



# CHILDREN IN THE FIELDS CAMPAIGN

## 2017 Migrant & Seasonal Farmworker Essay and Art Contests



## 2017 Contests Winners

### GROWING UP IN THE FIELDS THAT FEED AMERICA

Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs  
1120 20<sup>th</sup> Street N.W., Suite 300 South, Washington, D.C. 20036  
T: (202) 384-1754 • F: (202) 384-1754 • [www.afop.org](http://www.afop.org)



## ESSAY WINNERS

### Age Category 10-13

- 1st place Licsy Limon (Bakersfield, CA)
- 2nd place Melanie Gonzalez (Bakersfield, CA)
- 3rd place Camila Figueroa (Bakersfield, CA)

### Age Category 14-18

- 1st place Teresita Daniela Paz (Clinton, NC)
- 2nd place Lizeth Caballero (Bakersfield, CA)
- 3rd place Diana Caballero (Bakersfield, CA)

## ART WINNERS

### Age Category 10-13

- 1st place Julieta J Cruz Flores (Bakersfield, CA)
- 2nd place Aaron Cruz Flores Jr (Bakersfield, CA)
- 3rd place Camila Figueroa (Bakersfield, CA)

### Age Category 14-18

- 1st place Norman Gonzales (Bakersfield, CA)
- 2nd place Siclali Antonio Garcia (Autryville, NC)
- 3rd place Maria Celeste Carbajal (Newton Grove, NC)

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 2017 contest year. This year's theme was "Growing up in the Fields that Feed America". 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  
Health & Safety Programs Director  
Children In the Fields Campaign Director  
Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs





