

Spyridakis, Manos. *Market Versus Society: Anthropological Insights*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Standiford, Les. *Last Train to Paradise: Henry Flagler and the Spectacular Rise and Fall of the Railroad that Crossed an Ocean.* New York: Three Rivers Press, 2002.

Stein, Judith. *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.

Stein, Judith. Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.
Steinberg, Theodore. "Do-It-Yourself Deathscape: The Unnatural History of Natural Disaster in South Florida." *Environmental History* 2, No. 4 (1997).
Stephens, Lynn. *Transborder Lives: Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
Stockbridge, Frank Parker, and John Holliday Perry. *Florida in the Making.* New York: The de Bower Publishing Co., 1926.
Stuart, John A., and John F. Stack Jr., eds. *The New Deal in South Florida: Design, Policy, and Community Building, 1933-1940.* Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2008.
Super, John C. and Thomas C. Wright. *Food, Politics, and Society in Latin America.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985.
Sutter, Paul S. "The World with Us: The State of American Environmental History." *The Journal of American History* 100, No. 1 (June 2013).
Swihart, Tom. *Florida's Water: A Fragile Resource in a Vulnerable State.* New York: Routledge/RFF Press, 2011.
Swords, Alicia C. S., and Ronald L. Mize. *Consuming Mexican Labor: From the Bracero Program to NAFTA.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010.
Tebeau, Charlton W. *Florida's Last Frontier: The History of Collier County.* Miami: University of Miami Press, 1957.
Tebeau, Charlton W. *Man in the Everglades: 2,000 Years of Human History in the Everglades National Park.* Miami: University of Miami Press, 1968.
Thissen, Carlene. *Immokalee's Fields of Hope.* New York: iUniverse Star, 2004.
Thompson, Charles and Melinda Wiggins, eds. *The Human Cost of Food: Farmworkers' Lives, Labor and Advocacy.* University of Texas Press, 2002.
Thompson, E.P. *The Making of the English Working Class.* London: Victor Gollancz, 1963.
Tolnay, Stewart E., and E. M. Beck. *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings, 1882-1930.* Champaign, IL: University of Illinois, 1995.
Tompkins, Adam. *Ghostworkers and Greens: The Cooperative Campaigns of Farmworkers and Environmentalists for Pesticide Reform.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016.
Tooni, Linda Lewis, et al. *Farm Labor Organizing 1905-67: A Brief History.* New York: National Advisory Committee on Farm Labor, 1967.
Topik, Steven, Carlos Marichal, and Zephyr Frank, eds. *From Silver to Cocaine: Latin American Commodity Chains and the Building of the World Economy, 1500-2000.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.
Tucker, Richard P. *Insatiable Appetite: The United States and the Ecological Degradation of the Tropical World.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.
Unseld, Monica. "Farmworkers—Always Essential, Always at Risk: An Interview with Jeannie Economos." *NEW SOLUTIONS: A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy* 30, No. 4 (2021).
Valentine, Colleen M. "Prosperity in the Fields: Migrant Workers and the Role of Social Capital." MA Thesis, Georgetown University, 2012.
Vanderplank, Sula, Exequiel Ezcurra, Jose Delgadillo, Richard Felge, and Lucinda A. McDade. "Conservation challenges in a Threatened Hotspot: Agriculture and Plant Biodiversity Losses in Baja California, Mexico." *Biodiversity and Conservation* 23, no. 9 (2014).
Vargas, Zaragosa. *Labor Rights are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth Century America.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Vialet, Joyce C. *The West Indies (BWI) temporary alien labor program, 1943-1977*. Washington D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1978.
Volanto, Keith J. "Leaving the Land: Tenant and Sharecropper Displacement in Texas during the New Deal." *Social Science History* 20, No. 4 (1996): 533-550.
Vuic, Jason. *The Swamp Peddlers: How Lot Sellers, Land Scammers, and Retirees Built Modern Florida and Transformed the American Dream.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021.
Walker, Charles, and Richard M. Hunt. "Analysis of Costs for Tomato Production on The Rockdale Soils of South Florida." *Department of Food and Resource Economics, University of Florida, Economics Report* 45 (1973).
Wallace, Chris, Morton Silverstein, NBC. *NBC Reports, "The Migrants 1980."*
Walsh, Jane M. "'Our Struggles are Not the Same, But They Converge': Farmworkers, Allies, and the Fair Food Movement." Ph.D. Diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2014.
Waterhouse, Benjamin. *The Land of Enterprise: A Business History of the United States*. New York: Simon and Shuster, 2017.
Weber, John. *From South Texas to the Nation: The Exploitation of Mexican Labor in the Twentieth Century.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015.
Weil, David. *The Fissured Workplace: Why Work Became So Bad for So Many and What Can Be Done to Improve It.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014.
Weintraub, Sidney, Luis Rubio, and Alan Jones, eds. US-Mexico Industrial Integration: The Road to Free Trade. Westview Press, 1991.
Weisbrot, Mark, Lara Merling, Vitor Mello, Stephan Lefebvre, and Joseph Sammut. "Did NAFTA Help Mexico? An Update After 23 Years." Center for Economic and Policy Research (March 2017).
Weise, Julie M. "Immigration History and the End of Southern Exceptionalism." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 38, no. 4 (Summer 2019).
Weise, Julie M. *Corazón De Dixie: Mexicanos in the U.S. South Since 1910*. University of North Carolina Press, 2015.
Welch, Michael. "The Immigration Crisis: Detention as an Emerging Mechanism of Social Control." *Social Justice* 23, No. 3 (Fall 1996).
West, Patsy. *Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes of Southern Florida.* Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2012.
West, Patsy. *The Enduring Seminoles: From Alligator Wrestling to Ecotourism.* University Press of Florida, 1998.
White, Richard. "From Wilderness to Hybrid Landscapes: The Cultural Turn in Environmental History." *The Historian* 66, No. 3 (September 2004).
Wilcox, Walter W. "The Wartime Use of Manpower on Farms." *Journal of Farm Economics* 28, No. 3 (1946).
Wilkinson, Alec. *Big Sugar.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989.
Will, Lawrence E. *Okeechobee Hurricane and the Hoover Dike.* Belle Glade: The Glades Historical Society, 1990.
Will, Lawrence E. *Swamp to Sugarbowl: Pioneer Days in Belle Glade.* Great Outdoors Publishing, 1968.
Windham, Lane. *Knocking on Labor's Door: Union Organizing in the 1970s and the Roots of a New Economic Divide*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017.
Witney, J.H. "Florida Everglades Land Company." *Florida Everglades Review* (September 1910).
Wolgin, Philip Eric. *Beyond National Origins: The Development of Modern Immigration Policymaking, 1948-1968. PhD Dissertation*, University of California, Berkeley, 2011.

