



*A female striker holds a UFW eagle flag and covers her face to hide her identity during the San Luis strike, San Luis, Arizona, 1974. Photo courtesy of Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University; photographer Ben Garza.*

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## **Appendix A: Cesar Chavez Special Resource Study Legislation**

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### **PUBLIC LAW 110-229—MAY 8, 2008**

#### **SEC. 325. CESAR E. CHAVEZ STUDY.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 3 years after the date on which funds are made available to carry out this section, the Secretary of the Interior (referred to in this section as the "Secretary") shall complete a special resource study of sites in the State of Arizona, the State of California, and other States that are significant to the life of Cesar E. Chavez and the farm labor movement in the western United States to determine—

- (1) appropriate methods for preserving and interpreting the sites; and
- (2) whether any of the sites meets the criteria for listing on the National Register of Historic Places or designation as a national historic landmark under—
  - (A) the Act of August 21, 1935 (16 U.S.C. 461 et seq.); or
  - (B) the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

(b) REQUIREMENTS.—In conducting the study authorized under subsection (a), the Secretary shall—

- (1) consider the criteria for the study of areas for potential inclusion in the National Park System under section 8(b)(2) of Public Law 91-383 (16 U.S.C. 1a-5(b)(2)); and
- (2) consult with—
  - (A) the Cesar E. Chavez Foundation;
  - (B) the United Farm Workers Union; and
  - (C) State and local historical associations and societies, including any State historic preservation offices in the State in which the site is located.

(c) REPORT.—On completion of the study, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate a report that describes—

- (1) the findings of the study; and
- (2) any recommendations of the Secretary.

(c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as are necessary to carry out this section.



## Appendix B: New Area Studies Act

(112 STAT. 3501, P.L. 105-391, November 13, 1998)

### TITLE III—STUDY REGARDING ADDITION OF NEW NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM AREAS

#### SEC. 301. SHORT TITLE.

This title may be cited as the “National Park System New Areas Studies Act”.

#### SEC. 302. PURPOSE.

It is the purpose of this title to reform the process by which areas are considered for addition to the National Park System.

#### SEC. 303. STUDY OF ADDITION OF NEW NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM AREAS.

Section 8 of Public Law 91–383 (commonly known as the National Park System General Authorities Act; 16 U.S.C. 1a–5) is amended as follows:

- (1) By inserting “GENERAL AUTHORITY.—” after “(a)”.
- (2) By striking the second through the sixth sentences of subsection (a).
- (3) By redesignating the last two sentences of subsection (a) as subsection (f) and inserting in the first of such sentences before the words “For the purposes of carrying” the following:  
“(f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—”.
- (4) By inserting the following after subsection (a):

#### “(b) STUDIES OF AREAS FOR POTENTIAL ADDITION.—

(1) At the beginning of each calendar year, along with the annual budget submission, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Resources of the House of Representatives and to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the United States Senate a list of areas recommended for study for potential inclusion in the National Park System.

“(2) In developing the list to be submitted under this subsection, the Secretary shall consider—

- “(A) those areas that have the greatest potential to meet the established criteria of national significance, suitability, and feasibility;
- “(B) themes, sites, and resources not already adequately represented in the National Park System; and
- “(C) public petition and Congressional resolutions.

“(3) No study of the potential of an area for inclusion in the National Park System may be initiated after the date of enactment of this subsection, except as provided by specific authorization of an Act of Congress.

“(4) Nothing in this Act shall limit the authority of the National Park Service to conduct preliminary resource assessments, gather data on potential study areas, provide technical and planning assistance, prepare or process nominations for administrative designations, update previous studies, or complete reconnaissance surveys of individual areas requiring a total expenditure of less than \$25,000.

“(5) Nothing in this section shall be construed to apply to or to affect or alter the study of any river segment for potential addition to the national wild and scenic rivers system or to apply to or to affect or alter the study of any trail for potential addition to the national trails system.

#### “(c) REPORT.—

(1) The Secretary shall complete the study for each area for potential inclusion in the National Park System within 3 complete fiscal years following the date on which funds are first made available for such purposes. Each study under this section shall be prepared with appropriate opportunity for public involvement, including at least one public meeting in the vicinity of the area under study, and after reasonable efforts to notify potentially affected landowners and State and local governments.

“(2) In conducting the study, the Secretary shall consider whether the area under study—

- “(A) possesses nationally significant natural or cultural resources and represents one of the most important examples of a particular resource type in the country; and
- “(B) is a suitable and feasible addition to the system. “

(3) Each study—

“(A) shall consider the following factors with regard to the area being studied—

“(i) the rarity and integrity of the resources;

“(ii) the threats to those resources;

“(iii) similar resources are already protected in the National Park System or in other public or private ownership;

“(iv) the public use potential;

“(v) the interpretive and educational potential;

“(vi) costs associated with acquisition, development and operation;

“(vii) the socioeconomic impacts of any designation;

“(viii) the level of local and general public support; and

“(ix) whether the area is of appropriate configuration to ensure long-term resource protection and visitor use;

“(B) shall consider whether direct National Park Service management or alternative protection by other public agencies or the private sector is appropriate for the area;

“(C) shall identify what alternative or combination of alternatives would in the professional judgment of the Director

of the National Park Service be most effective and efficient in protecting significant resources and providing for public enjoyment; and

“(D) may include any other information which the Secretary deems to be relevant.

“(4) Each study shall be completed in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

“(5) The letter transmitting each completed study to Congress shall contain a recommendation regarding the Secretary’s preferred management option for the area.

“(d) NEW AREA STUDY OFFICE.—The Secretary shall designate a single office to be assigned to prepare all new area studies and to implement other functions of this section.

“(e) LIST OF AREAS.—At the beginning of each calendar year, along with the annual budget submission, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Resources of the House of Representatives and to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate a list of areas which have been previously studied which contain primarily historical resources, and a list of areas which have been previously studied which contain primarily natural resources, in numerical order of priority for addition to the National Park System. In developing the lists, the Secretary should consider threats to resource values, cost escalation factors, and other factors listed in subsection (c) of this section. The Secretary should only include on the lists areas for which the supporting data is current and accurate.”

(5) By adding at the end of subsection (f) (as designated by paragraph (3) of this section) the following: “For carrying out subsections (b) through (d) there are authorized to be appropriated \$2,000,000 for each fiscal year.”

## Appendix C: 2006 NPS Management Policies (Sections 1.2 and 1.3)

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### 1.2 THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM

The number and diversity of parks within the national park system grew as a result of a government reorganization in 1933, another following World War II, and yet another during the 1960s. Today there are nearly 400 units in the national park system. These units are variously designated as national parks, monuments, preserves, lakeshores, seashores, wild and scenic rivers, trails, historic sites, military parks, battlefields, historical parks, recreation areas, memorials, and parkways. Regardless of the many names and official designations of the park units that make up the national park system, all represent some nationally significant aspect of our natural or cultural heritage. They are the physical remnants of our past—great scenic and natural places that continue to evolve, repositories of outstanding recreational opportunities, classrooms of our heritage, and the legacy we leave to future generations—and they warrant the highest standard of protection.

It should be noted that, in accordance with provisions of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, any component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System that is administered by the Park Service is automatically a part of the national park system. Although there is no analogous provision in the National Trails System Act, several national trails managed by the Service have been included in the national park system. These national rivers and trails that are part of the national park system are subject to the policies contained herein, as well as to any other requirements specified in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act or the National Trails System Act.

### 1.3 CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION

Congress declared in the National Park System General Authorities Act of 1970 that areas comprising the national park system are cumulative expressions of a single national heritage. Potential additions to the national park system should therefore contribute in their own special way to a system that fully represents the broad spectrum of natural and cultural resources that characterize our nation. The National Park Service is responsible for conducting professional studies of potential additions to the national park system when specifically authorized by

an act of Congress, and for making recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior, the President, and Congress. Several laws outline criteria for units of the national park system and for additions to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System and the National Trails System.

To receive a favorable recommendation from the Service, a proposed addition to the national park system must (1) possess nationally significant natural or cultural resources, (2) be a suitable addition to the system, (3) be a feasible addition to the system, and (4) require direct NPS management instead of protection by other public agencies or the private sector. These criteria are designed to ensure that the national park system includes only the most outstanding examples of the nation's natural and cultural resources. These criteria also recognize that there are other management alternatives for preserving the nation's outstanding resources.

#### 1.3.1 NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

NPS professionals, in consultation with subject-matter experts, scholars, and scientists, will determine whether a resource is nationally significant. An area will be considered nationally significant if it meets all of the following criteria:

1. It is an outstanding example of a particular type of resource.
2. It possesses exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the natural or cultural themes of our nation's heritage.
3. It offers superlative opportunities for public enjoyment or for scientific study.
4. It retains a high degree of integrity as a true, accurate, and relatively unspoiled example of a resource.
5. National significance for cultural resources will be evaluated by applying the National Historic Landmarks criteria contained in 36 CFR Part 65 (*Code of Federal Regulations*).

#### 1.3.2 SUITABILITY

An area is considered suitable for addition to the national park system if it represents a natural or cultural resource type that is not already adequately represented in the national park system, or is not

comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment by other federal agencies; tribal, state, or local governments; or the private sector.

Adequacy of representation is determined on a case-by-case basis by comparing the potential addition to other comparably managed areas representing the same resource type, while considering differences or similarities in the character, quality, quantity, or combination of resource values. The comparative analysis also addresses rarity of the resources, interpretive and educational potential, and similar resources already protected in the national park system or in other public or private ownership. The comparison results in a determination of whether the proposed new area would expand, enhance, or duplicate resource protection or visitor use opportunities found in other comparably managed areas.

### **1.3.3 FEASIBILITY**

To be feasible as a new unit of the national park system, an area must be (1) of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure sustainable resource protection and visitor enjoyment (taking into account current and potential impacts from sources beyond proposed park boundaries), and (2) capable of efficient administration by the Service at a reasonable cost.

In evaluating feasibility, the Service considers a variety of factors for a study area, such as the following:

- size
- boundary configurations
- current and potential uses of the study area and surrounding lands
- landownership patterns
- public enjoyment potential
- costs associated with acquisition, development, restoration, and operation
- access
- current and potential threats to the resources
- existing degradation of resources
- staffing requirements
- local planning and zoning
- the level of local and general public support (including landowners)
- the economic/socioeconomic impacts of designation as a unit of the national park system

The feasibility evaluation also considers the ability of the National Park Service to undertake new management responsibilities in light of current and projected availability of funding and personnel.

An overall evaluation of feasibility will be made after taking into account all of the above factors. However, evaluations may sometimes identify concerns or conditions, rather than simply reach a yes or no conclusion. For example, some new areas may be feasible additions to the national park system only if landowners are willing to sell, or the boundary encompasses specific areas necessary for visitor access, or state or local governments will provide appropriate assurances that adjacent land uses will remain compatible with the study area's resources and values.

### **1.3.4 DIRECT NPS MANAGEMENT**

There are many excellent examples of the successful management of important natural and cultural resources by other public agencies, private conservation organizations, and individuals. The National Park Service applauds these accomplishments and actively encourages the expansion of conservation activities by state, local, and private entities and by other federal agencies. Unless direct NPS management of a studied area is identified as the clearly superior alternative, the Service will recommend that one or more of these other entities assume a lead management role, and that the area not receive national park system status.

Studies will evaluate an appropriate range of management alternatives and will identify which alternative or combination of alternatives would, in the professional judgment of the Director, be most effective and efficient in protecting significant resources and providing opportunities for appropriate public enjoyment. Alternatives for NPS management will not be developed for study areas that fail to meet any one of the four criteria for inclusion listed in section 1.3.

In cases where a study area's resources meet criteria for national significance but do not meet other criteria for inclusion in the national park system, the Service may instead recommend an alternative status, such as "affiliated area." To be eligible for affiliated area status, the area's resources must (1) meet the same standards for significance and suitability that apply to units of the national park system; (2) require some special recognition or technical assistance beyond what is available through existing NPS programs; (3) be managed in accordance with the policies and standards that apply to units of the national park system; and (4) be assured of sustained resource protection, as documented in a formal agreement between the Service and the nonfederal management entity. Designation as a "heritage area" is another option that may be recommended. Heritage



areas have a nationally important, distinctive assemblage of resources that is best managed for conservation, recreation, education, and continued use through partnerships among public and private entities at the local or regional level. Either of these two alternatives (and others as well) would recognize

an area's importance to the nation without requiring or implying management by the National Park Service.



## Appendix D: National Historic Landmark Criteria

### Sec 65.4

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The criteria applied to evaluate properties for possible designation as National Historic Landmarks or possible determination of eligibility for National Historic Landmark designation is listed below. These criteria shall be used by NPS in the preparation, review and evaluation of National Historic Landmark studies. They shall be used by the Advisory Board in reviewing National Historic Landmark studies and preparing recommendations to the Secretary. Properties shall be designated National Historic Landmarks only if they are nationally significant. Although assessments of national significance should reflect both public perceptions and professional judgments, the evaluations of properties being considered for landmark designation are undertaken by professionals, including historians, architectural historians, archeologists and anthropologists familiar with the broad range of the nation's resources and historical themes. The criteria applied by these specialists to potential landmarks do not define significance nor set a rigid standard for quality. Rather, the criteria establish the qualitative framework in which a comparative professional analysis of national significance can occur. The final decision on whether a property possesses national significance is made by the Secretary on the basis of documentation including the comments and recommendations of the public who participate in the designation process.

(a) Specific Criteria of National Significance: The quality of national significance is ascribed to districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States in history, architecture, archeology, engineering and culture and that possess a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, and:

- 1) That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to, and are identified with, or that outstandingly represent, the broad national patterns of United States history and from which an understanding and appreciation of those patterns may be gained; or

- (2) That are associated importantly with the lives of persons nationally significant in the history of the United States; or
- (3) That represent some great idea or ideal of the American people; or
- (4) That embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen exceptionally valuable for a study of a period, style or method of construction, or that represent a significant, distinctive and exceptional entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- (5) That are composed of integral parts of the environment not sufficiently significant by reason of historical association or artistic merit to warrant individual recognition but collectively compose an entity of exceptional historical or artistic significance, or outstandingly commemorate or illustrate a way of life or culture; or
- (6) That have yielded or may be likely to yield information of major scientific importance by revealing new cultures, or by shedding light upon periods of occupation over large areas of the United States. Such sites are those which have yielded, or which may reasonably be expected to yield, data affecting theories, concepts and ideas to a major degree.

(b) Ordinarily, cemeteries, birthplaces, graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years are not eligible for designation. Such properties, however, will qualify if they fall within the following categories:

- (1) A religious property deriving its primary national significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or

- (2) A building or structure removed from its original location but which is nationally significant primarily for its architectural merit, or for association with persons or events of transcendent importance in the nation's history and the association consequential; or
- (3) A site of a building or structure no longer standing but the person or event associated with it is of transcendent importance in the nation's history and the association consequential; or
- (4) A birthplace, grave or burial if it is of a historical figure of transcendent national significance and no other appropriate site, building or structure directly associated with the productive life of that person exists; or
- (5) A cemetery that derives its primary national significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, or from an exceptionally distinctive design or from an exceptionally significant event; or
- (6) A reconstructed building or ensemble of buildings of extraordinary national significance when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other buildings or structures with the same association have survived; or
- (7) A property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own national historical significance; or
- (8) A property achieving national significance within the past 50 years if it is of extraordinary national importance.

## **Appendix E: National Historic Trail Criteria**

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From the National Trails System Act (P.L. 90-543, as amended through P.L. 111-11, March 30, 2009)(also found in *United States Code*, Volume 16, Sections 1241-1251):

SEC. 5. [16USC1244] (a) National scenic and national historic trails shall be authorized and designated only by Act of Congress...

SEC. 5. [16USC1244] (b) (11) To qualify for designation as a national historic trail, a trail must meet all three of the following criteria:

(A) It must be a trail or route established by historic use and must be historically significant as a result of that use. The route need not currently exist as a discernible trail to qualify, but its location must be sufficiently known to permit evaluation of public recreation and historical interest potential. A designated trail should generally accurately follow the historic route, but may deviate somewhat on occasion of necessity to avoid difficult routing through subsequent development, or to provide some route variations offering a more pleasurable recreational experience. Such deviations shall be so noted on site. Trail segments no longer possible to travel by trail due to subsequent development as motorized transportation routes may be designated and marked onsite as segments which link to the historic trail.

(B) It must be of national significance with respect to any of several broad facets of American history, such as trade and commerce, exploration, migration and settlement, or military campaigns. To qualify as nationally significant, historic use of the trail must have had a far reaching effect on broad patterns of American culture. Trails significant in the history of native Americans may be included.

(C) It must have significant potential for public recreational use or historical interest based on historic interpretation and appreciation. The potential for such use is generally greater along roadless segments developed as historic trails and at historic sites associated with the trail. The presence of recreation potential not related to historic appreciation is not sufficient justification for designation under this category.



## Appendix F: Historical Context, Cesar Chavez and the Farm Labor Movement

### Introduction

This appendix describes the historic context for identifying resources associated with Cesar Chavez and the farm labor movement. The purpose of this historic context is to assist in the identification and evaluation of properties associated with César Chavez and the farm worker movement in the American West. It provides an historical overview intended to illustrate the relevance, general relationships, and national, regional, or local importance of associated properties.

This historic overview has been adapted from the 2004 draft document titled, “Cesar Chavez and the Farm worker Movement in the American West Theme Study” prepared for the NPS by the University of Washington Department of History’s Preservation Planning and Design Program (Rast, Dubrow and Casserly 2004). In 2009 and 2010, the COPH identified and evaluated 84 sites in California and Arizona with historical significance related to Cesar Chavez and the farm labor movement in the American West. Sites were identified through primary sources archived within the Farmworker Movement Documentation Project, books, essays, oral history interviews, declassified FBI surveillance files, back issues of the United Farm Workers of America (UFW) newsletters, and published secondary sources. This work was preceded by the 2004 draft document titled, “Cesar Chavez and the Farm worker Movement in the American West Theme Study” prepared for the NPS.

### Historic Context

This overview of historic contexts provides an historical overview intended to illustrate the relevance, general relationships, and national, regional, or local importance of properties associated with Cesar Chavez (1927-1993) and the farm labor movement in the American West.

During the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, the structure of the agricultural industry in the American West—dominated by corporate growers

and supported by government agencies—hindered the efforts of farm workers to form the attachments to

place that most Americans take for granted. Noted Chicano historian Rudy Acuna has explained that “when you are [a migrant farm worker] in a rural area, you are very vulnerable, especially if you are living from hand to mouth. There is very little integration of other ideas that’s taking place when you’re constantly moving . . . [you] never form a sense of place.” The structure of the agricultural industry, and the subordinate position of agricultural labor within that structure, required most farm workers to sacrifice attachments to place in order to focus simply on survival. “You’re constantly worrying if you’re going to have enough money to pay [for] the gas, or if you’re going to have enough money to buy the food,” Acuna explained. “It’s a tremendous feeling of isolation [and] fear,” one that transforms mobility into a necessity and transforms rootedness—a sense of attachment to a place—into a luxury.

The emergence of the United Farm Workers (UFW) during the 1960s, gave farm workers the opportunity to create meaningful places in California and elsewhere in the American West and form permanent attachments to them. Some of these attachments came as farm workers claimed public places, if only temporarily, through direct action—picketing ranches and supermarkets, marching down streets and through valleys, occupying the steps of courthouses and capitol buildings. For farm workers living transient lives, properties owned by the UFW such as the Forty Acres and Nuestra Señora Reina de La Paz came to represent the strength and permanence of their union.

Cesar Chavez appealed to Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants regardless of class, generation, ideology, or regional identity. Social leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr., welcomed Cesar as a brother in the shared “struggle for freedom, for dignity, and for humanity,” and Senator Robert Kennedy counted Cesar as an ally and a friend. National labor leaders, including UAW President Walter Reuther, recognized Chavez as an important force in the labor movement. Chavez has also been the subject of a wide range of scholarly work. During his lifetime, Chavez became the subject of more published work than any other Latino leader, past or present. Even Chavez’s strongest opponents acknowledged that

farm workers' lives and working conditions had improved as a result of his efforts.

Facing seemingly insurmountable odds, Chavez led a movement of thousands of farm labor families and their supporters as they created the nation's first permanent farm workers' union. Chavez then steered that union to a series of unprecedented victories: contracts that covered more than 100,000 workers and created union-run hiring halls, provided healthcare plans, established grievance procedures, raised farm workers' wages above the poverty level, mandated the provision of clean drinking water and hand-washing facilities in the fields, and regulated the use of pesticides. Under Chavez's leadership, the union established dozens of service centers providing credit unions, health clinics, co-op stores, and child care, and it created the nation's first pension plan for farm workers. Most notably, Chavez's advocacy and the power of the farm labor movement as a whole helped secure the first law governing farm labor in the continental United States (the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975) and the legal banishment of *el cortito* (the short-handled hoe) from the fields of California.

What Chavez and other farm labor movement leaders accomplished extends well beyond contracts and labor laws. Cesar Chavez cultivated a life-long commitment to bringing respect, dignity, and democracy to all of the nation's socially-marginalized groups. He focused first on farm workers, inspiring them to look their employers in the eyes, to stand up for their rights, and to take active roles in creating their union and wielding its power. He then broadened his focus to include all Latinos, serving them as a symbol of what could be accomplished in this country through unified, courageous, and nonviolent action. And yet he refused to settle for the racial nationalism ascribed to him by those who identified him as a leader of *La Raza*. What Chavez fought for—respect, dignity, and democracy—he wanted all of humanity to share. Before the end of his lifetime, Cesar Chavez was recognized as much more than a leader of farm workers. He was one of the most important civil rights leaders in the U.S.; he was a spiritual leader whose faith inspired fellow Catholics and other Christians; he was a pioneering leader in the modern environmental movement; and he was a staunch advocate for the poor.

## I. Cesar Chavez's Early Life and Formative Experiences in the American West, 1927-1952

The story of Cesar Chavez's boyhood and early adulthood reveals much about why he became a successful labor organizer and social leader. The experiences Chavez faced and the lessons he learned during his youth would serve him well during his long struggle to build a farm workers' union.

### THE CHAVEZ FAMILY HOMESTEAD

Cesar's grandfather, Cesario, came to the U.S. in the 1880s from Chihuahua, Mexico. Fleeing the injustices of the hacienda system, Cesario crossed into El Paso, Texas, and found work on the railroads and in the fields of Arizona. By 1888, Cesario had saved enough money to send for his wife, Dorotea, and their fourteen children—including Cesar's father Librado, then two years old. Cesario decided in the late 1890s to homestead in the North Gila Valley, twenty miles north of Yuma, Arizona. With Librado's help, Cesario also built a sturdy adobe farmhouse with thick walls, wood floors, and a flat roof made of elm and cottonwood beams and a layer of dirt on top.

In 1924 Librado married Juana Estrada. Soon after their first daughter (Rita) was born in 1925, Librado and Juana purchased a business that included a grocery store, an auto repair shop, and a pool hall located about one mile from the Chavez homestead north of Yuma. The couple made their home in the same building as the grocery store and there, on March 31, 1927, Cesario Estrada Chavez was born. With a growing family, Librado decided to expand his business. The family borrowed money and purchased forty acres of land surrounding the property. Late in 1932, Librado's debts forced him to sell his property and move the family back with his mother on the Chavez homestead, where they would live for the next six years.

During these boyhood years in the North Gila Valley, Cesar learned lessons that would stay with him for the rest of his life. Many of these came from his mother, who frequently told her children *cuentos* (stories with moral lessons), offered them *consejos* (advice), and taught them *dichos* (proverbs) that dealt with virtues such as honesty and obedience. Juana's lessons helped inspire Cesar's life-long commitment to nonviolence. Juana taught her boys that "It's better to say that [a man] ran from here than to say that he died here" and that "It takes two to fight" (Levy 1975). Later in life, Cesar recalled the words



his mother told him whenever he needed to drive points home to his fellow farm workers.

Cesar's mother and grandmother also passed on their devout Catholicism. Dorotea Chavez told her grandchildren stories about saints, explained Church teachings, and prepared the children for their first Communion. As the Depression years wore on, Juana increasingly sent Cesar and his siblings to find *trampitas* who could use a plate of food and a cup of coffee. Juana impressed upon Cesar the importance of sacrificing and sharing even the most meager resources with others who had less (Levy 1975).

As an adult, Cesar would look back on his childhood years on the Chavez farm with fondness. He remembered long summer days working with his father, having barbecues in the evening, and staying up into the night as his parents and relatives talked about life in Mexico. Cesar learned lessons from these stories as well. "There were stories . . . about the haciendas," he recalled, "how the big landowners treated the people, about the injustices, the cruelties, the exploitation." Such stories made him appreciate the life his family had struggled to build in the U.S. all the more.

Cesar's childhood was not idyllic. Like most Mexican-American families in this time period, the Chavez family spoke Spanish at home. Cesar discovered, however, that his language and his appearance marked him as a "dirty Mexican" at the public school in Yuma. Chavez's teachers rapped his knuckles with a ruler whenever they heard him speaking Spanish. On one occasion a teacher reprimanded Chavez for saying that he was Mexican. The teacher tried to convince him that he was just as American as his white classmates, but Cesar had trouble reconciling this explanation with the fact that Mexican Americans were viewed differently and treated unfairly in school. Not surprisingly, Cesar fared no better with his classmates, especially those whose families poured into Yuma in the mid-1930s as construction of the Imperial Dam on the Colorado River began. Fights between white and Mexican-American boys began to break out at school, and Chavez remembered with bitterness how the principal routinely blamed the Mexican-American students for any conflict. Such experiences with racism taught Chavez how discrimination made its targets feel excluded and inferior. Biographers Richard Griswold del Castillo and Richard Garcia explain that, as a result, "one of the main tenets of [Chavez's] later organizing philosophy was that neither racial nor ethnic prejudice had a place within

a farm workers' union movement" (Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1996).

### **LIFE AS MIGRANT FARM WORKERS**

During the years of the Great Depression, Cesar also became aware of the consequences of his family's marginal economic status. A grace period on back taxes owed by his father ended in 1937 and the state took legal possession of the Chavez homestead in August 1937. Librado forestalled eviction for another year and a half. During that time, Cesar gained his first exposure to life as a migrant farm worker. Late in the summer of 1937 his father joined the stream of "Okies" and other migrants heading to California, hoping to earn enough money to save the family's land. After finding a job in Oxnard and a dilapidated house to rent in the local barrio (then known as "Sonoratown"), Librado sent for Juana and the children. In California, Chavez discovered the realities of life that migrant workers and their families faced every day.

The family managed to raise enough money to move on to Brawley. The family worked feverishly in the summer cotton harvest in Brawley to earn enough money for rent, food, and gas. It became clear that Librado's plans for returning to Yuma with money to save the farm would not work out, and the family went back to the homestead penniless (Levy 1974). In March 1939 a grower bought the Chavez farm at public auction. A few days later a deputy sheriff delivered the final eviction notice and the new owner immediately began bulldozing the property. The force with which Chavez later fought to help farm workers gain economic stability can be traced, in large part, back to his childhood memories of the day that a tractor bulldozed the trees, irrigation ditches, and outbuildings he knew so well (Daniel 1987).

The Chavez family returned to southern California and began to feel the full impact of the racism faced by Mexican Americans amidst a larger stream of tens of thousands of white migrants. In California, racism often was more abrasive than in Arizona as Mexican Americans were routinely accosted by border patrolmen, interrogated and searched by police officers, kicked out of restaurants and movie theaters, and cheated by employers who considered them too docile to object (Griswold de Castillo and Garcia 1995).

After spending most of the summer of 1939 in and around San Jose, the Chavez family found work picking walnuts near Oxnard. When that harvest ended, the family again had no work and no place to

live. A fellow farm worker allowed Librado and Juana to set up a tent behind her house, but the winter was wet and cold, and thick fog from the ocean kept the family and their meager possessions constantly damp. With a lack of shoes or decent clothes, Cesar recalled the taunting he and Richard received, but he also pointed out that the school in Oxnard—one of about thirty-seven he would attend off and on before quitting after the eighth grade—was among the least of his concerns as they focused on working to supplement the family's income. Their work included sweeping out the local movie theater, shelling walnuts, chopping wood, running errands, collecting cigarette foil and empty bottles to sell, shining shoes, and selling newspapers. Cesar and his brother worked hard, following the examples set by their parents and older sister, but the family continued to earn barely enough to avoid starvation, and they often relied on the charity of others for shelter, gas money, and clothes.

