

Children In the Fields Campaign  
2016 Migrant & Seasonal Farmworker  
Essay and Art Contests



# 2016 Contests **WINNERS**

CULTIVATING ROOTS OF OPPORTUNITIES

Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs  
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Dear Reader

As many as 500,000 children work in agriculture in the United States, yet their voices are rarely heard and their struggles poorly understood. The annual Association of Farmworker Opportunity Program (AFOP) Migrant & Seasonal Farmworker Children Essay & Art Contests are a concerted effort by the AFOP Children in the Fields Campaign to help farmworker children share their stories and document what it is like for young people to labor in the fields.

This booklet features the first place winning submissions for the 2016 contest year. This year's theme was "Cultivating Roots of Opportunities." Winning submissions were selected by members of the Child Labor Coalition and will appear in AFOP's Washington Newsline and be presented to key members of Congress. These images and words illuminate the struggles and hopes of our nation's most marginalized population and demonstrate the potential that exists for young people who are given the opportunity to work hard in the classroom rather than in the fields.

You can find more information, including all of our winning entries, by visiting our website: [www.afop.org/children-in-the-fields/connect-with-cif/](http://www.afop.org/children-in-the-fields/connect-with-cif/).

Sincerely,

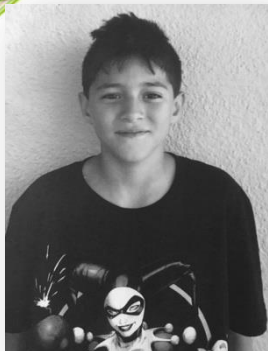


Melanie Forti  
Director of Health & Safety Programs  
& Children In the Fields Campaign  
Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs



