

## **Statement about “Apple Forecast” 5-minute video**

Kathryn Smith Pyle, filmmaker

I grew up in a rural agricultural area, where I came into contact with the hundreds of migrant workers who harvested the crops. In the 1950s the workers were African-Americans from the south; in the 1960s the workers were mainly from Puerto Rico. At the end of harvest season, most of the workers went on to another harvest or back home, wherever that was.

I moved away but I learned on visits to my family that by the 1980s the workers were primarily from Mexico and Central America, and unlike the previous seasonal workers, they had settled in the community, some running small businesses or working at various jobs including in the agricultural industry; by now some have become professionals in various fields. We all know how this pattern has been repeated across the country.

Meanwhile, I was working as a grantmaker in Latin America, supporting grassroots economic development projects, and saw first hand why so many people, especially from Mexico and Central America, were so motivated to migrate to the U.S. There were either no jobs or no good jobs there, and no adequate support for small business development.

Now, as a filmmaker and writer, I am focused on social issue documentaries and how stories told in film can shed light on the most important issues of our times, and move people to action.

In 2011, these experiences came together when the state anti-immigrant laws were implemented. I knew what this meant for the immigrants and I imagined how devastating the laws must be for farmers too – yet I was struck by how few of the farmers protested. It was clear that they were forced to live in the shadow as much as the hired workers, fearful of attracting attention.

There were some infamous raids on farms and processing plants that were exploiting the workers. But what about the farmers who were decent people, trying to run a fair business, and reliant on hired workers – a workforce that, according to the most recent census, is mainly undocumented? Where was the voice of those farmers in the immigration reform debate?

Inspired by several courageous farmers who have come forth with details about how the immigration system is hurting their business, I decided to make a very short documentary film giving voice to small farmers.

I was fortunate to find a skilled team that shared my commitment: consulting editor Francisco Bello, editor Ellen Knechel and cinematographer and editor Raul Paz Pastrana. Since it was apple season when we began production, the film highlights the apple harvest, which was underway in many regions of the country, especially in northern states from coast to coast. But the apple harvest is only an example; the issues are the same for the entire ag sector.

The film features two women impatient for a change. One, the treasurer of her multi-generational family farm corporation, describes her business and how dependent she is on the workers, whose skill and motivation she admires. The second woman, who came from Mexico nearly 20 years ago, is a supervisor in a processing plant and active in her church; she is recognized for her leadership ability, but without documents her contribution to her community is limited and her children’s educational opportunities are uncertain.

Captioned “Apple Forecast: Immigration Reform”, the film is only five minutes long, so that busy people, particularly policy makers, will have time to look and listen. The film is meant to be used as a conversation tool. Most importantly, it is meant to reach out to people who might understand immigration reform better through this new lens, who can understand the crisis that current policies have created for everyone by the stories of this small farmer and her valued workers.