UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

SANTA CRUZ

THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE MONTEREY BAY AREA: THE TRANSFORMATION OF MEXICAN AND MEXICAN AMERICAN POLITICAL ACTIVISM, 1930–2000

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

HISTORY

by

Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez

September 2017

The dissertation of Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez is approved:

Professor Lisbeth Haas, Chair

Professor David Brundage

Professor Gabriela F. Arredondo

Tyrus Miller, PhD
Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

Copyright © by
Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez
2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT xiv

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS xvi

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER ONE: LABOR AND POLITICAL STRUGGLE IN THE MONTEREY BAY AREA, 1930–1970 24

CHAPTER TWO: FROM FARM WORKERS TO POLITICAL ACTIVISTS: ORGANIZING *LECHUGEROS* DURING THE 1970 SALINAS UFW VEGETABLE STRIKE, 1970–1984 78

CHAPTER THREE: A DIFFERENT LULAC IN THE MONTEREY BAY AREA: STRUGGLES FOR CIVIL RIGHTS, 1970–1990 147

CHAPTER FOUR: *GUERILLERAS HUELGISTAS Y PELEONERAS*: MEXICAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN TRANSFORM THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE OF WATSONVILLE, 1980–1990 210

CHAPTER FIVE: MALDEF LITIGATING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND VOTING RIGHTS, 1980–2000 263

CONCLUSION 317

BIBLIOGRAPHY 334

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Filipino farm workers, Pajaro Valley, near Watsonville, September 1939. Mary Oliver photograph, Pajaro Valley Historical Association. 41

Figure 2. Filipino workers in a Salinas Valley lettuce field, circa 1930s. Courtesy of Grower-Shipper Association, Salinas, California. 43

Figure 3. Two men attempt to prevent a lettuce truck from leaving town, September 1936. The photo characterizes the tension between workers and growers. Courtesy of the San Francisco Chronicle..... 47

Figure 4. 1936 law enforcement in Salinas. Photo by Otto Hagel. 49

Figure 5. A woman pickets lettuce shipments. Salinas, September 21, 1936..... 49

Figure 6. Labor protestors on strike. 50

Figure 7. "Pitched battles between picketers and non-union workers following a day of intermittent clashes provoked when some 50 workers were brought into Salinas from the barricaded packing sheds for a weekend outing." Photograph by Harold Ellwood *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 5, 1936. 50

Figure 8. Lettuce strikers and law enforcement clash as trucks carrying lettuce drive through Main Street in Salinas, October 1936. 51

Figure 9. Agricultural goods being trucked from the Monterey Bay area. 51

Figure 10. The Tanimura family in the 1920s. 54

Figure 11. Salinas Assembly Center, California. 1942. George Tanimura and his siblings arrived at the Rodeo Grounds where Japanese Americans were registered before being moved to relocation centers like Poston, Arizona..... 55

Figure 11. Braceros signal the “V for Victory.” 57

Figure 13. A farm worker thins celery using the infamous short-handled hoe (*cortito*). Watsonville, California, 1974. CRLA led the drive to ban the use of the tool, but the physical damage had been done to hundreds of farm workers residing in Watsonville. Photo taken by Bob Fitch. Stanford University Libraries. 62

Figure 17. Members of the Salinas Valley Community Service Organization with Fred Ross and Saul Alinsky at the founding convention in Pacific Grove, California. March 23, 1954. Courtesy of *The Salinas Californian*..... 72

Figure 18. Protesting the high rent at the Bruce Church labor camp. Church was and still is one of the richest growers in the Salinas Valley. Courtesy of *El Malcriado*..... 86

Figure 19. A company promotes its iceberg lettuce and showcases the region where it is grown. The picture showcases the beauty of the par-three seventh hole at Pebble Beach, considered one of the most beautiful views in the world by golfing aficionados. On the right, a Mexican American *lechugero* packs and loads lettuce onto a truck. The photograph depicts the realities of the backbreaking work in contrast to an elite population who spent leisure time golfing and vacationing at Pebble Beach..... 88

Figure 20. Leon Ventura started as a bracero at Bud Antle and rose to become a company vice president. Courtesy of Leon Ventura..... 90

Figure 22. Sandy Nathan (left), a UFW attorney, and Marshall Ganz were handcuffed and taken to the U.S Border Patrol satellite station Salinas, CA. circa 1970s. Courtesy of Miriam Pawel. 93

Figure 23. Marshall Ganz calling for a strike vote in Salinas during the vegetable strike of 1970. Ganz gained the respect and admiration of the predominantly Mexican immigrant workforce. Photo by Bob Fitch. Courtesy of Stanford University Libraries. 94

Figure 24. German Rodriguez a seasoned farm worker overlooking work in the cauliflower fields of the Salinas Valley. The son of a former bracero he was responsible for sponsoring migrants from his native town in Jalisco, Mexico... 97

Figure 25. Farm workees sat in between rows to eat their meals. German Rodriguez during a lunch break with fellow workers. Most came from the same region in Jalisco like his sister Maria. 98

Figure 26. German Rodriguez, after a hard day toiling in the cauliflower fields of the Salinas Valley for the Bud Antle corporation. Thousands of packaged cauliflowers in the background. Courtesy of German Rodriguez..... 98

Figure 27. Efrain Velazquez as a boxer (*cajero*) with Bud Antle Inc. Circa 1970s. Courtesy of MMA fighter Cain Velazquez. 99

Figure 28. A farm worker in the Salinas Valley broccoli fields. The attire has not changed much over the last forty years. Photograph by author. 104

Figure 29. Bob Antle (left) and his father Lester “Bud" Antle, Salinas, CA circa September 1970. 104

Figure 30. Left: Tomas Alejo served in the U.S. Army and after returning to Watsonville became a leading organizer with the UFW. Right: Alejo's father (former bracero) in hat behind Cesar Chavez, the senior Alejo became a local UFW Leader. Lessons about social justice were passed on to the Alejo children. Tomas Alejo's son, Luis Alejo, would go on to serve in the California legislature and was responsible for passing legislation to allow undocumented immigrants residing in California to apply for driver's licenses and secured an increase in the minimum wage for all California residents. 108

Figure 31. Cesar Chavez waves an American flag to counter accusations of Communist Party influence on UFWOC during an organizing rally in Salinas. To his right are an unidentified activist (speaking into microphone) and Chavez confidant Marshall Ganz (wearing glasses). Directly behind the speaker (in plaid shirt) is Bill Kircher, AFL-CIO Director of organizing and liaison to the UFW, and members of the Seafarers Union. Salinas, California, 1970. Photograph by Bob Fitch. Courtesy of Stanford University Special Collections. 112

Figure 32. Cesar Chavez meeting *lechugeros* working for Bud Antle in the 1970s. Courtesy of Cathy Murphy. 117

Figure 33. Playwright Luis Valdez portrays Bud Antle in hat. Luis Valdez's *El Teatro Campesino* skit about the labor abuses by Bud Antle Inc. 120

Figure 34. Roberto Garcia (left) leads a UFWOC meeting and rally in Salinas while Cesar Chavez listens and waits for a question from a union member. Circa 1970s. Courtesy of Roberto Garcia..... 122

Figure 35. Roberto Garcia listening to Cesar Chavez on the right during the 1970 strike in Salinas. Courtesy of Roberto Garcia. 123

Figure 36. Roberto Garcia (rear, right, behind Cesar Chavez) discuss the boycott strategy. Courtesy of Roberto Garcia. 123

Figure 37. Left: Coretta Scott King and Dolores Huerta in Salinas, 1970 during Cesar Chavez's time in jail. Right: Huerta speaks to UFWOC organizers and the union's legal team during the 1970 lettuce strike. Photograph by Bob Fitch. Courtesy of Stanford University Special Collections and University Archives. 129

Figure 38. Cartoon illustrating the boycott on lettuce by UFWOC artist Andy Zermeño. November 15, 1970. Courtesy of Andy Zermeño. 130

Figure 39. Cesar Chavez is escorted by bodyguards and Roberto Garcia during his release from Monterey County Jail in Salinas on December 24, 1970. Courtesy of *The Californian*. 136

Figure 40. Former Bracero Tomas Alejo, Sr. became an activist with the United Farm Workers. Pictured on right with Cesar Chavez and picketing during the Gallo boycott. Circa 1970s. Courtesy of Luis Alejo. 144

Figure 41. Left: Tomas Alejo Jr., during his tenure in the U.S. Army. Center: UFW membership cards. Right: Tomas's wife Maria Luisa Alejo left he fields to become a registered nurse and a union steward for SEIU. Photographs courtesy of Luis Alejo. 144

Figure 42. (Left) Mercedes Padilla with her mother Juana and brother Eduardo Centeno 1954. (Right) Tracey and Watsonville, Ca. 163

Figure 43. Early 1970s LULAC chapter meeting. Left; Sam Bertram, unidentified, Herman Peña, Chris Padilla, Robert Melendez. Middle standing: Art Estrella, sitting center: John Saavedra, Phillip Tabera, Cosme Padilla, Azael Treviño, Hope Garcia. 168

Figure 44. Cresencio Padilla upon being hired for a temporary job with the Monterey County Public Defender's Office as an investigator in 1975. Padilla stayed for twenty-three years. Courtesy of Cresencio Padilla personal collection..... 169

Figure 45. Julian Camacho ran for the 17th Congressional District seat in 1972 and 1974. In this picture famed photographer and environmentalist Ansel Adams (holding a hat) stands at Camacho's left. Adams served as Camacho's campaign photographer and supported Camacho financially by funds from pictures he sold. In Camacho, Adams found a candidate who was willing to protect the environment and the Monterey Bay coastline. Courtesy of Julian Camacho... 180

Figure 46. Julian Camacho with Leon and Sylvia Panetta in Monterey, CA, 2015. Courtesy of Julian Camacho. 181

Figure 46. Leon Panetta speaking at a LULAC event. Circa 1980s. Courtesy of Cresencio Padilla Papers. 182

Figure 47. Former INS commissioner L.F. Chapman, Jr. had already written to Panetta describing his concern over the flyers:..... 185

Figure 48. Mercedes and Cresencio Padilla with Sylvia and Leon Panetta at a LULAC *5 de Mayo* event, 1986. On right with Panetta in Washington, D.C. Courtesy of Cresencio Padilla Personal Collection. 187

Figure 49. Chicanos from Salinas and the Lowrider club Barrio Pride. Philip Tabera of LULAC on the far right with vest and mustache. Courtesy of Philip Tabera. On the cover of the first Lowrider Magazine, January1977 a young Chicana, Gloria, from the Salinas Valley, Soledad, California. Courtesy of *Lowrider Magazine*. 194

Figure 49. Farm workers were found living in cave-like conditions in the outskirts of Salinas, in 1985. Photos by Richard Green. Courtesy of *The Salinas Californian*. 201

Figure 50. Gilbert Padilla the firefighter who sued the City of Salinas running for school board on the left. Simon Salinas, Cresencio Padilla, and Jesse Sanchez on right. LULAC allies were united in the race to elect the first Mexican American councilmember in Salinas in 1989, but by 1992 old friends became enemies and new political factions evolved that remain today. Courtesy of *El Sol Magazine Newspaper.* 208

Figure 51. Left: A worker operates heavy machinery. Figure 52. Right: A worker cuts broccoli before it is frozen. Courtesy of San Francisco State University Labor Archives. 223

Figure 52. Santa Cruz County Sheriff's deputies and Watsonville police officers stand in front of Watsonville Canning as marching strikers approach. Watsonville, CA. October 6, 1985. Courtesy of *Adelante*..... 230

Figure 53. Gloria Betancourt expresses her feelings to NorCal Frozen Foods officials during the strike. Far right, Cuca Lomeli. Photo by Chip Scheur, *Watsonville Register Pajaronian*. Circa 1986. 234

Figure 54. Dolores Cruz Gomez during the cannery strike. Watsonville police and Santa Cruz County Sheriff deputies behind her in riot gear. Courtesy of San Francisco State University Labor Archives. 238

Figure 55. MECHA students from UC Santa Cruz marching in support of *huelgistas*. Unknown Photographer. Courtesy Pajaro Valley Historical Association and San Francisco State University Labor Archives. 247

Figure 56. Gloria Betancourt (rear, right), Cuca Lomeli (front, right), on the first day of their hunger strike. Photo by Kurt Rodgers, *San Francisco Examiner*. 251

Figure 57. (Center) Esperanza Contreras; Octivina Serriteno (right) carries a picture of Christ supporting the strikers. The striker supporters placed blankets and mats as strikers kneeled their way to St. Patrick's Church. Photograph Courtesy of Kurt Ellison for the *Register-Pajaronian*. Pajaro Valley Historical Association and San Francisco State University Labor Archives. 253

Figure 58. Sergio Lopez hands a strike bumper sticker to David Gil (owner of Watsonville Canning) after signing a new contract on March 11, 1987 that included health benefits. Gloria Betancourt (background, far left) and Cuca

Lomeli (behind Gil) applaud. Courtesy of Pajaro Valley Historical Association and San Francisco State Labor Archives. 255

Figure 59. Anita Contreras leads hundreds of cheering workers through Watsonville after ratification of a three-year contract. The banner reads Justice, Dignity and Victory. Courtesy of Pajaro Valley Historical Association and San Francisco State University Labor Archives. March 1987. 256

Figure 60. Simon Salinas (center) hearing election results with campaign volunteers Cynthia Peña (left), and Eileen McKenzie (right) on the night of June 6, 1989. *The Californian*. 264

Figure 61. Joaquin Avila, circa 1983 275

Figure 62. Juan Uranga (right) speaking with farm workers in a Salinas Valley field during his run for city council in 1989. Juan Uranga campaign mailer. Simon Salinas Papers. 295

Figure 63. Left to right: Simon Salinas, Cesar Chavez, and Dolores Huerta at a political rally at the Armory Hall in Salinas, California. July 4, 1989. *El Sol Newspapers*. 305

Figure 64. Left to right: Juan Martinez, Lily Cervantes, and Jesse Sanchez at a LULAC fundraiser in Salinas. Circa 1989. Courtesy of Crecencio Padilla..... 309

Figure 65. Left, a portrait of the late Jesse Sanchez. Right, Jose Ortiz's portrayal of Sanchez surrounded by iconic Mexican heroes. Courtesy of Jose G. Ortiz. 312

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. *Total Value of Monterey County Agriculture* 332

Table 2. *Total Value of Santa Cruz County Agriculture*..... 333

ABSTRACT

THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE MONTEREY BAY AREA: THE TRANSFORMATION OF MEXICAN AND MEXICAN AMERICAN POLITICAL ACTIVISM, 1930–2000

by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez

The Struggle for Social Justice explores how Mexican and Mexican American agricultural workers in the Monterey Bay area of California became labor, civil, and voting rights advocates and acquired political power in the region from 1930 through 2000. Important strikes in 1934 and 1936 began to build power among farm workers in the region, but collusion by growers with local law enforcement undercut this organizing. From 1942 through 1970, roughly the span of the Bracero Program that brought guest workers from Mexico, there were no strikes in Monterey Bay fields; wages stagnated and growers in Salinas and Watsonville reaped huge profits. But many braceros stayed in the U.S. and honed their political organizing skills. The 1970 lettuce strike brought Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers to the region—a key organizing moment for immigrant Mexicans and U.S.-born Mexican Americans in the Monterey Bay area.

Organizing around civil rights causes shaped leaders like Mercedes and Cresencio Padilla, former immigrant farm workers, who founded a chapter of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). Unlike LULAC elsewhere, this LULAC chapter had a heavily immigrant membership and focused on larger civil rights issues. In 1985, a strike was called among cannery workers in the Monterey Bay area. LULAC and other civil rights organizations, along with the Mexican

American population, supported the strike, leading to significant gains for the workers. This strike, one of the longest in American labor history, was the first time that women took a substantial leadership role in labor activism in the region. Subsequently, the community used the political momentum built by this strike to partner with the Mexican American Legal and Education Fund (MALDEF) to take their fight for voting rights and electoral representation into the legal system. MALDEF and its lead attorney, Joaquin Avila, secured landmark legal victories in with *Gomez v. City of Watsonville* and *Armenta v. City of Salinas*, forcing a shift from at-large to district elections and paving the path for the successful election of the first Mexican Americans to city councils in both cities.

Previous activism by local civil rights leaders had laid a foundation for political empowerment. Avila and MALDEF finally secured legal protections that enabled the Mexican and Mexican American population to attain major political power through the election of candidates who represented their interests.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Over the years many individuals have provided invaluable guidance and support in getting me to this point and the following acknowledgments is a partial list of the people who have assisted along the way. I am very thankful for the incredible support from many individuals and institutions. At Stanford University, I would like to thank Professor Samy Alim, who provided me with forthright advice about the academy, a space to write, and opened the door to the Institute for Diversity in the Arts (IDA). Jeff Chang the Director at IDA has been extremely supportive, welcoming, and invited me to deliver talks at IDA. Dr. Gary Mukai and the Stanford Program on International and Cross Cultural Education (SPICE) over the years have provided insightful pedagogical lessons for teaching Asian American history and shared numerous primary sources related to Japanese American history.

The scholars in the Department of Special Collections and University Archives at Stanford have been extremely supportive over the years. Along the way we acquired numerous collections that we felt were invaluable to future research, and I am grateful that Stanford continues to preserve the history and experience of the Mexican and Mexican American population in the United States. I thank Tim Knowles who transformed the department by making collections more accessible, he allowed me to navigate quickly so I could get back to writing the dissertation. John Mustain's encouragement over the years and his passion for scholarship while maintaining a sense of humor brought joy and tranquility as I conducted countless

hours of research. I thank Bill O'Hanlon for welcoming me into the department and introducing me to Roberto Trujillo.

Roberto Trujillo the Director of the Department of Special Collections and University Archives at Stanford has provided feedback and advise to many PhD students. He and I have had many discussions, about the long history of Chicano scholarship, and he continues to be at the forefront of collecting many of the works that have led to the completion of dissertations and subsequent publication. His teaching over the years has provided me with insightful knowledge about archival sources. He is the Bancroft of our generation and I thank him for his ongoing support and encouragement over the years.

At UC Berkley I thank Teresa Salazar at the Bancroft library who was an incredible resourceful archivist. Professor Martin Sanchez-Jankowsky has been supportive and provided feedback, and also space to collaborate as a visiting dissertation scholar at the Institute for the Study of Societal Issues (ISSI). Professor David Montejano has been an incredible mentor and believed in this project from the beginning. He provided guidance and support through my qualifying exam; and he encouraged me to write this dissertation and continued to support my research by inviting me to Berkeley as a dissertation fellow and to learn from the Bancroft seminar.

Professor David Montejano established a writing seminar that has met on the same time and day of the week to workshop and discuss chapters and manuscripts. The David Montejano writing seminar at UC Berkeley provided the guidance and

discipline to write in a professional manner and it got me here. Two consistent participants Pablo Gonzalez, and Alex Garcia, were supportive in the seminar and provided valuable feedback and encouragement to keep writing. In the seminar I met Jordan Beltran Gonzales who has been so gracious in providing suggestions and guidance to finalize the dissertation.

At UC Santa Cruz I thank Professor Dana Frank who provided guidance toward funding of graduate studies. Professor Grace Peña-Delgado guided my preparation to my qualifying exam. Professor Matt O'Hara was patient with my progress and worked with me through my qualifying exam. I thank Professor David Brundage for his support and encouragement over the years. He provided guidance and inspired us to be better scholars of immigration and ethnic history by studying various ethnic groups. I thank Professor Gabriella Arredondo who has been a constant supportive adviser, provided constructive feedback, and always maintained a positive outlook.

A special thank you to the chair of my committee Professor Lisbeth Haas who was so patient over the years and for continuing to work with me as a first generation college student and development as a scholar. Over the years she sacrificed innumerable hours to meet with me. Her advice has transformed my scholarship and I am forever thankful for providing guidance and advocating on my behalf.

So many independent scholars have shared their research ideas and I thank them for their support**.** Frank Bardacke allowed countless hours of time to discuss various topics, interviews, and access to his personal archive that eventually headed

to Stanford. Frank's farmworker history is inspiring and writing style pushes us to find the voices of the workers, *esas voces son importantes.* Miriam Pawell, shared many stories photographs, primary sources and time to discuss my research over the years.

I thank Priscilla Martinez for her support and her feedback over the years. I thank all of the activists in the Monterey Bay area who spent hours sharing their history. I especially thank Dr. Juan Oliverez, and Supervisor Simon Salinas, for the many interviews. Dr. Armando Arias for his mentorship. Gary Karnes, Juan Martinez with the Bracero Memorial Highway Committee. I thank Crecencio and Mercedes Padilla for their civil rights work and for sharing their archive and time during many interviews. I thank Brian Antle for the numerous conversations and tours of the agricultural fields and incredible access on numerous occasions. Brian carries a huge weight to continue the successful legacy established by his grandparents and he is doing a fantastic job of providing opportunities to future generations. Thank you to the late Don Nucci who shared so much with me about history and the Salinas Valley. To all of the individuals who sat down with me to be interviewed in this dissertation all listed in the bibliography, and especially to the braceros that had the courage to share their stories. In Watsonville, I thank Gloria Betancourt *y las mujeres Guerilleras, Huelgistas, y Pelenoeras*. I thank Mayor Oscar Rios for sharing the cannery strike archive, his time and stories. I thank the following journalists for listening and writing about my ongoing research, Claudia Salinas Melendez at the *Monterey Herald*, Nic Rahaim at the *Monterey County Weekly* and Jill Patton at

Stanford Magazine. I thank my transnational collaborator from Mexico, Daniel Ruanova who believed in the research and for convincing me to make the history more accessible by producing art work and sharing it with the larger public.

I thank my five younger sisters Maria, Yessica, Karina, Elizabeth, and Francis who provided invaluable support, caring and loving my son and daughter providing constant labor to care for them when I was busy conducting research, and writing. While I made many sacrifices at a young age, at times even missing school to provide child care for all of you at a young age, I thank you for helping me through the arduous process of writing a dissertation. I thank my grandfather Guadalupe Rodriguez who made the trek as a bracero from Jalisco, and his journey opened the path to all of us. I thank my mother Maria who followed and my uncles who worked in Salinas for decades and shared their stories of agency and dignity in the fields. *Conchis* our beloved family pet has been a constant loving companion especially during the difficult periods of writing in isolation.

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife Jennifer, children Sofia, and David who sacrificed so much over the years. My wife has been an incredible supporter, partner, and believed in my crusade to document the history of Mexican and Mexican Americans in the Monterey Bay area. Without her support this dissertation would have never been completed. She understood why it was so important to capture this history, without her constant support and reassurance to finish I would not be here.

INTRODUCTION

THE AGRICULTURAL CAPITAL OF THE WORLD, THE MONTEREY BAY AREA

The Monterey Bay area of California, centered between the cities of Watsonville and Salinas, is home to a multi-billion-dollar agricultural industry that is one of the most productive in the world. This wealth was built on the backs of farm workers whose names and stories have too often been missing from the historical record. Interviews with several of these workers reveals something else often missing from histories of the region—pride and a sense of dignity that came from being incredibly skilled workers and that translated into political organizing prowess. Agricultural labor organizing led directly to Mexican and Mexican American political power in the region.

The Struggle for Social Justice explores how Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the Monterey Bay area became labor, civil, and voting rights advocates and gained substantial political power from 1930 through 2000. It studies the organizing efforts that put the area's agricultural fields, packinghouses, and canneries at the center of struggles for justice. Advocacy for labor, voting, and civil rights by Mexican and Mexican Americans led to a social and political transformation in the region that began long before and continued well beyond the civil rights and Chicano movement era so often covered in the literature. A long history of labor organizing efforts contested the agricultural industry's political hegemony in the region, which for decades primarily depended on a controllable labor force of Mexican migrants who were both legal and undocumented.

Mexican and Mexican American workers were able to organize in greater numbers around two key labor strikes that galvanized the Monterey Bay area. The first of these took place in Salinas, located approximately one hour south of San Jose, when Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC), fresh off their successful strike in Delano, California, arrived to organize *lechugeros* (lettuce workers). Organizing during and after the vegetable strike in 1970 empowered Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans and they applied the momentum from their labor advocacy to do more for civil rights in the region.

This organizing shaped important leaders like Mercedes and Crecencio Padilla, former immigrant farm workers and founders of a League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) chapter that stood out from other chapters. Unlike LULAC in other places, the Monterey Bay area's LULAC chapter was heavily immigrant, focused on larger civil rights issues and extremely effective in gaining ground for Mexican Americans in the political arena. They continuously advocated for better schools, jobs, housing, bilingual education, and an end to law enforcement abuses directed at Mexican immigrants.

During the second major strike, from 1985 to 1987, cannery workers, mostly women in Watsonville, became the organizers and leaders of one the longest strikes in United States labor history.[1] During the 1980s labor unions across a variety of industries were attacked and targeted by the Ronald Reagan administration's anti-

[1]One of the longest strikes in U.S. history was with the UAW United Auto Workers Local 833 against Kohler Corporation, which began in Kohler, Wisconsin on from April 5, 1954 and ended in through1966.

union campaign to remove unions from various sectors. Despite these social and political pressures, though, the women who worked in the cannery industry organized and maintained union membership.[2] When a strike was called among cannery workers on September 9, 1985, in Watsonville, labor unions, a multiplicity of civil rights organizations like LULAC along with Mexican American activists supported the strike, leading to retention of their health benefits and their labor union. This strike differed from previous strikes for four main reasons: 1) the strike is not held in the agricultural fields; 2) the striking workers are settled residents of the area, not migrants; 3) the workers are members of the Teamsters union, not the UFW; 4) the strike is supported by Mexican Americans. The demographics of the strikers also shifted dramatically from the era of the lettuce strikes—the cannery workers are mostly undocumented immigrant women, and these women took leadership roles in the strike. After the strike was settled, cannery workers and the community used the political momentum built by their strikes to partner with another key civil rights organization in the area, the Mexican American Legal and Education Fund

[2]On Chicano labor history see Mario Garcia, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981). Other early works include Mark Reisler, *By the Seat of their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900-1940* (Westport, CT, 1976); Richard Griswold del Castillo*, The Los Angeles Barrio, 1850-1890: A Social History* (Berkeley, 1979); David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin, 1987). Vargas Zaragoza, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Devra Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold: California Farm Workers, Cotton, and the New Deal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy In California.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Matt García, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus In the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Jose Alamillo, *Making Lemonade Out of Lemons: Mexican American Labor and Leisure in a California Town, 1880-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Frank P. Barajas, *Curious Unions: Mexican American Workers and Resistance In Oxnard, California, 1898-1961* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2012).

(MALDEF), to successfully demand voting rights and electoral representation. MALDEF and attorney Joaquin Avila, MALDEF's former general counsel who was working in private practice, secured landmark legal victories in *Gomez v. City of Watsonville* and *Armenta v. City of Salinas*. These two important lawsuits paved the path for the successful election of the first Mexican Americans to city councils in both cities.[3] These lawsuits forced a shift from at-large elections to district elections, which transformed the political power structure.

While previous activism by local civil rights leaders laid a foundation for political empowerment, it was Avila, with support from community organizers and MALDEF, who finally secured legal protections that guaranteed the region's Mexican American population permanent access to electoral representation, which enabled them to elect candidates who represented their interests. The makeup of the labor that created the region's wealth has long been overlooked. Up through the 1930s, the Monterey Bay area had a diverse ethnic population of white, Filipino, Japanese, and Mexican workers in the agricultural industry through the 1930s.[4] After

---

[3] William A. Flores. "Chicano Empowerment and the Politics of At-Large Elections in California: A Tale of Two Cities." Working Paper Series. No. 28. February 1990; Paule Takash Cruz. "Remedying Racial and Ethnic Inequality in California Politics: Watsonville Before and After District Elections." Center for Latino Policy Research. UC Berkeley: Center for Latino Policy Research (1999). "Latino Political Participation in Rural California" *California Institute for Rural Studies*. Working Group on Farm Labor and Rural Poverty Working Paper #8. February 1989. Pgs., 2-6; Armando, Navarro,. *Mexicano Political Experience in Occupied Aztlan: Struggles and Change*. (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2005).

[4] On ethnic immigrant history see Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that made the American People* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1971). For more on approaches to immigration and ethnic history see Rudolph J. Vecoli, "From The Uprooted to The Transplanted: The Writing of American Immigration History, 1951-1989," in *From " Melting Pot" to Multiculturalism: The Evolution of Ethnic Relations in the United States and Canada*, edited by Valeria Gennaro Lerda (Rome: Bulzone Editore, 1990), 25-23*;* Donna Gabaccia,"Immigrant Women: Nowhere at Home?" *Journal of American Ethnic History 10* (Summer 1991): 61-87; Kathleen Neils

the United States had entered World War II, thousands of guest workers (braceros) from Mexico were recruited to work in the region's agricultural industry. While braceros were exploited and became a controlled labor force for the agricultural industry, many used the program as an opportunity and ultimately stayed in the region and worked in the agricultural industry. They and their descendants are the Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans who became labor, civil, and voting rights advocates. It analyzes how Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans participated in greater numbers in civil and voting rights advocacy to eventually become part of the electoral process. This research captures the history of farm workers and their movement, and how many became labor and civil rights leaders, and how their children became elected officials who transformed the political landscape.

This dissertation overlays the well-documented and distinctly urban labor activism history onto a rural/suburban Monterey Bay area context, drawing clear

---

Conzen et al., "The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the USA, " *Journal of American History* 12 (Fall 1992): 3-41; Russell A. Kazal, "Revisiting Assimilation: The Rise, Fall and Reappraisal of a Concept in American Ethnic History," *American Historical Review* 100 (April 1995): 437-71; James R. Barrett and David Roediger, "In between Peoples: Race, Nationality and the 'New Immigrant' Working Class," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 16 (Spring 1997):3-44; George J. Sanchez, "Race, Nation, and Culture in Recent Immigration Studies," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 18 (Summer 1999): 85-114; Donna Gabaccia, "Is Everywhere Nowhere? Nomads, Nations, and the Immigrant Paradigm of the United States History," *Journal of American History 86* (December 1999): 1115-35; Kevin Kenny, "Diaspora and Comparison: The Global Irish as a Case Study," *Journal of American History* 90 (June 2003): 134-62; Malcolm Campbell, *Ireland's New Worlds: Immigrants, Politics and Society in the United States and Australia, 1815-1922* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008); Jennifer Guglielmo*, Living the Revolution: Italian Women's Resistance and Radicalism in New York City, 1880-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Gabriela F. Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation, 1916-39* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Eric Goldstein*, The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016); Vivek Bald, *Bengali Harlem and the Lost Histories of South Asian America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

connections between shifting labor demands and the rise of a political consciousness for Mexicans and Mexican Americans. This project examines the changing agricultural geography and socio-political landscape that underwent massive change between 1930 and 1964 as growers expanded and diversified their products and began to permanently recruit and depend on a large Mexican agricultural work force of mixed-status workers, both legal and undocumented.

As a result of the region's changing demographics between 1965 and 2000, a more visible Mexican and Mexican American political consciousness emerged. This rise in agricultural labor demand coupled with a growing mixed-status Mexican and Mexican American agricultural labor force prompted greater labor and civil rights advocacy. While the 1980s illustrate a visible shift in political representation, in actuality the electoral victories for Mexican Americans resulted from a longer and wider civil rights movement. Over a seventy-year period, Mexicans and Mexican Americans gradually accumulated substantial political power and civil rights in the Monterey Bay area intrinsically tied to the agricultural industry.[5] The advocacy of

---

[5] On the history of Chicano politics and civil rights organizations see, Juan Gómez-Quiñones, *Chicano Politics: Reality and Promise, 1940-1990* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990); Vigil E. Maurilio, *Chicano Politics* (Washington: University Press of America, 1977); Teresa Córdova, "Grassroots Mobilization by Chicanas in the Environmental and Economic Justice Movement, *Voces: A Journal of Chicana/Latina Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1997): 31-55; Vicki Ruíz, *Las Obreras: Chicana Politics of Work and Family* (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Publications, 2000); George Mariscal, *Aztlán and Viet Nam: Chicano and Chicana Experiences of the War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), *Brown-Eyed Children of the Sun: Lessons From the Chicano Movement, 1965-1975* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005); Lisa Magaña, *Mexican Americans and the Politics of Diversity: Querer Es Poder!* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2005); Armando Navarro. *La Raza Unida Party: A Chicano Challenge to the U.S. Two-Party Dictatorship* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), *The Cristal Experiment: A Chicano Struggle for Community Control* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), *Mexicano Political Experience In Occupied Aztlan: Struggles and Change* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2005); Armando Navarro and Mario C Compean, *Mexican American Youth Organization: Avant-Garde of the*

organizations such as the United Farm Workers Organization Committee (UFWOC), League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), cannery women's labor organizing, and several community-based groups transformed the Mexican American political landscape of the Monterey Bay area through labor, civil, and voting rights advocacy. As a result of the political transformation that took place during this longer and wider civil rights movement, Watsonville and Salinas witnessed the election of Mexican Americans to the California Assembly, board of supervisors, city council, and numerous school boards.[6]

Historiography

Understanding the changing labor demographics, civil rights advocacy, and the political mobilization for electoral representation highlights how Mexicans and Mexican Americans transformed the Monterey Bay region's civil, voting rights and political landscape. Absent from much previous scholarship is the civil rights advocacy that took place after 1970 in the Monterey Bay area. This project seeks to capture the history of civil rights struggles in the Monterey Bay region and builds on the work of Vicki Ruiz, Juan Gómez-Quiñones, and David Montejano, who demonstrate that the civil rights movement and the Chicano movement did not end in

---

Chicano Movement In Texas (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995); David Montejano, *Chicano Politics and Society in the Late Twentieth Century* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999); Mario García, *The Chicano Movement: Perspectives From the Twenty-First Century* (New York; Routledge, 2014), *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

[6] By the long Civil Rights movement I am referring to civil rights and social justice that took place long before the 1960s social activism and passage of landmark civil rights legislation. "The term 'Long Civil Rights Movement' (LCRM) was coined by historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall in a groundbreaking

the 1970s. As Montejano eloquently states, "The Chicano movement did not dissipate into nothingness."[7] Furthermore, my scholarship diverges from previous works that have largely focused on urban centers rather than rural/suburban agricultural communities like Salinas and Watsonville after 1970.