# ART

Ages 10-13



**1<sup>st</sup>** Prize

Jose E. Macario

Age: 10

Location: Bakersfield, CA





# ART: Ages 10-13

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize

Lizeth Camacena Lopez

Age: 10

Location: Bakersfield, CA

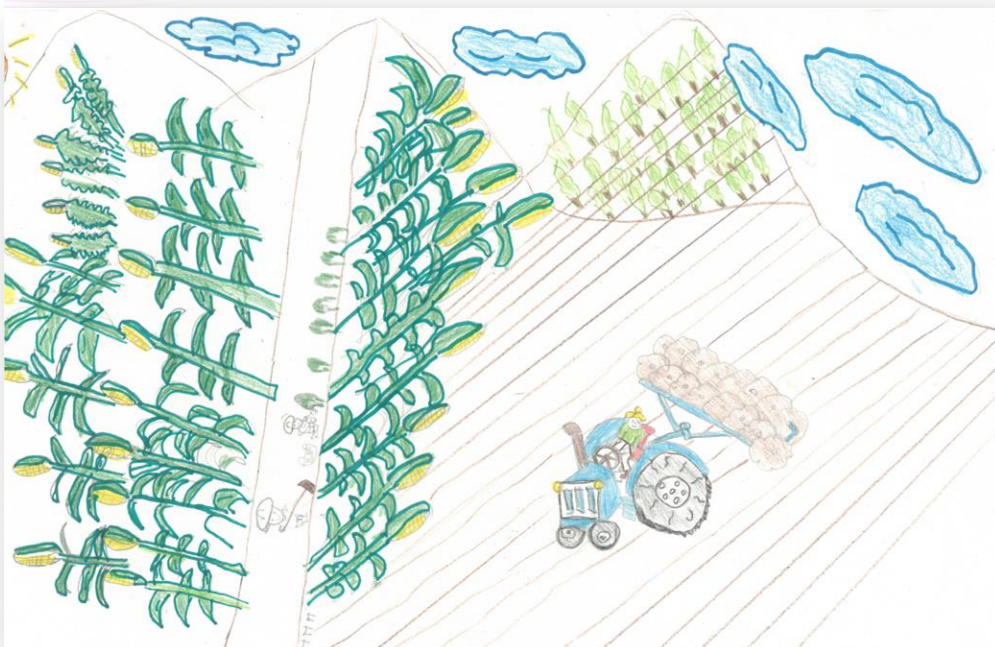


## 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize

Diego Galaviz Aleman

Age: 9

Location: Pearl, MS





# ART

Ages 14-18

## 1<sup>st</sup> Prize

Norman Gonzalez Carmona

Age: 15

Location: Bakersfield, CA





## ART: Ages 14-16

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize

Fernanda E. Gutierrez Elizondo

Age: 15

Location: Liberty Center, OH



### 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize

Javier A. Soto Gonzalez

Location: Bakersfield, CA





# ESSAY

Ages 10-13

1<sup>st</sup> Prize

Selina Naranjo

Age: 12

Location: Bakersfield, CA



## CULTIVATING ROOTS OF OPPORTUNITIES

Weekdays in summer while I'm at my cousins my mom picks oranges, day and night to provide for a family of seven. To me that does not seem easy to get up at three o'clock in the morning, get ready, and wake up six kids. If I were my mom I would be exhausted and not want to work in the fields any more. I can remember when I was small I asked my mom why did she want to work in the fields. Soon I found out that she had no choice which made me sad. I'm going to be honest personally I can't answer that questions, but in the conversations I overheard when my mom was talking to my cousin, I always heard how exhausting work was for her. Also that it was hard work because the sun is always beating down on you and every time my mom used to take off her hat I would always see bumps on her neck. I thought they were goosebumps but then one day she told me that they were from the sun over time the bumps went away. After that day I always made sure that she always had sunscreen on.

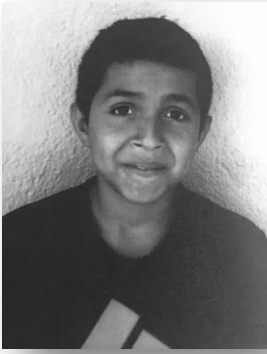
My dreams for the future are to get a better job than my mom, and get her out of the fields. I also want to buy her a better house so she can have room to move. I know that I can change my future even if it is something small that got changed. My dream job is to be a writer. I want to become a writer because to me writing is a way to let my imagination flow. Writing has always inspired me to express my feelings. One day I hope to publish the story that I am currently working on. I know that I will become a writer soon, but until that special day comes I am going to keep working hard to reach my goals. To reach my goals I will stay in school, get good grades, and keep writing stories.

My mom doesn't want to migrate/move because she said that she knows that it will affect my education. It is hard for me to watch her do the same thing every day just to keep me in school. I am grateful that my mom does all of this for six kids that do not even see all the hard work she does. We do go out of town sometimes but my mom always make sure that we make it up or we do not miss school often.

The changes I would like to see in the fields are that field workers get paid more than they are now. I also want to see less people working in the fields and more machines working in the fields. Most people want to invent things that will make life easier. A machine that will make life easier is one that works in the fields. Finally if the machines can not be built the field workers should have things provided for them like having water taken to them. People can make changes in their life they just have to believe in themselves, just like my mom does.



# ESSAY: Ages 10-13



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize

Alexis S. Ordaz

Age: 12

Location: Bakersfield, CA

Hello my name is Alexis Ordaz. I live in Bakersfield, C.A. I went to Voorhies and now I am going to middle school at Walter Stiern Middle school. My parents worked in the fields at Lamont in the grapes. Most of our parents work in the fields. Why do they work so hard in the fields? Let me tell you why because they want a better future for use and don't want use to work in the fields. They want us to be something special and not to be working in the fields. The person that my parents want me to be is anything that make me happy.

Some of the changes I want to see in the fields instead of outhouses there could be like some restrooms. Also all of these fields have to have a shaded area or a rest place so they can rest there if the get like dizzy or a headache so they can rest because it is usually super hot. Another change I want to see in the fields is that there be an emergency phone by every section or so for they can get to in case of an emergency like a snake bit or worse. Another one is that the manager should bring water so that in case if someone didn't bring water and there dying of dehydration.

Some of my dreams are becoming a soccer player and I will get there by working hard staying in school and never giving up. Another one is making my family happy and I will accomplish it by getting good grades in school and not getting in trouble. I will become a soccer player by getting good grades so I can get in the soccer team. By becoming a soccer player my family will be happy and won't have to work when they are old. I have never worked in the fields but if I did it would affect me by having to move

### My Future

Hello, my name is Josue Martinez, and I'm 10 years old. I live in Bakersfield, California and I go to Jefferson Elementary. I have three brothers and one sister. My mom works hard for us. I feel bad for my brother, because he wakes up and gets ready for the fields. When he comes home from work he is tired and the next day he doesn't want to go to work, but he still goes to work to help my mom pay bills. For my future, I want to work in computer programing. First, because I love computers and I like how they work. Then, I want to be a computer programmer to learn something new. Also they get paid lots of money. I want to work and get paid, so I can help my family pay for bills.

