

CHILDREN IN THE FIELDS CAMPAIGN
2022 WINNERS
BOOKLET



**MIGRANT & SEASONAL
FARMWORKER CHILDREN**

**ART &
ESSAY
CONTEST**



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's 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 year's theme was "I'm a Farmworker Child, See Me!". We received over 120 entries, and winners will be highlighted on CIFIC social media, website, and YouTube. The winner's booklet will be available to download and print on our website.

Winning submissions were selected by members of the Child Labor Coalition and other farmworker children advocates. Entries will appear in AFOP's Washington Newsliner 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/cif.

Sincerely,

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



WINNERS 2022 ✨

I'M A FARMWORKER CHILD, SEE ME!

ART WINNERS

Art Ages 10-13

1st Place: Janelly Caballero – Oxnard, CA

2nd Place: Brandy Ortiz – Indio, CA

3rd Place: Maria Garcia – Bakersfield, CA

Art Ages 14-18

1st Place: Aaron Cruz – Bakersfield, CA

2nd Place: Yaresmie Vaeza – Salinas, CA

3rd Place: Daylianis Rivas – Bakersfield, CA

ESSAY WINNERS

Essay Ages 10-13

1st Place: Guadalupe Gonzalez – Bakersfield, CA

2nd Place: Edwin Juarez – Bakersfield, CA

3rd Place: Keiry Mejia – Bakersfield, CA

Essay Ages 14-18

1st Place: Emily Camacho – Quincy, WA

2nd Place: Kelly Galindo – Ruskin, FL

3rd Place: Jessy Rivas – Bakersfield, CA



JANELY CABALLERO



1st Place Art, 13 years old. Oxnard, CA.

JANELLY CABALLERO

I am a farmworker working child, getting ready and going to school to prepare for the future. My art represents the hard work we farmworker children do in the fields. Because part of our work is not only harvesting food and vegetables but also going to school.

A farmworker child has 2 lives and in both, we have to perform our best: school and work. One life is full of heat under the sun, rain, and the cold, and the other life is trying our best at school. But working together we can all get a better future. Working in the field is essential to work, and I am proud to be part of it.



A farmworker child has 2 lives and in both, we have to perform our best: school and work.

1st Place Art, 13 years old. Oxnard, CA.

BRANDY ORTIZ

My name is Brandy Ortiz. I am 12 years old and I am from Indio, California. I painted an eye that looks into what I dreamed to do in the future in the future and, how I want to make my parents proud. In the back I painted a field, to represent my parents that are fieldworkers. I gave my draw the title "SEE ME" because I want to be recognized for my hard work, determination and education.



2nd Place Art, 12 years old. Indio, CA.

