



The Appendix

Appendix I:

Myrta's Story

“Edcouch, Texas, is the only place that I can truly call home, but as a migrant it isn't the only place I live in. Every year as school comes to an end and the heat begins to burn, my family packs our bags and boards up our house. It would be nice to say that leaving gets easier every year, but I cannot. It's gotten tougher every year. I can't say goodbye to my friends because I'm not really leaving, and I can't get sad because I know that I'll be back. Sometimes the only thing you can do is close your eyes for five minutes, because that is how long it takes to leave Edcouch and Elsa. Then, when you open your eyes, all you can do is hope that the three months of upcoming labor will speed by.

I can honestly say that up until my twelfth year of life I did not know what work was. Then one morning before the sun rose, my mother shook me out of bed and told me to get up. It was time to work. I didn't take the moment seriously because it was summer, and I was still 12. No one under 20 woke up before the sun, especially when you didn't have school. Who was I to break this unspoken rule? Unfortunately, that didn't pass through my parents' minds.

The moment initiated my new stage of life, as a worker. I was to rise at the same time as the adults, and to do the same work as the adults. So at 12 years old my summer days were going to be spent in the fields. We started off thinning peaches, the job that I hate with all of my heart. We rose at five in the morning, to make the day shorter and cooler, and terminated each day at around three. This cycle continued for the first month, and proceeded with the picking of raspberries, cherries and blackberries for the last two months. While other kids were at home watching TV and going swimming, I was beneath the sun in my peach tree wearing my long sleeved shirts.

I did not complain as I worked because I understood that this is what my parents needed me to accept. If I complained, I would only make myself look foolish because every other person there wasn't complaining. So, every morning as I rose my heart sank, and I longed to make the sun disappear or the clouds pour their rain. My 12th summer of life was spent in denial and confusion.

I am now eighteen, and I've gone back to Utah as a worker for the last five summers. As each summer passed, I learned things that I know other people would take a lifetime to learn. I experienced life with a new perspective, and I found myself being thankful to my parents for teaching me what hard work is. The opportunities that this type of work offers are overshadowed by society's stereotype of migrant farm workers. Positive effects are blurred by the negative statistics and other data that researchers, the media, and others collect.

My summers spent in and with the land have educated me. I still deplore thinning peaches, but I have an understanding of life and nature that makes my heart race. Every day that I begin before the sun is to my benefit. With this teacher, I have become a better student, not only of school, but also of life."