Vicki Ruiz explains that Mexican American activism did not begin with nor should be relegated to the Chicano movement or the United Farm Workers.[8] Rather, Mexican American activism emerged from a decidedly longer struggle that did not end in the 1970s. Similarly, Juan Gómez-Quiñones maintains that these early civil rights organizations such as the Community Service Organization (CSO), the GI Forum, and the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) proved instrumental not only in guiding the first wave of elected officials, but also in serving as ongoing civil rights advocacy groups.[9] David Montejano argues for this longer periodization, examining political and civil rights organizations in San Antonio, Texas, through trans-generational political advocacy.[10] Taken together, the work of these three scholars serves as a crucial departure point for contextualizing political development in the Monterey Bay region.

Building on Ruiz's definition of Mexican American advocacy, my project engages with a political narrative that is too often overshadowed by the United Farm Workers union and misses the important work of other legal organizations like

---

[8] Vicki Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987).
[9] Juan Gómez-Quiñones. *Chicano Politics: Reality and Promise, 1940-1990*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990).
[10] David Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966-1981*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010).

LULAC and MALDEF, particularly in regions like the Monterey Bay area. The research by Gómez-Quiñones is useful in examining how civil rights organizations and leaders in the Monterey Bay region were politically engaged decades before transforming their advocacy into successful electoral victories in the 1980s. While Montejano's study focuses on an urban area, his framework is highly applicable to examine the political transformation in rural/suburban agricultural communities of the Monterey Bay region. Since this project expands the boundaries of traditional periodization in both rural and urban areas, it must also inherently expand traditional notions of what constitutes the parameters of legal and illegal social belonging, political mobilization, and power.

Vicki Ruiz and Patricia Zavella highlight the importance of women's political participation, citing civil rights leaders like Luisa Moreno and Dolores Huerta. In particular, Ruiz demonstrates Mexican women's long history as wage earners and labor leaders throughout California within labor unions like the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA), saying, "The UCAPAWA moment demonstrates the leadership abilities among Mexican women industrial operatives when given both opportunity and encouragement."[11] Like Ruiz, Zavella illustrates the racial and gendered divisions of women's work in the canneries of the Santa Clara Valley.[12] Zavella notes that the Santa Clara Valley cannery industry employment structure, like the one in Watsonville, was based on gender,

[11]Vicki Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives*, xiii.
[12] Patricia Zavella. *Women's Work and Chicano Families: Cannery Workers of the Santa Clara Valley* (1987).

race, and ethnicity as men and cannery executives discouraged women from participating in union activities and political organizing and even excluded them from gainful employment.

Without the history of cultural politics in the Monterey Bay region, we cannot fully account for the transformative moment in the 1980s: The elections of Simon Salinas and Ana Ventura, both children of former braceros, to the city councils in Monterey Bay cities. Yet due to both the limitations placed on women's activism and the patriarchal definitions of power, men and women alike suffered political setbacks for electoral advancement and access to full citizenship rights. Because women were so limited and power was so gendered, rural/suburban communities like Salinas and Watsonville were denied earlier political representation. Like Ruiz and Zavella, my work examines and privileges the voices of women workers in the Monterey Bay area who became political actors successfully fighting for their place at the negotiating table as labor and civil rights leaders. In his essay "Mujeres en Huelga, Cultural Citizenship and Women's Empowerment in a Cannery Strike," political scientist William Flores produced a highly detailed examination of Watsonville's labor struggles.[13] Flores' ethnographic research highlights early moments of female political mobilization as women successfully organized themselves, claimed labor rights, and demanded political change in their community.

[13]William Flores and Rina Benmayor, *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space, and Rights* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997).

While women's labor activism figures prominently in urban political history, Mexican and Mexican American political mobilization has also been chronicled in rural /suburban areas. Existing works have uncovered the long labor and civil rights advocacy by Mexican and Mexican American men and women alike. Just as political landscapes were changing, Mexican and Mexican American workers contested and coped with solidifying agribusiness hegemony in the Monterey Bay region. Matt Garcia shows how a racialized workforce was able to build interethnic alliances to contest agribusiness and attain political power in Orange County, California.[14] Matt Garcia's comprehensive study of the citrus-growing regions of the state's San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys shows similarities to the Monterey Bay region in agribusiness development. Garcia's study serves as a guide for similar spaces—namely Salinas and Watsonville—where workers contested agribusiness power and developed interethnic and intra-ethnic alliances to advocate for civil rights. Matt Garcia's work Frank Barajas's also center inter-ethnic alliances and a longer civil rights movement culminating in the emergence of Cesar Chavez as a civil rights leader in Oxnard, California.[15] Like Garcia and Barajas, Lori examines the impact of the longer Chicano movement on Salinas, drawing connections between rural and urban labor mobilization and connecting rural labor movements with the larger civil rights movement.[16]

---

[14] Matt Garcia. *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970. (*Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).
[15] Frank Barajas*. Curious Unions: Mexican American Workers and Resistance in Oxnard, California, 1898-1961*. (Lincoln, Neb: University of Nebraska Press, 2012).
[16] Lori Flores. *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farmworker Movement.* (New Haven. Yale University Press, 2016).

While Garcia, Barajas, and Flores provide a long history of labor in rural agricultural communities, they all end their analysis by 1970 and do not consider the political transformations that followed. For this project, however, they collectively serve as a crucial departure point to examine the political transformation that resulted in electoral representation in the Monterey Bay region.

LULAC Historiography

The scholarship on LULAC has largely focused on its origins in 1929 and its advocacy in Texas. Not much research has been conducted on LULAC chapters outside of Texas. Various scholars have also been critical of LULACs role in civil rights advocacy, especially during the 1960s and 1970s. Ignacio Garcia claims that during the Chicano Movement LULAC and the American G.I. Forum were still operating, but had become more concerned with scholarships, Mexican fiestas, self-help campaigns, desegregation, and poll tax drives.[17]

Craig A. Kaplowitz argues that the organization's civil rights advocacy has been overshadowed by the Chicano movement's national media and scholarly attention.[18] Moreover, he argues, those considerations tend toward caricatures of LULAC, eventually rendering it irrelevant to the history of Mexican Americans during the period, who characterized LULAC as an organization of *Tio Tacos*—the Mexican American equivalent of "Uncle Tom"—because it endorsed the American political and economic systems and accepted Anglo middle-class norms of behavior

[17]Ignacio Garcia, *Chicanismo: The Forging of a Militant Ethos Among Mexican Americans* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997): 22-23.
[18]Craig Allan Kaplowitz, *LULAC, Mexican Americans, and National Policy* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2005).

and belief. These scholars agree that LULAC did not lead a social movement but was founded by elites within the Mexican American community. Kaplowitz points out, however, that LULAC's advocacy for civil rights and ability to directly impact public policy over many decades should not be overshadowed by a more romantic period of social activism during the Chicano Movement years. While LULAC members were not marching, waving flags, and demanding immediate change, their work led to substantial civil rights gains for Mexican and Mexican Americans.

Mario Garcia argues that LULAC as a civil rights organization evolved in South Texas because of the economic and social transformation in the region. As the region increased agricultural production during World War I, racism and antagonisms with labor exploitation became overtly directed at people of Mexican descent. During the 1920s, this persistent racism in Texas catalyzed organizing and mobilizing efforts toward Mexican American political unity.[19] Political scientist Benjamin Marquez examines how early activists were crusaders who fought racism with a religious zeal while embracing the country that rejected their people and culture. LULAC members sought to maintain a pride in their Mexican heritage while advocating for English acquisition, loyalty to the United States, and participation in American civic and social activities, and that LULAC founders were economic conservatives who saw

[19]Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology & Identity, 1930-1960*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

racial discrimination, not class domination, as the primary cause of Mexican Americans' problems. [20]

Cynthia Orozco has conducted the most comprehensive historical study on LULAC.[21] She maintains that Chicano Movement scholarship has overlooked the impact that LULAC had on civil rights for Mexican Americans. For Orozco, scholars who called LULAC "middle class" rarely addressed its meaning. Class, according to Orozco, has been misunderstood. The middle class in the Mexican-origin community is not the same as European-American middle class, or even Mexican American middle-class, which was privileged in comparison to the Mexican-origin working class. She calls for a reconsideration of LULAC and suggests that class, culture, consciousness, ethnicity, immigration, nation, citizenship, social movements, gender, periodization, and methodology should all be considered when studying LULAC.[22] In *How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts*, historian Natalia Molina argues that LULAC, from the time of its founding, pursued a mission of assimilation, but excluded from its membership Mexicans who were not U.S. citizens.[23] David Gutierrez also writes that LULAC " . . . was the foremost opponent of the Bracero Program and the use of wetback labor."[24] He argues that these longstanding positions held by LULAC stressed the need for

---

[20]See Benjamin Marquez, *LULAC: The Evolution of a Mexican American Political Organization* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993).
[21] Cynthia Orozco. *No Mexicans, Women, Or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican Americans Civil Rights Movement* (2009).
[22] Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed*, 9-11.
[23]Natalia Molina, *How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).
[24] David Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 143-144.

Mexican Americans to simultaneously assimilate *and* support restrictive immigration policies toward Mexico.[25]

This dissertation showcases how the LULAC chapter in the Monterey Bay area worked with other civil rights organizations to advance legislation and legal cases that would remedy racial and social injustice for the Mexican and Mexican American community in the region. Moreover, this research demonstrates how the LULAC chapter in the Monterey Bay area was active in assisting undocumented immigrants. This research culminates in a history of the migratory experience, both domestically across the states to California, and internationally to the United States. Ultimately, it was a multiplicity of civil rights organizations, inter and intra-ethnic alliances along with religious organizations that assisted in the social justice movement of the Monterey Bay area. This is a history of how farmworkers became activists, and their children became elected officials and leaders of the Monterey Bay area.

This research draws on oral history interviews I conducted over five years of research. It also draws from primary sources at multiple archival collections at various repositories. I conducted research at many archival institutions, where I examined various collections and analyzed multiple primary sources, newspapers, news media, correspondence, diaries, and archived interviews. Among these are Stanford, where I conducted extensive research in multiple collections, and the San Francisco State University Labor archive, the Pajaro Valley Historical Society, the

[25] Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors, 98-102.*

Grower-Shipper Association in Salinas, the Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley, public libraries in Salinas and Watsonville, and the Archdiocese of San Francisco.

Overview of the Chapters

Chapter One, "Labor and Political Struggle in the Monterey Bay Area, 1930 to 1970," surveys the Monterey Bay area's long history of labor organizing across varied ethnic groups who worked in the region's agricultural industry. This chapter argues that important strikes in 1934 and 1936 organized by Filipino workers began to build power among farmworkers in the region, but collusion between the Grower Shipper Association and local law enforcement squashed the organizing. The Bracero program from 1942 to 1964 continued to undercut organizing. Roughly during the span of the Bracero Program, no strikes took place in Monterey Bay area fields. Wages for farm workers remained stagnant and growers in Salinas and Watsonville made vast profits while the industry experienced rapid growth. Former braceros and Mexican American farmworkers built a network of alliances and contested grower abuses. Despite their exploitation in these dangerous industries, braceros eventually settled in the Monterey Bay area and many advanced in the agricultural industry. In turn, some of their children became active labor and civil rights organizers.

This chapter highlights the labor and racial unrest between the agricultural workforce and an increasingly mechanized industry. It provides an overview of the region's political history, especially the labor and political issues afflicting a multi-ethnic Salinas and Watsonville in the 1930s. The chapter examines the demographic, social, political, and economic landscape of the region during the Great Depression,

World War II, and the start of the Bracero Program.[26] The Monterey Bay region has a diverse ethnic history that is crucial to understanding the changing social and physical geographies between 1930 and 1964 that served as an impetus for Mexican American political mobilization and transformations that occurred in the 1980s.[27] The Monterey Bay area's large agricultural industry attracted various ethnic groups—Mexicans, Irish, Italians, Filipinos, Chinese, Japanese, and African Americans—who worked together, often intermarried, and created interethnic spaces in segregated communities of the region. [28] These ethnic groups forged friendships, shared work networks, and congregated in the same public spaces.

Chapter Two, "From Farm Workers to Political Activists: Organizing *Lechugeros* During the 1970 Salinas UFW Vegetable Strike, 1970 to 1984," focuses on the events leading up to, during, and after this watershed labor stoppage. The 1970 lettuce strike was a key organizing moment for Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the Monterey Bay area. Former Braceros were galvanized and connected to rising farm worker movement leaders in the UFW. The arrival of the UFW in Salinas during the 1970 vegetable strike energized and mobilized the Mexican and Mexican

---

[26] See Michael Snodgrass, "The Bracero Program, 1942-1964," in *Beyond La Frontera: The History of Mexico-U.S. Migration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), "Patronage and Progress, The Bracero Program from the Perspective of Mexico," in *Workers Across the Americas: The Transnational Turn in Labor History* (New York; Oxford University Press, 2011). According to Snodgrass, "the former guest workers now invited themselves." My research demonstrates braceros were actually welcomed to stay and be recruited by employers to work. Hence it is important to study how the exploitation of braceros brought attention to larger issues afflicting the entire Mexican and Mexican American community.

[27] On the ethnic population of the Monterey Bay area see Carol Lynn McKibben, *Beyond Cannery Row: Sicilian Women, Immigration, and Community In Monterey, California, 1915-99* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

[28] On interethnic alliances and tensions see Rudy Guevarra, Jr., *Becoming Mexipino: Multiethnic Identities and Communities in San Diego* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012).

American community to seek greater labor and civil rights in the region. Even though the 1970 lettuce strike is generally regarded as a success, Cesar Chavez and the UFW struggled in the area for several major reasons: 1) *Lechugeros* working for Bud Antle, the company struck by the union, were revered for their work ethic in the community and drew on a rich social network in their activism; 2) The UFW hesitated to organize the growing undocumented workforce; and 3) The UFW's union halls focused on a national boycott strategy instead of organizing farm workers in the fields. Nevertheless, former farm workers learned from the 1970 strike and were empowered to do more. Leaders in the region felt they needed a civil rights organization. Organizing from 1970 to 1984 shaped important leaders like former farm workers Mercedes and Crecencio Padilla, who found a LULAC chapter that stands out for its effectiveness in gaining political power for Mexicans in the area. Many transitioned from working in the fields to civil rights advocacy and were quickly able to organize the larger population to support the UFW for the Salinas lettuce strike of 1970.

Chapter 3, "A Different LULAC in the Monterey Bay Area: Struggles for Civil Rights from 1970 to 1990," analyzes LULAC in the region. The Salinas strike of 1970 had a profound impact on the larger Monterey Bay region, including the towns of Watsonville, Pajaro, and Castroville that shared demographic composition. This chapter examines how Cresencio Padilla and the leadership of the local LULAC chapter, organized communities like Watsonville, Pajaro, and Castroville, to address social and political issues afflicting the Mexican and Mexican American communities. Unlike LULAC in other places, though, the Monterey Bay area's

LULAC chapter was heavily composed of Mexican immigrant members focused on larger civil rights issues. This period from 1970 to 1990 also witnessed a growth in the Mexican and Mexican American population who experienced high rates of discrimination with regards to housing, education, and employment. Consequently, this LULAC chapter was extremely effective in gaining ground for Mexican Americans in the political arena and in supporting the cannery strike in the 1980s. LULAC members were consulted by powerful politicians like Leon Panetta and created public space to advance Mexican civil rights causes in the area. When strikes were called in the Monterey Bay area, especially between 1983 and 1987, cannery workers faced union-busting tactics. In the face of this adversity, LULAC supported the workers, which made their organizing more effective.

Chapter Four, "*Guerilleras, Huelgistas, y Peleoneras*: Mexican Immigrant Women Transform the Political Landscape of Watsonville, 1980 to 1990," engages topics of gender and women's experiences. This chapter argues that the cannery strikes in Watsonville differed from previous strikes for four main reasons: 1) they were not in the fields, 2) workers were not migrants, 3) the strike was organized and led by immigrant women who were members of the Teamsters instead of the UFW, and 4) the women who led the strike became transformational labor rights leaders who inspired the community to do more for civil and voting rights. The demographics of the strikers had shifted dramatically from the vegetable strike of 1970; the cannery workers were mostly undocumented immigrant women. This chapter examines the workers' organizing drives and the impact of the strike on the Latino community in

the Monterey Bay region. This chapter is about the transformational role of women leaders and activists in Watsonville, such as Gloria Betancourt who was president of the Teamsters Local 912. The Women's leadership transformed the Monterey Bay area's labor, civil and voting rights.

Cannery workers used the momentum of their strikes to demand voting rights and electoral representation, which led to voting rights successes brought on by local Mexican American residents and MALDEF. By the end of the labor strikes, Mexicans and Mexican Americans called for greater political representation. The cannery strike of Watsonville between 1985 and 1987 also highlighted the absence of Mexican Americans in elected offices. As workers struggled to attain full civil rights, the Watsonville cannery strike of 1985 to 1987 mobilized the community to advocate for electoral representation.

Chapter Five, "MALDEF: Litigating for Social Justice and Voting Rights, 1985 to 2000," examines the long historical development of legal advocacy by the Mexican American Legal and Education Fund (MALDEF) in the Monterey Bay region. It focuses on the landmark lawsuits *Gomez v. City of Watsonville* and *Armenta v. City of Salinas*. In 1986, one of MALDEF's most publicized cases, *Gomez v. City of Watsonville*, argued that at-large elections denied Latinos—approximately 50 percent of the city's population—electoral representation on the city council.[29] This

[29]"The court ruled that the city of Watsonville was in violation of Section II of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. As a result of this case MALDEF won a total of five cases in Tejas, one in Nuevo Mexico, and one in California, all of which involved challenges to the at-large voting system."

chapter examines the significance of this case to the larger Monterey Bay region and California electoral politics.[30]

The legal victories that MALDEF and its lead attorney, Joaquin Avila, secured for Mexican Americans paved the way for the successful election of the first Mexican Americans to city councils in both cities. This chapter focuses on the political mobilization and participation of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the Monterey Bay area and its implications, both statewide and nationally. I argue that while activism by local civil rights leaders had proved to be important, the work of Joaquin Avila and MALDEF finally secured legal protections that guaranteed the region's Mexican American population permanent access to electoral representation. The legal shift from at-large elections to district elections transformed the political power structure and gave the Mexican and Mexican American community a seat at the political table. MALDEF and Avila's victories in changing the electoral system were not just about the right to vote, they were most importantly about ensuring the community electoral representation. The electoral transition changed the power structures and shifted power lines with the security of voting rights in a way never before seen in the region.

Chapter Five also covers the first campaigns that led to the election of Mexican Americans Simon Salinas and Ana Ventura to the city councils in Salinas and Watsonville, respectively. It transformed gender and power dynamics between Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the Monterey Bay region. The children of

[30]See Armando Navarro, *Mexicano Political Experience in Occupied Aztlan* (New York: Rowman, 2005), 530-532.

former braceros, Salinas and Ventura became the symbols of the political transformation in the Monterey Bay region.

The "Conclusion: The Political Transformation of the Monterey Bay Area" I offer closing discussion. The Monterey Bay area is one of the most productive agricultural regions in the U.S.—and one of the wealthiest in the world— yet the region has been and continues to be home to some of the lowest-paid workers. There is no doubt that this agricultural wealth has been built on the backs of thousands of exploited farm workers. However, interviews with these workers reveals something else that is often missing from our histories of the region—the pride and sense of dignity that came from being incredibly skilled workers also translated into political organizing prowess. As I show in this dissertation, farm labor organizing led directly to Mexican American political power in the region.

The conclusion accounts for the successful electoral victories for the Mexican American community and also explores how effective elected officials were in representing and enacting legislation or policies that would benefit the Mexican and Mexican American community. The year 2000 marked a political transformation for the Monterey Bay region when the son of a former bracero became the first Mexican American to represent the district in the California Assembly. This chapter takes inventory of all of the Mexican Americans who were finally elected to school boards, city council seats, county boards, and California Assembly seats representing the Monterey Bay area. Finally, we circle back to the newest growing agricultural

industry, which is accepting cannabis entrepreneurs, and to a new guest worker program that growers are using to recruit workers from Mexico through legal means.

CHAPTER ONE: LABOR AND POLITICAL STRUGGLE IN THE MONTEREY BAY AREA, 1930–1970

> Where did the Okies go when the dust began to blow? Did they go to Idaho? Acapulco…? Maybe so, but most of the Okies I know went to Salinas and that's where I am from. I was raised among them, Okies and Mexicans.
>
> —Larry Hosford[31]

On September 17, 1936, A.S. Doss, secretary of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Workers Local 1096, worried that a trap had been set for 3,200 lettuce strikers in Salinas, California.[32] Doss ordered striking lettuce workers off the streets of Salinas where hundreds of armed deputies and an additional 1,000 deputized citizens awaited the strikers with plans to ultimately beat and shoot them to death.[33] Doss anxiously expressed how "a wholesale murder trap had been set" to kill the strikers.[34]

Doss claimed that Salinas City Manager Vic Barlogio admitted that law enforcement officers were "…entirely out of control and that there is no law in Salinas at the present time."[35] In fact, just the day before, Monterey County Sheriff Carl Abbott had sworn in 250 more citizens to add to his citizen deputy force. Doss also had learned that students at Salinas High School were ordered to make wooden clubs for the deputized citizens. Doss, whose own son attended Salinas High School, immediately withdrew the boy from classes after learning about the manufactured

---

[31] From the song *Salinas* written by Larry Hosford born in Salinas, CA, September 9, 1943. Hosford lived most of his life in East Salinas better known to locals as the Alisal.
[32] Box 2, Folder 4 Farm workers and Agribusiness in California, manuscript. Ernesto Galarza Papers, M0224, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, California.
[33] "Call 1700 Deputies In Lettuce Strike, Governor Is Mediator at Salinas, Calif.," *Daily Boston Globe*. September 20, 1936.
[34] "Citizen 'Army' Routs Strikers; Troops Wait Call to Salinas," *The Los Angeles Times*, September 17, 1936.
[35] "Free Salinas Streets of lettuce Strikers, Special Police Carry Clubs Made in High School, Strike Leader Warns of Violence," *The New York Times*, September 18, 1936.

clubs. The superintendent of the Salinas Union High School district, R.D. Case, told a local newspaper reporter that the day before, the high school workshop teacher had been presented with an order signed by Sheriff Abbott and District Attorney Anthony Brazil to have the students make the clubs.

The labor strife in Salinas drew the attention of California Governor Frank F. Merriam, who arrived in Salinas two days later, on September 19, to serve as a mediator.[36] However, the violence continued for three more weeks. Governor Merriam argued that he had evidence that the strike was being led by Communists and he was even lobbied by Sheriff Abbott to get a militia ready.[37] The strikers fought back. In the ensuing days, three replacement workers were kidnapped, shots were fired at produce trucks carrying lettuce picked by replacement workers, and strikers hurled kerosene at lettuce.[38] The police and deputized citizens intimidated hundreds of strikers by shooting gas bombs at crowds of picketers.[39]

Backdrop of Monterey Bay Area Labor Organizing

The Monterey Bay area of California has a long history of labor organizing across a variety of ethnic groups who were working in the region's agricultural industry. Filipino and white agricultural workers organized a labor union and led labor strikes in 1932, 1934, and 1936; each of these strikes erupted into violence. But

---

[36] "Call 1700 Deputies In Lettuce Strike, Governor Is Mediator at Salinas, Calif.," *Daily Boston Globe*, September 20, 1936.
[37] "Citizen 'Army' Routs Strikers; Troops Wait Call to Salinas," *The Los Angeles Times*, September 17, 1936.
[38] "Three Men Kidnapped in Lettuce Strike, Two Still Missing After Gang Grabs Trio in Front of Salinas Plant," *The los Angeles Time*s, October 5, 1936.
[39] "Lettuce Strike Crop Strike Test Looms today: Salinas Growers Will Attempt to Resume Packing of Vegetables," *The Los Angeles Times*, September 14, 1963; "Gas Barrage Routs Farm Strike Mobs," *The Los Angeles Times*, September 16, 1936.

from 1942 to 1964 the Bracero Program undercut this organizing by bringing in thousands of Mexican immigrants to work in agriculture. During that period, there were no strikes in Monterey Bay area fields—wages remained stagnant and growers in Salinas and Watsonville made huge profits. This chapter covers the longer labor and civil rights struggles that multiple ethnic groups fought for, but that culminated in a political transformation for the largest minority ethnic group in the region, Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants, in both Salinas and Watsonville.

The Monterey Bay Area: The Salinas Watsonville Labor Shed

Salinas and Watsonville have long, interconnected histories as international centers of agricultural production.[40] The people of both towns have a rich history of doing some of the most arduous labor in the world—agricultural fieldwork. Hundreds

---

40 On California agricultural history see, Matt Garcia, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus In the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement*, (Berkeley: University of California, 2012); Gilbert C. Gonzalez*, Guest Workers or Colonized Labor?: Mexican Labor Migration to the United States*, 2nd edition (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2013); Juan Gòmez-Quiñones, *Mexican American Labor, 1790-1990* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), 153-176; Ronald L. Mize and Alicia C.S. Swords, *Consuming Mexican Labor: From the Bracero Program to NAFTA* (North York, Ont.: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Frank Bardacke, *Trampling Out The Vintage: Cesar Chavez and The Two Souls of the United Farm Workers* (New York, NY: Verso Press, 2011); Edwin B. Almirol, *Ethnic Identity and Social Negotiation: A Study of a Filipino Community In California* (New York: AMS Press, 1985); Howard A. DeWitt, *Violence In the Fields: California Filipino Farm Labor Unionization During the Great Depression* (Saratoga, CA: Century Twenty One Pub., 1980); Howard A. Dewitt and Emory Stephen Bogardus, *Anti-Filipino Movements in California: A History, Bibliography, and Study Guide* (San Francisco, CA: R and E Research Associates, 1976); Lisbeth Haas, *Conquests and Historical Identities in California, 1769-1936* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Tomas Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: the Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Frank J. Barajas, *Curious Unions: Mexican American Workers and Resistance in Oxnard, California, 1898-1961* (Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 2012); Ana Rosas, *Abrazando El Espiritu: Bracero Families Confront the U.S.-Mexico Border* (Berkeley: University of California, 2014).

of farm workers lived in one or the other town, or commuted to one while living in the other. Due to its similar industries in agriculture and large immigrant populations, Salinas and Watsonville residents constructed trans-municipal social and labor networks often referred to as a "labor shed."

Located 100 miles south of San Francisco, Watsonville is a major agricultural community in Santa Cruz County. Watsonville is also a transnational community—Mexicans living in the region can easily navigate the town speaking completely in Spanish, just as they could in a community in Chavinda, or Gomez Farias, Michoacán. Yet, like many agricultural communities in the southwest United States, Watsonville also had a long history of being controlled by an established Anglo agricultural elite that regulated city and county politics.[41] In 1930 Watsonville had a total population of 8,344, but by 1980 it reached 23,662, with more than half identifying as Mexican or Mexican American.[42]

Like many other agricultural communities in California and the Southwest, Watsonville had a long history of being controlled by an established Anglo agricultural elite that regulated city and county politics. Agribusiness in Watsonville and the Pajaro Valley began to recruit and depend on a large agricultural workforce of mixed-status Mexican workers in the 1940s, experiencing the largest growth during

[41] On the history of the Southwest see David Montejano. *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987); Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1993). Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley, 1997); José M. Alamillo, *Making Lemonade Out of Lemons: Mexican American Labor and Leisure in a California Town, 1880–1960* (Urbana, Ill., 2006).
[42] 2000 U.S. Census of Population and Housing. Cenus.gov. Retrieved May 15, 2016.

the Bracero Program[43] of 1942 through 1964 and continuing in the post-bracero period.[44] The Bracero Program provided growers in the region with a seemingly endless supply of workers whose labor could be controlled. When the program ended, thousands of braceros were recruited and sponsored by their former employers to attain legal residency status or found work in the U.S. as undocumented workers. But what historian David Montejano said about Texas was just as true in California: "At least through World War II, a dominant grower or planter elite maintained low-wage labor through a variety of labor and political controls."[45] Montejano adds that any resistance from below during this period was generally defeated.

When demand for fruits and vegetables increased and they became staple food items in the American diet during the 1950s, employment and demand for agriculture workers increased significantly. Like the larger Salinas Valley, Watsonville became an agricultural community. Demand for frozen food products expanded by 650 percent between 1946 and 1970.[46] Watsonville was known as the Frozen Food Capital of the World because of the many canneries that bagged frozen vegetables and sold them internationally. Most of the broccoli, cauliflower, and other vegetables

---

[43] The Bracero Program was an agreement between the United States and Mexico signed on August 4, 1942 to recruit and contract temporary workers from Mexico. The agreement was supposed to last six months, and was renewed through the end of World War II and renewed subsequent times. In 1951 it became known as Public Law 78. The Bracero Program was finally terminated on December 31, 1964.
[44] William H. Friedland, Amy E. Barton, and Robert J. Thomas, *Manufacturing Green Gold: Capital, Labor, and Technology in the Lettuce Industry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 67-68, 79-81.
[45] David Montejano. *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 196-217, and *Chicano Politics and Society in the Late Twentieth Century* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 237.
[46] Frank Bardacke, *Reshaping the US Left: Popular Struggles in the 1980s,* Vol 1, 3rd edition, "Watsonville A Mexican Community on Strike," (Haymarket: New York, 1988), 150-80. According to local resident and activist Frank Bardacke, demand for frozen food products expanded to 650 percent after World War II.

were grown in the Salinas Valley, where workers were mostly members of the United Farm Workers, and then trucked about twenty miles north to Watsonville where they were frozen and bagged by members of the Teamsters Union.[47]

Located thirty miles southeast of Watsonville, Salinas is a major city in Monterey County.[48] It is the seat of Monterey County, which today has a $9 billion agricultural economy that includes the vast distribution networks and related businesses beyond the farms themselves.[49] While the enormous profits for the companies do not necessarily trickle down to its work force, Salinas has often been wrongly dismissed as a rural/suburban, provincial dusty community. In fact it has been the center of an international agricultural industry for nearly 120 years, dating back to the founding of the Spreckels Sugar Corporation in 1898.[50] Today agricultural tycoons in the region fly off in their private jets from the Salinas municipal airport to inspect their operations in Arizona and across other regions of California.

The farm workers of the Salinas-Watsonville labor shed have exemplified upward mobility over the decades. Thousands migrated as guest workers to the

---

[47] See chapter two, the UFW and Teamsters came to an agreement in 1971 that would allow the UFW to organize vegetable field workers and the Teamsters to organize cannery workers and truck drivers who transported the vegetables. See also Frank Bardacke, *Trampling Out The Vintage: Cesar Chavez and The Two Souls of the United Farm Workers* (New York, NY: Verso Press, 2011), 359-383. Matt García, *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 117-118.

[48] The Monterey Bay area includes the towns of Santa Cruz, Live Oak, Capitola, Soquel, Aptos, Rio del Mar, La Selva Beach, Corralitos, Freedom, Watsonville, Pajaro, Las Lomas, Elkhorn, Moss Landing, Castroville, Salinas, Marina, Fort Ord, Seaside, Sand City, Del Rey Oaks, Monterey, Pacific Grove. Salinas is an inland community of the Monterey Bay in Monterey County.

[49] Interview with Monterey County Supervisor Simon Salinas by author. May 15, 2015. Data complied from Monterey County crop reports. Monterey County Department of Agriculture offices, Salinas, CA. http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/government/departments-a-h/agricultural-commissioner/forms-publications/crop-reports-economic-contributions#ag.

[50] Christopher Henke, *Cultivating Science, Harvesting Power: Science and Industrial Agriculture in California* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008); Howard Dewitt, *Violence in the Fields: California Filipino Farm Labor Unionization During the Great Depression* (Saratoga, 1980).