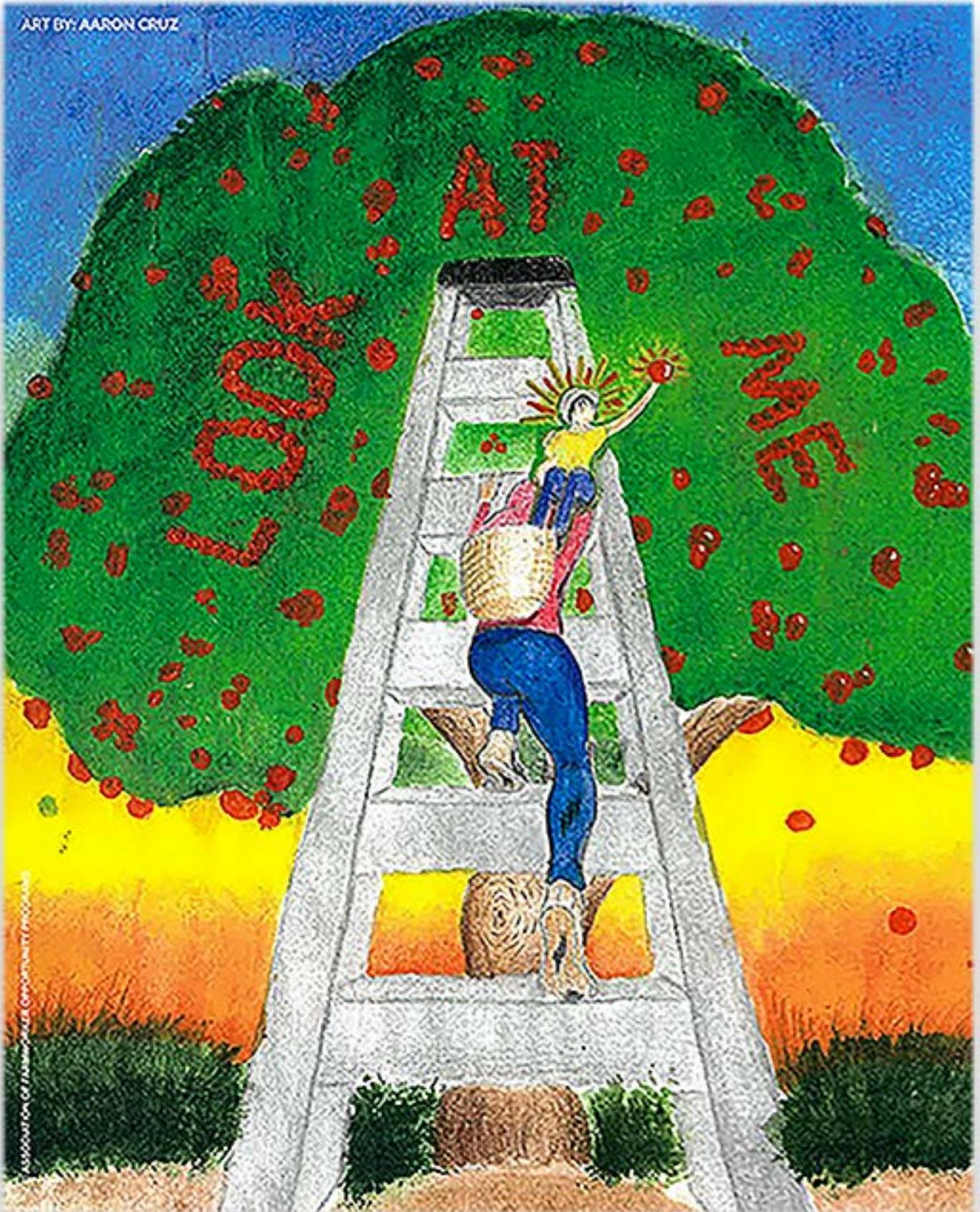
MARIA GARCIA

The eye represents the community of agricultural workers being observed by those who only enjoy the harvest or their work already on their table. The extra drawings represent my dream of being an architect. The pencil and ruler signify the tools used to measure angles to build a house. The piano is a graphic representation of projects in their architectural aspects, the house represents my dream come true and the girl is me watching my parents work hard under the sun.



3rd Place Art, 10 years old. Bakersfield, CA.

AARON CRUZ



1st Place Art, 15 years old. Bakersfield, CA.

AARON CRUZ

I will be sharing a little bit about myself. I am the second child of immigrant parents, I am currently attending high school and I'm going to be a junior next year. I have 2 siblings, an older sister and younger brother, my entire family is summed up to 4 people due to my father's recent passing. I really like drawing so this contest was like a good stress reliever from all the stuff that has been happening around me. I will now start talking about the drawing.

