

Santiago Rafael Remembrance



Santiago Rafael Cruz
1977-2007

Santiago Rafael Cruz was born into a farming family in Oaxaca México. His family lost their farm when they could not compete with American corn flooding into México after NAFTA, and resettled in Puebla and Mexico City. Some members came North to the U.S. to find ways to support the family, and Santiago wound up in Toledo Ohio.

Santiago encountered the Farm Labor Organizing Committee AFL-CIO and its struggle for the rights of immigrant workers. Soon he was involved in FLOC activities, and became a staff field organizer. He worked on a number of FLOC efforts and campaigns in Ohio and North Carolina. He also was one of the original members that founded Grupo Avanzando, a FLOC Associate Member leadership group in Toledo that has organized activities in support of FLOC and immigrant rights.

In February 2007, Santiago joined the staff of the FLOC office in Monterrey México. His job involved helping H2A "guest workers" going North to work under FLOC contracts. His work involved helping members with the visa processing process, investigating and helping resolve problems through inquiries, grievances, and referrals, and managing the office administration. He was staying in a room in the office while looking for permanent housing.

In the early morning of April 9 2007, a friend passed the FLOC office and noticed the door ajar and blood on the floor and walls. Santiago was found tied up, tortured, and beaten to death.

FLOC leaders, staff, members, and supporters who have worked with Santiago know him as a cheerful person concerned with the human and working rights of immigrants. We are all shocked and devastated by his vicious murder. But this brutal act will not intimidate FLOC into abandoning our operations in Mexico. Rather, Santiago's years of service defending the rights of fellow Mexicans who work the fields in the United States and Mexico will not be forgotten and will not be in vain as we continue the struggle for justice.

We are grateful to have many friends and allies supporting us in this sad struggle for justice. Leaders from labor, human rights organizations, national and local governments, religious communities, and many other groups have stepped in to call for a thorough and open investigation to bring Santiago's murderers to justice. We have received thousands of calls and messages expressing shock and sympathy over Santiago's murder. We greatly appreciate your support and efforts on behalf of Santiago and FLOC. This is a hard time for us, and knowing many friends stand with us in solidarity provides some comfort.



FLOC President Baldemar Velásquez announces that the office in Monterrey will be named the *Santiago Rafael Cruz Justice Center*

Remembrance services for Santiago have been held in Monterrey, North Carolina, and Ohio. In these services, colleagues and friends have commented on how Santiago had a lasting impact on their lives. Almost everyone commented on Santiago's positive manner, his smile, and his laugh. Several immigrants said that when they first came to the area they didn't know anyone, but Santiago made them feel welcome. One said, "It is because of him that I'm now involved with FLOC". Some said that they will always carry something of Santiago in their hearts, that the circle of friends is forever... and that they carry faith and hope for Santiago in his new life.

FLOC President Baldemar Velásquez expressed gratitude for what Santiago has given us, and announced that the office in Monterrey will be named the SANTIAGO RAFAEL CRUZ JUSTICE CENTER. He said that Santiago's presence is bigger than all of us, that this Center will be there for all to see, an ongoing reminder to FLOC members, FLOC supporters, and even to Santiago's murderers that we will always be here in the struggle for justice. He called on those who believe in justice to step up like Santiago did, that maybe tomorrow we won't be here and there will be no more chance to say anything. "We will not let the world forget."

Santiago Rafael Cruz presente!