Librado and Juana did not accept the harsh realities of their new situation. "We were probably one of the strikingest families in California, the first ones to leave the fields if anybody shouted '*huelga!*' [strike!]" Cesar recalled with pride. "If any family felt something was wrong and stopped working," he continued, "we immediately joined them even if we didn't know them. And if the grower didn't correct what was wrong, then they would leave, and we'd leave." The family's militancy stemmed in part from their somewhat unique position as former landowners with strong social ties. As early as 1941, Chavez was exposed to the labor movement's efforts to organize farm workers in California. A few organizers working with the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA) came to the Chavez home to speak with Cesar's father and uncle. Librado joined UCAPAWA and ended up paying dues to several different unions throughout the 1940s and '50s. As historian Cletus Daniel concludes, Librado's strong conviction that unionism was a manly act of resistance made a lasting impression on his young son (Terkel 1986, Daniel 1987, Levy 1975).

In the meantime, as the Chavez family spent the next several years developing their annual route through California, Cesar became increasingly familiar with the conditions of migrant life. Like most farm workers, the Chavez family cycled through many of the same valleys, towns, and labor camps every year. They spent winters in Brawley, tending and picking carrots, peas, cabbage, lettuce, broccoli, and watermelons with *el cortito*, the short-handle hoe that forced farm workers to twist and stoop as they moved

down the rows of crops. By springtime the family would decide whether to move to Oxnard to work beets, to Beaumont for cherries, or to the Hemet area for apricots. Through the middle of summertime they worked lima beans, corn, and chili peppers and often moved to grapes, prunes, cucumbers, and tomatoes by August. And in October every year the family would look for work in the cotton fields near Delano (Levy 1975).

It was in Delano that Cesar met his future wife, Helen Fabela. The Chavez family found space in a tent city in McFarland, and Cesar went into Delano to look around. When Cesar met Helen, they had much in common. The daughter of Mexican immigrants, Helen was born in Brawley in 1928. Her parents set her to work in the fields when she was seven years old, and her mother and four siblings felt the pinch of poverty even more after Helen's father died in 1940. Cesar and Helen soon began courting, but interruption was unavoidable as the Chavez family returned to Brawley to work the fields there (Ferris and Sandoval 1997, Levy 1975).

### DISCRIMINATION IN THE U.S. NAVY

In 1944 Chavez decided to leave the fields and volunteer for the Navy. Hundreds of thousands of young Mexican Americans, motivated by patriotism, machismo, or poverty, enlisted during World War II. Military service opened up a new world for Cesar, providing him with his first visit to a medical doctor, training in San Diego, and time in the Mariana Islands and Guam. But Chavez ultimately regarded his experience in the Navy as two of the worst years of his life. He chafed against the regimentation and discovered that the same racist sentiment that prevailed at home prevented African Americans, Filipinos, and Mexican Americans from learning trades that would allow them to escape unskilled labor upon returning to the U.S.

After two years in the Navy, Chavez received an honorable discharge and returned to his family in Delano. Two years later, Cesar and Helen were married. Following a Church ceremony in San Jose on October 22, 1948, the young couple took a two-week honeymoon and toured all of the Franciscan missions in California. Cesar was drawn to the missions as places to relax and contemplate his religious heritage. Later, the missions would serve as architectural models for his efforts to develop headquarters for the farm workers' union. Cesar and Helen moved back to Delano, where Cesar again found himself working the grape and cotton harvests.

When Cesar failed to find steady work in the spring, the couple agreed to join Cesar's parents in sharecropping, growing strawberries outside San Jose for a company that provided land, two small homes, electricity, water, fuel, and twenty-five dollars a week for groceries. The arrangement promised to free the Chavezes from the endless cycle of migration. However, the soil was poor in quality, the work was exhausting, and almost all of the meager profits went to the company. With two children and one on the way, Cesar and Helen decided to follow Cesar's brother Richard into lumber work in Crescent City, four hundred miles north of San Jose. Chavez loved the forests of northern California, but the difficulty of the work was exacerbated by relentless wind and rain. Early in 1952, the family decision to move back to San Jose put Cesar on a path that soon would intersect with those of Father Donald McDonnell and Fred Ross—two men who would change the course of his life (Levy 1975, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Taylor 1975).

With the birth of their fourth child in 1952, Cesar and Helen were on the verge of falling permanently into the cycle of poverty that had trapped many farm labor families. Cesar was frustrated by his situation, but his efforts to improve it had been stymied. Three years prior, Chavez had participated in a San Joaquin Valley cotton strike called by the National Farm Labor Union. Cesar and his parents supported the strike, and the family agreed that Cesar would participate while everyone else worked the grape harvest. Cesar joined the rallies, and eventually found his way into the daily planning meetings. He wanted to help, but Cesar was only offered menial tasks. When the strike ended after two weeks, Chavez rejoined his family.

Cesar's experience in the strike had been, in a certain way, unsettling. He saw the effort as disorganized and he wanted to learn how to avoid the mistakes he felt the NFLU had made, but there was no one to help him at this time (Taylor 1975, Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1996).

## **II. Development of the Agricultural Industry, Agricultural Labor and Agricultural Labor Activism in**

### **California and the American West Before 1960**

This section examines the development of agriculture in California, the evolution of the agricultural labor force, and the recurrent efforts during the first half of the twentieth century to organize migrant farm workers. In doing so, it reveals that farm labor leaders such as Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, Gilbert Padilla, Larry Itliong and other members of the farm labor movement owed a part of their success to the struggles and the development of strategies that had taken place during the decades leading up to the 1960s and to the evolving historical context within which they worked.

#### **THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY IN CALIFORNIA**

Spaniards began colonizing southern California in the late-eighteenth century by establishing a series of pueblos, missions, and presidios. These settlements functioned only with the well-regulated labor of Spanish peasants and American Indians. Private land grants in California were rare under Spanish rule, but they increased dramatically after Mexico declared its independence in 1821. In an effort to spur settlement and increase tax revenue, the Mexican government dispensed more than eight hundred land grants containing eight million acres of land between 1833 and 1846. American forces conquered California in 1846 and officially took possession of the territory two years later.

When California entered the Union in 1850, it had an agricultural economy dominated by massive estates whose large landowners were prohibited from using slaves but were free to maintain peon labor forces. The discovery of gold on the American River set off an unprecedented wave of emigration and subsequent commercial development in California; however the state's economic growth during the next fifty years was based primarily on the exportation of wheat and other agricultural resources (Jenkins 1985, McWilliams 1935).

As courts upheld the legal validity of almost six hundred land grants and as railroad magnates and speculators accumulated additional millions of acres of land, the trend toward concentrated landholdings and capitalist development became clear. By 1900, almost two-thirds of all arable acreage in the state was concentrated in fewer than five thousand estates, each of them larger than one thousand acres (Jenkins 1985, Kushner 1975).

This concentration of land—in the hands of individuals who, according to historian Carey McWilliams, were “growers” rather than “farmers” and operated their farms as “factories in the field”—did not go uncontested. During the last third of the nineteenth century, thousands of emigrants worked to carve out relatively modest landholdings (Vaught 1999). By 1900, three-fourths of all farms in the state were less than 175 acres in size. If the operators of industrialized farms saw themselves as businessmen and eagerly utilized labor contractors, foremen, gang labor, and piece rates in order to maximize profits, small-scale farmers saw themselves as “horticulturists” or “orchardists” who were motivated by economic success but also by their roles in the development of small, virtuous communities. Still, these farmers most often were forced onto marginal, arid lands, and their abilities to maintain their farms’ economic viability would be challenged even more during the twentieth century as large-scale landowners shifted their operations away from livestock and wheat and toward labor-intensive specialty-crop production—a shift that required access to vast amounts of irrigation water, rationalized and regulated markets, and large pools of inexpensive, migrant labor, all of which, in turn, required the support of politicians and government policies (McWilliams 1935).

Government policies regulating markets were slow to develop. Prior to the 1930s, large-scale growers formed cooperatives to negotiate with their suppliers, wholesalers, and shippers; to create grading systems that would legitimize claims to produce quality and to stabilize prices by avoiding market gluts during peak harvest times. During the Depression years, however, the California Legislature and then the U.S. Congress intervened in the market on behalf of growers. Under amendments to the Agricultural Adjustment Act passed in 1938, the federal government was empowered to organize growers’ associations, which would market products cooperatively and regulate shipments based on market condition reports supplied by the Federal Marketing Service. This worked to the advantage of the largest growers (Jenkins 1985, Gregory 1989).

### **THE AGRICULTURAL LABOR FORCE**

Perhaps one of the most important conditions for the development of the agricultural industry in California and throughout the American West was the existence and regulation of large pools of migrant labor. The need for agricultural labor in California remained moderate until after the worldwide collapse of the wheat market in the 1870s, after which, large-scale

growers began to shift their operations to the production of specialty crops. The transcontinental railroad and the development of refrigerated cars allowed growers to get their perishable crops to eastern markets, but growers faced a new need for workers who would accept low wages, poor working conditions, and erratic employment. Government policies—especially those governing foreign relations and immigration, freedoms of speech and assembly, and rights to organize unions—would help provide and regulate those workers (McWilliams 1935, Kushner 1975).

Growers turned initially to Chinese immigrants. Most Chinese immigrants originally worked for mining operations or railroad companies but, the completion of the transcontinental railroad left more than ten thousand Chinese laborers without work. Large-scale growers saw this newly available pool of workers as an opportunity to meet their needs. In the view of growers, Chinese farm workers were cheap, hardworking, and docile (meaning they would not strike). However, their perceived willingness to accept conditions that white workers would not tolerate, their foreignness, and the fact that they enabled large-scale growers to cut labor costs made the Chinese targets of attacks from organized labor, nativists, small-scale farmers, and other groups. Anti-Chinese sentiment reached new heights with the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and resulted in a violent effort to drive Chinese farm workers from the fields (McWilliams 1935, Kushner 1975, Daniel 1981).

As the number of Chinese laborers declined, growers turned to Japanese laborers who were willing to work for very low wages, did not ask for housing or board, and accepted even the most arduous tasks in the rapidly expanding sugar beet fields. By 1910, more than thirty thousand Japanese immigrants, more than one third of the total farm labor force, were working in California’s agricultural industry. Japanese farm workers also began to acquire land of their own. In 1910, Japanese farmers owned almost 17,000 acres of farmland in the state and controlled (contracted for, leased, or shared) an additional 178,000 acres. The Japanese immigrants’ ability to thrive in the agricultural industry made them targets for racist attacks. The nation’s first Alien Land Act, denying property rights to Japanese immigrants, was passed in California in 1913. Mounting racist hostility, the passage of Alien Land Acts in other western states, and restrictions on Japanese immigration led to a decline in the Japanese farm labor force (Daniel 1981, McWilliams 1935, Kushner 1975, Jenkins 1985, Almaguer 1994, Garcia 2001).

Growers had identified this decline by the 1920s and began turning toward Filipino and Mexican laborers. Filipino farm labor was appealing to growers for several reasons. As a result of American imperialism in the Philippines, Filipinos were classified as U.S. “nationals” and free from immigration restrictions; however, Filipinos could not vote, own land, or apply for citizenship. They were considered, moreover, to be hard-working, docile, and willing to accept low wages. The first large group of Filipino immigrants, ninety-four percent of whom were male, came to California in 1923 and by 1930, thirty thousand Filipinos resided at least part of the year in California. This group of immigrants again helped meet growers’ needs for labor, but racist hostility and economic downturn made them, like their predecessors, targets of attack. Years later, UFW Vice-President Philip Vera Cruz described the difficulties that Filipinos faced in a typical California town during the 1930s:

“In those depression years, Filipinos were blamed for taking the Anglos’ jobs. Racist growers and politicians picked on the Filipino minority as . . . [an] easy target for discrimination and attack. Filipinos were harassed and driven from their jobs. . . In those race riots staged in their camps, some were hurt and one was shot.”

As Vera Cruz explained, Filipinos were forced from the fields, but “the sad thing was they didn’t have anywhere to go.” Most Filipino farm workers responded to racist attacks by banding together even tighter, establishing a pattern of union organization that would strengthen Filipino farm workers’ resolve to begin the Delano grape strike thirty years later (Maram 1996, Kushner 1975, McWilliams 1935).

By the eve of the Depression, Mexican farm workers already greatly outnumbered Filipinos in California. Mounting anti-Filipino sentiment further fueled the turn toward Mexican labor. Large-scale growers had begun recruiting farm workers from Mexico in the 1910s when social and economic instability caused by the Mexican Revolution fueled immigration, but demand for Mexican laborers grew even more after the Immigration Act of 1924 began to curtail Japanese immigration. As with Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino laborers, the pattern held: growers viewed Mexican immigrants as the “perfect solution” to their perennial demand for farm workers deemed cheap and docile. One industry observer crowed that the Mexican farm worker “is the result of years of servitude, has always looked upon his employer as his *padron*, and himself as part of the establishment.”

Between 1924 and 1930, approximately 150,000 Mexican men, women, and children worked in the California agricultural industry annually. As the Great Depression deepened during the following decade, however, increasing numbers of Mexicans were forced to return to Mexico. With hundreds of thousands out of work and with state and local relief funds nearly exhausted by the early 1930s, calls for Mexican “repatriation”, a euphemism for expulsion, swelled. Beginning in February 1931, thousands of Mexicans, many of them American citizens, were deported to Mexico.

As in decades past, white workers and their demands for jobs fueled hostility toward Mexican laborers. Historian James Gregory’s history of “Okie” emigration to California reveals that the economic push during the 1930s came with unprecedented force. Facing declining agricultural markets, drought and Dust Bowl conditions, hundreds of thousands of whites and African Americans from Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas, and Missouri flooded California looking for work. In this context, Mexican migrants were seen as unwelcome competitors for agricultural work that could be taken by displaced white Americans (Gregory 1989).

These emigrants from Oklahoma and elsewhere were the first migrant farm workers to gain sympathy from American society at large. But the conditions of the migrant farm worker that Dorthea Lange, John Steinbeck, and other observers brought to the attention of the nation were the same conditions that Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Mexican, and other agricultural laborers had endured—and protested—for decades: pitiful working and living conditions, a corrupt labor contracting system, and poor wages (Gregory 1989).

Migrant farm laborers’ living and working conditions throughout the first half of the twentieth century were brutal. The work was exhausting, and it required considerable amounts of skill, dexterity, efficiency, and stamina. Cesar Chavez recalled the particular agony of thinning crops with *el cortito*, the short-handle hoe, which he described as, “like being nailed to a cross. You have to walk twisted, as you’re stooped over, facing the row, and walking perpendicular to it,” he explained. Farm workers also had to contend with summertime heat, and they had to provide their own drinking water. When their water jug was empty, a family member had to walk to a water pump to get more, losing as much as an hour of work and pay to do so. During the winter, farm laborers’ primary challenge was staying warm and dry,

but the fields often were damp and muddy, making the task impossible. Growers were not obligated to provide toilet facilities, so laborers had to leave the fields or, more likely, improvise (Levy 1975).

After a long day in the fields (or driving from field to field without finding work), farm workers were lucky if they could return to a tent or tarpaper-and-wood cabin in a crowded labor camp to eat a dinner of beans and potatoes. Even then, they were unlikely to have electricity or indoor plumbing. Farm workers considered themselves lucky to find space in these camps. Their only alternatives were squatters' camps, barns and abandoned buildings, or sleeping under a bridge or in a car, if they owned one (Levy 1975).

Such conditions were exacerbated by unscrupulous labor contractors, who often owned or managed labor camps, deducted rent before giving workers their pay, and ran company stores that charged exorbitant prices. Labor contractors found numerous ways to cheat or exploit workers—they spent workers' pay and then blamed its absence on the grower; they over-recruited workers and then lowered their promised wage; they short-weighted baskets of produce and pocketed the difference; they demanded sexual favors from women in exchange for giving them or their families work. Convinced that "labor contracting is nothing more nor less than a remnant of the system of peonage," Cesar later made the replacement of labor contractors with union-run hiring halls one of his top priorities (Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1996, Levy 1975).

## **ORGANIZING AGRICULTURAL LABOR**

Farm workers facing such living and working conditions began organizing in the American West as early as 1884, the year in which Chinese hop pickers at the Haggin Ranch in Kern County, California, went on strike for higher pay. Efforts such as these occurred sporadically among Chinese farm workers, but they were too isolated to have any broader impact. Japanese farm workers, however, developed much greater sophistication and proficiency in organizing. Japanese farm workers formed labor "associations" that initially served as contracting agencies. The associations accepted far less than prevailing wages in order to drive other workers out of the area. Once a local labor market was under their control, Japanese farm workers would form a list of demands and present them to growers just before harvest time, threatening to strike if they were not met. Japanese labor leaders also called for work slow-downs and utilized blacklists of obdurate

growers when necessary. In some areas, cooperative agreements between Japanese crews functioned so well that the labor market effectively became a closed shop (London and Anderson 1970, Daniel 1981).

The first attempt to forge a multi-ethnic alliance emerged just after the turn of the century. In 1903, approximately eight hundred Japanese and Mexican beet-field workers in Oxnard united to organize the Japanese-Mexican Labor Association (later renamed the Sugar Beet and Farm workers' Union of Oxnard). They elected a president, recruited several hundred more workers, and successfully struck for recognition and better wages; however, the union failed to secure the institutional and financial support it needed to survive.

Union secretary J. M. Lizarras wrote to American Federation of Labor (AFL) President Samuel Gompers requesting a charter "under which we can invite all the sugar beet and field laborers in Oxnard without regard to their color or race." As he had on other occasions, Gompers flatly refused to include Japanese workers under the AFL umbrella (Almaguer 1994). The AFL had been attempting to organize farm labor in the West since the late 1880s, but the federation's attempts were half-hearted—poorly organized, insufficiently funded, or prompted only by challenges from more radical organizations. The AFL's strict focus on organizing along craft lines and its racism weakened their attempts further (London and Anderson 1970).

## **THE WHEATLAND RIOT**

The AFL's conservatism, craft unionism, and racism opened the door for the rise of the International Workers of the World (the IWW, or Wobblies) formed in 1905. The Wobblies hoped to overcome the pattern of racial discrimination and segregation that divided white, Japanese, Mexican, East Indian, and other laborers in order to pull all of them (and their counterparts in other industries) into "One Big Union." The Wobblies' promotion of inter-racial solidarity was a response to the racism of the AFL but also to growers' divide-and-conquer tactics through which growers would segregate workers along racial lines into separate work crews and labor camps (Garcia 2001).

Between 1905 and 1913, the Wobblies demonstrated their growing strength in California, especially in free-speech campaigns in San Diego and Fresno. IWW locals began to proliferate, but in 1913 the Wobblies counted only five thousand members in the

state. Still, the influence of the IWW outspread its numbers. As Carey McWilliams observed, “whenever ‘labor trouble’ occurred in the fields . . . it was usually discovered that a ‘camp delegate’ had been on the ground.” Such was the case at the Durst Brothers’ hop ranch near Wheatland in August 1913. Ralph Durst’s advertisements throughout the state promising work to anyone who wanted it attracted almost three thousand farm workers, twice as many as he needed. Durst neglected to provide accommodations for these arrivals, many of whom were destitute. The water supply quickly ran out and few provisions had been made for sanitation resulting in stench around the camp and dysentery. Durst ignored these conditions, though, hoping that workers would leave without collecting wages withheld as an end-of-harvest “bonus.” Within a few days, two IWW organizers had mobilized the hop pickers and formed a list of demands. Durst ignored most of the demands and, on August 3, arrived at the camp with the Yuba County sheriff and several deputies to break up a mass meeting. A gunshot “to quiet the mob” touched off a riot, leaving the district attorney, two deputies, and two workers dead and dozens more injured (McWilliams 1935, London and Anderson 1970).

The Wheatland Riot was one of the most significant events in the history of the farm labor movement. It drew unprecedented levels of attention to the plight of agricultural laborers, led to the creation of the California Commission of Immigration and Housing, and gave the movement its first martyrs. This fallout also propelled further IWW organizing efforts. In 1915, IWW began sending organizers directly into the fields to recruit farm workers. Creating locals throughout the West and Midwest, the union counted one hundred thousand members by 1917. By then, however, the political winds were shifting. A wave of raids and arrests by the federal government crippled the IWW, and the climate of wartime patriotism encouraged the public to turn against any activity or agitation that might hamper (in one official’s words) “the effectiveness of the country’s efforts” (London and Anderson 1970, McWilliams 1935, Daniel 1981, Dunbar and Kravitz 1976).

### **FARM LABOR ORGANIZING (1920-1950)**

Organizing efforts among the farm workers of California became sporadic again until the late 1920s, when Mexican farm workers attempted to forge an ethnically-defined solidarity. In 1928, Mexicans belonging to the Los Angeles Federation of Mexican Societies established the Confederacion de Uniones de Obreros Mexicanos (CUOM), an organization

whose three thousand members dedicated themselves to promoting unionism among Mexican workers and fighting in particular to reform the agricultural industry’s labor contracting system.

Later that same year, Mexican farm workers in the Imperial Valley made such an attempt. On the eve of the cantaloupe harvest in May 1928, Mexican laborers formed La Unión de Trabajadores del Valle Imperial (the Imperial Valley Workers’ Union) and succeeded in attracting twelve hundred members. The union’s leaders presented a list of requests to growers. Union leaders had no intention of calling a strike, but when growers ignored the workers’ requests, a few dozen members of the rank-and-file walked out just as the harvest was beginning. Growers and local authorities smashed the strike, but they drew a clear conclusion: Mexican farm workers were not the simple, docile laborers whom growers thought they were hiring. The union’s failure offered lessons for farm labor organizers as well. Most important, the failure of the strike hinted at the consequences of the union’s decision not to reach out to Filipino farm workers in the Imperial Valley, many of whom already embraced a reputation for militant labor activism (Daniel 1981, London and Anderson 1970).

Two events that occurred the following year coincided to give organizing efforts among farm workers their strongest push yet. First, the Communist Party USA created the Trade Union Unity League (TUUL). Second, the crash of the stock market triggered the Great Depression. Communists had been quietly active in the fields of California throughout the 1920s, but the party formed the TUUL in September 1929 with the expressed mandate of organizing farm labor. Their first effort came in January 1930, when a walk-out by a few hundred Mexican and Filipino lettuce workers near Brawley turned into a full-fledged strike involving five thousand farm workers across the Imperial Valley. Communist organizers from the TUUL soon arrived in Brawley and formed a front organization, the Agricultural Workers Industrial League (AWIL). They wrested leadership of the strike away from the Mexican Mutual Aid Society, but this contest split the rank and file and gave the growers an opening to decry “Bolshevism.” Growers easily mobilized community opposition and enlisted the aid of local authorities. Within a few weeks, the strike collapsed (London and Anderson 1970).

Over the next couple of years, AWIL leaders regrouped. They changed the union’s name to the Agricultural Workers’ Industrial Union (AWIU) in

1931 and, after working to organize striking cannery workers in the Santa Clara Valley later that year, renamed it the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (CAWIU) —the name that the organization would retain as it grew into the strongest agricultural workers' union in California during the early 1930s. By 1933, thirty-seven major strikes erupted and the rejuvenated CAWIU led twenty-four of them. The CAWIU's San Joaquin Valley cotton strike was the largest, longest, and most dramatic including at least twelve thousand farm workers from a string of cotton fields stretching 114 miles down the valley (London and Anderson 1970, Daniel 1981, Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1996, McWilliams 1935, Ruiz 1998).

One of the CAWIU's first acts was to establish a strike headquarters and camp on forty acres of rented land outside of Corcoran. The striking farm workers also recruited and received community support and public sympathy grew after growers resorted to increasingly brutal strikebreaking tactics, including deadly violence. After three weeks, a mediation board created a resolution. Neither the union nor growers could claim a clear victory, but both sides accepted.

The CAWIU remarkably could claim at least partial victories in twenty out of twenty-four strikes its members participated in during 1933. The union's strategies of inter-racial organizing, reliance on grassroots organizing, recruitment of women, and emphasis on orderly, nonviolent conduct contributed to the union's success and helped explain how the union could command the fierce loyalty of at least fifteen thousand San Joaquin Valley farm workers in October 1933. However, the union failed to win formal recognition from a single grower, and it failed to replace labor contractors with union-run hiring halls. As a result, the CAWIU lost its membership and began to crumble.

The demise of the CAWIU left a legacy that would be inherited by the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA), founded in July 1937 and chartered by the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) soon thereafter. The union's founders wanted an organization that was decentralized and inclusive and their constitution guaranteed local autonomy and local control of at least fifty percent of union dues. Moreover, union leaders deliberately recruited diverse organizers, many of whom climbed into the ranks of union leadership themselves. Rank and file members of the union pledged "never to discriminate against a fellow worker because of creed, color,

nationality, religious or political belief; to defend freedom of thought . . . [and] to defend [their fellow members] on all occasions." By 1940 the union's national membership totaled more than 124,000 workers, 40,000 of whom worked in the fields. Librado Chavez became a new recruit in 1941 (Ruiz 1987, Kushner 1975).

UCAPAWA was the most prominent union in the fields of California between 1937 and 1940. Its greatest achievement came in November 1939, when Local 307 of Visalia negotiated a contract with the Mineral King Farm Association. This contract was perhaps the first ever signed by a grower and a union in the history of California's agricultural industry.

The contract with the Mineral King Farm Association was a significant achievement, but the limited victory in the Madera cotton strike that same year was a more typical outcome of UCAPAWA's efforts. On October 12, 1939, as many as one thousand white, Mexican, and African American cotton-field workers in Madera County went on strike, demanding an increase in wages. Led by the Associated Farmers, an anti-union vigilante group, growers repeatedly attacked pickets with fists and rubber hoses. On October 26, three hundred growers descended on striking families attending a rally in Fresno's Madera Park and beat them with axe handles. State highway patrolmen reportedly stood back and watched before deciding to fire tear gas into the crowd to "quiet the melee." UCAPAWA eventually won the strike, but, like so many farm workers before them, they failed to gain formal recognition from the growers. The following year, UCAPAWA leaders decided to withdraw from the fields in order to focus the union's resources on cannery and packinghouse workers.

The National Farm Labor Union (NFLU) also contributed to the foundation upon which Cesar Chavez began building during the 1950s. The NFLU was an outgrowth of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, founded in Arkansas by Harry Leland Mitchell in 1934. The union focused for many years on protecting the rights of sharecroppers, but in the 1940s redirected its energy toward agricultural wage workers. In 1945, the union was renamed the NFLU and rechartered with the AFL. Two years later, NFLU leaders decided to move west, and they began establishing locals throughout California. As this work was getting underway in the summer of 1947, they became aware of the impoverished conditions of farm workers employed by the Di Giorgio Fruit Company (Grubbs 1975).



By the summer of 1947, the 27-year old Di Giorgio Fruit Company was a giant in the agricultural industry that had amassed sixteen thousand acres of farmland across Kern County and had generated eighteen million dollars a year in gross revenue from the sale of fruits, vegetables, wines, and processed foods. More than eight hundred people, most of whom were Okies, worked year-round in the company's Kern County fields and orchards, packing sheds, and winery. The company hired an additional sixteen hundred farm workers, most of them Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants, at harvest time. The company's operations as they existed in the years after World War II were massive. As Ernesto Galarza explained, the showpiece was Di Giorgio Farms in Arvin—an enterprise of eleven thousand acres devoted to grapes, fruit orchards, and vegetables valued in the late 1940s at twenty-four million dollars. Sierra Vista Ranch, twenty-five miles north near Delano, was “less spectacular, but equally prosperous. The five-thousand-acre ranch was a self-contained community with its own volunteer fire department, restaurant, recreational facilities, dormitories, and police force.” With additional operations at Borrego Springs and elsewhere in California and Florida, the Di Giorgio Company was a giant in the agricultural industry. The company as a whole was the second largest producer of wine in the United States.

Joseph Di Giorgio was among the strongest opponents of unions in California and one of the chief supporters of the “Associated Farmers” vigilante group. Knowing this, NFLU leaders Mitchell and Hasiwar made Di Giorgio's company their first target. If they could gain recognition from Di Giorgio, they thought, others surely would fall in line. By September 1947, the NFLU had enlisted a majority of the company's full-time employees and formed a list of demands (Galarza 1970, London and Anderson 1970).

When the company refused to acknowledge the union's existence, the local membership voted to strike at the Grange Hall in Weedpatch on September 30, 1947. More than one thousand striking workers spread out to picket Di Giorgio Farms. Like some of its predecessors, the union appealed for support from around the state and the nation, and it drew the endorsement of prominent individuals. The union also activated an immediate boycott of all Di Giorgio products, including table grapes. The union's rising leader, Ernesto Galarza, pioneered the idea of picketing grocery stores such as Safeway in order to educate consumers and raise support for farm workers. This was one of several ideas that Chavez

and the UFW later would adopt. The union's members were well organized, and the Di Giorgio strike—labeled by historian Donald Grubbs “the most significant farm worker strike prior to *La Huelga*”—would persist for another two and a half years (Grubbs 1975, Meister and Loftis 1977, Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1996).

