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Annotated Bibliography

Research Question

How has the quality of life for migrant farm workers in the and their families in the US changed since the farm worker reform protests of the 1960’s?

Introduction

Since the birth of the United States, those that found themselves working the land, found themselves living a quality of life that was well below the status quo. They worked long hours in harsh conditions, made little to no income, were subjected to unfair and dangerous conditions, and had no resources or opportunities by which they could improve their situation. In today’s world, in a country as plentiful as the United States, where opportunity is as plentiful as the land is vast, we would all like to think that working conditions such as these no longer existed, but we’d be wrong. The working conditions faced by many US migrant workers and their families, although much better than those faced by the first generation African and subsequent African-American slaves, are a far cry from what they should be. This is why I’ve chose to research the difference in migrant workers’ quality of life today compared to what it was in the 1960s during the major farm workers’ reform led by Caesar Chavez, a migrant worker. I’m going to examine various aspects such as wage, average education level (both adult and child), the average starting age of child workers, how many children that are born into a migrant family stay in the same occupation and how many are able to leave the migrant lifestyle, etc. I will then compare the date from today to that of the average migrant worker of the 1960s and determine how much the quality of life has improved for migrant workers, if at all.

Works Cited

“Agricultural Jobs for Teens.” *Washington State Department of Labor and Industries*. Access Washington, n.d. Web. 04 Apr. 2016.

This is the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries website, Access Washington, where you can find information on Washington’s current labor laws. I was able to find laws regarding child labor and the legal age in which children are allowed to begin working. They listed the legal age to be 14 if the child is going to work in the agricultural field. It gave the exception of 12 and 13 years old children being permitted to work during the non-school months of June, July, and August. It also has links to information such as the number of hours children are allowed to work, the type of work they are permitted to do, and the wages, breaks and meal periods employers are required to give them.

This was one of my source’s sources. If their laws reflect the laws of many other states, this website could be useful by providing material I could cite in regards to the legal age children can work. I could then compare that age to the actual average age children of migrant workers begin working. I could also use it to compare the legal number of hours, type of work, wages, breaks, etc., in comparison to the reality. This is merely a factual website with current laws. It would be difficult to assess whether or not I agree or disagree with them seeing as though they are merely reporting the truth. However, I can see this information being used to reflect the blind eye our nation has turned to migrant workers and their children if what is legal differs from what is actually occurring, the way I think it might.

History.com Staff. "Cesar Chavez." *History.com*. A&E Television Networks, 2009. Web. 12 Apr. 2016.

This is an article on History.com that talks about the life of Cesar Chavez. It talks about how he grew up with parents that were migrant workers and the struggles that came along with that life. It ties his past in with his motives in reforming the conditions and quality of life for farm workers in the 1960’s. It talks about the struggles he faced like discrimination, violence, red tape, money, etc. It also explores the success he had, such as beginning to unionize the farm workers, bring awareness to the dangers of pesticides, providing hope to the workers, and over all improving the working conditions that many people working in the agriculture industry, especially Latinos, faced.

I think this is a great source for me to use. My research question talks about how the conditions have changed since the farm worker reform protests of the 1960’s and Ceasar Chavez was the man who led them. It is essential that I talk about how it was then so that I have something to compare today’s conditions to. I may not use much about his individual history, but if I did I could use it as a personal account from that era.

Kim, E. Tammy. "For Children of Migrant Workers, Choice Can Be the Field or the Car." *Aljazeera America*. Aljazeera America, 25 Oct. 2013. Web. 07 Apr. 2016.

This article talks about the day to day life and struggles of the average migrant workers and their families. It addresses the difficulties migrant workers face with trying to maintain the balance of adequate childcare for their children and working in the fields. It details the 11 and 12 hour days the parents face, and how their hard work can actually work against them. At the peak of the season their income doesn’t reflect their reality. Oftentimes, families that qualify for childcare subsidies will have them revoked because of the one or two months where they make more money than average. It also addresses the difficult choices that parents have to make in regards to their children when their childcare assistance is taken away from them.

The personal account of Cornelio Ramirez and his wife Rosa Iselda is detailed. They talk about how they have to keep their kids in dangerous places all day long when they are unable to go to daycare. It also talks about the poor living conditions where they reside in labor camps. They share a room with around 13 people, and a communal bathroom with nearly 100 other laborers. They say it is safer for their children to sit in the car or be with them in the fields where they can see and protect them than to stay at their so called “home” in the labor camps when the parents are working. The article goes on to say that is very common for children as young as 3 or 4 to work in the fields picking berries.

