



# COVID-19 in Immokalee, FL

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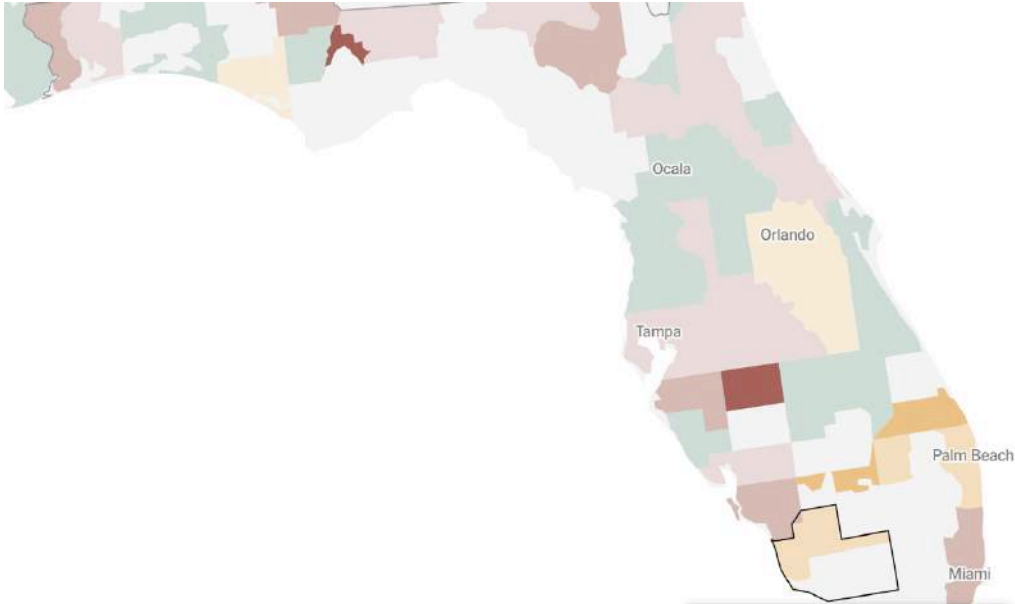
# The Problem

The outbreak of COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted racial and ethnic minority, largely Central American with some Haitian, farmworkers in Immokalee, Florida. Immokalee is an agricultural community within Collier County in Florida and produces the bulk of the nation's tomatoes during the winter season.

Farmworkers were designated as “essential workers” by the government and therefore had to work on the frontlines during the pandemic. However, the farmworkers remain disadvantaged in the fight for access to healthcare, childcare, and other essential benefits, arising from various legal, political, economic, historical, and social regimes.

# COVID-19 in Florida/Collier County

(Source: New York Times, Data Accurate Through March 28, 2020)



**Collier County, Fla.** 969 cases

	CASES	CASES PER 10,000
WHITE	310	13
BLACK	57	23
HISPANIC	416	39

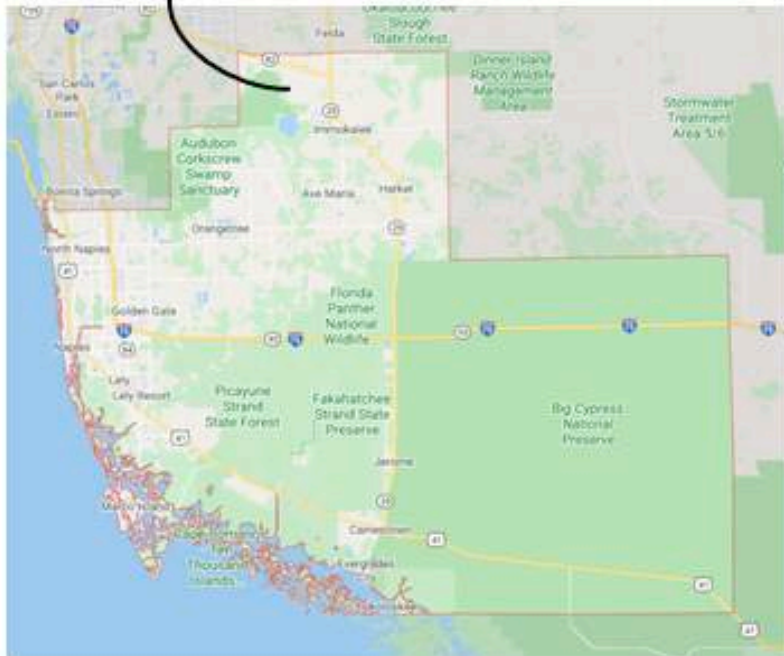
81% of cases have race or ethnicity data

