

## Silenced Voices Video and Discussion for Educators

This module was created by the VT Migrant Farmworker Solidarity Project to help educators present and organize a discussion or a number of classroom lessons, or as part of a unit about the issues of migration and globalization to accompany the video Silenced Voices by the VT Migrant Farmworker Solidarity Project. We have compiled a list of additional resources that might be helpful to review before getting started:

<http://www.vtmigrantfarmworkersolidarity.org/node/45#ed>

Please share any feedback, ideas or suggestions you have by emailing: [vtmfsp@gmail.com](mailto:vtmfsp@gmail.com)

Goals:

- Discuss and explore the economies, policies, and systems that create conditions that force people to migrate from Mexico to Vermont.
- Discuss and explore the policies, economies and systems that create conditions that drive Vermont farmers to seek migrant workers
- Discuss how migration impacts and changes both sending and receiving communities
- Discuss and explore what types of alternatives create more socially, economically, and ecologically just communities on both sides of the border

Materials:

- Easel paper, markers, and tape
- Copies of discussion questions
- Copy of Silenced Voices
- DVD player/computer with projector
- If you choose to do the 'sculpturing an answer to the question' exercise plan ahead as much as you can and bring in possible props and art supplies (cardboard is great!)

Directions:

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

A. Review goals with audience and introduce the video with some useful points: (5 minutes)

- This video by the VT Migrant Farmworker Solidarity Project is about the death of migrant farm worker José Obeth Santiz Cruz who was killed in a farming accident in December 2009 in Vermont. This is just 1 story. This video isn't trying to teach us everything about migrant workers and dairy farmers in VT. Rather, it helps to start a conversation.

B. Before watching the video let participants know that after you'll be breaking up into small groups to discuss the following questions. Write them out before on big paper/white board:

- Why do Jose' Obeth and many community members in San Isidro leave home and decide to migrate to Vermont?
- What were some of the experiences like of Obeth and his community while living and working in Vermont?
- How is migration impacting and changing the community/culture of San Isidro?

2. Watch Silenced Voices (25 minutes)

3. Discussion (3 options)

A. After the video break up into small groups (3-6 people) for 10-15 minutes. Have each group discuss all 3 questions. (10-15 minutes). For more advanced and knowledgeable groups who are familiar with this subject you might choose to jump ahead to the questions in #5.

B. If you have a small and engaging group you can work as a large group and address each question one at a time encouraging as many people to share as possible. (10-20 minutes)

C. Sculpturing an answer to the question with small groups: (20-30 minutes)

Assign each small group 1 of the 3 discussion questions to focus in on. Explain to each group that they need to work together to represent their answer by arranging their bodies, any available props, and other creative resources to silently show their answer to the question. They should think about the main characters involved in each question and then discuss, plan and practice how they will as a group show their answer to the question. Provoke groups to think about how to creatively represent key themes like agriculture, power, borders, struggle, hardships etc.

After they've rehearsed each group will present their sculpture to the large group. Then, the whole group will discuss each sculpture. What did you see? What is the story here?

4. Report backs from small groups

5. Deepening the discussion: (3 options)

A. Follow-up with a large group discussion exploring the below questions. (5-10 minutes)

B. Assign one of the follow-up questions to each break out group to discuss for another 5-10 minutes. (5-10 minutes)

C. For a classroom or multi-day workshop facilitators might assign these questions for outside research and ask participants/groups to prepare a short presentation on each theme. Another option for small groups is to 'sculpture an answer' to one of these questions as well:

- What are the economies, policies, and systems that create conditions that force people to migrate from Mexico to Vermont?

- What are the policies, economies and systems that create conditions that drive Vermont farmers to seek migrant workers?
- How does migration impact and change both sending and receiving communities? (Economically, Socially, Politically, Culturally, Ecologically?)
- What types of alternatives are being developed that support farming communities on both sides of the community to create more socially, economically, and ecologically just communities

6. Report backs for 6B or 6C.

7. Reconvene as large group. What questions remain? What questions does the film raise for you? (Write the questions out on big butcher paper and for multi-day workshops or in a classroom these questions can be assigned to groups for further group research and group projects.) (5 minutes)

8. Teaching points to conclude. (10-15 minutes)

In order to really do justice to the variety of issues raised in this film each of the below concluding points might be followed up with research and as next steps:

- There are policies, such as NAFTA, that force small farmers and entire farming communities off the land in Mexico. For example, we heard in the film that San Isidro used to rely on coffee as a cash crop but the prices bottomed out. In the 1980s the Mexican government eliminated its supply management system for coffee in preparation for NAFTA and in compliance with ‘free trade’. This means the Mexican government could no longer protect and regulate their markets from massive influxes of cheap coffee from other places. That’s what led to the drop in coffee prices and thus began the cycle of migration. Then, it happened with corn under NAFTA.
- There are policies; such as ending supply management systems in Vermont for dairy farmers that drive farmers off the land and make it very difficult for dairy farmers to earn livable wages and pay employees livable wages. In the 1980s under Reagan’s ‘trickle down economics’ ‘supply management’ was considered a ‘barrier to trade’ or ‘protectionist policy’ and thus Northeast dairy markets were forced to compete with other regions of the country and world that have unfair competitive advantages (climate, scale, subsidies).
- Policies such as these are leading to dramatic changes in agricultural communities on both sides of the border including the loss of the family farm. This has huge implications for the way of life of rural farming communities.
- However, there are also many different ways to engage this situation and many groups are doing so whether they are working for immigration reform, challenging trade

agreements and corporate control of agriculture, creating alternatives such as food sovereignty, fair trade, organic production, diversification etc, cooperative and worker-owned value added production in Vermont (organic valley milk) and Mexico.

- This process of economic globalization and ‘free trade’ is displacing massive amounts of people and forcing them to move across borders but the very governments that promote these conditions do not acknowledge the rights of migrants to struggle to support their families.
- Current proposals for immigration reform do not address these root causes of migration nor do they protect the human and worker rights of people who are forced to cross borders to survive due to these policies. Free trade agreements allow for wealthy corporations and wealthy individuals to migrate and move freely but don’t allow for poor people to cross borders to survive.

9. Optional: For those groups who ‘sculptured an answer...’

- Much of what we talked about boils down to what our food system looks like and how it relates to other peoples’ food systems (e.g. people in Mexico are losing their local agriculture etc.). Now, break into small groups again and discuss what alternatives that are more socially, economically, and ecologically just might look like. Then, sculpture it by using once again your bodies, props, and creativity to tell the story.

10. Follow-up and further research and reading:

- Check out our resources for educators to supplement this workshop/lesson on-line at:

<http://www.vtmigrantfarmworkersolidarity.org/node/45#ed>

Globalization and Migration:

- This workshop was adapted from BRIDGE: Building a Race and Immigration Dialogue in the Global Economy by the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights ([www.nnirr.org](http://www.nnirr.org)). The NNIRR video “Uprooted: Refugees of the Global Economy” is a great video to follow up with after Silenced Voices as it goes into more depth on the issues raised.
- We also suggest watching the video ‘Life and Debt’ by Stephanie Black as a follow-up on the economic globalization aspects of the film. In particular there is a chapter in the film that deals with the dumping of US manufactured dry powdered milk on Jamaican farmers and how this is driving small farmers out of business. This is an opportunity to discuss economic globalization as a race to the bottom for the small farmer etc. You might just watch this chapter only and use it to continue the discussion on milk etc. (<http://www.lifeanddebt.org/>)
- For multi-day workshops or in a classroom this would be a good time to handout and/or assign for reading with additional research on the background of NAFTA’s impacts on migration:

[http://www.witnessforpeace.org/downloads/10-12%20Factsheet\\_1.pdf](http://www.witnessforpeace.org/downloads/10-12%20Factsheet_1.pdf)

- Injustice for All: The Rise of the Immigration Control Regime is the executive summary of National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Right's 2009-2010 HURRICANE human rights report documenting U.S. human rights violations committed against

immigrant families, workers and communities. Excluded and Exploited: The New Regime of Trade, Managed Migration and Repression is a new in depth report about the relationships between economic globalization and migration:

<http://www.nnirr.org/resources/index.php?language=1>

The Vermont Dairy Crisis:

- We have an interview available on our website about the root causes of the current Vermont dairy crisis that is helpful to localize this issue in Vermont:

<http://www.vtmigrantfarmworkersolidarity.org/taxonomy/term/1>

Immigration Reform:

- There are various proposals for immigration reform and not all the groups who push for immigration reform agree about which proposal is best to support. This presents an opportunity to have a group look at one of the 3 below proposals and talk about the pros and cons of each from the perspective of those who push for them:

1. This represents one approach to ‘comprehensive’ immigration reform that many consider to be a ‘no compromise’ approach.

<http://www.nnirr.org/projects/immigrationreform/index.htm>

2. Here is a different approach to ‘comprehensive’ immigration reform that many would consider to be a ‘compromise’ approach:

<http://reformimmigrationforamerica.org/>

3. Here is another approach that isn’t ‘comprehensive’ and thus the above groups tend to see it as not ‘comprehensive’ in that it only ‘legalizes’ some immigrants (e.g. agricultural workers):

<http://www.fwjjustice.org/what-is-agjobs>

[http://ufw.org/\\_board.php?mode=view&b\\_code=cre\\_leg\\_back&b\\_no=6780](http://ufw.org/_board.php?mode=view&b_code=cre_leg_back&b_no=6780)