My take on the article is that they are most likely reporting the facts on the situation. I know that the situation that migrant workers face is a dire one. The conditions are harsh, choices are difficult and opportunities are few and far between. This article would be a great refrence for my paper. I could use the personal account to give my readers a better idea of the current quality of life that most migrant workers have to deal with. I also think that the personal aspect and the pictures that are included in the article allow the reader to really connect with the work emotionally. This is something I hope to achieve in my own paper, and I think this is a valuable source.

M., Maria. "Fields of Peril." *Human Rights Watch*. Www.hrw.org, 05 May 2010. Web. 16 Apr. 2016.

This is a firsthand account written by a former migrant worker who has escaped that lifestyle and gone on to graduate college. She states the realities of growing up in a migrant family. She talks about starting at ten years old working in the fields. She says that she viewed it as a normal part of life and that the family and friends that she knew and was surrounded by had children that did the same. She talks about how the growers were always fully aware of the child labor happening in the fields and that they ignored it on purpose. She then goes on the describe the type of work as physically damaging, especially to a young person. She said it was normal to work 10-13 hour days, and describes the long term effects that come from doing that type of work. She also talks about the pesticides and how her and other workers were constantly exposed to them during their work. They were never notified when the spraying would occur and were only told to get out of the fields when they saw the plane straying. She ends the article by saying that her parents still struggle and that she hopes to finish college and return to help them financially.

This article will be very useful to me. I need to include firsthand accounts in my research so that I can give a clear view of what the quality of life is for today’s migrant farm workers. This will provide information about the way of life that no statistic could.

Ruark, Eric A., and Aniqa Moinuddin. "Illegal Immigration and Agribusiness: The Effect on the Agriculture Industry of Converting to a Legal Workforce." *Federation for American Immigration Reform.* FAIRUS, Apr. 2011. Web. 16 Apr. 2016.

This website provides research results and statistics on illegal immigration in the United States. It explores the effect that increasing pay would have on the industry. It talks about how increasing pay to encourage legal workers to come do the work would effect the industry and explores both the positive and negative outcomes of doing so. It explores these pros and cons from both the worker and the growers’ perspectives. The results they suggest are that if pay were to be increased by merely 10-15 percent, legal workers would likely take the jobs, and that in doing so it wouldn’t likely hurt the income of the growers to the extent of causing food prices to go up for the consumers. This is all American based research.

I think this is an interesting article that I could use to explore viewpoints of people who oppose/support illegal migrant workers. Often times you hear the argument that no American would want to do the work that illegal workers do, thus they are doing us a service by being here illegally. This disputes that with statistics that show that many legal workers would accept the work if it paid a fraction more.

Zong, Jie, and Jeanne Batalova. "Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants and Immigration in the United States." *The Online Journal of the Migration Policy Institute: Migration Information Source*. Migration Policy Institute, 14 Apr. 2016. Web. 16 Apr. 2016.

This website gives statistics on the data collected by the US census regarding immigration. It gives specific numbers of illegal workers and legal workers. It also gives statistics on the number of people working illegally in the farm industry.

I think that this is going to be a very useful website for me. I’ve already used it’s information in my paper. For one of the viewpoints I’m exploring, knowing the number of illegal workers is essential.

McDaniel, Paul. "How Inaction on Immigration Impacts the Agricultural Economy." *Immigration Impact*. American Immigration Council, Jan. 2015. Web. 19 Apr. 2016.

This website is an argument for taking action on illegal workers within the US. I think this will be helpful to me because I need to explore more of the opposing points of view. I believe that illegal migrant workers are exploited and unable to free themselves of this industry for lack of resources. This is saying that they are the problem and that they are taking advantage of the system. It also talks about how the lack of action taken in resolving the “problem” of illegal workers is having on the US and its agriculture industry.

Mamtani, Ravinder, MD, Albert B. Lowenfels, MD, Sohaila Cheema, MBBS, and Javaid Sheikh, MD. "Impact of Migrant Workers on the Human Development Index." *Perspectives in Public Health*. Sage Journals, 6 Jan. 2014. Web. 16 Apr. 2016.

This website gives statistics about the Public Health Index, which is a tool used to calculate the quality of life in any given country. They use three different areas of life, health, education, economy, and measure them against a variety of factors. One such factor that they used to measure against education was the number of migrant persons in a country. They talked about how as a country’s population neared having 30% migrant persons, the Public Health Index took a sharp downfall.

I think this is interesting information that I haven’t seen or heard of before. I want to further research it, but it seems credible. I found it in a medical journal. I think it would be an interesting point of view to add to my paper. I could use it to talk about the overall effect that illegal migrant workers could have on a country and use it to back up the other side of what I believe.