

# Farm Worker Commemoration

# 50<sup>th</sup>



1966 - 2016

## Anniversary

Starr County Melon Strike and March

*Join us in  
remembering  
the sacrifices  
of those who  
dared to stand  
up for better  
working  
conditions  
and wages.  
The fight is  
not over.*



**Severo  
Benavidez**



## 1966 Rio Grande City Melon Strike



Nosotros en el movimiento de los Campesinos, fundado por nuestros líderes Cesar Chavez y Dolores Huerta, estamos orgullosos de este evento histórico de la Union. Celebramos los 50 años con ustedes. Esperamos que este movimiento nunca se acabe en Tejas. Si, Se Puede!

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# Huelguistas y Peregrinos de la marcha de 1966

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Juan Alaniz	Ismael Diaz	Guadalupe Juarez	Gabriela Rosa
Manuel Alaniz	Olga Diaz	Jesus Laurel†	Juan Rosa
Petra Alaniz	Ubaldo Diaz	Constancia Lopez†	Ma Guadalupe Saenz†
Reyes Alaniz†	Magdaleno Dimas	Eluterio Lopez	Viviana Segovia†
Daria G. Arredondo†	Pedro Dimas	Elvira Lopez	Dolores Serna
Domingo Arredondo	Ofelia Escobar	Leonel Lopez	Jose Serna†
Juanita Arredondo†	Albina Garcia†	Pedro Lopez†	Jose Serna, Jr.
Luis Arredondo	Agapita Garcia	Sebastiana Lopez†	Augustine Serratos†
Roberto Arredondo†	Antonia Garcia	Vidal Lopez†	Gregoria Soliz†
Donato Bazan†	Belinda Garcia †	Benjamin Luna	Margarita Swam
Natividad Bazan	Elida Garcia	Tomasa Mejorado	Benito Trevino†
Nicolas Bazan	Gloria Garcia	Consuelo Mendez	Dario Trevino†
Roel Bazan	Graciela Garcia	Pedro Mendez†	Graciela Trevino
Ruben Bazan†	Juan Garcia	Eva Mendozat	Herminia Trevino
Virginia Benavides	Baldemar Garza†	Librada Mendoza	Maria Elena Trevino
Genoveva Benavides	Carlos Garza	Manuela Mireles	Nasario Trevino†
Juliana Benavides	Dora Vela Garza	Irene Morales	Rafael Trevino†
Severo Benavides†	Eluteria Garza	Emma Morin†	Victoria Trevino
Noelia Benitez	Gilberto Garza	Guadalupe Morin†	Elodia Valadez†
Simon Calvillo†	Herlinda Garza†	Pedro Morin†	Victor Valadez†
Efrain Carrera	Leonor Garza†	Ramona Olivarez†	Chris Valencia
Horacio Carrillo	Luciano Garza	Luz V. Orta†	Cipriana Valencia
Lorenzo Casas	Luis Garza	Zoila Ozuna†	Fernando Valencia
Florencio DeLaCruz†	Matilde Garza†	Maximiliano Perez	Juana Valverde †
Guillermo DeLaCruz†	Noelia Garza	Belinda Reyes	Gloria Vera
Librado DeLaCruz	San Juana Garza	Lile Rios†	Mario Vera†
Octavio DeLaCruz†	Sra. Gomez	Anita Rivera	Gregoria Villarreal
Pablo DeLaCruz†	Eugenio Gonzales†	Antonio Rivera	Julia Ana Villarreal
Reynaldo DeLaCruz†	Guadalupe Guzman	Benito Rodriguez	
Serapio DeLaCruz	Jose Herrera	Anita Rosa	

# 50th Anniversary Celebration to Commemorate the 1966 Starr County Farm Worker Strike and March Through San Antonio and on to Austin

On Sunday, September 11, the **United Farm Workers** will hold a rally in **Austin** and march to the capitol, commemorating the 1966 farm worker melon strike in **Rio Grande City** and the farm laborers' historic 400-mile march 50 years ago, demanding a minimum wage of \$1.25/hour. The march began in **Rio Grande City** on July 1, 1966 and culminated in a march from **St. Edward's University** to the Capitol building on Labor Day, September 5, 1966.

There are a series of 50-year commemorative events of the 1966 strike and march to **Austin** taking place around the original march route. The events started on June 1, 2016, in **Rio Grande City** with some of the original marchers and melon strikers, who are advanced in age. There will be events in **Corpus Christi** on Sunday, July 31 (old City Hall Park, 1:00-3:00pm); and in **San Antonio** at **San Fernando Cathedral**, on Labor Day, September 5, in **Edinburg** at the City Auditorium on Friday, September 9, and in **Austin**, on Sunday, September 11.

One of the main **Austin** events will be the dedication of a commemorative memorial in the **Ragsdale Center** at **St. Edward's University**, which was the rallying point for the last night of the 1966 march from the Valley. The following day, Labor Day, about 10,000-15,000 people marched from **St. Edward's** to the Capitol. The memorial will be on a main wall in the **Ragsdale Center**, along the first-floor corridor that students use all the time. The memorial will be dedicated on Sunday, September 11, at noon. A program of informative talks and music will follow in the university plaza. At 1:00pm, a commemorative march to the Capitol will begin, culminating in a rally at the Capitol at 4:00pm. For further information, please call **Jim Harrington** in **Austin** (512.771.1759) or **Rebecca Flores** in **San Antonio** (210.842.9502).

El domingo, 11 de septiembre, la **Union de Campesinos de America** celebrará una junta general en **Austin, Texas** con una marcha al capitolio, conmemorando la huelga del melon en 1966 en la ciudad de **Río Grande**, y la marcha histórico" de 400 millas de hace 50 años, exigiendo un salario mínimo de \$1.25/hora. La marcha comenzó en la ciudad de **Río Grande**, el 1 de julio de 1966 y culminó en una marcha desde la **Universidad St. Edward** hasta el edificio del Capitolio en el Día del Trabajo, 5 de septiembre de 1966.

Hay una serie de eventos conmemorativos de 50 años de la huelga de 1966 y de marzo a **Austin** teniendo lugar alrededor de la ruta original de marcha. Los acontecimientos comenzaron el 1 de junio de 2016, en la ciudad de **Río Grande**, con algunos de los manifestantes y original melón huelguistas, que están en edad avanzada. Habrá eventos en **Corpus Christi** el domingo, 31 de julio (Old City Hall Park, 1:00-3:00pm); y en **San Antonio**, en la **Catedral San Fernando**, el Día del Trabajo, 5 de septiembre, en **Edinburg** en el auditorio de la ciudad el Viernes, 9 de Septiembre y en **Austin**, el domingo, 11 de septiembre.

Uno de los principales eventos de **Austin** será la dedicación de un monumento conmemorativo en el centro **Ragsdale** en **St. Edward's University**, que fue el punto de partida para la última noche del 1966 marzo del valle. Al día siguiente, el Día del Trabajo, unos 10.000-15.000 personas marcharon desde **St. Edward's** al Capitolio. El monumento estará en una pared principal en el centro de **Ragsdale**, a lo largo del pasillo del primer piso que los estudiantes utilizan todo el tiempo. El memorial estará dedicado el domingo, 11 de septiembre a las 12.00 horas. Un programa de charlas informativas y música seguirá en la plaza Universidad. A las 1:00pm, una marcha conmemorativa al Capitolio comenzará, culminando en un mitin en el Capitolio a las 4:00pm. Para más información, por favor llame a **Jim Harrington** en **Austin** (512.771.1759) o **Rebecca Flores** en **San Antonio** (210.842.9502).

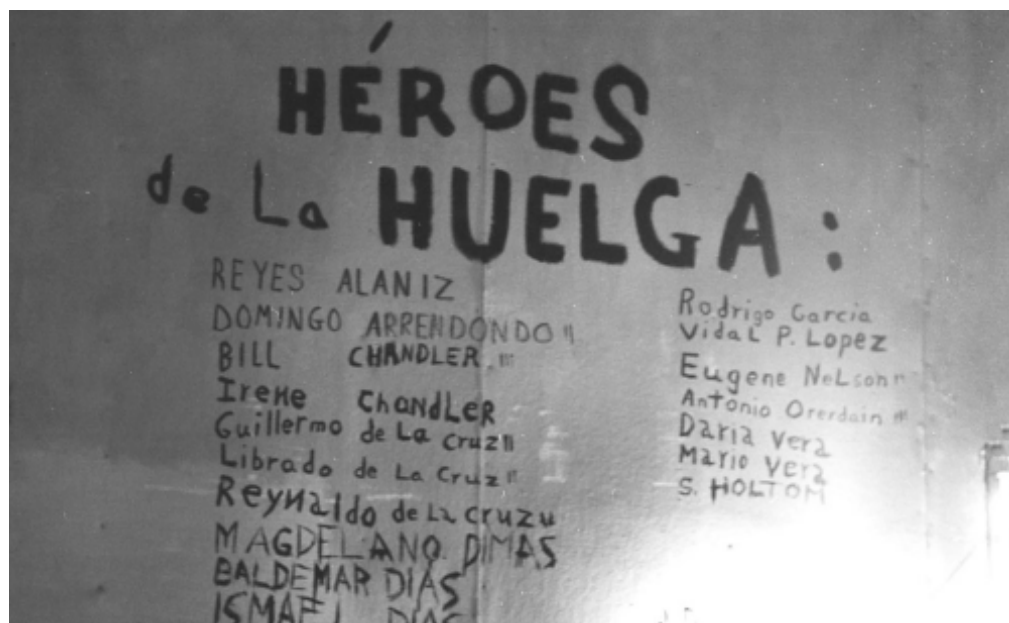
# Photo Spread of 1966 March



ABOVE: Ernie Cortez, Max Perez & Domingo Arredondo

BELOW: Fr Henry Casso





# RIO GRANDE CITY – THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE FARM WORKER MOVEMENT IN TEXAS, 1966

In the 1960 US Census, **Starr County** was ranked as the poorest in the state of **Texas** and 17<sup>th</sup> poorest in the US. Average per capita income in 1960 was \$534.

One third of the **Starr County** residents had annual incomes under \$1000. 70% earned less than \$3000. Most of the residents of **Starr County** and of the lower **Rio Grande Valley** began their migration to work in other states in March and would return in October. Many of these migrants worked in the fields in **California**. Those residents who remained harvested melons beginning in mid April through mid June. The majority of the farm workers worked for 6 major growers in **Starr County** and wages ranged from 40cents an hour to a high of 85 cents/hr.

## In 1965, the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) under the leadership of . . . .

In 1965, the **National Farm Workers Association** (NFWA) under the leadership of **Cesar Chavez** and **Dolores Huerta** called for a strike against the grape industry in **Delano, California** and began a consumer boycott of grapes sending staff around the country. **Eugene Nelson** was assigned to **Houston, Texas**.

When **Starr County** farm workers learned of the UFW staff in **Houston**, they asked **Nelson** to meet with them and soon after his arrival in April, formed the **Independent Workers Association** (IWA). 700 farm workers had signed authorization cards asking the **IWA** to represent them. 400

workers voted to go on strike against melon growers **La Casita, Los Puertos Plantation, Starr Produce,** and **Sun-Texas** on June 1, 1966. Over 80% of the work force quit the first day, every packing shed in the county was shut down. The **Mexican Confederacion de Trabajadores Mexicanos** (CTM) put up a picket line on the Mexican side. And strikers would stand beside the buses from **La Casita Farms** at the **Roma Bridge** trying to cajole workers out of going to work.

## The First Day of the Strike - June 1st.

State and local law enforcement officials were hired by the growers to bust the unionizing effort. **Randall Nye, Starr County** prosecutor was also the attorney for **Starr Farms. Texas Ranger Jerome Preiss** arrived on the first day of the strike on June 1, and immediately arrested **Eugene Nelson** for “inciting a riot” later changed to disturbing the peace and **Nelson** was jailed overnight. His bond was set at \$100.

**June 2.** Harassment continued on the second night, a county jeep sprayed a pesticide on the people at a rally being held at the **San Juan Plaza** in **Rio Grande City, Ismael Diaz** tried to stop the spraying and his hands suffered burns from the chemical.

Most of the strikers being Catholics were greatly heartened when Fathers

**Sherrill Smith** and **William Killian** marched with them to **Garciasville** for a mass. **Rev. Alford** of the **National Council of Churches, Rev. Leo Nieto, Tx Council of Churches, Father John McCarthy** of **Houston, Father Henry Casso**, Executive Secretary of the **San Antonio Bishops Committee for the Spanish Speaking**, were present during the strike in June 1966.

In Mid June, the melon season ended, and the farm workers saw the escalation of violence by law enforcement and decided to force attention to their problems, “*We must let the world know.*”

## On July 4, 1966 100 persons trudged east from Rio Grande City on a five day march . .

On July 4, they let the world know of their deprivation of long standing, through a peaceful march to **San Juan Shrine of Our Lady of San Juan. Bishop Humberto Medeiros** greeted the workers in **San Juan** and held a special mass for them in the Shrine. On July 4, 1966 100 persons trudged east from **Rio Grande City** on a five day march, planning to average about 10 miles a day to reach **San Juan**.

It was after the mass at **San Juan Shrine** on July 8 that the union decided to continue their march to

**Austin’s State Capitol. Eugene Nelson, Rev. Navarro** and **Father Gonzalez** agreed to march with the farm workers from **San Juan** to **Austin. Father Lawrence Peguero** of **Houston** permitted the farm workers to use his green and white bus. The number of marchers varied from about 15 to about 70 and were joined for short stretches along the road by local people. Eight adults and two young girls, walked all the way from **Rio Grande City** to **Austin. Jesus Laurel**, 44 of **Rio Grande City**, born at **Los Laureles** in **Starr County; Reyes Alaniz**, 62 of **Garceno; Señora Elvira Lopez**, 55 of **Rio Grande City**, lived at **La Casita Farms; Señora Gregoria Ramirez Villarreal**, 41 of **La Joya; Candido Rosa**, 34 of **Garceño**, worked in **Los Puertos; Julia Ana Ramirez**, 24, **La Joya; Valdemar Garza**, 29, **Rio Grande City; Roberto Arredondo**, 26, **Rio Grande City, Herminia** and **Graciela Treviño**, both in their teens, daughters of **Benito Treviño**.

## Although the march was to let the world know about the Strike for Wages . . .

Although the march was to let the world know about the Strike for Wages and Recognition of their union by the grower, it evolved to include a demand for a **Texas** minimum wage of \$1.25. To gain public and political support, the route taken was through most of the towns and villages throughout **South Texas**. As they went from town to town, the community, and their elected officials came out to support the effort.