Salinas Valley and Watsonville from 1942 through 1964 during the Bracero Program.[51] While the image of the farm workers embedded in the American mind is of abuse and exploitation, some Salinas Valley farm workers have moved up through the agricultural industry from cutting and stoop labor into such jobs as irrigators, tractor drivers, boxers, foremen, supervisors, union representatives, and some have become growers/owners of their own companies.[52]

The Bracero Program

The endpoint of 1964 marks the end of the largest and longest bilateral labor guest worker program between the U.S. and Mexico. Over two million Mexican men were legally contracted to work in the United States during the Bracero Program, which began in 1942. Braceros suffered immensely from intense labor conditions, hostility from local populations who viewed them as a threat to domestic workers, and separation from loved ones. Through all the hardships and failures that braceros experienced, they were responsible for saving an industry that had been struggling to remain profitable and contributed to its transformation into the multi-billion-dollar industry in the Monterey Bay area that it is today.[53]

Yet through the many stories of hardship there are stories of success. Braceros were actually welcomed to stay and recruited by employers to work. Hence it is important to study how the exploitation of braceros brought attention to larger issues

[51] Box 50, Folder 2 Immigration (illegal), "Braceros y Mojados, Negacion de Mexico," n.d. Ernesto Galarza Papers, M0224, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.
[52] Tanzina Vega. "More Latinos on Farms Move From Fields to Office," *The New York Times*, 16 August, 2014. Pg. A 20.
[53] Don Mitchell, *They Saved the Crops: Labor, Landscape, and the Struggle Over Industrial Farming in Bracero-Era California* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012).

affecting the entire Mexican and Mexican American community. For example, some former braceros who stayed in or returned to California eventually became the owners of farms and were agricultural innovators. Some of their children—second-generation Mexican Americans—became elected officials and transformed the political landscape of numerous communities in California, including Watsonville and Salinas.

The changing agricultural geography and socio-political landscape that took place between 1930 and 1964 manifest in two forms: the first occurred within agricultural production as growers expanded and diversified their products, which led to a greater demand for produce from the Monterey Bay region. Second, agribusiness began to permanently recruit and depend on a large Mexican agricultural workforce of mixed-status workers, both documented and undocumented. Ultimately this chapter highlights a much longer and wider farm worker movement. Though many scholars believe that the farm worker movement began with the Filipino and Mexican American farm worker strikes of 1962 and 1965, various ethnic groups, including Filipinos and Mexicans, living in the Monterey Bay area had been struggling to attain labor rights and civil rights as far back as the early 1930s.[54] In fact, the 1930s witnessed a period of tumultuous labor strife in Salinas. The labor unrest in both

[54] The scholarship by the following authors point to the farm worker movement as beginning in 1962 or 1965. Frank Bardacke, *Trampling Out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers* (London: Verso, 2011); Matt García, *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Miriam Pawel, *The Union of Their Dreams: Power, Hope, and Struggle in Cesar Chavez's Farm Worker Movement* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009) and *The Crusades of Cesar Chavez: A Biography* (2014); Lori Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants and the Farm worker Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016); Matt Garcia, "Setting the Table: Historians, Popular Writers, and Food History," *The Journal of American History,* December 2016, 663-664.

Watsonville and Salinas during the period drew international attention as the workforce struggled to organize unions and attain political power.

Various ethnic groups attracted by the Monterey Bay area's large agricultural industry—Mexicans, Irish, Italians, Filipinos, Chinese, Japanese, and African Americans, and white ethnic groups, including Portuguese, Swiss, and Italians—created interethnic spaces in what were thought of as segregated communities in the region.[55] These ethnic groups forged friendships, shared work networks, congregated in the same public spaces, and intermarried. The beginning point of 1930 is crucial for understanding the multi-ethnic populations of Salinas and Watsonville. Further analysis into the interethnic relations of the region in the early 1930s and 1940s sheds light on a number of potential historical interventions, such as the role of Japanese American growers and their employment of Filipinos, Mexicans, and Mexican Americans in the region. Understanding the Monterey Bay region's diverse ethnic history is crucial to understanding the changing social and physical geographies between 1930 and 1964 that served as an impetus for Mexican American political mobilization, which in turn proved foundational for the political and electoral transformations that occurred in the 1970s and 1980s.[56]

---

[55] On interethnic alliances and tensions see, Rudy Guevarra, *Becoming Mexipino: Multiethnic Identities and Communities In San Diego* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012). See Jon Gjerde and Mae Ngai, *Major Problems in American Immigration and Ethnic History: Documents and* Essay, 2nd ed (Boston, MA: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning, 2013); Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002).

[56] On the ethnic population of the Monterey Bay area see, Carol Lynn McKibben, *Beyond Cannery Row: Sicilian Women, Immigration, and Community In Monterey, California, 1915-99* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

As far back as the 1870s, the Monterey Bay area witnessed racial and labor unrest between agricultural workers and an increasingly mechanized agricultural industry.[57] By the 1930s, the Great Depression was causing domestic migratory streams that originated from Oklahoma and Texas. As these U.S. domestic migrants sought agricultural work in the Monterey Bay region, racial and class tensions heightened between local agricultural workers and incoming migrants. One politician's comment about white migrants arriving in California characterized the hostility toward the new arrivals during the 1930s: "This isn't a migration, it's an invasion. They are worse than a plague of locusts."[58]

When both white and Filipino farm workers began to demand higher wages and labor representation, violent confrontations erupted between growers and their workforce.[59] In one altercation, as a truckload of lettuce was being transported through the city of Salinas, picketers removed the driver transporting the lettuce and overturned the crates.[60] The lettuce was thrown on the Salinas streets and trampled as a crowd looked on. Similar labor strife and violence afflicted Watsonville as a growing minority agricultural labor force demanded better wages and civil rights.[61] However, the labor unrest also led to moments of interethnic solidarity among

---

[57] On May 3, 1877 two Mexican Americans were lynched in Santa Cruz, California. Geoffrey Dunn, "Hanging on the Water Street Bridge: A Santa Cruz Lynching," *Santa Cruz Public Libraries.*
[58] Carol Bidwell. "Fleeing the Dust Bowl for a Golden Opportunity in California," *Daily News*, March 12, 2008.
[59] Philip Vera Cruz, Filipino vice president of UFW-AFL-CIO. Interview 9/11/74. Box 1 Folder 11. Anne Loftis Papers, M0306, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.
[60] "Tension is Eased In Lettuce Strike," *The Washington Post*, September 19, 1936.
[61] "Lettuce Shipment Moved From Salinas Strike Area Under Armed Convoy," *Los Angeles Times*, September 18, 1936.

agricultural workers. Further demographic shifts took place starting in the 1940s and 1950s as the United States entered World War II and the Monterey Bay region replaced its domestic agricultural workforce not only with guest workers (braceros), but also with a consistent stream of undocumented workers from Mexico.

The legacies of many of the ethnic groups can be found in their community centers and places of worship. The Chinese Confucian center sits in the old Chinatown neighborhood of Salinas, once a thriving business community whose origins date back to the late nineteenth century. On the street behind the Confucian center is the Japanese Buddhist temple. Across Sherwood Street from the Confucian center sits Filipino Hall. Lastly, less than fifty feet from Filipino Hall is Cristo Rey Catholic Church, founded and built by braceros and the Mexican American community in the early 1950s.[62] These centers are historic landmarks of the ethnic and agricultural history of the region. The labor these ethnic groups contributed made Salinas and the larger Monterey Bay area one of the wealthiest and most productive agricultural regions in the world. While the contributions of each ethnic group vary by decade, two decades in the twentieth century especially stand out as periods when the demographics of the region were affected dramatically—the 1930s and the 1940s.

[62] See Lori A. Flores, "Converging Communities in Fields of Division: Mexican American Struggles for Rights in an Agricultural Town, 1940-1970," Ph.D. thesis (Palo Alto: Stanford University, 2011), 143.

Population Growth During the Great Depression

The population of Salinas in 1920 totaled about 4,000 people, but by 1940 it reached almost 11,000.[63] Immigrants from around the world arrived in the Salinas Valley during the Great Depression because the region offered agricultural jobs and the local economy was doing well relative to other parts of the country, which suffered from higher unemployment. They found jobs in the agricultural economy, which was rapidly changing from primarily producing sugar beets to growing row crops such as lettuce, cauliflower, broccoli, and strawberries.

An even more dramatic population increase came at the county level as many new residents settled in the outskirts of Salinas in unincorporated Monterey County communities such as Alisal, Chualar, Gonzales, and Soledad, among others. The county population grew from 28,000 to 73,000 during the same period of 1920 to 1940.[64] Towns such as Gonzales and Greenfield were incorporated as municipalities because of their growing populations. The growth of the region's economy was due largely to the increased demand for lettuce and other row crops. Sugar beets had been the Salinas Valley's biggest crop in 1920, but by 1929 lettuce surpassed sugar beets. Lettuce was first among a list of the top ten products for the region, garnering $6 million of a total of $16 million for the remaining nine products.[65] Other sources of jobs to support the agricultural industry also grew. For example, ice became a big

---

[63] *City of Salinas 2015-2023 Housing Element* Adopted December 15, 2015. Certified February 4, 2016 City of Salinas Community Development Department 65 W. Alisal Salinas, CA 93901.
J. Morgan Kousser, "Racial Injustice and the Abolition of Justice Courts in Monterey County." http://www.hss.caltech.edu/~kousser/redistricting/Racial%20Injustice.pdf (September, 9 2000).
[64] Sandy Lydon, *The Japanese in the Monterey Bay Area* (Capitola, CA: Capitola Book Co., 1997).
[65] Jennie Verardo Dennis and Denzil Verardo, *The Salinas Valley: An Illustrated History* (Chatsworth, CA: Windsor Publications, 1989), 65.

business so shippers could cool their vegetables. Similarly, paper and cardboard suppliers that manufactured boxes to ship the vegetables also grew exponentially.

Watsonville and the Santa Cruz County agricultural communities surrounding it also grew during the Great Depression. The county went from a population of 26,269 in 1920 to 45,057 in 1940.[66] Salinas had a population of 10,263 people at the start of the 1930s.[67] California in the 1930s had a total population of about 5.7 million people. Through the 1930s, during the Great Depression and as families experienced severe drought conditions in Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Texas, more than 1.3 million mostly white migrants from the Midwest and Southwest arrived in California.[68] By late 1931, those "Dust Bowl" migrants were arriving in California at a rate of 1,200 to 1,500 a day. Between July 1, 1935 and March 31, 1938 California witnessed the arrival of over 200,000 migrants from 19 states suffering from the drought. Many were financially devastated as the lengthy drought had forced them to abandon their farms. [69]

"Okie's Rights"

Migrants established a set of chain migration networks that connected them to roads and railroad lines in order to reach California. Some even walked and hitchhiked. The state countered with major vagrancy laws in 1933 and 1937; police created checkpoints throughout the state in order to prevent migrants from entering

[66] Population statistics gathered from Sandy Lydon, *The Japanese in the Monterey Bay Area* (Capitola, CA: Capitola Book Co., 1997).

California.[70] Because many of the Dust Bowl migrants had once had their own farms, they came with important and valuable skills as entrepreneurs and in agriculture.[71] Once in California, these migrants—disparagingly called "Okies" by local whites because many of them came from Oklahoma—were relegated to arduous and regimented fieldwork in the Salinas Valley.[72] But there, their labor would contribute to the larger transformation of Monterey Bay region's agricultural industry.[73]

Many of them settled in the Alisal, an unincorporated neighborhood on the outskirts of Salinas at the time. Some lived in makeshift shacks or homes so dilapidated that occupancy was truly dangerous. Their arrival also drew attention by the national media to the conditions of migrant farm workers, labor that had historically been done by Mexicans, Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos. Yet, not all Dust Bowl migrants stayed doing stoop labor in the fields. Many advanced quickly and were able to attain work in packing sheds, which were unionized and were a better climate to work in. But instead of focusing on their skills and contributions to the economy, these migrants faced harsh prejudice from the local white residents who ridiculed them for the way they talked and the clothes they wore. They were also segregated into separate "Okie" schools, as described here:

> The children looked like war refugees from a distant country, and in a way they were. Their hand-me-down trousers and skirts were secured with rope and twine. A soup bowl and a pair of old scissors were used for haircuts.

---

[70] "California Ordered to Defend 'Okie' Law," *The New York Times*, May 6, 1941.
[71] Patricia Leigh Brown, "Oklahomans Try to Save their California Culture," *The New York Times.* February 5, 2002.
[72] Genevieve Reynolds, "Democratic Women Hear Address On the War and Okie Problems," *The Washington Post*, December 15, 1942.
[73] Katherine Glover, "California Farm Nomads. Thousands of Homeless-Workers Harvest the Products of Field and Orchard," *The New York Times*, August 30, 1936.

> Those who had shoes were lucky if they had socks. All the kids looked undernourished and in need of medical attention. They spoke a different language, they possessed a different culture, they lacked skills in hygiene and in manners, morals and etiquette. With little or no formal education the children of the Dust Bowl crowded into … schools: the results were predictable. Teachers and taxpayers believed the newcomers were "uneducable," and their appearance offensive. Children were banned from public schools or forced to sit on the floor in the back of crowded classrooms, humiliated."[74]

Lester Antle was one of those white migrants to California during the Great Depression. An experienced boilermaker from Kentucky, Antle initially went to the Sacramento area but quickly transferred his skills to the agricultural industry when he learned that tomato canneries used boilers. His son Lester, Jr., known as "Bud," eventually branched out of the family business into lettuce harvesting.[75]

Bud Antle began working in the Pajaro and Salinas Valleys, establishing his own company and naming it after himself in 1943. The Antles would transform the agricultural industry entirely when they innovated vacuum cooling in the 1950s, forever changing how lettuce was packaged and shipped—and in its path displacing thousands of unionized packing-shed workers who in the 1950s were mostly white ethnics.[76] The Antles also contracted thousands of braceros during that program's lifetime. What agricultural business leaders viewed as innovation with regards to

---

[74] Jerry Stanley, "'Grapes of Wrath' Grads Migrant Kids from Leo Hart's school left Depression poverty in the dust," *Chicago Tribune*, March 14, 1989.
[75] Interview with Brian Antle conducted by author. September 19, 2015. Tanimura and Antle Headquarters. History of Bud and Bob Antle. http://www.taproduce.com/#5. & "Portrait of a Partnership." Tanimura & Antle Inc. August 20, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1ex7TAShRc.
[76] On the mechanization of agriculture and vacuum cooling, see William H. Friedland, *Manufacturing Green Gold: Capital, Labor, and Technology in the Lettuce Industry* (Cambridge, 1983); Frank Bardacke, *Trampling out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two souls of the United Farm Workers* (New York, Verso, 2011).

technology and labor practices, workers and labor unions viewed as a threat to their livelihoods and their existence. The cry of "they are taking our jobs" would be common among unions and workers as new technologies—and newer ethnic groups—replaced entrenched ethnic groups in various agriculture jobs during the 1940s and 1950s.

1930s Labor Struggles: The Early and Longer Farm Worker Movement

Workers and their attempts to organize into labor unions throughout the 1930s catapulted the Monterey Bay region into violent clashes between and among workers and growers. Local companies, primarily small family-owned growing operations, had a long history of hiring workers of various ethnic backgrounds. But growers were also notorious for hiring and pitting laborers from different ethnic groups against each other. By the early twentieth century many Japanese immigrants had arrived in the Watsonville and Salinas regions to work in agriculture, and they transformed the way vegetables were planted and harvested.[77]

[77] Kent Edward Haldan, *"Our Japanese citizens": A Study of Race, Class, and Ethnicity in Three Japanese American Communities in Santa Barbara County, 1900-1960*, Ph.D. dissertation (University of California Berkeley, 2000).



The Monterey Bay Area[78]

[78] Map created by Lara Scott. Courtesy of Christopher Henke, *Cultivating Science, Harvesting Power: Science and Industrial Agriculture in California* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008).



Figure 1. Filipino farm workers, Pajaro Valley, near Watsonville, September 1939. Mary Oliver photograph, Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

Filipino Labor in the 1930s

In 1924 the Johnson-Reed Act limited Japanese immigration to the United States. In turn, Filipinos were recruited as a new source of labor. By 1930 more than 30,000 Filipinos were working as laborers in the United States and of that number, 74 percent were working in California agriculture.[79] At that time the Philippines was a territory of the United States, so unlike other Asian groups; Filipinos could freely enter the United States as "nationals" rather than non-citizens. But as anti-Filipino

[79] For studies on Filipino agriculture workers see, Edwin B. Almirol, *Ethnic Identity and Social Negotiation: A Study of a Filipino Community In California* (New York: AMS Press, 1985); Howard A. DeWitt, *Violence In the Fields: California Filipino Farm Labor Unionization During the Great Depression* (Saratoga, CA: Century Twenty One Pub., 1980); Howard A. Dewitt and Emory Stephen Bogardus, *Anti-Filipino Movements in California: A History, Bibliography, and Study Guide* (San Francisco, CA: R and E Research Associates, 1976); Julie Sindel, "Filipino Farm Labor Organization: A Lesson in Filipino Leadership," *Ex Post Facto*: *Journal of the History Students at San Francisco State University, 2006-07*, Vol. XVI, 161-178; Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1939), *Brothers Under the Skin* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1951); Don Mitchell, *The Lie of the Land: Migrant Workers and the California Landscape* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

sentiment grew quickly, like the Chinese and Japanese before them Filipinos witnessed increased violence and racial hostility during their tenure in the agricultural industry.[80]

Anti-Filipino hysteria reached a tipping point by mid-January 1930. Some Filipino men—isolated and seeking social interactions beyond their "bachelor" working communities—went to "taxi dance" halls where, for ten cents, they could dance with the white women who were employed there. Racialized violence was not far from these leisure spaces. On January 18, 1930, shortly after a dance hall employing nine white women opened in Watsonville, hundreds of white men gathered and threatened to take the white women away and burn down the dance hall. The violence reached a mob level the next night, when a crowd of close to 600 white men broke into Filipino homes and beat the residents. The violence ended after five men were arrested for the deadly shooting of Fermin Tobera, 22, who was found shot to death at his labor camp on the Murphy Ranch four miles east of Watsonville.[81]

In 1933, under the leadership of Filipino agricultural labor contractor Rufo Canete, a meeting was organized in Salinas in order to create an organization that would represent Filipino labor issues. Named the Filipino Labor Union, the organization's mission was "to promote understanding between Filipino workers and vegetable growers and shippers in the Salinas Valley; to cultivate the spirit of

---

[80]Howard De Witt, "The Watsonville Anti-Filipino Riot of 1930: A Case Study of the Great Depression and Ethnic Conflict in California," *Southern California Quarterly*, 61 (1979), 223-238; Michael P. Showalter, "The Watsonville Anti-Filipino Riot of 1930: A Reconstruction of Fermin Tobera's Murder," *Southern Historical Quarterly*, 71 (1989), 341-348; Kevin Starr, *Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance, 1950-1963* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 450-455.
[81] "Filipino Shot Dead in Coast Race Riot," *Washington Post*, January 23, 1930, 4.

brotherhood among Filipino workers, labor contractors, and businessmen; to work for living wages with a view to improving conditions."[82] But earlier that year, the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (CAWIU) had already started organizing Filipino farm workers. Filipinos joined CAWIU in order to learn how to run a successful union and organized seven local farm committees with worker input and votes in order to make decisions. But it became increasingly difficult for local labor unions to succeed because growers and their associations worked with local law enforcement agencies to shut down attempts to organize labor unions. Among the actions they took were allying with local judges to pass injunctions against picketing growers, and pressuring union leaders from Salinas and Watsonville.



Figure 2. Filipino workers in a Salinas Valley lettuce field, circa 1930s. Courtesy of Grower-Shipper Association, Salinas, California.

[82] Julie Sindel, "Filipino Farm Labor Organization: A Lesson in Filipino Leadership" *Ex Post Facto: Journal of the History Students at San Francisco State University*, 2006-07, Vol. XVI, 171.

Labor Strikes: 1934 and 1936

One of the most violent labor strikes took place in Salinas between August 27 and September 25, 1934.[83] On August 27, 1934, about 5,000 packing-shed workers and lettuce field workers from Salinas and Watsonville attended a mass organizing meeting. Filipino workers joined with the Vegetable Packers Association, an American Federation of Labor affiliate with 2,000 members, mostly white men, to approve a strike call against Salinas and Watsonville growers. The FLU, with its 3,000 members, also joined the walkout plan and agreed to strike.[84] The strikers demanded recognition of their union, better working conditions, and general wage increases approximating 10 percent.[85] The mostly white packing-shed workers and Filipino lettuce field workers agreed that neither union would bargain without the other.

On August 30, 1934, forty women were sent from Salinas by strike leaders to visit lettuce sheds in Watsonville and encourage non-union workers to leave their jobs. The women were escorted by strikers and shouted laughing taunts at the men as they packed lettuce. Ultimately, the police reported, the women were successful in getting a number of men to leave their jobs and join the strike.[86] Following the picketing by strikers and female organizers, three serious clashes occurred. Two men were shot, another was clubbed over the head and seriously injured, and a police

---

[83] Howard DeWitt, "The Filipino Labor Union: The Salinas Lettuce Strike of 1934," *Amerasia* 5:2 (1978); Jamieson Stuart Marshal, *Labor unionism in the American agriculture* (Wisconsin: Arno Press Inc., 1979).
[84] "Fear Strike At Salinas," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 28, 1934.
[85] Ibid.
[86] "Lettuce Strike Pickets Shot in Salinas Battle," *The Los Angeles Times*, August 31, 1934. Pg. 1.

officer was injured by a brick thrown at him. In the first outbreak of violent episodes during the strike, Robert Caldwell, a white striker, was shot in the arm and Jose Pinzon, a striker of Filipino descent, was wounded in the shoulder at the M. Barton ranch in Salinas. The rancher leasing the field to farm, Walter Swain, had hired guards to protect the workers.

The second major violent episode occurred when strikers attempted to overturn lettuce trucks before they reached the sheds in Salinas. More than 400 strikers were involved in the melee as California Highway Patrol officers attempted to guard the trucks. One striker, lettuce worker Charles Pierce, suffered deep cuts to his face, and police officer Tyre Martin was struck with a brick in the head. The strikers, however, were successful in dumping part of a truckload of lettuce. After ten days of a successful strike, the growers agreed to negotiate, but only with the white packing-shed workers. They refused to bargain with the Filipino union representatives, claiming that Filipino workers had violated an agreement to return to work immediately. [87]

On September 22, 1934, as leaders of the Filipino Labor Union met to negotiate a labor contract, the Filipino Labor Hall owned by union leader Rufo Canete was burned down.[88] Also, the day before, a deputy sheriff had been stabbed, and in apparent retaliation for the stabbing white raiders fired upon another property owned by Canete, a four-building labor camp with sixty occupants. A fire started as

[87] "Seek End to Salinas Strike," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, September 1, 1934.
[88] "Filipino Labor Camp Burned in California: Woman Feared Dead in Fire Linked to Lettuce Strike and Action of Vigilantes," *The New York Times*, September 23, 1934, 6; Julie Sindel, "Filipino Farm Labor Organization: A Lesson in Filipino Leadership," *Ex Post Facto: Journal of the History Students at San Francisco State University, 2006-07*. Vol. XVI, 161-178.

bullets struck three 100-gallon oil tanks near the main building. Marguerite Vitacion, a Filipina, had been in one of the buildings, and subsequently was reported missing. Salinas Valley growers declared that the camp was destroyed by Filipinos who were angry at Rufo Canete, and police officers arrested forty-seven Filipinos and placed them in jail on charges ranging from assault to inciting a riot. Canete insisted that the arsonists were white men.[89] The growers also brought in scab workers to replace Filipino workers in order to break the field strike. While shed workers organized and their union was recognized, two years later, the growers used some of the most violent forms of intimidation to break the union and were successful.

1936 Lettuce Strike

In late August of 1936 negotiations for a new contract began between the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Workers union and the growers of the region. By September 3, the Grower-Shipper Association offered workers a five-cents-per-hour raise as well as equal pay for men and women. The union declined the offer and its nearly 3,000 members voted in overwhelming numbers to go on strike.[90] Consequently, as much as $12 million in lettuce went unpicked.[91] On September 8, the truck drivers who drove the lettuce to the coolers joined the strike and growers reported that they were losing $75,000 in profits each day. By mid-September the shed workers were joined by over 5,000 Filipino and Mexican field workers. On

[89] "Filipino Labor Camp Burned in California: Woman Feared Dead in Fire Linked to Lettuce Strike and Action of Vigilantes," The New York Times, September 23, 1934, 6.
[90]Jennie Verardo Dennis, and Denzil Verardo, *The Salinas Valley: An Illustrated History* (Chatsworth, CA: Windsor Publications, 1989), 93-94.
[91] Carleton Williams "Hopes Brighten For pact in Salinas Lettuce Row "*The Los Angeles Times*, September 23, 1936.

September 15 the growers brought in scab workers to open the packing sheds and retrieve the lettuce harvested from the local fields.[92] Awaiting the trucks in Salinas were over 2,000 picketers who began to throw rocks at the incoming trucks full of packaged lettuce. The local police shot tear gas at the picketers and the violence in Salinas escalated. On September 17, growers had twenty state highway patrolmen and local police escort lettuce trucks from the fields to the Salinas Valley Ice Company. On the roof of the ice company stood armed guards with machine guns. This time there was no violent incident.[93]



Figure 3. Two men attempt to prevent a lettuce truck from leaving town, September 1936. The photo characterizes the tension between workers and growers. Courtesy of the San Francisco Chronicle.

The Monterey County Sheriff deputized over 3,000 residents and used them to beat and arrest striking workers who had been replaced with scab workers.[94] Growers also hired Colonel Henry Sanborn, a U.S. Army Reserve officer and publisher of a conservative newspaper, to lead efforts against the strikers. But at one meeting with

[92] Jennie Verardo Dennis, and Denzil Verardo *The Salinas Valley: An Illustrated History* (Chatsworth, CA: Windsor Publications, 1989), 93-94.
[93] Ibid.
[94] "Tension is Eased In Lettuce Strike," *The Washington Post*, September 19, 1936.

local law enforcement and agricultural leaders, Sanborn accused the local union of having ties to Communist leaders. This was a sour issue to many in the community because just two years earlier the CAWIU had been backed by the Communist party to organize farm workers. Many of the leaders, including Pat Chambers, had been arrested and sent to prison under the Criminal Syndicalism Act.[95] The idea that Communists had led the Vegetable Workers Union did not sit well with growers and the local police. Sanborn was officially removed from his position and the community was assured that he would not return. Within two months both the strike and the packing-shed union were broken. Union members voted to terminate the strike and growers agreed to re-hire the union workers. Shed workers returned to work on November 3, 1936.

As the decade came to an end there were other attempts to organize workers, including a successful effort at the Spreckels sugar refinery. By the end of 1939, over 1,000 railcars of artichokes, 24,000 cars of lettuce, and 7,000 cars of other vegetables were shipped from the Salinas Valley each year.[96] The area's agriculture value was reaching over $50 million.[97] Relative to the rest of the country, the Monterey Bay area was doing well during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

---

[95] Anne Loftis Papers, M0306, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif. Box1 Folder 11. Pat Chambers along with Caroline Decker were union leaders during the Cotton strike in Corcoran, California during the early 1930s. Ann Loftis describes his history as a communist union organizer, including his work with CAWIU, and arrests as a union organizer.

[96] Jennie Verardo Dennis, and Denzil Verardo *The Salinas Valley: An Illustrated History* (Chatsworth, CA: Windsor Publications, 1989), 95.

[97] Monterey County Agriculture Crop Report 1940-50.



Figure 4. 1936 law enforcement in Salinas. Photo by Otto Hagel.



Figure 5. A woman pickets lettuce shipments. Salinas, September 21, 1936.



Figure 6. Labor protestors on strike.



Figure 7. “Pitched battles between picketers and non-union workers following a day of intermittent clashes provoked when some 50 workers were brought into Salinas from the barricaded packing sheds for a weekend outing.” Photograph by Harold Ellwood *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 5, 1936.

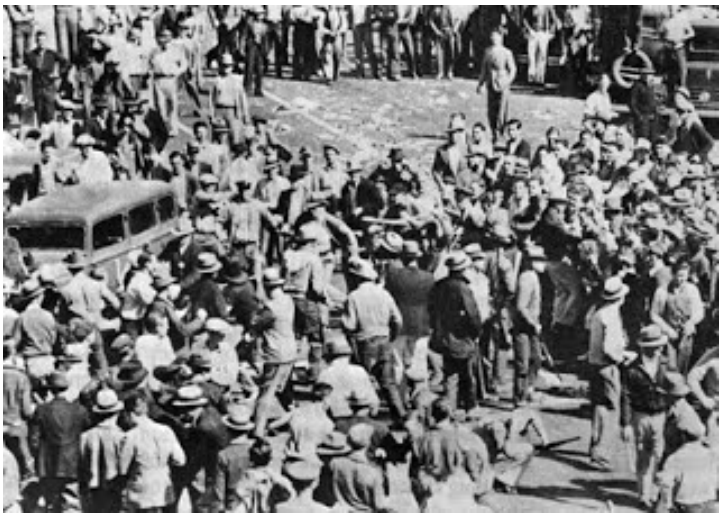


Figure 8. Lettuce strikers and law enforcement clash as trucks carrying lettuce drive through Main Street in Salinas, October 1936.[98]



Figure 9. Agricultural goods being trucked from the Monterey Bay area.

The 1940s: Dramatic Changes

On February 19, 1942—just over two months after the United States entered World War II following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii—President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, ordering all people of Japanese ancestry to report to processing centers and subsequently forcing them into internment camps for over three years.[99] More than 120,000 Japanese Americans were sent to these camps.[100] Even after World War II was over, many Japanese Americans were never able to return to the way of life they had worked so hard to develop. Many lost their farms and any other sources of wealth or savings during internment.[101]

Labor strife, the war, Japanese American internment, and a growing economy created a high demand for agricultural workers.[102] Altogether the war resulted in the loss of tens of thousands of agriculture workers, either via displacement into internment camps, or via the military draft to provide a military labor force. [103] As they had done during World War I, U.S. officials looked to Mexico for a supply of skilled agricultural workers. By 1942 the Bracero Program was born.[104]

---

[99] Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004).
[100] Wendy Ng, *Japanese American Internment During World War II: A History and Reference Guide*. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002).
[101] "L.A. Housing Fight Looms As Japs Return," *Chicago Defender*, 13 January 1945.
[102] Anne Loftis Papers, M0306, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif. Box 4 Folder 34. Works of Yoneda: 100 Years of Japanese Labor History in the USA; A Brief History of U.S. Asian Labor A Partial History of California Japanese Farm Workers; Rain, Rain, and Rain; Youth Never Dies.

[104] During World War I the U.S and Mexico entered into a similar agreement. Guest workers from Mexico worked in the Salinas Valley during the war, mostly in sugar beet fields for the Spreckels

The Japanese in the Monterey Bay Area: Legacies of American Internment

The Japanese first arrived in large numbers in the Pajaro and Salinas valleys around 1900 as farmers. Pioneers in agriculture, they experimented with various forms of crop rotation, innovated irrigation techniques, and enhanced the production of lettuce, strawberries, and cauliflower, innovations that would later bring enormous wealth and prosperity to the region. Perhaps no other family demonstrates the decades of Japanese innovation and contributions to Salinas Valley agriculture than the Tanimura family. George Minoru Tanimura was born on July 2, 1915 in San Juan Bautista, California, to immigrant parents Eijiro Kimoto and Yukino Tanimura from Japan. George grew up thinning lettuce, an arduous labor-intensive task, while in elementary school in Castroville, California. Yet from a young age George came to appreciate and love the process of growing vegetables.

George's mother died when he was just thirteen years old, and as the oldest of twelve children, he quit school after eighth grade to help his father with operations on their small farm. Three years later his father died, so at age sixteen George was left with the entire responsibility for the family.[105] He managed the family farming operation and his sister Chisato, who was living in Japan, returned to San Juan Bautista to help care for the younger children. At this time the Tanimura family was living in Aromas, on the outskirts of Salinas and Watsonville. George Tanimura led the family through major economic challenges during the Great Depression. But just

---

Sugar Corporation. For more on the "first" bracero program, see Barbra A. Driscoll, *The Tracks North: The Railroad Bracero Program of World War II* (Austin, TX: 2011), 6-8.

[105] History of Bud and Bob Antle. http://www.taproduce.com/#5. & "Portrait of a Partnership." Tanimura & Antle Inc. August 20, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1ex7TAShRc.

when the Tanimuras had recovered from the loss of their parents, and begun to prosper in their farming operations, Executive Order 9066 demanded that all Japanese Americans be sent to internment camps.[106] The Tanimuras lost their entire farming operation as they spent the war years of 1942-1945 in Poston, Arizona, and while two Tanimura brothers were serving in the U.S. Army in Europe.



Figure 10. The Tanimura family in the 1920s.

[106] Interview with Gary Tanimura conducted by author. Spreckels, CA. January 7, 2014.