# ART: Ages 10-13

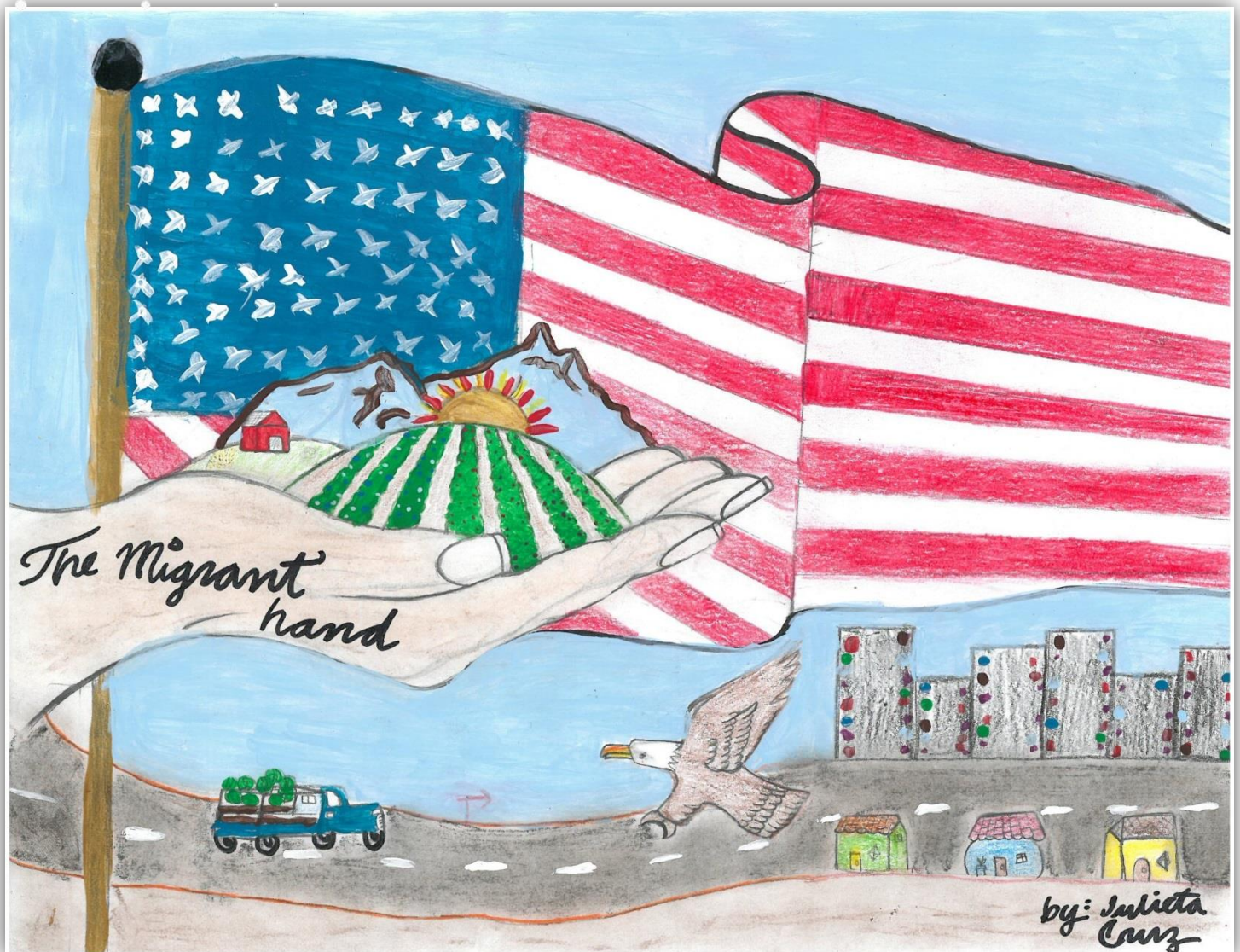


**1<sup>st</sup> Prize**

Julieta J. Cruz Flores

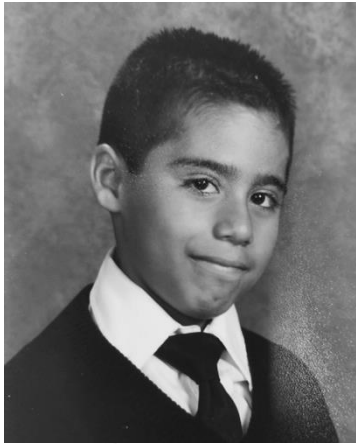
Age: 13

Location: Bakersfield, CA





# ART: Ages 10-13

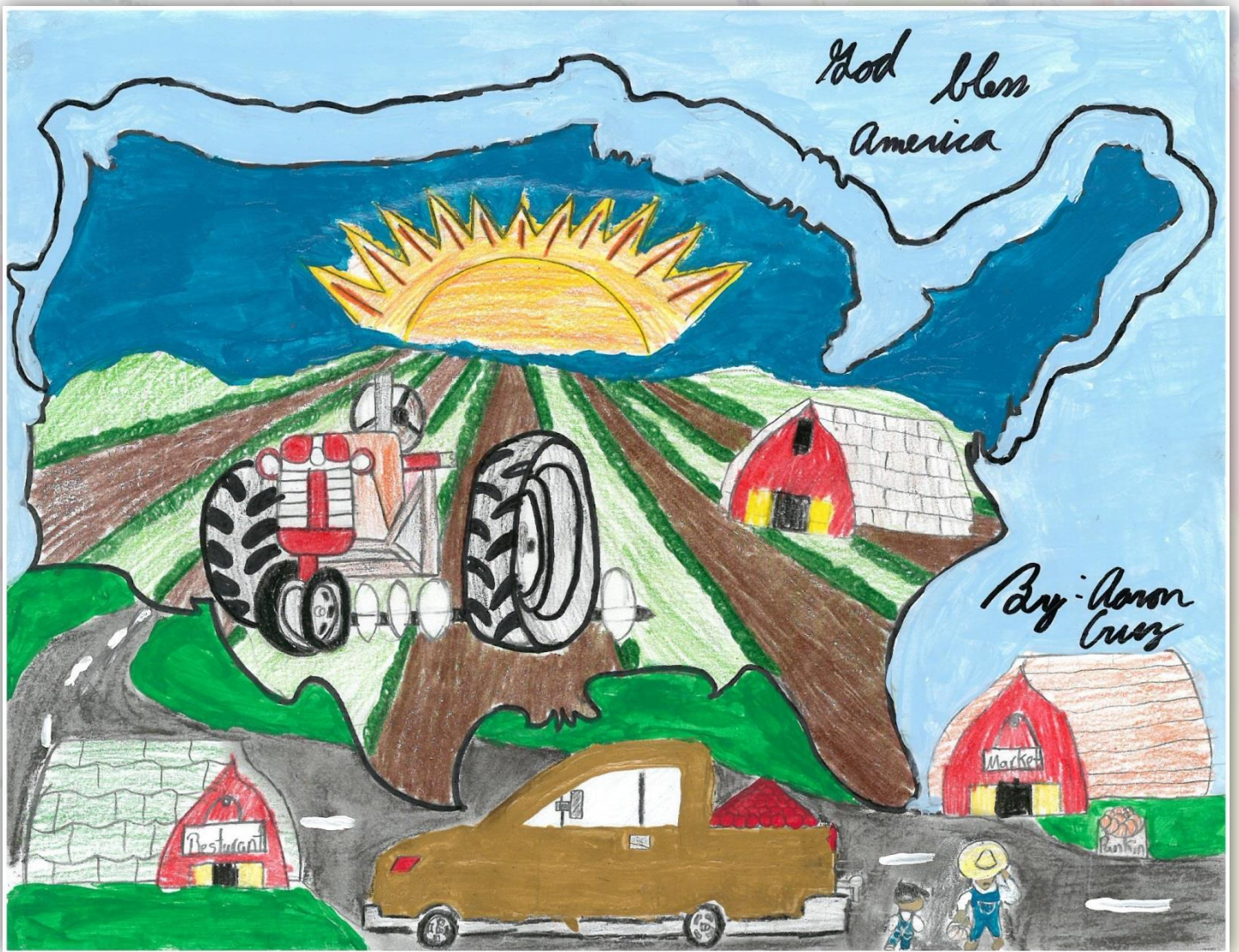


## 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize

Aaron J. Cruz Flores

Age: 11

Location: Bakersfield, CA





# ART: Ages 10-13



**3<sup>rd</sup> Prize**

Camila Figueroa

Age: 11

Location: Bakersfield, CA





# ART: Ages 14-18



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

Norman Gonzalez

Age:16

Location: Bakersfield, CA





# ART: Ages 14-18

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

Siclali Antonio Garcia

Age: 14

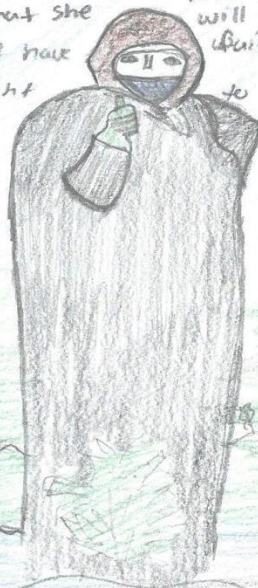
Location: Autryville, NC



Mi primer trabajo cuando era  
 Chica fue a los 8 años,  
 comence a trabajar en la blueberry  
 con mi madre y mi padre. Hubo  
 cuando vi que el dinero no era  
 facil de conseguir, te tenias que  
 esforzar y aguantar. Yo miraba  
 a la gente sufrir por el calor y  
 mas porque estaban cubiertas con  
 capas de telas para proteger su  
 piel. Yo veria a mi madre  
 empujarse a si misma a  
 pesar de que se sentia  
 como que ella queria simplemente  
 dar hasta alli.



This is my aunt adela, this was  
 her last time working in the field  
 right before her accident. She was  
 going to work one icy day, the roads  
 were covered with what we call "helo negro"  
 her husband asked her to stay but with the  
 little money they had, she could not afford it.  
 She ended up in a ditch with the car flipped over.  
 After that day my aunt was never the same,  
 she became paralyzed and depressed. The doctors tell  
 us that she will never be able to walk again  
 but we have faith that she will be okay everyday  
 and night to get my old happy aunt back.



trabajando en  
 el tabbaco.