I got the idea of becoming a computer programer because last summer in the Migrant Summer School I was introduced to coding and I liked how it worked. The computer programs gives you games, but you also need to use blocks to move around. Next, I want work in computer programing because once you get better you eventually make your own game. Once you finish your game you can share it with others and play games other student create and share with you. I will make games and sell them, so I can help my mom pay the bills.

Another reason I want to work in computer programing is because it is something I enjoy doing. Working in the fields is not something I like; you have to wake up and get ready at four in the morning. Next, in the fields you come home tired and late, but for computer programing you come home happy. Then, in the fields it is hot and in computer programming it is in a factory. In conclusion, for my future I want to work in computer programing.

school to school. Why would it affect it? It would affect me because if I move to a school new school I may lose some lessons that I was not taught. I would be way behind than the other students. Then if I moved to another school that was teaching lessons that I already knew then I won't be learning nothing new and bored.

There is a lot of people that can put people down by telling them you can't do things. Once I met this guy that liked sports and broke his leg and couldn't play anymore. He heard that there was olympics for people that couldn't walk. He studied to get there, worked hard, and practice in basketball. He told everyone that he was going to try to do it but everyone told him "you can't do it". But did he give up no he tried and tried. He worked so hard he made it to the olympics he won the two gold medals and didn't let other people put him down. He won rugby and basketball. The way they play rugby is by knocking each other off the wheelchairs and making it passed a line on the court. Basketball was kind of the same because they passed the ball, scored in hoops, and got across the court in a wheelchair.

I will make my family happy by playing soccer or doing something else to get money and make sure my parents don't work because they did all this work for use so we have to do work hard for them when they get old and can't work. I will get good grades by studying in school and never giving up. I will not get into trouble.

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize

Josue G. Martinez Luevano

Age: 10

Location: Bakersfield, CA



# ESSAY

Ages 14-18



**1<sup>st</sup> Prize**

Lizeth Caballero

Age: 15

Location: Bakersfield, CA

## Another Day ... Another Story

I wake up to my alarm at 4:30 a.m.; however, my alarm is not the type that goes “beep, beep, beep” my alarm goes, “Lizeth ya es hora.” It is my hard working mother, who wakes me up every morning for work. I get up to gather and prepare for the day. Before I know it, I am carpooling to work. The grape fields is my destination.

My family has been working year-round in the grape fields across California’s valley. Doing every job imaginable from planting, picking and packing. Mid-year into my high school freshman year, I started working in the fields with my mother. Who ever thought that the field work was to be another life, another world, another story for me to tell?

A typical work day for my mother and I is purposeful, tough, and enervating. My mother wakes up at 4 a.m. and prepares our lunch for the day. By 4:30 a.m. I am ready and awake for work. Before 5 a.m., we hit the road to prevent traffic. Our destination is far. I use this opportunity to get some sleep, or sometimes I reflect on life as I look out the car window being surrounded by the break of dawn. I ask myself, “Do I limit myself to this? Or can I do more?” Once we reach our destination I know it is time to be that hard working teenager who use this as a motivation for a better future.

Most people think working in the fields is not difficult. They believe it is just the heat that kills, but they don’t know the truth behind those long, tall, and green grape vines. There is heat, pain, and exhausting human bodies underneath, and one of those bodies is mine. I’ve experienced many different situations where I felt as if I could not go any longer. There was a day that I cut my fingers because I did not know the proper way of cutting a bunch of grapes from the vine. I bled for an hour, but I had to continue working because I had a job to complete. Now, I have scars on my fingers, proof of the hard labor. After the third consecutive day working

in the fields, I woke up with a sore back. I was stiff and I could not move. My back was killing me due to pushing the grape carts and carrying multiple full trays of grapes. My feet are worn out due to the mud and dirt we have to walk and stand in. The scorching sun hitting us at all times. Temperature reaching the 90’s by 9 a.m. My body feels as if it is 100 degrees because I have to wear enough clothing to keep myself clean. I face these challenges while working. I don’t complain or nag at my parents because they do this every single day without complaining. Therefore, if they can do it, I can do it too. As Cesar Chavez once said, “Si se puede!”

I have goals! I will attend one of the best Universities of California. My goal is to be admitted to University of California Los Angeles to become an OB/GYN. It is my dream to graduate from this prestigious school with an outstanding career, and give back to community. Furthermore, to give back to my parents and loved one who support my journey towards success.

