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**Harvest of Shame**

Harvest of Shame was a groundbreaking documentary that exposed the plight of migrant workers in America during the 1960s. They resided in Florida during winter but traveled north to work as the weather became warmer. These types of workers arose as a new force of the post-war era where consumption along all sectors was increasing. Agricultural demands were increasing, causing an increase in the labor needed. At the same time, media demands were also increasing which lead to the success of this documentary as one of the first of its kind. These workers work 136 days of the year and average $900 annually, which is about $8,000 today. Additionally, only 1/500 migrant children finish middle school and 1/5000 finish high school. Many feel like they will never be able to escape this endless cycle of work, and children not being educated only worsens the cycle. This documentary had a profound impact on the American public who had no idea about how migrant farmers lived, let alone how the food got to their plates. This also was the first popular expose documentary of its time and paved the way for other journalists to use documentary filmmaking as a way to spark change. This new media attention on farm and workers’ rights helped pass laws in congress. Today there are no longer migrant workers, but immigrant workers. Many are undocumented, are living in poverty, and have no real political power because they cannot vote or lobby. Out of all the US farmworkers, 48% are undocumented immigrants and 21% are authorized immigrants. So, has anything really changed since the 1960s?

Full documentary: [1960: "Harvest of Shame"](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJTVF_dya7E)

**Bibliography**

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*Edgecliff Student Newspaper.pdf*. (1961). Retrieved March 12, 2021, from<https://www.exhibit.xavier.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://scholar.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1156&context=edgecliff_newspaper>

Gordon, L. J. (1968). Review of Due to Circumstances Beyond Our Control [Review of *Review of Due to Circumstances Beyond Our Control*, by F. W. Friendly]. *The Journal of Consumer Affairs*, *2*(1), 124–127.

This book speaks about how television has become a money-making scheme above all else, and is a public service instrument second. In order to do this, programming serves to the lowest common denominator of the public. He notes how when CBS ran a rerun of I Love Lucy instead of reporting on relevant news, television's place was cemented as profit oriented. He then talks about how Edward R. Mirror pioneered the public service side of television with the See it Now and CBS reports. He also broadcasted the Harvest of Shame which was, “courageous and explosive”. When the response to Harvest of Shame was understood by CBS executives, they switched that time slot to a game show, and move See it Now to late Sunday afternoon. The chairman of CBS wanted to avoid the controversy over airing these types of documentaries and wanted to stick to what was safe. The author then goes on to question what the balance between profits and public services that a television company should assume.

*How To Update ‘Harvest of Shame’ for the 21st Century*. (2015, November 24). Culture.<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/how-to-update-harvest-of-shame-for-the-21st-century>

This article brings the 1960 broadcast Harvest of Shame to light, 55 years after it was released. It then goes on to talk about Barry Estabrook’s Tomatoland which covered the plight of Hispanic tomato pickers. They have no political say because they cannot vote, and was one of the mort undesired jobs in agriculture. There has been progress where tomato buyers have agreed to pay more meaning more money goes to the tomato pickers. They then go on to discuss how there are still problems within the food system, although there needs to be a focus on cheap calories and that impact on public health. Additionally, there are issues about how small farms are fading away, and black farmers are losing land 3 times the rate, giving way to large industrial farms that are more likely to exploit their workers.

*Immigrant Farmworkers and America’s Food Production—5 Things to Know*. (n.d.). FWD.Us. Retrieved April 1, 2021, from<https://www.fwd.us/news/immigrant-farmworkers-and-americas-food-production-5-things-to-know/>

Knebel, S. M. (1966). Current Developments in Farm Labor Legislation. *Journal of Farm Economics*, *48*(5), 1131–1136.<https://doi.org/10.2307/1237109>

Logsdon, D. N. (1967). *COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH SERVICES FOR THE RURAL POOR*.<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED015063>

This speech explains that migrant workers receive a limited amount of care, but the non-migrant agricultural workers who do not attract attention through migrating receive limited or even worse care as well. The health program for both these groups should include, “family health services, clinics, a hospitalization plan, family oriented nursing, dental care, health education, nutritional services, and social services”. Rural youth should also be involved in these health programs like candy stripers. The speech gives credit to writers, television commentators like Edward R. Morrow, and other individuals outside the government for convincing the American public and legislators that something must be done about the living conditions of migrant workers. They are entitled to the same human rights as any other American. The speech then goes on to describe how most migrant workers have a “home base” and stay there for about 9 months, then they migrate up to New York, New Jersey, or the Carolinas for a few months. This migration is common knowledge, but much of the public doesn't understand the pressures of this migration. The speech outlines a comprehensive program for rural agricultural workers, migrants and non-migrants alike, that were listed above.

Murrow, E. (1960, November). *Harvest of Shame* [Video]. CBS.<https://www.cbsnews.com/video/1960-harvest-of-shame/>

NPR. (2014, May 31). *In Confronting Poverty, “Harvest Of Shame” Reaped Praise And Criticism*. NPR.Org.<https://www.npr.org/2014/05/31/317364146/in-confronting-poverty-harvest-of-shame-reaped-praise-and-criticism>

This podcast gives an overview of Harvest of Shame, which aired the day after Thanksgiving in 1960. It was considered groundbreaking, but NPR questions if it changed anything. They played audio clips from the actual documentary and highlighted how one farmer remarked about “we used to own our slaves, how we just rent them” in referring to the bus stations around town that would drive the workers to the fields. The podcast then remarked that nobody on television had ever taken the time to do a one hour exposee before. Criticism of the documentary was that it was overdramatized and stretched the truth. Congress and the farm lobby tried to discredit the documentary, but the actual images of the farm conditions spoke for themselves. Funding and education for migrant children was released because of this documentary and sped up legislation about farm workers in congress. NPR then continued to talk about how migrant worker issues are still around today as they live in poverty and noted that the average farm laborer makes about $10,000 a year.

Pizzolato, N. (2018). Harvests of Shame: Enduring Unfree Labour in the Twentieth-Century United States, 1933-1964. *Labor History*, *59*(4), 472–490.

Schaefer, R. J. (1994). Reconsidering Harvest of Shame: The Limitations of a Broadcast Journalism Landmark. *Journalism History*, *19*(4), 121–132.<https://doi.org/10.1080/00947679.1994.12062372>

This article talks about how even though the Harvest of Shame documentary had a seminal place in the history of broadcast journalism, it failed to spur change in the living conditions of migrant workers. Edward Murrow and the executive producer Fred Friendly worked on expose documentaries in the 1950s about MCcarthey broadcasts and evoked a strong public response. This is why they believed Harvest of Shame would have an impact on public policy. The documentary did evoke public sympathy for migrant workers but had little impact on agricultural policy. This article discussed how the production decisions framed the labor problem as a timeless moral struggle between the workers and the greedy growers. While this approach allowed viewers to feel sympathetically for the migrant workers, it did not allow for the program to examine the structural policies and technologies that led to the abundance of food and labor after World War II. This emotional appeal happened at the sake of historical understanding and context which overall reduced the effectiveness of Harvest of Shame.

Siegel, E. (1966). Migrant Families: Health Problems of Children. *Clinical Pediatrics*, *5*(10), 635–640.<https://doi.org/10.1177/000992286600501011>