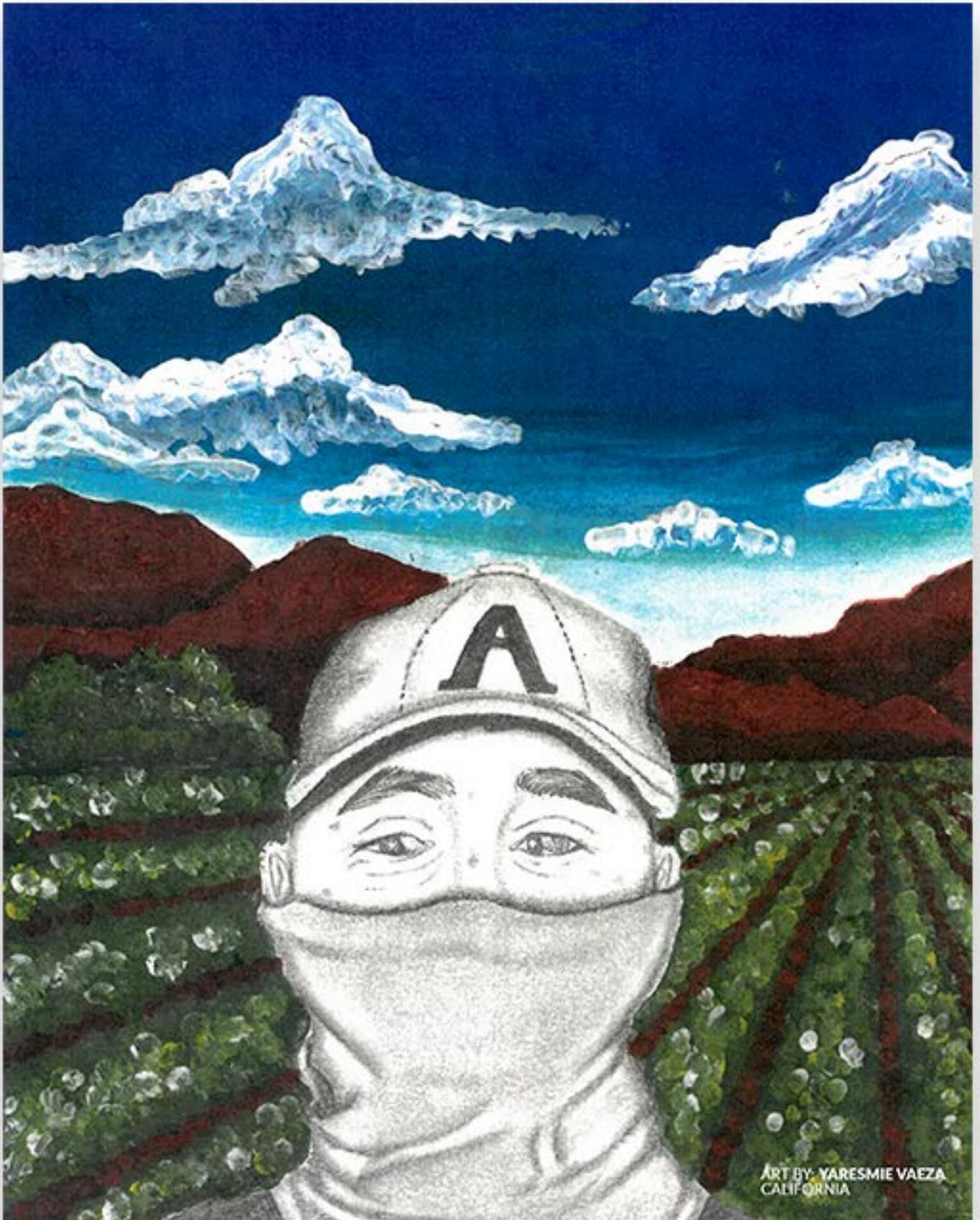
The ladder represents the path of life the child is supposed to take. The father is carrying the child because as a parent they help their children advance into their future. The basket on the father is supposed to represent all the weight he bears and responsibility as a father and a field worker. The fruit on the tree represents the knowledge, education, and all the good things the child receives as he walks his path to achieve his dreams. The yellow and orange lines on the child represent hope and how important children are especially children of field workers. They are the future of our country and families. Field workers do anything for their children, to protect them, help them have a good future. They sacrifice themselves in order for the children to have good futures. They already run high risks of death just by working in the fields due to heat strokes. They do anything for their children until the last attempt, just like my father did. Children of field workers are so important because usually they feel like they don't get the love they deserve from their parents because they are mostly out working most of the day.



Field workers do anything for their children, to protect them, help them have a good future. They do anything for their children until the last attempt, just like my father did.

1st Place Art, 15 years old. Bakersfield, CA.