The strike ultimately collapsed because the NFLU had no means of cutting off Di Giorgio's supply of labor. The Bracero Program—begun during World War II to import seasonal contract laborers from Mexico—allowed Di Giorgio to hire as many workers as the company needed for its harvests every year. Until the program was terminated in the mid-1960s, growers could continue to ride out strikes simply by (falsely) claiming the existence of a labor shortage, replacing their workers with braceros, and protecting them with sheriff's deputies and company guards.

The NFLU operated on additional fronts during the late 1940s and early 1950s. In September 1949 the union led a two-week strike of cotton field workers in the San Joaquin Valley. The union won its demand that an announced pay cut be rescinded, but no further organizational gains were made. Cesar Chavez participated in this strike, but the experience left him wishing that the leaders had set higher goals and worked more effectively to achieve them. The NFLU's last major victory in the fields came three years later with a strike on the five-thousand-acre ranch of the Schenley Corporation outside of Delano which brought modest victories (London and Anderson 1970).

After winning the Schenley strike in 1952, Ernesto Galarza helped keep the NFLU alive for seven more years, renaming it the National Agricultural Workers Union (NAWU). Born in southern Mexico in the city of Tepic, Nayarit, Galarza came to California with his family in 1910. With a doctorate in sociology from Columbia University and eleven years of experience with the Pan American Union in Washington, D.C., Galarza returned to California, settled his family in San Jose, and joined the leadership of the NFLU as Director of Research and Education. Galarza shifted his energies to defeating the Bracero Program. Galarza became convinced that the NFLU's fight—and that of all farm workers—was not against a single grower like Di Giorgio, but against a system in which corporate farms were intricately linked with petroleum companies, power companies, water suppliers, and financial institutions. Galarza concluded that these other industries applied great economic pressure on

growers and the primary way that growers could generate profits was to keep their labor costs low and their workers powerless.

The most effective means that growers found to minimize the power of labor was the perpetuation of the Bracero Program. Established by Congress in 1942, the program was designed to provide growers with a reliable source of labor at a time when military industries offered American workers much higher wages and better working conditions. As Galarza understood, the “experiment” was an unmitigated success for growers. In creating the program, Congress promised the Mexican government that growers would pay braceros prevailing wages, provide transportation and cover living expenses, and only hire braceros when local labor shortages developed (not to break strikes). Although all of these promises were broken by the growers Congress extended the program to 1950 and, following the outbreak of the Korean War, formalized the program and extended it indefinitely.

Galarza made termination of the program his mission. His efforts to bring the Bracero Program to an end contributed greatly to the foundation upon which Chavez built. Indeed, the termination of the Bracero Program in 1964 cleared a path for the farm workers’ successes of the 1960s and ’70s. The NFLU demonstrated the importance of recruiting a coalition of supporters, and it introduced to the farm labor movement tactics such as the consumer boycott of grapes and the secondary boycott of grocery stores. The union showed that agribusinesses giants such as Di Giorgio were not too big to confront. The lessons Chavez learned from the NFLU and other farm labor union victories and defeats would inform and inspire his own efforts.

### **III. Cesar Chavez’s Education as a Community Organizer in California and the Emergence of Dolores Huerta, 1952-1962**

#### **CESAR CHAVEZ AND THE COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANIZATION (CSO)**

As Ernesto Galarza was making a home in San Jose and beginning his battle against the Bracero Program, Cesar Chavez and his growing family were settling into their rented house on Scharff Avenue in San Jose’s Sal Si Puedes barrio. Near the end of the Chavezes’ first summer in Sal Si Puedes, Cesar took an organizing job with the Community Service

Organization and begin moving his family up and down the San Joaquin Valley. Over the next decade, Cesar would gain his education and training as a social activist, and form friendships and alliances with Father Donald McDonnell, Fred Ross, Dolores Huerta, Gilbert Padilla, and farm workers who would join him in the struggle to form an effective farm labor union.

Soon after moving to Sal Si Puedes in 1952, Cesar met Donald McDonnell, a young Catholic priest in San Jose. Along with Father Thomas McCullough, McDonnell had lobbied the San Francisco Archdiocese to create a “mission band” of roving priests who would minister to braceros and other migrant farm workers. Basing his operations in Sal Si Puedes, McDonnell began his mission by knocking on doors in the barrio and asking Catholics if they would support the opening of a new church in the neighborhood. Chavez, a devout Catholic, was highly receptive and relayed to the priest that he and his family felt unwelcome in a church across town. Cesar and McDonnell began talking about problems facing farm workers who lived in the barrio, and Chavez revealed an interest in labor organizing that had stayed with him since his experience in the San Joaquin Valley cotton strike three years earlier. The two men talked late into the night about social justice, the Church’s stand on farm labor and readings from the encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII in which he upheld labor unions (Levy 1975, Taylor 1975).

McDonnell introduced Cesar to a world of ideas that would shape his personal philosophy, his approach to labor organizing, and his commitment to social justice, including the writings of Mohandas Gandhi. Chavez learned that Gandhi spoke about “the complete sacrifice of oneself for others” and “the need for self-discipline and self-abnegation in order to achieve a higher good.” Chavez also remembered reading “three or four volumes on agriculture, describing the Associated Farmers, their terror and strikebreaking tactics, and their financing by banks, utilities, and big corporations.” All of these books taught Cesar a great deal, but they could not teach him everything about building a union (Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

Like McDonnell, Fred Ross was drawn to Sal Si Puedes by his desire to help Mexican Americans improve their lives. A community organizer working for social activist Saul Alinsky, Ross went to Los Angeles in 1947 to organize the Community Service Organization (CSO) and train its members to deal

with issues related to civil rights, voter registration, housing discrimination, and police brutality. Ross decided to expand the CSO with a new chapter in San Jose and was looking for residents who could help him. Chavez agreed to host a house meeting with Ross and a dozen or more people from the barrio on June 9, 1952 (Levy 1975, Taylor 1975).

At the meeting Ross explained that he saw the conditions of Sal Si Puedes in other Mexican American communities and what the CSO had accomplished in Los Angeles. Cesar talked with the organizer for two hours and then offered to drive him to his next meeting that night. Fred was just as excited about meeting Cesar. Clearly, Ross recognized Chavez's potential as a community leader. His diary entry that night went straight to the point: "I think I've found the guy I'm looking for" (Ross 1989, Levy 1975, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Matthiessen 1973, Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995).

In 1952, Cesar became a deputy registrar and then the chairman of the CSO voter-registration drive in San Jose. He continued to work during the day at the lumber mill and in the fields, and then at night he would work to recruit voters. Instead of recruiting college students as Ross had done, Chavez called on his friends. Chavez realized that organizing would be accomplished more effectively through social networks. By election night of November 1952 he had registered nearly six thousand new voters. More important, the campaign provided Chavez a formative experience in linking his emergent interest in labor organizing with civil rights activism and political mobilization (Taylor 1975, Matthiessen 1973, Levy 1975, Daniel 1987).

Chavez's success in the voter-registration drive was gratifying, but the campaign exposed him to a sudden host of adversaries and accusations. During the early 1950s, almost anyone who organized communities and fought for political rights, labor rights, or the rights of racial minorities in America might be suspected of being a Communist. On the national level, Senator Joseph McCarthy was conducting investigations of the government in search of Communists. The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and similar committees at the state level investigated, and blacklisted hundreds of suspected radicals— including those in movie studios, universities, and labor unions— but countless individuals suffered from an atmosphere of political repression (Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

When newly registered Mexican-American voters were intimidated at the polls, Chavez sent a letter of complaint to the U.S. attorney general. This move raised undue suspicions that Chavez might be a Communist. FBI agents began questioning Cesar, and the local newspaper ran stories implying that he worked for the Communist Party. These accusations drew the attention of the very people Chavez was trying to organize into a CSO chapter, but accusations of Communist affiliation were inconsistent with Chavez's Catholic conservatism. The Catholic Church was in the forefront of the anticommunist movement in the early 1950s, and Cesar wisely turned to McDonnell and other priests to defend him against suspicions and accusations (Levy 1975, Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

After the successful voter-registration drive, Chavez saw that a good amount of organizing work in Sal Si Puedes remained. Cesar opened an office that could serve more as a service center and give the residents of Sal Si Puedes a place where they knew they could go with their problems. Such a central location would be especially important for the migrant farm workers who moved in and out of the area. Cesar found space to rent and set up the San Jose CSO office and service center on East Santa Clara Street (Levy 1975).

Chavez's success in registering voters and establishing the San Jose CSO chapter helped Fred Ross convince Alinsky to hire the twenty-five year old as a CSO staff member. Ross assigned Chavez to finish an organizing campaign in nearby Union City (then named De Coto), freeing Ross to move on to King City and other towns in the Salinas Valley. Cesar did well in Union City and was sent to Oakland to orchestrate his own campaign. Cesar already sensed that social organizing was to be his life's work, and, with his experience in Oakland, he proved that he could succeed at it (Levy 1975, Etulain 2002).

## **DELORES HUERTA'S RISE AS A COMMUNITY ORGANIZER**

In 1955 Ross made plans to organize a chapter in Stockton, where one of his first contacts was Father McDonnell's colleague in the "mission band," Father Thomas McCullough. McCullough had located his mission in Stockton and began moving through bracero camps exploring ways to meet the needs of migrant farm workers. McCullough based his mission out of St. Gertrude's Catholic Church, where one of the brightest parishioners was twenty-five-year-old Dolores Fernandez Huerta. When Ross

asked McCullough to put him in touch with potential CSO organizers, the priest introduced him to Huerta (Taylor 1975).

Dolores Huerta had grown up in Stockton, but like both of her parents, she was born in Dawson, New Mexico, in 1930. Huerta's father worked as a miner in northern New Mexico and pursued farm work as far north as Wyoming, but the Depression forced the family to move up and down the Pacific Coast looking for work. Huerta's parents divorced in 1933 and two years later her mother, Alicia Fernandez, moved the family to Stockton. Huerta's mother worked in a cannery and waited tables until she saved enough money to buy a restaurant and seventy-room boarding house in which she always made room for unemployed farm workers (Coburn 1976, Rose 1990, Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995, Baer 1975, Huerta 1975, Baer and Matthews 1974, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

Fernandez's influence on her daughter was profound, showing her children that women could be strong, independent, and successful. "I was raised with two brothers and a mother," Huerta explained, and "there was no sexism. My mother was a strong woman and she did not favor my brothers. There was no idea that men were superior." Huerta elaborated: "At home, we all shared equally in the household tasks." Fernandez made unconventional choices throughout her life, and she encouraged Dolores to do the same. Huerta followed that advice as she became increasingly active in the farm labor movement (Rose 1990, Baer 1975, Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995).

Dolores's mother also provided her children with middle-class aspirations and a strong sense of racial equality. In her elementary school, Mexican-American, African-American, and white children "were all thrown in together," but in high school, Dolores confronted increased economic and racial segregation. Huerta took her education very seriously and did quite well, but she continued to develop a strong sense of the ways in which economic and racial injustice pervaded American society. A trip to Mexico City with her mother heightened her racial pride and further convinced her that the racist treatment directed at Mexicans in the U.S. was deplorable. Upon returning home Huerta began to consider leading a life of social activism (Huerta 1975).

After a failed marriage to her high school boyfriend left her to raise three children, Huerta moved back in with her mother and enrolled in community college

courses in Stockton (where she was the only Chicana student). By 1955, the year in which Fred Ross arrived in Stockton, Dolores had earned her teaching credentials from the College of the Pacific. She also married Ventura Huerta and had four more children. But she had not given up her desire to find a way to fight social injustices. Ross would offer her the opportunity she sought (Baer 1974, Huerta 1975).

When Ross met with Huerta and other members of Stockton's Mexican-American community, he shared the ideas that he had discussed at house meetings in Sal Si Puedes and elsewhere. She was skeptical as Ross shared stories of their successes in San Jose and elsewhere, but just as he had done with Cesar, Fred won Dolores over. Dolores, like Cesar, credited Ross with changing the course of her life. Ross assigned Huerta to a voter-registration campaign and she threw herself into the work. With the registration drive underway, Huerta joined Ross in efforts to reform the police department, to get better treatment for Mexican Americans at the county hospital, and to have sidewalks built in the barrio (Huerta 1975).

As Dolores's involvement in the CSO continued, she heard more and more about Cesar. Ross was so impressed by him, she had little choice. When she finally met Chavez, she was initially unimpressed due to his reticence. Given time, though, Huerta came to know her CSO colleague quite well. By the end of the decade, Huerta's path had crossed Chavez's so many times that she had come to know him, trust him, and admire him for his remarkable skills as an organizer and a leader. A common bond developed between the two activists (Rose 2002, Etulain 2002, Taylor 1975 Matthiessen 1973).

While Huerta remained involved with the Stockton CSO chapter during the mid-1950s, Chavez continued the assignment Ross had given him after his Oakland campaign: organizing the towns of the San Joaquin Valley. Cesar approached this assignment with great eagerness, for it brought him back to the towns he had known as a teen-age migrant. More important, it gave him the opportunity to hone his skills as an organizer of Mexican American farm workers. But Cesar grew increasingly committed to helping farm workers and figuring out how to organize them so that they might be empowered to help themselves (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

## **CHAVEZ'S TRANSITION FROM COMMUNITY ORGANIZER TO LABOR ORGANIZER**

Perhaps Chavez's greatest discovery during these years working in the fields for the CSO was that assistance to farm workers could be used as an organizing tool. When Chavez was organizing a new CSO chapter, he would set up a service center like that in *Sal Si Puedes*. Through these service centers he would be able to help the people who came to him with personal problems. Not surprisingly, he attributed this willingness to the example his mother set for him as a young boy. And then "one night it just hit me," Chavez explained:

"Once you helped people, most became very loyal. . . . Once I realized helping people was an organizing technique, I increased that work. I was willing to work day and night and go to hell and back for people—provided they also did something for the CSO in return. . . . For a long time we didn't know how to put that work together into an organization. But we learned after a while—we learned how to help people [commit to an organization] by making them responsible." (Levy 1975)

Chavez was effectively synthesizing lessons he had learned about labor organizing, community organizing, and civil rights activism with the lessons about sacrifice, service to others, and inclusiveness that he had carried with him since his childhood (Levy 1975).

Cesar's dedication to building a solid, powerful organization for farm workers piqued the interest of Chicanos such as Gilbert Padilla. The son of migrant farm workers, Padilla was born in a labor camp in the late 1920s. He grew up in the fields and tried to escape the life of the migrant farm labor by enlisting in the military. After his army discharge in 1947, Gil found himself returning to Los Banos in California's central valley with his brothers and being offered a lower wage than that of the braceros. Increasingly disgusted with the racist treatment received in the fields, Padilla found work in a dry-cleaning business and started a civil rights group, Club Mexico. In 1957 he was back in the fields of Kings County, and two years later, he met Cesar Chavez and soon joined his CSO efforts. He would go on to volunteer for the organization from 1957 to 1961 and then joined Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta as the organization's only paid staff members (Taylor 1975, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

The year after he recruited Padilla into the CSO, Chavez accepted an assignment that proved to be one of the most significant in his transition from community organizer to labor organizer. During the

summer of 1958, the United Packinghouse Workers union offered Saul Alinsky and the CSO twenty thousand dollars to organize a chapter in Oxnard where the Chavez family had lived during the winter of 1938. The union was trying to organize the field and packing-shed workers and asked Chavez to open a CSO office in Oxnard (Daniel 1987, Levy 1975, Matthiessen 1973).

Chavez held numerous house meetings in Oxnard during the fall of 1958 in order to further the CSO agenda, but local Mexican Americans kept bringing up one issue: growers were giving their jobs to braceros. One of the largest bracero camps in the country, the Buena Vista Camp which housed as many as 28,000 Mexican farm workers, was located in Oxnard. As Chavez began to investigate the abuses of the Bracero Program in Oxnard, he discovered how growers, working with corrupt Farm Labor Placement Service officials, blocked local farm workers from getting jobs and then claimed the existence of a labor shortage so that they could import braceros. Cesar continued to work on organizing a CSO chapter and dedicated most of his thirteen months in Oxnard to attacking the Bracero Program.

Chavez began by gathering evidence to prove that growers abused the Bracero Program by accompanying farm workers to the Farm Labor Placement Service office, where officials made them spend several hours filling out referral cards. By the time they would arrive in the fields, growers would tell them that all the jobs were taken. Chavez retained their referral cards to verify their efforts. A second part of the campaign, a boycott of local merchants, was designed to apply indirect pressure on growers. A third technique was a sit-down strike, first used at the Jones Ranch in April 1959. Chavez and his companions would find a crew of braceros in a field and sit down across from them. The braceros usually stopped working and, when the foremen arrived with local police, Chavez would demand that the braceros be taken back to the labor camps so that local farm workers who accompanied him could have their jobs. Chavez also put pressure on public officials. Cesar called the Department of Employment offices every day for a month, before he finally got the director on the telephone. One night in the spring of 1959 a sympathetic official from the Bureau of Employment Security called to tell Cesar that "these people don't want any investigations. . . . They don't want any publicity . . . and you've got everybody shook up." Cesar began formulating a fifth tactic. The next morning Oxnard farm workers

began to march in the streets and to the fields (Levy 1975, Taylor 1975).

Farm workers and CSO volunteers implemented Chavez' plan to get all of the publicity they could. Meanwhile, Cesar led seventy farm workers to the employment office where they filled out hundreds of referral cards. More farm workers joined them later and, by the time they began marching to the Jones Ranch, farm workers driving fifty cars, numerous policemen, and several reporters had joined them. When the assembly arrived at the ranch Chavez delivered a speech culminating with a condemnation of the referral cards, burned his card, and watched as other farm workers followed suit. The farm workers began to realize their strength, and Chavez discovered the importance of symbolic acts of commitment (Ross 1989, Levy 1975).

The following month Chavez led a march through the streets of Oxnard . Volunteers created signs and one woman brought a banner of the Virgin de Guadalupe, who Cesar decided should lead the march. As the march left the CSO office and spilled into the street, hundreds of people started joining in, taking up signs and singing marching tunes and hymns. On that day, Chavez "discovered the power of the march. We started with a couple of hundred people in la colonia," he told writer Jacques Levy. "[B]y the time we got through, we must have had ten thousand people" (Levy 1975).

One of their biggest victories came after the march when the growers agreed to hire people at the CSO office which became a hiring hall. The CSO chapter office in Oxnard became a model for the hiring halls created by the United Farm Workers the following decade. Growers now came directly to the CSO office to request workers. With more than one thousand members, most of whom were farm workers, the CSO chapter had become an agricultural labor union in everything but name. As the summer of 1959 drew to a close, Chavez was eager to establish a union and to sign contracts with area growers (Levy 1975, Taylor 1975).

The AFL-CIO, which had just begun its own effort to organize agricultural labor in California, pressured the CSO board of directors to reject Chavez's plan to establish a farm labor union in Oxnard. A number of developments had coincided to push the AFL-CIO into the fields and led the organization to see Chavez's plan as detrimental to its own. Ernesto Galarza's NAWU (formerly the NFLU) folded in 1959, but Galarza's campaign against the Bracero Program succeeded in focusing national attention on

the plight of migrant farm workers and the unchecked power of western growers. A group of religious leaders, labor leaders, and progressive politicians formed the National Advisory Committee on Farm Labor and began to lobby AFL-CIO President George Meany. When Father Thomas McCullough failed to persuade Meany to act., he returned to Stockton, and with the help of Dolores Huerta organized the Agricultural Workers Association (AWA).

Internal politics of the AFL-CIO influenced its decision to become active in organizing farm labor. Meany knew AFL-CIO Vice President Walter Reuther had an increasing interest in organizing agricultural labor, and, as the two men fought for control of the AFL-CIO, Meany hoped to prevent Reuther from turning farm workers into a personal power base (Ganz 2000, Levy 1975, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

In February 1959, Meany decided to charter the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC). Meany allocated funding to the AWOC, but his appointment of Norman Smith (a former organizer of midwestern autoworkers) as director combined with his insistence on quick results at the local level did not bode well for the organization's long-term success (Ganz 2000, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997). To Smith's credit, he recognized the talent of Dolores Huerta, who rose to the position of AWOC secretary-treasurer after the AWA became a part of the AWOC. Huerta, in turn, recruited Larry Itliong, a Filipino farm worker who had risen to a position of leadership in UCAPAWA during the late 1930s. Still, the AWOC's top leadership demonstrated a poor understanding of the complexities of farm labor organizing in California; they often ignored the advice of Huerta (who left the union within a year) and that of Ernesto Galarza (who served on the AWOC staff until he quit in frustration). They also failed to gain a following among Mexican American farm workers, the single largest group of farm workers in California. By the early 1960s, the faltering AWOC leadership would begin to view Chavez as a serious rival (Ganz 2000, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

Chavez had been angered and frustrated by the CSO's fear of a territorial dispute with the AFL-CIO over the organization of Oxnard farm workers. Although he began to think about leaving the CSO, his appointment in 1959 as executive director, with its promise of greater influence over the CSO agenda, convinced Chavez to stay. Chavez moved into the CSO headquarters in Los Angeles. His experiences

in Oxnard confirmed his desire to dedicate himself to the farm workers' struggle, and convinced him that he would be capable of organizing a farm labor union when the next opportunity arose. The techniques he used in Oxnard—the boycott, sit-down strikes, marches behind religious images, the use of media, and the lobbying of public officials—represented both old and new community-organizing and labor-organizing tactics (Levy 1975, (Ganz 2000, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

During his three year tenure as executive director of the CSO, Chavez guided the organization to continued gains, developed relationships with members of the Mexican American Political Association and other civil rights activists, and earned a reputation as one of the most important civil rights leaders in the American West. By 1962, the CSO had grown to twenty-two chapters, helped tens of thousands of Chicanos register to vote, led thousands of Mexican immigrants through the naturalization process and provided Chicanos with a sense of power within the political system (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1997).

Chavez continued to unsuccessfully lobby the CSO board of directors to support his plans for a farm workers' union. Displeased with continued opposition from the board and with the general drift of the CSO away from the working class and the fields, Cesar "started a revolt" (Jensen and Hammerback 2002).

In the winter of 1962, the CSO board of directors finally agreed to support a pilot project to organize farm workers, but with two conditions: that Chavez's salary be paid from farm workers' dues and that a majority of the CSO membership vote to endorse the project. The membership considered the proposal at the annual convention in March 1962 but voted against it, wanting to maintain the CSO's focus on urban and civic issues, not on the plight of rural labor. On the final day of the convention, Chavez resigned. A couple of weeks later, Cesar moved his family from Los Angeles to Delano to begin the creation of a viable agricultural labor union (Levy 1975, Taylor 1975, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

#### **IV. The Organization of the Farm Workers Association in California, 1962-1965**

Although Cesar's decision to leave the CSO came as a surprise to almost everyone involved with the

organization, he had discussed the idea with Helen Chavez in advance. He warned her that the task of forming a union would require a great deal of work and sacrifice and the prospects were daunting. Despite numerous attempts over the previous eighty years, farm workers in California had been unable to overcome the obstacles set up by growers and the politicians, courts, and law enforcement officials who supported them. They had been unable to form a union strong enough to counterbalance the power of the agricultural industry. In confronting this history, Chavez was challenging a deeply entrenched way of life, a system that benefited growers but denied farm workers a larger share of the industry's wealth, a measure of security for their families and even challenged their dignity.

More immediately, Cesar and Helen had no income and eight children to support; nonetheless Chavez had decided to move forward with his plans. Between 1962 and 1965 he worked to build the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA), a forerunner to the United Farm Workers (UFW). As this section of the study reveals, Chavez had help. His wife and children made sacrifices large and small, and Helen eventually accepted a position working for the union. Dolores Huerta and Gilbert Padilla left the CSO not long after Cesar did in order to become co-leaders of the effort. They were joined by Cesar's brother Richard, his cousin Manuel, Rev. Jim Drake, and others. Just as important, Chavez had developed a vision for the union built on a solid grasp of the history of efforts to create and sustain an agricultural labor union. This vision was turning into a reality when Filipino farm workers affiliated with the AWOC unexpectedly began the Delano grape strike in 1965.

When Cesar decided to leave the CSO, he and Helen chose Delano for a number of reasons. Their family network in Delano provided them with the support to take the risks required to organize a farm workers' union. Chavez also had tactical reasons for picking Delano. He knew that the nature of agricultural production in the area had enabled the stabilization of Delano's agricultural labor force. By the 1960s, the area's vast acres of grapes (which require constant tending) provided year-round employment for several thousand Mexican-American and Filipino farm workers (London and Anderson 1970, Dunne 1971, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Hammerback and Jensen 1998).

The roots of the Delano grape industry reach back as far as 1873, the year in which the Southern Pacific Railroad reached Delano and provided a connection

with urban markets. The cultivation of grapes on a large scale began in the 1920s when Joseph Di Giorgio bought thousands of acres of land and drilled hundreds of feet into the earth to tap the water table with powerful electric pumps. During the late 1930s, Delano also attracted dozens of smaller-scale Yugoslavian growers, most of whom came from families that had tended grapes along the Adriatic Sea. These smaller-scale growers set the tone for civic and social life in Delano (Dunne 1971, Kushner 1975, Scharlin and Villanueva 2000).

The completion of Highway 99 through Delano reinforced the town's social and spatial divisions previously marked by the railroad tracks. By the time Cesar and Helen returned to Delano in 1962, the town of fourteen thousand residents had come to resemble other towns up and down the valley in its social order and spatial form. Delano had a small business district that ran parallel to the highway. The north and east sides of Delano were the middle-class residential areas where most of the town's white population lived. This part of town also included the high school, the municipal park, the hospital, an International Harvester retailer, a branch of the Bank of America, a furniture store, and the Stardust Motel. Across the tracks to the west sat the last of the honky-tonk bars, several cheap hotels and boardinghouses, liquor stores, and draw-poker parlors. Further west were the working-class residential areas where most Mexican Americans, Filipinos, African Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Arab Americans made their homes (Dunne 1971).

Among those living on the west side of Delano were many of the area's farm workers, those who worked for Di Giorgio and other growers. Because this work required a stable, year round and semi-skilled work force, vineyard workers were able to command higher wages than migrant farm workers received and achieve a measure of economic security. Chavez felt that Delano-area farm workers were in a better position to support organizing efforts and would be easier to hold together as a bargaining force (Hammerback and Jensen 1998, Dunne 1971, Matthiessen 1973).

## **FORMATION OF THE NFWA**

When Cesar and Helen arrived in Delano in April 1962, the cheapest house they could find to rent was a wood-frame house on the east side of Delano on Kensington Street. The house was modest in size, and its appearance made it stand out against middle class section of town's tidy homes. The Chavez

family lived in the house for eight years, during which time Cesar first articulated his vision for a farm workers' union. The Chavez's, Dolores Huerta, other organizers, and thousands of farm workers made sacrifices to create what would become the United Farm Workers (Matthiessen 1973, Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995, Taylor 1975, Coplon 1984).

Chavez's vision for a farm workers' union had developed during his years with the CSO, but his ideas also were shaped by his understanding of agricultural labor history and his desire to create a viable alternative to the AWOC. Cesar wanted his organization to be built through the community organizing techniques he had developed in the CSO, blending elements of the ethnic labor associations and *mutualistas* (mutual-aid societies) prevalent in barrios and colonias throughout the West and Southwest (Ganz 2000, Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995).

Chavez admired organizers and farm workers who had suffered through poverty and violence in their efforts to form unions, but he recognized many of their mistakes. He concluded, for example, that the first weeks of a strike were crucial. More important, Chavez saw that most organizers thought that they couldn't organize unless they struck at the same time (Levy 1975). Chavez became convinced of the importance of organizing first—developing a real community of farm workers and providing mutual benefits to strengthen it—before pushing for contracts and calling for strikes. In this sense, he translated the CSO's community-organizing tactics into a labor-organizing strategy.

During the first eighteen months of its existence in 1959 and 1960, the AWOC led more than 150 strikes and gained some wage increases, but due to a lack of foundation among farm workers, the union lacked the strength to sustain strikes and secure contracts. As part of the same strategy, the AWOC organized by going through labor contractors rather than going into the fields among farm workers themselves. As Dolores Huerta later pointed out, this was one of AWOC's biggest mistakes (Levy 1975, Jensen and Hammerback 2002, Ganz 2000, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Dunne 1971, Majka and Majka 1982).