In **Edinburg, Mayor Al Ramirez** greeted them and endorsed their effort while on a gurney. **Rev. Navarro**, the **Baptist** pastor who led the marchers said of the march: “*Turning point was the arrival, outside of Edinburg, of an ambulance bearing Mayor Al Ramirez who had come to greet them.*”

Union leader **Franklin Garcia**, with 1000 members in a meatcutters local in **Brownsville** endorsed the strike and pledged assistance. The Executive board of the **Texas AFL CIO** called for a boycott of **La Casita** farm products.

**July 22.** The newspaper, **Falfurrias FACT**, reported that on Wednesday,



# RIO GRANDE CITY – THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE FARM WORKER MOVEMENT IN TEXAS, 1966

July 22, “the marchers were brought into town to purchase new shoes and boots at the **Family Shoe Store** operated by **Mrs. Frank Mendoza**. Eighteen pairs of shoes were purchased.” They had just completed 100 miles of their journey. In **Falfurrias**, the **Catholic Church** held a Friday rally at the **Knights of Columbus Hall** with **Bob Sanchez** of **McAllen** and **Former State Rep Gregg Montoya** of **Edinburg**. Progress was slow along the hot roadside with temperatures reading near the hundred mark

**July 27.** In **Kingsville, Texas** **A&I** students had a rally, and the **King Ranch** cowboys served them a good lunch under large tents inside the gates of the ranch.

**At Kingsville, the marchers number were swelled to 200 by area people.**

**At Kingsville**, the marchers number were swelled to 200 by area people. Another lift came with the addition of a burro, dubbed 1.25. Outside **Bishop**,

**Texas**, 20 cotton pickers left their cotton sacks and joined them marching for a mile.

**July 30.** In **Corpus Christi, Bishop Drury** held a mass at the Cathedral. The March into **Corpus Christi** was from the Church at **Violet** to the **Cathedral of Corpus Christi**. Fifty farm workers from **Rio Grande City** walked on **Highway 44**, one was **Severito Benavdes**, 73, riding mostly, but walking some of the way. **Steelworkers, Teamster, Electrical Workers** joined the march.

**Moses Leroy** of the **Houston, NAACP**, said, “This is the greatest thing that has ever happened in a generation. It is a tragedy that we live in a state with the resources we have, in a **Great Society** that our great leader **Lyndon Johnson** has advocated, and we make less than \$1.25 an hour.” Marchers went to **Steelworkers** hall for a stop of soda water. The reception in **Corpus Christi** was quiet and mild. At some junctures there were small crowds who cheered. Columns of marchers had stretched out until it was several blocks long. The **Cathedral of Corpus Christi** was about half filled for the services to be conducted for the marchers by **Bishop Drury** who gave them a total endorsement.

Saturday night’s rally in **Corpus Christi** was attended by 800.

**Aug 23.** In **Floresville**, a sleepy little place that was **Gov John Connally’s** home town, not a single city or county official attended. The marchers arrived 30 to 50 strong. When they arrived perhaps 300 or 400 people in all were on the street or on the courthouse lawn. The **Catholic** and one **Methodist** church were the only establishment support the marchers had in **Floresville**.

**Archbishop Lucey held a mass at the San Fernando**

**Aug 27.** In **San Antonio**, **Archbishop Lucey** held a mass at the **San Fernando Cathedral**, and said: “A wage of a dollar and a quarter an hour is ghastly recompense for exhausting labor under the burning sun of **Texas**. The presence here of so many **Texas** citizens of **Mexican** descent is a symbol of a new era in human relations throughout the Southwest and in other parts of our nation. Through the years our Spanish speaking people have suffered in silence the injustices heaped upon them either by individuals or by a badly organized social order. But now our citizens of **Mexican** descent have learned that there is a law of justice...they have

learned that they should not suffer cruelty and discrimination without protest or complaint...”

Later that night, a rally was held at **Casiano Park** in **San Antonio** with 400 supporters and then Sunday night more than 1000 marchers walked to the **Alamo** for a rally there. On Monday morning, Aug 29, they struck north on the superhighway to **Austin**.

On August 30, while resting just north of **New Braunfels**, **Ken Allen**, student at the **UT School of Social Work**, doing his master’s thesis on the valley farm workers strike and had taken the tape recorder that morning, recorded this conversation:

**Governor Connally:** *I do not feel that as Governor of this state that I should lend the dignity, the prestige of an office to dramatize any particular march, and so I would not have been with you even if I had not had a previous commitment. I want to make that clear. Are you asking me...you want me to call a special session?*

**Eugene Nelson:** *Yes, we do.*

**Connally:** *The answer to that is No. I will not.*

**Speaker Ben Barnes said Saturday in Dallas:** “We did that to show them that a march is not the correct way to get things done.”

**Labor Day - September 5th: Austin, Texas:** At 11:09, the capitol grounds were reached by the head of the line.

After 64 days and 468 miles the march was concluded. Most newsmen agreed 10,000 would be a good guess. At 10 a.m., ranks arranged into columns of two. The line of marchers stretched out 15 blocks, or 1.2 miles. **BT Bonner** of **Austin**, led a group of 40 in a 200 mile march from **Huntsville** to **Austin** via **Houston**.

**In the main the marchers were Mexican Americans, representatives of labor unions**

In the main the marchers were Mexican Americans, representatives of labor unions (**Laborers in Corpus Christi** and **Houston**, **Steelworkers from Port Lavaca**) and teachers, college students, house wives, office workers, state and federal employees. The street crowds were fairly good; around the downtown section the spectators were 3 and 4 deep.

They were mostly Latin Americans and African Americans; there were in fact more members of these minorities downtown this day that one native of the city has even seen there at one time before.

During the final day at the State Capitol, **Cesar Chavez** met with **Andrew Young**, Exec Dir of **Dr MLK’s SCLC**.

This information chronicling the events of the 1966 Strike and March was taken from the following publications printed in the summer and fall of 1966, as follows: **Sons of Zapata**, 1967. **Texas Observer**, **San Antonio Express-News**, **Falfurrias Fact**.

# RIO GRANDE CITY - la cuna del

En el 1960 censo de los EEUU, el condado de **Starr** fue clasificada como la más pobre del estado de Texas y 17 más pobre de los EE.UU.. El ingreso promedio per cápita en 1960 era de \$ 534. 1/3 de los residentes del condado Starr tenía ingresos anuales de menos de \$ 1000. 70% ganaba menos de \$ 3.000.

La mayoría de los residentes del **Condado de Starr** y del valle bajo del **Río Grande** comenzaban su migración a trabajar en otros estados en marzo y regresaban en octubre. Muchos de estos migrantes trabajaban en los campos de **California**. Los residentes que cosechaban el melon a partir de mediados de abril hasta mediados de junio.

La mayoría de los trabajadores agrícolas trabajaban con 6 de los principales productores en el **Condado de Starr** y su pago era entre 40centavos la hora y un máximo de 85 centavos / hr.

En 1965, la **Asociación Nacional de Trabajadores del Campo** (NFWA) bajo la dirección de **César Chávez** y **Dolores Huerta** llamó a una huelga en contra de la industria de la uva en **Delano, California** y comenzó un boicot al consumo de uvas mandando personal a través del país. **Eugene Nelson** fue asignado a **Houston, Texas**.

Cuando los campesinos se dieron cuenta, pidieron a **Nelson** y poco después el llegó a **Río Grande City** en abril, y formaron **Independent Workers Association** (IWA). 700 trabajadores agrícolas habían firmado tarjetas de autorización pidiendo que la **IWA** los representara. 400

trabajadores votaron ir a la huelga contra los cultivadores de melón **La Casita, Los Puertos Plantation, Starr Produce, y Sun-Texas** el 1 de junio de 1966. Más del 80% de la fuerza laboral se puso en huelga el primer día. **La Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos** (CTM) también inicio un piquete en el lado mexicano.

Hubo líneas de piquete en el **Puente de Roma** tratando de convencer a los trabajadores Mexicanos de no subirse en los autobuses de **la Casita**.

## Oficiales estatales y locales de policía fueron contratados por los productores para quebrar la campaña de los

**En Junio 1.** Oficiales estatales y locales de policía fueron contratados por los productores para quebrar la campaña de los campesinos. **Randall Nye**, fiscal del condado de **Starr** era también el abogado de **Starr Farms. Texas Ranger Jerome Preiss** llegó el primer día de la huelga el 1 de junio, e inmediatamente arresto a **Eugene Nelson** por "incitar a una revuelta", y **Nelson** fue encarcelado durante la noche. Su fianza fue fijada en \$ 100.

**2 de junio.** Acoso continuó durante la noche el 2 de junio cuando un jeep del condado echo un pesticida a las personas que se juntaban en la plaza de **San Juan** en **Río Grande City**. **Ismael Díaz** trató de detener el veneno y el sufrió quemaduras de la química.

La mayoría de los huelguistas son católicos se alegraron cuando **Padres Sherrill Smith y William Killian** marcharon con ellos para **Garciasville** para una misa. **Rev. Alford del Consejo Nacional de Iglesias, Rev. Leo Nieto, Tx Consejo de Iglesias, el padre John McCarthy, de Houston, el Padre Henry Casso, Secretario Ejecutivo de la Comisión Episcopal de San Antonio**, estuvieron presentes durante la huelga en junio 1966.

A mediados de junio, la temporada de melón terminó, y los trabajadores del campo viendo la escalacion de violencia por parte de la policía, decidieron llamar mas atención a sus problemas, "Hay que dejar que el mundo sepa."

**El 4 de julio**, empezaron una marcha pacífica al **Santuario de la Virgen de San Juan**. **Obispo Humberto Medeiros** recibió a los trabajadores en **San Juan** y celebró una misa especial para ellos en el santuario.

**El 4 de julio** de 1966 100 personas empezaron una marcha de cinco días, la planificación de un promedio de 10 millas por día para llegar a **San Juan**. Fue después de la misa en la capilla de **San Juan**, el 8 de julio que el sindicato decidió continuar su marcha al capitolio del estado de **Austin**.

**Eugene Nelson, Rev. Navarro y Padre González** acordaron marchar con los trabajadores agrícolas de **San**



**Juan a Austin. Padre Lawrence Peguero de Houston** permitió el uso de su autobús verde y blanco para seguir a los huelguistas durante la marcha.

## El número de manifestantes varió de aproximadamente 15 a aproximadamente 70.

El número de manifestantes varió de aproximadamente 15 a aproximadamente 70. Y al llegar a pueblos, ellos se unian con todavía mas apoyadores. Ocho adultos caminaron todo el camino, y 2 chicas jóvenes, hijas de **Benito Treviño, Herminia Ramírez y Graciela Treviño**, quienes estaban en su adolescencia.

**Jesús Laurel**, 44 de RGC, nacido en **Los Laureles** en el **Condado de Starr. Reyes Alaniz**, de 62 años de **Garceno**, La señora **Elvira López**, de 55 años de **RGC**, vive en **La Casita Granjas**,

La señora **Gregoria Ramírez Villarreal**, de 41 años de **La Joya**, **Candido Rosa**, 34 de **Garceno**, trabajó en **Los Puertos**, por 60/70 centavos la hora 10 horas al día, **Julia Ana Ramírez**, de 24 años, **La Joya**, **Valdemar Garza**, de 29 años, **RGC**, **Roberto Arredondo**, de 26 años, **RGC**.

Aunque la marcha fue para que todo el mundo supiera de la huelga y los salarios bajos y para que se reconociera el sindicato como representante de los campesinos, la marcha evolucionó para incluir una demanda legislativa por un salario mínimo de \$ 1,25. Para ganar apoyo público y político, la ruta seguida fue a través de la mayor parte de las ciudades y pueblos de todo el sur de **Texas**.

Mientras iban de ciudad en ciudad, la comunidad, y sus funcionarios elegidos salieron a apoyar el esfuerzo. En **Edinburg**, **Alcalde Al Ramírez** los saludó y respaldó su esfuerzo. **Rev.**

# movimiento campesino en Texas, 1966

**Novarro**, el pastor Bautista, que encabezó la marcha, dijo: *“Una de las mas grandes inspiraciones en la marcha fue la llegada, en las afueras de Edimburgo, de una ambulancia que llevaba Alcalde Al Ramírez que había venido a saludar a ellos.”*

El líder sindical **Franklin García**, con 1000 miembros en un sindicato local en **Brownsville** respaldó la huelga y prometió ayuda. El Consejo Ejecutivo de la **AFL CIO TX** llamó a un boicot de los productos agrícolas **La Casita**.

**22** de julio el periódico, **Falfurrias FACT**, informó que el miércoles 22 de julio *“los manifestantes fueron llevados a la ciudad para comprar nuevos zapatos y botas en la tienda de zapatos operada por la señora Frank Mendoza. Diesiocho pares de zapatos fueron la compra.”* Ellos acababan de completar las 100 millas de su viaje. En **Falfurrias**, la Iglesia Católica realizaron una manifestación el viernes en **KC Hall** con **Bob Sánchez** de **McAllen** y ex **Rep Estado Gregg Montoya** de **Edinburg**. El progreso fue lento a lo largo de la carretera caliente con temperaturas cerca de la marca 100.

El 27 de julio en **Kingsville**, los estudiantes de **Texas A & I** tuvieron un rally, y los vaqueros **King Ranch** les sirvieron un buen almuerzo bajo grandes carpas dentro de las puertas del rancho. En **Kingsville**, el número

de manifestantes se aumentó a 200 por la gente de la area. Otro apoyo llegó con la adición de un burro, apodado 1.25.

Cerca del pueblo de **Bishop**, 20 pizcadores de algodón dejaron sus sacas de algodón y se unieron marchando por una milla.

El 30 de julio en **Corpus Christi**, **Obispo Drury** celebró una misa en la catedral. La marcha en **Corpus Christi** era de la Iglesia por la calle Violeta a la **Catedral de Corpus Christi**. 50 trabajadores agrícolas de **Rio Grande City** caminaban por la carretera 44, uno era **Severito Benavdes**, 73.

*“Esto es lo más grande que ha pasado en una generación. Es una tragedia que vivimos en un estado con los recursos que tenemos, en una gran sociedad que nuestro gran líder Lyndon Johnson ha defendido, y que ganan menos de \$ 1.25 la hora.”*

Sindicalistas trabajadores del acero, los **Teamsters**, trabajadores eléctricos unieron a la marcha. **Moisés Leroy de Houston**, **NAACP**, dijo: *“Esto es lo más grande que ha pasado en una generación. Es una tragedia que vivimos en un estado con los recursos que tenemos, en una gran sociedad que nuestro gran líder Lyndon Johnson ha defendido, y que ganan menos de \$ 1.25 la hora.”*

Los manifestantes fueron a **Steelworkers Hall** para tomar agua y soda. Recepción en **Corpus Christi** era tranquila. La columna de marchistas, había extendido hasta que fue varias cuerdas de largo. La **Catedral de Corpus Christi** estuvo una mitad de llena, y obispo **Drury** dio su apoyo total. El sábado, 800 personas asistieron a la junta la noche del sábado en **Corpus Christi**.