# ART: Ages 14-18



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

Maria Celeste Carbajal

Age: 15

Location: Newton Grove, NC





# ESSAY: Ages 10-13

## My Mom

I see the light from the kitchen coming into my bedroom.

I hear my mom mixing the rice on the stove to prepare the lunches.

I smell the strong smell from the spicy peppers that will go in the burritos.

I touch the soft, silky blanket on top of my bed.

I hear my mom coming home from picking blueberries all day long.

I touch the rough couch pillow that she bought with money made in the fields.

I see the blueberry stains on my mom's hat.

I feel happiness that my mom is home safe with me.

I smell the dirt on my mom's clothes.

I hear my mom talk to the Rite-Aid nurse about my medication.

I feel my mom's arms hugging me and I don't want her to let go.

I smell my mom's clean wavy hair after she showers.

I touch my mom's hand and hold it tight.

I see my mom's tired eyes closing as she falls asleep.

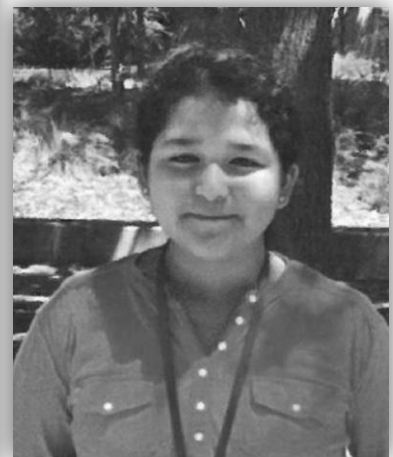
I hear my mom telling me, "Good night Mami, I love you very much."

# 1<sup>st</sup> Prize

Licsy Limon

Age: 10

Location: Bakersfield, CA





# ESSAY: Ages 10-13

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

Melanie Gonzalez

Age: 10

Location: Bakersfield, CA



### My Parents Feed Everyone

My name is Melanie Gonzalez and I am the daughter of farmworkers. I have 2 sisters and 1 brother. I am the 3<sup>rd</sup> child. My parents work very hard in the fields. They wake up early and come home late. My siblings and I have a lot of responsibility at home and school.

My family does not move away to work, but they come home really late so that means less time with family. When they come home, we make sure dinner is all ready. Also, my siblings and I have the whole house clean for them. This way they'll have more time to go rest.

My parents wake up at 4:20am to eat and get ready. When they wake up, I wake up with them to make sure their lunch is in their bags and they have enough water to drink for the day. Today, I think they are picking cherries. When they go to work, I wonder why they work so hard on very hot days. Every day, they come home all dirty and sweaty with cuts on their arms and hands. And every day I pray to God that my parents always wake up with their eyes open, their legs, arms, and hands still working, and for them to keep breathing. I worry that they might faint in the hot sun or hurt their backs.

Although many people may not understand, I know how important my parent's work is to America. Americans and the world enjoy fresh fruits and vegetables because of my parents and other farmworkers who work in the fields every day. That's why I don't mind taking so much responsibility at home.

However, my responsibility doesn't end at home. When I go to school, I make sure to get good grades because that makes my parents happy. I like seeing my parents proud and happy. Another thing that motivates me is seeing them work hard at work, so then I work hard on my work from school. When we are at school, we have no one to pick us up, so we have to be responsible and walk home.

I would like to tell my parents thank you for everything you guys do for the world. You don't just feed us, but you work to feed the world. I'm so proud of you guys, and I'm also proud of being a child of hard-working farmworkers.