“Once in Delano,” Chavez recalled, “the first thing I did was draw a map by hand of all the towns between Arvin and Stockton, eighty-six of them, including farming camps” (Levy 1975, Taylor 1975). Cesar decided to visit all of them, crisscrossing the San Joaquin Valley in his old station wagon, talking to



farm workers and gauging their reactions to his idea of a union. As he had done during his days as a CSO organizer, Chavez spent a lot of time on the road and saw little of his family. “It’s very difficult to ask your wife and children to make a sacrifice,” Cesar acknowledged. “. . .but I had no difficulty in that decision, [because] Helen wanted to do it” (Levy 1975, Taylor 1975).

Indeed, Helen Chavez’s willingness to work in the vineyards and fields while also taking care of eight children helped make Cesar’s work possible. Helen remembered working ten-hour days, five days a week, earning about eighty-five cents an hour. From her perspective, “the beginning of the union was the roughest time we had.” Still, she tried to shield Cesar from her worries and frustrations.

Cesar and Helen struggled to make ends meet during the first months of organizing the new union which was called the Farm workers Association (FWA), but family, friends, and new supporters became committed to La Causa. Even though Cesar’s brother Richard worked full-time as a carpenter, he helped out when he could and offered construction work when Cesar was short on money. Cesar’s sister Rita and her husband mortgaged their home and loaned Cesar and Helen some money. And his cousin Manuel gave up a job as a car salesman in San Diego in order to join Cesar in Delano. Manuel’s impatience with being poor and hungry led the men to the doors of strangers, asking for food. Cesar quickly realized that this way of meeting farm workers—seeking and accepting their hospitality—offered another organizing tool (Levy 1975, Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995).

This discovery led Cesar to the home of Julio Hernandez, a farm worker from Corcoran who quickly became one of the FWA’s strongest advocates and most successful organizers, eventually becoming a union vice-president. Like other farm workers whom Chavez met in the early 1960s, Hernández initially was skeptical, but Cesar won him over and the enthusiastic organizer went on to draw more than three hundred farm workers into the union, more than any other recruiter in the valley. Fred Ross continued to give Cesar his support, and the two often met to discuss problems and strategies. Dolores Huerta and Gil Padilla, Cesar’s colleagues on the CSO staff agreed to leave their positions with the CSO to become co-founders of the FWA (Levy 1975, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Taylor 1975).

Huerta had become prominent as a CSO staff member and as one of the nation’s foremost Chicana

trade-union activists by the early 1960s holding positions on the California Welfare Commission and on an AFL-CIO advisory commission. Federal officials often consulted her about issues of race and poverty. Cesar asked her to join him in founding the FWA, but he expected her to give up her CSO salary and to move with her seven children from Stockton to Delano. Like Gil, Dolores remained on the CSO staff after Cesar resigned—she would have had no income otherwise—but she began to organize for the FWA on the side. Cesar pressured Huerta to leave the CSO, but he could not offer her any pay. Huerta wanted to leave the CSO and work full-time for the FWA. She had misgivings over the conflict of interest presented by her employment with the CSO which refused to support the work of organizing agricultural labor. Dolores decided to sacrifice her salary, join Cesar full-time and moved to Delano in 1964 (Taylor 1975, Rose 2002, Levy 1975).

Another of Cesar’s contacts from his CSO days was Rev. Chris Hartmire, the director of an interdenominational group known as the California Migrant Ministry (CMM). The CMM had a long history of doing charitable work among the state’s farm workers, and Hartmire encouraged Cesar’s efforts. More important, he decided to assign Rev. Jim Drake and his wife Susan to work with Cesar in Delano and continue to pay Drake’s full salary. The minister’s increasingly avid outreach efforts among Protestants and his administrative assistance would prove invaluable (Levy 1975, Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995).

Many individuals helped shape the FWA, but six of them—Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, Gil Padilla, Manuel Chavez, Julio Hernández, and Jim Drake—formed the team that created the union. As Cesar explained, this small group “began to form this really close, really tight community. We began to set rules, not written, but understood. We wanted only people with a real commitment” (Levy 1975).

Dolores’s commitment paralleled Cesar’s. In the mid-1970s she observed that her thirteen years of organizing, disregard for her personal life, and constricted involvement in the lives of her children resulted in her life being the union. Huerta’s commitment took time and a great deal of struggle and sacrifice. After her second divorce in 1961, Huerta fought for custody of her children. Fortunately, family members and friends offered their help. Huerta took on translation and teaching work and even harvest-time work in the fields in addition to her work for the FWA. Yet this sometimes was not enough to provide what she needed. Still,

Dolores embraced her work and her leadership role in the FWA (Dunne 1971, Levy 1975, Rose 1990a, Rose 1990b, Rose 2002, Fujita-Rony 2002, Baer and Matthews 1974, Coburn 1976).

By the end of the spring of 1962, the team had begun to develop a strategy for promoting the FWA. First, they chose to call their organization an “association” and focused on the services it would provide. This reflected Chavez’s theory of organizing and his firm belief that support would be rewarded with loyalty. Second, they produced hundreds of thousands of fliers with a questionnaire that asked farm workers for their names, addresses, and wages they thought they deserved. As the questionnaires began coming in, they provided contacts for setting up house meetings—the final part of Chavez’s organizing strategy. Cesar ran these house meetings differently than he had as a CSO organizer because he wanted farm workers to tell him what their concerns were and what services they needed. Chavez was committed to creating a union that would be guided from the bottom-up. This meant delaying any thoughts of strikes and contracts. At the house meetings, farm workers felt free to talk about economic matters such as wages and the price of staples such as rice and beans, which they often had to purchase from company stores. They also aired frustrations about work conditions and the abuses they suffered at the hands of labor contractors (Taylor 1975).

Chavez and the other members of the organizing team began to plan for a founding convention and continued to recruit farm workers, attend house meetings, and help solve problems throughout San Joaquin Valley. Soon they were helping farm workers deal with police harassment, nonpayment of wages, workmen’s compensation issues, and poor service at county hospitals. By the fall of 1962, Chavez and the other organizers had built support among enough farm labor communities to anticipate a successful convention (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Levy 1975).

The convention was held in Fresno where the team’s plan was presented. The Farm Workers Association would lobby the governor’s office to establish a minimum wage for farm labor of \$1.50 an hour and to recognize farm workers’ right to unemployment insurance. The FWA would avoid promoting itself as a union, but it would advocate for collective bargaining rights. It would establish services such as a life insurance plan, a credit union, a co-op, and a hiring hall. The FWA would adopt a constitution and elect officers, and it would set dues at \$3.50 per

month. The 287 convention participants embraced this plan and elected Cesar Chavez to the office of president; Dolores Huerta, Gil Padilla, Julio Hernández, and Rodrigo Terronez to the office of vice-president; and Antonio Orendain to the office of secretary-treasurer. They also accepted the proposed level of dues. The only real debate revolved around the union’s flag. When Manuel unveiled the proposed flag—with its simple black thunderbird set against a white circle on a red flag—many convention participants gasped. Some thought the flag was Communistic, others that it too closely resembled the Nazi flag, and all of them clamored for an explanation. Finally Manuel told them that the black eagle represented the dark situation of the farm worker, the white circle signified hope, and the red background stood for all of the hard work and sacrifice that the union’s members would have to contribute in order to gain justice for farm workers. The participants adopted the flag and chose “*Viva La Causa*” as their motto (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Levy 1975).

During the following months, Chavez and the other officers worked to implement their plan. Cesar returned to Delano to continue handling cases and to draft the union’s constitution. Gil and Dolores hired a lawyer to write articles of incorporation. Dolores then headed to Sacramento with Manuel to begin lobbying for the FWA program while Gil began working on a life insurance program. Setting up a credit union proved easy by comparison. Richard Chavez had built a small one-bedroom house in Delano and Cesar realized that the house could be used as collateral to secure a loan and finance the credit union. The credit union opened and, at the suggestion of Dolores Huerta, Helen was recruited to manage its books (Levy 1975, Ferriss and Sandoval, Rose 2002, Taylor 1975, Rose 1990).

By early 1963 the FWA was a successfully functioning organization. It operated under a constitution, collected dues, and offered a variety of services to its membership. Its offices eventually moved from the Chavez home to an old building located at 102 Albany Street, in the far southwest corner of Delano. Richard Chavez donated his labor to fix up the place, and the FWA had a party when he finished (Levy 1975, Taylor 1975).

Still, the FWA struggled to recruit members and to collect dues. Chavez did not want the union to become reliant on outsiders and their money so collection of dues was important to him. Just as important, he saw that “once a guy had paid a whole year’s dues, \$42.50, if anybody said anything wrong

about the union or anybody in the union, that guy was like a lion. He had commitment” (Levy 1975). The commitment and the solidarity it fostered would be crucial if the FWA expected to have a chance of getting growers to raise wages, improve working conditions, and sign contracts.

Two events during the first half of 1965 demonstrated that the FWA had the strength to stand up for its members against the pressure of growers, labor contractors, policemen and local government officials. The union’s first strike occurred in May 1965 in response to broken promises regarding wages to rose field workers. The FWA organized the workers for about a month and called a strike. The company countered by importing a group of unskilled workers from Mexico. Workers returned to work after the fourth day with concessions of a small wage increase. No contract was signed, however, and the wage increase remained nothing more than a temporary concession (Taylor 1975).

The union also supported a rent strike near Porterville. Jim Drake and Gil Padilla, both of whom were paid by CMM but worked in conjunction with the FWA, found out that the Tulare County Housing Authority was generating a sizable profit from the Woodville and Linnell labor camps. The county health department had condemned the camps in 1965, but the housing authority continued to run the camps anyway. With the help of Cesar, Dolores, CMM worker David Havens, and a few other volunteers, Jim and Gil organized a summer-long rent strike against the Housing Authority and the J. D. Martin Ranch, where most of the Woodville rent strikers were employed. While this strike was quite improvised, it was notable for its effectiveness in raising awareness of the FWA. The black eagle of the FWA flag appeared in public for the first time. By the end of the summer, one new supporter—a Berkeley undergraduate named Doug Adair—had decided to move to Delano to join editor Bill Esher on the staff of the FWA’s newspaper, *El Malcriado* (meaning “the unruly one”), which had debuted the previous December (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Taylor 1975, Levy 1975).

As the third anniversary of the FWA founding convention approached, Chavez thought that the union was on the right track. However, its treasury was low and the union received no support from national labor organizations. The rose-workers’ strike and the rent strike revealed the union’s continued weaknesses. The FWA had managed to survive for three years and had grown to twelve hundred members. Chavez thought the FWA would

be ready to sustain strikes and win contracts by the fall harvest of 1968 (Levy 1975). Meanwhile, Filipino farm workers in Delano, most of whom were AWOC members, voted to go on strike in September 1965, beginning what would become a five-year campaign to bring the California table-grape industry—and 70,000 farm workers—under union contracts.

## **V. The Delano Grape Strike in Kern County, California and Across the U.S., 1965-1970**

During the years of the Delano grape strike, Chavez drew on all of the lessons he had learned and the experiences he had gone through since his boyhood. The years of the Delano strike also revealed the strength of the team of organizers and labor leaders that surrounded Chavez. If Helen Chavez, Dolores Huerta, Gil Padilla, Richard Chavez, Manuel Chavez, Jim Drake, and other activists (particularly Filipino labor organizers Larry Itliong and Philip Vera Cruz) were the right people to join Cesar in leading the Delano grape strike, September 1965 was the right time for that strike to begin.

This section of the study focuses on the most important period in the modern history of the farm labor movement in the American West. It highlights the central role that Cesar Chavez played in the strike but it also reveals how other leaders, union members, and urban supporters continued to define and strengthen La Causa. It also points to the importance of historical context. Several events and developments during the 1960s cleared a space that the farm labor movement never before had been able to claim and use.

Conditions favorable to the farm labor movement had been developing since the late 1950s. The array of progressive and pro-labor groups that had pressured the AFL-CIO to create the AWOC in 1959 continued to mount a campaign against the Bracero Program. Ernesto Galarza remained the most vocal critic of the program, but other organizations applied increasing pressure on Congress to better regulate the program and to let it expire in 1961. The successes of the civil rights movement and the election of John F. Kennedy also gave members of these organizations hope that American society was entering a new era, one that would see improvement in the lives of migrant farm workers, racial minorities, and the working poor. The broadcast of Edward R. Murrow’s powerful documentary, *Harvest of Shame*, in November 1960

attracted further support for their efforts (Majka and Majka 1982).

Congress voted in 1961 to extend the life of the Bracero Program for two more years, but in March 1963 the House voted against extending the program an additional two years. Though the Kennedy administration pushed through a final one-year extension, the Bracero Program ended on December 31, 1964.

The following spring, Chavez called some of California's Chicano political leaders, labor organizers, and civil rights activists to Delano to talk about their window of opportunity. Chavez and his fellow participants in the farm labor movement were inspired by Martin Luther King, Jr., and others who fought and sacrificed for civil rights. They saw commonalities between their campaigns as did supporters of the civil rights movement in the cities and on the college campuses beyond Delano. Both King and Chavez were strong, charismatic leaders, who were dedicated to inter-racial alliances and nonviolent resistance. Both were willing to serve their causes as symbols and spokesmen, however, they understood the necessity of grassroots organizing and empowerment (Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995).

### **LARRY ITLIONG INITIATES THE DELANO GRAPE STRIKE**

In the spring of 1965, Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz declared that braceros could be imported under Public Law 414 on an "emergency" basis if a labor shortage were to arise. He set \$1.40 an hour as the braceros' minimum wage. When grape growers in the Imperial and Coachella Valleys subsequently offered their Filipino workers only \$1.25 an hour, Larry Itliong and Ben Gines of the AWOC demanded the same pay as that offered to braceros. After short strikes, the growers agreed to their demand. When the grape harvest moved north into the Arvin area, however, growers decided to set \$1.25 an hour as the prevailing wage. Filipino farm workers again went on strike, but this time they lost (Majka and Majka 1982).

Larry Itliong, whom Dolores Huerta had recruited into the AWOC, was prepared to renew the fight when the grape harvest reached Delano, but he knew that the area presented a more challenging situation. The Delano agricultural economy employed a stable labor force, and many of the Filipino farm workers had lived in Delano for thirty years. Still, most of these farm workers were aging bachelors who had

nowhere to live except in the labor camps located on Delano ranches. If the AWOC called a strike, growers could respond by shutting off the electricity and gas to their bunkhouses or by evicting them. Itliong approached Chavez for support. Chavez told them that the organization was a union, but that it was in no position to initiate a strike over the wage issue (Taylor 1975, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Levy 1975).

Itliong's efforts to secure support from the AWOC leadership were rebuffed. George Meany's disappointment with the organization had led him to close down the AWOC in the early 1960s and reactivate it nine months later with a new staff of professionals and a new national director, Al Green. In the fall of 1965, Green was trying to build a membership base large enough to justify the AFL-CIO's investment, which had ballooned to one million dollars. Green had no interest in grape workers and was, working behind the scenes with the Teamsters to organize citrus grove and packinghouse workers. Ronald Taylor notes that, as far as Green was concerned, "the Filipinos were on their own" (Scharlin and Villanueva 2000, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

Itliong was cautious when Filipino farm workers in Delano wanted to strike. He sent letters to nine growers asking for the wages that many of them had paid at their operations in southern California, but his letters were ignored. Finally, on September 8, 1965, the members of the Delano-area local of the AWOC met for a strike vote at the Filipino Community Hall. Itliong offered a series of warnings about the sacrifices that could be involved, but the majority of Filipino farm workers courageously voted to go on strike. Former UFW Vice-President Philip Vera Cruz characterized the vote as "one of the most significant and famous decisions ever made in the entire history of the farm workers' labor struggles in California" (Scharlin and Villanueva 2000, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

### **THE FWA JOINS THE DELANO GRAPE STRIKE**

Chavez knew that Itliong had been thinking about the possibility of a strike, but the Filipino labor leader had not informed anyone in the FWA that he would hold a vote. Cesar never considered breaking the strike, but he was not sure if the FWA was ready to join it. Helen Chavez was more certain. When Cesar

consulted his wife, she asked, “Well, what are we? Aren’t we a union? That’s what we’re a union for, right?” (Scharlin and Villanueva 2000, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997). After speaking with Helen, Chavez along with the rest of the FWA board offered Itliong their unconditional support, but told him that they would need to call a general meeting of the membership in order to hold a vote. Chavez set the date of the meeting for September 16, Mexican Independence Day.

While the strike attracted two thousand workers—most of whom were Filipino—and spread to twenty ranches. FWA organizers furiously planned their general meeting. They inserted fliers in *El Malcriado* (the union’s newspaper) and distributed leaflets in Delano, McFarland, Earlimart, and other valley towns, announcing the meeting and proclaiming “Now is when every worker, without regard to race, color, and nationality, should support the strike and under no circumstances work in the ranches that have been struck” (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997). Looking for a place large enough to hold the meeting, Cesar turned to Father Francis Alabart, the pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church in Delano where the Chavez family attended Mass.

On the night of September 16, 1965, as many as fifteen hundred men, women, and children crowded into the church hall, filled the doorways and windows, and gathered outside. The crowd overwhelmingly voted to strike. Gil Padilla opened the meeting and introduced speakers who recounted the history of the AWOC strike and explained the stakes. Chavez spoke at length, stressing the seriousness of the decision to join the strike and the need for nonviolent action modeled after that of the civil rights movement. He then invited farm workers in the audience to express their thoughts after which, when Chavez asked for a strike vote, they overwhelmingly raised their hands, and their voices. They chanted: ‘*Huelga! Huelga! Huelga! Huelga!*’ and began to clap in rhythm.” The sentiment was clear. Within a few days, organizers had counted twenty-seven hundred cards signed by farm workers authorizing the FWA to represent them. On Monday, September 20, the FWA (newly renamed the National Farm Workers Association or NFWA) struck thirty Delano-area ranches (Taylor 1975).

Delano growers thought that Father Alabart had betrayed them. Growers pressured the hierarchy of the Catholic Church to distance itself from Chavez and the farm labor movement. The Church’s failure to do more to help farm workers disappointed and angered Chavez. He had appreciated the efforts of

Father McDonnell and a few other priests over the years, but his interactions with the California Migrant Ministry made him wonder why the Catholic Church was not doing the same. César and other Catholics working in the CSO and the FWA asked “why the Protestants come out here and help people, demand nothing, and give all their time to serving farm workers, while our own parish priests stay in their churches. . . ?” (Etulain 2002). Chavez would remain critical of the Church at least until March 1966, when the Catholic Bishops of California publicly endorsed the Delano strike. Nevertheless, Catholicism itself would provide a vital source of strength for Chavez and a unifying force for the farm labor movement throughout the years of the Delano grape strike (Etulain 2002, Kushner 1975, Day 1971).

The NFWA leadership had asked the membership to wait until September 20 to strike so they could prepare. Chavez, still unsure that the NFWA could survive a large strike, rushed out letters seeking negotiations with growers or mediation from state officials which were ignored. NFWA leaders wanted to call upon CMM Director Chris Hartmire for support and supplies. Chavez arranged a meeting with Al Green at the Stardust Motel in Delano on September 19. As Cesar explained, “I proposed that we have a joint strike committee, a joint finance committee. . . We said we would recognize him as the leader of the strike” (Levy 1975). Green balked, saying he could not agree to anything without authorization from AFL-CIO headquarters (which he refused to call). Chavez’s proposal marked a potential turning point in the history of the farm labor movement. (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Levy 1975).

Despite Green’s obstinence, Larry Itliong agreed to a measure of cooperation with the NFWA. The union lacked money to fund a strike and sufficient facilities to serve as strike headquarters, but the AWOC had resources to share. The Filipino Community Hall on 1457 Glenwood Street in Delano had been converted into the AWOC’s strike headquarters. The hall had a large meeting room, large kitchens, a dining room, office space, and rooms for storage. Soon after the NFWA strike vote, Itliong invited the Chicano farm workers to share the Filipino Community Hall. The NFWA retained its own offices at First and Albany, but it also set up a small office in the hall and rented an adjoining “*huelga* house.” The food served to striking farm workers at the Filipino Community Hall quickly came to reflect the inter-ethnic nature of their alliance. Tacos and tamales began to show up next to platters of lumpia and adobo dishes in the dining room as the hall continued to offer a hot meal every

day for hungry pickets (Taylor 1975, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Dunne 1971).

The Filipino Community Hall took on great historical significance during the Delano grape strike. Not only was it associated with important events, including the AWOC strike vote in September 1965, a pivotal speech by UAW President Walter Reuther in December 1965, and Chavez's announcement of his first public fast in February 1968, the hall highlights the important roles of Filipino farm workers who helped lead the strike and the Filipino community that helped support it (Fujita-Rony 2002).

Philip Vera Cruz once stated that "all that has been written about the union has been focused on the Chicanos . . . and all the resources of the union that were spent in organizing were [spent on] . . . the Chicanos" (Scharlin and Villanueva 2000). Although neither part of Vera Cruz's statement is entirely true, the sentiment it conveys did spring from the verifiable tendency of scholars, writers, and the general public to associate the farm labor movement and its leadership exclusively with Chavez and other Chicanos. Yet such distortions of historical memory contradict the spirit that Chavez himself tried to instill in the movement. Chavez spent a great deal of time during the Delano grape strike at the Filipino Community Hall, and he encouraged Chicano farm labor to do so as well. Growers and labor contractors often segregated Filipino and Chicano farm workers into separate picking crews and exploited ethnic animosities to break up labor disputes. At the Filipino Community Hall, however, Filipino and Chicano pickets began to develop a strong sense of unity. Soon after the strike began, the Filipino Community Hall became the scene of Friday night meetings of all AWOC and NFWA members (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Scharlin and Villanueva 2000, Taylor 1975).

Inter-racial alliances, as well as alliances with religious groups, civil rights activists, and student groups, were crucial after September 1965. Chavez's immediate concern, though, was what would happen in the first few weeks of picketing. By the end of the first day of the strike, more than twelve hundred workers had gone on strike but only two hundred had joined picket lines at vineyards spanning an area of about four hundred square miles around Delano, Earlimart, and McFarland.

The NFWA quickly developed a system of "roving picket lines." Pickets would form a car caravan behind a picket captain, who would lead the way to a ranch location scouted the previous day. At the

entrance to the ranch, pickets would gather with signs and flags and await the arrival of the first workers. As workers approached, they were asked to join the picket line or at least withhold their labor from the ranch being struck. By mid-morning, after all the sympathetic workers had turned around and the other *esquirols* ("scabs") had crossed the picket lines, the car caravans would drive the backroads looking for work crews. When one was spotted, the pickets would gather again and urge workers to support their strike with shouts of "*Hay huelga aqui!*" ("There is a strike here!") or, in Tagalog, "*Mag labas kayo, kabayan!*" ("Come out of there, countrymen!") (Taylor 1975, Ganz 2000).

"The picket line is where a man makes his commitment," Chavez said in the late 1960s, "and the longer he's on the picket line, the stronger the commitment." For Chavez, the picket line was a recruiting tool, an organizing tactic, a classroom, and a means of claiming space. California's vast ranches might have been the private property of wealthy growers, but the picket line allowed farm workers to assert their control over public space. Chicana farm workers asserted such control from the beginning of the NFWA involvement in the strike. As the strike wore on, some farm labor families began to decide that the men should look for work on nonstruck ranches while the women stayed to represent their families on the picket lines (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Matthiessen 1973).

During the first few weeks of the strike, growers, foremen, and law enforcement officers acted violently towards those on the picket line. Growers and their supporters continued to play down the strike publicly, but some growers attacked pickets and threatened them with shotguns while law enforcement either looked the other way or took pickets into "protective custody" (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Kushner 1975).

Still, Chavez preached nonviolence. A close observer and supporter of the civil rights movement, he saw the positive national response to civil rights activists' nonviolence in the face of police brutality in Birmingham, Alabama, in April 1963 and in Selma, Alabama, two years later. Martin Luther King, Jr., and his followers received heightened sympathy and support from the public after each of these confrontations, and the federal government was spurred to action. Chavez's own commitment to pacifism grew from his mother's teachings and his readings of Gandhi, but he cast his insistence that pickets resist retaliating against growers' attacks in practical terms (Levy 1975).

Chavez decided to recruit activists from the civil rights movement to teach farm workers nonviolent tactics for the picket line. This decision met some opposition, but students and other volunteers—many of whom participated in the civil rights movement as members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) or members of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)—quickly answered Chavez’s call (Ganz 2000, Levy 1975, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997). One of the first to do so was Marshall Ganz, the future director of the union’s international boycott and a future UFW executive board member (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

An emphasis on inclusiveness—and the union’s need for support and publicity from beyond Delano—led Cesar, Dolores, and young farm workers such as Jessica Govea and Eliseo Medina to college campuses, churches, and to meetings of other unions, civic groups, and social organizations. When the Kern County sheriff directed his deputies on October 18 to prevent pickets from “disturbing the peace” with shouts of “*huelga*,” Cesar planned to have a group of volunteers disobey the order on the same day that he was speaking at the University of California-Berkeley. Jim Drake recruited a group of clergymen and other supporters and notified the sheriff’s department, television stations, and newspaper reporters of their intention to use the word “*huelga*.” The following day, sheriff’s deputies arrested forty-four pickets—including Helen Chavez, Protestant clergymen, and several SNCC and CORE volunteers—for chanting “*huelga*” outside the W. B. Camp Ranch. Chavez received word of the arrests during his speech on the steps in front of UC-Berkeley’s Sproul Hall and announced the news to the students in his audience, who began shouting the word and contributing cash. After similar speeches at San Francisco State University, Mills College in Oakland, and Stanford University later that day, Cesar returned to Delano with \$6,700 and a new wave of volunteers. Many of them headed immediately to the Kern County Courthouse in Bakersfield, where Helen and the others remained in jail. As many as 350 people gathered outside the courthouse to picket and sing protest songs until those arrested were released (Taylor 1975, Rose 1990, Levy 1975, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Jensen and Hammerback 2002).

Chavez recognized the importance of such symbolic acts of protest and defiance, but no one did more to cultivate them than Luis Valdez. The son of farm workers, Luis Valdez was born in Delano and lived there until he was fourteen. He studied drama at San

Jose State University and then joined the San Francisco Mime Troupe. Valdez was drawn to the Delano strike immediately and began a theatrical troupe (El Teatro Campesino), that would entertain pickets and boost morale (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Levy 1975, Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995).

Valdez attracted enough farm workers to begin performing skits at the Friday night meetings at the Filipino Community Hall, on the picket lines, and along march routes. Luis and Cesar soon discovered that the skits, that entertained and educated, were as meaningful for the actors as they were for their audiences. “I found out that one of the hardest things for me to do was to get campesinos to act like growers,” Valdez explained. “But the moment that they did the boss, they changed. They became better organizers. They became confident and in control of themselves, and Cesar saw this.” The Teatro became a training ground (Galan Productions 1996).

### **EMERGENCE OF THE GRAPE BOYCOTT**

Despite the wave of support and emergence of unexpected resources such as El Teatro Campesino, the farm workers failed to make any headway with the Delano growers before the end of the fall harvest. In December, Chavez decided to launch the NFWA’s first boycott, targeting the multiple products of the Schenley Corporation, the second largest grower operation in Delano. In December 1965, Chavez assigned Jim Drake and Mike Miller (a SNCC organizer from San Francisco) to organize the boycott. They in turn recruited a staff of young farm workers and accepted SNCC’s offer to help coordinate the campaign. During the next few months these union members and volunteers set up boycotts in about a dozen cities in California and elsewhere in the West.

These first boycotts were narrower in scope, more concentrated on the West Coast, and shorter in duration than the famous table-grape and lettuce boycotts of the later 1960s and 1970s. They relied heavily on white supporters who lived in the cities and only secondarily on farm workers themselves. Nevertheless, the first boycotts helped the union learn valuable lessons, and increased the movement’s national exposure (Rose 1990).

Two other developments, one in December 1965 and the other in March 1966, helped make the strike a national event. Walter Reuther, the formidable president of the UAW and vice president of the AFL-CIO, visited Delano on December 16 and almost immediately joined Chavez and Itliong at the head of

a march through the streets of downtown Delano in defiance of a city council resolution passed the day before that prohibited demonstrations and marches. Reuther gave a rousing speech to hundreds of marchers, and members of the media and then met with Delano's mayor and city manager, telling them that "sooner or later these guys are going to win" (Levy 1975).

That evening, more than five hundred farm workers and supporters arrived for a rally at the Filipino Community Hall which was overflowing. Chavez, Larry Itliong, and Al Green joined Reuther on the stage, and when Chavez rose to a thunderous applause Reuther began to see the strength of the NFWA having arrived in Delano prepared to deal primarily with the AWOC. Reuther began his own speech by declaring: "This is not your strike, this is *our* strike!" The crowd roared back: "*Huelga! Viva Reuther! Viva La Causa!*" Reuther then announced that the AFL-CIO had voted to support the strike. Reuther's decision to split the financial support equally between the AWOC and the NFWA gave the NFWA its first recognition and substantial means of support from the wider labor movement. Dozens of reporters from television and newspapers across the country covered the day's events. The following morning, three times the usual number of farm workers joined picket lines in Delano, Los Angeles, and San Francisco (Taylor 1975, Kushner 1975).