**Agosto 23**. En **Floresville**, un pequeño pueblito la ciudad natal del gobernador **John Connally**, ni un solo funcionario de la ciudad o del condado asistió. Los manifestantes llegaron 30 a 50 fuertes. Cuando llegaron tal vez 300 o 400 personas se juntaron frente de la casa de corte. La Iglesia Católica y un **Metodista** eran el único apoyo del establecimiento que los manifestantes en **Floresville**.

**Agosto 27**. En **San Antonio**, arzobispo **Lucey** celebró una misa en la **Catedral de San Fernando**, y dijo: *“Un salario de \$1.25 por hora es miserable recompensa para trabajo agotador bajo el sol ardiente de Texas. La presencia aquí de tantos ciudadanos de ascendencia mexicana de Texas es un símbolo de una nueva era en las relaciones humanas en todo el suroeste y en otras partes de nuestro país. A través de los años nuestra gente de habla hispana han sufrido en silencio las injusticias acumuladas sobre ellos, ya sea por individuos o por un orden social mal organizado. Pero ahora los ciudadanos de origen mexicano han aprendido que hay una ley de justicia ... que han aprendido que no deben sufrir la crueldad y la discriminación sin protesta o queja...”* Más tarde esa noche, hubo un rally

en **Casiano Park** en **San Antonio** con 400 participantes.

**28** de agosto y el domingo por la noche más de 1000 manifestantes caminaron hacia el Álamo para una manifestación allí. El 29 de agosto El lunes por la mañana, salieron a **Austin**.



El 30 de agosto mientras descansaban justo al norte de **New Braunfels**, **Ken Allen**, estudiante de la **Escuela de Trabajo Social UT**, haciendo su tesis de maestría sobre la huelga de los campesinos y había traído la grabadora esa mañana. Grabó esta conversación:

El gobernador **Connally**: no me siento que como gobernador de este estado que debería prestar la dignidad, el prestigio de una oficina de dramatizar cualquier marcha en particular, y por lo que no habría estado con usted, incluso si no hubiera tenido un compromiso anterior. Quiero que esto quede claro. ¿Me estás pidiendo ... que quieres que llame a una sesión especial?

**Nelson**: sí, lo hacemos.

**Connally**: La respuesta es No, no lo hare.

El líder de la Casa de Representates estatal **Ben Barnes** dijo días después en **Dallas**: “Les mostramos que una

marcha no es la forma correcta de hacer las cosas,”

Día del Trabajo, Sep 5, en **Austin**: A las 11:09, Los que encabezaban la marcha llegaron al **Capitolio**. Después de 64 días y 468 millas se concluyó la marcha. La mayoría de los

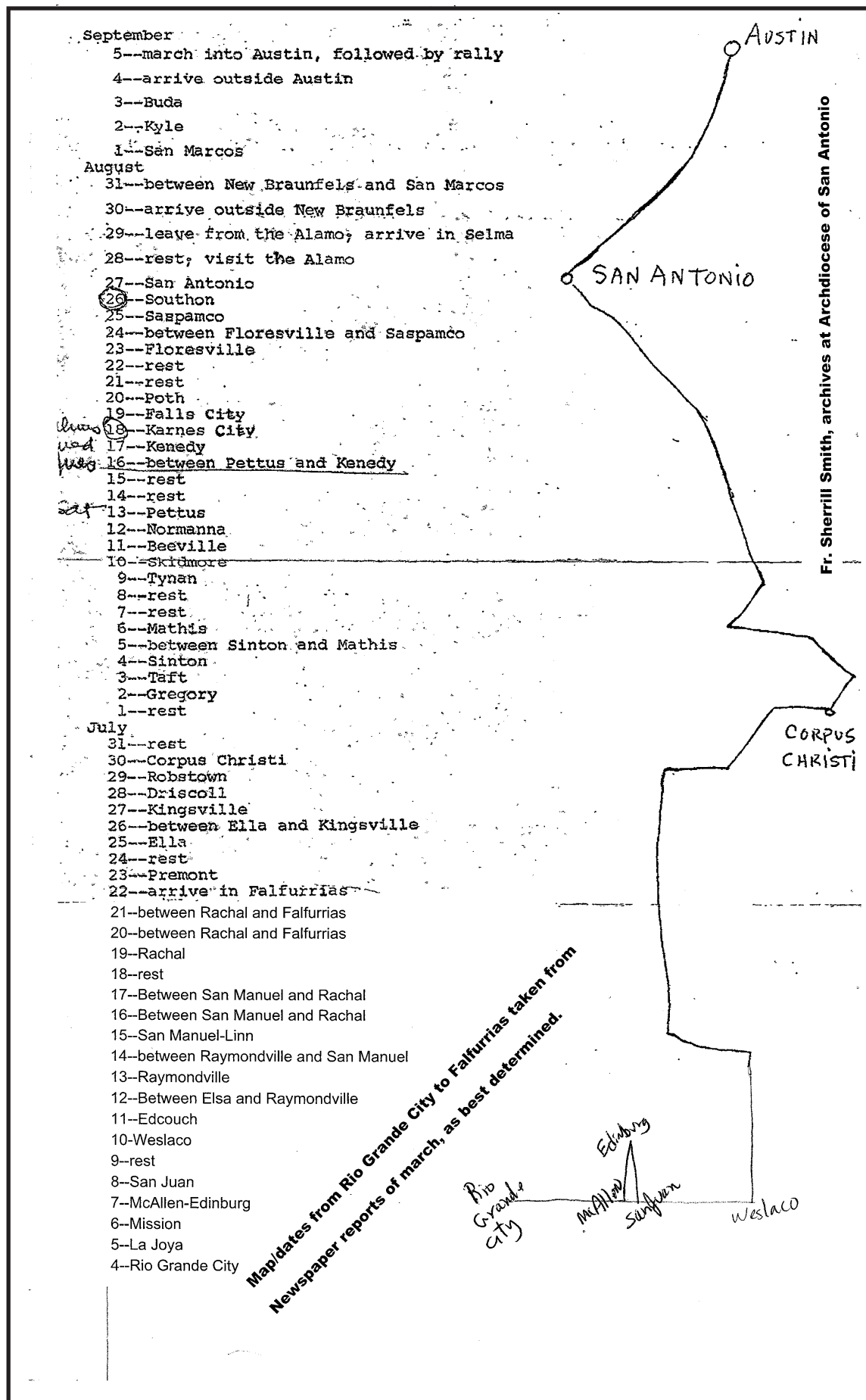
periodistas acordaron 10.000 personas asistieron.

La marcha en **Austin**. A las 10 a.m. filas puestas en columnas de dos. La línea de marcha se estiró a 15 cuerdas, o 1.2 millas. **BT Bonner** de **Austin**, 40 negros en la marcha de **Huntsville**; que vinieron marchando 200 millas a **Austin** desde **Houston**. En el principal los manifestantes eran mexicano-americanos, representantes de los sindicatos de trabajadores (obreros de **Corpus Christi** y **Houston**, de **Port Lavaca**) y los profesores, estudiantes universitarios, amas de casa, oficinistas, estatales y federales. En su mayoría eran latinoamericanos y negros; de hecho había más miembros de estas minorías que un nativo de la ciudad jamás nunca se había visto a la vez.

Durante el último día en el Capitolio del Estado, César Chávez se reunió con **Andrew Young**, **Exec Dir** de **SCLC** del **Dr. Martin Luther King**.

The route of  
the farm  
worker march  
in 1966 from  
Rio Grande  
City to Austin,

La Ruta de la  
March del  
campesinos en  
1966 desde Rio  
Grande hasta  
Austin, Texas



# 50 Years Later: The 1966-67 Farm Workers Strike – Did we Lose or Win?

By Bill Chandler, Executive  
Director, Mississippi  
Immigrants' Rights Alliance  
(MIRA)

It was a farm worker's strike for \$1.25 an hour minimum for their work harvesting honeydew and cantaloupe melons, bell peppers, lettuce, onions, and more produced in rotation in Starr County. But very little has been written about it, much of it in academic papers and much inaccurate. Many of the principal participants have passed on—most of the strikers, and organizers Eugene Nelson, Margil Sanchez, Lucio Galvan, Antonio (Tony) Orendain, Irene Ramos Chandler, Erasmo Andrade, and others. United Farm Workers co-founder, Gilbert Padilla, 88, is still very active in Fresno, California.

I was there with my family for over a year arriving on the heels of the 1966 march to Austin, helping workers to continue their strike in pursuit of union contracts. In the aftermath of the march, public attention turned away and the hard work of winning the strike continued.

Was it ever won? In many ways it was, but not fulfilling the immediate goals of the strikers. Most of the strike breakers lived in Mexico, coming across the Miguel Aleman-Roma Bridge early in the morning. We would go to the bridge by 4:00 am to talk with the arriving workers and try to persuade them to honor the efforts of the strikers as they

boarded the busses from La Casita Farms and others.

Frustrated by their indifference, on several occasions the bridges were blocked by picket lines resulting in a number arrests by Starr County Sheriff deputies including strikers and organizers alike. We were guests of the Starr County jail on numerous occasions.

Gilbert Padilla organized one of the most historic picket lines—on both sides of the border—by involving the unions in the Mexican border towns. The demonstration by these unions was the first recorded act of cross-border solidarity supporting a strike in US-Mexico history. Bridges from Hidalgo County through crossings in Starr and even in Zapata County were closed to strikebreakers. Outraged by the three-day shutdown, the growers appealed to the Governors of Texas and Tamulipas to intervene. The National Guard marched on the Mexicans and nearly all of the Texas Rangers from throughout Texas were called in to end the action.

Many arrests came when the Rangers attacked, not only jail time but beatings as well. As the strikers struggled, the Gilbert Padilla and UFW president Cesar Chavez convinced the Senate Sub-

Committee on Migratory Labor Which included Sen. Edward Kennedy, to conduct hearings in Rio Grande City.

In 1949 the Texas Legislature enacted the anti-picketing law mandating that union pickets must stand 50 feet apart or they would be arrested and charged. Many of us were jailed over under that law. The attacks by the Rangers in 1967 were “justified” by that law. The United Auto Workers union, long-time supporters of civil and worker's rights had sent in organizer Francisco “Pancho” Medrano to help. He too was beaten and arrested.

Following the demise of the strike itself, the UAW underwrote a law suit, *Medrano vs. Allee*, (Ranger Captain A.Y. Allee led the attack), filed in US Court charging the unconstitutionality of the anti-picket law and for the abolition of the Texas Rangers. Argued by the late Chris Dixie, a noted labor lawyer from Houston, the federal judge agreed. Appealed by the state to the Fifth Circuit Court of appeals which agreed with the federal judge, then in the historic decision

in 1972, so did the US Supreme Court. The law was ruled unconstitutional and the Rangers were abolished in a way, being moved from under the Texas Governor to become part of the Texas Department of Public Safety. This decision became a real victory as no one ever sued the Rangers and won, and it protected 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment rights for union worker's actions from that day on.

The strike also won by becoming a catalyst for the greater Chicano movement in Texas in many ways. Youth on and off high school and university campuses responded by organizing, inspired by the courage of the farm workers. Unions inspired by the strike pushed harder to organize.

Later, the Grape Boycott, in support of the protracted strike in the California vineyards became extremely effective as Chicano

youth and many allies acted with their own picket lines at stores to call upon consumers to “boycott grapes!” The boycott's pressure nationwide resulted in scores of union contracts as the grape growers sat down with the UFW. Texas activists forced the sales downward—in Houston, grape sales fell some 45%. Similar responses by consumers were felt in all the large urban areas throughout the state.

Often the sacrifices of workers result in victories beyond their actions: the 8 hour day, the weekends, the Wage and Hour Law, Workers Compensation, Social Security, and yes what resulted from the farm worker's strike in Starr County.

Viva La Huelga!

# ¿Quién era Cesar Chavez?

By Richard Ybarra

(This article first appeared in *Vida Nueva*, a newspaper established by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles)

This is the story of **Cesar Chavez**. It will tell readers who he was and what he believed and did with and for others that has made him a household world in and outside the **United States of America**.

During his funeral Mass **Cardinal Rogelio Mahony** said, “*Cesar Chavez was a special prophet for his people.*” **Cesar Chavez** was born to be special but it was not easy to know in the beginning. He became someone who developed many complex characteristics that made him hard to label. This small yet powerful man with an 8th grade education became a giant in history. His roles were varied.

**He was at the same time a strong labor and a tireless civil and human rights leader, a pacifist . . . .**

He was at the same time a strong labor and a tireless civil and human rights leader, a pacifist like his heroes **St. Francis of Assisi**, **Gandhi** and **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.** **Cesar** was an economist, accountant, photographer, vegetarian, animal rights activist, organic gardener, wine connoisseur, pool and billiard ace, German Shepherd lover and trainer, **Cursillista** and jazz aficionado.

His good friends included **Bobby** and **Ethel Kennedy**, Arizona’s **Bill Soltero**, **Catholic Worker** founder **Dorothy Day**, **Bill Kircher** of the **AFL-CIO**, **Paul Schrade** – **UAW**, **Paul Hall** – **Seafarers**, **Pete Velasco**, **Father Victor Salandini**, **Anthony Quinn**, **Martin Sheen**, **Joan Baez**, **Delancey Street’s John Maher** and many nuns, rabbis, ministers and priests.

Some say he was not a great speaker but only great speakers like him make audiences cry and get thousands to volunteer their time and hundreds to become full time volunteers for \$5 a week, plus room and board. **Cesar Chavez** was born in **Yuma, Arizona** on March 31, 1927 to **Librado Chavez** and **Juana Estrada**. He grew up on the farm that his grandfather settled in the 1880’s. His parents taught him the significant values that the world later came to know him by – loving thy neighbor, non violence, feeding the poor, visiting the sick and imprisoned (essentially Mathew 25).

During the depression they lost the farm and became migrant workers. **Cesar** often said that he and his family “picked everything under the sun except pockets.” Like many other migrant workers, he attended 28 different schools, dropping out in the 8th grade to work in the agriculture fields to help his family. **Cesar** later learned to enjoy reading, and his curiosity about everything in life caused him to read hundreds of books. His family joined every farm labor strike



they encountered and he recalled the difficulties and fun he had living in labor camps and tents.