# ESSAY: Ages 10-13

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

Camila Figueroa

Age: 11

Location: Bakersfield, CA



### "Growing Up in the Fields that Feed America"

Have you ever wondered for a moment and thought to yourself what is it like to work in the field everyday. Well millions of farm workers and labor in the fields across the United States, including handpicking the majority of the fruit and vegetable crops produced here. In many cases these workers are young adults or even children. Families need to move around multiple times a year. Because it's seasonal so in winter they work on pine trees, summer grapes, spring cherries, fall apples etc... Children have to miss their education to help their families earn money but the children end up missing their education that helps them in their live to get a good job. Farmworkers do not have a choice to work in the field it is an obligation. It is a dangerous job. In term of equipment, using tools designed for the muscle power of an adult can have dangerous consequences. Often times, children operate heavy equipment unsupervised and without adequate training beforehand. Operating large machinery, like tractors, has resulted in tragedy for child laborers. Children who work in the field may also use dangerous tools like sharp knives to perform their duties. Like other farmworker, children experience heat-related conditions from intense sun exposure. This includes heat exhaustion, heat stroke, dehydration, and even death. At a young age they may also be less aware of their bodies functions, and thus less able to recognize these conditions when they are occurring. Farm workers are really brave people that are hard workers that do not give up on their lives.



# ESSAY: Ages 14-18

## Helping Feed America

I am Teresita Daniela Paz currently seventeen years of age, and I am Mexican American. I attend Sampson Early College High School located in Clinton, N.C. I graduate next year with three Associate Degrees, along with my high school diploma. Despite all the obstacles in my life and being the daughter of farmworkers I have achieved many of my goals because of the environment I was born in. Growing up in the fields that feed America has been a major impact on me emotionally, physically and mentally.

My parents Jorge Paz, and Teresita Santiago deserve the credit of all of my success in life. My parents made the sacrifice to come to America to seek for the "American Dream". Unfortunately they did not get the style of life that they were hoping for. They got the life of the fields of being in the hot sun from sunrise till sun down. They worked in the field picking blueberries, sweet potatoes, oranges, tomatoes, zucchini, cucumber etc. Fortunately they had six children in which at a very young age we were all out there helping them fill their blueberry buckets and helping them carry sweet potato buckets to the big truck. Money needed to be made one way or the other and that was the only way for us.

Many times I would have loved to stay in on the weekends and catch up on my sleep after a week of school but it never worked that way. Saturday morning my parents would be up by 5:30 am getting ready for work while I was hoping they would tell me "Te puedes quedar en casa hoy", never happened, I knew I as a daughter needed to help them because I had needs and wants. I would stay up all the way to work to keep them up because they were always tired from the day before. The physical effect it caused me was when we would get to the field, tie the bucket around our waist and start a row of big blueberries. I would complain constantly of how hot it was out in between those bushes and how my back would begin to hurt because of the weight of the bucket. I would begin to cry because sweat got into my eyes. Every now and then I would sit with my mom under a bush to get some shade while my dad stayed picking so we would not stay behind from the crew.

The fields affected me emotionally because even if we have hands full of dirt and chemicals that go within our pores that make our hands swell and get full of blisters; my parents kept working, they suffered injuries but they knew not to complain because they could not afford to lose a day of work. I would want to already be grown and have a good paying job so that I could have them out of the fields; but patience is key. There are times where I sit back and think how many people take advantage of migrant workers and do not value their work and do not think that thanks to them there is food on the table. My family and everyone else in the fields feed America, we make sacrifices to feed not just our family but also everyone else in the country.

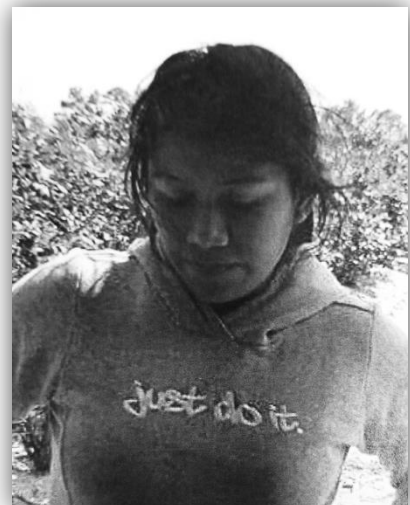
Growing up in the fields impacted me mentally, psychically and emotionally; I had no choice but to continue helping my parents. Mentally by making me want to continue my education and become a School Counselor. Emotionally, from seeing the tiredness in my parents face and body posture. Physically because up to this day I have scars that have been left in my arms and back from walking through the perky branches. I also have scars from all the scratching I would do from the chemicals that would itch my entire body. As a daughter of farm workers, I have learned to appreciate everything I have even if it may not always be enough. Thank You to them I will accomplish much more and strive for my better future.