Our world is changing every second. As technology advances more people have become dependent. My parents are teaching me how to become independent, stable, and a hard worker. My parents are cultivating my personal roots of opportunities. They help me grow and learn every day. All farmworkers struggle on a daily basis. They teach their children the real definition of hard work. This motivates us to become better, and understand their struggles. My parents did not come here to have a better life for themselves, but for my sisters and me. Seeking that life that they never had. My future will consist of reaching for the stars not the grapes.



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize

Norman Gonzalez Carmona

Age: 15

Location: Bakersfield, CA



Habemos muchos estudiantes migrantes que tratamos de concentrarnos en nuestro futuro y hacer lo mejor a pesar de nuestros muchos problemas. Para estudiantes como nosotros las oportunidades de salir adelante son pocas. Muchos dirían que las cosas han cambiado y se han vuelto mas fácil para nosotros. Desafortunadamente la realidad es mucho mas cruel. La sociedad nos rechaza por nuestra cultura, por el trabajo de nuestros padres, por el color de nuestra piel y hasta por el idioma que hablamos! El candidato a la presidencia es un racista que concentra y dirige su odio específicamente hacia nosotros, el cree que todos somos violadores, drogadictos, asaltantes, ladrones, que venimos aquí a arruinar las vidas de los demás y robarles de sus oportunidades. Pero al contrario, nosotros venimos aquí a estudiar y buscar oportunidades que en nuestro lugar de origen nunca pudimos encontrar.

Yo soy un estudiante de un padre migrante y puedo decir con orgullo que yo seré alguien en la vida, por que yo vine a estudiar y salir adelante y estoy determinado a lograr mis metas, mucha gente que ya es de aquí y tiene todo en charola de plata no mueven ni un músculo y tiran todas las oportunidades por la ventana. Los estudiantes como yo enfrentan muchos problemas como si fueran rutina de la vida diaria. Conozco a montones de estudiantes que no saben hablar ingles y ni eso les prohíbe salir adelante. Nuestra hambre y pasión por la educación y salir adelante nos mueve hacia nuestros logros. Mi meta principal es que algún día sere un arquitecto con un doctorado. Ire a Cal Poly San Luis Obispo para obtener mi licenciatura, me transferiré a UCLA para adquirir mi maestría y por ultimo iré UC Berkeley para hacer mi doctorado.

Tengo un plan en la vida y desde que estaba en la secundaria empecé a planearlo, pero nada hubiera sido posible sin la ayuda de mi tia Maria T. Herrera y mi papá José Rafael Gonzalez Gallegos. Ellos hacen todo lo posible para que yo tenga una educación y pueda salir adelante. Pero quien nos dio a nosotros los jóvenes de familias migrantes la oportunidad de la educación y nuestros derechos? Quien luchó por nosotros? Cesar Chavez. El lucho por nuestros derechos, ayunó por nosotros, hizo todo en su poder para darnos la oportunidad de salir adelante, para darnos la oportunidad de vivir. Cesar Chavez cultivo las raíces de la oportunidad, los trabajadores del campo y todos los que siguieron la causa de Cesar Chavez sembraron esas raíces y ahora es nuestro turno. Nosotros somos esas raíces y es nuestro turno de crecer y florecer para darle oportunidad a los que siguen, nos toca mostrarle a este país y a los que nos contradicen que somos mas que voladores y ladrones y vándalos, es nuestro deber demostrarle al gobierno que nosotros valemos algo y somos fundamentales para el desarrollo de este país, que nosotros venimos a salir adelante y a crecer con prosperidad, que nosotros seremos gente importante en el futuro, que nosotros somos humanos y tenemos derechos. Nosotros somos esas raíces de oportunidad, nosotros somos la oportunidad para que nuestra gente y futuras generaciones vivan la vida que ellos quieran cuando ellos quieran.

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**For more information about  
Children In the Fields Campaign  
please contact:**

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# AFOP'S 2017 MIGRANT & SEASONAL FARMWORKER CHILDREN ESSAY AND ART CONTESTS

Children (ages 10-13 & 14-18) from farmworker families are invited to submit their essays and art.

**THEME:  
TO BE DETERMINED**

## — Prizes

First Place	\$300
Second Place	\$200
Third Place	\$100

*\*First place winners will also receive an all-expenses paid trip to AFOP's 2017 National Conference in Las Vegas, NV*

## — Deadline

August 4, 2017

## — More Information

[mlupercio@afop.org](mailto:mlupercio@afop.org)  
[www.afop.org](http://www.afop.org)

## Submit —

Submit art and essay entries to:

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Washington, DC 20036