His favorite recreation as a boy was shooting pool in his family’s pool halls. It was a skill he never lost. He also enjoyed big band music from this country and he and **Helen**, whom **Cesar** married in 1948, loved to swing dance the jitterbug. He wore zoot suits and other styles of his times. At age 18 he joined the **US Navy** serving for

two years during **WWII**. After the service he returned to **Delano** and married **Helen Fabela Chavez**. He



was once arrested there for not obeying a theater rule saying he had to sit in the Mexican section. Over the next several years he and **Helen** along with brother **Richard** and cousin **Manuel** and their spouses traveled **California** doing farm work to mill work.

In 1950 while living in **San Jose** near his parents **Cesar’s** life would forever change. As a devout Catholic, he volunteered at **Our Lady of Guadalupe Church**. He

# Who was Cesar Chavez?

helped **Father Donald McDonnell** who introduced him to the writings of **Pope Leo XII, Rerum Novarum** and the social teachings of the **Catholic Church**. In 1952 he met **Fred Ross** who recruited **Cesar** as a community organizer. **Fred** was his lifelong friend and mentor. **Cesar** became **State Director** of the **Community Service Organization (CSO)** and moved his family around the state, organizing urban and rural chapters, that helped Mexican Americans and registered them to vote in elections.

## Cesar gave credit to the Filipino workers, who started in 1965 the Grape Strike one week before . . .

Then he founded the **National Farm Workers Association** with **Dolores Huerta, Gilbert Padilla**, his wife **Helen** and their eight children: **Fernando, Silvia, Linda, Elouise, Anna, Paul, Elizabeth and Anthony**. **Cesar** gave credit to the Filipino workers, who started in 1965 the Grape Strike one week before his Mexican union joined them.

He would later build the **Paulo Agbayani Village** as a retirement home for the Filipino brothers he and his family loved. This became the first successful union of farmworkers in United States history.

Though he went on to become a labor and civil rights leader, his most comfortable role was as a

husband, father and grandfather to a family. To know **Cesar Chavez**, you must know his primo hermano (first cousin) **Manuel Chavez**, his closest friend and confidante. Before his death in 1999, **Manuel** was asked when **Cesar** got the idea to do what they would do and accomplish later in life. **Manuel** said, *"We were teenagers working in the fields and living in a labor camp. We were cold, hungry, angry and had not been paid. We said, 'someday if we can, we will change how this works'."* Asked why **Cesar** believed he could succeed where everyone else had failed before in forming a union? *"We had nothing to lose!"* said **Manuel**, smiling.

*"Si se puede"* the saying he made popular, was born during his 1972 **Fast for Justice in Arizona**. The governor had signed a law not allowing farmworkers to form unions. Many said things could not be changed in **Arizona** – "no se puede" was what you heard in the community. **Cesar's** 24 day fast ended with 10,000 persons in the march and rally, highlighted by **Joe Kennedy**, son of **Senator Robert Kennedy**, shouting *"Si se puede! Viva Cesar Chavez!"*

## When asked what he found most brilliant about Cesar, chief biographer Jacques Levy

**Cesar** never stopped growing. When asked what he found most brilliant about **Cesar**, chief biographer **Jacques Levy** (author

of the authentic book on Chavez – "Autobiography of La Causa") said, "His curiosity! Any topic that caught his attention he would read and learn about it. Whether it was history, architecture, finance, management, agriculture, cooperatives, labor, natural resources, eastern and western religions, etc." **Cesar Chavez** read from one to ten books at a time. He read slowly but captured and learned everything.

**Cesar** was a serious and disciplined man who faced pressure with calm, patience and courage. As a leader he never betrayed his humility, and by example showed supporters and followers the power of finding courage to overcome fear. He was passionate about everything he did – organizing, campaigning, handball, yoga, vegetarianism and animal rights. He comforted families in mourning and had a habit of stopping along highways to help people whose cars had broken down.

## Philosophy

I believe that God prepares all of us with basic capacity. In the case of **Cesar Chavez**, he gave him an extra portion. As **Cesar** grew as a leader and as a person, he formed an unusual, gentle and powerful mix of philosophy. He once answered a question from a European diplomat visiting him on how he would describe his political

beliefs, he simply answered, "radical Catholic." Courage and fearlessness under pressure were part of his make-up.

**Cesar Chavez's** philosophy could be categorized as a fine blend of Catholicism, Judaism, **United Auto Workers** (from the Reuther brothers) and yoga, with a touch of Gandhian thought, **St. Francis** and **Martin Luther King, Jr.** He learned from each to create his own whole. His greatest teachers were his parents, **Librado** who showed him work ethics and worldly skills and **Juana** who was his spiritual guide and role model.

He felt that to *"Treat people as people"* was one of the most difficult lessons for human beings to learn. He deemed it the basis of differences and difficulties in our world, people not taught how to treat and respect others. A favorite quote was *"Hay más tiempo que vida"*. He would explain that truth would always triumph and good things happen in time! His direction was always simple and straight ahead. He treated all people with dignity and respect. He was very close to the farmworkers he served and



relished the times spent sharing and teaching them.

## Person

Up close this man of small stature (about 5'6" tall) was as he seemed. He was a visionary, a courageous and relentless fighter, true to his beliefs with the discipline of a worldclass athlete. He was brilliant and had an unquenchable curiosity for life and how things

# “Hay más tiempo que vida”

work. For him a fun afternoon was slowly peering at book after book on shelves of a used bookstore in any city. The subjects he enjoyed ranged from the classics to history, biographies to architecture and organic farming to religious studies. If he read it he could master any subject and tie it to something he wanted to teach or do.

**Cesar** had a serene seriousness bolstered by a quick sense of humor. He was always ready to laugh – and if it was really funny, a gut-wrenching contagious laughter. He could be silly and joke about himself and regularly included corny jokes in his speeches.

## Leader

His influence and leadership are alive and will be with us forever. He is like **Benito Juarez, Miguel Hidalgo, Pancho Villa, Emiliano Zapata, Simon Bolivar** and other Latino legends. **Cesar** led by example and gave people the coaching to succeed. He was extremely frugal and like many

from his generation was concerned about budgets and spending. His background and the lessons he learned from other groups taught him that organizations — and especially “movements” — could be wiped out due to mishandling of funds or overspending.

Though at times he was criticized as being too tightfisted and a micromanager of money issues, his legacy includes never being accused of mishandling a dime of organizational funds to enrich himself or anyone else. Having

raised millions upon millions of dollars from donations, coop funds and nonprofit businesses to keep his organizations alive, this is a powerful cornerstone of his legacy. Hundreds of former colleagues and volunteers went on to become leaders impacting our society as much as any “group” from any US movement.

**Cesar** was a trainer of leaders — someone whose style and commitment influenced those he coached and gave opportunities to advance their own lifelong contributions. Mostly he enjoyed

the interactions with the poor and working families he served. Their love and respect for him as well as their sacrifices and courage kept **Cesar** humble, honest and inspired. He was a loyal leader who represented many undocumented workers. During strikes he and they opposed all strikebreakers, with or without documents.



## Student of life – his teachings

**Cesar Chavez** learned the value and importance of “treating people like people.” That led to his movement getting support from a broad collection of backgrounds and people, enabling his movement to become a bastion of diversity. His example was a key influence to thousands of volunteers who supported his movement in the fields and in the cities. He encouraged and supported women as leaders long before it was fashionable.

**Cesar’s** inspiration caused many Americans to join his cause and become leaders in it. Their contribution should long be noted. When it came to key leaders and keen strategists who helped make “**Cesar Chavez**” into a national figure and legend, there was no shortage of superstars from all

backgrounds especially Anglos and people from the Jewish community.

## Without them there would have been no grape boycott, farmworkers movement or Cesar Chavez

Their efforts were solid and performances were stellar. Without them there would have been no grape boycott, farmworkers movement or **Cesar Chavez**. His movement included farmworkers of many backgrounds. While the majority were Mexican immigrants, Filipinos, African Americans, Native Americans, Salvadorians, Portuguese, Arabs, Haitians, Punjabs, Cubans, Oakies and Arkies played important roles. He valued each group. **Cesar** assembled a mini United Nations.

**Cesar** inspired a generation of Latinos to stay in school, graduate from college and become professionals. The one semester he taught labor studies at the **University of California Santa**



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Distributed by *El Joffer Gratao*, United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO, Box 62, Keele, Ca 93531.



# “There is more time than life”

**Barbara**, the biggest classroom overflowed with over 800 attending every lecture. **Cesar** prepared long and hard each week and while there, had a room at **Mission Santa Barbara** with the **Franciscans** who viewed him as one of their own.

## Spiritual Man

Besides his family role, his spirituality was the most central aspect of his life. Though a devout Catholic who represented his church with pride, **Cesar’s** earliest church support came from **Protestants, Jewish** temples and synagogues. For the most part, the **Catholic Church**, priests and nuns came around later and made great contributions. They had more difficulty due to so many opponent farmers being **Catholics** as well.

**Cesar** was popular with churches and religious group in the **USA, Canada** and **Europe**. His work took him to every church or religious conclave and service imaginable. He enjoyed welcomes from every major religious denomination at international, national and regional convenings. **Presbyterians, Lutherans, Methodists, Church of Christ, Orthodox and Reform Jews, World Council of Churches, Anglican, Baptists** – even **Krishnas** – and other denominations invited him to address them.

He gathered encouragement and strength from them. Boycotters and strikers formed the volunteer army that fought for “immigrant

farmworkers rights” while churches, labor and students fueled the fight for the soul and conscience of the American people.

## Discipline

**Cesar** was always focused and direct in setting goals and personal habits. He took care of his health in most every way imaginable (with the exceptions being his many fasts and not getting medical attention before his sudden and unexpected death). His vegetarian diet was very clean. He exercised and was an accomplished student of yoga. He set his routine to fit his demanding seven-day-a-week schedule. Early to rise, early to exercise, healthy eating, meeting after meeting, something to soothe the mind and spirit — like a long walk, glass of carrot juice, working in his organic garden, listening to jazz and mariachi music and those books he read late into the night — were the things that kept his mind and body keen.

He was a healer of sorts, and everyone who knew him well was familiar with his remedies and hand curing methods, that he employed to ease pains of others. He would rub his hands together quickly, to warm them up and then place each on opposite sides of the ailing body part, without his hands touching the person’s body. Within a few minutes, one could feel heat on the injury and hear his calm voice ask if there was a difference, most often noting a successful treatment. This was not



widely publicized or known about him.

## Economist

**Cesar Chavez** went from desert farm boy to labor and human rights leader. He studied economics, economic development, leveraging resources, funds, services and benefits for farmworkers and other poor people. He experimented and dabbled in economic development. From his earliest days fundraising for **CSO** — where he would stage a carnival that involved his family, even his father running the small ferris wheel, to the multimillion dollar funds and nonprofit organizations he developed in his life.

**Cesar** led burial services, a credit union, a state chain of clinics, prepaid legal programs, health

clinics, day care, a retirement village, a multi-million dollar health care program for farmworker families on both sides of the border, day care centers, retirement villages, job training in printing, auto/diesel mechanics and data processing, a private bus company, English and negotiations schools, a statewide microwave radio network, radio stations, the publishing of two newspapers, affordable housing and a pension plan for his members. There were experiments he had in mind that he never got to explore.

In 1979 he said his long term goal was to leave the **UFW** to others and go into cities across the **USA** to form the “Poor People’s Union”. He would bring poor working people together to leverage funds

to get more goods and services. He studied cooperatives all over the world and found the **Mondragon** system in **Spain** to be the best model. He thought that poor people, especially immigrants, needed to form economic cooperatives and businesses to provide for themselves at lower rates and to become self sufficient. These included farming coops, garden coops in cities, insurance, health clinics along with social service centers to serve poor and working immigrant families.

He believed services for immigrants would be in great need for many years. It is now up to people living today and the generations that follow to take and make his dream their own and

# Recordando a Cesar Chavez

organize to do the things he taught. Se puede? Si Se Puede!!

## Family

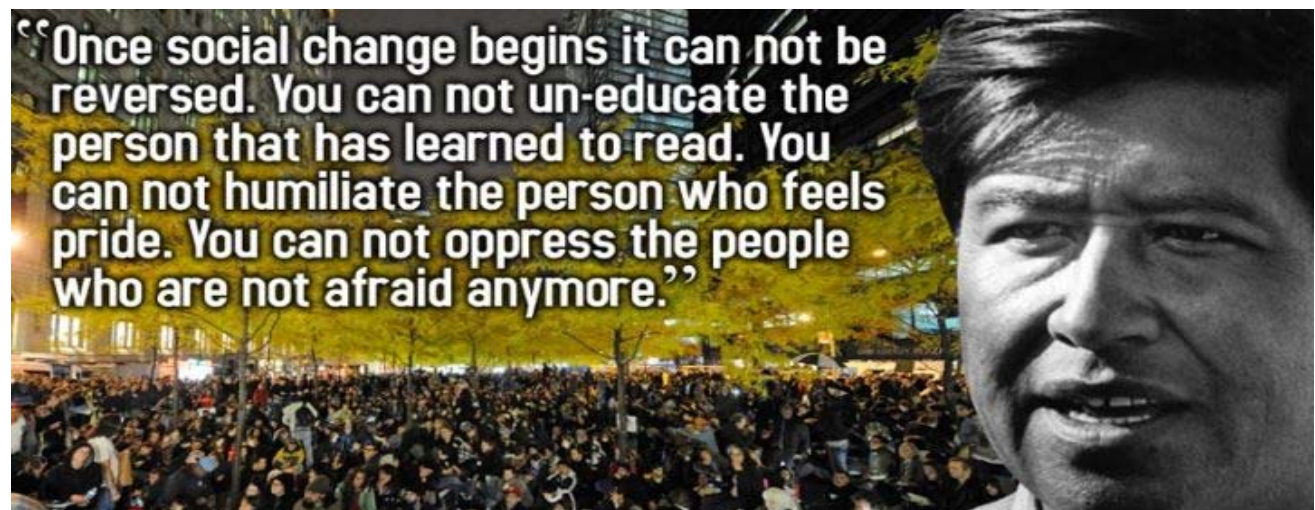
The father of eight children, grandfather to 31, **Cesar** was looked up to, loved and respected. He was a husband who respected and loved his wife **Helen**. He was a father whose cause took him away from his children. He tried to make up for this with the love and time he shared with grandchildren. The role of grandfather was **Cesar's** greatest.

His ways of convincing others to follow his lead and ideas, no matter how impossible they seemed, was practiced on his family. He cared deeply about them but never showed them favoritism when it came to the movement's scarce financial resources, meaning they were last and least. When his children asked for bicycles or dolls, he would say "when the eagle flies" (when the union won). Over the years they came to believe "that old eagle will never fly."