YARESMIE VAEZA



2nd Place Art, 17 years old. Salinas, CA.

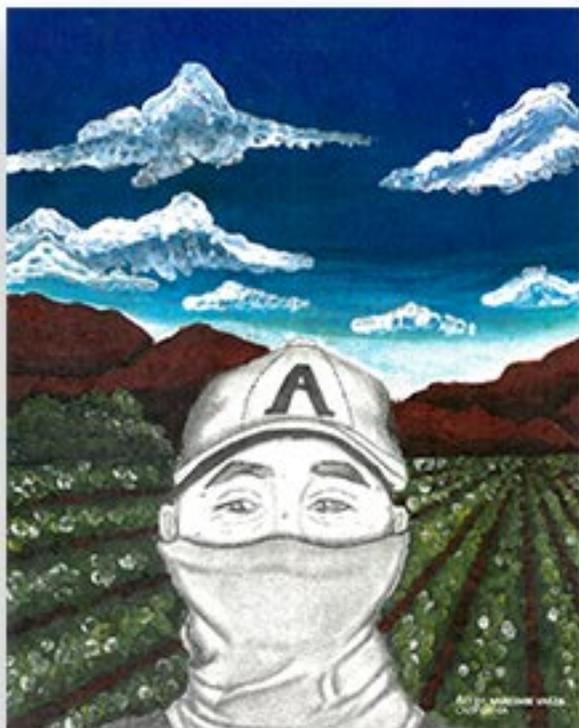
YARESMIE VAEZA

The inspiration for this painting was my stepdad. He is the only one working since my mom has cancer and my siblings and I, are too young to work.

I asked him: Why do you work in the fields? He said: even though you are not my children by blood, I have the responsibility to take care of you. I draw the farmworker in black and white because I think that even though they work in the most beautiful sceneries, they do the same tasks every day 6 days a week like they are expected to be a machine.

