WORKING TOWARD FOOD JUSTICE MUST INCLUDE IDENTIFYING OUR RELIANCE ON IMMIGRANTS AS AN ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT IN THE FOOD ON OUR PLATES.
Moving to towns nearby to labor inside meat factories and produce fields, becoming part of a growing international labor movement of people and produce fields, was one way I could fight the trend toward “getting big or getting out.”

Since I left farming, food has further globalized. The two worlds of “local” and “international” collided one day when I desperately sought part-time help on my farm. Five men from the state of Nayarit, Mexico arrived in my driveway, said they wanted work, and I hired them. They had left their own sunny corn and tobacco fields to work in a windowless, frigid room, forced to work 12 hours a day. With their help, I was able to transform my farm. Five men from the state of Nayarit, Mexico arrived in my driveway, said they wanted work, and I hired them. They had left their own sunny corn and tobacco fields to work in a windowless, frigid room, forced to work 12 hours a day. With their help, I was able to transform my farm.  

Above all, they taught me about the human suffering that remains hidden in our food. We have done a fair amount of highlighting food workers’ rights. Even as mainstream agriculture reaped profits, we see it.

Charles D. Thompson, Jr.
Professor of the Practice of Cultural Anthropology
and Documentary Studies

Charles Thompson began researching food and agriculture in college. Growing up in Appalachia, a place where too many rural people – ostensibly people living close to land – have lacked good nutrition for generations, he was drawn to help remedy the problem.

For a farm loan for myself, thinking that by going through corporate consolidation continue marching across the globe, displacing millions of people. For the time being, Americans eat well because immigrants who are working at the dinner on their plates – perhaps in prayer or contemplation, as we sometimes do – and ask how Borders are tied to eating, even for the enlightened consumers who care deeply about food origins.  

And though I supplied niche markets in Chapel Hill and Durham, huge numbers of immigrants were coming here to work for factory farms. Even as mainstream agriculture reaped profits, we see it.

Charles Thompson credits his stints as a community organizer and farmer with forming the “deep questions” that took him back to academia.

He moved to Chapel Hill, where he earned his PhD in cultural anthropology and religious studies. In 2003, he became the Education Director at the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke, where he teaches about farm work, immigration, and the politics of food. Thompson is also appointed as Professor of the Practice in Cultural Anthropology and Documentary Studies.