

PHOTO ESSAY

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*Photographs and text by Joshua Dudley Greer*







IMMOKALEE, FLORIDA, IS A PLACE OF POLARITIES. Located near some of the wealthiest areas in south Florida, this tiny agricultural town has a median household income of just \$23,000. Much of the town feels passed over and derelict, while the neighboring casino overflows with eager gamblers and bused-in tourists. Very few residents have college degrees, and only about 35 percent will ever graduate high school. Football is seen as a way out for some: Four players from Immokalee High School have made their way to the NFL in recent years. But for most people, Immokalee is about the fields.

During the harvest season, the population of Immokalee swells to more than double its permanent size thanks to an influx of migrant workers who come to pick watermelons, cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes, and—of course—oranges. These workers have come from places like



Mexico, Haiti, and Guatemala, but they will not stay long. Despite the fact that Florida's agricultural industry produces nearly \$104 billion in revenue each year, a stable income eludes the men and women working the fields and manning the packing facilities. So these new Americans must go from state to state, traveling with the harvest in the hopes of creating a better life. For them, Immokalee is just one place like many others: It is not the destination, it is a point on the way to something else. ☹

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EDITOR'S NOTE: *For a look at the important work that the Coalition of Immokalee Workers does on behalf of farmworkers, watch the film Food Chains, out this fall.*