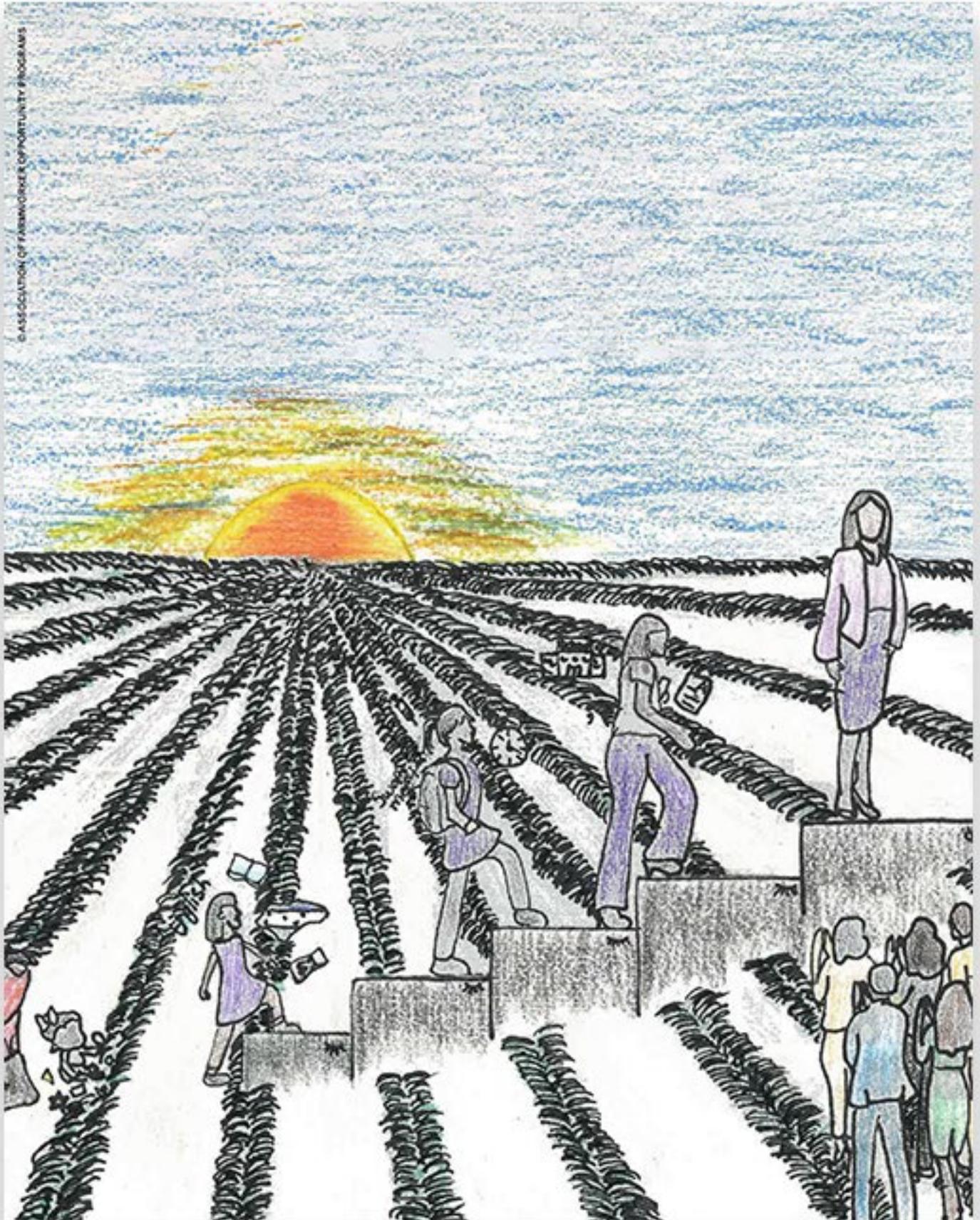


I draw the farmworker in black and white because I think that even though they work in the most beautiful sceneries, they do the same tasks every day 6 days a week like they are expected to be a machine.



2nd Place Art, 17 years old. Salinas, CA.

DAYLIANIS RIVAS



3rd Place Art, 17 years old. Bakersfield, CA.

DAYLIANIS RIVAS

As a farm worker's child, it is not easy to be acknowledged unless we acquire success. The drawing depicts a person picking a non-specific crop. That person represents all those individuals who are tirelessly working in the fields to be able to provide for the family. A prime example being my dad. Next to the person is a little baby girl, which in this case, represents me. Around the girl are little objects that could be described as toys because she has nothing to worry about. However, as the little girl grows, there are many challenges that she stumbles upon. Those being: language barrier due to immigrating to the U.S to pursue a better life, no financial stability, medical tragedy within the family, etc. Nonetheless, as she gets older she struggles more and more.

The little syringe- represents her sister's leukemia diagnosis, the clock represents crucial decisions having to be made in such little amount of time, for example: financial aid and college applications. Also, going to sell at the swap meet in arduous conditions because there was little to no work in the fields. Furthermore, the girl was never acknowledged in her journey as is being presented by the crowd cheering only when she is at the top and successful, not when she was going up the stairs and getting up as many times as was needed to keep going. The girl was able to, regardless of her background and low chances of success due to her circumstances, make something of herself and finally, BE SEEN.



As a farm worker's child, it is not easy to be acknowledged unless we acquire success.

3rd Place Art, 17 years old. Bakersfield, CA.

GUADALUPE GONZALEZ

I heard footsteps heading my way, a kiss on my cheek, and the door closed. They left... and I sigh. I understand, but it's hard. My parents came from Mexico for a better life, yet they still struggle. They try so hard for us to think that they aren't struggling but I know deep down they are, and they still make time for us after work. The tired faces are covered with fake happiness. That breaks me inside. My mom Laura works cleaning houses, she used to work in the fields, and my dad Salvador works in the fields. My name is Lupe, and this is my story as a farmworker child.

I finished my last bite, I'm walking through the halls, I hear laughing, and talking, I see them enjoying themselves with their families, I walk faster, and my family isn't here. Being treated unfairly is one of the challenges we face. Unfortunately, children of farmworkers might not have the same opportunities as other kids because their parents are not around as much. However, I understand that my parents' job provides food for us and helps bring food to the table of many other families.