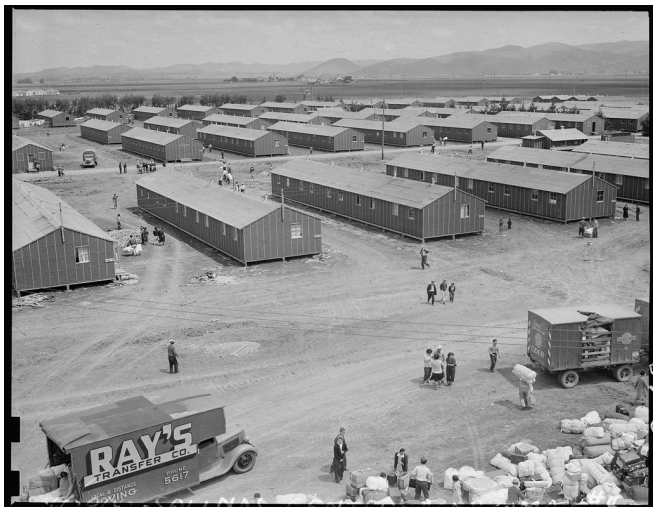


Figure 11. Salinas Assembly Center, California. 1942. George Tanimura and his siblings arrived at the Rodeo Grounds where Japanese Americans were registered before being moved to relocation centers like Poston, Arizona.

After the war ended, in 1945, the Tanimuras were able to return to California from Arizona. They had no farm, so they began to work in Gilroy as manual laborers cutting and packaging lettuce. It took them a few years of saving to eventually purchase acres of land to grow and sell their own lettuce. The Tanimuras would pool their paychecks and save the money, using one paycheck to collectively buy food, pay rent, and purchase other necessities. By the 1950s the Tanimuras had become one of the largest growers of lettuce. The Tanimuras learned and became experts at growing and everything surrounding it, such as the best seeds, soil, irrigation methods, and crop rows. Furthermore, as they became the owners of farming operations, they sought a steady stream of migrant laborers to do the work.

Braceros Transform Monterey Bay Agriculture, 1942 to 1964

The first braceros contracted to work in Salinas arrived in the fall of 1942 and began working in the sugar beet and celery fields. [107] Two years before they arrived, the total value of Monterey County agriculture products was $17,454,348. By the end of the Bracero Program in 1964 the value was $152,679,620.[108] The braceros were initially welcomed with patriotic fervor, citing the cooperation of the U.S. and Mexico to win World War II. President Franklin Roosevelt even proclaimed his support for the program: "Mexican farm workers brought to the United States in accordance with the agreement between our two governments…are contributing their toil to the production of vitally needed food."[109] The Southern Pacific Railroad's magazine in October 1943 called the braceros *Soldados del Ferrocarril* (Soldiers of the Railroad) and put a photo of about fifty braceros holding U.S and Mexican flags and signaling "V for Victory" on its cover. But these celebrations were short-lived; it wasn't long before braceros were guided by police escorts to their labor camps in the outskirts of town.[110]

---

[107] Mitchell, *They Saved the Crops*, 1. Texts differ as to when exactly the first braceros arrived in Salinas. The other date of the first arrival is September 27, 1942. Cohen cited October 1, 1942 in her book, *Braceros*, 198. Ronald Takaki's *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (New York, NY: 1993), 364, cites it as September 29, 1942.

[108] Monterey County Agricultural Crop Reports, 1940-1964. Office of the Agricultural Commissioner, Salinas, CA., ag.co.monterey.ca.us.

[109] See Smithsonian press release dated. Roosevelt had been responsible for deporting a large number of Mexicans residing in the United States during the Great Depression just a few years before.

[110] Barajas, *Curious Unions*, 197.

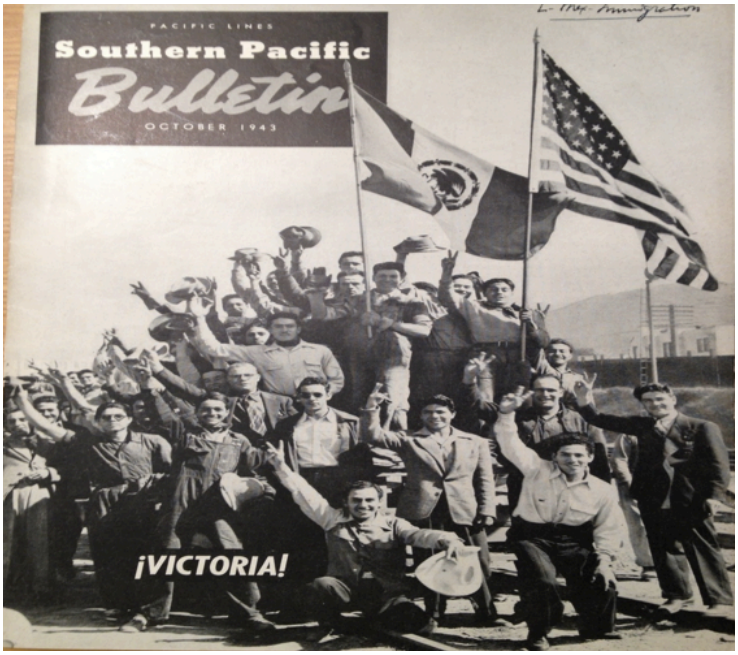


Figure 11. Braceros signal the "V for Victory."[111]

Numerous explanations have been given to justify the need for braceros, but three factors stand out. The first was that the potential labor pools of workers were being drafted into the U.S. armed forces. The second was the labor shortage caused by the internment of Japanese Americans. The third factor was that growers wanted to undercut union activities by bringing in cheaper replacement workers.[112] In hindsight, evidence supports a combination of the three factors, but considering the enormous wealth accumulation by growers during the 1942–1964 period, the last reason

[111] Box 17, Folder 1. Ernesto Galarza Papers, M0224, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, CA.
[112] Mark Brilliant, *The Color of America Has Changed: How Racial diversity Shaped Civil Rights Reform in California, 1941-1978* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 149. See also William H. Freidland et al., *Manufacturing green gold: Capital, Labor, and Technology in the lettuce Industry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 1-5.

becomes the most important.[113] Braceros were not able to organize or bargain, and their pay was lower than that of the domestic workers.[114] Growers had more funds to invest in mechanizing the industry with the most modern technology by cutting wages and replacing domestic workers with braceros. Unionized white packing-shed workers suffered, too, as growers began using vacuum cooling in the packing sheds, which displaced a large number of those workers.



Figure 12. Braceros in the Salinas Valley with the Bud Antle Corporation, 1961.[115]

World War II veterans returning from their service who had been farm workers before the war sought work in other industries and leaving the fields for

[113] On mechanization of agriculture see Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press), 207; Frank Bardacke, *Trampling Out the Vintage,* 348.
[114] Lisbeth Haas, "The Bracero in Orange County: A Work Force for Economic Transition," Program in U.S.-Mexican Studies (University of California, San Diego, 1981), 44-47.
[115] Leon Ventura (far right with Army hat) working as a bracero for the Bud Antle Corporation, circa 1960s, Watsonville, California. His daughter Ana Ventura became the first female Mexican American to serve on the city council and as mayor of Watsonville.

good. These veterans spoke English and had marketable skills outside of doing stoop labor. Many had high school diplomas and after the war, moved to San Jose, Oakland, Richmond, Daly City, and other suburban communities surrounding San Francisco Bay. Growers continued having difficulty finding workers for their farms and thus the Bracero Program was renewed multiple times.

Bracero Labor, Skills, and Desperation to Earn a Wage

In order to understand and measure the kind of progress braceros envisioned, it is critical to understand the places they came from, and where they developed belief systems about work that they brought with them to the United States. Recent scholarship has identified the many skills and contributions braceros made to the larger agricultural economy. [116] Many braceros already knew how to grow vegetables and raise cattle when they arrived in the U.S. For braceros who grew up living in poverty with few economic and schooling opportunities, migrations *al otro lado* (to the other side) or to *el norte* (north) was a persistent solution that they learned about at an early age as a method for escaping poverty.

The braceros I interviewed had experienced various levels of poverty in Mexico, but had developed positive attitudes about working in agriculture. They recalled growing up working on the land alongside their parents, siblings, and extended family members. At an early age they had learned to plant and harvest *frijol*

[116] See Deborah Cohen, *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in the Postwar United States and Mexico* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Mireya Loza, *Defiant Braceros: How Migrant Workers Fought for Racial, Sexual, and Political Freedom* (2016); Ana Elizabeth Rosas, *Abrazando El Espíritu: Bracero Families Confront the US-Mexico Border* (2014); Don Mitchell, *They Saved the Crops: Labor, Landscape, and the Struggle Over Industrial Farming in Bracero-Era California* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012);

(beans) and *maize* (corn). Their lives revolved around harvests that were dependent on seasonal rains. The braceros viewed their migration experience as a rite of passage into manhood. As the program continued, most had a relative or acquaintance in their community who had previously migrated and shared romanticized stories about opportunity in the United States as braceros. These stories further motivated the young men to migrate because there simply were few opportunities at home to move up the social ladder. For some young men it was also generational; Juan Vasquez Martinez, Jose Maria Rubio Nuñez, and Eustaquio Zúñiga Nieto had fathers who had been braceros. In contrast, others were recruited by individuals who came to their towns and offered work in the United States.

For example, former bracero Salvador Flores Barragan told me, "We were so poor back then, my parents and grandparents owed a lot of money. Those debts were paid with the money I sent home as a bracero."[117] Braceros often recounted how young they were and how much energy they had to do the work. That youthful energy was how they were able to earn money to pay off debts and get ahead in life. In hindsight they understood how hard the work had been, but at the time they viewed this work as the only way to escape their poverty, and it was work they found honorable.[118]

Though some braceros had a relative or even a father who had migrated, others like Isidro Hernandez Tovar depended on the social capital that braceros shared when they returned to their hometowns in Mexico. He grew up with little

[117] Interview with Salvador Flores Barragan. Interview conducted by author January 31, 2014.
[118] Interview with Salvador Flores Barragan. Interview conducted by author January 31, 2014.

aspirations for a future because of the extreme poverty he was raised in. His family had no land of its own and his father had abandoned his mother when Isidro was still quite young. Hernandez Tovar learned his agricultural skills and appreciation for work as a contracted laborer for other farmers in Zapotlanejo, Jalisco, Mexico.

A hometown friend, Sixto Lopez, had migrated as a bracero the year before and eventually motivated Hernandez Tovar to sign up for the program. Like that of most migrants during the late 1950s, his goal was to save 2,000 *pesos* (Mexican currency) and to purchase *cinco mudas de ropa* (five changes of clothing). The money he earned in three months as a bracero would have taken him over a year to earn in Mexico. He could also use his earnings to get married. He was inspired to migrate by seeing braceros like Lopez and Donatalo Lomeli, who returned to his hometown with the blue denim Levi's jeans, yellow boots, and transistor radio that distinguished braceros starting in that period.

Eustaquio Zúñiga Nieto developed work skills and an appreciation for agriculture early on from his parents and uncles in the rural area surrounding San Rafael de Nietos, San Luis Potosi, Mexico.[119] Born into a family of nine siblings, he started working in agriculture with his family and uncles at age eight. The family had about fifteen animals and if their maize harvests failed, they resorted to selling their livestock in order to purchase necessary food. "The only way to survive on the ranch was by harvesting maize and beans or by having animals, so you developed good

[119]Interview with Eustaquio Zúñiga Nieto, by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez. January 31, 2014. King City, CA. On bracero social capital, see Douglas S. Massey, *Categorically Unequal*.

working habits at a very young age," he told me. His parents instilled in him an appreciation for rural life and agriculture work, as well as a strong work ethic.



Figure 13. A farm worker thins celery using the infamous short-handled hoe (*cortito*). Watsonville, California, 1974. CRLA led the drive to ban the use of the tool, but the physical damage had been done to hundreds of farm workers residing in Watsonville. Photo taken by Bob Fitch. Stanford University Libraries.

The land was cultivated with a plow that was pulled by two bulls. Zúñiga Nieto watched his uncles plowing the soil and learned how to apply the techniques he learned from them. Harvests were dependent on seasonal rains. Toward the end of May they would expect storms and by the end of June the soil was soft enough so they could till and prepare it to plant seeds that would bloom into corn and vines of beans that would be picked in October. The entire harvest could be ruined by the *sequias* (droughts) that afflicted his hometown. "The work was difficult but you also began to appreciate agricultural work through each harvest," he said. He rarely attended school as a child; only as he got older did he have the opportunity to practice reading and writing skills. The work habits and skills he learned in his youth would become quite valuable when he migrated as a bracero. Throughout the Bracero

Program, braceros were often blamed for "taking jobs" from domestic workers, and depressing wages.[120] However, one often overlooked variable by scholars in the displacement of workers during the Bracero Program was the continued mechanization of agriculture and the technology used to harvest the crops. When Zúñiga Nieto arrived in the Salinas Valley as a bracero he encountered the work he was used to, but it was much more mechanized; tractors and heavy equipment were used to cultivate the land. Eustaquio Zúñiga Nieto envisioned himself one day driving and operating the equipment and moving from stoop labor to an irrigation position.

Rafael Silva Puentes had been looking for the right path in life and found a purpose working as a bracero.[121] He described his first year picking cotton in Parker, Arizona: "When I arrived in Parker, I found out what this country was all about. I learned that this country was for me because there was so much work. I enjoyed the work because I kept multiplying the dollar-to-peso earnings and so I did well." He never viewed cutting celery or lettuce as degrading or oppressive. As a young and ambitious person who wanted to buy land and start a family, his prospects in Mexico had been minimal:

> I didn't have anything. I didn't have a family, and little prospects of ever owning a home, a piece of land, or cattle. At a young age I wanted to raise cattle and have a life. Thanks to migration I have done well. Of course not all of my migrations were good: on one occasion, I can remember the weather was extremely hot. That season I didn't even make enough money to return to Jalisco. Another year I was robbed in Guadalajara. On another occasion, during a forty-five-day contract, I did really well. Most of the other times I did well because I worked for longer contracts.

[120] Anne Loftis Papers, M0306, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif. Box 3 Folder 3. "Braceros - Depressing Wages and Replacing Domestic Workers."
[121] Interview with Rafael Silva Puentes by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez. Salinas, CA. June 27, 2013.

Like Rafael Silva Puentes, by the time most boys in rural Mexico had become teens or young adults, they had heard about the prospects of earning money in *el Norte* (the north, the United States). While their reasons for embarking on such a journey varied, a common one was the need to earn enough money to pay off family debts. Families had often borrowed money to buy grain to feed their cattle, or to get through a bad harvest caused by a prolonged drought.[122] Sometimes families owed money on their homes. Some braceros, like Rafael Silva Puentes, even borrowed money to finance their journey.

Guadalupe Rodriguez left San Francisco Asis, in Los Altos (the highlands) of Jalisco, where the *Cristero* war had been fought in the 1920s over religious secularization.[123] His journey from Jalisco, Mexico to Salinas, California was close to 2,000 miles, typical of the distances braceros traveled to work their U.S. contracts. Such a trip took courage and the braceros handled their anxieties in various forms. Some braceros were happy to work overtime on Sundays because downtime meant feeling nostalgic about their loved ones in Mexico.[124] The work was easy; it was *la nostalgia* (homesickness) that was difficult—missing family and hometown—even though they all expected eventually to return to Mexico.[125]

---

[122] Cohen, *Braceros,* 178-182.
[123] On the Cristero conflict, see Jean A. Meyer, *La Cristeada*: *The Mexican People's War for Religious Liberty* (Garden City Park, NY: Square One Publishers, 2013).
[124]Ronald L. Mize and Alicia C.S. Swords, *Consuming Mexican Labor: From The Bracero Program to NAFTA* (Ontario, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 3-21.
[125] Interview with Guadalupe Rodriguez, by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez. Salinas, CA. October 13, 2014.

Workforce Changes Due to Technological Innovation

Journalists and the general public do not often associate agricultural innovation with first-rate scientific or highly technological inventions. However, some of the most important technological innovations have occurred within the agricultural industry. For example, drip irrigation—first introduced by the Tanimura family—saved the industry millions of dollars and the environment in conserving water. Another important agricultural innovation that transformed the region was vacuum cooling.

Prior to 1945 lettuce was shipped in large wooden crates covered with ice. Shortage of ice during World War II pressured growers to innovate. Rex Brunsing came up with the idea of using a vacuum cooler to cool the lettuce and ship it in a dry cardboard box and a refrigerated train. Once the lettuce was harvested, it was packed in the fields where trucks would transport it on large pallets to a vacuum cooler. At the vacuum cooler a large forklift lifted the pallets loaded with lettuce and drew out the heat from the lettuce, dropping temperatures to near freezing.[126] Bud Antle bought the rights to vacuum cooling from Brunsing in the 1950s. Antle then built cooling centers in Glendale, Arizona, and El Centro, California, beginning a larger packing operation than ever before.[127]

The opportunity to take the technology from wooden cartons to corrugated cardboard boxes transformed the industry and displaced thousands of workers from

---

[126] Dennis Jennie Verardo, and Denzil Verardo, *The Salinas Valley: An Illustrated History* (Chatsworth, Calif: Windsor Publications, 1989), 101-102. Also see William Friedland H., Amy E. Barton, and Robert J. Thomas*, Manufacturing Green Gold: Capital, Labor, and Technology in the Lettuce Industry Cambridge* [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
[127] *Portrait of a Partnership*. *The Tanimura Inc*. August 20, 1999.

packing-shed jobs. Growers hired braceros to do the cutting and packaging in the fields, no longer needing better-paid shed workers. By the 1950s braceros had gone from doing 4 percent of the agriculture work to 75 percent of the thinning, cutting, and packing in the lettuce industry. The meager wages paid to braceros gave growers more profits with which to invest in technology to mechanize the industry.[128] As Bud Antle's grandson Bob said, from 1945 to 1953 "the industry converted 100 percent. Nothing has changed that fast since."[129]



Figure 14. Billboard of Bud Antle of California. Circa 1970s. Photograph by Bob Fitch. Courtesy of Stanford University Special Collections.

Documenting and Organizing the Braceros: Ernesto Galarza

Before Cesar Chavez became an international spokesperson and the public face representing the issues of farm workers in the fields, Ernesto Galarza had already spent close to two decades researching, organizing, and publishing based on his time

[128] Matt Garcia, "Setting the Table: Historians, Popular Writers, and Food History," *The Journal of American History*, December 2016, 663-664.
[129] Ibid.

in Salinas and Watsonville.[130] Ernesto Galarza was an organizer for the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) who commuted from his home in San Jose to Salinas and Watsonville to organize farm workers.[131] Skeptical of the Bracero Program from its inception, Galarza became an ardent critic of the program at congressional hearings in the 1950s. For Galarza, "…unionization was futile while the Bracero Program remained." [132] Galarza wanted to expose the abuses of the Bracero Program in order to establish a sound union for farm workers. He assisted in establishing a local branch office of the National Farm Labor Union (NFLU) in Salinas during the 1950s.

Often working out of the Labor Temple on Pajaro Street in Salinas, Galarza documented the labor that braceros performed, kept copious notes on their daily tasks and pay stubs, and spoke on their behalf.[133] He interviewed workers and documented abuses they had witnessed. Galarza undertook to simultaneously destroy the alliance between growers and government bureaucrats, and to shake organized labor out of its complacency. Galarza wanted to protect the agricultural jobs for domestic workers, including Mexican Americans who were U.S. citizens. But his work became more and more difficult as growers were hiring not only braceros, but also former braceros

[130] Galarza kept detailed travel logs. Folder 6 and 7 Box 18. Ernesto Galarza Papers, Stanford University Department of Special Collections (hereafter Galarza Papers).

[131] Oral History Interview with Ernesto Galarza conducted by Anne Loftis. Anne Loftis Papers, M0306, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif. Box 1 Folder 10. "Galarza, Dr. Ernesto, interview, 5/7/74.

[132] "Statements and Reports 1949-1952." Folder 7 Box 3. Galarza Papers.

[133] Anne Loftis Papers. Box 3 Folder 1. "Introduction: Strangers to Our Fields," The National Farm Labor Union Fights the Bracero Program, by Anne Loftis; comments on Strangers, by U.N. Secretary. Southwest Labor History Conference, 1/27/75.

who had "skipped" their contracts or came back to the U.S. as undocumented workers.[134] These workers followed migration corridors previously established by braceros and took advantage of their social capital and their expansive network in Salinas and Watsonville without having to be contracted as braceros.

Once a bracero understood the places to find work and live, he could negotiate with multiple growers and higher wages for himself instead of being relegated to a contract tied to a single grower and a set wage.[135] For first-time migrants, however, the Bracero Program was an anchor and guide to establish networks and learn the trade. Galarza believed that the Mexican government was partially to blame for not doing enough to retain its citizens, but instead actually encouraged migration to the United States to stave off the poverty they were living in.[136] After spending close to two decades documenting and witnessing firsthand abuses of the program, and the collusions between growers and government officials, in 1962 Galarza left his job with AWOC as an organizer and began to implement his research to write a book about the Bracero Program abuses, *Merchants of Labor*.[137]

1964: The End of the Bracero Program

Galarza had neither large numbers of supporters, nor financial backing, nor friends with political clout. Rather, he was a trained academic who used his research and writing skills to expose the abuses of the Bracero Program. After thirty-two braceros were tragically killed in 1963 when a bus they were riding in collided with a

[134] Galarza Papers. Monterey County Correspondence. Box 45 Folder 10.
[135] Galarza Papers. Correspondence with Dr. Benjamin Yellen, documentation of farm worker abuses. Box 45 Folder 7.
[136] Galarza Papers. Braceros, living and working conditions, CA. 1949-1957. Box 65 Folder 2.
[137] Galarza Papers. "Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee 1959-1966." Folder 9 Box 3.

train near Chualar, California, Galarza was brought back to investigate Bracero Program abuses.[138] Galarza urged Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, then Chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labor, to investigate the Chualar accident.[139] Powell agreed and Galarza was appointed chief labor counsel. His report resulted in the publication *Tragedy at Chualar*.[140] Ernesto Galarza's work set the foundation for future organizing successes; just six years after the Chualar accident, Cesar Chavez arrived in Salinas to begin organizing vegetable workers.[141]

Scholars have attributed various theories for the end of the Bracero Program. Some say that the Chualar accident brought unwanted media attention to the program.[142] Others believe that a combination of Catholic clergy and social justice organizations brought it down, but that in general the program was no longer needed because growers could pick and choose from an endless supply of undocumented workers seeking jobs in the region.[143] Again, Bud Antle was at the forefront of the agricultural industry not only in technological innovation; he also understood labor

---

[138] Isidro Hernandez Tovar was a survivor of the Chualar accident; his friend from home, Sixto Lopez, perished in it. Galarza also corresponded with Salvador Flores Barragan another survivor of the accident. Interviews conducted by author with Flores Barragan and Hernández Tovar. Galarza Papers. Families of Chualar Bus Accident Victims, CA. 1963-1964. Box65 Folder 6.

[139] Galarza Papers. Box 16, Folder 7. Accidents on the job, Chualar Bus Accident, reports and legal documents,1963-1964.

[140] Ernesto Galarza, *Tragedy at Chualar: El Crucero De Las Treinta Y Dos Cruces* (Santa Barbara, CA: McNally & Loftin, West, 1977); Lori A. Flores, "A Town Full of Dead Mexicans: The Salinas Valley Bracero Tragedy of 1963, the End of the Bracero Program, and the Evolution of California's Chicano Movement," *Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (Summer 2013), 124-143.

[141] Galarza Papers. Correspondence with Congressman Adam Clayton Powell Folder. October 5, 1963. 1 Box 16.

[142] James L. Vizzard Papers, M0324, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif. Box 21 Folder 7. "Bishops' Committee for Migrant Workers , 1963-1966."

[143] See the work by Gina Marie Pitti, "To "Hear About God in Spanish": Ethnicity, Church, and Community Activism in the San Francisco Archdiocese's Mexican American Colonias, 1942-1965," PhD Dissertation (Stanford University, 2003); "A Town Full of Dead Mexicans: The Salinas Valley Bracero Tragedy of 1963, the End of the Bracero Program, and the Evolution of California's Chicano Movement," *Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (Summer 2013), 124-143.

policy well. Antle realized by the late 1950s that the Bracero Program was reaching its final renewal.[144] As a mixture of labor organizers like Ernesto Galarza, elected officials, clergy members, and activists were already lobbying for an end to the Bracero Program, Antle and other growers like Bill Ramsey at Mann Packing began to sponsor former braceros by assisting them with the bureaucracy entailed in establishing legal permanent residency in the United States.

One of the braceros I interviewed, Leon Ventura, was drafted into the U.S. Army once he gained his residency papers and decided to stay permanently in the United States after his employer sponsored him to establish permanent residence. His daughter, Ana Ventura Phares, would become Watsonville's first Mexican American mayor.

By 1961 Bud Antle became the first grower to agree to a labor contract with the Teamsters Union. Antle was also in the midst of allowing braceros to form their own union and he provided higher than prevailing wages to his workers. But he was scorned and purged out of the Grower-Shipper Association after signing the Teamsters contract.[145] By the end of the decade, Antle was working with 50 independent growers who were farming 60,000 acres, and employed 3,500 people, making the company the largest employer in Monterey County.[146]

---

[144] Interview with Frank Bardacke conducted by author. Watsonville, CA. July 31, 2011 and February 7, 2014.
[145] William H. Friedland, *Manufacturing Green Gold: Capital, Labor, and Technology in the Lettuce Industry* (Cambridge, 1983); Frank Bardacke, *Trampling out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two souls of the United Farm Workers* (New York, Verso, 2011).
[146] Dennis Jennie Verardo and Denzil Verardo, *The Salinas Valley: An Illustrated History* (Chatsworth, CA: Windsor Publications, 1989).

Bud Antle was at the forefront of the agricultural industry and not just in technological innovation, but he also understood labor policy well. Antle knew very well by the late 1950s that the Bracero Program was reaching its final renewal. As a mixture of labor organizers like Ernesto Galarza, elected officials, clergy members, and activists lobbied for and end to the Bracero Program. Growers like Bud Antle and Bill Ramsey at Mann Packing continued to sponsor former braceros and establishing legal permanent residency.

From Braceros to Mexican Americans: Building A More Organized and Visible Civil Rights Movement

Mexican Americans who settled in Salinas faced a number of incidents of racial discrimination in their new neighborhoods. Mexican Americans witnessed high percentages of discrimination in housing, hiring, and access to proper schooling. As the percentage of population increased, Mexican Americans began to organize themselves. Returning veterans of World War II and later, the Korean War, came back to Salinas and Watsonville with new skills and many of those who had worked in the fields now sought alternative work.

One of the first Mexican American civil rights organizations established in the Monterey Bay region was formed to combat ethnic discrimination. Labor and civil rights organizers Fred Ross and Saul Alinsky founded a Salinas Valley chapter of the Community Service Organization (CSO) in 1954.[147] Like Ernesto Galarza, Ross made numerous visits to Salinas and the surrounding communities to organize Mexican

[147] "CSO in Soledad." Box 6 Folder 4. Fred Ross Papers, M0812, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.

Americans.[148] The CSO also focused on important issues such as citizenship drives, voter registration, and neighborhood improvement, but no documented legal action in advocating for civil rights was taken.[149]

But while the CSO's ideology might have been successful in organizing Mexican Americans in cities with large, established Mexican American populations, like San Jose and Los Angeles, it simply did not resonate with a rural/suburban population and a growing immigrant populace in the Salinas Valley.



Figure 17. Members of the Salinas Valley Community Service Organization with Fred Ross and Saul Alinsky at the founding convention in Pacific Grove, California. March 23, 1954.[150] Courtesy of *The Salinas Californian*.

Mexican American veterans from the region were also active in civil rights advocacy. Among them were Albert Oliverez and his two brothers, Peter and Manuel,

[148] "CSO Correspondence with Cesar Chavez." Ross Papers. Box 43 Folder 16.
[149] On the CSO, see Stephen J. Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race, and Mexican Americans* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Lori A. Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farm Worker Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).
[150] *The Salinas Californian*, January 25, 1954.

Salinas Valley farm workers who had been drafted during the Korean War in the early 1950s. Albert served in the U.S. Army from 1951 to 1954 and received a Silver Star, two Bronze Stars, a Purple Heart, the United Nations Medal, and the Combat Infantryman's medal, as well as a combat field commission as a lieutenant. Upon their return from the war as decorated heroes, the brothers left the agricultural fields for good and became politically active in the region.[151] Together they founded a *Viva Kennedy* chapter in 1960[152] and Albert also founded the Tri-County Mexican American Unity Organization. Civil rights leader Bert Corona mentored Manuel Oliverez, who founded a chapter of the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) in the early 1960s.[153] The Oliverez brothers also became heavily involved with establishing anti-poverty program agencies and providing social service outreach to the Mexican American community in the region.[154] Individuals like the Oliverez brothers, as well as these organizations overall, established a solid foundation for future activism in the region, but their efforts concentrated on Mexican Americans and they failed to fully incorporate a growing Mexican immigrant population.

Conclusion

The Salinas/Watsonville Mexican American community in the 1960s was just a generation removed from the fields. As children, they might have attended school

---

[151] Henry A. J. Ramos, *The American GI Forum: In Pursuit of the Dream, 1948-1983* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1998).
[152] Interview with Dr. Juan Oliverez, by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez. Salinas, California, June 3, 2015.
[153] MAPA and La Raza Unida Party, A Program for Chicano Political Action for the 1970s. Box 1 Folder 17. Bert N. Corona Papers , M0248, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, CA; Mario Garcia, *Memories of Chicano History: The Life and Narrative of Bert Corona* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).
[154] Juan Oliverez Interview conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez.

most of the day, but then headed to a strawberry field for the remainder of the afternoon into the evening to assist their family who had been picking the entire day. They also continued to see the arrival of immigrants from Mexico, as well as domestic migrants from Texas and elsewhere in the southwest. Many Mexican Americans had a difficult time adapting to or navigating a hostile region that was always at odds with Mexicans maintaining their Mexican heritage, including repeated discrimination in the workplace. For some, there was pressure to assimilate at school, where Anglo teachers too often Anglicized student names. A Mexican American called Juan by his parents could become John; at home parents were alienated by their children's refusal to learn Spanish.

The second generation of Mexican Americans grew up with very few Mexican American role models in non-agricultural careers. Similarly they also endured under extreme pressure to assimilate into a predominantly white culture. Yet despite the "English only" pressures and xenophobia, assimilation did not mean an easier path to careers in various sectors. Mexican Americans faced high incidents of employment discrimination in the region. Even for the lucky ones who attained stable jobs, advancement was another obstacle.

In August of 1963 the population of the city of Salinas leapt from 31,000 to 50,000 when the city annexed the now predominantly Mexican American Alisal area located east of the city.[155] By 1960 the population in Watsonville had reached 13,290

[155] Dennis Jennie Verardo and Denzil Verardo, *The Salinas Valley: An Illustrated History* (Chatsworth, CA: Windsor Publications, 1989), 112-113.

with a significant number of people living in unincorporated Pajaro.[156] During the 1960s, a large number of Mexican Americans from Salinas and Watsonville were serving in the U.S. military, including Everett Alvarez, the first POW during the Vietnam War.[157] Many like Rick Losoya, lost their lives in Vietnam. During the same decade Mexican Americans who obtained college degrees returned to places like Salinas and Watsonville with a new sense of ethnic identity. Quite often this was a Chicano identity, which embraced their Mexican heritage but was separate from the traditional Mexican identity that their parents may have urged them to follow. Inspired by the social justice calling of the Chicano movement and by United Farm Workers activism in local labor strikes, Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the Monterey Bay area began to unite in political activism to counter the long history of racial discrimination in the region.[158]

Students who became involved in the Chicano movement activism of the 1960s began to organize around civil rights causes, including the labor injustices faced by many local farm workers. These individuals knew all too well what it was

---

[156] The Decennial U.S. Census of Watsonville, CA.
[157] Everett Alvarez and Anthony Pitch, *Chained Eagle* (New York: D.I. Fine, 1989), 25.
[158] On the Chicano movement see David Montejano, *Chicano Politics and Society In the Late Twentieth Century* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999); Mario Garcia, *The Chicano Movement: Perspectives From the Twenty-First Century* (New York; Rutledge, 2014); George Mariscal, *Aztlán and Viet Nam: Chicano and Chicana Experiences of the War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Lisa Magaña, *Mexican Americans and the Politics of Diversity: Querer Es Poder*! (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2005); Armando Navarro, *La Raza Unida Party: A Chicano Challenge to the U.S. Two-Party Dictatorship* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000); *The Cristal Experiment: A Chicano Struggle for Community Control* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998); *Mexicano Political Experience in Occupied Aztlan: Struggles and Change* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2005); Armando Navarro and Mario C Compean, *Mexican American Youth Organization: Avant-Garde of the Chicano Movement in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995).

like to work doing the arduous labor of the fields. Once Cesar Chavez arrived in Salinas and Watsonville these former farm workers, students, and an immigrant workforce would unite to organize under the social justice calling of the Chicano movement. By late August 1970, Cesar Chavez made one of his first public visits to rally local farm workers who were ready to walk out of their jobs and a Mexican American second generation including a multi-ethnic group of activists who were energized to organize farm workers in the region and demand better treatment, higher wages, and a number of environmental protections like the use of pesticides.