Wong, Carolyn. *Lobbying for Inclusion: Rights Politics and the Making of Immigration Policy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006.
Wright, Almon R. "Food and Society: War-Time Archives of the U. S. Food Administration." *The American Scholar* 7, No. 2 (1938).
Xiuhtecutli, Nezahualcoyotl, and Annie Shattuck. "Crisis Politics and U.S. Farm Labor: Health Justice and Florida farmworkers Amid a Pandemic." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 48, no. 1 (2021).
Yost, Ellen G. "Immigration and Nationality Law." *The International Lawyer* 31, No. 2 (Summer 1997).
Ziewitz, Kathyrn, and June Wiaz. *Green Empire: The St. Joe Company and the Remaking of Florida's Panhandle*. Gainesville: University of Florida, 2004.
Zlolniski, Christian. "Economic Globalization and Changing Capital-Labor Relations in Baja California's Fresh-Produce Industry." In Durrenberger and Reichart, *The Anthropology of Labor Unions*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2010.
Zlolniski, Christian. "Growers, Unions, and Farm Laborers in Mexico's Baja California." In E. Paul Durrenberger, ed., *Uncertain Times: Anthropological Approaches to Labor in a Neoliberal World*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2017.
Zlolniski, Christian. "Water Flowing North of the Border: Export Agriculture and Water Politics in a Rural Community in Baja California." *Cultural Anthropology* 26, no. 4 (2011).
Zloniski, Christian. *Made in Baja: The Lives of Farmworkers and Growers behind Mexico's Transnational Agricultural Boom*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019.
Zolberg, Aristide R. *A Nation by Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America*. New York, NY: Harvard University Press, 2008.