When Senator Robert Kennedy came to Delano three months later, he publicly embraced Chavez and the farm labor movement. Kennedy was a member of the Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor along with Senator Pete Williams and Senator George Murphy. Williams, the subcommittee chairman, had sponsored bills that would ensure a minimum wage for farm labor, collective bargaining rights under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), tighter restrictions on child labor, and tighter control over the Farm Labor Placement Service. When the NFWA suggested that Williams hold hearings in California to bring attention to the bills and the Delano strike, he scheduled three—in Sacramento, Visalia, and Delano on March 14, 15, and 16. Chavez was one of the first witnesses called to testify. Bishop Hugh Donohoe of Stockton also testified that the Catholic Bishops of California, who previously had remained silent regarding the strike, could find "no compelling reason for excluding farm management-labor relations from the National Labor Relations Act" (Taylor 1975). This institutional support from the Catholic Church was important to the striking farm workers, but Catholicism itself continued to play a far greater role in the farm labor

movement—as a march to Sacramento in the spring of 1966 would demonstrate.

### THE 1966 MARCH TO SACRAMENTO

The idea for the march to Sacramento originated in January 1966. NFWA leaders had retreated to a supporter's home in Santa Barbara to evaluate the Schenley boycott and figure out how to keep farm workers from returning to the vineyards in the spring. Chavez, Huerta, Drake, Ganz, Valdez, Vera Cruz and a few others met and discussed the concept for a march to Sacramento that would pass through most of the farm labor towns. Chavez then suggested that since the march would coincide with Lent perhaps the march should be a pilgrimage which could arrive at Sacramento on Easter Sunday. Plans for the march were made and on March 17 a group of about seventy-five farm workers and thirty supporters began what was then the longest protest march in U.S. history—from the NFWA offices on Albany Street, along Highway 99 in Delano, to the steps of the state capitol building in Sacramento 250 miles to the north (Ganz 2000, Levy 1975).

The march adopted three themes that Chavez suggested: *Perigrinación, Penitencia, y Revolución* ("Pilgrimage, Penitence, and Revolution"). These themes resonated during the Lenten season, but they also reflected Chavez's continuing emergence as a spiritual leader who urged farm workers to use spirituality as a source of strength (Levy 1975, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997). The march was arduous. Only eighty-two men and women made it the whole way and most of them had to endure fatigue, blisters, and bloody feet. Some marchers carried portraits of the Virgin of Guadalupe and a few shouldered large crosses. Others carried flags from the U.S., Mexico, the Philippines, the NFWA, and the AWOC. Most people wore red headbands or red armbands. The marchers walked about ten miles a day, beginning with a Mass and ending with a rally. At night marchers would rely on the hospitality of farm workers along the march route for places to shower and sleep. During the day, supporters brought food and entire families joined in for several miles and even an entire day or two on the weekends, doubling and tripling the ranks of the marchers and stretching the march out as long as two miles. The march, like the movement itself, was a family affair embedded within a larger social network of community support (Ganz 2000, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Levy 1975, Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995).

The march to Sacramento represented a convergence of ideas Chavez had put into action in Oxnard and



elsewhere. The march incorporated religious symbols and practices, it exemplified one of the most effective means of nonviolent protest, it relied on community support, and it attracted favorable publicity (due in part to the media coverage of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, the previous year). The march also gave Chavez the chance to reconnect with farm workers along the San Joaquin Valley. Most important, it strengthened the solidarity of the hundreds of men, women, and children who participated (Levy 1975).

The scale of the march was unprecedented—it was more than two hundred miles long, it involved hundreds of marchers and inspired thousands of supporters and observers. But the march also was revolutionary and historically significant for its spatial dimensions. Luis Valdez observed that the march obliterated territorial divisions. “The San Joaquin Valley is full of those limitations, of those barriers and those lines that you never crossed. Well, this march crossed them. It crossed them all. It was,” he concluded, “a literal taking of the territory” (Galan Productions 1996).

As the marchers approached Sacramento a few days before Easter, Chavez received a telephone call from a lawyer representing the Schenley Corporation. The company wanted to sign a contract. Dolores Huerta assumed responsibility for drawing up and negotiating a contract. When the Schenley Corporation officially recognized the NFWA on April 6 and signed a contract ninety days later, the farm workers’ union had achieved much of what it sought when it went on strike in September. On Easter Sunday (April 10) a crowd of more than four thousand farm workers and supporters thronged to the steps of the capitol building to listen to speeches by Huerta and Chavez and to celebrate a remarkable victory (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Ganz 2000, Taylor 1975).

A few days after Schenley announced its recognition of the NFWA, the Di Giorgio Company hinted that it might consider holding elections on its ranches to determine whether its workers wanted representation from the NFWA. A wary Chavez arranged a round of talks only to learn that the company insisted on an immediate end to the strike and boycott, compulsory arbitration, an election that would exclude striking farm workers, and a ballot that also listed a company-run union. When Chavez heard that union organizers had been physically attacked at the company’s Sierra Vista ranch while he was meeting with company

officials, he broke off the talks and decided to confront the agribusiness giant head on (Levy 1975).

### **EVOLUTION OF THE UNITED FARM WORKERS ORGANIZING COMMITTEE**

Chavez quickly refocused the NFWA’s boycott network (now strengthened by the full support of the AFL-CIO) on Di Giorgio’s popular juice and canned food brands. The network also expanded into New York, Chicago, and other cities in the East where pickets could target points of distribution. When NFWA organizers learned that Di Giorgio was recruiting strikebreakers and requiring them to sign cards authorizing the Teamsters to represent them, Chavez and AFL-CIO organizing director Bill Kircher realized they would have to beat the Teamsters in ranch elections (Taylor 1975, Dunne 1971).

Di Giorgio planned to hold elections at its Sierra Vista ranch in Delano and its Borrego Springs ranch in San Diego County, but the company gave the NFWA only three days’ notice. Kircher and Chavez were infuriated and secured an injunction removing the NFWA and the AWOC from the ballots. They also pressed Governor Brown to investigate the situation. Chavez traveled with Chris Hartmire to Di Giorgio’s Borrego Springs ranch to recruit farm workers and maintain pressure on the company. After persuading ten farm workers to walk out, Chavez, Hartmire, and Father Victor Salandini entered the property to help the workers reclaim their belongings. All thirteen men were arrested for trespassing and detained before being chained together, taken to the San Diego County jail, stripped naked, and searched. When news of Cesar’s rough treatment spread, more outraged farm workers joined the strike. The negative publicity also pressured Di Giorgio to agree to the governor’s recommendation that new elections be held on August 30, 1966 (Levy 1975, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Dunne 1971).

In anticipation of the Di Giorgio elections, the NFWA and the AWOC negotiated a merger. The creation of the new union, the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC), was announced on August 22, 1966. Bill Kircher approved an operating budget of ten thousand dollars per month from the AFL-CIO, and the membership voted Cesar Chavez director and Larry Itliong assistant director; Dolores Huerta, Gil Padilla, Tony Orendain, Philip Vera Cruz, and Andy Imutan were appointed vice presidents and fellow members of the board of directors (Levy 1975, Taylor 1975).

The farm workers' new strength and unity helped bring them victory in the Di Giorgio elections. Although the Teamsters won the packing-shed workers, the field workers voted 530 to 331 in favor of representation from the UFWOC. When the news arrived at the Filipino Community Hall, where most of the union members had gathered to await results, "everyone just exploded." The victory party soon migrated to the Peoples Bar and Cafe to celebrate (Levy 1975).

The union's successes brought a new wave of favorable publicity across the country and prompted a telegram from Martin Luther King, Jr. The civil rights leader acknowledged that "the fight for equality must be fought on many fronts—in the urban slums, in the sweat shops of the factories and fields. Our separate struggles are really one—a struggle for freedom, for dignity, and for humanity... We are together with you in spirit and in determination that our dreams for a better tomorrow will be realized" (Levy 1975).

After the victories in the Di Giorgio elections, the UFWOC engaged in two smaller but still significant campaigns. The first involved the boycott of Perelli-Minetti Company's 2,600-acre vineyard in Delano in August 1966 after the company refused to negotiate a contract with the UFWOC. With this boycott, the UFWOC sent farm workers to Los Angeles, the company's major market, but the union also used AFL-CIO assistance to follow cargo shipments to urban markets in the East. In New York City, union supporters organized a boycott of Macy's department store, which carried Perelli-Minetti products. Perelli-Minetti finally conceded in February 1967 and signed a contract four months later. Six other wineries in California followed suit almost immediately, giving the UFWOC a total of eleven contracts (all of them negotiated by Dolores Huerta) covering five thousand workers—about two percent of the state's agricultural labor force. The contracts demonstrated the power of the boycott. (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Jenkins 1985).

In the summer of 1966, NFWA organizers had helped Tejano members of the Independent Workers Association organize a four-hundred-mile march from Rio Grande City to the Texas state capitol in Austin that was modeled after the march to Sacramento. By the time Chavez was able to join in, as many as ten thousand striking melon workers and their supporters were closing in on the state capitol building. After Chavez left, the IWA members voted to merge their organization with the UFWOC, and Tony Orendain agreed to head the Texas branch of

the union. Tejano members of the UFWOC faced many of the same obstacles as their counterparts in California—staunch resistance from growers, intimidation from law enforcement authorities and quickly-issued injunctions from the local courts (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995, Taylor 1975).

## **THE FORTY ACRES**

Around the time that the Di Giorgio campaign was concluding, Chavez decided to move forward with plans to develop a network of service centers for farm workers modeled after the service center in San Jose. He wanted the centers to provide medical clinics, co-op auto repair shops and gasoline stations, credit unions, and other health and welfare services. Chavez enlisted union volunteer Leroy Chatfield, the former principal of a Catholic high school in Bakersfield, to develop these plans. Chatfield soon raised twenty-five thousand dollars from a foundation and secured fifty thousand dollars more from the AFL-CIO's Industrial Union Department (Taylor 1975).

The union acquired forty acres of land two miles west of Delano, on the north side of Highway 99 next to the city dump, in the spring of 1966. Although the land was barren and dusty in the summer heat, Chavez had ambitious plans for what would become the union's headquarters, known by members as the Forty Acres. From the beginning, Chavez envisioned the Forty Acres as a model service center, and the union began planning the construction of four buildings—an automobile service station, an administrative center, a health clinic, and a retirement center for Filipino farm workers. By the beginning of 1968, Cesar's brother Richard had built a gasoline and vehicular repair station. (Matthiessen 1973).

Under Richard's supervision—and with a donation of fifty thousand dollars from the United Auto Workers—UFWOC volunteers and other members of trade unions who donated their labor completed construction of an administrative building the following September and named it after Roy Reuther, brother of Walter Reuther. The new building, constructed with adobe brick and an aluminum roof, eventually housed offices, a reception area, and a large meeting room that doubled as the hiring hall, from which farm workers would be dispatched to ranches under contract. When Reuther Hall opened in 1969, Larry Itliong relocated his offices there, taking up a room down the hallway from Cesar (Kushner 1975, Taylor 1975, State of California

1988). Union volunteers built the health clinic, and the offices of the credit union and *El Malcriado* (the union's newspaper) also relocated to the Forty Acres (State of California 1988).

The final and perhaps most notable component of the Forty Acres, devoted to retired Filipino farm workers, were not completed until 1975. Most Filipinos who immigrated to the U.S. came as young bachelors. Although some found wives in the U.S. and started families, most did not due in part to a climate of racism and anti-miscegenation laws. These aging men were not covered by Social Security. The UFWOC responded to their need for retirement homes and care by setting aside land on the east side of the Forty Acres for the creation of the Agbayani Village, a retirement center named for a Filipino farm worker who had died of a heart attack while on a picket line. The center's residential building was designed with sixty units, each offering residents a private room and an adjoining bathroom. The center included a central kitchen, a dining hall, a living room, and a recreation room. Nearby land was reserved for a vegetable garden and for grazing a few head of cattle. In 1980 the Agbayani Village housed seventy single Filipino men (State of California 1988, Scharlin and Villanueva 2000, Day 1971).

### **THE TABLE GRAPE STRIKE**

In the summer of 1967, the grape strike continued with the Giumarra Brothers Fruit Company, the largest table-grape grower in the state. It controlled eleven thousand acres (six thousand of them in table grapes), employed more than two thousand workers at harvest time, and grossed twelve million dollars a year. When the Giumarra family refused to come to the bargaining table, the UFWOC called for a rally and strike vote on August 3, 1967, at the Bakersfield fairgrounds. More than sixteen hundred farm workers attended, voting in overwhelming numbers to go on strike against Giumarra (Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995, Majka and Majka 1982, Levy 1975, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Taylor 1975).

The Giumarras gained injunctions that limited the number of pickets to three per ranch entrance and restricted the use of bullhorns. The company aggressively recruited illegal Mexican immigrants to break the strike (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997). The union countered with a boycott of Giumarra table grapes, but the boycott initially proved difficult to manage. Boycott organizers thought that they could alert consumers to the Giumarra label, but grocery stores seldom shelved grapes by producer. Moreover, the Giumarra Company had little trouble

marketing their product under other growers' labels. Dolores Huerta and Fred Ross proposed a boycott of all California table grapes. The union would attack the entire table-grape industry simultaneously. The boycott began in January 1968.

The campaign owed its remarkable success to a number of factors, the most important of which was the decision to send farm workers themselves to the cities and to the forefront of the boycott organization. During the next two years, these UFWOC members established boycott centers in more than forty major cities and worked with boycott committees in hundreds of smaller towns. One of the first young Chicanos to leave Delano to begin a major urban boycott campaign was Eliseo Medina. A Delano farm worker who had joined the NFWA in 1965 when he was a teen-ager, Medina would become a veteran of numerous organizing and boycott campaigns.

For Medina, as for dozens of other Chicanos, "it was a big experience." This was especially true for Chicanas such as Mary Elena Rojas, Juanita Herrera, Fina Hernandez, Maria Sanchez, and Esther Padilla, all of whom joined their husbands in directing boycott efforts in Pittsburgh, Denver, Cleveland, and other cities. Chicanas who had been raised to defer to their husbands or other men found opportunities in the boycott to redefine their relationships with their spouses and to reconstruct their own self-images. Jessica Govea, Maria Saudado, Peggy McGivern, and Hope Lopez—single Chicanas who, along with Dolores Huerta, independently directed boycott efforts in major cities—found still other opportunities in the campaign. These women discovered "a new space to express a gendered resistance to the status quo based on their own views and experiences." Indeed, leadership in the boycott campaigns gave women in the farm labor movement new confidence in their own organizing abilities (Rose 1990, Rose 1995, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Taylor 1975, Galan Productions 1996).

The boycott helped fuel the broader transformation of the Delano grape strike from a local labor struggle (though one that had spread to southern California and to Texas and had received national media coverage) into a key facet of the maturing Chicano movement. Since the early months of the Delano strike in 1966, Chavez had been identified alongside Reies Lopez Tijerina and Rudolfo "Corky" Gonzales as a national Chicano leader. Chavez rejected efforts to impose racial boundaries on the social movement he was building. Yet Chicanos across the country took pride in his courageous leadership and in the

farm labor movement as a whole. The appearance and confident assertiveness of Chicano boycott leaders in front of grocery stores, inside churches, and on college campuses inspired and attracted urban Chicanos across the country. During the coming months and years, young urban Chicanos would flock to La Causa and attribute to it a cultural significance that extended far beyond the San Joaquin Valley. As a result, the status of Chicanos gained new visibility within the broad spectrum of civil rights movements of the era (Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995).

In the meantime, Chavez and the UFWOC leaders were increasingly worried about losing their momentum. Chavez himself was concerned that impatient farm workers and union supporters might abandon their commitment to nonviolence. It was becoming harder for the farm workers who had been on strike for more than two years to exercise restraint. By the spring of 1968, the civil rights movement, the anti-Vietnam movement, and the Chicano movement all had grown more militant. The first half of the year would see an escalation of revolutionary rhetoric among groups such as the Black Panthers and Black Muslims, the eruption of dozens of riots after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., an explosion of more than 220 student protests against the Vietnam War, and a continuation of Tijerina's insistence that stolen land must be reclaimed through armed occupation. Growing numbers of farm workers began to believe that it was time to adopt a more confrontational approach (Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995, Taylor 1975, Daniel 1981).

As reports of violent activity and property damage caused by frustrated farm workers mounted, Chavez became profoundly disappointed. He called a meeting at the Filipino Community Hall on February 19, 1968, and announced that he had begun to fast. He would continue to do so until union members renewed their pledges of nonviolence. Chavez then left and walked to the service station building at the Forty Acres, where he set up a cot and a few religious items in a small room. He would remain there for most of the twenty-five days of his fast (Levy 1975, Daniel 1981).

UFWOC leaders were divided in their responses. Tony Orendain and a few others thought that Cesar's fast was a publicity stunt, and a waste of time. Dolores Huerta saw the fast's broader spiritual and cultural significance. Within days word of the fast had spread throughout the San Joaquin Valley. Thousands of farm workers began streaming to the Forty Acres with pledges of support and nonviolence

and prayers for Chavez's health. Father Mark Day (the recently-appointed pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church) pledged to offer Mass every day of the fast, and hundreds of farm workers and supporters pitched tents, and attended festive Masses, Jerry Cohen recalled, Cesar's fast and the events surrounding it at the Forty Acres rejuvenated the farm labor movement (Levy 1975, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Matthiessen 1973, Levy 1975). Cohen explained how the fast also helped pull the union together in a new way. When a weakened Chavez was called to trial at the Kern County Courthouse in Bakersfield on the thirteenth day of his fast, the leaders of the union's ranch committees (which functioned as locals) met to coordinate a show of support (Levy 1975).

When Chavez and Cohen arrived at the courthouse, they were overwhelmed by the presence of as many as one thousand farm workers, singing and praying. The judge rejected a plea from Giumarra's attorneys that the farm workers be evicted. This decision was a small but significant victory. It was the first time the farm workers' union ever won anything in that courthouse. "Every time I had ever been in that courthouse before, it was like going on enemy territory," Cohen explained. "But after that demonstration, it was a lot different" (Taylor 1975, Levy 1975).

A little less than two weeks later, Chavez was convinced that the farm workers' commitment to nonviolence had been renewed. He announced an end to his fast. UFWOC leaders planned a Mass and celebration at the Forty Acres and arranged to have Robert Kennedy fly in to be at Chavez's side. On the morning of March 11, 1968, hundreds of cars began arriving in Delano, and organizers soon realized that they would need to relocate to Memorial Park. By the time Kennedy arrived, the gathering had swelled to four thousand people. Several priests, ministers, and rabbis celebrated an ecumenical Mass and Kennedy offered Chavez a piece of bread.

One week later, Kennedy announced his candidacy for the Democratic nomination for president. For the next two months, the union shifted many of its members and volunteers into the campaign to help their ally win the California primary election. Their efforts worked, and on the night that Kennedy won he acknowledged his gratitude to Cesar, Dolores, and the UFWOC. After leaving the stage in the Ambassador Hotel ballroom, Kennedy was shot by an assassin. His death the next day shocked the nation, but it was especially devastating to the farm workers, who considered Kennedy not only a critical

ally but also a close friend (Taylor 1975, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Levy 1975).

The union poured its resources back into the table-grapes boycott, its most powerful weapon. By the middle of 1969, it was clear that the boycott was having a substantial impact on California growers. The increasingly desperate growers filed a lawsuit against the union on July 4, 1969, claiming that the boycott had cost the industry twenty-five million dollars in sales. (Levy 1975, Meister and Loftis 1977, Majka and Majka 1982).

The union also opened a new front in its attack on growers with a focus on environmental health issues. In 1969 some grape workers with skin rashes and flu-like symptoms began to complain to the union that they thought they were being poisoned by pesticides. Jerry Cohen discovered that growers had been substituting highly toxic phosphate-based pesticides for recently-outlawed DDT-based pesticides. The California Department of Health opened its own investigation and concluded that at least fifteen percent of all farm workers in the state suffered from pesticide poisoning. Boycotters in Washington, D.C., decided to purchase some Delano grapes and have them tested. When the grapes showed high concentrations of Aldrin (a pesticide that has been banned because of its links to cancer), the issue exploded in the media, adding further fuel to the boycott effort (Taylor 1971, Meister and Loftis 1977).

### **END OF THE DELANO GRAPE STRIKE**

As the first grape crop was ripening in southern California the following spring, the growers' solidarity began to crack. In April 1970, Lionel Steinberg, the owner of three of the largest vineyards in the Coachella Valley, agreed to sign a contract with the UFWOC if a special committee of bishops appointed by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops was allowed to sit in on the negotiations. A handful of growers from the Coachella Valley followed Steinberg's example, but the union's big break came on the evening of July 25, 1970. John Giumarra, Jr. called Jerry Cohen and proposed that they meet immediately.

The quick moving negotiations held in room 44 of the Stardust Motel barely slowed when Chavez and Cohen insisted that the Giumarras get the rest of the struck Delano grape growers—all twenty-seven of them—on board. After two days of meetings, the growers agreed to the union's demands for an increase in pay; the creation of union-run hiring halls;

an increase in piece-rate bonuses; the establishment of joint farm labor-grower committees to monitor and regulate pesticide use; and the funding of the Robert F. Kennedy Health and Welfare Plan for union members. On July 29, conciliatory growers gathered with elated union members at Reuther Hall at the Forty Acres to sign three-year contracts.

The Delano contracts brought eighty-five percent of the table-grape growers in California under union contract, an unprecedented achievement in the history of the U.S. agricultural industry. But even as the UFWOC leaders celebrated, they knew that a new campaign already was needed. The Teamsters had broken a jurisdictional agreement with the UFWOC and moved in on farm workers in the lettuce fields of the Salinas Valley (Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

## **VI. The Salinas Strike, the Fight against the Teamsters, and Agricultural Labor Laws in the American West, 1970-1975**

The next period of the farm labor movement saw the UFWOC face familiar challenges brought with unprecedented force. On the same day that the union finished its negotiations with Delano grape growers, Chavez received confirmation that 29 lettuce growers in the Salinas Valley had signed contracts with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and that at least 175 vegetable growers employing 11,000 farm workers in the Salinas and Santa Maria Valleys were considering Teamsters contracts of their own. Salinas Valley growers were determined to avoid giving in to the UFWOC (as they thought Coachella and Delano growers had done), and they were not adverse to violence. As the UFWOC engaged these new opponents, its leaders also had to administer the union's new contracts and maintain its existing membership base. Moreover, the union initiated two transformative projects—moving its headquarters from Delano to a location in the Tehachapi Mountains and completing the process of gaining independent standing within the AFL-CIO (Levy 1975, Ferriss and Sandoval 1995).

Continued success in the fields and the undeniable power of the boycott brought important victories during this period, including the passage of the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act, the first law in the continental United States that recognized the rights of farm workers to organize and negotiate contracts with growers.

## FIGHT AGAINST THE TEAMSTERS

Given the Teamsters' territorial raid in 1966 when the Di Giorgio Company and the Teamsters together tried to thwart the UFWOC, the Teamsters sudden move into the fields of the Salinas Valley was not without precedent. The Teamsters had a long-standing presence in the valley, and in July 1970 the union's Salinas-based local had just renegotiated contracts covering workers in the area's canneries, packing sheds, and frozen-food processing plants as well as field-truck drivers and packing-carton stitchers. As negotiations ended, representatives of the Growers-Shippers Vegetable Association (GSVA) asked if the Teamsters might also sign a contract covering field workers which would violate accepted trade-union policy. Nevertheless, William Grami, director of organizing for the Western Conference of Teamsters saw an opportunity to expand his power and sent word to the GSVA that he was willing to sign recognition agreements immediately (Meister and Loftis 1977, Taylor 1975).

When Chavez and other union leaders learned of the Teamsters' contracts, they quickly developed a counter-strategy. Chavez already had planned to organize the Salinas Valley, where farm workers picked seventy percent of the nation's iceberg lettuce as well as broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, celery, strawberries, and artichokes, but he had hoped to spend a couple of years after the Delano campaign building farm labor solidarity in the area before confronting growers. The UFWOC's success in Delano forced the issue as growers in the Salinas Valley believed that if they signed a contract with the Teamsters, it would forestall the UFWOC moving into their area. However, the growers underestimated the strength of the UFWOC's organizational base, which Manuel Chavez and Gil Padilla had begun building in the area several months earlier. Second, they underestimated the anger with which farm workers would respond to the contracts when they learned that they had been signed by Teamsters officials and growers without farm workers' consent (Taylor 1975, Ferriss and Sandoval 1995).

That anger turned into activism when the UFWOC initiated the first step in its counter-strategy, a march on Salinas culminating in a massive rally. On August 2, 1970, more than three thousand farm workers marched through the streets of Salinas and streamed onto the football field of Hartnell Community College, chanting "*huelga*" and carrying UFWOC banners, American and Mexican flags, and pictures of the Virgin of Guadalupe and Martin Luther King, Jr. Chavez took the stage. Alternating between

Spanish and English, he denounced the growers and the Teamsters for their "great treason against the aspirations of those men and women who have sacrificed their lives for so many years to make a few men rich" (Levy 1975). Behind-the-scenes deals would not be accepted, Cesar asserted and he urged farm workers to refuse to sign Teamster cards. He asked them to begin forming representative committees at their ranches that would report to the UFWOC's Salinas headquarters during the coming week. After several priests offered Mass, the crowd voted overwhelmingly to go on strike (Levy 1975, Ferriss and Sandoval 1995).

Chavez was able to gain use of the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) office on South Wood Street in Salinas. When Teamsters organizers, growers, and foremen tried to force the valley's *lechugeros* (lettuce cutters) and other field workers to sign union cards, many of the workers simply walked off and went to the MAPA office instead. Many of the workers did not know the addresses of the ranches where they worked, so this took a great deal of time. Finally union organizers hung a large map of the valley in the MAPA office. As Padilla recalled, they "color-coded the strikes and then assigned each picket captain two or three ranches and told them to get those workers who had struck those ranches to form the picket lines" (Taylor 1975).

Meanwhile Chavez and AFL-CIO organizing director Bill Kircher pressured the Teamsters to recognize the UFWOC's jurisdiction over field workers. They took their case to AFL-CIO President George Meany, who arranged for a meeting so that the leaders of the competing unions might come to an agreement. After this meeting and further mediation from the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Committee on Farm Labor, the Teamsters agreed on August 10 to sign another "no raid" pact and to explore ways to break their Salinas contracts. Chavez, in turn, declared a six-day moratorium on strikes (Ferriss and Sandoval 1995).

Chavez called off all UFWOC strikes in order to allow the Teamsters and growers to meet without distraction, but he realized that the union would need to maintain some pressure. The union's leaders decided to target the area's largest corporate growers. Each of these operations would be vulnerable to negative publicity and, if necessary, a consumer boycott. Leroy Chatfield had already sent out signals that the union was considering a boycott of United Fruit's popular Chiquita bananas, and the arrival of corporate executives from the East Coast provided an opportunity for further maneuvering. During the

second week in August, United Fruit's vice president Will Lauer and Purex's chairman of the board, William Tincher, met with Dolores Huerta, Jerry Cohen, and Marshall Ganz (Levy 1975). As negotiations moved forward over the coming days and weeks, the union concluded that the corporate growers would be unwilling to rescind their Teamsters contracts and sign with the UFWOC in order to avoid a boycott.

Uncertain about what would lie ahead—how long growers would hold out, the extent to which the Teamsters could be trusted, and how long the area's farm workers would remain nonviolent—Chavez decided to begin another fast. Chavez's health deteriorated quickly, leading him to end the fast on the sixth day. On August 17, Chavez retreated to the Franciscan mission at San Juan Bautista to recuperate, leaving Huerta, Cohen, Ganz, and others to run the UFWOC office and continue negotiations. The mission at San Juan Bautista and others like it appealed greatly to Chavez. He found them to be peaceful places where he could meditate and pray. During his time in San Juan Bautista, Cesar noted that he “was able to reflect on what was happening, to shed all of those million little problems, and to look at things a little more dispassionately” (Levy 1975). The need for a place to retreat, reflect, and plan would stay with Chavez for the rest of his life (Ferriss and Sandoval 1995, Levy 1975).