I lean against the door, and I hear crying from my mom's room, I peek through the door, bills surrounding her, and I feel tears coming down my cheek. She inspires me to do better and to go to college following something I'm passionate about, but I have challenges that I need to overcome. One of the challenges is that I'm not treated equally amongst others because I can't afford things others can.

Seeing my mom come from work tired, exhausted, and hurt made me think to myself I need to do better for my family and for me too. I want to pay her back for all her sweat and tears.

The sun is burning my skin, my breath is getting heavier every second I arch and reach for the grapes, and my back hurts. Kneeling every minute reaching out for grapes breathing in the dust till morning to the evening, I don't wanna live like this. It's lunchtime, I sit, workers surrounding the bench, cars coming past us, dust going into the air, and my food tastes like dust. I don't want this for my future. I want to be inside a building with fresh air studying a case to get justice for people, that's my dream as a farmworker child.

I envision myself walking through that stage and seeing my brother's expression of being proud of me, knowing I won't be working in the fields. I know my parents did all they could to give us the best life, and I appreciate it so much. The struggle I've had having farmworker parents has taught me to be strong and independent, I love them no matter what.



1st Place Essay, 13 years old. Bakersfield, CA.

EDWIN JUAREZ

I am a child of a farmworker. I see my mom come home every day from the fields working. My experience as a son of a farmworker is disheartening. I see my mom go early in the morning to the fields and come home very late. She is tired when work ends, and she comes to feed us and take care of my siblings and me even if she is tired from work. That makes me sad and motivates me to graduate from college, so I can have a better life and help my mom to stop working in the fields. I want to show my mom that her hard work became my degree and thanks to her, I can choose from an array of professional careers that puts me in the position to take care of my family. She eats whatever she finds in the refrigerator and if there is something I like she leaves it for me or my siblings. She has shown me the very essence of hard work and sacrifice.

I am proud of my mom for being able to survive working under the hot sun day in and day out. She struggles with the consistent feeling of hunger, thirst, and exhaustion. That evokes a feeling of dejection. However, the feeling of sadness also is entangled with a heart of pride for my mother's strength and abilities. People say, "working in the fields is easy", but after many of these naysayers try to do one day in my mother's shoes, they see that it's backbreaking work!

I am happy that I am a son of a farmworker. Some kids say they hate being a son or daughter of a farmworker.

Mexicans, Salvadorans and other people from different countries come to the United States in search of a better life. They find work, but see that all the good definitely has a part of sorrow enmeshed in the American dream they so desperately fought to be a part of. The United States is not like people think it is- they think that it is the land of opportunity for everyone. However, after witnessing sweat that drops down from my mother's brow after a long day of work in the field I am clear that the land of opportunity comes with a heavy price.

I want to grow up and become an Engineer or a Doctor, maybe even a Lawyer. I am thinking of being a businessman. I'm grateful for what my mom gives me. I thank God for my mom and how good she is. I will show the world that Mexicans and everyone can be big in the world so **sí se puede...yes we can!**



2nd Place Essay, 13 years old. Bakersfield, CA

KEYRI MEJIA

I was born in El Salvador on May 12, 2012. Living in El Salvador is hard because it is a hardship to have ample food on a daily basis. I was told that pay can be as low as five dollars a week for backbreaking work. My mother did not think it was fair or just to have to live and raise a family in a system that allows its people to struggle for basic human needs such as having enough food to feed her family. When I was four year old, we moved to Texas. I can remember the journey as something you watch in a movie. At four years old, I cannot remember much but I do know it was a hard and exhausting journey. Soon after settling in Texas, I can recall how uncomfortable I felt being in a strange new place especially being in a place where my first language was Spanish. It was especially hard to adjust to because my mother immediately had to work long and hard hours coming home tired, hungry, and thirsty. Around the start of 3rd grade, we moved to Bakersfield, California because of the need to find stable work for my mother. Thinking that this would be an improvement for us, I witnessed that her work continued to exhaust her. During this time, she worked in the grape fields. I was worried all the time because of the stories I heard of the workers dealing with seeing snakes, and having to work long hours starting at 5am and not coming home till dark. My big sister had to care for me. Even with all of that pressure put on my mother to provide for us, I was told that the pay continued to be low even though we were in America. The thing that I will never forget and have some type of anger towards is the fact that my mother did all of this work while being pregnant. Thankfully, my brother was born safe and healthy, a bit small but still OK! Even though I am only 10 years old, I know that working in fields with or without a child is extremely difficult and not ideal for most people.

