

# HOPE'S DAUGHTERS

Christie Arnold

“Hope has two beautiful daughters. Their names are anger and courage. Anger at the way things are, and courage to see that they do not remain the way they are.” –Augustine of Hippo, 5th century.

I was reminded of this quote as I explored Immokalee last March. In so many of the people I met and the organizations I entered, there was a sense of hope. This hope was not naïve, but rather, it was grounded in past successes and future expectations of more to come. It was a hope that sees the injustices facing migrant farm workers for what they are—unacceptable violations of human dignity. And it was a hope that foresees that things will change, that they must change.

I was deeply inspired by the hope of women like Lucy Ortiz, who fights for the rights of migrant farm worker women to be free of systemic sexual exploitation in the fields across America, and Andrea Ortega, who helps migrant workers gain access to vital legal representation on and off the farms. I was encouraged by the sense of hope I felt at the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, where community members come together and advocate for fairer wages and better working conditions in the fields. The work they do has had an incredible impact. Their courageous collaboration in the midst of extreme poverty and oppression continues to bring much-needed change to Immokalee.

I was also moved by the hope I saw in the eyes of Maria Segura from the Family Literacy Academy, who cried as she told us about her life as an immigrant farm laborer and her long journey out of that work. She has learned English, obtained her GED and an associate's degree, and is now an early childhood educator at the Academy while she works towards a bachelor's degree. Maria's passion to inspire other women to do what she did will reverberate throughout family life in Immokalee.

I was honestly surprised by the hope I saw, because the conditions in Immokalee could easily engender feelings of hopelessness. As an International Relations major in college,

I've served in impoverished villages in third world countries. But I hadn't realized that similar conditions existed here in my own state. Migrant families in Immokalee face abject poverty, sub-standard housing, unhealthy diets, and unfair pay. Often, as many as three or four families live crowded together in one trailer. The houses I saw were barely bigger than one-room shacks. Migrant workers work long, arduous hours and don't even make minimum wage. They are also exposed to toxic pesticides, and there is no hospital in the town. Abuses on the job often go unreported by the workers for fear of deportation and other immigration issues. There have also been cases of human trafficking there, as many farm working conditions and policies leave workers vulnerable to such exploitation.

As a second year law student, I can't yet make the kind of legal change I want to see one day. But I can support the community, and am excited for what will come out of this trip in my own life and at the FSU College of Law. I'm excited to help mentor the students at Immokalee's high school who aspire to go to college. I'm determined to talk to the managers at my local Publix about the corporation's lack of willingness to help migrant laborers receive fair wages. I'm motivated to learn about where my produce comes from and to make sure I buy from companies with fair supply chains. I'm eager to go back to Immokalee with my fellow law classmates to see how else we can guide Immokalee students towards their educational goals. This trip opened my eyes to the injustices here in Florida, and at the same time gave me exposure to how things are in the process of changing for the better. There is hope on the ground in Immokalee, and that gives me hope.

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