Chapter Two examines how these individuals went from working in the fields and migrating with their families from other states to becoming leaders in the farm worker movement while also successfully organizing an immigrant population to demand labor and civil rights. Yet it was an uphill battle as the United Farm Workers union had to compete with labor contractors, the arrival of large corporate landholders like Dole, and older more established companies like Bud Antle who often paid and treated their workforce better than the UFW cared to admit. Ultimately, a multiplicity of energized civil rights activists would work together to transform the political landscape of the region. In particular, the 1970 lettuce strike and the work of Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers would draw attention to the farm workers in the larger Monterey Bay area and inspire a generation of organizers and civil rights activists to become more aware of the injustices in the region and do something about them.

By the 1980s changing federal government economic policies would be having a direct impact on Watsonville. As the town's elite sold their companies to large transnational conglomerates boasting billion-dollar sales, the entire region transformed with the global economy. It was not long before decisions about labor were mostly made from outside of the region. In contrast to previous labor upheaval in the region, however, the immigrant population this time could depend on a Mexican American population and other supporters to contest the agricultural elite.

CHAPTER TWO: FROM FARM WORKERS TO POLITICAL ACTIVISTS: ORGANIZING *LECHUGEROS* DURING THE 1970 SALINAS UFW VEGETABLE STRIKE, 1970–1984

> The Union's survival, its very existence, sent out a signal to all Hispanics that we were fighting for our dignity. That we were challenging and overcoming injustices, that we were empowering the least educated among us, the poorest among us. The message was clear: if it could happen in the fields, it could happen anywhere; in the cities, in the courts, in the city councils, in the state legislatures, I didn't really appreciate it at the time, but the coming of our union signaled the start of great changes among Hispanics that are only beginning to be seen. Within thirty years the great cities of California would be run by farm workers, their children, and grandchildren.
>
> —Cesar Chavez in a speech to the Commonwealth Club of California, November 9, 1984[159]

> I don't know what you want here, Cesar, but my boys are very happy with us. You stop right now, they are not boys, they are men. I hope I don't ever hear you calling them boys again. You treat them like men, they are not your boys and you treat them like men.
>
> —Roberto Garcia, quoting Cesar Chavez [160]

On December 4, 1970, United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC) president Cesar Chavez was arrested and booked into the Monterey County Jail in Salinas, California.[161] Chavez had ignored a legal directive from Judge Gordon Campbell to call off the UFWOC's strike against Bud Antle Inc., then the largest lettuce grower in the world.[162] The Salinas-based company employed over 1,500 predominantly Mexican and Mexican American farm workers. In defying the

[159] Speech to the Commonwealth Club of California in San Francisco, CA. November 9, 1984. Hoover Institution Library. Box 500, Folder 16. Stanford, CA.
[160] Interview with Roberto Garcia conducted by author. August 9, 2016. Salinas, CA. Garcia a native of Salinas became a close confidant of Cesar Chavez and personal bodyguard from 1970 to 1982.
[161] The United Farm Workers Organizing Committee went through multiple name changes and eventually was known as the United Farm Workers or UFW. I use UFWOC during the time period of the grape and lettuce strikes and UFW interchangeably as I write about its longer history.
[162] Steven V. Roberts, "Chavez Is Jailed in Lettuce Strike: Held in Contempt, He Defies Order to Halt Boycott," *The New York Times*, December 5, 1970.

judge's order, and subsequently getting arrested for doing so, Cesar Chavez drew national attention to the Salinas Valley, one of the most productive agricultural regions in the world.

Chavez's stay in jail—and the events that led to his arrest—would magnify larger civil rights and political issues facing the growing Mexican and Mexican American population in the region. The 1970 vegetable strike would also inspire them to advocate for larger civil rights issues.[163] For the UFW, it was a moment of reckoning: Was it a labor union? Or was it something much larger?

The 1970 lettuce strike is a key organizing moment in the history of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the Monterey Bay area. Former Braceros were galvanized and connected to rising farm worker movement leaders in the UFW. Yet even though the 1970 lettuce strike is seen as a success, Cesar Chavez and the UFW struggled in the Monterey Bay area for a few major reasons: 1) Antle *lechugeros* (lettuce workers) were proud and loyal to the company and were esteemed for their labor skills in the community and drew on a rich social network in their activism; 2) The UFW hesitated to organize the growing undocumented workforce; and 3) The UFW's union halls were disorganized. In spite of these obstacles in labor organizing, former farm

[163] On the UFW, see Marshall Ganz, *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Frank Bardacke, *Trampling Out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers* (London: Verso, 2011); Matt García, *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Miriam Pawel, *The Union of Their Dreams: Power, Hope, and Struggle in Cesar Chavez's Farm Worker Movement* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009); and *The Crusades of Cesar Chavez: A Biography*. 2014; Lori Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants and the Farm worker Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

workers learned from the 1970 strike and are empowered to do more. Leaders in the region such as Cresencio Padilla strongly believed that the community needed a civil rights organization.

From Lechugeros to Organizers: The 1970 Lettuce Strike

For the local Mexican and Mexican American community the UFW motivated and inspired them do something about the poverty they lived in. The UFW provided an opportunity to organize and seek employment out of the fields. Its larger message of social justice resonated with both the Mexican and Mexican American population. For many Mexican Americans who had served their country during the Vietnam War just a few years before, working in the fields was honorable, but not a job that people expected to be doing when they returned from war. For instance, this was the perspective espoused by Tomas Alejo, Jr., whose father was a former bracero who then became a UFW leader. For other Mexican Americans, the UFW-led labor movement signified an era that brought them into dialogue with other civil rights organizations like the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA), and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), and they networked and mobilized the population to implement the most effective political strategies for attaining full citizenship rights.[164]

[164] CRLA recruited young attorneys from some of the top law schools across the country and has a historic record of alumni who went on to work with the UFW and fought for civil rights their entire careers. Among the notable alumni are former California Supreme Court Justice Cruz Reynoso, Luis Jaramillo, Jose Padilla, Bill Monning, Ana Caballero, Juan Uranga, Ruben Pizarro, and Luis Alejo. Jerry Cohen eventually left CRLA to join the UFW and founded their legal department. See Jerry Cohen, "Gringo Justice: The United Farm workers Union, 1967-1981," *Farm worker Union*

During and after the strike, Mexican Americans began to question the lack of affordable housing, and not just for farm workers; they began to question abuses by the police and by the U.S. Border Patrol, a federal agency with a satellite station in Salinas responsible for deporting the undocumented population.[165] While *La Migra* (the Border Patrol) garnered fear from the local populace of Mexican workers who were undocumented, those workers understood that their employers were in league with the Border Patrol and they were afraid of another organization even more—the UFW.[166] Mexicans and Mexican Americans also began to question why they had no political representation on school boards or city councils, and at the county, state, and federal level. The 1970 strike in the Salinas Valley was the catalyst for a Mexican and Mexican American civil rights movement in a rural suburban community that would continue through the 1970s and 1980s. It galvanized the community to become politically engaged and demand equal representation in local politics.

This chapter analyzes the multiplicity of actors, politics, and factions that played out during and after the 1970 vegetable strike. They lingered and resulted in electoral campaigns that would change the political makeup of the Monterey Bay area. It was an array of organizers and organizations, including growers that were in negotiation with the UFW about the labor demographic shifts taking place that

---

Documentation Project (February 2008), 8-9; Jennifer Gordon, "Law, Layers, and Labor: The United Farm Workers' Legal Strategy in the 1960s and 1970s and the Role of Law in Union Organizing Today," *University of Pennsylvania Journal of Labor and Employment Law* (Vol. 8, no. 1), December 2, 2005, 8-11.

[165] "Farm Union Halts 'Salad Bowl Work,'" *The New York Times*, 25 August 1970.

[166] Frank Bardacke, *Trampling Out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers* (London: Verso, 2011), 490-495; Kent Wong, "United Farm Workers (UFW) Movement: Philip Vera Cruz, Unsung Hero," *Advancing Justice. UCLA Labor Center. Asian American Studies Center* (Los Angeles, UCLA AASC, 2009), 8.

changed the region forever. The setting and the tension that played out as a result of the strike, boycott, and Cesar Chavez's time in jail took place at an all-important time in the Chicano movement.[167] The previous historiography has largely excluded much of this important and complex history. This chapter focuses not only on the UFW but also on an overlooked region. It shows not only how Mexicans and Mexicans Americans struggled for labor rights, but also how important civil rights advances were made possible with the arrival of the UFW in the Salinas Valley.

Chicano movement activists mobilized communities across California and the Southwest to unite under ethnic solidarity, including in the Monterey Bay area. This validated how Mexicans and Mexican Americans struggled for civil rights and the ideals of the Chicano movement, but also created political factions in the region. Missing from much of the previous literature on the UFW is how the 1970 labor strike would spawn the beginning of a more visible Mexican and Mexican American political activism. For example, the research by Lori Flores on Chicano activism ends in 1970.[168] Specifically Mexicans and Mexican Americans sought greater electoral representation in the Monterey Bay area. At the forefront was support for the UFW and farm worker issues, but at the time of the strike, the Mexican and Mexican

---

[167] On the Chicano movement, Zaragosa Vargas *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Ernesto, Chávez, "Mi Raza Primero!" (My People First!): *Nationalism, Identity, and Insurgency In the Chicano movement In Los Angeles, 1966-1978* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Lorena Oropeza. *Raza Sí!, Guerra No!: Chicano Protest and Patriotism During the Viet Nam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Cynthia Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, Or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement (*Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009); Max Krochmal, *Blue Texas: The Making of a Multiracial Democratic Coalition in the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill; UNC Press, 2016).
[168] Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming,* 208.

American population of the region had no political representation and no Mexican American leader who held office to bridge the community over looming tensions in the region.

Because of this lack of Mexican American leadership in Salinas, Catholic clergy from out of the area headed to Salinas to lead negotiations among Bud Antle Inc., the Teamsters Union (with whom Bud Antle had signed a contract back in 1961), and UFWOC during the 1970 strike.[169] The events that proceeded toward Cesar Chavez's arrest also drew attention to a historically polarized Mexican immigrant workforce that had rapidly replaced a domestic agricultural workforce in the fields.[170] But not all Mexican immigrant workers or Mexican Americans rushed to

---

[169] See Dick Meister, "The Teamsters Move In," *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, (1970), 1-8.

[170] On California agricultural history see, Matt Garcia, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus In the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement* (Berkeley; University of California, 2012); Gilbert C. Gonzalez*, Guest Workers or Colonized Labor?: Mexican Labor Migration to the United States*, 2nd edition (Boulder, Paradigm Publishers, 2013); Juan Gómez-Quiñones, *Mexican American Labor, 1790-1990* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), 153-176; Ronald L. Mize and Alicia C.S. Swords, *Consuming Mexican Labor: From the Bracero Program to NAFTA* (North York, Ont.: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Edwin B. Almirol, *Ethnic* Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1939); *Brothers Under the Skin* (Boston, Little, Brown, and Company, 1951); Don Mitchell, *The Lie of the Land: Migrant Workers and the California Landscape* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Kelly Lytle Hernandez, "Mexican Immigration to the United States," *OAH Magazine of History*, Vol. 23, No. 4, *North American Migrations* (Oct., 2009), 25-29; Evelyn Nakano Glenn. *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002); Gilbert G. Gonzalez, *Mexican Consuls and Labor Organizing: Imperial Politics in the American Southwest* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999); Mario Garcia, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women*, *Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque, 1987); Tomas Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley, 1994); Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Frank J. Barajas, *Curious Unions: Mexican American Workers and Resistance in Oxnard, California, 1898-1961* (Omaha; University of Nebraska, 2012); Ana Rosas, *Abrazando El Espiritu: Bracero Families Confront the U.S.-Mexico Border* (Berkeley; University of California, 2014).

aid the UFW and Chavez, Many instead sought to focus their energy on political campaigns and legal work in the region.

While many Mexicans and Mexican Americans rushed to support Cesar Chavez during the strike, others, such as lawyers with CRLA, focused on civil rights issues, which they deemed even more imperative to make any kind of progress. [171] The UFW united a population in need of leadership, but factions quickly evolved during the labor strike, including supporters of Bud Antle Inc., as well as Mexican immigrants who viewed the UFW with distrust.[172] For immigrants who did not work *con papeles* (with legal papers) the union not only did not address their civil rights, but also made their lives in the region difficult as many were deported.[173] By 1970 the UFW had developed a reputation of reporting undocumented workers to immigration or Border Patrol officials, and notifying the Social Security Administration of workers who worked with invalid Social Security numbers.

The Lettuce Curtain: *La Barendo*, *Chavistas*, and the Grower Elite

Over the past century, lettuce grown in the Monterey Bay area has reached every continent of the world.[174] For many years, it was sold in large containers, boxes, and bags with beautiful logos and artwork representing California and the Monterey Bay Area, such as logos that read, "Sunny Shores," or bright, colorful artwork depicting majestic Pacific Ocean views. The people on many of the

[171] Interview with Roberto Garcia conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez. August 9, 2016. Salinas, California.
[172] Kent Wong, "United Farm Workers (UFW) Movement: Philip Vera Cruz, Unsung Hero," *Advancing Justice* (Los Angeles, UCLA AASC, 2009), 8.
[173] Interview with Maria Rodriguez by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, Salinas, CA, March 11, 2015.
[174] Christopher Henke, *Cultivating Science, Harvesting Power: Science and Industrial Agriculture in California* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 3-11.

containers are white, with blonde hair and blue eyes, and often smiling. The colors on each logo are vibrant and represent the beauty of the region. But by the 1970s, farm workers in the Monterey Bay region were far from being blonde and blue-eyed; rather, the Monterey Bay's agricultural workforce was largely Mexican. What the logos did not show people around the world who purchase the produce was the inequality that existed in the Monterey Bay area, or the conditions in which the workers who picked the lettuce actually lived. The racial, ethnic, and class divides that existed in the Monterey Bay area remained absent from any marketing of vegetables. Agricultural companies benefited greatly from the Mexican labor force, and the evidence of their exploitation was evident in housing throughout the region, especially in and near the cities of Watsonville and Salinas. [175]

Housing Conditions for Farm Workers

In the 1960s if you drove around the Monterey Bay region you would surely appreciate the beauty of the Monterey Peninsula and the Salinas Valley, but you also would witness the contrast between where the farm workers live against the homes of the growers, owners, and managers. While the term *lettuce curtain* has taken on new meanings through the years, it started as the best way to describe this dramatic divide.

For the most part, the growers and upper management working for agricultural companies lived in the outskirts of the Salinas Valley, in the prestigious neighborhoods often described in John Steinbeck novels like *The Pastures of*

[175] Frank Bardacke *Good Liberals and Great Blue Herons: Land, Labor and Politics in the Pajaro Valley* (Santa Cruz: Center for Political Ecology, 1994); Lori A. Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farm worker Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

Heaven.[176] Perhaps the logos represented their housing communities in Corral de Tierra, San Benancio, Toro Park, Pasadera, and River Road, neighborhoods in the foothills just outside of Salinas with majestic views of the rich farmlands. In contrast, farm workers lived in rundown apartments on the east side of Salinas in one of the most densely populated areas in the United States.[177] Hebron Heights was one neighborhood where Mexican farm workers piled into one- and two-bedroom apartments, or lived in old, rundown mobile home parks. Some families lived in former bracero labor camps. Nuclear families often lived with grandparents, cousins, and extended kin from their communities in Mexico. Housing was expensive and wages were low. With no political representation on the city councils, county board of supervisors, or in Congress, complaints about lack of affordable housing for the agricultural workforce were never addressed.

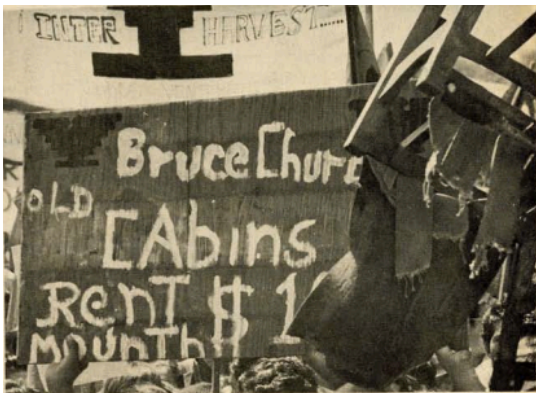


Figure 18. Protesting the high rent at the Bruce Church labor camp. Church was and still is one of the richest growers in the Salinas Valley. Courtesy of *El Malcriado*.

[176] Susan Shillinglaw, and Nancy Burnett, *A Journey into Steinbeck's California* (Berkeley: Roaring Forties Press, 2011).
[177] Alina Tugend, "The Least Affordable Place to Live? Try Salinas," *The New York Times*, May 7, 2006.

Growers in the Monterey Bay area had prevented any successful labor organizing from ever impinging on their large profits and way of life. For the workers, living in the Monterey Bay area meant hardly ever seeing the region's beauty that they saw on the packing boxes they worked with every day. Mexican American families lived in the area for years without ever visiting the most pristine oceanic views in the world, like Big Sur, just a few miles from their homes.[178] No signs existed that read "No Mexicans allowed" and no roadblocks kept the workers and their families from visiting the beaches, or living in nicer neighborhoods. Inequality was far more insidious and structural than that—they simply did not earn enough money and did not have the leisure time to visit the local paradise that visitors from around the world flocked to see.

[178] On Mexican American history, see George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); David Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

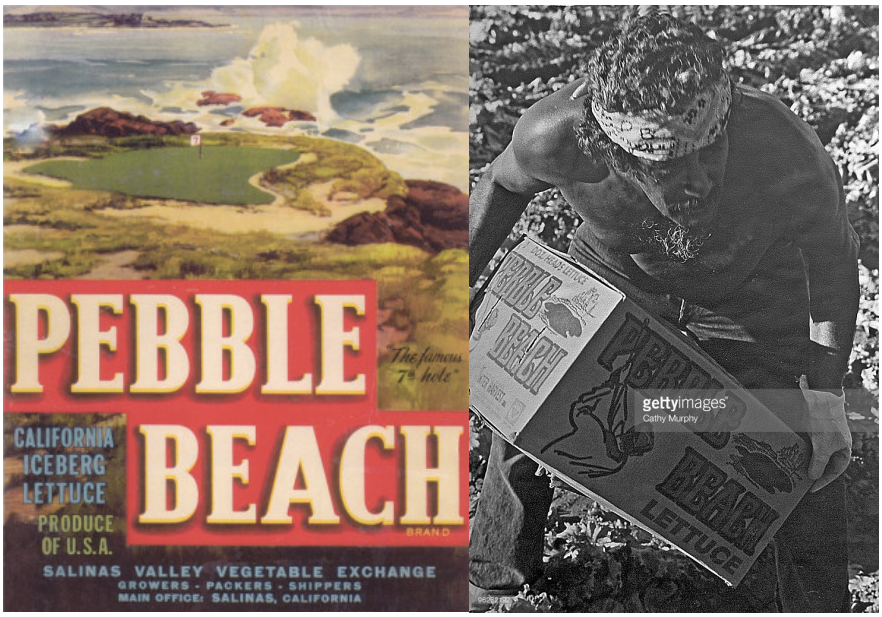


Figure 19. A company promotes its iceberg lettuce and showcases the region where it is grown. The picture showcases the beauty of the par-three seventh hole at Pebble Beach, considered one of the most beautiful views in the world by golfing aficionados. On the right, a Mexican American *lechugero* packs and loads lettuce onto a truck. The photograph depicts the realities of the backbreaking work in contrast to an elite population who spent leisure time golfing and vacationing at Pebble Beach.

The Workforce and Working for Bud Antle (*La Barendo)*

Bud Antle Inc., or *La Barendo* as Mexicanos referred to it, was by August 1970 one of the most respected and sought-out places to seek employment for immigrant Mexicanos.[179] In fact, just nine years before, on May 1, 1961, Bud Antle became the first Salinas Valley grower to sign a union contract, signing with the Teamsters Union to organize its harvest crews—three years before the end of the

[179] Interview with Roberto Garcia by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez. Salinas, CA, August 12, 2016. Interview with Leon Ventura conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, Watsonville, CA, March 15, 2015. Interview with German Rodriguez conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez. Salinas, CA, March 15, 2016.

Bracero Program.[180] That action resulted in Antle's expulsion from the Grower-Shipper Association, a powerful Salinas Valley organization that had united since 1930 to keep unions from organizing in the agricultural fields of the Salinas Valley. Its members had agreed never to negotiate with or appease labor unions, and they viewed Bud Antle's decision as a betrayal to the organization.

In many ways, however, Bud Antle and his son Bob understood better than the Grower-Shipper Association and Cesar Chavez that the demographics of the region's workforce were changing from predominantly bracero and Mexican American to an undocumented Mexicano workforce.[181] Antle understood that it was good business to retain and reward the workers he had trained and who had worked for his company year after year. These workers were not only highly skilled, but loyal and dependable people who migrated or followed *la corrida* (the migrant route) from Salinas, to Huron, to Oxnard, and finally to Yuma, Arizona, all during a twelve-month period. For immigrant workers from Mexico these were highly sought-out jobs that paid well; women and men were willing to make the sacrifices that came with the jobs.

---

[180] William H. Friedland, *Manufacturing Green Gold: Capital, Labor, and Technology in the Lettuce Industry* (Cambridge, 1983), 79-83.
[181] Frank Bardacke, *Trampling out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers* (New York, Verso, 2011).

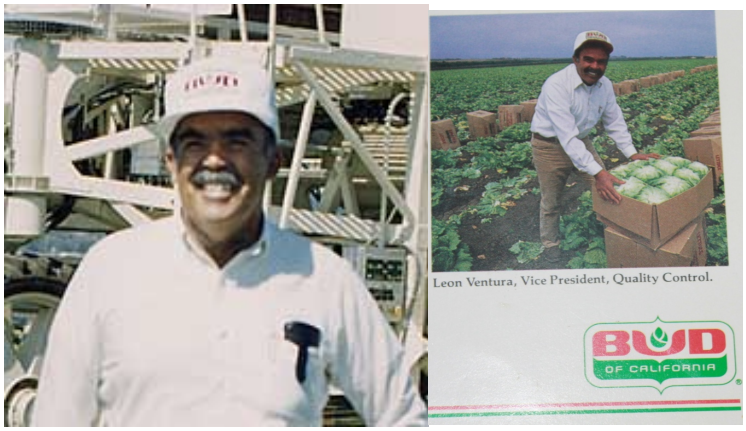


Figure 20. Leon Ventura started as a bracero at Bud Antle and rose to become a company vice president. Courtesy of Leon Ventura**.**

Before the end of the Bracero Program in 1964, Antle sponsored hundreds of his former braceros to apply for their *micas* (legal residency cards) so they could remain in the U.S; many like Leon Ventura took advantage, and continued with the company for decades.[182] Ventura arrived in the Monterey Bay area as a contracted bracero, was sponsored by Bud Antle to stay and work, but was drafted into the U.S. Army in the late 1950s. Ventura went back to work for Bud Antle as a supervisor and worked through the lettuce strike of 1970. He stayed there for over forty years. His three daughters attended Berkeley, Princeton, and Santa Clara University. His eldest, Ana became an attorney with CRLA and later became the first Mexican American mayor of Watsonville.[183]

Not all bracero children who migrated as adults had the same opportunity to receive an education. For most, their only option was to enter the agricultural

[182] William H. Friedland, *Manufacturing Green Gold: Capital, Labor, and Technology in the Lettuce Industry*, (Cambridge, 1983). Other growers such as Bill Ramsey from Mann packing did the same.
[183] Interview with Leon Ventura and Ana Ventura Phares conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez. Watsonville, CA, March 15, 2015.

industry. For many immigrant farm workers, working for *La Barrendo* was the equivalent of working at a reputable manufacturing job like the Ford Motor Company's San Jose Assembly Plant.[184] Family members usually recruited the workers who were hired at Bud Antle.

Bud Antle (*La Barendo)* The Grower Elite

The Antle family had an all-American narrative of having pulled themselves out of the fields as field hands.[185] They were only a generation removed from the fields themselves, but had benefited greatly from the Bracero Program.

Control over who could do the hiring was something the Bud Antle Company was not willing to give up. Taking on Cesar Chavez, whose family had also been displaced at the beginning of the Depression, was something they were not afraid to do and they would not allow a militant Mexican American waving around red flags to disrupt their organization and workforce. For the Antles, the UFW was too militant. Furthermore, signing with the Teamsters, the largest labor union at the time, almost ten years before the UFW arrived in the region, they had become the first California grower to sign a union contract covering field workers.[186]

UFWOC Organizers

When UFWOC organizers including Cesar Chavez and UFWOC co-founder and vice president Dolores Huerta arrived in Salinas in 1970, they found a local community that was eager to draw attention to civil rights issues facing farm workers.

---

[184] Interview with German Rodriguez conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, Salinas, CA, March 15, 2016.
[185] Bud Antle and United Farm Workers," San Francisco State Labor Archives. San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive, December 11, 1970.
[186] "Lester V. Antle, 58, Calif. Lettuce Grower," *The Washington Post*, August 4, 1972.

By 1970 Cesar Chavez had gained international notoriety for organizing and drawing attention to farm labor conditions. Over the previous five years he had been organizing farm workers in Delano, California, and on the weekend of July 4, 1969 Chavez was portrayed on the front cover of *Time* Magazine with the headline "The Grapes of Wrath."[187] Chavez's organizing in Delano had garnered him support across ethnic lines, and attracted a white college student population from across the country, some of whom had experience organizing for civil rights with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Marshall Ganz was one of these students. Originally from Bakersfield, California, center of another rich agricultural region, while a student at Harvard he was inspired by the civil rights movement and became involved with SNCC. In the summer of 1964, Ganz worked on organizing voter registration drives in the South and soon became a successful organizer with SNCC[188]

Ganz went home to Bakersfield that year and was introduced to Cesar Chavez by Leroy Chatfield, his high school friend who was working closely with Chavez.[189] Once he heard Cesar Chavez speak at the local Filipino Hall in Delano, Ganz realized that an important civil rights movement was taking place in his hometown. Ganz was so inspired by Chavez and the UFW's mission to organize farm workers that he dropped out of Harvard and joined the UFW efforts in 1966.[190] Marshall Ganz proved

---

[187] "The Grapes of Wrath, 1969: Mexican Americans on the March," *Time Magazine*, July 4, 1969.
[188] Marshall Ganz, *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)
[189] Oral history interview with Marshall Ganz conducted by Leroy Chatfield. 2009. https://libraries.ucsd.edu/farm workermovement/medias/oral-history/.
[190] Frank Bardacke, *Trampling Out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers*. (London: Verso, 2011), 490-495. On Black Power, see Stokely, Carmichael, and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (1967).

to be an important UFW organizer. He rose quickly to be one of Cesar Chavez's top lieutenants and sat on the UFW's Executive Board.[191] Although Ganz had no farm worker experience, he was a natural political strategist and organizer who understood through the teachings of his father, a rabbi, the importance of helping the least fortunate. Ganz led the 1970 Salinas lettuce strike and was a well liked and admired organizer among Mexican *lechugeros* in the Monterey Bay area.[192]

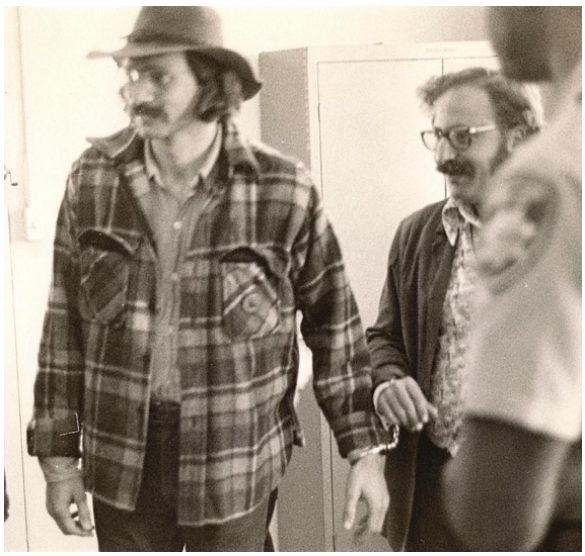


Figure 22. Sandy Nathan (left), a UFW attorney, and Marshall Ganz were handcuffed and taken to the U.S Border Patrol satellite station Salinas, CA. circa 1970s. Courtesy of Miriam Pawel.

[191] See Miriam Pawel, *The Union of Their Dreams: Power, Hope, and Struggle in Cesar Chavez's Farm Worker Movement* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009); *The Crusades of Cesar Chavez: A Biography* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014).
[192] Interview with Sabino Lopez conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, Center for Community Advocacy, Salinas, CA, December 14, 2014.



Figure 23. Marshall Ganz calling for a strike vote in Salinas during the vegetable strike of 1970. Ganz gained the respect and admiration of the predominantly Mexican immigrant workforce. Photo by Bob Fitch. Courtesy of Stanford University Libraries.

Ganz was the lead public relations representative for the UFW while Cesar Chavez was in jail. Ganz told reporters from a San Francisco television station that "the way you get a job is to pay a guy off, give him a kickback, give him some tequila, and that's how you get a job, and that's how you keep a job." [193] Ganz was vividly describing some of the abuses that did in fact happen in the fields. Contrary to his hyperbole, though, most jobs were attained through a family network.[194] As someone attained a job as a *lechugero*, and overheard that the company needed more workers, the *lechugero* would recommend a brother or sister. For farm workers, sponsoring someone to learn the trade and develop the skills was risky, because it meant putting their reputations as dependable workers at stake. The family member was then vetted and prepared to show up to work where a foreman would decide

[193] Bud Antle and United Farm Workers." San Francisco State Labor Archives. San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive. December 11, 1970.
[194] Interviews with seasoned farm workers who described how they attained work included, Roberto Garcia, Sabino Lopez, Maria and German Rodriguez and a number of former braceros who described a social network through family members. For more on social capital see Douglas S. Massey, *Categorically Unequal: The American Stratification System* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2007).

whether the company would give the person an opportunity. Referring a family member to an employer was a risk farm workers were willing to take on. For Ganz, the role of the UFW was to centralize the hiring at local union halls where workers would have security and maintain dignity through a system of seniority instead of perceived nepotism and prevent employer abuses.

Vetted to Work at Bud Antle

Maria Rodriguez was an ambitious and motivated immigrant from Mexico eager to earn a lot of money, but she had no legal status to work in the United Sates.[195] However, getting a farm worker job in the 1970s, and showing proof of legal residency was not difficult to accomplish and growers were not strict about verifying legal status. Counterfeit resident alien cards and Social Security numbers were easily obtained on the black market for a minor cost and used to prove legal residency to employers. For Maria, her extended network helped her land a job with Bud Antle. Proving that she was a reputable worker and that she could endure the labor was a larger barrier than proving legal status.

---

[195] On gender, labor, and migration see Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 91, No. 5 (Dec., 1986), 1053-1075. See also Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), on the long history of wage earning women see Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983). On gendered migrations see, Jorge Durand and Douglas S. Massey, *Crossing the Border: Research from the Mexican Migration Project* (New York, NY; Russell Sage Foundation, 2004), Chapter 6, "Migration and Gender," 111-120, and Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Cambridge, Mass; Harvard University Press, 2002). Vicki Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987); Sarah J. Mahler and Patricia R. Pessar, "Transnational Migration Bringing Gender In," *Center for Migration Studies of New York*, IMR Vol. 37, No. 3 (Fall 2003), 812-846, Deborah Cohen, "From Peasant to Worker: Migration, Masculinity, and the Making of Mexican Workers in the US," *International Labor and Working Class History,* 2006, 81-103; Sonia Hernández, *Working Women Into the Borderlands* (College Station, Texas A&M University Press, 2014).

In the early 1970s, *lechugeros* were strong young Mexican males that personified Mexican masculinity. Cutting lettuce was considered a rigorous, fast-paced, highly skilled job monopolized by young Mexican men.[196] On any particular day a *lechuguero* will stoop and cut 2,000 to 5,000 pieces of lettuce, and package them. There are a number of decisions that cutting and packaging lettuce entails and those decisions have to be made in a matter of seconds. As Frank Bardacke described, "Any doubt about the skill of the men who do the job is cured forever by giving the work a try."[197] The *lechugero*s were considered among the elite farm workers in the region, with the exceptional physical stamina required for working long hours in the fields. As lettuce production increased in the Salinas Valley*, lechugeros* not only developed a reputation as valuable and respected agricultural workers, but also were in high demand. In fact, growers competed to hire the best.

