

P.J. PALMER

*Francisco, a migrant worker
living in Weedpatch, California, 2013*
single frame 1:85:1, digital capture



courtesy: National Steinbeck Center and (twenty)2 films

Tom Joad's Never Going to Die

DIRECTOR: P.J. Palmer

INTERVIEWEE: Jorge Gillon

LOCATION: Weedpatch Camp, California

My name is Jorge Gillon. I am an artist, um, poet, a couple classes away from graduating with a BA in U.S. history from Cal State. So, come spring, I'll graduate.

I was born in Bakersfield, and lived in the Weedpatch field my whole life.

I got a couple paintings in Fresno, and in Pasadena down in L.A., and some in here locally in Bakersfield.

I do a lot of spoken word locally, and sometimes I get a chance to go to Visalia with some friends, or Fresno.

I'm a product of amnesty. In 1986, when my parents were granted amnesty, I was allowed to stay. I mean, never answering the phone, or being afraid that my parents weren't going to come back or whatnot because of La Migra. You know, that was a constant thing, growing up as a little one: not understanding what La Migra was, but that La Migra would take them away, you know.

My parents, they are farm laborers. They picked guavas for Sunview Vineyards, and when the season was over, they transferred over and did pruning, or "lobata," as they called it, where they set up the grapevines for next year so the fruit could grow for next year. So, it was almost like a year-round thing. They went from harvesting to pruning and, I guess, the gardening aspect of the grapes.

When I was like three, I remember picking onions just right outside of Lamont, and I got sick, I got a fever. I guess I was working too hard. I mean, fuck, you don't know; at three years old you don't know.

I remember third and fourth grade, not being able to pick, but we would set out the paper for the raisins, because raisins are literally dried by the sun and we would put clods of dirt on each of the four corners of the paper and do the whole circle. I used to not like it. In fourth grade, you know, going into fourth-grade year, kids are like, "I can't wait till summer," and I'm like, "Naw, man, I'm gonna go to the fields." Some kids, not all kids, had to do it.

The original Sunset Camp, that was torn down. There wasn't the need to preserve anything, about the whole thing, because, you know, you have these people who are in charge and have absolutely no connection to the decisions being made that affect other people.

The last renovation that happened cut all ties off from Tejas, and all the people from Nuevo Leon, and now you have people from Coachella, and Indio, and Arizona