# Our Process

1. Examine the extensive work done on labor and immigration legal regimes in Immokalee
2. Go beyond the field to embed this work to within the context of Immokalee's status as an unincorporated place and a care nexus of family support services (e.g. how would care Immokalee be different if CIW was a formal union that bargained collectively for healthcare coverage)
3. Apply our preliminary examination of Immokalee's historical context to the present day COVID-19 pandemic outcomes

# IMMOKALEE, FLA

□ Rural unincorporated community in Eastern Collier County



## Immokalee in Numbers

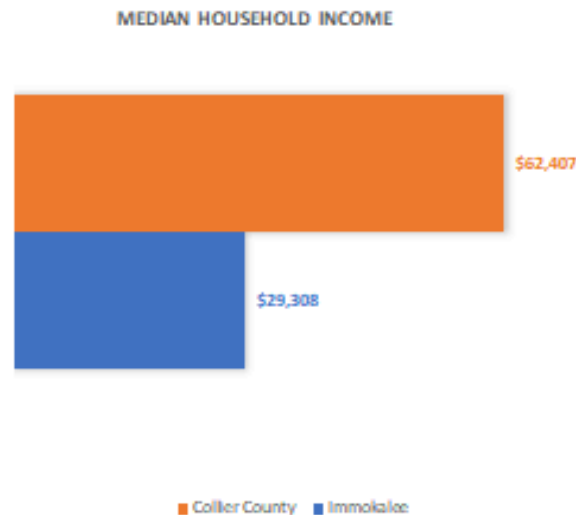
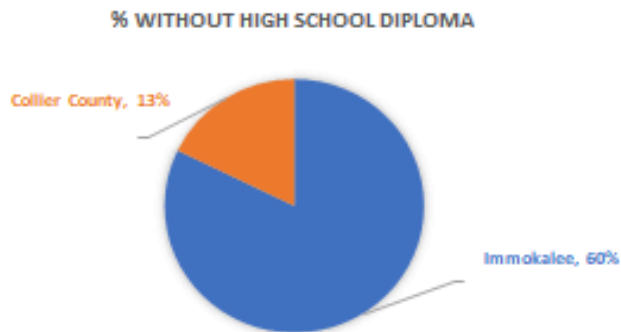
Total Population	33,937 (2018)
U.S. Citizens	63%
Non-Citizens	46%
Unauthorized	37% (2017)
Ethnicity	
Hispanic or Latino	72%
Non-Hispanic or Latino	28%

## Collier County in Numbers

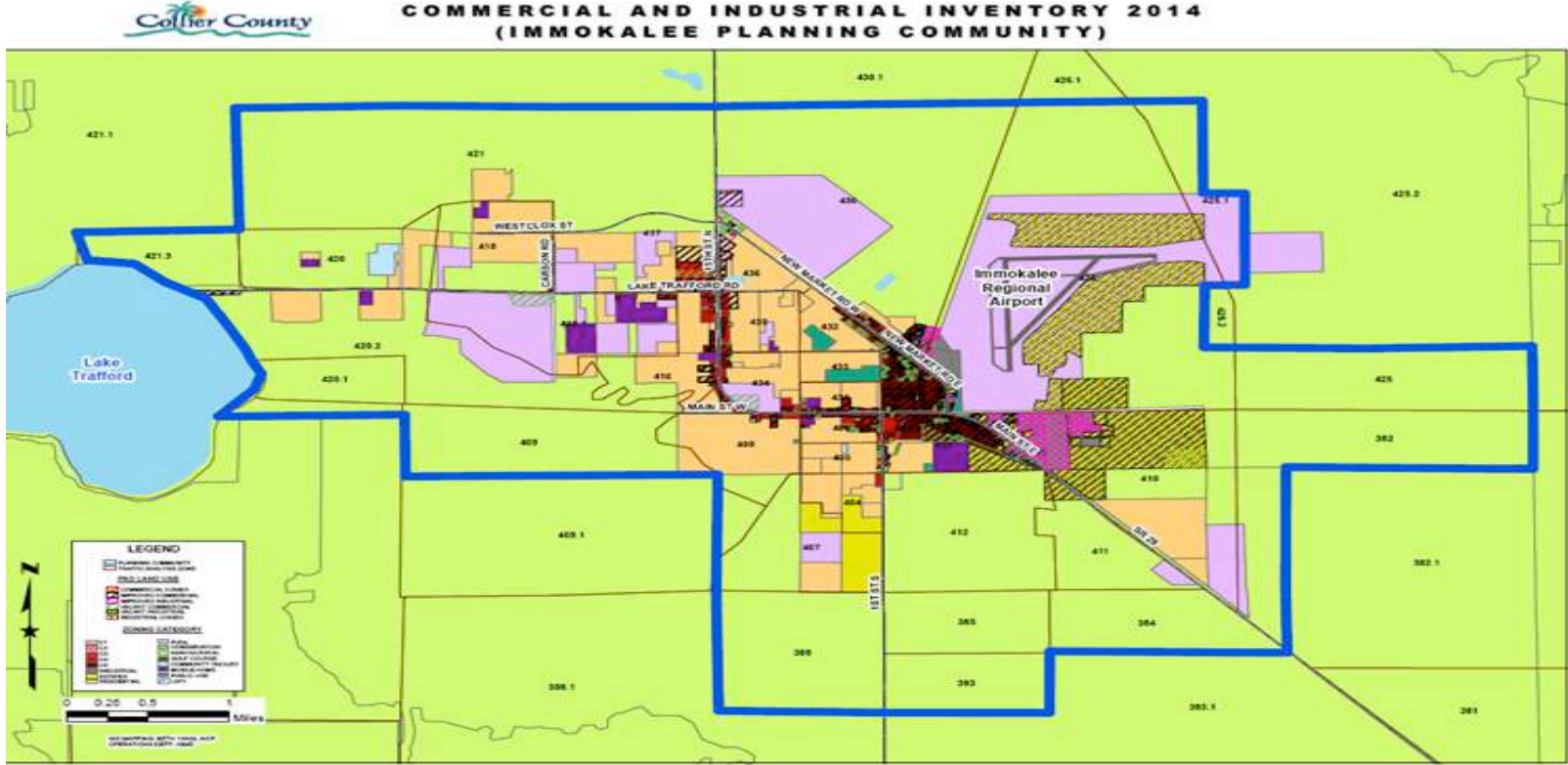
Total Population	365,657 (2018)
U.S. Citizens	83%
Non-Citizens	24%
Unauthorized	14% (2017)
Ethnicity	
Hispanic or Latino	27%
Non-Hispanic or Latino	73%