Women who wanted to work in the lettuce fields, which garnered higher wages, had to start by packing broccoli or cauliflower. Maria was sent to the cauliflower fields where cutting and packaging was still highly skilled and difficult, but it was not solely "a man's job" like the lettuce fields. Unbeknownst to Maria, her subsequent work in the Salinas Valley had been engendered by the employers, men, and women who had worked in the region for decades.[198]

---

[196] Bruce Neuburger, *Lettuce Wars: Ten Years of Work and Struggle in the Fields of California* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2013), 25-40.
[197] Frank Bardacke, *Trampling Out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers* (New York: Verso, 2011), 352-354.
[198] Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002); Gilbert G. Gonzalez, *Mexican Consuls and Labor Organizing: Imperial Politics in the American Southwest* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999); Mario Garcia, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920* (New Haven:

Lechugeros, Brocoleros, Colifloreros



Figure 24. German Rodriguez a seasoned farm worker overlooking work in the cauliflower fields of the Salinas Valley. The son of a former bracero he was responsible for sponsoring migrants from his native town in Jalisco, Mexico.

Yale University Press, 1981); Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women*, *Cannery Lives: Mexican women, Unionization, and the California food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque, 1987). For more on Chicana history see Adelaida Del Castillo, ed. *Between Borders: Essays on Mexicana/Chicana History* (Encino, CA: 1990); Judith Sweeney, "Chicana History: A Review of the Literature," in Rosaura Sanchez and Rosa Martinez Cruz, eds., *Essays on La Mujer* (Los Angeles, 1977); Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (New York, 1989; Deena J. Gonzalez*, Refusing the Favor: The Spanish-Mexican Women of Santa Fe, 1820-1880* (New York, 1999); and Emma Perez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1999).



Figure 25. Farm workees sat in between rows to eat their meals. German Rodriguez during a lunch break with fellow workers. Most came from the same region in Jalisco like his sister Maria.



Figure 26. German Rodriguez, after a hard day toiling in the cauliflower fields of the Salinas Valley for the Bud Antle corporation. Thousands of packaged cauliflowers in the background. Courtesy of German Rodriguez.



Figure 27. Efrain Velazquez as a boxer (*cajero*) with Bud Antle Inc. Circa 1970s. Courtesy of MMA fighter Cain Velazquez.

Before ever setting foot in a field, Maria visited her brother German, a seasoned *lechugero* working for *La Barrendo,* for coaching about how to prepare for work.[199] Her brother wanted to make sure that she was appropriately dressed and had the right tools for cutting and packaging cauliflower. In this context, appropriate meant being dressed in work attire that could endure the climate and hazardous conditions in the fields. Individuals seeking work in the fields of the Salinas Valley often showed up in jeans, sneakers, and a jacket, not realizing that an investment in work attire was necessary before ever applying for a job.

An important detail to describe is that under her hat Maria wore a cloth veil that covered her entire face and neck; it was held together with bobby pins, leaving only a small opening for her to see. She used over thirty bobby pins to close the veil shut. The *pañoleta* (veil) would protect her from exposure to pesticides, long days in the sun, and even sexual harassment.[200] Men in the fields wore hats, and some men

[199] Interview with Maria Rodriguez conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, Salinas, CA, October 13, 2013.
[200] On gender in the workplace and women's dress attire see Ronald L. Mize and Alicia C.S. Swords, *Consuming Mexican Labor: From the Bracero Program to NAFTA* (North York, Ont.: University of

wore handkerchiefs long enough to cover their necks, but were left open instead of being closed with bobby pins like the colorful veils that women wore.[201] Maria also wore a sweatshirt and jeans; over her clothing she wore long yellow overalls that would protect her from rain and mud. Lastly over her shoes she wore black rubber boots, or *sobre-shoes* as the workers called them, to protect her from the mud, but to also allow her to maneuver as she walked long rows of cauliflower.

Aside from her proper clothing, the most important tool that she would be using was her cutting knife. According to Maria, company supervisors joked about workers who arrived without cutting knives, saying, "*ese llego a la guerra sin fusíl*" ("you went to war without your gun"). Her brother taught Maria how to properly use her tool. Doing so required practice in the living room before she ever set foot in a field. She first practiced with an unsharpened knife and worked her way to a cauliflower knife that was sharpened for about thirty minutes to an hour. Those knives could easily cut through skin and many farm workers ended up with severe wounds around their wrists and some accidentally sliced nerves. Knowing that the sharpness of a knife was critical to working fast and effectively, German Rodriguez developed the habit of leaving his knife in the freezer overnight in order to preserve

---

Toronto Press, 2011); Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Cambridge; Harvard University Press, 2002). Vicki Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987); Patricia Zavella, *Women's Work and Chicano Families: Cannery Workers of the Santa Clara Valley* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); Lori A. Flores, "An Unladylike Strike Fashionably Clothed: Mexicana and Anglo Women Garment Workers Against Tex-Son, 1959–1963," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 78, No. 3 (University of California Press); Patricia, Zavella, *I'm Neither Here nor There: Mexicans' Quotidian Struggles with Migration and Poverty*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

[201] Interview with Maria Rodriguez conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, Salinas, CA. October 13, 2013.

its sharpness for the following day at work.[202] The knives were extremely sharp in order to cut the cauliflower with one strike and then quickly package it. According to farm worker German Rodriguez, more important than a farm worker's lunch was making sure to retrieve the knife from the freezer before leaving for work.

On her first day at work, Rodriguez rushed to get dressed, prepared and bagged a lunch for the day, and headed to a bus stop where she was questioned about her skills by a company foreman. Upon her arrival to work, she found that there were more people than she expected already in line to be interviewed, but Rodriguez immediately stood out, because she was dressed appropriately for work in the fields. Arriving to work inappropriately dressed could result in not being hired. Wearing sneakers alone instead of boots would cause the shoes to be wedged in the mud. Her brother made sure she wore a proper brimmed cap with the company's large logo, *Bud of California*. Such a minor decision to wear the company's logo gave workers credibility, and would deflect questions about where she had worked before.

When she told the foreman that she had the necessary skills to perform the tasks he looked at her from head to her shoes, and as she held her cauliflower knife in one hand he asked, "Who sent you?" She replied, "My brother German." Since the foreman recognized the name because German was a seasoned *lechugero* with a sound reputation at work, he shrewdly—and immediately—hired her. For Maria, earning her first job in the cauliflower fields of Salinas was a success she attributed to

[202] Interview with German Rodriguez conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, Salinas, CA, March 11, 2015..

her brother German. But she brought a longer history of social capital with her. [203] Her father *Don* Lupe had been a bracero, and German and her other brothers had established a migration path and a sound social and economic network to ease her transition as an employee in agriculture.[204]

After many migrations, successes, and failures her family had established an extensive and elaborate migration network that stretched 2,000 miles from their hometowns in Jalisco to the Salinas Valley. Although Maria did not recognize it then, her father's previous migrations to the Salinas Valley as a contracted bracero alleviated the pain and suffering many men and their families had experienced when they migrated to the United States. Guest workers dealt with social and emotional issues when arriving in a foreign country, such as not being able to speak English, and doing some of the most exploitative work. However, for Maria it was her attire that distinguished her from the others, not the previous migrations by family members that set in motion future migrations. Maria explained that she was She also knew she was lucky that her foreman, Leon Ventura, who was a former bracero like her father, was patient with her having to take days to acquire the proper training and practice to learn the arduous work of cutting, bagging, and packaging cauliflower, all of which is done in less than six seconds per head.[205]

---

[203] See Douglas S. Massey's definition of social capital. "Social capital forms through family and community ties, strengthens from frequent contact and reciprocal exchange, and ultimately helps migrants surmount obstacles inherent in entering the United States and locating employment and housing there. Typically, it translates into direct financial assistance, housing, and information on border crossing, employment and housing" (248).
[204] Interview with former bracero Guadalupe Rodriguez, Salinas, CA, October 13, 2013.
[205] Packing was also racialized, when the Bud Antle Corporation took the packaging of the vegetables out of the sheds and had workers cut and package in the fields. The packing-shed jobs had been held

Workers with no labor union could be fired for not having acquired the skills necessary to do the work. Not all farm workers had the privileges Maria Rodriguez had which is partially why the UFW wanted to protect workers from being easily fired. But the hiring halls that the UFW advocated for could also lead to similar abuses by union bosses. Immigrant farm workers understood the pitfalls of a hiring hall and abuses by labor unions. Pete Maturino, a UFW organizer, noticed firsthand the kinds of abuses with UFW hiring halls:

> After a while the UFW offered me a position in the hiring hall, but it didn't work out. I saw too many things. People who were in charge were abusing the hiring hall system. For example, they were getting kickbacks. There was money being exchanged for favors, for jobs and stuff, so I said, I'm outta here.[206]

Undocumented farm workers like Maria understood that unions could also practice labor abuses and she knew very well that *la union de Chavez* reported undocumented workers to the U.S. Border Patrol. For these reasons, workers like Maria found it difficult to fully accept the ideas of the UFW and organizers who arrived in the fields to promote the benefits of a labor union.[207]

---

by white working class workers; when those jobs were eliminated, whites ridiculed and criticized the Mexican workers out in the fields who took on more work and responsibilities.

[206] Interview with Pete Maturino conducted by Gary Karnes, *Voices of Change*, 250-251.

[207] On the UFW reporting undocumented workers to the U.S. Border Patrol see David Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Frank Bardacke, *Trampling Out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers* (London: Verso, 2011), 490-495; Kent Wong, "United Farm Workers (UFW) Movement: Philip Vera Cruz, Unsung Hero," *Advancing Justice* (Los Angeles, UCLA AASC, 2009), 8.



Figure 28. A farm worker in the Salinas Valley broccoli fields. The attire has not changed much over the last forty years. Photograph by author.



Figure 29. Bob Antle (left) and his father Lester “Bud" Antle, Salinas, CA circa September 1970.

Mexican Immigrants and Citizenship Status: "They were not Cap-in-hand Guys"

When UFWOC struck twenty-seven of sixty growers in the Monterey Bay Area on August 24, 1970, over 6,000 farm workers stayed away from work.[208] Four days later the UFW dispatched over forty boycott organizers from Delano's Grape Boycott Committee to organize vegetable workers in the Monterey Bay region.[209] Marshall Ganz and fellow organizers immediately witnessed a difference in the political character of the *lechugeros* from the vineyard workers at Delano. Having succeeded in getting a UFW contract for farm workers in Delano, organizers were motivated to do the same in the Monterey Bay area. But the question remained—Would their strategies work up there?

The UFW organizers who came to the Monterey Bay area had no clear strategy about how to organize a diverse agricultural community that was experienced in agriculture, which included former braceros, migrants from Puerto Rico, Texas Mexicans (*Tejanos*), local Mexican Americans, blacks, and a poor white population that had lost organized jobs in the packing sheds as a result of Bud Antle's technological innovation with vacuum cooling in the 1950s.[210] [211]

The Monterey Bay area had a longer history of anti-union sentiment. The growers had a union of their own, the Grower-Shipper Association, comprising

---

[208] "Farm Union Halts 'Salad Bowl Work,'" *The New York Times*, 25 August 1970.
[209] *El Malcriado*: *The Voice of the Farm worker*, September 1, 1970, Delano, California.
[210] In the 1950s Bruce Church and Bud Antle invested in vacuum cooling and were successful in getting the lettuce to be packed and shipped directly from the fields. Lettuce no longer was shipped to a shed where a predominantly white work force packaged and prepared for cooling. The jobs were lost and ultimately whites blamed braceros or Mexicans in general for taking the jobs, not the technological innovation.
[211] "Clear Way for Farm Unionism," *The New York Times*, August 17, 1970.

almost all of the local growers and packing companies, which had banded together to fight off union organizing back in 1930. The region also had a large immigrant population, many of whom had been contracted to work as braceros but were now undocumented workers with no legal status. The farm workers of the Monterey Bay area also were much more radical than the UFW organizers had anticipated. In addition, the community was ethnically diverse, too. As UFW organizer Jessica Govea told Frank Bardacke:

> The Salinas workers were so much more confident than the Delano workers… They were clear about why they were going on strike, and what they wanted to change by going on strike, and they felt they had every right to do that. Some of that confidence reminded me very much of my father, who had come from Mexico as an immigrant. He had that kind of self-confidence. You know, my dad was not a cap-in-hand guy. And the Salinas people I met, I am using a broad brush, were the same. They were not cap-in-hand guys.[212]

For Jessica Govea, the Mexican immigrant work force of the Monterey Bay Area had significantly more *ganas* (desire) than U.S. citizen Mexican Americans.[213] Mexican immigrants had traveled thousands of miles to seek work in the United States, but Mexican Americans had citizenship, and schooling in the U.S. They were already on the way out of the fields and into agricultural management, sales jobs, political organizing, the law, and in general starting to go after jobs that historically they had been excluded from with government agencies and other organizations. They were no less aggressive or ambitious about organizing than the immigrants, but the issues at hand were different for each group.

---

[212] Frank Bardacke, *Trampling Out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers* (New York: Verso, 20011), 358-391.
[213] Interview with Jessica Govea conducted by Leroy Chatfield, *United Farm worker Movement Documentation Project,* UC San Diego Library. Part 2.

Mexicano immigrants took their jobs as their livelihood, as something they would be doing the rest of their lives.[214] For Mexican Americans, it was about getting jobs out of the fields and addressing larger civil rights issues that plagued their families, even with citizenship and schooling in the United States. In fact, many had fought in the U.S. military during World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, but when they returned to the Monterey Bay area they were still shunted to back-breaking field work.[215] For Mexican Americans it was about contesting a second-class citizenship, something they would have to do through legal means. For a new population in the fields it was about addressing wages and working conditions. But in many ways neither group intended to stay working in the fields, at least not stooped cutting, picking, and packing vegetables for very long.[216]

Local Salinas Valley resident and UFW organizer Pete Maturnino also witnessed firsthand the intra-ethnic dynamic in the region between Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans.

> You learn areas, geographies, commodities, and things like that, and you learn about people. These are all Mexicans! And not all Mexicans are the same! I mean, the lettuce workers coming out of Mexicali are very different from the homeowner out of Delano doing grapes. They are more family-oriented than the tough guy coming out of the lettuce fields—very different.[217]

---

[214] Jessica Govea interview. Box 38 audiocassettes 20-22. Frank Bardacke papers (M2014). Dept. of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.
[215] See the description given to Levy by Cesar Chavez about working in the agriculture fields after serving in the United States Navy, Jacques E. Levy, and Cesar Chavez. *Cesar Chavez: Autobiography of La Causa*. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 25-35.
[216] David Gutierrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) & Lori Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants and the Farm worker Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).
[217] Interview with Pete Maturino by Gary Karnes, *Voices of Change*, 250-251.



Figure 30. Left: Tomas Alejo served in the U.S. Army and after returning to Watsonville became a leading organizer with the UFW. Right: Alejo's father (former bracero) in hat behind Cesar Chavez, the senior Alejo became a local UFW Leader. Lessons about social justice were passed on to the Alejo children. Tomas Alejo's son, Luis Alejo, would go on to serve in the California legislature and was responsible for passing legislation to allow undocumented immigrants residing in California to apply for driver's licenses and secured an increase in the minimum wage for all California residents.[218]

The Vegetable Strike: August 1970 to December 1970

Cesar Chavez chose to attack one of the most powerful and respected agricultural companies in the region, Bud Antle. Among the many growers in the area, Bud Antle was perceived as one of the more labor-friendly employers. The predominantly Mexican immigrant work force was paid higher than average wages and employees had a medical plan. The *lechugeros* and other harvest workers were highly respected for their skills by co-workers, but also by their managers, who understood how valuable and not easily replaceable they were.

[218] *El Malcriado: The Voice of the Farm worker* May 29, 1974, 5

On July 29, 1970 Cesar Chavez was in Delano, California, signing the first union contract with sixteen grape growers in Delano.[219] The boycott on grapes had lasted nearly five years before the historic signing with growers that evening.[220] Yet, before the contracts were even signed, Cesar Chavez had dispatched his top UFW organizers to the Salinas Valley to picket a recent agreement signed by the Teamsters Union with vegetable-field workers. At a press conference in Delano, Chavez pledged to defeat the Teamsters Union, which had signed contracts with nearly thirty lettuce, carrot, celery, and strawberry growers in the Salinas Valley. Chavez said, "UFWOC is the union the workers prefer."[221]

The Teamsters Union

By mid-July more than 10,000 vegetable workers were on strike in five California counties: Monterey, San Benito, Santa Cruz, San Luis Obispo, and northern Santa Barbara.[222] The strike was in large part due to a jurisdictional dispute over who could represent field workers, the Teamsters or UFWOC. The farm workers had signed authorization cards to join UFWOC. While the workers demanded a strike, UFWOC granted growers a six-day moratorium on a strike and followed with a ten-day extension. When growers could not get the allegiance of their workers they began to intimidate the workers into signing union cards with the Teamsters. Several farm workers were subsequently dismissed from their jobs after failing to do so.

---

[219] Steven V. Roberts, "26 Grape Growers Sign Union Accord; Boycott Nears End," *The New York Times*, July 30, 1970.
[220] "Sweet Grapes." *The New York Times*. August 1, 1970.
[221] Bill Boyarsky, "Handshakes Seal Pact Ending Grape Boycott," *The Los Angeles Times*, July 30, 1970.
[222] Doug Willis, "Unions' Fight Perils Lettuce," *The Atlanta Constitution*, August 28, 1970.

On August 12, 1970 a caravan of Catholic priests with the Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on Farm Labor, led by Monsignor George Higgins, arrived in Salinas to negotiate the dispute. With their help, an agreement was carved out.[223] On one hand, the Teamsters would have jurisdictional authority to organize workers in canneries, frozen food processing plants, and warehouses as well as truck drivers.[224] On the other hand, UFWOC would have jurisdictional authority to organize workers in the vegetable fields who cut and packaged lettuce, cauliflower, broccoli, carrots, and celery, among other produce.[225] On August 21, the president of the Grower-Shipper Association, Herb Fleming, announced that the association had "negotiated proper and legal contracts with the Teamster union. They have assured us that they will honor these contracts, and we intend to do the same." For certain growers, it was not about the wages they paid their workers, as the difference they argued was not much. Instead, growers such as Tom Bengard said, "…I don't think it's the money. … It's more a civil rights thing than anything else." Growers argued that they were paying unorganized workers $1.75 an hour with incentives. However, UFWOC argued that workers were making more like $1.25-$1.45 an hour. But what Bengard stated was in fact a larger issue than wages—ultimately, this had to do with workers having a hiring hall, a say in which pesticides were used and when, and other health insurance benefits.

---

[223] Ibid.
[224] "Chavez, Teamsters in Accord on Coast," *The New York Times*, August 1, 1970.
[225] Damon Stetson, "A.F.L.- to Expand Drive for Bargaining Rights for Farm Workers" *The New York Times*. August 1, 1970.

The moratorium ended on August 22. According to Monsignor Higgins, the growers were divided about who should represent their workers, but ultimately they all agreed to prohibit UFWOC from any organizing in the fields. Rather, the growers wanted to reassure the workers that they would hold the Teamsters accountable to contracts that had been signed the previous month.[226]

On Sunday, August 23, 1970, vegetable workers from the larger Monterey Bay area marched to Hartnell College in Salinas to attend a Catholic Mass.[227] At the mass the workers unanimously agreed to begin a strike the very next day. They angrily yelled at the Catholic Committee that they would rather go on strike than be represented by the Teamsters. Speaking on behalf of the workers, lettuce worker and ranch committee representative Antonio Sagredo stated:

> Let the people and the government of the United States know that we are ready to work, but that we must have what we ask. It isn't very much. We don't ask the impossible – only that they look upon us as human beings. We have the same ambitions as they do. We have families. We have rights. We are people. Why must they burden and look for a thousand ways to keep us down? They sold us out to the Teamsters, and now they are angry with us for not selling ourselves out. And now they would lose their crops rather than give in. But the people know we are right. The will give us their support. We shall triumph.[228]

[226] *El Malcriado: The Voice of the Farm worker*, Delano, CA. August 1, 1970.
[227] "Coast Workers Vote Strike at 27 Vegetable Ranches," *The New York Times*, August 24, 1970.
[228] *El Malcriado: The Voice of the Farm worker*, Delano, CA, August 15, 1970.



Figure 31. Cesar Chavez waves an American flag to counter accusations of Communist Party influence on UFWOC during an organizing rally in Salinas. To his right are an unidentified activist (speaking into microphone) and Chavez confidant Marshall Ganz (wearing glasses). Directly behind the speaker (in plaid shirt) is Bill Kircher, AFL-CIO Director of organizing and liaison to the UFW, and members of the Seafarers Union. Salinas, California, 1970. Photograph by Bob Fitch. Courtesy of Stanford University Special Collections.

Dolores Huerta read a message to the crowd from Cesar Chavez who had not arrived yet: "The growers do not rule by love in this valley, but by fear. Injustice is the order of the day, and men live in want. A strike is both just and necessary."[229] The workers had been eager to go on strike for over a month, but had followed UFWOC's advice and gave the growers and Teamsters an opportunity to negotiate with workers, but they failed to do so.[230] For UFWOC organizers and the workers it was a sign of disrespect that the growers would not sit down to negotiate with the union that the workers had chosen, UFWOC.[231]

---

[229] *El Malcriado: The Voice of the Farm worker*, Delano, CA, September 1, 1970.
[230] *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement* (Berkeley: University of California, 2012), 116-119.
[231] "Salinas Before the Storm." Box 1 Folder 46. Frank Bardacke papers (M2014). Dept. of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.

Chavez added:

> A new order of things is replacing the old in agriculture. It can be done peacefully, with the consent of the growers, or it can be preceded by a painful struggle. Everything we have done has been done in good faith. Our good faith has been received by a slap in the face of farm workers.[232]

By Monday morning, August 24, 1970, UFWOC had struck twenty-seven of the sixty Salinas Valley growers. About 6,000 workers did not show up to work.[233] Those who did show up respected the picket lines and refused to do the work. One of the largest strikes in the region's history had been sparked and not since the strikes of the 1930s had farm workers been mobilized in such a manner. Farm worker Jose Villalobos was asked by the local newspaper about whom he had voted for to represent the farm workers, the Teamsters or UFWOC. Villalobos responded, "Chavez is one of us, and we have confidence in him. He will not sell us out. We know very little about the Teamsters. We do know that they don't understand us or know what we want. Besides, Chavez has won in the grape strike. We will stay with him, he is our man." Maria Melendez, who had worked for a number of local contractors in Watsonville, said she was tired of the poor treatment in the fields: "Chavez's union will see that we are treated fairly, and with dignity. This is what I really want, to see justice, that's all."[234]

By August 25, the Monterey County Superior Court had issued a temporary restraining order on behalf of twenty-two of the thirty-one growers affected by

---

[232] *El Malcriado: The Voice of the Farm worker*, Delano, CA, September 1, 1970; "Coast Workers Vote Strike at 27 Vegetable Ranches," *The New York Times*, August 24, 1970.
[233] *El Malcriado: The Voice of the Farm worker*, Delano, CA, September 1, 1970.
[234] Ibid.

striking farm workers.[235] The restraining order prohibited picketing as a violation of the state's jurisdictional Strike Act. That same morning UFWOC attorneys Jerry Cohen and Venustiano Olguin, and Jacques Levy, a Chavez biographer, were brutally attacked by managers from the Hansen Ranch in East Salinas. Cohen said that he overheard the Hansen employee utter the words, "Okay boys, go get 'em." Cohen had been at the ranch investigating a sit-in strike. He spent several days at Memorial Hospital in Salinas after suffering a concussion from the attack.[236]

The next day, August 26, the effects of the strike were heard internationally as the Federal and State Marketing Service, whose statistics were conservative, stated that less than half the lettuce quota in the Salinas Valley was flowing to the market.[237] Strawberry growers admitted that 1,788 crates of strawberries had been shipped on August 25, as opposed to 13,045 on the day preceding the strike.[238] The violence continued on August 26 when the Oshita Farms ranch foreman, John Panziers, attacked five people by driving a bulldozer into vehicles parked near the struck fields of Oshita Farms. On the same day twenty-seven UFWOC picketers were arrested by the Monterey County Sheriff's department for blocking traffic from entering Hansen Ranch.[239]

As the strike continued both Teamster and Grower-Shipper representatives told the media that they would continue to allow the workers to be represented by the

---

[235] "Farm Union Halts 'Salad Bowl Work,'" *The New York Times*, 25 August 1970.
[236] *El Malcriado: The Voice of the Farm worker*, Delano, CA, September 1, 1970. 3-6.
[237] Dick Meister, "The Teamsters Move In," *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, (1970), 1-8.
[238] *El Malcriado: The Voice of the Farm worker*, Delano, CA, September 15, 1970. 2. https://libraries.ucsd.edu/farm workermovement/ufwarchives/meister/23%20UFWMeister70-3-Teamsters.doc.pdf.
[239] "Court Enjoins Chavez," *The New York Times*, September 17, 1970.

Teamsters.[240] UFWOC was accused of having broken the agreement not to strike, but UFWOC responded by saying that the Teamsters and the growers had failed to respect the field workers' vote for having UFWOC represent them. Another victory for UFWOC was when members of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workers Union refused to cross UFWOC picket lines. This union controlled the vacuum coolers for the produce that was packed and shipped by growers.

Although several Catholic clergy came to Salinas to support the strikers, not all Catholics were behind the UFWOC strike. A priest from the Salinas parish, Rev. Thomas Cross, made his feelings known publicly when he picked lettuce as a strikebreaker and condemned both the actions of UFWOC and that of the Bishops' Committee for mediating the strike. However, on the following day Cross was strongly rebuked by the Most Reverend Harry Clinch, the Bishop of Monterey. Bishop Clinch called the action by the young priest "regrettable" and stated that the Bishops' Committee had the full support of the Diocese in Monterey "…in its task of bringing the contending parties together." [241]

"Why Vietnam When There is a Salinas?" Violence in the Fields

As the strike continued in the Salinas Valley, growers scoured the state looking for replacement workers to cut and pack the lettuce that was rotting in the fields.[242] By late August the price of lettuce had skyrocketed from $3.00 a crate to

[240] Dick Meister, "KPFA Commentary," September 11, 1970, 1-11. https://libraries.ucsd.edu/farm workermovement/ufwarchives/meister/24%20KPFA%20Septem%2011,%201970.pdf.
[241] *El Malcriado: The Voice of the Farm worker,* Delano, CA, September 15, 1970, 8.
[242] "Coast Workers Vote Strike at 27 Vegetable Ranches," *The New York Times*, August 24, 1970.

$6.00 a crate.[243] Just seven days after the strike began, UFWOC achieved its first success when it signed a union contract with one of the largest lettuce growers in the region, Inter Harvest, which was a subsidiary of the conglomerate United Fruit.[244] When UFWOC threatened a worldwide boycott of its products, Inter Harvest officials agreed to meet and sign with UFWOC on August 30, 1970.

Inter Harvest headquarters was in Massachusetts, so it was not under the same kind of pressure as the local family owned agricultural companies that belonged to the Grower-Shipper Association, which demanded unity among its members.[245] Inter Harvest ignored pleas not to sign with UFWOC, withstanding the alienation and protests from local growers and their supporters. The UFWOC two-year contract guaranteed workers a minimum wage of $2.10 an hour in 1970 and $2.15 in 1971.[246] The agreement also included the ban of dangerous pesticides such as DDT, the stipulation that there would be no profiteering on rent and food at labor camps, a central hiring hall instead of hiring by contractors, a one-week paid vacation each year, and coverage for the workers' entire spouse and children under the health and welfare plan.[247]

UFWOC garnered financial support for the strike from other unions. For example, Cesar Chavez told supporters that UFWOC received $12,000 from the

---

[243] Harry Bernstein, " Harvest, Shipping Near Standstill in 'Salad Bowl' Strike," *The Los Angeles Times*, August 26, 1970. Pg. 3.
[244] Dick Meister, "KPFA Commentary," September 11, 1970.) 1-11. https://libraries.ucsd.edu/farmworkermovement/ufwarchives/meister/24%20KPFA%20Septem%2011,%201970.pdf.
[245] "Reds Lettuce Alone." Box 4 Folder 26. Frank Bardacke papers (M2014). Dept. of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.
[246] Dick Meister, "The Teamsters Move In," *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, (1970), 1-8.
[247] *El Malcriado: The Voice of the Farm worker*, Delano, CA, September 15, 1970, 8.

United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners and $10,000 from the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. With the money, UFWOC organized a strikers' kitchen to feed more than 1,000 workers each day, and also used the money to pay telephones, utilities, rents, and legal fees, among other related costs. Chavez also reported that UFWOC had received "a lot of money… from Catholic sources for the union, but not directly for the Salinas Valley".[248] At the national level, UFWOC had been chartered by the AFL-CIO in 1966, and was reassured of financial support by AFL-CIO president George Meany at its California state convention where a campaign began to raise $10 million to support the union over the next ten years.[249] Bill Kircher of the AFL-CIO also came to the Salinas Valley to assist UFWOC.



Figure 32. Cesar Chavez meeting *lechugeros* working for Bud Antle in the 1970s. Courtesy of Cathy Murphy.

[248] Ibid.
[249] *El Malcriado: The Voice of the Farm worker*, Delano, CA, September 15, 1970.

To counter the UFWOC strike and pickets, the local grower community organized a counter committee called the Citizens Concerned for Local Justice to picket against the strikers.[250] They mounted a picket against Inter Harvest, the company that had signed with UFWOC, and intimidated its workers. As the strike continued a growing number of violent episodes took place in Salinas. On September 5, 1970 two UFWOC members were beaten with baseball bats on a lettuce farm. Bill Kircher of the AFL-CIO was accosted and threatened by twenty members of the Teamsters at the motel he was staying at in Salinas. One Teamster even pointed a shotgun at a journalist with a local newspaper.[251]

As the violence in the region continued, Cesar Chavez sent a telegram to California Attorney General Thomas Lynch on September 5, 1970 that mourned: "The vigilante atmosphere hangs heavy over the Salinas Valley." Chavez urged Lynch to conduct an investigation into the violence before something more violent occurred in the region.[252]

One member of the Citizens Committee denied any violence on their behalf or intimidation tactics when he spoke to a local newspaper on behalf of the group:

> This boy [Cesar Chavez] knows all the commie tactics. He knows how to arouse people against us. You can tell he's darn well trained. What he says is a concoction of lies…. Salinas has a darned good police department. We are just a bunch of people trying to see that no one gets killed. We want to keep little Cesar from tying up the whole valley and the whole nation. It's time Americans acted like Americans.[253]

---

[250] Interview with Jerry Cohen conducted by Leroy Chatfield. https://libraries.ucsd.edu/farm workermovement/archives.
[251] *El Malcriado: The Voice of the Farm worker*, Delano, CA, September 15, 1970. 3.
[252] "Salinas Before the Storm." Box 1 Folder 46. Frank Bardacke papers (M2014). Dept. of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.
[253] *El Malcriado: The Voice of the Farm worker*, Delano, CA, September 15, 1970, 8-11

Yet the local *Salinas Californian* made it abundantly clear that Cesar Chavez's suspicions of violence directed at the strikers was in fact true about the vigilantism that was taking place in the Salinas Valley.[254] The newspaper reported that the Citizens' Committee had organized all-night pickets at the entrance to the Inter Harvest fields and kept armed guards in the fields and packing sheds. UFWOC was also receiving telephoned threats and bomb scares.[255] The Teamsters were also sending people to threaten and intimidate the workers. On September 8, the sheriff's office arrested thirty-one UFWOC picketers at the Bruce Church ranch in Gonzales, but Chavez, who was there, was not arrested. Sheriff W. A. Davenport said, "I won't play into the hands of anybody who wants to use my department. "[256] The sheriff understood that if he arrested Cesar Chavez, his department would be the center of national media attention. Chavez responded, "We welcome arrests. We will not resist. We will conduct ourselves peacefully. We feel that if we give up the right to picket lines we give up the right to be a union." In October the UFWOC office in nearby Hollister was bombed with dynamite and eight individuals were caught and arrested.

UFWOC and the vegetable strike of 1970 garnered more victories when four more growers agreed to sign a union contract during the first week in September. Fresh Pict, a subsidiary of Purex Industries that harvested over 42,000 acres in the southwest states, agreed to recognize UFWOC.[257] The same week D'Arrigo Brothers—a long-time labor foe, one of the largest broccoli growers, and the

---

[254] Ibid.
[255] "Union Office is Bombed," *The New York Times*, November 5, 1970.
[256] *El Malcriado: The Voice of the Farm worker*, Delano, CA, September 15, 1970, 8-11.
[257] Joe Pilati, "Dispute with Teamsters Shows Drive: Lettuce Pickers Travel 3,000 Miles to Publicize Boycott, Build Own Union," *Boston Globe*, November 26, 1970.

company whose founder was responsible for bringing the first broccoli seeds from Italy to the United States—along with the Salinas Strawberry Company and the largest artichoke grower in Watsonville, Delfino Ranch, also signed with UFWOC.[258]

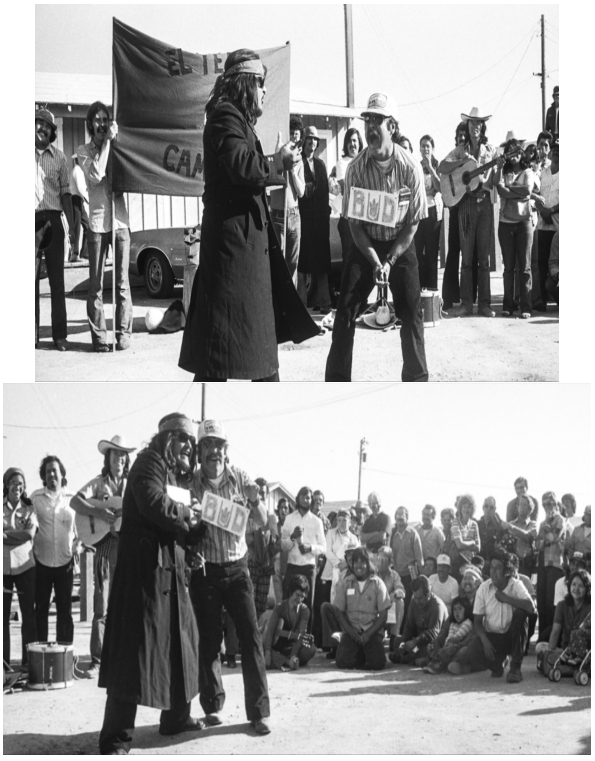


Figure 33. Playwright Luis Valdez portrays Bud Antle in hat. Luis Valdez's *El Teatro Campesino* skit about the labor abuses by Bud Antle Inc.