My mother and other field workers had to do what they had to do no matter the hardness of the job because they have a desire to take care of their family.

I may not be old enough to understand everything in this world but it is clear that working in the fields is not easy! When I ask my mother to play with me, she cannot because of the exhaust that covers her body. People think that working in the field is only picking up the fruit, but no, they are so wrong! It is the opposite of easy, I have not been in the field to actually work but I know it is hard, and not an easy way to get money. My mom tells me of the stories of her daily backbreaking work leaving her and other field workers hungry because of the ten minutes they have to eat lunch. My heart aches to see my mother having to do this type of work to take care of my siblings and me. I always listen when my mother tells me to go to school, listen to my teachers, be respectful, and study hard, so I can get a great education so that I do not have to work in the fields when I grow up. One thousand times over, I prefer to study as hard as I can to become a lawyer or some type of big professional when I grow up, so, I will NEVER have to experience the hard labor my mother had to endure for the sake of caring for her family.



EMILY CAMACHO

Darkness, birds chirping, roosters crowing, alarm, alarm, snooze, alarm, warm smell of Folgers coffee, pan dulce en la mesa, chorizo con papas burritos, crisp cold mornings, the child farmworker I am, camouflaged in a field.

My name is Emily Camacho, I am 14 years old and I am a farmworker child. My hands are rough, my arms are scarred, my feet are callused, my back aches, heat waves visible from a distance, a craving for water never as intense as when I am working. Dreaming; a college campus, textbooks, exams, restless nights studying, a diploma, a white coat.

My name, a birth certificate, 9 digits, an identity. I am here. My rough hands tell a story, the fruits and vegetables that have passed through them, now on your table, in your refrigerator. I am here. My eyes, look through them, see the endless fields, miles and miles of fruit trees. My eyes, travel through them, miles of terrain, different states, migrating like beautiful mariposas.

My feet; callused, weak, not able to take another step, ready to collapse. My shoes; dirty, muddy, old, ripped. My feet have walked a thousand miles or more in these fields, orchards, vineyards. My callused feet like that of my parents, walking, searching, dreaming, yearning the American Dream. Crossing borders, blending in, camouflaged, but I am here, see me, hear me, watch me.

My back aching, hunching, folding. Heat waves visible, running, running fast, a quick escape from thinning apples, picking cherries, cleaning onion fields ... to drink water. Ice ice baby, cold water. I am here. I am here, collapsing as my lips feel the first touch of water. Collapsing as my dry, dirty hands hold the styrofoam cup to my mouth, collapsing as my callused feet can't seem to walk or climb another ladder step, collapsing on my knees like my parents did when they reached the land of the free. Collapsing in gratitude as I am here, see me, hear me, watch me live and achieve my parents' wildest dreams.

I am here. My callused feet, rough hands, aching back all make me who I am. I am here, I am a farmworker child. I am here, see me, hear me, watch me.

"¿Pies para que los quiero si tengo alas para volar?" (Feet what do I need them for if I have wings to fly?) - Frida K.



1st Place Essay, 14 years old, Quincy, WA.

KELLY GALINDO

You see kids from all parts of the country all coming from different struggles and different social and economic statuses some off better than others. Just as other people of color Hispanics and children of immigrant parents who work in the fields are often unseen or invisible, we are one of many minority groups.

We don't have many who view us for what we sacrifice and have accomplished, and we're pushed to the side, and we're kept unseen. We start working when we see the light of day rise from the east and end our day of labor when it sets in the west, we work long back aching hours in the scorching sun with only handkerchiefs, a cap, and maybe one or two layers of a long-sleeved shirt on us to protect us from the sun and to try and help protect us from the pesticides that are lurking in those crops.