In a poetic way, that old eagle finally flew on April 23, 1993 – the day of his passing and when 50,000 people came to pay respect at his funeral services in **Delano, California**. He even managed to organize his burial to be 29 days after his birthday. Upon his passing **Helen** honored **Cesar's** wish of being buried in the **La Paz Rose Garden** with his two German Shepherds – **Boycott** and **Huelga**.



ABOVE: The Chavez family



# THE MARCH OF THE HOPEFUL

by Bishop Joel Martinez, UMC (Ret.)

As a child, I picked cotton with my paternal Grandfather, Refugio Martinez, in Seguin. As a teenager, I chopped cotton in West Texas one summer. As a college student, I worked with the National Council of Churches in Migrant Ministry in Minnesota and Wisconsin in the summer of 1958. Raquel, my wife, and I later worked in Migrant Ministry in Indiana the summer of 1961.

So when I was invited to join the efforts of South Texas farm workers in their march for just wages and improved working conditions during my first pastorate in San Antonio in the summer of 1966, my faith, my life experience, and my heritage led me into a ministry of accompaniment of the poorest of workers in our state. As pastor of El Buen Pastor UMC in San Antonio, I helped organize the gathering of food, clothing, and funds for the families of the marchers. I marched in Kenedy, San Antonio, and Austin on that sunny Labor Day of September 1966 with 15,000 others up Congress Avenue to the Capitol.

What I remember about the workers I met was their faith and hope in the future. Many were grandmothers and grandfathers who wanted a new future for their grandchildren and their future great-grandchildren. It reminded me about those summer days with grandfather Refugio and how proud and hopeful he was about my future.

So in 1966, I marched for justice for the rights of farmworkers to just wages and working conditions. In 2016, I will support efforts for raising minimum wages for all workers, for the expansion of access to healthcare, affordable housing, and educational and employment opportunities for all. Most of all, I will march in remembrance of the huelgistas of 1966 whose faith and hope helped to change me and my generation.

Bishop Joel N. Martinez (Retired)

The United Methodist Church





## Field Notes from Starr County

by Daniel Blue Tyx

On assignment this summer for a magazine story on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the strike, I drove across **Starr County** meeting with strikers and volunteers. Along the way, I heard many stories and commentaries left unrecorded by history, a few of which I'd like to share here.

**Baldemar Diaz** told me that he was working as a labor foreman at **La Casita Farms** when the strike started. Although he made \$3 an hour, he joined because *“the people in the strike were my people.”* In fall 1966, a **Texas Ranger** arrested him while in town shopping for school supplies. The **Ranger** offered to let him go if he went back to work at **La Casita**, but **Balde** decided to go to jail rather than break the strike.

In his backyard, **Librado de la Cruz** pointed to the farmland on the other side of the fence. *“This was all monte, owned by Griffin & Brand.”* he said. *“In 1954, I started to work clearing the land, taking everything out by the roots, we were paid 40cents an hour. Hard work never bothered me.”* During the strike, he would set the record for the most-arrested striker—seven times—in the fight for a fair wage.

At age thirteen, **Herminia Treviño** was the “baby” of the march from **Rio Grande City** to **Austin**. She recalled the warm greeting the marchers received across **Texas**, including a barbeque dinner, complete with white linens, served by cowboys at the **King Ranch**. Later, when **Governor John Connally** pulled his limousine to the side of the road to tell strikers he wouldn't meet them in **Austin**, she fearlessly yelled back, *“We're not going to see you!”*

Lastly, **Daria Vera**, then the union's 19 year-old Secretary-Treasurer, said she was well aware of the risks she ran in leaving the fields. *“I knew when I joined the strike that I could be hit, I could be arrested, I could even be killed. But I wasn't afraid because I was fighting for my rights. We had nothing to lose, because what was 40 cents?”*

## Working in the summer in the lower Rio Grande valley.

By Amanda de la Fuente

In late July 2016, on a 500 acre farm in **Lyford, Texas**, **Manuel Gonzalez** and **Antonia Salazar**, farmworkers for the past 20 years, shared their experiences working as husband and wife in the fields. The majority of the group of around 18 summer workers in **Lyford** stated they came from **Veracruz, Mexico**; **Manuel** said as soon as they arrived to the **Rio Grande Valley**, they started working as field hands.

Summer is off-season in the Valley and the work they get hired to do during these months is to clear the fields of weeds, in **Lyford** they were clearing weeds from soybean plants; this is one of a few commercial organic farms found in the **RGV**, most of the other farms they work, such as various plantations in **Mission, Texas** use traditional pesticides. **Manuel** stated at those farms, they are instructed to work depending on the strength of the pesticide, if it is “weak” they will spray it in the morning and have the farmworkers working in the field by the afternoon, if it is very strong, they will tell them to wait three days before working on that field.

For this couple, work in the summer doesn't have the monetary benefit as work during harvest (Fall-Spring), for cleaning the fields with a hoe or machete, they get paid by the hour (\$7.25) with 8 hours per day, 7 days a week. During harvest season, they work by contract, getting paid by output, and can rise their pay closer to \$12-15 per hour. The farmworkers are given a 30 minute lunch, with no official break in-between starting and finishing the day, but take their own water/rest breaks as needed, a few minutes. The water and portable restrooms are provided by the crew leader.

## Mission Stop, 1967

By David Lopez

As the strike prolonged over months, money contributions were diminishing and there was urgent need for renewed excitement and attention. The **Texas Rangers** had arrived and the strike office phone was bugged. The **Associated Press** had a correspondent in the Valley and he agreed to take a call from me as a test that I told him could generate a good story. On the phone, I said, *“We are going to make sure that the trainload of melons going out tomorrow does not make it past **Mission.**”* Next day, four of the oldest (and bravest) ladies supporting the strike joined me at a railroad crossing of a **Mission** main street.

Each was given a large sign to hold at each of the corners. At the time the train was expected, there gathered dozens of police and sheriff deputies, several Highway Patrol cars, and 14 Texas Rangers, headed by **Capt. A. Y. Allee**. There were floodlights and serious looking automatic weapons. The ladies deployed, and I was with one of them at a corner when **Capt. Allee** came yelling to get the ladies away. *“This is public right-of-way, isn't it, Captain?”* I said. *“No, it's not,”* he replied. *“This is private property of the railroad.”* *“Oh, okay,”* I said. I asked the lady to move back a step, and said *“Now, she's on the public space.”*

Of course, **Capt. Allee** disagreed, and the charade continued as he insisted and we moved step by step. Having been alerted, reporters and photographers came close, as did the police. The train was approaching, and the crew saw the crowd, including officers displaying firearms. The crew decided there was physical danger and, stopped the train and walked away. The train was delayed, the spectacle of senior ladies facing down the **Rangers** and police got us national coverage, and contributions followed



## Reflejos de la labor

For the past 11 years, in the early days of June, Margarito Huerta, along with his wife and four children of Raymondville, Texas have traveled as migrant farmworkers. This year they are in Michigan, working from 7AM to 8PM, cleaning bean fields of weeds, his wife and 3 sons work during this time, and their daughter will join them after finishing up her semester at Texas State Technical College in Harlingen, Texas.

For Margarito, there are few complaints, after so many years he has built a working relationship with the various jefes/bosses; for these 13 hour work days, he states they get their first break at 9:30AM for breakfast, lunch is at 1PM, and the second rest break is at 4:30PM, but nothing is set in stone, the farmworkers choose when is the best time to take these breaks, and it is usually dependent on the intensity of the heat that day.

In contrast to the pay in the Rio Grande Valley, which can fluctuate significantly between minimum wage up to a few dollars more, the pay his family receives in Michigan is 9 dollars the hour. Margarito stated during the other seasons of the year, he has worked in the onion fields in the RGV, and has also worked the machines for cotton harvest. Showing his character as a caring father, the only criticism he had was directed towards the inequality that occurs in the migrant programs available to his children, he states that while they are out of state working long hours, some migrant programs run concurrently, and by the time they return at the end of the summer, most of the opportunities to participate in the programs have been given to other families.





**Herminia Olivares†**

**And**

**Jose Maria Flores†**

**Owned a small farm in Atascosa County and did farm work**

**In South Texas and in the Midwest.**

**Their legacy was not in dollars but rather in values they instilled in their five daughters and one son.**

**They taught us to work hard and earn our way-To be honest and responsible for each other-To face hardships and overcome them with courage and strength. They were a peace loving man and woman who showed their love through every day struggles that brought food to our table and put a roof over our head.**

**Clarissa†, Maria Elena, Jesusa, Rebecca, Yolanda, and Jose Ricardo are forever proud of our parents and the legacy they left us.**

Gracias a todos quienes marcharon en 1966. Abrieron el camino a justicia para los que les siguieron.

*Jim Harrington*



“El acto de valor más verdadero es el de sacrificarnos nosotros mismos por otros en una lucha totalmente no violenta en pro de la justicia.” -César E. Chávez





## FROZEN CROPS, FROZEN BENEFITS, FARMWORKERS MOBILIZE TO CHANGE THE SYSTEM

by Maureen Leach, OSF (UFW and NFWM from 1982-1987)

Severe weather in December 1983 froze crops in the Rio Grande Valley. FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) came to help the growers; but no governmental agency considered the needs of farm laborers. The freeze underlined the disastrous consequences of the fact that the state unemployment law excluded most farm workers from benefits, those whose labor brings food to the people of this country.

The freeze added more than 15,000 newly unemployed to escalate the 19 percent unemployment rate. The United Farm Workers Union and the National Farm Workers Ministry mobilized into action.

Through dialogue, demonstrations, press releases, research, a lawsuit, and legislation, we were able to get farm workers unemployment benefits. The lawsuit demonstrated what agricultural laborers were losing through exclusion from benefits most workers could claim when out of a job. Eduardo García, one of the plaintiffs in the class action lawsuit, worked for eight employers; none paid any unemployment insurance. Mr. García lamented having to ask a teacher to help find shoes for his grandson so he could attend school.

After Travis County Judge Harley Clark ruled that the Texas Unemployment Compensation Act was unconstitutional in the way it excluded farmworkers, we sought legislation to implement a fairer system. Maribel Quiroz, although under ten years old, was an effective lobbyist. Her eyes spoke volumes, as she handed legislators a green bell pepper with a note that said "Farm workers pick the food you eat; please vote for HB 32/SB933." The law passed.



## The Short Handle Hoe

By Rebecca Flores

The Short Handled Hoe prohibition law was passed in the late 70's by St Rep A.C. "Tony" Garcia from Pharr. Enforcement of this law was by the local JP courts. When we started to demand that JP's enforce this law, the growers began having workers use a knife to cultivate, thin and weed the row crops. St Rep Lena Guerrero, a farm worker born in Mission, introduced the "knife" bill in the early 80's that would do away with this practice. Her testimony before the House Ag Committee showed us Lena's superb skills as a legislator and as an orator. There was not one friend of the farm workers on the House Ag Committee. Her final line was: "You do not have knives like these in the fields." and she spiked a sharp knife on the desk in front of a startled House Ag Committee. The bill was passed out of the House and the Senate, but Governor Clements vetoed the bill.

## A Tale of Generations

By: Gabriela Hernandez

June 2, 2012 and May 14, 2016: Two dates which changed the course of my family's history, forever. Generations of sacrifice had paved the way for me to take center stage on both nights, allowing me to become my family's first high school and college graduate. "*Cada generación tiene que ser mejor que la ultima.*" are the words my father engraved in me as a young child, words which I continue to live by.



Sitting around the dining room table, two months after my college graduation, my father and grandmother reminisced about their family's time in Lodi, Indio, Coachella, Arvin, and Wasco California during grape and peach picking seasons. The years were 1985-1988, under scorching summer suns that ranged between 112-115 degrees Fahrenheit. As Mexican immigrants who had come to the United States in search of a better future, my father's family consisted of two older brothers, his mother and father. Fieldwork was usually found in the Rio Grande Valley, California, Michigan and Idaho.

"Todo estaba bien, lo que no le gustaba [al mayordomo] era que fuéramos a decirle algo...que nos fuéramos a quejar con los de [la unión]," my grandma explained. "[El mayordomo] no quería tomar riesgos," my dad added. Although they had always been provided with breaks, cold water, and portable toilets for both men and women, plantation owners were fearful of making any negative press.

"Pero bien contentos que trabajábamos," my grandmother assured. Life in Mexico had held no promise. Humbly, she had held a vision for the family, one which fortunately came full circle thirty years after the family had picked their last batch of crops. A new chapter had begun, one of promise and hope for generations to come.



# Dolores Huerta:

## A Woman Who Refuses to Give Up

By Luis Valdez

When I think of **Dolores Huerta**, I think of the Earth. Powerful, beautiful, fecund, challenging, conscious, yet so incredibly delicate. The patina of my superimposed memories of her over the last 25 years glows with dissolving moving images: **Dolores** as a picket captain, **Dolores** as a single mother, **Dolores** as a negotiator, lobbyist, speaker, La Pasionaria de Delano; **Dolores** as my leader, for she was the first woman general I met and followed into the fray of **La Causa**. Yet these images all come together to form the simple, inspiring portrait of an enduring friend.

I met **Dolores** in the **Mission District** in **San Francisco**, late in September of 1965; she was on a whirlwind tour of the **Bay Area**, raising funds and donations of food for the two week-old **Delano Grape Strike**.

**but I had really approached her to discuss the possibilities of organizing a theater company of striking . . .**

As a writer for a '60s radical newspaper, I was full of questions about **La Huelga** (the strike), but I had really approached her to discuss the possibilities of organizing a theater company of

striking farmworkers. I wanted to know if **Cesar Chavez** would even consider the idea, and if **Dolores** could present the concept to him.

Her response was incredibly warm and enthusiastic, though she was quick to point out that the NFWA (National Farm Worker Association, as the United Farm Workers were then called) was broke and fighting for its life. It was hard enough just feeding the families of the striking farmworkers, so there was no money for props, costumes, lights, sound equipment, actors, and all the rest of those non-essentials.

**I got my opportunity to “pitch the concept” to Cesar the following week in Oakland**

But she loved the idea. She smiled and gave her most sage piece of advice: “*You really ought to talk to Cesar about this yourself.*” I got my opportunity to “pitch the concept” to **Cesar** the following week in **Oakland** at a rally in support of the strike. He listened carefully to my wild ideas, the nodded and said **Dolores** had talked to him about it.