From Farm Worker to Organizer: Roberto Garcia

Roberto Garcia, one of Cesar Chavez's bodyguards and confidants in the Salinas Valley, was born in Mexico and crossed the Rio Grande with his immigrant parents when he was two years old.[259] He recalled witnessing some of the most severe forms of racial discrimination and segregation in the Rio Grande Valley in Texas,

[258] Dick Meister, "KPFA Commentary," September 11, 1970, 1-11. https://libraries.ucsd.edu/farmworkermovement/ufwarchives/meister/24%20KPFA%20Septem%2011,%201970.pdf.
[259] Interview with Roberto Garcia conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, Salinas, CA, August 12, 2016.

such as being denied service at restaurants where "No Mexicans Served" signs were posted.[260] As a youth, he arrived home one day and his parents were gone. They had been deported by the U.S. Border Patrol. In our interview, Roberto recounted how he had cried himself to sleep until they returned days later. Eventually the Garcia family followed the migratory route to California and arrived in the Salinas Valley in the early 1960s. Garcia was working in a field in Chualar when he and his crew noticed the entire stretch of the El Camino Real highway (now U.S. 101) stopped. They were curious to find out what happened and they drove to the road where they saw body parts everywhere, ambulances, and the California Highway Patrol. They had just encountered one of the worst accidents in U.S. history—thirty-two braceros working in the Salinas Valley had been killed in a horrific traffic accident.[261]

Garcia eventually became a foreman at Mann Packing, "When I was a foreman, I wasn't treating them [farm workers] like men, I don't know how I was treating them, I was treating them like slaves," Garcia told me.[262] When Garcia's parents, who also worked at Mann Packing, met Cesar Chavez in 1970 they immediately joined UFWOC and participated in the strike. One day Garcia arrived at work and saw his parents picketing the very company he was working for. When the police arrived and mistreated them, he walked off his job and joined them on the

[260] On racial discrimination toward Mexicans in Texas see David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987); Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1993); Cynthia, Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Austin, Tex: University of Texas Press, 2009); Max Krochmal, *Blue Texas: The Making of a Multiracial Democratic Coalition in the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2016).
[261] Gary Karnes, *Voices of Change: The People's Oral History Project*, (Pacific Grove, CA, 2015).
[262] Interview with Roberto Garcia by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez. Salinas, CA, August 12, 2016.

picket line. Garcia left a secure and high-paying job to join UFWOC because he understood firsthand the hardship and mistreatment that farm workers faced on a daily basis. Cesar Chavez's and UFWOC's message resonated with the young Mexican American.[263]

Roberto Garcia spent over eight years of his life organizing with the UFW and protecting Cesar Chavez as his personal bodyguard. Throughout these experiences, Garcia was in some of the most confidential and intimate meetings with Chavez as they negotiated contracts and developed organizing strategies.



Figure 34. Roberto Garcia (left) leads a UFWOC meeting and rally in Salinas while Cesar Chavez listens and waits for a question from a union member. Circa 1970s. Courtesy of Roberto Garcia.

[263] Interviews with UFW organizers conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez. Salvador Bustamante, Stanford University, September 16, 2013; Susan Samuels Drake, Soquel, CA, September 3, 2014; Sabino Lopez, Center for Community Advocacy. Salinas, CA, December 14, 2014.; Roberto Garcia, Salinas, CA, August 12, 2016.; Dr. Fernando Torres-Gil. National Steinbeck Center, Salinas, CA, May 4, 2016.



Figure 35. Roberto Garcia listening to Cesar Chavez on the right during the 1970 strike in Salinas. Courtesy of Roberto Garcia.



Figure 36. Roberto Garcia (rear, right, behind Cesar Chavez) discuss the boycott strategy. Courtesy of Roberto Garcia.

With a growing population of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the Monterey Bay area, Cesar Chavez, the UFW organizers, and local activists were successful in drawing national attention to the labor and environmental issues faced

by farm workers. While the UFWOC strike in the Salinas Valley was going on, UFWOC was sending picketers across the United States to areas like Boston, Massachusetts, the headquarters of the S.S. Pierce Company, whose Pic N Pac division was in Salinas.[264] In Boston, pickets were organized at the Pierce headquarters in order to draw attention to the conditions of their workers in the Salinas Valley, where the workers complained of rampant abuse.[265]

While the media and the historical narrative of the strike often depict UFWOC as a Mexican and Mexican American labor union fighting a strike against a white grower elite, some Salinas Valley growers, like Oshita Farms, and the Matsui Nursery were owned by Japanese Americans. Some labor contractors who were hiring for local companies were also Mexican or Mexican American. One particular Mexican contractor who hired workers for Pic N Pac, Manuel Jimenez, was accused of being very harsh toward the workers. They called him "*perro chato*" (literally "flat-faced dog") because they thought he looked like a bulldog.[266] The workers told the local newspaper that Jimenez had used chains and rifles to intimidate the workers living at La Posada housing camp. One worker contracted by Jimenez, Pedro de Santiago, said that the buses that Jimenez used to transport workers were in such terrible conditions that the brakes often failed. According to de Santiago they were the same kinds of buses that were used when the braceros were killed in 1963 at Chualar. Another worker, Olga Galvan, stated that Jimenez often humiliated the workers. She added

---

[264] Jean Hewitt, "Here to Spur Boycott of Lettuce, Farm Workers Urge: Remember the Grape." *The New York Times*, October 9, 1970.
[265] Joe Pilati, "Dispute With Teamsters Slows Drive: Lettuce Pickers Travel 3000 Miles to Publicize Boycott, Build Own Union," *Boston Globe*, November 26, 1970, 54.
[266] *El Malcriado: The Voice of the Farm worker*, Delano, CA, September 15, 1970. 16-19.

that Pic N Pac was notorious for spraying its fields with deadly pesticides when the workers were still in the fields.[267] As the strike went into a fourth week, it was having a severe effect on the local economy and the agricultural industry. Even though eight more local growers were in negotiations with UFWOC, tension was thick in the air in Salinas.[268]

"Boycott Scab Lettuce"

On September 26, 1970, UFWOC received a setback when Monterey County Judge Anthony Brazil upheld the Teamsters contract with local growers and forbade any further picketing of local companies. UFWOC responded by refocusing its strategy into boycotting all of lettuce and began pickets across the state of California at supermarkets like Safeway that bought lettuce from growers in the Salinas Valley. UFWOC had used a similar strategy during its grape boycott from 1965 to 1970 and had achieved success by signing union contracts with grape growers in the San Joaquin Valley just before the lettuce strike started in August 1970.[269]

UFWOC's Social Capital and Network

UFWOC was marketing its lettuce boycott with a similar strategy to its grape boycott. More importantly for UFWOC organizers, though, were the networks that did not have to be replicated.[270] During the five-year grape boycott organizers had established relationships across the United States with supporters from various ethnic

---

[267] *El Malcriado: The Voice of the Farm worker*. September 15, 1970, 6-7.
[268] Frank Del Olmo, " Chavez Union Wins 2 Elections: Teamsters Take One of 1st Secret Votes," *The Los Angeles Times*, September 7, 1975.
[269] Harry Bernstein, " Chavez Calls for Boycott of Lettuce Lacking Union Label," *The Los Angeles Times* September 18, 1970, 3.
[270] See "Bob Johnson 1975-1977". https://libraries.ucsd.edu/farm workermovement/essays/essays/167%20Johnson_Bob.pdf.

and social class backgrounds.[271] Lettuce boycott organizers were able to quickly contact former supporters of the grape boycott and local contacts across the United States to immediately get free housing and financial support. By November 1, 1970 UFWOC had agreements to only purchase UFWOC-picked lettuce with supermarkets in the following cities: Boston, Detroit, New York, Seattle, Portland, Cleveland, Minneapolis, Chicago, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, Washington, DC, San Francisco, Oakland, and Los Angeles. In Boston, for example, the union used its network associated with the Catholic Church to quickly arrange a meeting with Archbishop Humberto Sousa Medeiros, who offered office space and publicized boycott information to the diocese that reached thousands of residents in Massachusetts.[272] Pickets were organized at various grocery stores in U.S. cities. In Detroit, boycotters waged a massive leafleting campaign against Wrigley's that shut down three of the chain's stores.[273] Soon after, the store managers asked the leaflets to please leave because the stores had ordered only union lettuce.

Eliseo Medina remembered in detail his time organizing the grape boycott in Chicago:

> I got to Chicago with only five names, three of which had left Chicago, a bag of *huelga* buttons, and $100. We got office space from the Cardinal's Office

---

[271] See the commentary by Leroy Chatfield on "The Union of Their Dreams: Power, Hope, and Struggle in Cesar Chavez's Farm Worker Movement." https://libraries.ucsd.edu/farm workermovement/essays/essays/The%20Union%20of%20Their%20Dreams.pdf. Chatfield is the founder and Director of the Farm worker Movement Documentation Project. He also worked closely with Cesar Chavez and UFW.

[272] *El Malcriado: The Voice of the Farm worker*, October 1, 1970, 6-10.

[273] Jean Hewitt, "Here to Spur Boycott of Lettuce, Farm Workers Urge: Remember the Grape," *The New York Times*, October 9, 1970; Joe Pilati, "Dispute with Teamsters Slows Drive: Lettuce Pickers Travel 3000 Miles," *Boston Globe*, November 26, 1970, 54.

> for the Spanish Speaking on South Wabash Avenue. We became convinced that you get the best results by contacting the man in the streets, rather than concentrate on mayors, congressmen and other leaders for support. We must have had more than fifty meetings a week with Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, Chicano, student groups and many other organizations. Our biggest campaign was the gigantic Jewel Tea Company. After they took the grapes off their shelves, the rest of the food chains followed suit. It was a long and hard fight, but we won.[274]

When Medina went back to Chicago to organize the lettuce boycott he was still only twenty-four years old, yet he organized one of the most effective boycott campaigns in the United States.[275] Jessica Govea, the daughter of farm workers, left home for the first time to organize the lettuce boycott campaigns in Toronto, Canada. Passionate organizers spent countless hours, often seven days a week, passing out leaflets and organizing meetings and demonstrations across the U.S. and Canada to garner support for the lettuce boycott.[276] By early October UFWOC had dispatched over two hundred organizers across the United States to various urban centers. The boycott was largely successful due to inter-ethnic collaboration and to gaining the support of multiple organizations, religious institutions, and other labor unions.[277]

---

[274] *El Malcriado: The Voice of the Farm worker*, September 15, 1970, 6.
[275] Miriam Pawel, *The Union of Their Dreams: Power, Hope, and Struggle in Cesar Chavez's Farm Worker Movement* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009).
[276] Interview with Jessica Govea conducted by Leroy Chatfield. https://libraries.ucsd.edu/farm workermovement/medias/oral-history/.
[277] See Matt Garcia, *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Miriam Pawel, *The Union of Their Dreams: Power, Hope, and Struggle in Cesar Chavez's Farm Worker Movement* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009) & *The Crusades of Cesar Chavez: A Biography*. 2014; Lori Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants and the Farm worker Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

Dolores Huerta

During the strike in the Salinas Valley, Dolores Huerta was demonstrating what a skilled negotiator and leader she was, and was also becoming an iconic figure in the farm worker movement.[278] In 1970 Huerta was directly negotiating contracts with growers, often being ridiculed by growers who did not want to negotiate with women and began calling her "the dragon lady." As Frank Bardacke noted, "She did not fear the bosses. She talked back to them, interrupted them, made jokes at their expense. She never backed down. She not only articulated the workers' current grievances, but she spoke about the humiliations farm workers had faced over the years."[279]

Huerta also traveled across the country representing UFWOC, meeting with notable national and international figures such as New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller.[280] She was soon seen as a role model for all Mexican Americans and especially for women, who often were relegated to administrative or cooking duties during the Chicano movement. In contrast, Huerta became a leader in one of the most important labor movements at its apex during the lettuce strike in Salinas. Cesar Chavez had chosen Huerta to lead negotiations in Salinas.[281] She had the highest

[278] "Biographical Files. Dolores Huerta." Box 53 Folder 2. Frank Bardacke papers (M2014). Dept. of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.
[279] Frank Bardacke, *Trampling out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers* (New York, Verso, 2011), 378-379.
[280] "Richard Garcia on Dolores Huerta." Box 53 Folder 5. Frank Bardacke papers (M2014). Dept. of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.
[281] Interview with Sabino Lopez conducted by author. Lopez, Sabino. December 14, 2014. Center for Community Advocacy. Salinas, California

formal education among the three UFWOC founders, Helen and Cesar Chavez and Gilbert Padilla.



Figure 37. Left: Coretta Scott King and Dolores Huerta in Salinas, 1970 during Cesar Chavez's time in jail. Right: Huerta speaks to UFWOC organizers and the union's legal team during the 1970 lettuce strike. Photograph by Bob Fitch. Courtesy of Stanford University Special Collections and University Archives.

Huerta was also one of very few women in an executive position with a labor union. She was often found navigating multiple workloads for UFWOC, doing bookkeeping work for the union, filing membership reports, and working up to sixteen-hour days on a regular basis.[282] Besides being the lead negotiator for UFWOC with the Salinas Valley growers, she personally led the boycott campaign for over ten

[282]Interview with Bob Fitch conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, Watsonville, CA, July 31, 2011 and February 14, 2014.

months in New York City.[283] Earlier she had been at the forefront of leading pickets in Delano; by the time the Salinas strike began she had been arrested and gone to jail six times, but never received the same kind of media attention that her male counterparts often did during the civil rights movement.[284] About being arrested and going to jail for the farm worker movement, she stated, "It's a terrible thing to be in jail. However more people should go to jail to realize how unjust it is. Only poor people go to jail. Now I see it as an honor to be arrested." About being a female negotiator and leader, she stated, "Women have to fight a lot harder to push their point across."[285]



Figure 38. Cartoon illustrating the boycott on lettuce by UFWOC artist Andy Zermeño. November 15, 1970.[286] Courtesy of Andy Zermeño.

[283] Frank Bardacke, *Trampling out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two souls of the United Farm Workers* (New York, Verso, 2011), 378-379.
[284] Mario T. García, *A Dolores Huerta Reader*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008).
[285] *El Malcriado: The Voice of the Farm worker*, October 1, 1970, 6-10.
[286] United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, United Farm Workers, and United Farm Workers of America. *El Malcriado*. Delano, Calif: *Asociacion de Trabajadores Campesinos*, 1964-1975. Stanford University Special Collections.

By early December the strike was vehemently focused on one grower, Bud Antle, and on the Dow Chemical Corporation. Dow Chemical provided Antle and other growers in the larger Monterey Bay area with the pesticides used in the growing of vegetables in the region. Dow was also providing the U.S Department of Defense with napalm used during the Vietnam War. UFWOC wanted to make more public in its boycott campaign against Antle the use of pesticides and its effects, including deaths, rashes, and burns of the people in the fields.

On November 17, Monterey County Superior Court Judge Gordon Campbell had ordered UFWOC "to stop striking, picketing and boycotting activities relating to any of the group's farms" and to post a $2.75 million bond against potential financial damage from the boycott against Bud Antle lettuce.[287] Antle claimed that the boycott was affecting the premium price of lettuce.[288] On December 4, Cesar Chavez was due in court in Salinas to appear before Judge Gordon Campbell. Along with his attorney Jerry Cohen, Chavez was supposed to respond and show cause for not following a court order to halt the boycott campaign against Bud Antle Inc., at the time the largest lettuce grower and non-union company in the Monterey Bay area.

On the morning of December 4, Chavez, along with supporters, met at the UFWOC office in East Salinas. Along with his family and UFWOC officials Dolores Huerta, Larry Itliong, Gilbert Padilla, and Philip Vera Cruz, and Father David Duran, Cesar Chavez walked, followed by a growing crowd of supporters, to the courthouse

[287] Elanor Blau, "Chavez Asks Lettuce- Boycott Support," *The New York Times*, November 30, 1970.
[288] Harry Bernstein, " Jailing Chavez May Rally Support for Lettuce Boycott," *The Los Angeles Times*, December 6, 1970.

on West Alisal Street in Salinas. Chavez and his family entered the courthouse where Campbell was running twenty minutes late. On the other side sat Bud and Bob Antle. Most of Antle's lettuce workers had joined UFWOC and had been on strike for nearly two months. But the Antles refused to negotiate with UFWOC and wanted to maintain their company's "sweetheart" agreement with the Teamsters.[289] UFWOC argued to the judge that they were currently appealing the judge's November 17 orders to a higher court and therefore were not in contempt of the order.[290] As the hearing continued, over two thousand Chavez supporters outside the courthouse chanted, prayed, and sang in support of Chavez, led by Catholic priests David Duran, Ramon Varela, Eugene Boyle, Bill O'Donnell, and James McEntee, who had come to Salinas in support of Chavez from various communities in Northern California.

Judge Campbell ordered UFWOC to pay a $10,000 fee for each count that UFWOC was in violation. As Campbell was leaving the courtroom Cohen reminded the judge that the highest legal fine for this kind of violation was $500 per count. Campbell returned and admitted that he had over fined and levied the fine at $500. He also ordered that Chavez be jailed for ignoring his order and for contempt of court. Chavez responded to the fines and his arrest by standing and stating, "Boycott Bud Antle! Boycott Dow Chemical! Boycott the hell out of them! Viva!"[291] When the crowd outside heard the verdict they began chanting "V*endido*" (sell-out) to the judge. The crowd was frustrated, restless, and anxious, but listened to Dolores Huerta

[289] "Chavez Jailed in Lettuce Boycott Struggle," *Chicago Daily Defender*, December 7, 1970.
[290] Steven. V. Roberts, "Chavez is Jailed in Lettuce Strike: Held in Contempt. He Defies Order to Halt Boycott," *The New York Times*, December 5, 1970.
[291] Charles Foley, "Grapes boycott Leader Jailed," *The Guardian & The Observer*, December 13, 1970, 4.

and Larry Itliong. Huerta told the crowd that the judge's decision "…was another example of how the growers can utilize the power of the courts to keep us poor" and reminded many in the crowd who were strikers, too, "Let us work non-violently and boycott Dow and Antle from one end of the world to the other."[292] As the impromptu rally subsided, many people walked to Christ the King Catholic Church where they heard Mass in honor of Cesar Chavez and were again reminded of the importance of non-violence.

While in jail Cesar Chavez wrote that he was prepared to be there indefinitely:

> I am in fine spirits. They are being very kind to me. I was spiritually prepared for this confinement. I don't think the judge was unfair. I'm willing to pay the price for civil disobedience. I am still very committed and not bitter at all. At this point in our struggle there is more need than ever to demonstrate our love for those who oppose us. Farm workers are being managed by being denied representation by the union of their choice. Jail is a small price to pay to help right that injustice. We will continue our struggle until we have own the same rights enjoyed by other workers in America.[293]

Chavez also released a statement saying that it was not just about Antle's lettuce, but also the company's celery, broccoli, and artichokes, and noted that Antle was re-labeling its vegetables for the market Bud, Rick, Jade, and ANCO.[294] In 1970, according to a Department of Defense report, Bud Antle supplied 60 percent of the entire military purchase of Western iceberg lettuce at prices above market wholesale

[292] "Chavez Jailed in Lettuce Boycott Struggle." *Chicago Daily Defender*, December 7, 1970, 5.
[293] *El Malcriado*, January 15,1970.
[294] Ibid.; Steven V. Roberts, "Chavez is Jailed in Lettuce Strike: Held in Contempt, He Defies Order to Halt Boycott," *The New York Times*, December 5, 1970.

averaged city by city. In 1970, the Department of Defense bought 71,726,000 pounds of lettuce for $8,962,000.[295]

By December 6, Chavez's second day in jail, an altar and a twenty-four-hour vigil had been assembled across the street from the jail.[296] As news reached the national and international community media from across the country arrived in Salinas, as did prominent civil rights leaders. The first of these to arrive was Ethel Kennedy, widow of U.S. Senator Robert Kennedy, a long-time supporter of UFWOC who was assassinated on June 6, 1968. Kennedy was greeted in Salinas by both a cheering crowd on West Alisal and also a throng of anti-UFWOC picketers who threw eggs at her and insulted her with verbal jibes.[297] At the end of the visit, Kennedy joined with about 2,500 individuals for a candlelight procession and a Mass for Cesar Chavez outside of the jail.[298]

On December 15, 1970, Cesar Chavez was visited in jail by two other well-known civil rights figures. Coretta Scott King, the widow of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., arrived in Salinas accompanied by Andrew Young, a former leader of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and a close associate of her late husband.[299] After a short visit with Chavez, King addressed the crowd of two thousand outside the jail:

---

[295] Special to the *New York Times*, "Union Sees A Gain in Chavez Jailing: But Leaders Also Express Concern for His Health," *The New York Times*, December 6, 1970.
[296] "Anti-Chavez Pickets Boo Mrs. Robert Kennedy," *The New York Times*, December 7, 1970.
[297] Charles Foley, "Grapes Boycott Leader Jailed," *The Guardian & The Observer*, December 13, 1970.
[298] "Anti-Chavez Pickets Boo Mrs. Robert Kennedy," *The New York Times*, December 7, 1970.
[299] Niko Kyriakou, "40 Years Later: Salinas Valley Labor Clashes Still Resonate Chavez's UFW, Teamsters Battled in Early '70s," *The Californian*, March 26, 2011.

> For more than thirty years farm workers were thought to be un-organizable and so powerless they could not demand and achieve security and dignity. But Cesar Chavez challenged tyrants, organized the working poor and became a threat, so they have jailed him. But as my husband so often said, "You cannot keep truth in a jail cell."Truth and justice leap barriers, and in their own way, reach the conscience of the people. The men of power thought my husband was a powerless man with grandiose ideas. He had nothing but an idea that people at the bottom could be aroused to fight for dignity and equity. The power structure became alarmed when his ideas were transformed into marching millions and the right to vote…the right to jobs, the right to private dignity were won. You are carrying on, with other millions at the bottom, the work my husband began. That is why I have come here today, not just to support you, but salute you.[300]

As King closed her remarks she told the audience to encourage the organizers to look for allies and consider the power of women and their power as consumers. King also talked about how the farm worker movement was much bigger than what was occurring at that moment.

> I know that among you your children are undiscovered, underdeveloped people of talent. Cesar Chavez is not an accident; he is a genius of his people, and their union, the farm workers union, is a hero union. When you have succeeded in making your lives more secure and richer, the whole nation will benefit. That is why your struggle has deeper dimensions than a strike for wages. You are demanding a place in the halls of man. You are saying there are no lowly people, there are only people who are forced down. If this nation can produce a trillion dollars every year, it is a disgrace in the eyes of God that some people should be haunted by hunger and hounded by racism.[301]

[300] Coretta Scott King, *El Malcriado*, January 1, 1971, 11-13.
[301] Ibid.

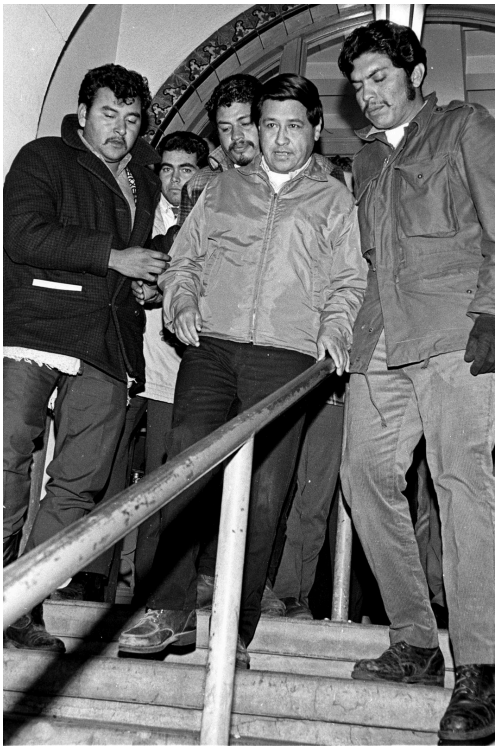


Figure 39. Cesar Chavez is escorted by bodyguards and Roberto Garcia during his release from Monterey County Jail in Salinas on December 24, 1970. Courtesy of *The Californian*.

It took a directive from the California Supreme Court, which voted six to one in favor of Cesar Chavez for him to be released from jail.[302] After twenty days in jail, Chavez was released on Christmas Eve 1970 to a jubilant crowd of supporters waiting for him. The Court also made it clear that UFWOC could continue with the boycott. Upon his release from jail Cesar Chavez was asked about his stay in the Monterey County jail and he made the following statement:

> This jail reminds me of some of the labor camps. The plumbing doesn't work, it leaks when it works, it's very cold, it leaks when it rains, and it's very

[302] "Chavez Ordered Freed By Court: His Appeal on Contempt Is to Be Heard on Coast," *The New York Times*, December 24, 1970.

> damp, the lighting is very bad. I would suggest to the citizens of Monterey County to build a new jail, it's a disgrace.[303]

Cesar Chavez was smiling when he made this statement, but his statement could also describe some of the conditions where many farm workers lived in the Monterey Bay area—old dilapidated apartment buildings, trailer home parks, and farm labor camps that had been built decades before to house braceros. Something larger was also occurring in the larger Monterey Bay region, which Coretta Scott King had spoken about. The children of farm workers were watching and studying the momentous strike, and the media attention that Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and other rank and file leaders of the movement were receiving. The younger people were becoming leaders and learning directly from allies of different ethnic backgrounds and social classes. The 1970 strike was the catalyst for the Mexican and Mexican American population in the Salinas Valley to seek something bigger outside of the fields of the region and fight for larger civil rights issues.

The success of the vegetable strike and boycott on lettuce forced the growers and the Teamsters Union to the negotiating table. By March 1971 UFWOC reached an agreement with the Teamsters. UFWOC would organize and have sole jurisdiction over the field workers and the Teamsters would continue to represent the truck drivers, cooler workers, and cannery workers.[304] In late March 1971, UFWOC called

---

[303] "Bud Antle and United Farm Workers." San Francisco State Labor Archives. San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive. December 11, 1970.

[304] Matt García, *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Miriam Pawel, *The Union of Their Dreams: Power, Hope, and Struggle in Cesar Chavez's Farm Worker Movement* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009) & *The Crusades of Cesar Chavez: A Biography*. 2014; Lori Flores, *Grounds*

off the boycott on lettuce to begin negotiations with the Monterey Bay growers. But the growers stalled negotiations through the 1971 harvest and then rejected the proposals offered by UFWOC. Negotiations between UFWOC and the growers ended and the workers returned to campaign for the lettuce boycott.

"La Union de Chavez"

Not everybody left the UFW happy. UFWOC was on the cusp of organizing immigrant workers but failed to do so, losing trust and alienating hundreds of potential allies and supporters in the fields.[305] During a 1972 interview with San Francisco National Public Radio station KQED, Cesar Chavez magnified his frustrations and made his feelings and strategy known about how to deal with the undocumented workers in the fields of the Salinas Valley:

> As long as we have a poor country bordering California, it's going to be difficult to win strikes…as strikes are won normally by other unions. With one employer, as is the case the case right now with the Butte Oil and Gas Company, we've closed them. They've been unable to get strikebreakers, or very few of them, and then all of a sudden yesterday morning they brought in 220 wetbacks, these are the illegals from Mexico. Now there is no way to defending this kind of strike breaking. Therefore the only way to win strikes is by taking our fight to the citizens and taking the fight to the cities to help boycott the product and that's the only way to get contracts. I venture to say that without that we weren't able to organize.[306]

The following letter, which Chavez sent to the U.S. Social Security Administration just a few weeks before he was jailed in Salinas, demonstrates that in

---

for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants and the Farm worker Movement (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

[305] Dolores Huerta and Larry Itliong both UFW board members disagreed with the UFW's position organizing the undocumented workforce. See Kent Wong. "United Farm Workers (UFW) Movement: Philip Vera Cruz, Unsung Hero." Advancing Justice. UCLA Labor Center. Asian American Studies Center. (Los Angeles, UCLA AASC, 2009), 8.

[306] Cesar Chavez interview with KQED. September 25, 1972.

fact he was serious about organizing a Mexican American workforce at the cost of alienating Mexican migrants without legal status. This strategy created a significant division between Mexican Americans and undocumented immigrants from Mexico. While the letter on the surface reads like he has a genuine concern for the workers, it is a complaint about undocumented farm workers. For Chavez, there was a clear distinction between the Mexican populations and he made sure that the general public and the government understood the difference. The letter shows that Chavez simply did not have any empathy for undocumented workers, who were considered to be taking jobs from legal residents or U.S. citizens, or used as scab workers. Chavez's views also broke away from a Chicano movement solidarity among all Mexicans, whether here legally or not. In response, Chicano movement leader Bert Corona wrote to Chavez to urge him to stop these abuses against immigrants from Mexico. The letter addressed the issue of workers without Social Security cards:

> We have been finding a surprisingly large number of people who are working without Social Security numbers. In the Union our membership records; our union health plan; and our seniority system are all based on the workers' Social Security numbers. If people are working without valid Social Security cards it makes it extremely difficult for us to insure that they receive all the benefits that they are entitled to. Of course, it also means that they are not getting their Social Security benefits. I am sure that you realize the importance of this matter. For that reason I would appreciate if you could send an agent to Delano at the earliest possible convenience to discuss what we can do about this problem…[307]

Not everyone within the UFW leadership agreed with Cesar Chavez about his decision to report undocumented workers, and his decision to do so would create

[307] "The Wet Line." Frank Bardacke papers (M2014). Box 1 Folder 52. Dept. of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif. November 7, 1970.

factions within the union that would lead to purges by Chavez and later regional divisions among the Mexican and Mexican American population. Some UFW members and organizers were viewed as *Chavistas* or individuals who simply followed the UFW president under just about any condition. Some UFW organizers, like Sabino Lopez, were mentored by Chavez, but later purged.

Sabino Lopez, the son of a former bracero, became a union organizer and adamant supporter of Cesar Chavez, but later sued him when Chavez failed to provide him with labor rights.[308] Many years after the strike, however, Lopez would go on to establish an important second-generation movement organization in Salinas, the Center for Community Advocacy. Lopez admits that the UFW's arrival in the Salinas Valley was an important event that drove him to gain the confidence and skills necessary to be a community leader. Lopez later wrote:

> Those who attack our union often say, "It's not really a union; It's something else, a social movement, a civil rights movement. It's something dangerous." They are half right. The United Farm Workers is first and foremost a union. But the UFW has always been something more than a union, although it's never been dangerous if you believe in the Bill of Rights. The UFW was the beginning! We attacked that historical source of shame and infamy that our people in this country lived with. We attacked that injustice, not by complaining, not by seeking handouts, not by becoming soldiers in the War on Poverty. We organized![309]

On Leadership

By the late 1970s the UFW had seen many successes and was growing, but the bureaucracy entailed in dealing with the expanding organization was becoming

[308] Sabino Lopez Affidavit. Sabino Lopez Papers, http://unionoftheirdreams.com/Primary_Sources.php.
[309] Speech to the Commonwealth Club of California in San Francisco, CA. November 9, 1984. Hover Institution Library. Box 500, Folder 16. Stanford, CA.

problematic. In his seminal book on the farm worker movement, Marshall Ganz wrote that Chavez did not create an organizational infrastructure to meet the challenges that the UFW faced, such as growth. Instead, Ganz said, Chavez consolidated internal political control so that he could respond unilaterally.[310]

By 1977 the UFW was showing signs that it was having a difficult time managing its organizers and contracts. Chavez was determined to hold on to power even if that meant driving seasoned organizers out and the union to the ground. On February 17, 1977 Father James L. Vizzard sent a memo to the UFW Executive Board resigning as legislative liaison for the union. For Vizzard, it was a painful decision. He stated, "I saw, and continue to see, the union as the one viable hope for securing justice, decency and dignity for the people whom I love and for whom I have given the better part of my life." Vizzard was also extremely frustrated and disappointed with the lack of leadership and direction he received as the UFW's lobbyist in Washington D.C. Later in the memo he lamented:

> Since the day I arrived four years ago I have received no further directives, neither have I received one word or comment, positive or negative, on what I have or have not done. Despite the obviously favorable implications of last November's election results and despite the expressed desire of the new Congress and the new administration to give favorable response to farm workers' needs, the union has not even begun to develop a legislative agenda, or, if it has, it hasn't informed me. I have been made to look foolish and have lost considerable credibility by not being able to tell Congress what the UFW wants.[311]

[310] Marshall Ganz, *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 242-243.
[311] Vizzard Papers. Stanford University Special Collections. Box 1 Folder 1.