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

Teresita Daniela Paz

Age: 17

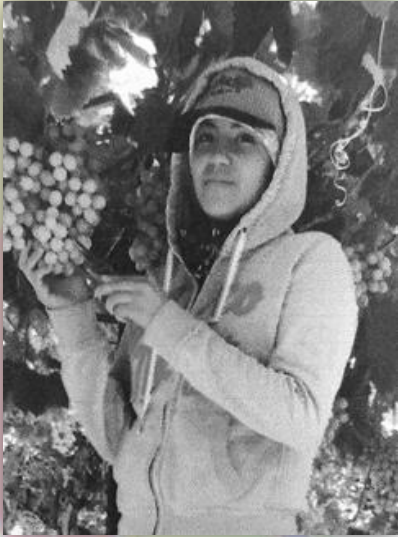
Location: Clinton, NC



**2<sup>nd</sup> Lizeth Caballero**

Age: 16

Location: Bakersfield, CA



## Growing With The Fields In America Lizeth Caballero

Bakersfield, CA

"Venganse a la escuela!" grito el mayordomo. Yo, todavia un poco dormida, corro para entender el trabajo de hoy...mi dia a comenzado. It is half passed 3:00 a.m., when my mother, who is exhausted from lack of rest, walks into my room and whispers, "diez minutos para irnos." Without thinking twice about it, I am up and wide awake. I gather my belongings and get ready for yet another draining journey...at the grape fields.

For about 6 years, my family has dedicated their lives to planting, picking, and packing the grapes that our nation feeds on. These experiences have put us through distressed, wretched, and hideous moments I will never forget. At sunrise, I am riding in the car with my mom to pick up the workers that carpool with us; after picking them up, we have forty-five minutes to an hour of driving ahead of us. The dreadful fields are our destination where our everyday work awaits us all. Once work has begun, everything completely changes. In Kern Country, everyone is exposed to the heat hitting the triple digits; however, we field workers have it worst. The grape vines are only so tall that we receive barley any shade. With the scorching and blazing sun hitting us from behind, my mother is frequently trading my spots of the "surco" or "groove" to keep me from being exposed to the aggressive heat for too long. I always try to even out our time on the sun, but she insists on taking the side of the extra heat, before anyone gets injured.

Injuries, like heat strokes, surround us and have happened recently. Many of us have fainted and been taken to the hospital. One person even passed away due to a heat stroke. This chain of events has left us speechless; I am thankful to God that my family and I have not been part of that situation.

However, my family has been a victim of the effect of working in the fields. Recently, a traumatizing and heart-breaking event occurred in our lives. A couple of months ago, my mother became very sick; she constantly had fevers, chills, lack of energy, and also had rashes and huge blisters all over her ill body. Until one night, my father rushed my mother to the emergency room, leaving me in charge of my younger sisters back at home. We soon found out about the illness my mother had contracted... it was valley fever. Valley fever is a type of fungus created by the soil that is inhaled once it is up in the air. After working in the fields for 6 years my mother, unfortunately, caught this fungus. Going through this was extremely difficult for my family and me. My sisters and I had to step up and take care of the house, while my father worked even harder than before and my mom was in and out of hospitals. She became fragile and depressed and was isolated from other patients. Since my mother's illness was rare, she was kept under strict observation, having constant checkups throughout the day. Her room was labeled "Danger Zone" because of the meds she was on. At first, the doctors believed she was suffering from tuberculosis, putting her through chaos. When we were allowed to visit her, my sisters and I had to wear special suits in which we looked like little ducklings looking for their mommy. It tore my heart to pieces seeing my mother cry and go through all that pain.