## Agriculture in Immokalee

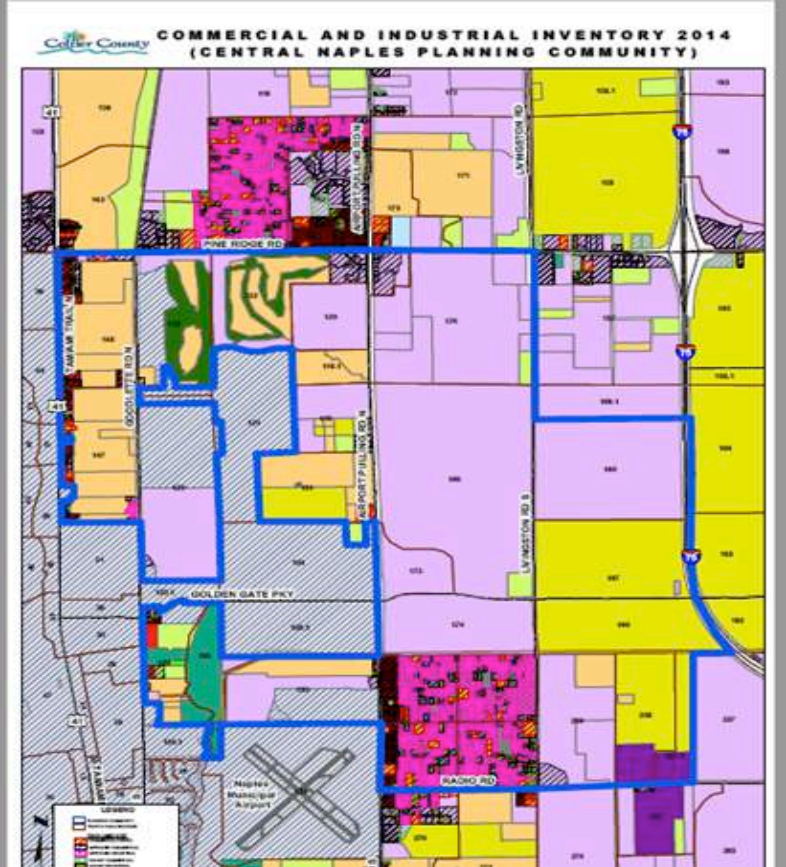
- Agriculture in Immokalee contributes significantly to state and national economy but does not translate to wealth or contribute to well being of workers because of exploitation and segregation of farm workers