### **THE SALINAS STRIKE**

While Chavez was at the mission, the union learned of Grami's decision that the Teamsters were “honor bound” to maintain their contracts with all growers who wanted to keep them. Several corporate growers had notified the Teamsters of their desire to rescind their contracts in order to sign with the UFWOC, but 170 smaller-scale vegetable and soft-fruit growers insisted on staying with the International Brotherhood. The Teamsters' refusal to rescind these contracts shattered Cesar's remaining hopes of avoiding a strike. Chavez knew that farm workers' anger had been rising daily. A few days after his initial agreement with Grami, he discovered that the Teamsters had accepted a piece-rate increase of only two and half cents over the five-year length of their contracts. After the initial six-day moratorium period ended, Chavez and Huerta had to plead with union members to refrain from striking in order to give the Teamsters more time. Now, with the announcement on August 21 that members of the GSVA and the Teamsters were keeping their contracts, the area's farm workers would not be stopped. When farm workers met at another rally at Hartnell College on

August 23, 1970, they thundered their continuing commitment to a strike and pledged to remain nonviolent. The next morning, as many as 7,000 farm workers walked off their jobs at more than 150 ranches, making this the largest farm labor strike since the 1930s. From Salinas south to Santa Maria, the UFWOC's red banners flew in the towns and along the roads. All across the landscape, “it looked like a revolution,” Jerry Cohen remembered (Daniel 1981, Ferriss and Sandoval 1995, Taylor 1975, Levy 1975, Meister and Loftis 1977).

The atmosphere grew tense as the GSVA obtained injunctions that prohibited picketing, as local growers hired armed guards, and Teamsters officers sent thugs with baseball bats to intimidate UFWOC members, including those employed at grower operations that rescinded their Teamsters contracts. Local law enforcement officers sided with the growers and their men. When two burly Teamsters attacked Jerry Cohen as he was trying to check on the safety of broccoli workers involved in a sit-down, the only response from a sheriff's deputy was a complaint to the semi-conscious UFWOC lawyer that there were too many pickets at the ranch. Cohen, who had suffered a concussion, was hospitalized for eight days. Other acts of violence followed during the next several weeks. A ranch foreman drove a bulldozer into UFWOC pickets' cars, several pickets were shot at, and some were attacked with chains. Some farm workers began to retaliate, throwing rocks and using lead pipes as weapons (Levy 1975, Ferriss and Sandoval 1995).

The injunctions and mounting acts of violence convinced Chavez to pull farm workers away from the picket lines and turn the union's boycott machinery against non-UFWOC lettuce. George Meany had announced the official end of the grape boycott on August 31, and the first of several hundred boycott organizers began to return to California a week later. Despite his sense that most of them would not want to leave again so soon, Chavez announced at a press conference on September 17 that the union was sending boycotters to sixty-four cities in North America.

The GSVA responded by going to court with the argument that the UFWOC strike was prompted by a jurisdictional dispute between two unions and that growers should not have to suffer the consequences. As union appeals moved forward, the Bud Antle Company, acting independently, went to court with a similar argument and convinced Judge Gordon Campbell to issue an injunction against the boycott of its lettuce. Chavez defied the order, and Judge

Campbell summoned him to the Monterey County Courthouse in Salinas on December 4. When Chavez arrived with Jerry Cohen, the courthouse was surrounded and filled by three thousand farm workers standing or kneeling silently in a show of support. The hearing ended after three hours with Chavez refusing to call off the boycott. Cesar was led to jail for contempt of court, and his pre-planned press release went out: "Boycott Bud Antle! . . . And boycott the hell out of them!" (Levy 1975).

The actions of the Antle Company and Judge Campbell played right into the union's hands. As Chavez passed time in the Monterey County Jail, reading books and answering letters, the union maintained a constant vigil. Priests offered Masses, union leaders organized rallies, and the national media covered every development. Media coverage escalated when Chavez received two prominent visitors, Coretta Scott King and Ethel Rose Kennedy. Both women had confidence in Cesar's struggle, and they passed on the strength that they had shared with their husbands. Clearly, Chavez was now regarded on a par with the nation's other civil rights leaders. He remained in jail for twenty days. On December 24, 1970, the California Supreme Court ordered his release pending its review of the case.

Over the course of the next year, the UFWOC continued to wage its battles against Salinas and Santa Maria Valley growers and against the Teamsters. In Washington, D.C., George Meany and Teamsters President Frank Fitzsimmons brokered a new jurisdictional settlement, which Chavez and Bill Grami signed in mid-March. UFWOC leaders met in May with thirty or forty growers and several Teamsters officials. The Teamsters no longer wanted their contracts with the GSWA, and the growers promised to negotiate with the UFWOC if Chavez would suspend the boycott. The UFWOC leaders accepted the deal; however after five months of weekly negotiations, the union concluded that the growers were not willing to sign contracts. Bill Kircher announced in November that the UFWOC was breaking off talks. The lettuce boycott began again, with no end in sight (Levy 1975).

## **EVOLUTION OF THE UFW/ THE MOVE TO LA PAZ**

Despite the slow progress in Salinas, the union continued to win victories on other, less prominent fronts. By the summer of 1971, the UFWOC had 150 contracts to administer; however, the union's leaders lacked real experience administering contracts that covered thousands of workers. When Chavez insisted

on going to Salinas to personally honor his promise to farm workers there, he took most of the union leadership with him, leaving only Larry Itliong and Richard Chavez in Delano to coordinate the election of ranch committees, ratify the contracts, set up hiring halls, verify farm workers' seniority, administer the medical plan and life insurance program, and coordinate the collection of dues and the payment of taxes. The California Migrant Ministry assigned twenty volunteers to help, but they too had little practical experience. Cesar refused to accept the administrative help offered by the AFL-CIO because he preferred to have farm workers stumble through administrative tasks and learn from their own mistakes (Levy 1975, Taylor 1975, Ferriss and Sandoval 1995, Meister and Loftis 1977, Daniel 1981).

The task of setting up hiring halls proved particularly difficult. Growers were supposed to send written requests for a certain number of workers to the hiring hall every day. Likewise, workers seeking employment on a union ranch were supposed to go to the hiring hall, verify their UFW membership (and pay their dues if necessary), and request a dispatch to a union ranch. Hiring hall administrators were responsible for matching workers with growers' needs based on a seniority system. This system broke down in the first couple of weeks of August as confusion over ranch information, duplicate registrations and dispatch cards were compounded by thousands of people waiting to be dispatched at the same time. John Giumarra, Jr., noted his complaints about the early inefficiencies of the hiring hall even as he acknowledged how transformative they were. In the eyes of growers, the hiring hall quickly became "a bottleneck in every farm operation" (Ferriss and Sandoval 1995, Taylor 1975).

Richard and other union leaders became able administrators, and growers such as Lionel Steinberg expressed satisfaction with the hiring hall. Yet the year and a half following the signings in Delano continued to be a challenging period of adjustment for everyone involved in the union. Farm workers had to learn what their rights were under the contracts and how to initiate grievance procedures (which often meant translating the legalistic language of contracts into Spanish). The workers elected to ranch committees had to learn how to represent their co-workers and deal with growers, and those assigned to help run local hiring halls had to learn how to place thousands of workers a day. Meanwhile, union leaders and organizers continued to recruit new union members, direct pickets and boycotts, negotiate with growers and mediators, talk to elected officials and



the media, and raise money from union supporters. UFWOC members at all levels struggled with their tasks, but Chavez was committed to the creation of a democratic union in which farm workers themselves would wield power and make decisions rather than rely on professional union administrators or even their own leaders to tell them what to do. Chavez knew that if the union's structure did not empower farm workers, then growers would never treat them with the respect they deserved (Taylor 1975).

Chavez's commitment to a democratic union influenced his decision in 1971 to move the union's national headquarters from Delano to a more remote site. While in Salinas, Chavez had received word that Kern County was trying to sell 187 acres of land it owned in the foothills of the Tehachapi Mountains. The property located near Keene, thirty miles east of Bakersfield, was the former site of the Kern County Tuberculosis Hospital. The sanitarium had been closed, but a number of wood-frame cottages, administrative buildings, hospital wings, and a central steam-boiler plant still stood, sheltered by large oak trees and set among grassy hills (Ferriss and Sandoval 1995, Taylor 1975). When Chavez learned about the property's reduced price tag, he contacted a union supporter who had offered to help the union buy its own ranch someday. This supporter entered into a bidding contest with a farmer and finally won the property for a price of \$232,000. The down payment was his gift to the UFWOC, and the union made arrangements with county officials to pay off the rest. Chavez renamed the place *Nuestra Senora Reina de La Paz* (Our Lady Queen of Peace). He announced that he wanted to move the UFWOC's central administrative offices and staff residences there (Taylor 1975).

This decision met some resistance from other union leaders. Larry Itliong, for example, thought that the move would distance Chavez and other officers from farm workers, especially the Filipino farm workers in Delano and exacerbate a distance that the union's emerging bureaucratic structures already had created. Itliong wanted Chavez to remain a daily presence in Delano. Itliong thought that Jim Drake, Leroy Chatfield, Marshall Ganz, and other volunteers had too much influence on the union leader and that Chavez had been "swayed by the grandiose thinking of a brain trust of intellectuals" (Taylor 1975, Meister and Loftis 1977). Not surprisingly, Itliong refused to relocate to La Paz. His continued opposition to the union's emerging structure, among other reasons, prompted his decision to resign in October 1971 (Scharlin and Villanueva 2000, Taylor 1975, Meister and Loftis 1977).

Helen Chavez also was reluctant to move to La Paz for more personal reasons. She had spent time at the Kern County Tuberculosis Hospital as a girl. However, most of the staff welcomed the move. They realized that La Paz would provide a place to retreat and plan strategy, and they thought that the move would curtail interruptions from workers who went to the Forty Acres with complaints best handled by field office staff or ranch committee members (Ferriss and Sandoval 1995).

Chavez himself was eager to establish offices and a residence at La Paz for several reasons. First, he wanted to decrease farm workers' dependence on his leadership. The relocation from Delano also would help keep the union from becoming too closely identified with one particular place or one part of the nation's farm labor population and thus would allow the union to maintain an appealing and inclusive national profile. Chavez also wanted enough land to build a union training center, where farm workers could learn leadership skills and nonviolent tactics. Finally, Chavez continued to relish the peaceful and communal atmosphere of Franciscan missions such as San Juan Bautista, and he longed for a refuge where he could escape the media spotlight and spend free time with his family. The move to La Paz thus represented an important transition in Chavez's own identity as a movement leader (Ferriss and Sandoval 1995, Taylor 1975). The move was completed by the summer of 1972. Chavez's office was located in one corner of the large administration building. The Chavez family moved into a two-bedroom wood-frame house on the property.

Through the rest of the decade the full-time population of La Paz fluctuated between 100 and 150 individuals, most of who lived in the old hospital's staff housing or in trailers purchased by the union. The main hospital unit was converted into a hotel of sorts for farm workers who came to La Paz for training and for volunteers who passed through on their way to field offices or other assignments. The union also established a day care center for younger children and arranged for older children to be bused to Tehachapi for school (Taylor 1975).

Despite Chavez's best intentions, some union members who wished to build a wider base of leadership thought that Chavez's involvement with the day-to-day problems of farm workers and the day-to-day operation of the union remained remarkably high, even excessive. As historian Cletus Daniel notes, the AFL-CIO president and trade-union traditionalists developed serious doubts about

Chavez's "eccentric" style of leadership—his well-known idealism, his constant involvement in all aspects of the union, his unwavering sense of mission, and his stubborn aversion to compromise. The latter quality in particular rankled Meany, who privately blamed Chavez for the AFL-CIO's difficulty in settling the jurisdictional dispute between the UFWOC and the Teamsters (Taylor 1975, Daniel 1981).

Still, few could deny that Chavez's leadership was effective and that farm workers derived benefits from their union. As a result of these improvements, the union grew larger and stronger. The union's growth under Cesar's direction, in fact, paved the way for its admission into the AFL-CIO as a fully independent affiliate, renamed the United Farm Workers of America (UFW), in February 1971. This change in status gave the union a voice in directing federation policies and operations but required the union to forfeit a ten-thousand-dollar monthly subsidy it had continued to receive as an organizing committee. The shift reflected the union's maturation (Ferriss and Sandoval 1995, Taylor 1975, Levy 1975).

### **UNION SUCCESS IN FLORIDA**

As the campaign in Salinas stalled in 1971 and 1972, other organizing campaigns and political battles drew the union's attention. One of the most prominent organizing drives took place in Florida. Following the NBC broadcast in 1971 of the documentary *Migrant*, which exposed the squalid living and working conditions of Florida's agricultural laborers, the UFW sent Manuel Chavez to meet with farm workers and establish a base of operations for the union. The documentary was particularly critical of the Minute Maid Company, a subsidiary of the Coca-Cola Company that operated thirty thousand acres of citrus groves and employed twelve hundred farm workers in south central Florida. Coca-Cola moved quickly to improve conditions, but its predominantly African-American workers still welcomed the assistance of the UFW. Manuel organized the Minute Maid workers. Coca-Cola recognized its vulnerability to a boycott and signed a contract in February 1972 with little protest. As in California, the union's efforts transformed the lives of farm workers (Taylor 1975, Meister and Loftis 1977).

The union's success in Florida, however, turned the state into one of several new political battlegrounds. In 1972, an unprecedented political offensive began when a nation-wide coalition of corporate growers, shippers, anti-union groups, and their allies in state offices joined with the American Farm Bureau

Federation to sponsor legislation that limited union voting rights to year-round employees, banned harvest-time strikes, banned boycotts, and, in some states, even banned negotiations over pesticide use. Legislatures in Kansas, Idaho, Oregon, and Arizona passed these bills. Similar initiatives had begun in Florida and California when the UFW launched its counter-attack. Chavez assigned Jerry Cohen to lead a whirlwind campaign in Oregon, where a Farm Bureau bill had just passed and Gov. John Connally had one week in which to act on it. Cohen and the union's Portland-based boycotters mobilized farm workers and supporters and applied enough pressure on the governor to veto the bill. Eliseo Medina achieved even greater success in Florida. Several months before the beginning of the legislative season in 1972, a supporter informed the union that a Farm Bureau bill would be introduced. Medina and his staff began an opposition campaign that exposed the rampant abuses of the labor contracting system and the deplorable sanitary conditions of labor camps (which caused a typhoid epidemic in the spring of 1972). The campaign helped defeat the bill in committee (Meister and Loftis 1977, Levy 1975).

### **ARIZONA FAST OF 1972**

In 1972, Chavez decided to focus his own efforts on Arizona, where Dolores Huerta had been meeting with farm workers, lobbying politicians, and monitoring the rapid progress of yet another Farm Bureau-sponsored bill. Aware of the pressure that the bill's opponents could bring to bear on his office, Governor Jack Williams instructed the highway patrol to deliver the bill as soon as it passed the state senate. Forgoing a customary review by the state attorney general's office, the governor signed the bill within an hour of its passage on May 11, 1972. Chavez immediately traveled to Arizona with Jim Drake, Marshall Ganz, Leroy Chatfield, and his brother Richard to join Dolores. As the group of union leaders met to strategize, they discussed their frustration over local farm workers' sense of defeatism. "Every time we talked about fighting the law," Cesar explained, "people would say, 'No se puede, no se puede—it's not possible. It can't be done.'" Dolores, however, insisted that "from now on, we're not going to say, 'No se puede,' we're going to say, 'Si se puede!'" (Huerta 1975). The slogan stuck. The attitude that it reflected propelled a labor campaign that transformed Arizona politics (Huerta 1975, Levy 1975).

Upon learning of Governor Williams' decision to sign the Farm Bureau's bill, Chavez began a fast that would last twenty-four days. On the sixth day of his

fast, Chavez moved to the Santa Rita Community Center in Phoenix's south-side barrio. The worn-down, white-stucco building offered a small air-conditioned room for Cesar's cot and a large meeting hall for Masses and rallies. During the next eighteen days farm workers gathered nightly to attend Mass, sing union songs, listen to farm workers from California talk about unionization, and meet with visitors such as Sen. George McGovern and Coretta Scott King. The fast had the same mobilizing effect on farm workers that the Delano fast had in 1968, but it was no less physically difficult for Cesar. Although his physical health deteriorated rapidly, he remained committed. Chavez decided to end the fast on June 4, the two-year anniversary of Robert Kennedy's assassination. Five thousand farm workers arrived at a Phoenix hotel for a memorial Mass in Kennedy's honor, a brief statement from Chavez, and a rally (Taylor 1975, Meister and Loftis 1977, Levy 1975).

Meanwhile, Jim Drake and the other union leaders organized a recall campaign against Gov. Williams and began to collect the necessary 108,000 signatures. They exceeded that number. The attorney general blocked the recall election by challenging the validity of tens of thousands of signatures, but the union's victory was clear. Forty percent of the number of voters in the most recent gubernatorial election signed petitions opposing the Williams administration. Moreover, farm workers in Arizona began to recognize and exercise their political power. In the 1972 election, an unprecedented number of Mexican Americans and Navajos were elected to state, county, and local offices. Two years later, Raul Castro captured the governor's office (Taylor 1975, Meister and Loftis 1977, Levy 1975).

## **PROPOSITION 22**

During the middle of the Arizona campaign, the union learned of its greatest political threat yet. The American Farm Bureau Federation was preparing to place an initiative on the California November ballot that would shackle the UFW with the same restrictions that had been enacted in Arizona. Pro-grower groups spent \$224,000 to qualify the initiative (Proposition 22) for the ballot and another \$500,000 on the campaign to pass it. In response, union leader Leroy Chatfield sent farm workers and union supporters throughout the state to serve as "human billboards" in high-traffic areas and to talk with community groups, church groups, students, and other sympathizers. The union could spend only one-fifth of the amount that growers spent, but the

union's campaign was more effective. On November 7, Californians soundly defeated Proposition 22. As in Oregon, Florida, and Arizona, the UFW demonstrated its abilities to orchestrate and win political battles. Unionized farm workers in California and across the country embraced the political strength of their solidarity. Growers took notice as well (Daniel 1981, Taylor 1975, Meister and Loftis 1977).

## **CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURAL RELATIONS ACT**

The political victories of 1972 were impressive, but they came at a significant cost. While union leaders and organizers focused on the political arena, organizing activity in the fields came to a virtual standstill. At the same time, union leaders had to delay efforts to further improve the union's administration of existing contracts, and the union's largest strike—against Salinas growers—continued to lie dormant. The extent of the union's vulnerability was revealed when its three-year contracts with the table-grape industry expired in 1973. Once again the Teamsters broke a jurisdictional agreement, this time with the support of the White House (Daniel 1981, Levy 1975).

When Richard Nixon ran for reelection in 1972, he gained strong support from the Teamsters and their president, Frank Fitzsimmons. Nixon appointed Peter Nash as general counsel to the National Labor Relations Board and instructed him to aid growers filing complaints against the UFW (despite the fact that the NLRB had no jurisdiction over agricultural workers). Nixon also pardoned former Teamsters president Jimmy Hoffa and ordered the Justice Department to drop its prosecution of Fitzsimmons' son on fraud charges. It is not surprising, that the Nixon White House also backed the Teamsters union in its jurisdictional fight with the UFW.

In the summer of 1972, Nixon's White House Counsel, Charles Colson, sent a memo to the Justice and Labor Departments and to the NLRB explaining that the president had taken a "personal interest" in the fight and that these agencies should intervene if and when they could thwart the UFW (Levy 1975). Colson also reportedly arranged to have Fitzsimmons address the American Farm Bureau Federation's annual convention in Los Angeles in December 1972. The Teamsters president used the opportunity to attack the UFW as "a revolutionary movement that is perpetuating a fraud on the American public" (Meister and Loftis 1977, Ferriss and Sandoval 1995, Taylor 1975, Levy 1975).

Around the time of the Farm Bureau convention, a sympathetic grower from the Coachella Valley warned Chavez that the area's table-grape growers were going to sign with the Teamsters when their UFW contracts expired in April 1973. When the Teamsters announced in January that they had renegotiated their contracts with 170 Salinas and Santa Maria growers—almost *three years* before they were set to expire—it was clear that the Teamsters were launching a major offensive. As Bill Grami announced these new contracts, Teamsters officials continued their aggressive negotiations with growers in the Coachella and Imperial Valleys. Teamsters organizer Ralph Cotner, met with twenty-five Imperial Valley growers in Indio on January 24 and proposed contracts directly intended to undermine UFW gains. Cotner claimed that the Teamsters had the workers' consent and promised to produce the signatures of 4100 workers (despite the Farm Labor Service's estimation that only 1500 farm workers were employed in the area and a survey by the Catholic Bishops Committee showing that the vast majority favored the UFW). The Teamsters continued to represent farm workers against their will.

In response to the Teamsters' maneuvers, Chavez called for early negotiations with growers under contract, but his efforts were in vain. Nine hours after the union's contracts with Coachella and Imperial Valley growers expired on April 15, 1973, all but two growers (Lionel Steinberg and K. K. Larson) signed with the Teamsters. On April 13, union members filled the Coachella High School auditorium and voted to strike any grower who signed with the Teamsters. Three days later, one thousand farm workers walked off their jobs, beginning one of the most turbulent periods in the history of the farm labor movement. By the time union strikes against table-grape growers ended five months later, two UFW members had been killed, hundreds more injured, and more than thirty-five hundred arrested for violating court injunctions against picketing and other demonstrations of protest (Meister and Loftis 1977, Levy 1975).

When the UFW lost the Coachella contracts, the union's leaders immediately began to rally support. Rev. Chris Hartmire sent volunteers and supplies from the California Migrant Ministry and Monsignor George Higgins arrived with twenty-five clergymen and labor organizers to offer their assistance. Familiar groups of Chicano students and progressive sympathizers began to arrive or send aid, and the AFL-CIO offered its strongest support yet when

president George Meany publicly denounced the Teamsters as "union busting" and "strikebreaking." A few days later, Meany persuaded the AFL-CIO executive council to authorize \$1.7 million in aid. Combined with the \$1 million of UFW funds that Chavez committed to the fight, this contribution from organized labor made the 1973 campaign the best-financed farm labor strike in U.S. history. Pickets could count on strike pay, and they knew that the union could provide legal assistance and bail for those sent to jail (Taylor 1975, Levy 1975, Meister and Loftis 1977).

As court injunctions against picketing increased the union needed to provide bail money to free hundreds of farm workers and supporters from jail. On the first day of the strike, Riverside County Judge Fred Metheny issued an injunction covering the Tudor ranch; by the end of the harvest, a total of eighteen injunctions had limited the number of UFW pickets, their distance from ranch properties, and the use of bullhorns. Cesar recalled that "the worst was the Tenneco [ranch] injunction which prohibited all picketing," ...the day that was issued, Teamster goons appeared at various picket lines armed with grape stakes, clubs, baseball bats, metal pipes, and knives" (Levy 1975).

The Teamsters willingness to use violence was well known. The International Brotherhood hired more than 300 "guards" and paid them to "protect" nonstriking farm workers. Their intimidating appearance--dark sunglasses, tattoos, and biker boots—ran contrary to the union's \$1.3 million a year public relations campaign to improve its image. The guards' first show of force came on April 25, when thirty Teamsters stormed a meeting at a labor camp and began throwing rocks at UFW members. Violent encounters were then reported every week: shots were fired at a house where Chavez was sleeping, two Teamsters kidnapped a man they mistook for a UFW member and attempted to murder him, several Teamsters in the back of a truck hurled twenty-pound rocks at a car in which Chavez was riding, unidentified men set fire to a trailer home with a UFW family inside, a bomb blew up the car of another UFW member. An attack on June 24 was, in the words of Lt. Paul Yoxsimer, "the most violent eruption of the entire strike." (Levy, 1975). Approximately 180 Teamsters carrying iron pipes, chains, clubs, tire irons, and machetes attacked 400 men, women, and children on a picket line southeast of Thermal, leaving twenty-five injured and four hospitalized (Levy 1975, Meister and Loftis 1977, Taylor 1975, Ferriss and Sandoval 1995).

Throughout these weeks, Chavez reminded union members of the importance of nonviolence. As the strike wore on and the union failed to make any headway with growers, who managed to harvest most of their crops with imported workers from Mexico, some could not resist retaliating. When the harvest moved north toward Delano, the situation looked bleak. On July 10, 1973, the E & J Gallo Wine Company, the nation's largest winery, announced that it had signed a four-year contract with the Teamsters. The UFW's Delano contracts were set to expire less than three weeks later. Nevertheless, Chavez remained upbeat. Chavez knew that the jurisdictional fight would continue after the 1973 harvest, and he was convinced that the union had the strength to retain farm workers' loyalty and public support.

Chavez's prediction that the Teamsters would capture the table-grape industry held true. What surprised Chavez and the rest of the UFW was the vigor with which law enforcement in Kern, Tulare, and Fresno Counties aided the Teamsters' (and growers') efforts. One of the largest confrontations between union members and sheriff's deputies occurred in Kern County on July 22, 1973. As union members picketed on Edison Drive in front of the Giumarra Ranch, several helicopters began to sweep low to kick up dust and spark disarray. Deputies ran in among the pickets, swinging billy clubs and grabbing picketers' faces to spray mace in their eyes. One deputy pinned 17 year old Marta Rodriguez's arms behind her back, handcuffed her, and began to drag her away. Rodriguez panicked and screamed for help. When Frank Valenzuela, the former mayor of Hollister, approached the deputy and offered to calm the girl down, other officers converged on him, clubbed him on the legs, sprayed mace in his eyes, and hit him in the stomach. They pinned the fallen man's arms behind his back, shoved his face in the dirt, and handcuffed him. By the end of the afternoon, 230 picketers had been arrested (Levy 1975, Ferriss and Sandoval 1995).

Amid such violence, the union's last-minute talks with the Giumarras and other Delano growers went nowhere. By the beginning of August as many as three thousand union members were picketing ranches scattered throughout Kern, Tulare, and Fresno Counties—standing up to Teamsters' threats and attacks, withstanding brutal arrests by sheriff's deputies, and filling county jails to capacity. The picketing would last only two more weeks. On the night of August 13, the union sponsored a party at a park in Arvin. Following the party, a young picket captain from Yemen named Nagi Daifullah and

several other union members were talking outside a bar near the park. A sheriff's deputy ordered them to disperse. When they refused, a scuffle broke out. Daifullah ran from the scene; the deputy chased after him and, knocked him to the ground with a blow from his flashlight. The twenty-four-year-old farm worker suffered fatal head injuries and died on August 15. The next day, shots fired at pickets from a passing truck killed sixty-year-old union member Juan de la Cruz. The deaths, so close together, sent shock waves through the farm labor movement. As the union prepared to mourn its martyrs, Chavez and the other union leaders agreed to call off all picketing "until the federal law enforcement agencies guarantee our right to picket and see that our lives are safe and our civil rights not trampled on" (Levy 1975, Meister and Loftis 1977, Ferriss and Sandoval 1995, Taylor 1975).

For Chavez, this was a momentous decision. Just a few years earlier, he had explained to writer Peter Matthiessen his belief that "the picket line is where a man makes his commitment" (Matthiessen 1973). As Chavez knew, the picket line was profoundly important as a recruiting tool, an organizing tactic, and a means of claiming space. The courageous act of picketing itself allowed farm workers to demonstrate their commitments to La Causa to their employers and co-workers. Such commitments were difficult to break, and they gave striking farm workers a strength that simply was harder to cultivate in the safer settings of rallies, marches, and distant boycotts. However, Chavez was not willing to risk farm workers' lives on the picket lines. The UFW thus shifted its dwindling resources to the boycott, targeting California's non-union table grapes and lettuce and the wines of Ernest and Julio Gallo.

By then, the union was almost a shadow of itself. During the strike of 1973 the UFW lost ninety percent of its contracts, dropping from 150 to 12 (which covered only about 6,500 farm labors), and its membership rolls dropped from 55,000 to 10,000. The union also had burned through almost three million dollars in strike-related expenses. Yet the union's members remained committed to the struggle, and its boycott organizers remained spirited. On the morning of September 1, five hundred boycotters gathered at the Forty Acres for a rally. They climbed into cars, trucks, and buses decorated with union signs, formed caravans, and headed for cities throughout the U.S. and Canada (Meister and Loftis 1977, Levy 1975).