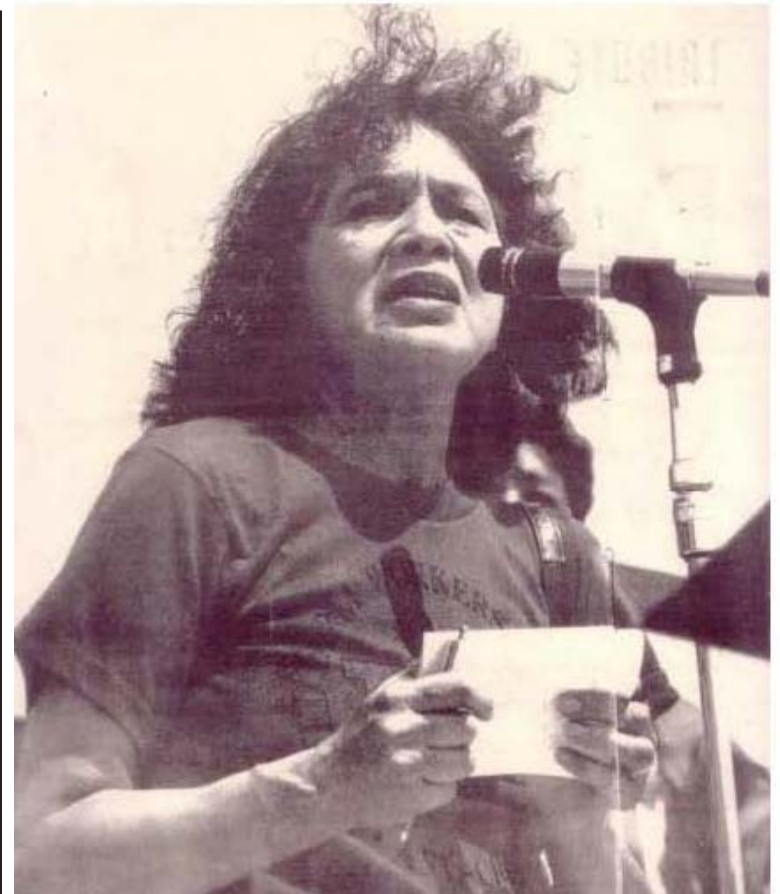
I was welcomed to come to **Delano** and volunteer, he said, but as **Dolores** had pointed out, there was no money. **El Teatro Campesino**

was to be born out of thin air, with nothing but the flaming hearts of the strikers to give it life. Yet in **Dolores** and **Cesar**, I had already found its creative and political godparents, and all the support I would ever need.

**Dolores** was a 35-year-old firebrand in 1965, and she was commanding crusty macho campesinos 20 years her senior. What dazzled my radicalized, university-trained Chicano mind was that she led through persuasion and personal example, rather than intimidation, and that she was one hell of an organizer.

People tend to forget that the 60s were in the sexiest dark ages, even in The Movement, as we called it, but **Dolores** was already way in front. She was a woman, a Mexican-American, a Chicana cutting a swath of revolutionary action across the torpidity of the **San Joaquin Valley**. And she had more cojones than the growers.

That first crucial grape harvest by scabs in the fall of '65 produced more bitter fruit for **La Huelga**, and goon violence at the L.A. produce market. In the pre-dawn hours of the summer and fall, the market is gloriously bustling place with the cornucopia of the Earth arriving at its concrete docks and warehouses in scores of 18-



wheelers. The very smell of the place is intoxicating watermelons, cantaloupes, lettuce, apples, peaches, potatoes, tomatoes, rutabagas, bananas, and grapes. **Cesar** sent **Dolores** and a bevy of strikers to stop the scab grapes by convincing the **Teamsters** and packinghouse workers not to handle them.

Led by **Dolores**, we entered the produce market like a flying flange. We found our shipment a scab

grapes, and began to talk to the workers standing by their dollies. Management came running and yelling, followed by their goons. **Dolores** stood her ground, talking to the men, appealing to their workers' consciences. Nobody was moving. So one of the goons grabbed **Dolores** and threw her off the dock. Later, she was arrested by the **LAPD**. I had never seen such a demonstration of raw human courage.



# *Dolores Huerta:*

## Una Mujer que Nunca se Rájo

On another occasion, I had the delight of seeing a totally different aspects of **Dolores**. With her kids, she lived around the corner from the “Pink House” union headquarters on the seedy, frayed edge of **Delano’s** barrio. We stopped by her home one pre-dawn morning on our way to the picket line to pick her up, but the house was still dark.

**I knocked and got no response so I went in. Her floors were covered with sleeping volunteers.**

I knocked and got no response so I went in. Her floors were covered with sleeping volunteers. So I made my way to the back. In one of the rooms there was a mound of sleeping children all under one blanket on a tiny bed. The mound shifted, and out of a web of her children’s limbs and feet, **Dolores** stuck her head out. “Time to go?” she asked, smiling and yawning.

In the early years of the strike **Dolores’s** role as a nurturing mother was sometimes strained because of forced absences while she was on the road. Yet her kids were always well taken care of by relatives, friends, and the larger family of **La Huelga** itself. **Dolores’s** 15 year-old daughter, **Lori**, opted to join the **Teatro**, and in 1967 became a seasoned

performer and fellow traveler in our Boycott Grapes tours to **Texas, Rhode Island, New York, Washington D.C., Chicago, Denver**, and back.

I later learned that **Dolores** had wanted to be a Spanish dancer through high school. **Dolores** was not only **Lori’s** best audience, she was also the **Teatro’s**. Years later flash forward more than 20 years, another of **Dolores’s** daughters came to work at the **Teatro Campesino** for a summer in our **San Juan Bautista** headquarters. **Juanita Chavez**, a daughter from **Dolores’s** marriage to **Richard Chavez**, provided more than a nostalgic link to the underlying Causa.

In 1988, she led a teenage workshop to make contact with the farmworker children of **McFarland, California**, some of them victims of a cancer cluster and official cover-up, caused by pesticide residues and toxins in water. The ideals, intelligence and social conscience of both **Dolores** and **Richard** were evident in **Juanita**. **Dolores’s** 11 children have never suffered for want of an admirable role model. Today one is a lawyer, another a doctor. The youngest and oldest are 26 years apart

**Dolores** has always been there.

To the chagrin of many a corporate lawyer, **Dolores** has also been at the negotiating table. We got our first glimpse of her acute shrewdness in the matter of contacts and fine print in the old empty **Delano Mortuary**, which was the only site available in **Delano** for the union’s earliest hard-fought and hard-won negotiations.

To the superstitious, the mortuary site forebode legal disaster. They didn’t count on **Dolores’s** tenacity. **Cesar**, of course, was totally aware of her worth in a good, down-and-dirty verbal exchange. The bracero program of the 50’s (the use of cheap, docile contract labor from **Mexico** at the expense of local workers) was brought to a final end by their lobbying and political arm twisting across the state.

Under their leadership, the **CSO** (Community Services Organization) had brought thousands of Mexican American voters to the polls for the first time. Taking on the minions of agribusiness across the negotiating table was only a new challenge. And **Dolores** was more than ready. Her mind

worked like a computer, and she hammered out the details of America’s first farm labor contracts in history

The wonder of **Dolores Huerta** is that she has never given up struggling for what is right, decent and human in the world, and she never will. She seems possessed of a determination to help those less fortunate, and she has laid her life on the line in repeated marches to the edge of violence and social confrontation. In 1988 during the **Bush** presidential campaign in **San Francisco**, the brutal end of a policeman’s nightstick nearly ended her life, and cost her spleen. But **Dolores** is still there on the front of the lines.

With **Cesar**, she has become the living symbol of what we used to call commitment. She was there before the ‘60s, and she is there way after. In truth, you can only admire and stand in awe of the fact. She capped it all in **Arizona**, sometime in the ‘70s, in the middle of yet another struggle. A desperate striking farmworker was complaining about the difficulty of winning any struggle against the growers. “No se puede,” he kept saying. “It cannot be done.” **Dolores**, with charismatic selfpossession and optimism, responded confidently. “What do you mean it can’t be done? Si se puede! Si se puede!” And her assertion became the rallying cry of millions, aching for social justice. Yes, it can be done. **Dolores** has said so.





# FARMWORKERS STRIKE AND MARCH IS OUR HERITAGE

BY FERNANDO PIÑÓN

In the summer of 1966, I was enrolled in summer classes at the **University of North Texas**, where I was pursuing a degree in journalism. I had heard of **Cesar Chavez** and his attempt to organize the farm workers in **California**, but I had not heard that **Texas** farm workers were attempting to do the same in the **Valley**.

It was only when I went home during semester break that I read about their efforts, and at first it seemed like any other strike which, like before, was not going to succeed. My sympathies were with the farm workers, who, after all, each year harvested millions of dollars worth of citrus fruits, melons and vegetables while working in horrible, medieval-type conditions and being paid up to \$.80 an hour.

It also seemed “normal” that most people seemed to ignore their strike, perhaps believing nothing would come out of it. After all, while over 400 farm workers had voted to go on strike against the melon growers and had vowed to go on a march to Austin to pressure the Legislature into passing a minimum wage law that would raise their salary to \$1.25 an hour, only a few farm workers actually began their march — walking towards the **Shrine of Our Lady of San Juan**, a revered church in **San Juan, Texas**, whom many believed was responsible for miracles.

My original interest in the farm workers came from **Fr. Antonio Gonzalez, OMI**, one of the leaders of the strike and the chaplain who dealt with the students at **St. Augustine High** school in **Laredo**, from where I had graduated. But by the end of August my interest in the strike went beyond him when it was clear that that simple “strike” had turned into a movement. At **San Juan**, hundreds joined the march, and it began picking up even more followers along small communities along the way. As was perhaps to be expected, the more followers joined the march, the more racist epithets directed at them by mostly Anglo onlookers.

By August 27, as the marchers arrived in **San Antonio**, the march had become the *cause célèbre* in the state and the country. Literally, thousands cheered the marchers as they arrived going past the small towns along the way, and hundreds others jeered at them with racial insults. I traveled to **San Antonio** to be with the marchers, and was astonished at the thousands of people who had gathered outside the **San Fernando Cathedral**, and then,

after a Mass given by **Bishop Robert E. Lucey**, marched towards the **Alamo** with lighted candles.

As a young Mexican American from **Laredo**, I fully agreed with **Bishop Robert E. Lucey** when he said in his homily that “the presence here of so many **Texas** citizens of Mexican descent is a symbol of a new era in human relations throughout the Southwest. ... Mexican Americans have learned that they have a certain dignity as human beings and that they must stand up and defend themselves against discrimination and oppression. This was, I thought, the movement that would, finally, awaken that “sleeping giant” Mexican American politicians would talk about.

The following day, I followed the marchers as they headed to **Austin**, and was with them when they decided to rest in **Landa Park** in **New Braunfels**. It was a casual atmosphere, with the marchers sitting in group and talking lively as they ate their lunch. This felt more like a church picnic rather than a political event that had become national news because most people realized the marchers were fighting for not only for higher wages and social justice but also for the unfair labor practices they were subjected to.

That casual atmosphere, however, was shattered by a sudden burst of applause. I, like many others, was surprised at the sudden exhilaration. I glanced at where the marchers were looking, and I saw **Governor John Connally, Texas Attorney General Waggoner Carr, and Speaker of the Texas House Ben Barnes** walking nonchalantly towards the marchers. The applause turned to cheers as the marchers believed **Texas’** highest elected officials were there to welcome them and bring them good news.

**Father Gonzalez**, with a Crucifix in hand, walked quickly to greet the Governor as other marchers quickly gathered around him, still in a state of elation. It was then that **Gov. Connally**, without greeting the workers as constituents or as fellow Texans, curtly told the group that he would not only not call a special session of the Legislature but that he would not meet with them in **Austin**. He would not, he said, “lend the dignity of [his] office” to a Labor Day rally.

Just as the applause and the cheers had exploded spontaneously, so did the jeers. Cries of “Viva la Raza,” echoed throughout the park, and **Fr. Gonzalez** pushed the crucifix into **Gov. Connally’s**

head as if to excise the demons of discrimination and abuse the governor represented. It was in that burst of defiance coming not from college campuses but from melon pickers who could hardly read and write that I became a believer in *La Causa*. It was then that I vowed to use my journalistic talents to write about Mexican American culture and politics.

It was that rejection that became the turning point of Mexican Americans in their pursuit of social and political equality, a fact **Eugene Nelson**, one of the strike organizers, immediately recognized when he said that, “The *Tejanos* no longer tip their hats to the *gabachos*.” While one can say that the march did not succeed in having the state to increase the minimum wage, “the Valley farm workers’ movement in 1966 provided the underpinnings for the Chicano movement in **Texas** ... and for the growth and prospering of that movement,” as **Houston Judge Alfred J. Hernandez** pointed out.

In fact, present at that march were **Ramsey Muñiz**, who later was to become the gubernatorial candidate for *La Raza Unida* Party, and other prominent founding member of the party. These were young college students at **St. Mary’s University** who took **Connally’s** rejection not only as an affront to the farm workers but to all Mexican Americans. As those present began to shout, “Education is a right,” they began to shout, “*Chicano Power*” and “*Viva la Raza*,” both cries of defiance and independence. In fact, two years later, many of those young people in the march led the 1968 student walkout at **Edgewood High School** in **San Antonio**, and four years later met to form the **La Raza Unida Party** and field state-wide candidates for office.

In 1972 the **Rev. James Novarro**, the co-leader of the march, told the meeting of young Mexican Americans that the farm workers’ march, and the rejection of **Gov. Connally**, had given birth to *La Raza’s* ethnic consciousness, and it was because of this that “today we declare our independence from the Democratic and Republican Parties and join *La Raza Unida Party*.”

It was in **Landa Park**, as a senior at the **University of North Texas**, where I joined the farm workers, and it was because of this that I became attached to my own cultural heritage. This, our heritage forged in our own unique history, is the essence of our unity.

## BREAD AND ROSES

As we go marching, marching in  
the beauty of the day  
A million darkened kitchens, a  
thousand mill lofts grey  
Are touched with all the radiance  
that a sudden sun discloses  
For the people hear us singing:  
"Bread and roses! Bread and  
roses!"

As we go marching, marching, we  
battle too, for men,  
For they are in the struggle and  
together we shall win.  
Our days shall not be sweated  
from birth until life closes;  
Hearts starve as well as bodies,  
give us bread, but give us roses.

As we go marching, marching,  
unnumbered women dead  
Go crying through our singing  
their ancient cry for bread.  
Small art and love and beauty  
their drudging spirits knew.  
Yes, it is bread we fight for — but  
we fight for roses, too!

As we go marching, marching, we  
bring the greater days.  
The rising of the women means  
the rising of the race.  
No more the drudge and idler —  
ten that toil where one reposes,  
But a sharing of life's glories:  
Bread and roses! Bread and  
roses!