Although we're kids with long long roads ahead of us sometimes the road seems short, sometimes we want to give up, but the adversity we're faced with and the multitude of no's that have been given to us because we may not come from wealthy households just push us to be better it pushes us to face problems head first and solve them it builds us to be strong independent people who don't depend on anyone else because we've learned to thrive on our own, only we can accomplish our goals with the advice, mistakes, and support of our parents. My parents have given me the world as I say they put their bodies health on the line to feed our family and to give us the best life that they couldn't have because of their struggles as kids,

and as their kids all we can do to repay them is to try and help our parents the best we can whether that's at home babysitting our siblings from a young age or going to work with our parents over the summer or weekend filling bucket after bucket of apples, cucumbers, tomatoes, or any other fruit or vegetable you can think of.

No one expects a 10-year-old would spend their summers or even weekends lifting bucket after bucket that weighed about 30 pounds or more containing produce rather than playing video games or watching TV all day. No one expects that 10-year-old to be lifting those buckets in the scorching hot sun all day rather than being inside their homes with the AC turned up all the way protecting them from the bugs and heat. No one expects this they're blind to the world around them, or they're short sighted and don't see farther than their own household or job. But put your glasses on and see us farmworker children, see us for what we do and see is as humans and help advocate for us if you can! See our community, who work to survive, who work to support our families, who work for a better future.



2nd Place Essay, 15 years old. Ruskim, FL.

JESSY RIVAS

Never in a million years would I have imagined the tum of events my life took. In 2015 my mom made a drastic decision to bring my siblings and I to the United States as it offered better opportunities for dreamers such as myself: whose birth country lacked many resources. Being born and raised in Honduras where its primary language is Spanish, and having to adapt to a different culture and language was overwhelming especially when trying to communicate with others. Nonetheless, didn't let that affect me. I studied a lot and in no time I became comfortable with the language and the culture, mostly because of my mom who would put my siblings and I to study everyday. Although I was young, I knew that coming to the United States to get an opportunity to accomplish my dreams wasn't going to be an easy task...Since we were struggling financially, I helped bring money home by voluntarily going with my dad to work in the fields. While at the same time going to the swapmeet to sell merchandise. I would help my dad during summertime by picking grapes under the burning sun. For a few months everything was going well. We were doing better financially. However, that didn't last long. After a while, I suddenly started to feel an excruciating pain in my leg. I went to several emergency hospitals in Bakersfield hoping that they would make a conclusion and provide me with a solution to stop the pains that came and went without warning. Nevertheless, the doctors would either say that it was because I was growing or because I was doing exercise. With time, my pain only got worse and spread throughout my body. There came a point where I could no longer handle the pain and my mom decided to take me to Valley Children's hospital in Madera. Upon arriving at the hospital, we explained to them the situation and were later taken to a room where they did various blood tests on me.

After a few hours the doctor came back with the results. I had leukemia. The moment those words were said, my mom burst into tears. On the other hand, I sat there emotionless. The treatment process started rather quickly. The day after being diagnosed I was already receiving chemo and by the second week my hair had already fallen out. Being in a hospital bed for months made me feel useless because I knew I could no longer help my family financially. I believe that farmworkers are forgotten and sometimes even treated with the utmost disrespect. Many people look over the fact that we are also humans trying to make a living. That kind of behavior towards farmworkers has made me want to work harder to be able to someday help the community and fight for better working conditions. Nonetheless, this has motivated me to work harder to pursue my dreams of being an oncologist pediatric nurse.



3rd Place Essay, 17 years old. Bakersfield, CA

YOU CAN SUPPORT AFOP'S EFFORTS

To fight for farmworker children's rights, for a safe and healthy life, for education, and for a better quality of life overall by making a generous contribution to AFOP's Children In the Fields Campaign.



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You can also make a contribution

Please make check to: AFOP

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Washington, D.C. 20036

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YOUR GENEROSITY!**