# Scope & Coverage of Agriculture In Immokalee



# Compared with other areas in Collier County: Naples & Marco Island





## Basis for Exploitation in Immokalee

- Agriculture and Low-cost immigrant labor shaped Immokalee
  - Agriculture is the largest single industry in Immokalee

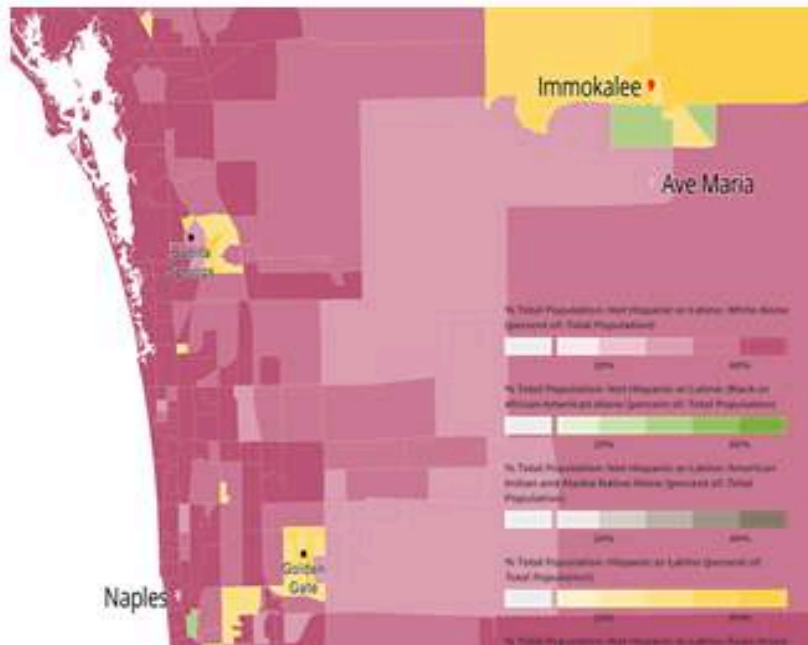
	Immokalee	Collier County
Agricultural employment	47%	3.3%
Agricultural earnings	\$29,771	\$43,269

- Availability of non-union low-waged labor force
  - Immigrant
  - Undocumented
  - Race/ethnicity

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# However,

- A large statistical and racial discrepancy exists between Immokalee and other areas in Collier County.
- Inequities persist until this day
  - Demography: Hispanic/Latino/Caribbean vs. white
  - Segregation: Strong history of segregation (living arrangements)
  - Class: Rich vs. poor (household income). Whites in neighboring areas enjoy greater prosperity than other racial and ethnic groups within the county.
- All of these concentrates' exposure during COVID because most farmworkers are undocumented, poor, uneducated and live in substandard dwellings. Hence, they are unable to access basic services that promote their well-being.
- As such, the social and health determinants of farm worker well-being (healthcare access, insurance coverage, childcare support services) remains neglected or ignored.



# Existing Interpretations

- Social justice activism led by CIW
  - Advocates the self organization of farm workers over unfair and exploitative labor conditions on farms, housing standards, and access to public health and educational services for farm workers
  - Through innovative socio-legal strategies



# Stakeholder Mapping: An Overview



“Taco Bell makes farmworkers poor”

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers used a theory of stakeholders in the corporate agricultural supply chain as the basis for their advocacy strategy.

- 1) Corporate retail “megabrands”
- 2) Growers
- 3) Farmworkers

# Stakeholder Mapping: Consumers



By leveraging consumers through campaigning and providing information, pressure can be placed upon corporate megabrands.

College students were a notable subsection of this stakeholder group -- a Taco Bell corporate strategy was expanding into college campuses, an effort stunted by student protests.

# Stakeholder Mapping: Farmworkers



Through a focus on education, farmworkers leveraged their numbers as stakeholders in establishing new standards via the Fair Food Program. This Worker-Driven Social Responsibility is an example of shifting power among stakeholders to achieve desired change

# Stakeholder Mapping: Legal and Policy Gaps

- Labor Law
- Health Care
- Immigration Law
- Government Structure of Immokalee and Collier County
- Community members of Immokalee region
- Federal enforcement of labor conditions

# Immigration



Immokalee is a major destination for immigrants from Mexico, Central America and Haiti. Most immigrants to Immokalee are undocumented or hold Temporary Protected Status.

Undocumented immigrants are typically economic or social refugees and TPS recipients are, by definition, fleeing natural disasters or war.

ICE maintains random checkpoints to attempt to capture undocumented immigrants, and cooperates closely with the Collier County Sheriff's office, which oversees public safety in Immokalee.

Undocumented and TPS immigrants are thereby the most desperate for work, allowing growers to offer low wages and little protections.