Chavez and other union leaders continued hasty preparations for the union's second constitutional

convention (its first since gaining full membership in the AFL-CIO), to be held at the new Fresno Convention Center from September 21 through 24, 1973. The convention was unlike those of other trade unions. Most of the 414 delegates could barely afford to attend. Debate was unusually lengthy, extending over several marathon sessions, the last of which stretched for twenty-two hours. Convention delegates paused several times to listen to addresses by guests such as Sen. Edward Kennedy and UAW President Leonard Woodcock, but most of their time was spent discussing, amending, and finally adopting the union's new 111-page constitution. The convention concluded with the election of a new nine-member executive board: Cesar Chavez (president), Dolores Huerta (vice-president), Philip Vera Cruz (vice-president), Pete Velasco (vice-president), Gil Padilla (secretary-treasurer), and at-large board members Mack Lyons, Eliseo Medina, Richard Chavez, and Marshall Ganz. Cesar was pleased with the union's new structure. The convention "set rules which are law and have to be obeyed. Before, we improvised, and I had to make all the decisions. Now we have a clearly constituted authority to act between conventions," he explained. "The executive board makes the policy decisions, which I carry out" (Levy 1975, Meister and Loftis 1977, Taylor 1975).

After the convention, union leaders turned their attention back to the boycott. During the rest of the year and into 1974, Cesar and Dolores spent more time on the road traveling to different cities, speaking to the media, and rallying farm workers and volunteers on the picket lines. Chavez also traveled with Helen in Europe (on non-UFW funds) for three weeks to spread the boycott message and curtail California growers' ability to dump their produce on European markets. He and Helen received an unexpected audience with another supporter, Pope Paul VI. The Pope praised Cesar for his "sustained effort to apply the principles of Christian social teaching" and for his close cooperation with the U.S. Bishops Committee on Farm Labor and then offered his blessing. As Chavez returned to California, it was clear that the American Catholic Church would intensify its support of the union and its boycott (Rose 1990, Levy 1975, Meister and Loftis 1977).

Despite skeptics' conclusions that the union's battle against the alliance of growers and Teamsters was hopeless, the boycott gained momentum. By the end of 1974, a Louis Harris poll revealed that twelve percent of the country's adult population (or seventeen million Americans) had stopped buying grapes and eleven percent (fourteen million people)

had stopped buying lettuce. The union estimated that growers had lost at least four million dollars in sales. Ernest and Julio Gallo were hit particularly hard, reportedly losing nine percent of its market share (Ferriss and Sandoval 1995, Meister and Loftis 1977).

Still, the union's leaders realized that the boycott alone would not force growers to recognize the union or allow elections. To beat the Teamsters and gain leverage with the growers, the union needed a state law that would level and regulate the playing field. During the 1974 legislative session in California, Jerry Cohen pushed a bill that would have given the union secret-ballot union-recognition elections. The proposal contained no language about boycotts or strikes (which growers had tried to limit with Proposition 22) and thus was vulnerable to powerful opposition from agribusiness, but the maneuver signaled the possible emergence of new common ground. Between 1965 and 1974, growers had come to believe that farm workers should be protected—and thus regulated—by the NLRA, which guaranteed secret-ballot elections. During the same time, the union had moved toward the opposite position. In the early years of the first Delano strike, Chavez had railed against the exclusion of farm workers from the legislative act that protected other industrial workers' basic rights to organize. Chavez knew that the farm workers' continued exclusion from the NLRA allowed the union to utilize its most effective weapons, the primary and secondary boycotts, without restriction. If the two sides could compromise on these issues, though, a legal framework that would benefit workers and growers might be constructed. Cohen's bill was defeated in the state senate, but not before gaining the endorsement of the former secretary of state and current gubernatorial candidate, Jerry Brown (Taylor 1975, Ferriss and Sandoval 1995).

Jerry Brown's election as governor of California in November 1974 marked the beginning of a new era of possibility for the farm labor movement. Governor Brown (the son of former governor Pat Brown) considered himself a friend of Chavez and the farm labor movement, and he even recruited union organizer Leroy Chatfield onto his staff. The union thus expected to see prompt movement toward a farm labor law when Brown took office in January 1975, but there was little response to Chavez's requests for a meeting. As the union's leaders began considering ways to get the governor's attention, Fred Ross, Jr., proposed a march on Gallo. Not only would a march to the company's headquarters in Modesto put pressure on the giant company, it would

send a message to Brown and show skeptics across the country that the movement was strong (Ferriss and Sandoval 1995).

On February 22, 1975, several hundred farm workers and union supporters gathered in San Francisco's Union Square while another contingent prepared to head north from Delano, following much of the same route as the famous march on Sacramento almost a decade prior. The main group would trace a 110-mile route across San Francisco Bay, toward Stockton, and south to Modesto. Before the marchers left Union Square, three Gallo supporters unfurled a huge banner from the top of the St. Francis Hotel with a provocative message: "GALLO'S 500 UNION FARM WORKERS BEST PAID IN U.S. . . . MARCHING WRONG WAY, CESAR?" The union's members barely blinked. Their contract demands called for much more than raises in pay. When the marchers arrived in Modesto one week later, however, another banner waited: "73 MORE MILES TO GO. GALLO ASKS UFW TO SUPPORT NLRA-TYPE LAWS IN SACRAMENTO TO GUARANTEE FARM WORKER RIGHTS." By that time the marchers' numbers had swelled to almost twenty thousand, and they had good reason to cheer as it seemed that Gallo had given in. The jubilant marchers converged in Modesto's Graceada Park for a rally and celebration (Ferriss and Sandoval 1995).

Governor Brown succumbed to the pressure even though he knew how difficult it would be to forge a bill that would be acceptable to the state's influential growers and farm workers. During the next two months, Brown and his secretary of agriculture organized a series of public hearings at the capitol and private negotiating sessions at the governor's homes in Hollywood and Sacramento. Cohen served as the union's lead negotiator on the bill, and he pushed Chavez's demands effectively. By the end of May, Chavez knew that he would get what he wanted: binding, timely, secret-ballot elections; the right to boycott; voting rights for seasonal workers; protection for organizers in the fields; and the establishment of a government agency to certify election results and enforce the law's provisions. Growers, for their part, were satisfied that the legal framework would curtail the constant disruptions of strikes and boycotts that hampered their harvests and cost the industry millions of dollars. They were pleased, too, with the creation of a five-person supervisory board appointed by the governor.

The bill survived a special legislative session and, on June 5, 1975, Governor Brown announced the remarkable political achievement—the signing into law of the Agricultural Labor Relations Act. The bill

marked a victory for Brown as well, one of the first significant accomplishments of his administration. But the governor wisely sounded a note of caution. He warned those present at the bill signing ceremony not to "overstate what's going on here today; this is the beginning, not the end." Indeed, the UFW had a great deal of organizing work ahead. And, as Chavez and other union leaders returned to the fields, they would find that the growers' approval of the ALRA was anything but a capitulation to the UFW (Levy 1975, Meister and Loftis 1977, Ferriss and Sandoval 1995, Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995).

## **VII. The Modernization of the United Farm Workers and the Broadening of the Farm Labor Movement in the U.S., 1975-1984**

After the passage of the landmark Agricultural Labor Relations Act, Chavez allowed himself to look ahead to future challenges. As one of the most prominent labor leaders and civil rights leaders in the American West, Chavez had developed a broad social vision. The challenges he had identified were many. "After we've got contracts, we have to build more clinics and co-ops," he told writer Jacques Levy in 1975. "Then there's the whole question of political action, so much political work to be done taking care of all the grievances that people have, such as the discrimination their kids face in school, and the whole problem of the police. . . . We have to participate in the governing of towns and school boards," he continued. "We have to make our influence felt everywhere and anywhere. It's a long struggle that we're just beginning, but it can be done because the people want it" (Levy 1975).

During the time period covered by this section of the study, Chavez began a sustained effort to broaden his personal focus and that of the farm labor movement beyond the challenges associated with securing contracts. He worked to make the UFW a modern union, one that had a well-trained leadership and utilized an array of tools to communicate with politicians and the public. As Chavez's leadership in the fields of public health and environmental safety evolved, he focused more of the union's resources on the problems of pesticides. Still, this wider focus developed slowly and haltingly. The promises of the ALRA proved to be fleeting, growers still fought the UFW on several fronts, the Teamsters remained in the fields, and the possibility of violence on the picket lines continued to influence Chavez's strategic thinking. Moreover, the UFW's political power was greatly diminished by the conservative drift of state

and national politics. As the union's public appeal began to fall, the boycott, the union's most effective weapon, became less reliable. Nevertheless, when Chavez called a renewed boycott of grapes in 1984 to publicize the dangers of pesticides and protest growers' refusal to come to the bargaining table, his commitment to fighting for the dignity of farm workers was as strong as ever.

### 1,000-MILE MARCH

Governor Jerry Brown's signing of the ALRA marked a proud moment for the farm labor movement, but growers also regarded it as a victory. Both celebrations ended quickly. The first controversy erupted when Brown announced his nominees to the Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB), the five-person board responsible for certifying election results and enforcing the farm labor law's provisions. Despite Brown's promise to appoint a balanced board, four of his five nominees were decidedly pro-farm labor: former UFW organizer Leroy Chatfield and another Chavez ally, Bishop Roger Mahony, as well as a Latino civil rights activist and a progressive Democrat who had worked for the Teamsters. When growers complained that the board was "oriented toward unionization," they seemed to reveal a fundamental misunderstanding of the ALRA's purpose. Most growers demonstrated no greater inclination to cooperate with UFW organizers who began seeking access to ranches in anticipation of ALRB-supervised elections. Citing constitutional rights preventing trespassing on private property, the Gallo Company and other grower operations refused to allow UFW organizers into their fields—even as they granted access to Teamsters organizers (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Meister and Loftis 1977).

Chavez decided to publicize violations of the new law and create new opportunities for organizing by embarking on a "thousand-mile march" from San Ysidro north to Sacramento, then south again to La Paz. On July 1, 1975, Chavez and sixty union members touched the fence of the U.S.-Mexico border near San Ysidro and began walking north. Marching and singing every day, the farm workers gathered almost every night with supporters from nearby towns and ranches to hold rallies and sign petitions demanding elections. The fifty-nine-day march and its events rejuvenated Cesar (Meister and Loftis 1977, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

The thousand-mile march succeeded in spreading the news of the ALRA among the state's farm workers, and it built momentum for upcoming elections.

Because it also helped maintain pressure on Gov. Brown, the march aided another battle fought on behalf of farm workers: the effort to ban *el cortito* (the short-handled hoe) from the fields of California. *El cortito* was a hoe that measured only twenty-four inches in length. Its use required farm workers to bend and stoop as they walked along rows of lettuce and sugar beets, thinning and weeding, and it left users with lifelong back pain if not debilitating back injury. Chavez traced his long struggle with back pain to the use of *el cortito* in his youth. Despite California growers' arguments that *el cortito* allowed greater precision in thinning and weeding, growers in other states had stopped forcing farm workers to use it long ago. In 1972, California Rural Legal Assistance attorney Maurice Jourdane had submitted the first formal complaint against the use of the short-handled hoe to the state Division of Industrial Safety. The DIS rejected the claim, but the state supreme court overturned the ruling. Three years later, the DIS had yet to issue an order forbidding the use of the tool. Jourdane contacted the UFW, which in turn pressured Gov. Brown to order the DIS to take action (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995).

Meanwhile, the ALRB established offices around the state, staffed them with arbitrators and paralegals, and arranged for more than 150 elections during the late summer of 1975. At the same time, the Teamsters' power was waning. Their most powerful ally, Richard Nixon, had been out of office for almost two years, former president Jimmy Hoffa had disappeared, and several federal agencies were moving forward with criminal investigations into the union's activities. Still, the International Brotherhood continued to work with growers to fight the UFW. Teamsters organizers enjoyed unlimited access to field workers, and their men who continued to serve as "guards" prevented UFW organizers from "trespassing." Largely as a result, the two unions split the elections held during August and September. The UFW won 74 elections and the Teamsters won 73 (17 ranches voted for "no union"); however, before the end of the year, the UFW began to pull away. Of the remaining elections, the UFW won 124 to the Teamsters' 42, giving the UFW the right to represent 27,000 farm workers seeking union contracts (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Meister and Loftis 1977, Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995).

Virtually all of these elections were contested. Growers challenged the validity of elections in which striking farm workers voted, the Teamsters filed complaints charging the UFW with electioneering at the polls, and the UFW registered more than one



thousand complaints against growers for firing pro-UFW workers and against the Teamsters for intimidating UFW organizers. This workload overwhelmed the ALRB's young, inexperienced staff. Not only did the board conduct more than three hundred elections by the beginning of 1976, it was asked to investigate nearly twelve hundred charges of unfair labor practices and forced to respond to more than two hundred lawsuits. As a result, the board only certified seventy-five elections by the end of 1975, including one at Inter Harvest, where the UFW won handily, but excluding the Gallo Wine Company and the Giumarra Company, two of the state's largest grower operations (Meister and Loftis).

More important, the ALRB used its \$2.6 million annual operating budget in just seven months. By early 1976, the board was forced to lay off all of its 175 employees and suspend operations until the legislature appropriated additional funds. This froze more than two hundred uncertified election results, more than one thousand complaints of unfair labor practice, and hundreds of petitions for elections. Without board agents in the fields, growers had little incentive to open negotiations with election winners and even less incentive to recognize unofficial election results. The UFW also charged that growers fired several hundred farm workers for engaging in UFW organizing activity. The board appealed to the legislature for emergency funding, but by this time enough rural Democrats in the legislature had aligned themselves with Republicans to block the request. In addition, the board's opponents pressed for radical changes to the law, which would have reduced penalties for unfair labor practices, restricted seasonal farm workers' voting rights, and virtually blocked UFW organizers from access to the fields. The pro-grower coalition refused to grant emergency funding and even threatened to withhold the next year's allocation if such changes did not go through. Gov. Brown stood by the UFW. Despite Brown's welcome support, though, Chavez knew that the union would have to take yet another battle to the public (Meister and Loftis 1977, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

#### **PROPOSITION 14**

The union's leaders decided to put the key deficiencies of the ALRA, including lack of funding and experienced staff, and two possible remedies, before the state's voters. They prepared a ballot initiative that, if approved, would require the legislature to adequately fund the ALRB every year and require growers to allow all union organizers equal access to workers in the fields. In the summer of 1976, union volunteers collected signatures from

more than 700,000 supporters with remarkable ease. Their effort put Proposition 14 on the November 1976 ballot (Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995).

The drive for signatures forced growers and their allies to retreat, but only temporarily. The legislature voted to provide additional funding for the board without changes in the law, and, with three new members, the board went back to work. Pro-grower forces then launched a \$1.8 million media campaign against Proposition 14. The "No on 14" campaign, largely funded by oil companies and other corporate interests with ties to agribusiness, was deceptive. Ignoring the legislature's responsibility to fund the board adequately and the limitations on union organizers' access to workers that the initiative itself proposed, the campaign cast the ballot measure as nothing but an attack on private property rights (Meister and Loftis, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

Chavez, Cohen, Huerta, and other union leaders countered the "No on 14" campaign in speeches and other public appearances, but they seem in retrospect to have been overconfident. The initiative was defeated by a three-to-two margin. No one took the defeat of Proposition 14 harder than Chavez. Once a firm believer in the political process and confident that the public always would see the justice of La Causa, Chavez became disillusioned. In the future he would be more inclined to deal with elected officials and other political power brokers rather than appeal to the electorate itself (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

#### **UFW EMERGES AS DOMINANT UNION IN CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURE**

Victories in the fields also proved hard to come by in 1976. With an enormous backlog of election petitions, complaints, uncertified election results, and lawsuits to deal with, the ALRB slowed the UFW's progress toward new contracts to a virtual standstill. Chavez increasingly expressed his frustration and displeasure with the board. The ALRB did hold nineteen elections during the calendar year—of which the UFW won fifteen—but the more important process of certifying election results at the largest grower operations (such as Gallo) went nowhere (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

After a long, difficult year in which most of the union's energy and resources went into driving the campaign for Proposition 14, filing complaints against growers, preparing for elections, and haranguing the farm labor board for its lack of progress, the UFW finally found a cause for celebration and a reason for optimism. In March

1977, Teamsters President Frank Fitzsimmons announced that the International Brotherhood was giving up its claims to field workers and that, with the exception of a contract with Bud Antle, it would not seek to renew any of its remaining contracts covering farm workers in California. This development, though unexpected, reflected the reality of the Teamsters' mounting defeats at the ballot box in 1975 and 1976. The announcement marked the end of the bitter, wasteful struggle between the two unions. Chavez looked back at the period with regret, but looked to the future with great optimism. With a membership approaching forty thousand, the UFW in 1977 was unquestionably the dominant union in California agriculture. With as many as 200,000 farm workers in the state still unorganized, the union seemed poised to grow even stronger (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Daniels 1981).

### **UFW ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH AND CHALLENGES**

As Chavez anticipated the organizing work that lay ahead, he felt more keenly his long-standing desires to restructure the UFW's management and chart the union's future. For several years, the union's leaders had been aware of mounting internal divisions over issues such as union leaders' various duties, the degree of Chavez's own influence over day-to-day operations, salaries for union leaders and staff, and the allocation of resources in political campaigns, legal battles, social services, and field organizing. Chavez hoped to tackle the issue of management structure first. He had invited consultants such as Kenneth Blanchard, the author of *The One-Minute Manager*, to La Paz to lead seminars and offer advice. Now, one month after the Teamsters' announcement, Chavez decided to bring the entire union staff to the mountain retreat of Charles Dederich's drug rehabilitation program, Synanon, for a conference. Cesar was impressed with the order, tidiness, and efficiency of the Synanon retreat, and he thought that the union might adopt certain aspects of Dederich's program. One feature that appealed to Chavez was an exercise in open communication known as "the Game." Soon after the staff conference at Synanon in April 1977, Chavez set up weekly two-hour sessions of the Game for all union staff at La Paz (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995, Coplon 1984).

The Game required participants to sit in a circle, confront fellow participants, and air grievances—often quite combatively. It proved to be unpopular with many of the staff members, and long-time union organizer Jim Drake even resigned after

the Game was introduced to La Paz. Yet Chavez felt that the exercise was worthwhile. "It was very productive," he told a reporter. "We wanted a more open union. We wanted the staff to deal squarely with the leadership, and vice versa. . . The Game [gave] you license to say anything." Jerry Cohen later acknowledged Drake's perspective. The Game itself "was just a little blip on the screen," but "it was indicative of an internal problem with the union." The problem—or array of problems, all of them associated with the union's continuing transition into a modern labor union—also pushed away Vice-President Philip Vera Cruz, and another of the union's talented board members, Eliseo Medina. But Drake, Vera Cruz, and Medina would not be the last to leave, and the internal divisions beginning to plague the union's leadership would not be resolved for three more years (Coplon 1984, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Scharlin and Villanueva 2000).

### **YUMA MELON STRIKE**

Despite the emergence of internal divisions, organizing campaigns and election drives continued to swell the union's membership rolls to a peak of more than one hundred thousand. One organizing campaign occurred during the summer of 1978 in Yuma, Arizona. Melon pickers near Chavez's hometown had contacted the UFW for assistance in a strike and warned the union that a local judge had issued an injunction against all picketing. Chavez left La Paz with his wife Helen and drove to Arizona during the second week of June. Their decision to challenge the injunction and face imprisonment made this an unusual homecoming, for by now growers had learned that jailing the prominent UFW leader would create more problems than it would solve. On June 13, Cesar and Helen joined forty farm workers on a picket line along Highway 95 at the G&S Produce Company's fields. Sheriff's deputies ordered the pickets to disburse and all of them did (at Chavez's request) except for Cesar and Helen. County officials were unsure how to proceed. At the hearing, the judge handed down a suspended six-month sentence for contempt, and the Chavezes emerged from the courthouse to a cheering throng of six hundred farm workers waving UFW banners (Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995, Jensen and Hammerback 2002).

### **IMPERIAL VALLEY LETTUCE STRIKE**

Returning to La Paz, Chavez looked ahead to a new campaign—the union's most important since the passage of the ALRA. When union contracts with lettuce growers in the Imperial and Salinas Valleys were set to expire on January 1, 1979, Chavez wanted to negotiate with the entire industry at once so that

growers under contract would not suffer a competitive disadvantage. Marshall Ganz began investigating the conditions of the state's vegetable growers and the executive board met to discuss strategy. After Ganz discovered that inflation had created huge profits for growers (even as workers' wages stood still), the board decided to push growers for wage and piece-rate increases of more than forty percent, payment of salaries for full-time UFW representatives (to be elected by workers on each ranch), and increased contributions to the union's medical plan. When Dolores Huerta and the negotiating team presented these demands, growers were caught off guard (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Lindsey 1979).

The farm workers' solidarity was remarkable. After negotiations with Imperial Valley growers failed to produce results, nearly five thousand lettuce-pickers working on eight large ranches walked off their jobs on January 19. It was the union's first major strike in almost four years and it immediately shut down one-third of the nation's iceberg lettuce production, costing growers more than two million dollars during the first two weeks alone. The spirit of solidarity even spread to a new generation of Chicanos. When growers were allowed to post worker-recruitment handbills on the classroom windows of Holtville High School, Chicano students walked out in protest. Only a union lawsuit could bring the growers' recruitment efforts at the high school to a halt (Lindsey 1979, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

Farm workers' commitment to the fight—and Chavez's commitment to nonviolence—remained strong even after the fatal shooting of twenty-eight-year-old union member Rufino Contreras on February 10, 1979, at the Mario Saikhon Ranch. As Contreras and a group of pickets entered the ranch to confront strikebreakers, ranch guards fired as many as fifteen rounds in the group's direction. A bullet struck Contreras in the head, killing him instantly. Many pickets responded with anger and violence of their own, but a saddened Chavez again doubted the wisdom of sending farm workers to the picket lines (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

As the harvest ended in the Imperial Valley and moved north to the Salinas Valley, Chavez began to argue with Marshall Ganz and others at executive board meetings that the union should pull farm workers from the picket lines and reactivate the lettuce boycott that Chavez had quietly ended the previous year. Local ranch-committee members and strike leaders, however, insisted that the farm workers were galvanized by the strike and that

growers were close to giving in. Their prediction proved true in September, in large part because of the pressure created by two marches and a massive Labor Day rally. The twin marches—one south to Salinas from San Francisco, the other coming north from San Ardo—converged on Hartnell Community College and drew twenty-five thousand participants, some of whom threw down their tools and joined the marches as they passed through the valley. Near the conclusion of the rally, Jerry Cohen announced that the Meyer Tomato operation had agreed to sign a contract and meet all of the union's demands. Within a few days, most of the valley's other vegetable growers signaled their willingness to sign as well (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Etulain 2002).

This victory was one of the union's greatest. Lettuce-pickers under union contract became the highest paid field workers in the country. Moreover, the improved medical plan allowed the union to meet the health-care needs of an increasing number of farm workers. Perhaps most important, veteran union members and recently-organized farm workers alike saw just what they could accomplish through unified, nonviolent effort (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

### **MODERNIZATION OF THE UFW**

The contracts signed with growers who had operations in the Salinas Valley and Imperial Valley propelled the union into a new phase, one in which the UFW would continue to evolve into a modern union with a well-defined management structure and an organizational system capable of handling tens of thousands of union members. The phase also would see Chavez's increased efforts to expand his view beyond the campaigns for union contracts in order to pursue his wider social agenda. And, not coincidentally, the new phase would be marked by the departures of several long-time union leaders, many of whom left because of their sense that *La Causa* could no longer encompass both a modern union and a broad social movement. These transformations came in the wake of a great victory, but they occurred at a time when the political climate in California and the rest of the nation was growing more conservative. The union's struggles were far from finished.

Efforts to reorganize the union's management had been developing slowly since 1977, but they finally came to fruition after the signing of the lettuce contracts. The nine-member executive board adopted a "team-management" model, requiring each board member to take command of one area of the union's operations. Chavez was pleased with the adoption of

this new system. It was predicated on a great amount of individual responsibility, accountability, and, in Cesar's words, "systematic and intensive communication." But it relieved Chavez of the need to make all decisions—even if it did not deter Chavez from keeping a hand in all decision-making processes. As part of the same effort to improve and modernize the union's management, the UFW turned the old doctors' residence at La Paz into a computer center with records for members and supporters as well as sympathetic individuals who might be receptive to direct-mail appeals. The union also received a grant to develop a microwave communication system, so that staff members in La Paz could communicate with organizers in the fields without relying on public telephones (Jensen and Hammerback 2002, Coplon 1984, Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995).

With the union's modernization efforts progressing, Chavez again looked ahead to the broader challenges that he had talked about with Jacques Levy in 1975. His goal of mobilizing farm workers' political power remained important, and the union began to funnel hundreds of thousands of dollars into the campaign treasuries of politicians identified as allies. Chavez also began exploring the idea of a broader "Chicano lobby" in Sacramento and Washington, D.C., that would push the interests of all Mexican Americans. Yet even as Chavez directed political initiatives, he remained convinced that political power alone would not get farm workers and Chicanos what they needed (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

Cesar continued to view his fight as more than a struggle for union recognition and contracts. La Causa was a labor movement, one that had evolved into a modern labor union, but it also was a social movement, one that sought dignity for farm workers, Chicanos, and other marginalized groups. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Chavez was trying to chart a course for the UFW that encompassed union work and a broader social agenda (Levy 1975).

During this time, a number of leaders and staff members who thought that the UFW could no longer be both a labor union and a social movement decided to resign, and not always on good terms. Some internal critics thought that the UFW was becoming too bureaucratic and falling out of touch with its roots as a social movement. Others thought that the union remained too close to its roots and that it needed the guidance of a professional management team. Marshall Ganz and Jessica Govea, both highly-respected board members, decided to leave the union because they thought that it was not doing enough to

support grassroots organizing among farm workers out in the fields. Attorney Jerry Cohen left as well, in part because he disagreed with the union policy of paying staff members as if they were volunteers rather than professional managers. Even Gil Padilla, one of the original founders of the FWA, decided to resign after finding himself disagreeing too often with Chavez and the rest of the board over policy decisions. These departures saddened Chavez and undoubtedly hurt the union (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995, Coplon 1984).

Divisions between the executive board and local union representatives in the Salinas Valley hurt the union as well. These divisions first emerged during the summer of 1979, when local strike leaders rejected Chavez's proposal to shift union resources from the picket lines to the boycott. After the union won its contracts, many of these local leaders were elected as union representatives and began pressing La Paz for help in setting up a credit union and dealing with a membership base that had grown by the thousands. When the executive board was slow to respond, the representatives decided to challenge three board positions on Chavez's slate at the union's convention in 1981. The surprise move failed, and the Salinas delegates walked out of the convention. Chavez, suspecting that the move was the work of grower-paid saboteurs, fired seven field representatives from the Salinas Valley. This well-publicized battle continued into 1982, when a judge ordered the union to reinstate the representatives and give them back pay on the grounds that they had been elected and thus were not subject to termination from the executive board (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Coplon 1984).

When word of these internal divisions made its way into the news, California growers paid attention. The work of the ALRB already progressed at a snail's pace. In 1982, seven years after the farm labor board's creation, it had yet to make an award for violation of the ALRA. Now, with the turnover in union leadership and the rift between the executive board and the Salinas representatives, growers began to sense that the UFW was weaker than it had been in years. They became more aggressive in obstructing organizing drives, contesting elections, and stalling contract negotiations. One grower's gun even took the life of yet another union member—the fifth martyr for La Causa. After months of organizing work among fellow farm workers at the Sikkema Family Farm, a dairy ranch outside of Fresno, twenty-one-year-old Mexican immigrant René Lopéz finally succeeded in getting the ALRB to hold an

election in September 1983. As Lopez and his friends relaxed and awaited the outcome of the vote, Sikkema guard Donato Estrada and Ralph Sikkema's brother-in-law drove toward the group and called Lopéz over to their car. A shot rang out, and Lopéz fell dead. He was the first union organizer to die while trying to work under the protection of the ALRA. Speaking to a crowd of one thousand family members, friends, and farm workers at Lopéz's funeral, Cesar asked, "How many more martyrs must there be before we can be free?" Chavez's questions were rhetorical, of course, but the criticism underlying them was largely directed at David Stirling, the new general counsel of the ALRB (Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Coplon 1984).

Stirling had been appointed by George Deukmejian, a conservative Republican who captured the California governor's office in 1982 with the strong support of agribusiness. Gov. Deukmejian selected Stirling for the post and backed his efforts to pull the ALRB away from its "pro-union bias." Stirling quickly moved to replace the ALRB's field staff and signaled his intent to slow down the board's work even further. Stirling also reduced the board's expenditures on election monitors. Before the cuts, four monitors normally would have been sent to an election the size of that on the Sikkema ranch in September 1983 to protect farm workers. The board failed to protect Lopéz, though, and Chavez blamed Stirling (Jensen and Hammerback 2002, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

### **BOYCOTT AGAINST UNRESTRICTED PESTICIDES**

By the end of 1983, the union's strength was waning and its organizing efforts were spiraling downward. The union had difficulty attracting enough votes to win elections. When it did win elections, it took months to have them certified. Even when the union's victories were certified, growers refused to negotiate contracts. The absence of new contracts limited resources and, more important, created the impression that the union was not worth voting for, perpetuating this cycle. Membership in the union plummeted to less than forty thousand, and frustrated executive board members knew that the union needed to break the cycle. During the spring of 1984, the board prepared to call a new and more dramatic boycott of grapes to force growers to the bargaining table despite their ability to hide behind the Deukmejian's ALRB. This time, the union would work to make the public aware of the environmental and health risks associated with the hundreds of

millions of tons of chemical pesticides dumped on grapes and other crops each year.

