

## Gabriela Quintanilla



Gabriela Quintanilla has been at the forefront of the struggle for the rights of the undocumented and farmworkers, since shortly after she made the arduous journey, at age 13, from El Salvador to upstate New York, to reunite with her mother. Not long after arriving, she was able to participate in youth empowerment and arts workshops at a regional nonprofit, the Rural & Migrant Ministry, and was quickly recognized for her leadership abilities. While in high school, she traveled widely to speak to community and religious organizations, students, and political leaders, sharing the hardships that face undocumented workers and students.

While a Sociology major at SUNY Stony Brook, Gabriela was inspired by the Coalition for Immokalee Workers, and joined the steering committee of the Student Farmworker Alliance. Their “bottom up” organizing approach became the foundation of her social justice activism. Gabriela started a new organization, Adelante Student Voices, to empower, educate, and provide a network of support for undocumented students. In 2013, she was featured in two documentaries: *Paper State: Undocumented, Unafraid, Undeterred*, which won “Best Student Documentary” at the Cannes Film Festival, and, *Dreamers Among Us*.

After college, Gabriela became the Western New York Coordinator of the Rural & Migrant Ministry. She trains staff and volunteers, oversees the youth programs and Worker Education Center, as well as focusing on public policy affecting immigrant workers. She played a major role in the passage of the historic New York Farmworker Fair Labor Practices Act in 2019. She met with politicians, organized rallies and trained workers and allies to lobby.

One of her recommenders said, “Gabriela is a force. She is one of a kind. Her academic work was extremely impressive and her intellect and analytical skills rather striking ... more [like] a graduate student...in her second year. [She] won the prestigious *Tepper Award for Public Sociology*. Never before have we given the honor to someone so early in their time at Stony Brook. I can only imagine the ways in which her work and her life will impact countless others...”

Recently, Gabriela’s online plea for face masks for farmworkers was picked up by U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez—and 5,000 masks poured in from around the country. This is the solidarity that fuels her passion for the struggles ahead!