Growing up and working in the fields that feed the whole country has been a truly challenging, extremely difficult, and hugely concerning feat for me and my family. Having to depend on the season and fruits well-being to be able to continue, is stressing. As my parents move from ranch to ranch and city to city to find work, I pray to God to get me through just one day of work. The field work does not pay well, but it is what my family lives on. Today, my mother is back and better working the grape fields. When we tried convincing her to stay home and catch up on rest, she refused. My mother appreciates and gives numerous thank you's to farm owners for providing the work. Even with a permanent sickness, this job has helped sustain my family and given my mother many memories. One of her favorite things about the job is watching the grape develop; from a baby plant to a juicy fruit that we see in a supermarket were soon ends up onto our table. I don't complain whatsoever because both of my strong parents struggle EVERY SINGLE DAY. When I have a hard time either at work or at school, I think about both of them, who wake up every morning to go yet another unbearable day at work. My parents are my motivation towards success and a better future. They teach me how to fly out from my little nest, to go towards a greater future that I soon believe they will be part off. Growing up in the fields of America is only helping me grow into a resilient, independent, and successful person so that one day I can lead America to a better future.



# ESSAY: Ages 14-18

## Learning To Rise Above

Diana Caballero

It has been 6 years...for over half a decade, my family has risen above by picking and planting grapes, stripping leaves to help the bunch of grape appropriately grow, and packing the fruit to get shipped across America. Doing so has brought my family in despair moments several times, in one occasion it was life threatening. I have never experienced working under the sun but I believe my say counts due to the circumstances I lived. My hard working mother, father, an eldest sister work in the grape fields in and out of Bakersfield. Along with others they are making it happen, they are feeding our beautiful America.

Picking grapes for such a long time has had a consequence. My mother caught an illness... Valley Fever. The reason my mom caught it was because she inhaled a fungus in the air due to the humidity in the fields. The fungus is found in the blood, it does not have a cure at all. It is extremely hard to hear my mom say "Hija haste algo de comer, me siento muy mal, muy débil" or "Darling, cook yourself something to eat, I do not feel well and I am very weak." Something inside me breaks into several pieces because I cannot do anything to help her. My mother suffered a lot. She was put in an isolated and lonely room during her visits because doctors had an unknown idea of what illness she caught. She was so ill she needed a nurse with her almost all the 24 hours of the day. Just a week after she was diagnosed she immediately returned to the fields. Being in recovery, my mother managed to return to the fields. Every day from 4am -3pm, my mom remained powerful and strong to provide food for our family and those around the country. A woman like that is what I gladly call a super woman.

I'd be lying if I said I am not afraid when my family goes to go work early in the morning. I worry about their safety because there are a variety of accidents happening everyday on freeways due to traffic. I would go crazy and insane if my family were to suffer one of those deadly accidents. There has been an awful amount of heat strokes and deaths due to field work. So every morning, when I awaken to set the alarm to our house when my parents leave for work, I pray that they come back healthy and safe. My family is my treasure and I have nothing without them.

However, the fact that my parents work in the fields is not a bad thing. My parents use it to encourage my sisters' and me to do better. They have taught me that life is not handed to an individual; one has to work for their own dreams to come true. My dream and goal I will accomplish one day, is to work with the heart doing ultra sounds, heart mummurs, and echoes. Thanks to my parents I am captivated to push harder! Their saying "si puedes solo ponte las pilas," is a motivation for me to do great things.

Being raised in a farm working family is a privilege. You learn to grow and succeed as an individual. Farmworkers should be thanked for feeding America. Our nation should be thankful to be having the most amazing people delivering food to their very own table. America's economy would not expand successfully without farmworkers, they make it happen. Farmworkers are and will always be united no matter what steps in front of them. Despite all the troubles, they are always working to feed America. As César Chavez once said, "Si se puede" and I know I could make my success happen.

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

Diana Caballero

Age: 14

Location: Bakersfield, CA



**2018 Migrant & Seasonal Farmworker Children  
Essay and Art Contests**

**THEME: TO BE DETERMINED!**

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

Due dates and requirements will be announced on [www.afop.org/cif](http://www.afop.org/cif)

**PRIZES**

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



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**FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:**

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Children In the Fields Director

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