The union had opposed the unrestricted use of pesticides since the late 1960s. In 1969, Chavez testified in front of the Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor that "the issue of pesticide poisoning is more important today than even wages," and pesticide regulations were written into virtually every contract the union negotiated—years before the Environmental Protection Agency issued its own regulations. Chavez also began encouraging young union members and supporters such as Marion Moses to study medicine so that they might help farm workers overcome the health risks associated with pesticides. Moses earned her medical degree in the 1970s and, after residencies in internal and occupational medicine, returned to California to work for the union. Soon after her arrival at La Paz in 1983, Moses began to hear reports that a number of farm workers and other people, most of them children, from farm towns around Delano had developed cancer. In McFarland, a farm town near Delano with six thousand residents, thirteen children living in a six-block area had recently been diagnosed with leukemia. This extraordinarily high ratio—four hundred percent above average—defined the town as a cancer cluster. It would not be the only one (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995, Taylor 1975).

The UFW's opposition to unrestricted pesticide use provided a common cause with environmental and consumer safety groups. An estimated three hundred thousand farm workers across the country suffered illnesses caused by pesticide exposure every year, but millions of tons of pesticides spread through the air and groundwater, and millions of Americans ate grapes and other produce items contaminated with pesticide residues. With promises of support from church groups and high expectations of support from other organizations, Chavez called for a national boycott of California grapes on June 12, 1984. The union planned to rely heavily on their computerized databases and a newly-acquired knowledge of advertising techniques. This campaign—the "high-tech boycott" with a focus on pesticides—would help define the union through the rest of the decade (Jensen and Hammerback 2002, Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995).

## **VIII. Cesar Chavez and the Farm Labor Movement in a New Era in California and Across the U.S., 1984-1993**

Cesar was fond of telling doubters and reassuring supporters that “we have more time than money.” He knew that the combined economic resources of farm workers would never match the countless millions of dollars on which corporate growers and their allies could draw. But Chavez believed that if farm workers remained patient and nonviolent, eventually they would gain enough strength and support to help them outlast the “feudalistic” structure of agribusiness. During the final decade of Chavez’s life, the UFW never regained the strength it had in the 1970s. Yet Cesar was never discouraged. According to Chavez, the most important battle already had been won. “It doesn’t really matter whether we have a hundred thousand members or five hundred thousand members,” he explained in 1984. “In truth, hundreds of thousands of farm workers in California—and in other states—are better off today because of our work. And Hispanics across California and the nation, who don’t work in agriculture, are better off today because of what the farm workers taught people—about organizing, about pride and strength, about seizing control over their own lives.” Chavez led the farm labor movement as it continued to fight the other battles against growers, pesticides, conservative politicians, and the ineffectual farm labor board, but also, more broadly, against racism, ignorance, violence, greed, poverty, and despair, until his death in 1993 (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

This section of the historic context examines the last decade of Chavez’s life and the battles that the UFW faced during that time.

The union’s new boycott of grapes took off under the direction of Richie Ross, a labor activist and political consultant. Using computer-generated mailing lists and modern offset-printing equipment installed at La Paz, Ross began sending out hundreds of thousands of pleas from Chavez asking sympathizers to boycott California grapes until growers agreed to negotiate with the UFW and meet its demand to stop using pesticides known to have caused cancer in laboratory animals. Growers retaliated with a media campaign of their own, and they tried to divert attention away from the issue of pesticides and toward Chavez’s “political” interests (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Coplon 1984).

Cesar rose above these personal attacks with grace and simple eloquence. In a speech before the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco in November 1984—a speech that he considered particularly important and, along with union speechwriter Marc Grossman, took great pains to prepare—the union leader maintained his broader focus on the union’s fight against multiple injustices, especially poverty, racism, corporate welfare, the failure of the state to enforce the law, and the poisoning of the environment. He called attention to the fact that “thousands of farm workers live under savage conditions: beneath trees and amid garbage and human excrement. . . . They walk miles to buy food at inflated prices,” he noted, “and they carry water from irrigation pumps.” Given such conditions, Chavez explained, it was no surprise that the babies of migrant farm workers suffered a twenty-five percent higher infant mortality rate than the rest of the population, or that malnutrition among the children of migrant workers was ten times higher, or that farm workers’ life expectancy was only forty-nine years, twenty-four years less than that of the average American (Jensen and Hammerback 2002).

Finally, after years of denying that unrestricted pesticide use posed any dangers, growers were beginning “to reap the harvest from decades of environmental damage they have brought upon the land—the pesticides, the herbicides, the soil fumigants, the fertilizers, the salt deposits from thoughtless irrigation, the ravages from years of unrestrained poisoning of our soil and water. Thousands of acres of land in California have already been irrevocably damaged by this wanton abuse of nature,” Cesar reported. Thus the union decided to return to the boycott and update it for a new era. Chavez noted that the union’s traditional allies—racial minority groups, labor unions, and church groups—were providing their support, but so too was “an entire generation of young Americans who matured politically and socially in the 1960s and ’70s—millions of people for whom boycotting grapes and other products became a socially accepted pattern of behavior.” Chavez concluded that many of these supporters were responding because the union’s boycott was “high-tech.” It was a boycott “that uses computers and direct mail and advertising techniques which have revolutionized business and politics in recent years” (Jensen and Hammerback 2002).

Chavez’s confidence aside, the table-grapes boycott was much harder to sell in 1984 than it had been in 1968 and 1973. Church groups might have been supportive, but organized labor was reeling from the loss of manufacturing jobs and the hostility of the

Reagan administration, which had decimated the air traffic controllers' union just three years prior. Hundreds of thousands of union members who would have been sent out to rally support for the boycott in the 1960s and 1970s were now out of work. The generation of antiwar students had grown up, developed careers, and gained more disposable income, but many of their priorities had changed, and many had become disillusioned. In his speech to the Commonwealth Club, Cesar claimed that the union had achieved more success with the boycott by November 1984 than it had during the fourteen years since 1970. The boycott might have gained a strong following, but table-grape growers showed no immediate sign of feeling the pressure (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Jensen and Hammerback 2002).

Yet as the boycott continued through the mid-1980s, news of other pesticide-induced illnesses emerged. In 1985, as many as one thousand people became ill after eating California-produced watermelons that had been sprayed with Aldicarb, an illegal pesticide. In 1986, one hundred and twenty citrus workers at the LaBue Ranch in Tulare County suffered burns when they came into contact with a combination of chemical pesticides that had not been approved by agriculture regulators. In 1987, twenty-seven farm workers at the H. P. Metzler Ranch in Fresno County were treated for symptoms of pesticide poisoning—rashes, dizziness, eye irritation, nausea, and respiratory difficulties. That same year, new cancer clusters were identified in other San Joaquin Valley towns, including Delano (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Jensen and Hammerback 2002, Hoffman 1988).

The Environmental Protection Agency concluded that consumers, too, were endangered by pesticides. The heightened awareness of the dangers reached the pages of the *New York Times* in March 1986. "Pesticides dwarf the other risks the agency deals with," noted Steven Schatzow, director of the agency's Office of Pesticide Programs. "The risks from pesticides are so much greater because of the exposure involved. Toxic waste dumps may affect a few thousand people living around them. But virtually everyone is exposed to pesticides" (Hoffman 1988).

The UFW took the E.P.A.'s warnings to consumers, student groups, and public officials in several ways. The union produced and distributed a short documentary titled *The Wrath of Grapes* in 1987. It included testimonials from parents in McFarland and other farm towns lamenting the fact that growers and the government were ignoring the dangers of

pesticides, and it conveyed the stories of families whose children were born with birth defects or later developed cancer as a result of direct contact with pesticides and indirect contact with pesticide residues in the water and air. Around fifty thousand copies of the documentary went out to consumer groups, church groups, student groups, and the media. Chavez and other union leaders also continued to deliver speeches, lead marches, and participate in rallies throughout California and the rest of the country. Marion Moses took yet a third approach to educating the public. In 1988 she opened the Pesticide Education Center in San Francisco to serve as a clearinghouse of information about pesticides and a base from which to pressure public officials to ban known cancer-causing pesticides (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Levy 1975, Chavarria 1987).

As the table-grapes boycott entered its fourth year, Chavez sensed a need to refocus himself, the union, and its supporters on the campaign and its deeper meaning. In order to reflect on this, to serve penance for those who enabled growers to continue to use pesticides and nonunion labor, and to bring pressure to bear on the grocery stores that "promote, sell, and profit from California table grapes," Chavez decided to begin a new public fast. He vowed to consume nothing but water until table-grapes growers agreed to negotiate new contracts and eliminate pesticides known to cause cancer (Jensen and Hammerback 2002, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

Chavez recognized the dangers of this fast. Despite a healthy personal regimen that included a vegetarian diet, exercise, and yoga, his sixty-one years of age had taken their toll. A medical team joined Chavez at the Forty Acres to monitor his health, and his family drew near. Even former union leaders such as Marshall Ganz, Jerry Cohen, and Fred Ross Jr., returned to Delano to offer Cesar their support. After a remarkable thirty-six days, Chavez was advised to end the fast or risk permanent damage to his health and possibly death. On August 21, 1988, eight thousand farm workers and supporters, including Jesse Jackson, Ethel Kennedy, and state assemblyman Tom Hayden as well as actors such as Martin Sheen and Edward James Olmos joined Chavez at the Forty Acres to attend Mass and celebrate the end of the union leader's fast. The spirit of Cesar's fast did not end, however. Supporters agreed to take up the fast in three-day periods and continue a "chain of suffering." Jesse Jackson was the first to accept a small wooden crucifix from Cesar and fast for three days before passing the cross to the next person (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995).

The fast was hard on Chavez's health, and it would take him months to recover. Even more troubling, according to Chris Hartmire, was the fact that "the growers didn't call." The fast accomplished Cesar's personal goals, though, and it produced a wave of media attention and a series of rallies, grocery-store pickets, and vigils around the country. Within two years studies would show grape consumption down seventy-four percent in New York City, thirty-seven percent in Los Angeles, and thirty-six percent in San Francisco. Chavez's patient confidence remained intact (Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

Less than a month after Chavez ended his fast, Dolores Huerta unexpectedly risked her own life for La Causa. On a fundraising trip through California, presidential candidate George Bush proclaimed, "I have never, nor will I ever, boycott grapes!" The next day, September 15, Huerta arrived at a rally for Bush at the St. Francis Hotel to distribute press releases criticizing Bush's opposition to the boycott. After talking to several reporters outside the hotel, Huerta found herself herded into a group of protesters. Within a few minutes a police officer began beating the fifty-eight-year-old union leader with his billy club. Huerta was hospitalized with four fractured ribs, a ruptured spleen, and life-threatening internal bleeding. Chavez, still recovering from his fast, demanded a full investigation, as did several civil rights groups and the California Labor Federation. The city finally settled a lawsuit with Huerta out of court three years later for more than eight hundred thousand dollars. Huerta used the settlement proceeds to assist groups working to organize women (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

By the spring of 1989, Chavez's health was restored and he was back on the road, speaking to farm workers, church groups, college students, and consumer groups. He talked about the struggles of farm workers and the history of the union, the tragedies caused by pesticide poisoning and the refusal of the state to pass and enforce restrictions on the use of pesticides, and the broader problems faced by farm workers, Latinos, other racial-minority groups, and the poor. He called for increased concern for public health and the environment, greater state investment in public education, greater support from the state and private industry for affordable housing for lower-income Americans, and more job training and job opportunities for the unemployed. Chavez drew large audiences wherever he went, and he commanded the respect due a labor

leader and civil rights leader of his stature (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Jensen and Hammerback 2002).

Even some of Chavez's former opponents were beginning to recognize his legacy. On October 19, 1990, a reluctant Chavez helped celebrate the opening of new elementary school in Coachella named in his honor—the first public building in the state of California to bear his name. Two years later, in the middle of a rejuvenated field-organizing campaign that prompted the first wage increase for grape workers in eight years, the union planned a two-mile march in downtown Salinas. Members of Teamsters Local 890 asked if they could join Chavez, and he agreed. The mingling of UFW members and Teamsters on the streets of Salinas seemed strange to those who remembered the bitter, violent confrontations of the 1970s (Hartmire 2000, Ferriss and Sandoval 1997)

Even as the union was enjoying steady gains in boycott support and making progress in the fields, it was beset by financial problems stemming from grower lawsuits. One of the most difficult lawsuits was filed by one of the union's staunchest opponents, the Bruce Church Company, a corporate giant in the lettuce industry. The grower operation, which owned land in California and Arizona (encompassing the former Chavez homestead near Yuma), had signed with the Teamsters in 1970. After its workers voted for representation by the UFW under the auspices of the ALRA, the company launched what would become a seventeen-year battle challenging the election. And, in 1984, the company filed a \$5.4 million lawsuit in Arizona for damages stemming from the secondary boycott. A federal judge finally dismissed the suit in 1992, but the company initiated a \$3 million lawsuit one year later. Because the UFW's total assets at the time had fallen to around \$2 million, the suit threatened to drive the union into bankruptcy and out of existence (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997, Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 1995).

Chavez traveled to San Luis, Arizona, in April 1993 to testify against this new lawsuit. After two days of testimony he was tired but confident, eager to defeat the lawsuit and return to organizing work. On April 22 the union leader spent a relaxing evening with UFW board member David Martinez at the San Luis home of Dona Maria Hau, a retired farm worker. Sometime in the early morning hours of April 23, 1993, Cesar died from natural causes. He was sixty-six years old.



As news of Cesar's death spread to family members, friends, farm workers, supporters, and old allies, so too did feelings of shock, sadness, and grief—but also gratitude for all that Cesar did, all that he fought for, and all that he symbolized. Almost forty thousand people made their way to Delano to pay their respects and to march with Cesar behind the red and black union flags one last time.

The funeral procession followed Cesar's simple pine casket along the Garces Highway, past People's Cafe, to the Forty Acres. Jesse Jackson, Edward James Olmos, and some of Robert Kennedy's children took turns as pallbearers, while Ethel Kennedy offered comfort to Helen, her longtime friend. Former governor Jerry Brown spoke at the funeral, and words of condolence flowed in from Pope John Paul II, President Salinas de Gortari of Mexico, and President Bill Clinton. Countless farm workers whose lives Cesar fought to improve reflected, too, on the passing of their champion. The words of Pete Velasco, a Filipino immigrant, farm worker, and union leader, perhaps reflect the widest sentiment:

“Cesar was a gift to the farm workers, to all people, and to me. He taught us how to walk in the jungle and not be afraid. He taught us to maintain dignity. [With Cesar's death,] the spirit within every one of us has become renewed, just like the spirit of 1965 has

come back to life. And that was a beautiful legacy that we received from our brother Cesar Chavez.”

After the funeral procession, Chavez was laid to rest in a simple, private ceremony at La Paz. As Velasco affirmed, Chavez's legacy lived on (Ferriss and Sandoval 1997).

Chavez's legacy matches that of any social leader in the U.S. during the twentieth century. Identification and preservation of sites associated with Chavez's life and the history of the labor movement that he led will ensure that this legacy is not forgotten. At the same time, identification and preservation of sites associated with Cesar Chavez and the farm labor movement will recognize the difficulties that farm workers faced in their efforts to form the attachments to place that most Americans take for granted. Properties such as the Forty Acres near Delano and Nuestra Señora Reina de La Paz in the Tehachapi Mountains have particular importance. Purchased, shaped, and maintained by farm workers, these sites reflect the strength and permanence of their union. They remain sources of pride for Mexican Americans and others who supported the UFW in the 1960s and 1970s and continue to support the union today. For all Americans, these sites are critical locations for understanding U.S. history as it unfolded over the course of the twentieth century.

Cesar Chavez and the Farm Labor Movement Timeline	
1903	Japanese and Mexican beet-field workers in Oxnard unite to form Japanese-Mexican Labor Association
1905	Industrial Workers of the World (also known as Wobblies) begin efforts to organize farm workers
1913	Wheatland Riot breaks out at the Durst Brothers' hop ranch, leaving five dead and dozens injured
March 31, 1927	Cesario Estrada Chavez born in the Gila River Valley northeast of Yuma, Arizona
1927 – 1938	Chavez spends boyhood at the family homestead in the Gila River Valley; attends Laguna School
1928	Mexican farm workers in the Imperial Valley form <i>La Unión de Trabajadores del Valley Imperial</i>
1930	Mexican and Filipino lettuce workers form Agricultural Workers Industrial League (AWIL)
1931	Farm workers in California form Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (CAWIU)
1933	CAWIU organizes 24 strikes, including massive San Joaquin Valley cotton strike
1935	National Labor Relations Act (Wagner Act) signed into law; protects industrial workers' rights to engage in collective bargaining but specifically excludes farm workers and domestic workers
1938 – 1943	Chavez family spends time in Oxnard, San Jose, Delano, and elsewhere working in seasonal agriculture
1939	United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA) active in California
1944 – 1946	Cesar serves two years in the U.S. Navy
1947	National Farm Labor Union (NFLU) leads a strike and boycott against Di Giorgio Farms in Kern County
1948	Cesar marries Helen Fabela
1949	NFLU leads strike of cotton field workers in the San Joaquin Valley; Chavez participates
1949 – 1951	Cesar works for a lumber company with Richard in Crescent City; Helen pregnant with third child
1951	Cesar and Helen move back to San Jose's <i>Sal Si Puedes</i> barrio
June 1952	Fred Ross, founder of the Community Service Organization (CSO), meets Chavez in San Jose, recruits him
1953 – 1958	Chavez organizes CSO chapters in Oakland and the San Joaquin Valley
1955	Fred Ross meets Dolores Huerta in Stockton, recruits her into CSO
1959	Chavez elected executive director of the CSO; family moves to Los Angeles (Boyle Heights)
March 1962	CSO membership votes down Chavez's proposal to organize farm workers; Chavez resigns
April – September 1962	Chavez family moves to Delano; Chavez begins talking with farm workers about forming an association
September 30, 1962	Farm Workers Association (FWA) holds founding convention in Fresno
1963	FWA sets up offices at 102 Albany in Delano
March 1965	First FWA strike, for a pay raise, against a rose grower
Summer 1965	Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) calls strikes in Coachella Valley and near Arvin
September 8, 1965	AWOC members in Delano, led by Larry Itliong, meet at Filipino Community Hall and vote to go on strike
September 16, 1965	FWA changes name to National Farm Workers Association (NFWA); votes to join AWOC strike
November 1965	Luis Valdez and Agustin Lira form El Teatro Campesino
December 1965	NFWA and AWOC launch boycott of Schenley Industries and Di Giorgio Fruit Corporation

<b>Cesar Chavez and the Farm Labor Movement Timeline (continued)</b>	
December 1965	UAW president Walter Reuther visits Delano, announces support for AWOC and NFWA
March 1966	Robert F. Kennedy, visiting Delano for Senate hearings, announces support for AWOC and NFWA
March 17 – April 10, 1966	NFWA and AWOC members undertake 300-mile, 25-day march to Sacramento
April 1966	Schenley Industries agrees to sign a contract; focus turns to Di Giorgio; national boycott continues
June 1967	Di Giorgio agrees to talks with NFWA and AWOC, then signs contract with Teamsters
July 1967	NFWA and AWOC merge to form United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC)
August 30, 1967	Election victories give UFWOC right to represent field workers at Di Giorgio ranches
Summer 1967	Chavez activates nationwide boycott of Giumarra table grapes
January 1968	Giumarra selling grapes under rivals' labels; Chavez extends boycott to entire table-grapes industry
February 14 – March 11, 1968	Dismayed by violence, Chavez conducts fast at Forty Acres; announces fast on February 19 at Filipino Community Hall
Spring 1969	UFWOC declares boycott of all Safeway grocery stores (where Giumarra sold 20 percent of its grapes)
April 1970	Coachella grower Lionel Steinberg signs a contract with UFWOC
July 29, 1970	Giumarra and other Delano growers sign contracts with UFWOC, ending five-year table-grapes strike
August 1970	Salinas Valley lettuce growers sign contracts with Teamsters; UFWOC moves operations to Salinas
August 23, 1970	Chavez activates lettuce boycott; InterHarvest, Fresh Pict, and Pic N Pac sign contracts with UFWOC
December 4 – 24, 1970	Chavez jailed at Monterey County Courthouse for refusing to terminate boycott of Bud Antle lettuce
1971	UFWOC begins the process of becoming an AFL-CIO union; begins to move headquarters to La Paz
1971	Larry Itliong resigns from UFWOC
May 12 – June 4, 1972	Chavez conducts fast at Santa Rita Center in Phoenix to protest anti-union legislation
November 1972	UFW leads defeat of Proposition 22, which would have restricted union activity in California
April 1973	UFW loses Coachella Valley contracts to Teamsters; violence often erupts along picket lines
Summer 1973	Strike activity and violence spread to San Joaquin Valley
August 13, 1973	Nagi Daifullah dies from head injuries suffered while fleeing deputy sheriff near Arvin
August 15, 1973	Juan de la Cruz dies from gunshot wounds in Kern County; Chavez suspends picketing, activates boycott
September 1973	UFW holds first convention
February 1975	March to Gallo headquarters in Modesto prompts negotiations on new state law to govern labor relations
June 5, 1975	Governor Jerry Brown announces passage of the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act
July 1975	Chavez conducts "thousand-mile march" from San Ysidro to Sacramento to La Paz
April 1976	Agricultural Labor Relations Board runs out of funds; Chavez puts funding proposition on November ballot
November 1976	Growers oppose Proposition 14 with \$2 million campaign; Proposition 14 defeated by wide margin
1977	Teamsters withdraw from fields; Chavez brings "the Game" to La Paz

<b>Cesar Chavez and the Farm Labor Movement Timeline (continued)</b>	
January 1979	Contracts with Imperial and Salinas Valley growers expire; negotiations stall; strike begin
February 10, 1979	Rufino Contreras dies from gunshot wounds in Imperial Valley; Chavez suspends picketing
August 1979	Focus of strike activity moves to Salinas Valley; picketing and marches secure new contracts
1978 – 1981	UFW leadership increasingly divided by internal issues (union structure and authority, priorities, salaries)
1982	ALRB's failure to enforce the ALRA creates perception of inactivity in the fields
1983	Radio Campesina network launched
September 1983	Rene Lopez dies from gunshot wounds near Fresno, reflecting ALRB's failure to protect organizers
1984	Chavez calls on American consumers to boycott grapes because of health risks from pesticides
1987	Cancer clusters prompt UFW production of short documentary film <i>The Wrath of Grapes</i>
1988	Chavez conducts 36-day fast to pressure growers to negotiate contracts and regulate pesticides
April 22, 1993	Chavez dies in his sleep in San Luis, Arizona

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

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- A** ACHP – Advisory Council on Historic Preservation  
ACOE – Army Corps of Engineers  
AFL - American Federation of Labor  
AFL-CIO - American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organization  
ALRA – Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975  
ALRB - Agricultural Labor Relations Board  
APE – area of potential affects  
ARPA - Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979  
AWIL - Agricultural Workers Industrial League  
AWOC – Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee  
AWIU - Agricultural Workers’ Industrial Union
- B** BLM – Bureau of Land Management  
BNSF – Burlington, Northern Santa Fe Railway Line
- C** CAA – Clear Air Act  
CAWIU - Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union  
CEQ – Council of Environmental Quality  
CFR – Code of Federal Regulations  
CIO - Congress of Industrial Organizations  
CMM - California Migrant Ministry  
COPH – Center for Oral and Public History at California State University, Fullerton  
CORE - Congress of Racial Equality  
CPLC – Chicanos Por La Causa  
CSO – Community Service Organization  
CUOM - Confederacion de Uniones de Obreros Mexicanos (Confederation of Mexican Workers Unions)  
CWA – Clean Water Act
- D** DIS - Division of Industrial Safety (State of California)  
DO – Director’s Order
- E** EA – Environmental Assessment  
EIS – Environmental Impact Statement  
EO – Executive Order  
EPA – United States Environmental Protection Agency  
ESA – Endangered Species Act
- F** FBI – Federal Bureau of Investigation  
FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency  
FR – Federal Register  
FTE – Full-Time Equivalent  
FWA – Farm Workers Association
- G** GSVA - Growers-Shippers Vegetable Association
- H** HB – House Bill  
HUAC - House Un-American Activities Committee  
HVAC – heating, ventilation, and air conditioning
- I** IWA - Independent Workers Association  
IWW - International Workers of the World (also known as Wobblies)

- L** LWCF – Land and Water Conservation Fund
- M** MAPA - Mexican American Political Association  
MCOP – Maricopa County Organizing Project  
MOP – Migrant Opportunity Program
- N** NAGPRA – Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990  
NAWU - National Agricultural Workers Union  
NEPA – National Environmental Policy Act  
NFLU - National Farm Labor Union  
NFWA – National Farm Workers Association  
NFWSC – National Farm Worker Service Center  
NHL – National Historic Landmark  
NHP – National Historic Park  
NHPA – National Historic Preservation Act  
NHS – National Historic Site  
NHT – National Historic Trail  
NLRA - National Labor Relations Act  
NP – National Park  
NPS – National Park Service  
NRCS – Natural Resources Conservation Service, United States Department of Agriculture  
NRHP – National Register of Historic Places
- P** PEPC – National Park Service Planning, Environment and Public Comment Website  
PL – Public Law
- S** SHPO – state historic preservation officer  
SNCC - Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee  
SRS – Special Resource Study
- T** TCP – Traditional Cultural Properties  
TUUL - Trade Union Unity League
- U** UAW - United Auto Workers  
UCAPAWA - United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America  
UFW – United Farm Workers of America  
UFWOC – United Farm Workers Organizing Committee  
USC – United States Code  
USDA – United States Department of Agriculture  
USFWS – United States Fish and Wildlife Service

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## Preparers

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### Core Study Team

The core study team is based in the National Park Service's Pacific West Regional Office in Oakland / San Francisco, California. Core study team members were responsible for public involvement and outreach, research, writing and analysis, development of the alternatives, environmental compliance, and production of the draft study report.

- **Martha Crusius, Project Manager;** Program Chief, Park Planning and Environmental Compliance
- **Suzanne Brinkley, Planner**
- **Barbara Butler, Landscape Architect**
- **Anne Dove, Planner**

### EXTENDED STUDY TEAM

The extended study team includes NPS Pacific West Regional Office staff who provided assistance and expertise for specific aspects of the study.

- **Mamie Choy, Landscape Architect.** Participated in newsletter production, website development, public meeting facilitation, alternatives development.
- **Elaine Jackson-Retondo, Ph.D., Architectural Historian,** Acting History Program Manager, National Historic Landmarks Program Manager. Participated in alternatives development, technical review of historic overview, resource description and resource significance.
- **Lynne Nakata, Interpretive Specialist.** Participated in alternatives development and review.
- **Rose Rumball-Petre, Environmental Compliance Specialist.** Primary author of the environmental assessment. Participated in alternatives development and review.
- **Fred York, Ph.D., Anthropologist.** Participated in alternatives development and review. Advised on Native American communications.

### CONTRIBUTING ORGANIZATIONS

#### California State University, Fullerton, Center for Oral History and Public History

- Raymond W. Rast, Ph.D.

Dr. Rast directed the research that identified significant historical sites associated with Cesar Chavez and the farm labor movement; conducted interviews and oral histories as part of this research; submitted a report to the NPS that served as the basis for much of Chapters 2 and 3 of this report; assisted in stakeholder outreach; advised in development of public materials; participated in alternatives development; provided technical review of historic overview, resource description and resource significance.

Five students at California State University, Fullerton, made significant contributions to this study: Evan Haynes, Lindsey Noyes, Derek Papa, Maria Quintero, and Bryon Walsh. Students enrolled in History 492B (Fall 2009), History 492C (Spring 2010), and History 506 (Spring 2011) at California State University, Fullerton, made additional contributions.

### CONSULTANTS

The following individuals who were or are active in various aspects of the farm labor movement gave generously of their time to advise and inform the research that supports this report.

- Doug Adair
- Rev. Deacon Sal Alvarez
- Rev. Monsignor Eugene Boyle
- LeRoy Chatfield
- Paul Chavez
- Richard Chavez
- Jose Cortez
- Dolores Huerta
- Rudy Chavez Medina
- Rick Tejada-Flores