# Union Songs

## La Carcel de Rio Grande

(tune of La Cárcel de Cananea)

La cárcel de Rio Grande Es cárcel muy afamada.  
Encierran a los huelguistas por causa de sus  
ideales. (Repite)  
Nos trajeron arrastrando pa' cumplir con su deber  
Y nosotros protestando el derecho de comer  
(Repite)  
Al otro lado del rio siempre viven más barato  
Y por eso los rancheros les están dando sus  
trabajos. (Repite)  
Ya con esta me despido cantando tras de las rejas.  
(Repite)  
Yo les digo a mis amigos que no quiebren esta  
unión. (Repite)

## EL PUENTE DE ROMA

Aquí me siento a cantar este caso que pasó  
Un 24 de octubre en Roma, Tejas pasó.  
Les gritábamos justicia a todos los campesinos  
Que vienen del otro lado a trabajar con los gringos  
No hemos podido ganar; y la ley nos hace daño  
De que nos quiebran, la huelga el pobre del mexicano  
Cantando triste me quedo, cantando de corazón  
Y les digo a mis amigos que no quiebren esta unión.

*Written by those who were arrested in Starr County:  
Reynaldo De La Cruz, Domingo Arredondo; Guillermo  
De La Cruz, Bill Chandler, Antonio Orendain, Eugene  
Nelson, Mario Vera, Librado de la Cruz, Baldemar Diaz,  
Ismael Diaz, Rodrigo García, Pedro Ríos. And the  
women Daria Vera, Kathy Baker Rodríguez, Cathy  
Lynch, and Irene Chandler.*

## De Colores

De colores—de colores  
Se visten los campos en la primavera  
De colores—de colores  
Son los pajaritos que vemos de afuera  
De colores— de colores  
Es el arco iris que vemos lucir  
Y por eso los grandes amores  
De muchos colores me gustan a mi  
(2x)

Canta el gallo— canta el gallo  
Con el kiri, kiri, kiri, kiri, kiri  
La gallina— la gallina  
Con el cara, cara, cara, cara, cara  
Los pollitos— los pollitos  
Con el pío, pío, pío, pío,, pi  
Y por eso los grandes amores  
De muchos colores me gustan a mi  
(2X)

## LA MARCHA (tune of El Quelite)

Qué bonito esta la marcha, bien haiga quien la  
fondo.

Qué por todos lados tiene, valientes al por  
mayor

En cada pueblo que pasan, renovado se quedó

Que la gente de Rio Grande, van cumpliendo  
su misión.

Al salir de New Braunfels, nos sale el  
gobernador

Detrás de unos chaparrales, a quitarnos la  
intención

El lunes vamos a Austin a ver al gobernador

Si en Austin, no se consigue, nos vamos a  
Washington

Ya con esta me despido, lo digo de corazón

Si en Austin no se consigue, nos vamos a  
Washington

# Canciones de la Union

## Trabajadores Campesinos

Trabajadores Campesinos  
A luchar con valor y con tezon  
Sin pasos para atras todos unidos  
A luchar encontra del patron

El la frontera del pueblo San Ysidro  
Empezaron los huelgistas a marchar  
Pa' informar al pueblo campesino  
De la lucha que vamos a enfrentar

Es el años del 75  
El 28 de Agosto comenzo  
Una ley pa' proteger al campesino  
Y que el mundo le ponga su atención

Viva la cause por cual luchamos  
Viva la huelga en el fil  
Viva la Virgen de Guadalupe  
Viva nuetra union

A temblar partoncitos baratos  
Contratistas de cruel explotador  
Mayordomos y todos lacyos  
Ya el campesino tiene proteccion

Los gorilas quiern entramparnos  
Con el aguila vamos a ganar  
Cuando firme todo el rancho la tarjeta  
Ya tendremos el drecho de votar

CORO

Con la ley ya no pueden los patrones  
Hecha pa' fuera un Chavista, asi no más  
El derecho de informa a companeros  
Lo logramos no se perdera jamas

Con valor, campesino Americano  
Esta ley con orgullo a defender  
Muchos años en la huelga hemos pasado  
Y es de todos recordar nuestro deber.

CORO

Esta marcha llevaremos  
Con el aguila que es nuestra proteccion  
Adelante por todos los caminos  
Y que sirva de ejemplo a la nacion

Campesinos Mexicanos  
Americanos por color  
Puerto Ricos y Filipinos  
Todos son de igual valor

CORO

## No Nos Moveran

**No, no, no nos moverán; no,  
no, no nos moverán**  
**Coro: Como el árbol que crece  
junto al rio, no nos moverán.**

**The union is behind us; we  
shall not be moved (2x)**  
**Chorus: Just like a tree that's  
standing by the water, we  
shall not be moved.**

**¡Qué viva César Chávez, no  
nos moverán! (2x)**  
**Coro: Como el árbol que crece  
junto al rio, no nos moverán.**

**We're fighting for our freedom;  
we shall not be moved. (2x)**  
**Chorus: Just like a tree that's  
standing by the water, we  
shall not be moved.**

**Luchamos por los niños, no  
nos moverán. (2x)**  
**Coro: Como el árbol que crece  
junto al rio, no nos moverán.**

**We'll build a mighty union; we  
shall not be moved. (2x)**  
**Chorus: Just like a tree that's  
standing by the water, we  
shall not be moved.**

## SOLIDARITY FOREVER

**Coro: Solidaridad pa' siempre, solidaridad pa' siempre  
Solidaridad pa' siempre, ¡Qué viva nuestra unión!**

**En las vinas de la ira, luchan por su libertad**

**Todos los trabajadores quieren ya vivir en paz**

**Y por eso compañeros, nos tenemos que juntar**

**En solidaridad.**

**Coro: Solidaridad pa' siempre, solidaridad pa' siempre  
Solidaridad pa' siempre, ¡Qué viva nuestra unión!**

**When the union's inspiration through the workers' blood shall run  
There can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun  
Yet what force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one  
For the Union makes us strong**

**Chorus: Solidarity forever, solidarity forever, solidarity forever  
For the Union makes us strong.**

**Vamos, vamos campesinos los derechos a pelear**

**Con el corazón en alto y con fe en la unidad**

**Que la fuerza de los pobres como las olas del mar**

**La injusticia va inundar**

**Coro: Solidaridad pa' siempre, solidaridad pa' siempre  
Solidaridad pa' siempre, ¡Qué viva nuestra unión!**

**It is we who ploughed the prairies, built the cities where they trade  
Dug the mines and built the workshops, endless miles of railroad  
laid Now we stand outcast and starving, 'mid the wonders we have  
made But the union makes us strong**

**Chorus: Solidarity forever, solidarity forever, solidarity  
forever For the Union makes us strong.**

**They have taken untold millions that they never toiled to earn  
But, without our brain and muscle, not a single wheel can turn  
We can break their haughty power gain our freedom when we learn  
That the Union makes us strong**

**Coro: Solidaridad pa' siempre, solidaridad pa' siempre Solidaridad  
pa' siempre, ¡Qué viva nuestra unión!**





Genoveva Puga at the gravesite of her son, who was crushed to death at an Edinburg citrus packing shed. Her suit ended the exclusion of farm laborers from workers compensation law.



# WINNING WORKERS COMPENSATION FOR FARM LABORERS

By James Harrington

After the Union began to organize into colonia committees in 1977, and farm workers began focusing on legislative priorities. One of the foremost, adopted by the organizing conventions, was obtaining workers compensation coverage.

Even though agricultural work was the state's first or second most dangerous occupation, depending on the season (construction was the other), the law excluded farm laborers. The law required an employer to provide medical coverage and time lost for injuries. It also compensated death and permanent injuries.

Without workers compensation, injured workers had to depend on local charity and whatever government benefit they could eke out. This was a considerable burden on their families and the community at large.

The legal action began when **Genoveva Puga** brought suit against **Donna Fruit** over the death of her son, who was crushed to death when a forklift malfunctioned and an orange crate fell on him. Her case went to the **Texas Supreme Court**, which gave her an opening to challenge the workers' compensation exclusion.

Then, hand-in-hand with political organizing, a group of **UFW** workers filed a class action in **Travis County District Court**, alleging that their exclusion violated the state constitution's **Equal Rights Amendment** because it discriminated against them as an ethnicity class. The ERA forbids discrimination based on race, ethnic origin, religion, color, and sex.

The 1983 legislative session that preceded the lawsuit saw a midnight filibuster of a proposed law on the session's last day that would have covered farm workers. **Gov. Mark White**, to his credit, called a special session the next day before legislators left town to implement a comprehensive study group to recommend a law that would cover farm workers. Lt. Gov. **Bill Hobby** led the effort.

**Judge Harley Clark** declared the exclusion unconstitutional, which gave impetus to **Gov. White's** legislative strategy and led to a law in 1985 that included farm laborers under workers compensation.

## LA UNION DEL PUEBLO ENTERO

by Juanita Valdez Cox

**César Chávez** founded **La Union del Pueblo Entero (LUPE)** in 1989 as the non-profit, community organizing arm of the farm worker movement. **LUPE** was founded on the belief that when people work together, they can impact change. **César** realized that workers faced serious issues in their communities. The **United Farm Workers** would concentrate on workplace issues and **LUPE** on community issues, i.e., immigration, health, education, colonia infrastructure, civic engagement.

**LUPE's** strength is found in its 7000+ membership base from which lead-ers transform their communities. Our members impact change for themselves and their communities. Their paying annual membership dues reflects their com-mitment to this process and necessary activism to make these changes.

**LUPE** arrived in South Texas in 2003 and in meeting its goals faced daunting challenges by Federal and State government but has effected changes beginning in 2005 in collaboration with other organizations as follows:

- (1) passed legislation authorizing counties to spend a portion of CDBG funds for street lights in Colonias.
- (2) filed a lawsuit against Department of Homeland Security to stop them from checking documents of residents being evacuated during natural disasters and also sued FEMA that had been denying assistance to low income families whose homes were damaged by Hurricane Dolly.
- (3) Collaborated with other organizations to defeat over 100 anti-immigrant bills in the Texas Legislature.
- (4) Working again in collaboration with other valley organizations obtained \$14 million for drainage improvements in colonias.
- (5) **LUPE** won a lawsuit against the State of Texas for discriminating against low-income and minority voters by passing the most restrictive Voter ID law in the country.
- (6) As a plaintiff, won a lawsuit against the State of Texas for denying birth certificates to U.S. born children of undocumented parents.



from left to right: Ismael Diaz, Baldemar Diaz, Dolores Rodriguez, Guadalupe Guzman, Herminia Ramirez, Daria Vera, seated is Librado de la Cruz



Credit to Phil Oakley. Eugene Nelson on the right.

# VIOLENCE IN RIO GRANDE CITY STRIKE

BY ALEX MORENO, JR.

In 1966 I joined **Ernie Cortes** and other UT students in organizing the **Farmworker Support Committee** to assist the striking workers in **Rio Grande City, Texas**. The strike of melon workers started in June of 1966 and grew to over 1,000 farmworkers signed up with the **United Farmworkers Organizing Committee (UFWOC)**. Support groups were set up in **Austin, San Antonio, Dallas, Houston** and **Corpus Christi** to gather donated food and clothing for the strikers. Those supplies were delivered to the workers by volunteers from the Mexican-American community and from local labor unions. These were the first efforts taken throughout **Texas** in what became the Chicano movement. Students involved in these committees later helped form **MAYO** and other youth groups.

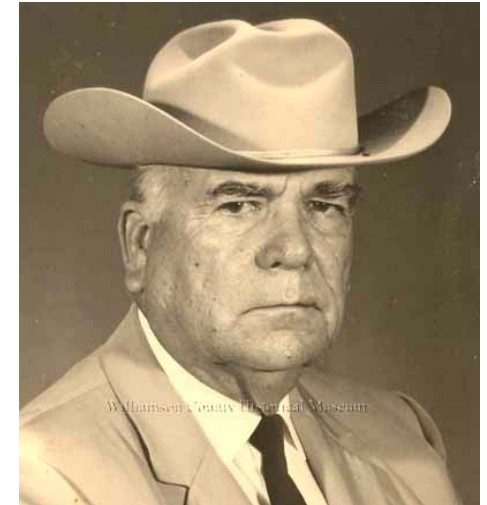
In late May of 1967, I volunteered to assist the huelgistas in picketing and other activities taking place in **Rio Grande City**. The Union was conducting picket lines on the railroad line where melons were shipped. **Texas Rangers** had been arresting those picketing and threatening the lives of several by holding them within inches of the moving train. Earlier the **Rangers** had made many arrests and threats to workers in their attempts to end the farmworker strike.

**Texas Rangers** had a long history of fighting unions and using violence to stop strikes. The **Rangers** had been used in agricultural disputes, in railroad strikes, in oilfield labor stoppages, at seaports and other labor disputes. Arrests would deter unions as it tied up funds in posting bonds and intimidated the strikers. The **Rio Grande City** strike would prove to be their last labor dispute.

In one evening in late May of 1967, I was at the union hall when **Ranger Captain A. Y. Allee** came by looking for **Magdaleno Dimas**, a union supporter. Fearing that the **Rangers** might try to harm him, **Ray Chandler** and I went to warn him to remain unarmed and non-violent as **Cesar Chavez** directed. As we left the house, we saw the **Texas Rangers** drive up. As I walked through the gate to the street, **Captain Allee** grabbed my neck and pulled me toward him as he shoved a shotgun into my ribs. I did not know whether I would be shot or only banged up. I shortly realized that I would not be seriously harmed but I watched as about 30 police officers entered the small house and proceeded to beat up **Magdaleno Dimas** and **Benito Rodriguez**. For a few minutes the house shook as the beating took place.

**Dimas** would suffer a concussion and be hospitalized for four days. Both men had many bruises where they were hit with weapons and kicked where they fell. **Rodriguez** broke a finger. **Dimas** was arrested for evading arrest and the rest of us for assisting in evading arrest. The arrest warrant was signed by the Justice of the Peace outside the house after **Chandler** and I were detained.