# Labor

Farmworkers are excluded from important New Deal reforms such as the National Labor Relations Act

Florida has not recognized the protection of farmworkers from Unfair Labor Practices which inhibit organizing and enhance the power of the growers and purchasers at the expense of the workers.

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers has shown that the WSR model is successful at addressing human rights issues, but WSR model has limitations in responding to



Farmworkers on the bus to work. These buses have been identified as a major vector for the spread of COVID-19



CIW members on Hunger Strike outside Publix's shareholder meeting

# Municipal/State Law and Unincorporation

Administered by Collier County, which is generally much Wealthier and Whiter than Immokalee

Inefficient Federal and State Housing Programs

Community is at the mercy of the Florida State Department of Health

Fair Food Program Provides a Semblance of Law Enforcement

There is a current campaign for incorporation, but it is led by the Immokalee Chamber of Commerce

What would be different if Immokalee had been a city for decades and there was Municipal Infrastructure in place for COVID? about worker led incorporation in the Future?



# Health Care -

## Traditional explanations to the limited access to Health Services

- The **Lack of handwashing** stations and sanitizers
- The severe **crowdedness of housing and transportation**
- **No hospital** or emergency room in Immokalee
- A concern of losing a day at work, the **unavailability** of sick leaves
- Uninsured or Underinsured Population



# Health Care - Primary Care Providers During Covid-19

The Health Care Network of  
Southwest Florida and the  
Department of Health

The CIW and the MSF

Growers



# Health Care

**Compliance and Noncompliance**

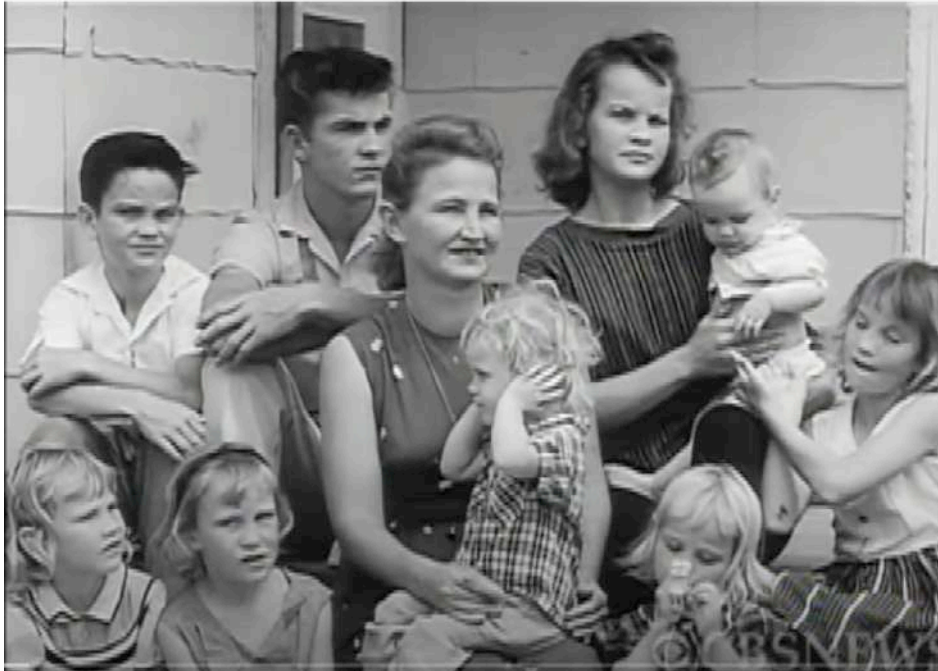
**Enforcement Vacuum (only a limited authority under the MSPA)**

**Fear of Interacting with the Authorities**

**Poor communication and traceability issues**

**The characteristics of rental leasing agreements**

# Other Dimensions of Care



**The care/ Work Dilemma**


**The Redlands Christian  
Migrant Association (RCMA)  
and other care providers  
during the pandemic**

**The Gendered distribution of  
vulnerability**

# Conclusion

The stark inequalities in Immokalee farms and within the care nexus, which existed long before COVID, have exacerbated the COVID-19 outbreak in Southwestern Florida, especially for Latinx and Haitian workers. We hoped to develop an analysis that would shed more light on:

- (1) organizational tactics: the power of structural methods in a time of crisis
- (2) stakeholder power: the interplay between farmworkers and growers, governmental agencies, local and transnational nonprofits, and market actors.
- (3) The legal regimes that shape the terrain for all these interactions: we tried both to deepen our understanding of “the immediate suspect” regimes (such as health care, immigration, and to suggest new drivers (such as municipal law, housing)



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