

For Further Information

Books

Ferriss, Susan, and Ricardo Sandoval. *The Fight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farmworkers Movement*. 1997.

Jourdane, Maurice. *The Struggle for the Health and Legal Protection of Farm Workers: El Cortito*. 2004.

Matthiessen, Peter. *Sal Si Puedes (Escape if You Can): Cesar Chavez and the New American Revolution*. 1969.

Websites

Bracero History Project, a Smithsonian-led collaboration
www.echo.gmu.edu/bracero

California Department of Education curriculum and other resources
<http://chavez.cde.ca.gov/ModelCurriculum/Intro.aspx>

The Cesar E. Chavez Foundation
<http://www.chavezfoundation.org>

The Dolores Huerta Foundation
<http://www.doloreshuerta.org>

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La Causa

The Delano Grape Strike of 1965–1970

Tuesday, September 27, 2005
6 p.m., Carmichael Auditorium



Smithsonian
National Museum of American History
Behring Center

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Introduction

In September 1965, Filipino and Mexican American farm workers went on strike against grape growers in the Delano, California area. More than a labor dispute, the strike became a movement for social justice. It helped to redefine Latino and overall American politics, and catapulted its leader, Cesar Chavez, into prominence as one of the most celebrated American political figures of the 20th century.

The Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee went on strike against Delano area table grape growers on September 8, 1965. The union, largely representing Filipino farm workers, struck for wages equal to the federal pay standards for foreign workers. A week later, the mostly Mexican American National Farmworkers Association, led by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, joined the walkout. The strike spread quickly as over 2,000 workers left the fields.

The two groups merged, establishing the United Farm Workers of America (UFW). Through community organizing, marches, nonviolent resistance, and consumer boycotts, the UFW built a national support network. By focusing attention on the deplorable conditions of some of the nation's lowest-paid workers, the union slowly won contracts from the grape growers. By summer 1970, the UFW had signed contracts covering about 10,000 workers.

Program

- **Welcome and Introduction**

Brent D. Glass, director, National Museum of American History

- **Discussion**

Dolores Huerta, president, Dolores Huerta Foundation,
and co-founder of the United Farm Workers

Andrew Imutan, past vice president, United Farm Workers
Organizing Committee

Luis Valdez, founder, El Teatro Campesino, director and playwright

Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-Ariz.), U.S. House of Representatives

Maria Hinojosa, PBS senior correspondent, moderator of discussion

- **Questions and Answers**

- **Closing Remarks**

Magdalena Mieri, director, Program in Latino History and Culture

Acknowledgments

Smithsonian Center for Latino Initiatives for their financial support. Special thanks to the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Program and the Museum's Bracero History Project for co-sponsorship of this event

Related Exhibitions

La Causa: The Delano Grape Strike of 1965-1970, through December 31, 2005,
2nd floor west

Participants

Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-Ariz.) represents Arizona's 7th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives, serving on the Committee on Education and Workforce and the Committee on Resources. He chairs the House Democratic Environmental Task Force. Born and raised in Tucson, Arizona, he is the son of a *bracero* who emigrated from Mexico in 1945. Raúl is an advocate for working families—defending the environment; preserving Social Security and Medicare; universal health care; protecting civil liberties; immigration reform, and for promoting a comprehensive border policy; and increasing support for public education.

Maria Hinojosa, senior correspondent for the PBS series *NOW*, anchors *LatinoUSA*, a weekly program on news and culture in the Latino community. Hinojosa was a CNN urban affairs correspondent from 1997 to 2005. Earlier she worked at National public Radio as a New York-based correspondent. She also hosted *Visiones*, a public-affairs talk show on WNBC-TV in New York. Hinojosa holds many awards and honors, including the Latino Heritage Award from Columbia University and the Ruben Salazar Award from the National Council of La Raza, which recognizes a journalist's outstanding body of work.

Dolores Huerta, president of the Dolores Huerta Foundation for Community Organizing, co-founded the United Farm Workers with Cesar Chavez and is its emeritus secretary treasurer and first vice president. She was instrumental in obtaining many "firsts" for farm workers—toilets in the fields with soap, water, and paper towels, and cold drinking water with paper cups; the Robert F. Kennedy medical plan that covered farmworker families; the Juan de la Cruz pension fund (paid for by employers); job security, and seniority rights, rest periods, paid vacations and holidays; and protections from pesticides, in union contracts. With Cesar Chavez, she helped establish the National Farm Workers Service Center, which builds low-income housing throughout the United States, and Radio Campesina stations in California, Washington, and Arizona.

Participants (cont'd)

Andy Imutan, vice president of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC) from 1966 to 1973, arrived in California from the Philippines in August 1965. On September 8, 1965, Imutan joined the Agricultural Workers Organization Committee (AWOC) strike. As a volunteer for AWOC, he prepared picket signs and informative leaflets, and convinced scab workers to join the strike. As welfare chairman for AWOC in January 1966, he looked after the needs of the strikers, and also served as a spokesperson for the Filipino Community Hall, soliciting support and welcoming visitors. Later that year, he joined the National Farm Workers Association march from Sacramento to Delano. He organized asparagus workers in San Joaquin, California in 1970 as director of UFWOC. After 1973, Mr. Imutan continued his activism efforts as president of Pilipino Bayanihan and later, Maharlika, both non-profit and community-based organizations for farm workers and poorer residents of San Joaquin.

Luis Valdez, founder and artistic director of El Teatro Campesino, began presenting plays for striking farmworkers in 1965. His 10- to 15-minute plays were usually improvised, spoken in Spanish, and centered on the topic of the strike. Valdez led the company to national acclaim with an Off-Broadway Obie Award and Drama Critics Awards in Los Angeles and San Francisco. In 1977, he created *Zoot Suit*, the first play by a Chicano to be produced on Broadway. A film version followed. In 1987, Luis wrote and directed one of the year's biggest hit films, *La Bamba*. In 1984, he won a Presidential Medal of the Arts, and in 1994, the Aguila Azteca Award (Golden Eagle Award), the highest decoration Mexico awards to citizens of other countries. He continues to work and to mentor a new generation of theater artists at El Teatro Campesino's playhouse in San Juan Bautista, California.