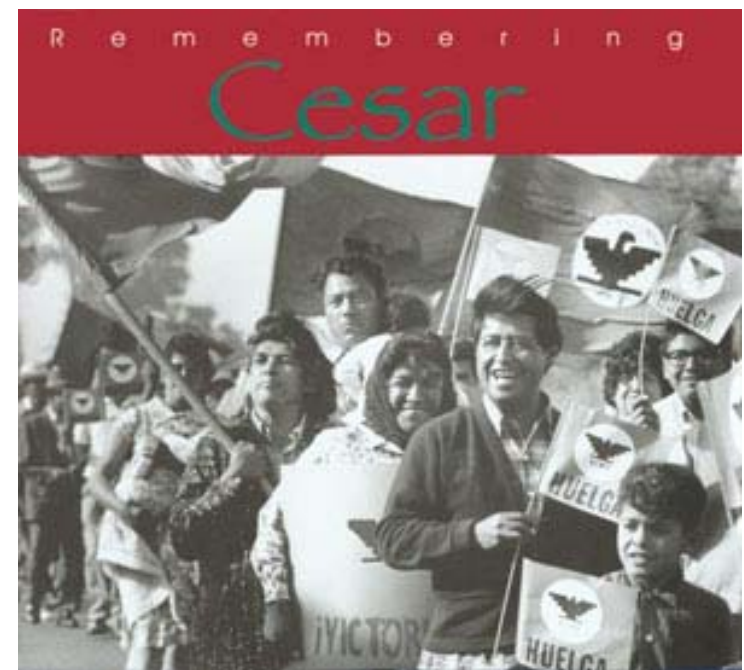
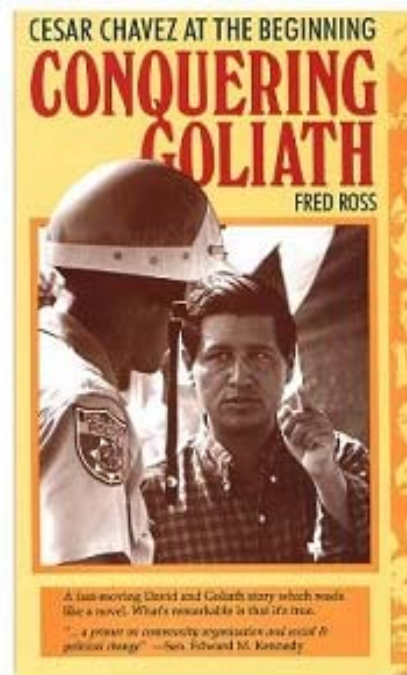
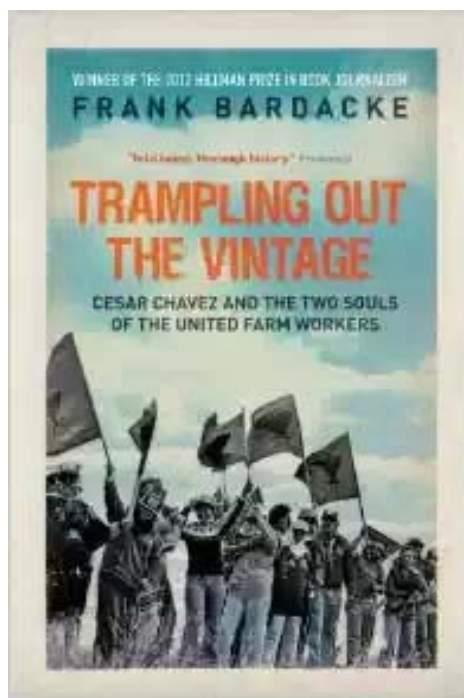
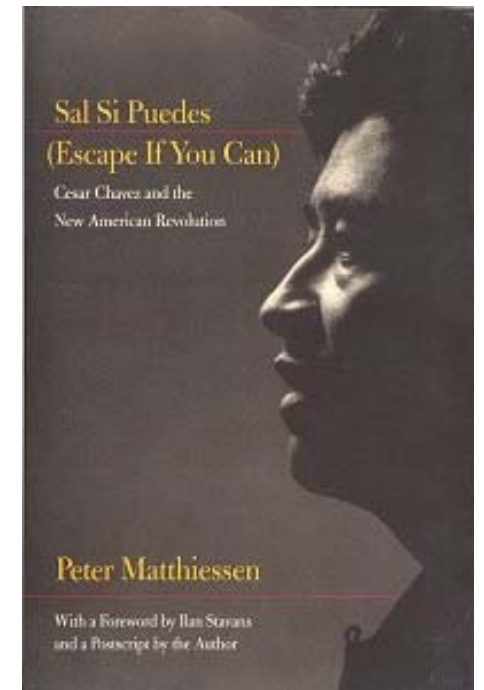
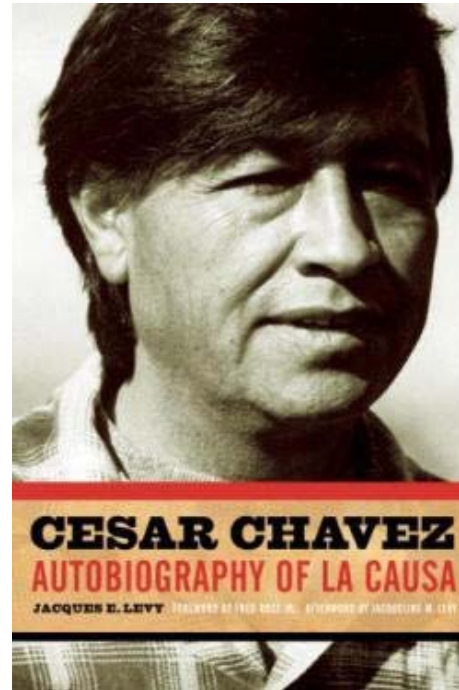
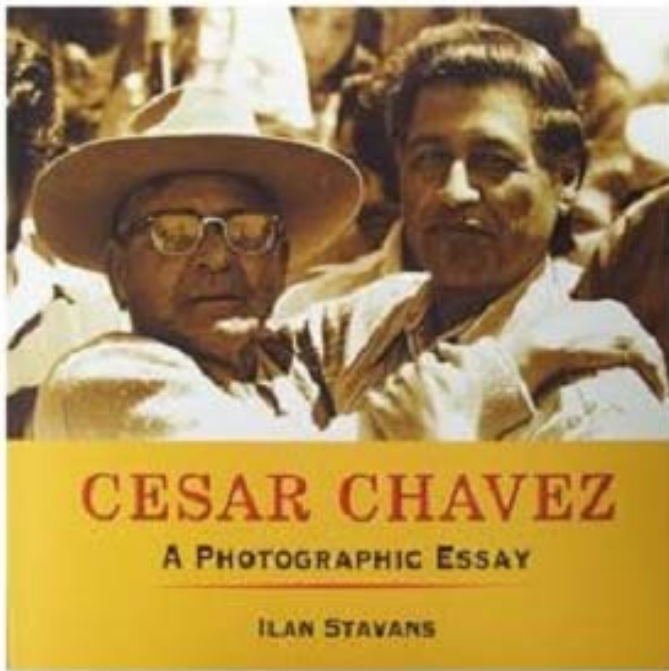
Later that year, the union and its supporters filed suit against **Captain Allee** and the **State of Texas** seeking to stop the unlawful actions in the name of law enforcement. It took three years for the Court to rule that the **Rangers** were violating the **U.S. Constitution** and declaring five **Texas** labor laws unconstitutional. On appeal, the **U. S. Supreme Court** upheld the injunction against the **Rangers** and most of the relief sought. No challenge was made to the factual allegations determined by the trial court. Since that case, the **Texas Rangers** have not intervened in any union activities though it was too late to help those **Rio Grande City** strikers.



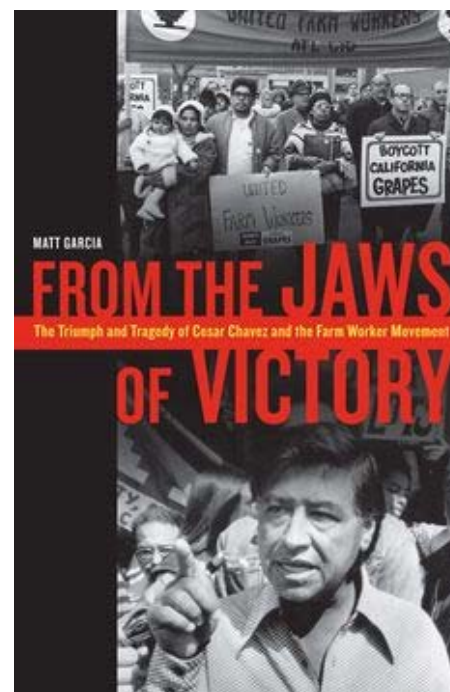
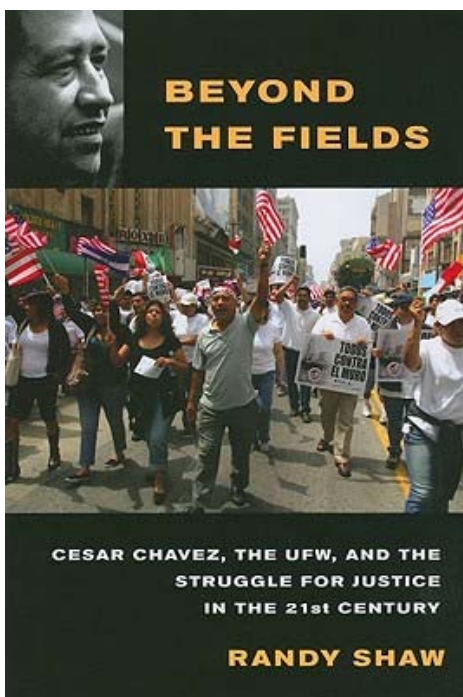
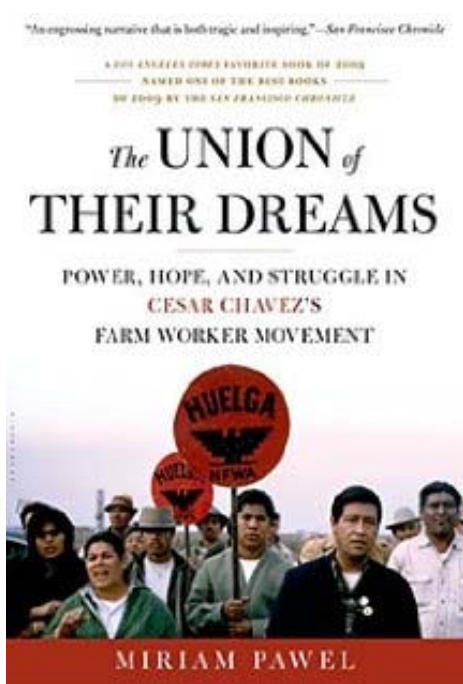
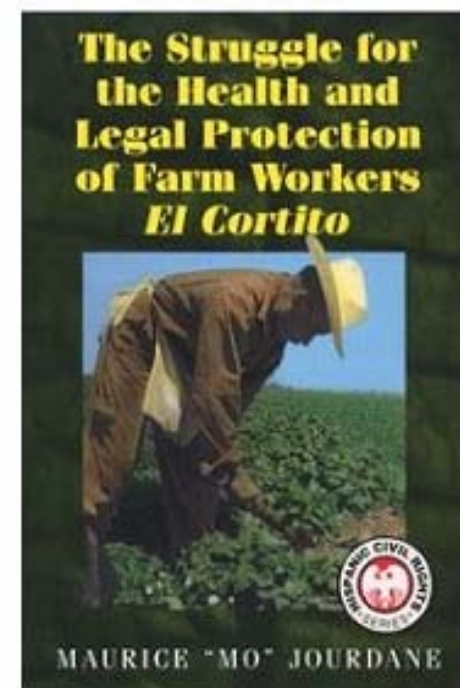
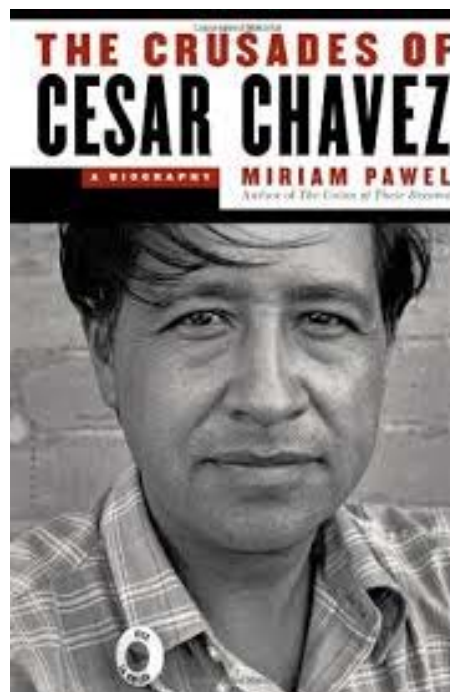
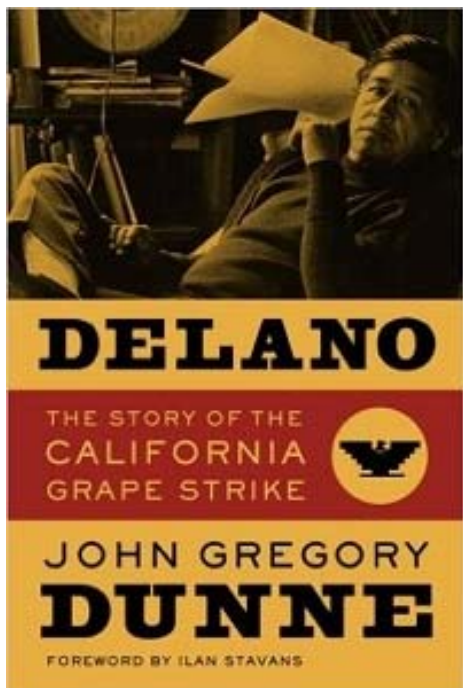
ABOVE: Captain A. Y. Allee, Texas Rangers Company "D"



# Books on the Farm Workers Movement



# Libros sobre el movimiento del campesino



# Farm Worker Vocabulary

Spanish	English	Spanish	English
La pisca	Cotton picking	Cebolla	onion
Jalinche	Harlingen	Repollo	cabbage
Brosvil	Brownsville	Naranja	oranges
Robesto	Robstown	Bodega	the produce shed
Lobica	Lubbock	Toronja	grapefruit
al norte	migrating north	Andamos en el amarre	tying greens/herbs
al oes	going to West Texas	Andamos por pieza	being paid by the piece
cosecha	crop	Melon	cantaloupe
temporada	season	Sandia	watermelon
el azadon cortito	short handled hoe	Tomate	tomatoes
la saca	cotton picking sack	Lechuga	lettuce
el patron	the owner	La romana	scale used to weigh cotton sacks
aguas	careful, here comes the owner	Rio Bravo	Rio Grande
tirar la piedra	taking a squat	El gorro	hat or woman's sun bonnet
desenraice	clearing land of mesquite	El campo	the ag fields
surco	row	El campo	Labor camp
riego	irrigation	Esquirol	scab, strike breaker
Limburgo	Edinburg	A medias	grower takes half, worker takes half
Tapiar	harvest onions	Huelga	strike

¡Viva la Causa!



*Lloyd Doggett addresses Farmworkers Convention 1984*

Rep. Lloyd Doggett

*He Works For Us*

Paid for by Lloyd Doggett for U.S. Congress Committee



Huelga Artist: Andy Zermeno, UFWOC