Conclusion

The literature on the UFW has largely focused on its labor successes and failures as a union.[312] The UFW was successful in organizing field workers under a union. They struggled to gain the respect of another union, the Teamsters. The UFW achieved many labor rights for a largely Mexican farm worker population in the Monterey Bay area. The UFW also mobilized the Mexican and Mexican American community to advocate for full civil and voting rights. From the 1970 lettuce strike new civil rights organizations evolved, and the most important and successful one in the region would be a local chapter of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) which was established by a former migrant farm worker, Cresencio Padilla, who had worked picking strawberries with his family in the Salinas Valley.

Some journalists like Miriam Pawel have focused on biographies of Cesar Chavez and challenged the previous hagiographies about him. Yet, scholars have overlooked the importance of the UFW in its indirect role as an organization that inspired and motivated a population of Mexican and Mexican Americans to seek expanded civil rights in the Monterey Bay area. At rallies, marches, and negotiation meetings, farm workers who were working with or for the United Farm Workers were developing new skills outside of the realm of agriculture. As some joined the union efforts in organizing locally, others joined national boycott efforts, traveling for the

[312] The UFW literature is vast, but there is little work on the 1970 vegetable strike in Salinas or the larger Monterey Bay area. See Matt García, *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movemen*t. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Miriam Pawel, *The Union of Their Dreams: Power, Hope, and Struggle in Cesar Chavez's Farm Worker Movement* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009) & *The Crusades of Cesar Chavez: A Biography*. 2014; Lori Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants and the Farm worker Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

first time far away from their families and community. Former farm workers were soon leading their own efforts or organizations. In some cases, they were returning to school to finish high school equivalency exams, attending college, and completing degrees as first-generation students.[313]

Many second-generation Mexican Americans had worked in the agricultural fields along with their parents, typically after school. For Mexican Americans who did not want to continue going to school, the fields were always an option, albeit one they quickly learned to detest. Mexican Americans were in one way or another influenced by the civil rights advocacy of the Chicano movement and its message of getting an education. They might have also been directly affected by having served in the Vietnam War, or having had a family member or neighbor who served. Mexican Americans were leaving the fields for good in Salinas and Watsonville and choosing to follow the ideals of the Civil Rights and Chicano Movements. The UFW had motivated many of them to follow through on the ideals of the larger Chicano Movement and then bring their new skills and education back to their communities.[314] It led Mexicans and Mexican Americans, many of them former farm workers or children of farm workers, to seek to correct injustices that plagued the population surrounding housing, education, employment, and harassment by local law enforcement agencies. The strike inspired and motivated Mexicans and Mexican

[313] Interviews with UFW organizers conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez. Salvador Bustamante, Stanford University, September 16, 2013; Susan Samuels Drake, Soquel, CA, September 3, 2014; Sabino Lopez, Center for Community Advocacy. Salinas, CA, December 14, 2014.; Roberto Garcia, Salinas, CA, August 12, 2016.; Dr. Fernando Torres-Gil. National Steinbeck Center, Salinas, CA, May 4, 2016.

Americans to demand equal access to employment, schooling, and equal citizenship status.



Figure 40. Former Bracero Tomas Alejo, Sr. became an activist with the United Farm Workers. Pictured on right with Cesar Chavez and picketing during the Gallo boycott. Circa 1970s. Courtesy of Luis Alejo.



Figure 41. Left: Tomas Alejo Jr., during his tenure in the U.S. Army. Center: UFW membership cards. Right: Tomas's wife Maria Luisa Alejo left he fields to become a registered nurse and a union steward for SEIU. Photographs courtesy of Luis Alejo.

The success of UFWOC and the 1970 vegetable strike was also paramount in the passage of the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975.[315] The law changed how employers could treat farm workers. Governor Jerry Brown signed the

[315] Zachary Stahl, "Growing Pains," *Monterey County Weekly*, Seaside, CA, June 4, 2009, 10.

bill right after taking office in January 1975. Through an emergency statute, this proposal became law in September of that year instead of the following year in January. Governor Brown would also go on to sign a law banning the use of the short-handle hoe and providing the guarantee of farm worker unemployment insurance.[316]

The arrival of the UFW in Salinas and the 1970 vegetable strike signaled great changes ahead, as Cesar Chavez stated during a speech he gave at the Commonwealth Club of California in San Francisco fourteen years after the strike.

> Tens of thousands of the children of grandchildren of farm workers, and the children and grandchildren of poor Hispanics are moving out of the fields and out of the barrios and into the professions and into business and into politics. And the movement cannot be reversed! Our union will forever exist as an empowering force among Chicanos in the Southwest. And that means our power and our influence will grow and not diminish.[317]

One year after the strike the parents of children who attended a public middle school in Salinas united together after a Superior Court judge made racist remarks about a student's speech during a graduation ceremony. The parents' organizing in reaction to the racialized incident led to the establishment of the first LULAC chapter in the Monterey Bay area. Many of those parents were former farm workers and had participated in the UFWOC strike or had witnessed the possibilities for change in the region and better treatment. The LULAC chapter's leadership began to organize around civil rights causes. Chapter Three of this dissertation will focus on their civil

[316] Niko Kyriakou. "40 Years Later: Salinas Valley Labor Clashes Still Resonate," *The Salinas Californian*, March 26, 2011, 1.
[317] Speech to the Commonwealth Club of California in San Francisco, CA. November 9, 1984. Hover Institution Library. Box 500, Folder 16. Stanford, CA.

rights advocacy on behalf of the larger Mexican immigrant and Mexican American population.

CHAPTER THREE: A DIFFERENT LULAC IN THE MONTEREY BAY AREA: STRUGGLES FOR CIVIL RIGHTS, 1970–1990

> The UFW was a labor union. What we needed was a civil rights organization that advocated on behalf of the Mexican community.
>
> Many Italian residents in Castroville told me that I was a 'good Mexican.' I was even invited to join the Rotary Club, which was a predominately Anglo group. This was in 1969. In two years time, their feelings would dramatically change towards me.[318]
> —Cresencio Padilla, Founder of Castroville-Salinas LULAC[319] Chapter

In preparation for the 1971 graduation ceremony at Gambetta Middle School in Castroville, California, teachers selected one of their top students, Maria Dolores Jacinto, to deliver the graduation speech.[320] Jacinto and her family had emigrated from Mexico just four years earlier. In her remarks, Jacinto wanted to express her appreciation for the opportunities afforded to her in the United States. When she first arrived, she had been concerned about a lack of opportunities she might have. But instead, she was very grateful for the encouragement she received from her teachers. As Jacinto stated in her speech, "When I came to this country four years ago I thought that I would find every door shut because I did not understand the English language. My teachers made every effort into planting the desire to keep me studying and now I am on my way to higher schooling."[321]

---

[318] Interview with Cresencio Padilla by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, Royal Oaks, CA. January 20, 2016.
[319] League of United Latin American Citizens
[320] "Bilingual Speech's 'Disgrace,'" *The Salinas Californian*, July 14, 1971. "Picketers Protest Judge Blohm." See also Cresencio Padilla, *LULAC Legacy in Monterey County* (Self-published autobiography, 2011), 7. Maria Ines Zamudio, "Cresencio Padilla's life of service honored," *The Salinas Californian*, October 17, 2008; Larry Parsons, "Investigator, Activist Retires," *Monterey Herald*; Sunita Vijayan, "Pillar of the Community: Longtime Civil Rights Advocate Cresencio Padilla honored with Statue," *The Californian*, June 20, 2012; Claudia Melendez Salinas, "Statue of Blind Justice Finally Sees Light of Day," *Monterey Herald*, June 19, 2012.
[321] Interview with Cresencio Padilla by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez; Padilla, *LULAC in Monterey County*, 12-13; Karnes, *Voices of Change,* 30-31.

Jacinto continued to thank her teachers and parents in English, and then delivered the speech in Spanish. Out of the 500 students enrolled at Gambetta, 400 were Mexican American or had a Spanish surname.[322] For Jacinto, it was important to deliver her remarks in Spanish so that the majority of parents in the audience could understand the remarks.[323] One member of the audience was Monterey County Judge Kenneth Blohm, also a member of the North Monterey County School Board. Blohm was infuriated because Jacinto delivered her speech in Spanish. During a board meeting he made public his discontent with Jacinto's speech in Spanish, asserting that "…it was a disgrace to let it happen. It should never have been able to happen."[324] The school principal, Paul Murray, affirmed Blohm's request by stating, "It won't happen again." Both Blohm's comment about the speech and the principal's affirmation of that comment exemplified a long and tenuous history between Anglos and Mexicans in the Monterey Bay area. The Mexican population was increasing rapidly in the region, and Anglos consequently felt threatened.[325]

The remarks made by Judge Blohm brought together the Mexican and Mexican American[326] community, both of which continuously faced discrimination and were often harassed over their ethnicity. They had witnessed abuses by the local police departments and the United States Border Patrol. They also faced discrimination in the areas of employment and housing, and a lack of educational

---

[322] Ibid.
[323] *The Salinas Californian*, "Bilingual Speech's 'Disgrace,'" July 14, 1971.
[324] Padilla, *LULAC Legacy in Monterey County*.
[325] J. Morgan Kouser, "Racial Injustice & the Abolition of Justice Courts in Monterey County," September 9, 2000. Unpublished report.

support for a bilingual student body in the region.[327] For decades there had been numerous incidents of negligence or abuse by elected officials and governing bodies. But it was the Gambetta Middle School incident that led an organized and more visible Mexican American leadership to step up its work within civic institutions in order to demand full civil rights under the law.

In the first organized effort to address their grievances over racial hostility in the aftermath of the Gambetta Middle School graduation speech, concerned parents and activists from the region organized the Concerned Parents Committee of Castroville. The committee submitted a formal letter to the school board—framed as a unified message among concerned parents—demanding that Judge Blohm resign:

> We continue to feel that Mr. Blohm's statements were improper and motivated by racial antipathy toward persons of Mexican descent. Accordingly, we have formed a committee made up of people from Castroville. Our purpose is to ensure that the Board and its members never again condone the racist sentiments earlier expressed by Mr. Blohm. We therefore, once again, demand that Mr. Blohm step down from his position as trustee.[328]

Yet Judge Kenneth Blohm staunchly refused to resign. Meetings followed with the School Board where the Concerned Parents Committee reminded Judge Blohm that Juan Castro founded the town where Gambetta Middle School was located when it was still part of Mexico and that the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo allowed Mexicans to practice Spanish without prejudice.

---

[327] LULAC Meeting Minutes. Castroville, Ca. Cresencio Padilla Personal Collection. 22 January 1973. "Bilingual Speech's 'Disgrace,'" *The Salinas Californian*, July 14, 1971; "Picketers Protest Judge Blohm."

[328] Letter from Concerned Parents of Castroville to the Board of Trustees. September 20, 1971. Cresencio Padilla Papers. See also Cresencio Padilla, *LULAC Legacy in Monterey County*, 12-13.

Although racist incidents continued, by now Mexicans and Mexican Americans became highly motivated to organize politically to counter discrimination in schools, housing, and employment. Richard Gonzalez and Cresencio Padilla, along with Luis Jaramillo, a lawyer with California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA), emerged as leaders, organizing meetings where the local Mexican and Mexican American community could strategize on how to counter the racist ideologies of the white establishment. Cresencio Padilla would eventually organize the same group into the Castroville-Salinas chapter of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) in order to have the backing of an established civil rights organization with access to government officials at all levels.

This chapter examines the advocacy[329] by LULAC in the Monterey Bay area for policies that were designed to protect people against arbitrary or discriminatory treatment by government officials or individuals. These include the U.S. Constitution and civil rights legislation that followed, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964[330] and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.[331] Focusing on the rural regions of California's

[329] By advocacy I am referring to the practice of vigorous action as a means of achieving political goals, through demonstrations, protests, labor organizing, community mobilization, and electoral campaigns.

[330] The Civil Rights Act of 1964 made racial, religious, and sex discrimination by employers illegal and gave the government the power to enforce all laws governing civil rights, including desegregation of schools and public spaces.

[331] The Voting Rights Act (VRA) was passed in 1965 after a century of deliberate and violent denial of the vote to African-Americans in the South and Latinos in the Southwest—as well as many years of entrenched electoral systems that shut out citizens with limited fluency in English. The VRA is often held up as the most effective civil rights law ever enacted. It is widely regarded as enabling the enfranchisement of millions of minority voters and diversifying the electorate and legislative bodies at all levels of American government. Congress has reauthorized the VRA four times, most recently in 2006, when both the House and the Senate approved the measure overwhelmingly in a bipartisan manner. The 2006 reauthorization renewed several key protections, providing for language assistance,

Monterey Bay area, which encompasses locations from Salinas north to Santa Cruz, this chapter studies the response in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s by the region's Mexican and Mexican American community to racial and political polarization, starting with filing legal grievances advocating for electoral representation in the larger Monterey Bay region, and evolving into a more visible activism with LULAC's emergence as the civil rights organization that was vigilant against institutional racism toward Mexican and Mexican Americans in the area. This chapter analyzes how former immigrant farm workers such as Mercedes and Cresencio Padilla mobilized the Mexican and Mexican American community to seek equal access to civil rights and in doing so continued a "longer" and "wider" rural/suburban civil rights movement, to use historian Mark Brilliant's terminology. He has called for a rethinking of the civil rights era "…as not only 'long' but also 'wide,' wide geographically, wide demographically, and most importantly, wide substantively in terms of the range of 'race problems' and responses to them."[332]

This chapter argues that advocacy and legal cases filed by LULAC on behalf of Mexican and Mexican Americans were major successes in securing civil rights for this community. LULAC's early advocacy set the stage for transforming the political landscape of the Monterey Bay area to the benefit of the Mexican and Mexican American population.[333] These victories led to the enactment of bilingual education in

---

Election Day monitors, and Justice Department pre-approval of voting changes. Currently, the protections are set to expire in 2031.

[332] Ibid.

[333] See Benjamin Marquez, *Constructing Identities In Mexican-American Political Organizations: Choosing Issues, Taking Sides (*Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003); Cynthia Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American civil rights movement* (Austin:

local schools, greater job opportunities that historically had not been available to Mexican Americans in the region, better access to housing, and equal treatment from local law enforcement agencies.

Ultimately, LULAC was able to establish permanent communication among leaders in education, elected officials, and law enforcement agencies. After years of advocacy, LULAC officials began to be invited by local police and fire departments to discuss specific social issues facing the local Mexican and Mexican American community, including the large undocumented population. As former farm worker and local civil rights advocate Diana Jimenez—who eventually served as the chapter's president—stated about LULAC's access to law enforcement officials, "…I have the sheriff's direct cell phone number and I can call him any time there is an issue involving the Mexican population in the region."[334]

A Different LULAC

The region has a long history of labor organizing, dating back to the "lettuce wars" of the 1930s, but addressing civil rights issues was something that no organization had successfully achieved until the LULAC chapter came along. It was also not the first time that the Monterey Bay area's Mexican and Mexican American community had formed a civil rights organization to combat ethnic discrimination. Fred Ross and Saul Alinsky's work in founding a Salinas Valley chapter of the Community Service Organization (CSO) in 1954, and the work of the Oliverez

---

University of Texas Press, 2009); League of United Latin American Citizens. History of LULAC: Founded February 17, 1929. [United States]: The Administration, 1985.

[334] Interview with Diana Jimenez conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, July 26, 2016.

brothers and their mentor Bert Corona along with other individuals and organizations, established a solid foundation for future activism in the region.[335] They also focused on important issues such as citizenship drives, voter registration, and neighborhood improvement, but no legal action in advocating for civil rights was taken until LULAC first successfully did so in the 1970s.

Until LULAC, no community organization fully incorporated a growing Mexican immigrant population or took legal action in advocating for civil rights. And while the region boasted a local California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA) office, that agency was facing from California Governor Ronald Reagan's administration accusations of not following federal guidelines to remain outside of partisan politics and its funding was at stake. CRLA was also picketed by the UFW as Cesar Chavez was becoming territorial about who would advocate on behalf of farm workers.

Arguably the most effective civil rights organization in the Monterey Bay area from its founding 1973 into the 1990s, LULAC became a powerful advocate for the Mexican and Mexican American population and was consulted by powerful politicians like former Congressman Leon Panetta. It also created public space for the celebration of Mexican culture in the area and expanded access to institutions previously not available. Unlike many other LULAC chapters, which were founded by Mexican Americans born in the United States, the Monterey Bay LULAC chapter was founded by an immigrant from Mexico who continuously advocated for the large

[335] "In Defense of the Mexican Workers Without Visas in the United States," (in Spanish and English) World Federation of Trade Unions, 9th Congress, Prague, Czechoslovakia, April 16-24, 1978." Box 1Folder 11. Bert N. Corona Papers, M0248, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.

undocumented population in the region, allowed non-U.S. citizens to join, and led the way in embracing women's participation in leadership roles—contesting the notion that LULAC was only interested in the issues facing U.S. citizen Mexican American civil rights.[336]

However, from its founding in 1973, the Monterey Bay area's LULAC chapter was at the forefront in its advocacy for undocumented immigrants. The Monterey Bay area's Mexican American population was emblematic of David Montejano's characterization of Chicano civil rights advocacy. While new second-generation movement organizations were established and advocated for the Chicano movement's social ideals, older and more established civil rights organizations were revived in the 1970s.[337]

Of course not all Mexican Americans were able to leave home to attend college, nor to participate in demonstrations across the Southwest. Many, like the Oliverez brothers, had to stay in the region and supplement the family's household income.[338] For people who grew up working with their families in the fields of the Salinas Valley, like Mercedes and Cresencio Padilla, the Chicano movement and its legacies of social justice would develop and flourish by uniting Mexican Americans and immigrant Mexicans.[339]

---

[336] Ruben Donato, *The Other Struggle for Equal Schools: Mexican Americans During the Civil Rights Era*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997).
[337] David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 290-291. & *Chicano Politics and Society in the Late Twentieth Century* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999).
[338] Interview with Dr. Juan Oliverez conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez. Salinas, California.
[339] On the Chicano movement and studies in rural/suburban agricultural regions see the work by Matt García, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-*

By the early 1970s many second-generation Chicanos returned to the region with a political ideology that was vastly more radical than their 1960s predecessors, and they considered LULAC to be a conservative and ineffective civil rights organization. However, in contrast to other LULAC chapters, this one welcomed a younger generation and was successful in recruiting and retaining young, college-educated Chicanos.

Chicano activists were also in conversation with activists from larger urban cities like Los Angeles, San Jose, and San Antonio, Texas. David Montejano has argued in *Quixote's Soldiers* that "…a notable share of the political organizing in Latino communities in the United States can trace a lineage to the Chicano organizations and activists of San Antonio in the seventies." Montejano's assessment of Chicano Movement activists from San Antonio did in fact have "…wide-ranging, long term consequences for Latino politics in the United States," specifically the Monterey Bay area.[340] Inspired by the mission of the Chicano Movement, Dr. Juan Oliverez—whose brothers Albert, Pete, and Manuel Oliverez had been active with Mexican American organizations—was one of them. "We were trying to emulate and replicate Jose Angel Gutierrez and the civil rights activism that was occurring in larger cities like San Antonio, Texas, and do the same in Salinas."[341]

1970 (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Frank P. Barajas, *Curious Unions: Mexican American Workers and Resistance in Oxnard, California, 1898-1961* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2012); Lori A. Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farm worker Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

[340] Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers*, 5-7.

[341] Interview with Dr. Juan Oliverez conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez. Salinas, CA.

Oliverez had been heavily involved as an activist at San Jose State during his undergraduate years in the late 1960s and was a student of Dr. Harry Edwards, who had attempted to organize a boycott of the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City where San Jose State students and gold-medal winners John Carlos and Tommie Smith famously raised their fists.[342] After San Jose State, Oliverez matriculated at UC Berkeley as a sociology PhD student in the same cohort as Tomas Almaguer.[343] Both entered Berkeley inspired by the ideals of Marxism and their professors at Berkeley—Herbert Blumer, Neil Smelser, Robert Blauner, and Troy Duster, among others. Oliverez had also attended the Chicano Moratorium March on August 29, 1970 in Los Angeles.[344] In San Jose the activism had been on the streets, at Berkeley and other universities in the courtyards as mass rallies assembled, but the activism would be very different in a rural/suburban community like Monterey County.

As a young Chicano activist, Oliverez saw LULAC as a conservative organization. But when he returned to Salinas from Berkeley in the early 1980s and connected with LULAC members, he was inspired by how well organized the local LULAC chapter was and by how effective the members were in their civil rights advocacy. Oliverez put his Marxist ideas behind, but he never lost faith in the ideals of the Chicano Movement and his consciousness for social justice would be evident

---

[342] Harry Edwards, *The Struggle that Must Be*: *An Autobiography* (New York: Macmillan, 1980), 205-248.

[343] Tomas Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California*. (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2009).

[344] Interview with Juan Oliverez. Another activist from Salinas, Juan Martinez also attended the Chicano Moratorium in Los Angeles. Oliverez would serve on the Salinas City Council and Juan Martinez was elected Hartnell College Trustee.

throughout his time with LULAC and career in politics and education.[345] Other notable second-generation Chicanos who joined LULAC and lived through or were activists during the Chicano Movement were Philip Tabera, Jesse Sanchez, Esq. David Serena, Juan Oliverez, PhD., Linda Sanchez, Lydia Camarillo, and Lily Cervantes. Roberto Rubalcava recruited Phillip Tabera and Jesse Sanchez to attend UC Santa Cruz. Along with playwright Luis Valdez traveled o Cuba as college students at San Jose State in 1964. As young philosophers and activists, Valdez and Rubalcava wrote a radical manifesto about the conditions of Chicanos as colonized subjects in the United States and proclaimed, "…having no real leaders of our own, we accept Fidel Castro."[346] After serving on LULAC's board, both Camarillo and Cervantes, inspired by their activism with LULAC, left for law school and later returned to the region.

By the 1970s, the population of Mexicans and Mexican Americans had grown significantly in the Monterey Bay area, but it continued to face repeated prejudice and overt forms of racial hostility. While the United Farm Workers had arrived in the region during the 1970 lettuce strike, and successfully drew attention to the labor injustices in the agricultural fields across the Southwest, it also faced a monumental dilemma that would plague it for posterity.[347] Was the UFW a labor union, or a civil

---

[345] "They See Law as Tool for Social Change," *The Salinas Californian.* Fred Alvarez. August 12, 1986.

[346] See George Mariscal, *Browne-Eyed Children of the Sun: Lessons from the Chicano Movement Chicano movement, 1965-1975.* (New Mexico, 2005) 106-111. Mariscal adds that both Valdez and Rubalcava's "exuberance" would be redirected away from Cuba to the Chicano Movement Chicano movement in the states.

[347] Helen Manning, "Deputies' accounts conflict over melee in tomato field," *The Californian,* April 27, 1978..

rights organization, and what issue would it focus on? In hindsight, scholars like George Mariscal have argued that the UFW could be viewed as both.[348] Cesar Chavez stated early on that the UFW's advocacy was not a social movement, but instead was solely focused on labor organizing.[349]

The UFW's organizing efforts during the 1970 vegetable strike could not address the social inequality that plagued the Mexican and Mexican American community surrounding schooling, housing, and employment discrimination outside of the fields.[350] For many Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the Monterey Bay area, the UFW was too radical and even at times too militant in its organizing tactics. As Cresencio Padilla stated, "…the UFW was a labor union. What we needed was a civil rights organization that advocated on behalf of the Mexican community."

The Local Formation of LULAC

LULAC was founded February 17, 1929, to combat discrimination in Texas and is considered the oldest Mexican American civil rights organization in the United States.[351] LULAC was primarily a middle-class institution serving the interests of acculturated Latinos with U.S citizenship in Texas and other states.[352] In fact, for

[348] George Mariscal, *Brown-Eyed Children of the Sun: Lessons From the Chicano Movement Chicano movement, 1965-1975*.
[349] Richard Garcia, "César Chávez: A Personal and Historical Testimony," *The Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 63, No. 2. (May, 1994), 225-233. " Cesar Chavez Discusses 1968 Fast/Purpose of Forty Acres/ Farm worker Movement – c.1972 (14 minutes)." Cesar Chavez Oral History. UFW Farm worker Documentation Project. https://libraries.ucsd.edu/farm worker movement/medias/oral-history/.
[350] Frank Bardacke, *Trampling Out the Vintage*: Matt Garcia, *From the Jaws of Victory*.
[351] Mario T. Garcia, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, & Identity, 1930-1960*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989): 25-43.
[352] See the work by Richard Garcia, "César Chávez: A Personal and Historical Testimony" and *The Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 63, No. 2. (May, 1994), 225-233.

more than fifty years Latinos who were not U.S. citizens could not join LULAC.[353] The policy had drawn criticism from other civil rights organizations and LULAC finally amended the policy at their national convention in 1981,[354] leaving the issue to individual chapters. LULAC's original mission included fighting five forms of discrimination against all Mexicans in Texas during the 1920s: in public schooling; unequal access, or no access at all, to public facilities such as restaurants, movie theaters, swimming pools, and barbershops; "white man's" primaries to prevent African Americans and Mexican Americans from exercising their right of suffrage; housing discrimination, including being prevented from purchasing real estate in parts of San Antonio; prohibiting Mexican Americans from serving on juries. Mexicans also witnessed repeated violence by the infamous Texas Rangers.[355]

While the reasons for establishing LULAC in 1929 made clear sense in the south, why would a LULAC chapter still be necessary in the Monterey Bay area during the 1970s, a period considered the "post-civil rights era"? For the most part, the Monterey Bay area LULAC chapter was founded for much the same reasons that LULAC was established in 1929. LULAC had lost credibility at the national level with a younger, more militant Chicano Movement population during the 1960s, and

[353] Carolyn, Hernandez, "Lulac: The History of a Grass Roots Organization and Its Influence on Educational Policies 1929-1983," PhD. Dissertation. (Loyola Marymount University, 1995).
[354] Roberto Robledo, "LULAC Members to Convene," May 28, 1982.. *The Salinas Californian*.
[355] See Benjamin Heber, Johnson, *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); John Raymond, Mckiernan-González *Fevered Measures: Public Health and Race at the Texas-Mexico Border, 1848-1942* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012);

was losing membership and closing chapters.[356] The political mobilization by the Monterey Bay leadership reinvigorated a well-established civil rights organization like LULAC, but also propelled Mexican and Mexican Americans to organize and advocate for electoral representation.

Mexican and Mexican American students faced hostile environments for speaking Spanish in local schools—often being placed by teachers and administrators in classes with students with mental disabilities—or being hit with rulers or wooden paddles.[357] Schools also lacked mandated bilingual education programs. Mexicans and Mexican Americans also faced discrimination when they attempted to rent an apartment or buy real estate in various Monterey Bay neighborhoods. No Mexican Americans were on the city councils of the Monterey Bay region. Mexicans and Mexican Americans suffered various forms of discrimination in hiring and often ongoing abuse in the workplace. LULAC would eventually sue various police departments in the Monterey Bay area based on police brutality inflicted on the population, including repeated abuses by the U.S. Border Patrol. For these reasons alone, local leaders felt that a LULAC chapter was still needed in one of America's supposedly progressive regions, the Monterey Bay area.

Though the Gambetta Middle School incident in 1971 brought together a group of local activists who grew tired of continued incidents of racial hostility

---

[356] Ignacio M. Garcia:*Chicanismo: The Forging of a Militant Ethos Among Mexican Americans*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997).

[357] See the 1973 case Diana v. State Board of Education, " …which reversed the trend of automatically paling Spanish-speaking schoolchildren in classes for the mentally retarded on the basis of culturally biased and English-only standardized intelligence." Lori A. Flores. *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farm worker Movement*. (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016.), 178.

toward Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the Monterey Bay area,[358] no other organization lasted or had the success that the LULAC chapter achieved in guaranteeing civil rights for the community.[359] As politics among various organizations played out, LULAC and its leadership would focus exclusively on civil rights advocacy.

From Immigrant Farm workers to Political Activists

Cresencio Padilla was born in Mexico City in 1934. In 1947, he, his six siblings, and their parents traveled to Reynosa, Mexico, in order to cross the Rio Grande. With the help of a smuggler who put the entire family on a large canoe, they entered the United States. Crecencio's brother Gilbert remembers the moment vividly. Gilbert recalled how his mother would tell all of them to be quiet. Gilbert was only eight years old when they crossed the border and simply did not understand the danger; the whole moment was an adventure for him. [360] The Padillas were deported in the 1950s, but subsequently entered legally. They had an uncle waiting for them in McAllen, Texas, where they stayed, but eventually moved to work on a farm in Edinburg, Texas, where they lived in a large tent. With very little seasonal work to support a family of nine, the Padilla family migrated to California, where they found work in the agricultural fields in Fresno and Tracy, and eventually migrated to the Salinas Valley and Watsonville.

---

[358] Interview with Cresencio Padilla and Mercedes Padilla by author. January 20, 2016.
[359] The Community Service Organization's (CSO) existence in the region was short lived, the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) had different stints, remerged in the 1990s when Padilla organized a chapter to focus on politics, but was dissembled after a few years. The LULAC chapter originally founded by the Padillas still exists in the region.
[360] Interview with Gilbert Padilla. Telephone interview via Chapala, Jalisco, Mexico. August 19, 2016.

Once in the Monterey Bay area, the Padilla family worked as sharecroppers in the strawberry fields owned by the Driscoll's corporation. Cresencio worked in the fields and packing sheds from 1953 to 1963, and became a U.S. citizen in 1966. He was a charismatic individual with leadership skills and was proud of his Mexican heritage.[361] By his twenties, he was out of the fields working as director of Head Start in Monterey County and by 1969 as an investigator with California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA). In 1975 he was recruited to work as an investigator for the Monterey County Public Defender's Office, where he stayed for twenty-three years and became an ardent defender of the working class in the larger Monterey Bay area.

Cresencio had tried to leave the fields before he got the job at Head Start. He initially worked in construction, though he had been told repeatedly he did not have the skills to work in the industry. He made repeated attempts to join the carpenters and plumbing unions, but was also turned away, for what he believed was often racial discrimination.[362] Cresencio would never forget the kind of discrimination he experienced when trying to better his livelihood. The Padillas always felt an instinct to do something about the economic and racial disparities affecting the local Mexican and Mexican American community.[363]

Mercedes Padilla was also born in Mexico City. She immigrated with her siblings and mother in the 1950s when she was eleven years old. Her father was already in the U.S., working for the railroad in Nevada. Mercedes did not get the

[361] Ibid.
[362] Letter from Ralph Games to LULAC, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. February 2, 1974. The letter addresses testing bias. Padilla Papers.
[363] Interview conducted by author with Cresencio Padilla. August 28, 2015.

opportunity to attend school past the seventh grade; her mother became seriously ill and as the oldest sibling in the family she had to enter the fields to work picking strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, and onions. Mercedes and her family followed the migrant farm worker trail across central California from Tracy to Salinas and then Watsonville, where her family, like Cresencio's, worked for Driscoll's. She has said that arriving in the Monterey Bay area and working for Driscoll's was a privilege because the company provided for the families who worked the harvests, so they decided to stay in the area.



Figure 42. (Left) Mercedes Padilla with her mother Juana and brother Eduardo Centeno 1954. (Right) Tracey and Watsonville, Ca.

Mercedes and Cresencio were married on January 14, 1957 and she continued to work in the strawberry fields. As Cresencio became more politically involved, Mercedes often took their four children to the fields with her. While not initially involved in LULAC meetings, Mercedes was an ardent supporter and key adviser about issues related to education, housing, and immigration.[364]

[364] Interview with Mercedes Padilla at her home on August 9, 2016. Royal Oaks, California & Phone interview. August 24, 2016.

Previous scholars have been ardent critics of gender relations within the Mexican American civil rights advocacy. As historian Cynthia Orozco wrote, "…marriage, the division of labor, and reproduction could constrain women's interaction. Some women had husbands, children, and housework to tend." Mercedes Padilla had principal responsibility for the couple's four children, but she stated how her husband Cresencio was not one to slow her down. Being civil rights activists was exhausting for both Padillas. While the oldest children in nuclear Mexican and Mexican American families often serve as surrogate parents, as Mercedes had done, her parents were able to provide childcare and assist with household responsibilities so that she and Cresencio could continue in their civil rights advocacy.[365]

Mercedes, like her husband Cresencio, worked her way out of the fields and was hired as a Public Health Liaison with the North Monterey County School District in 1974, where she worked closely with migrant students and on dental screenings. She also worked for the school district's affirmative action committee. Active in her church, Our Lady of Refuge in Castroville, she served on the parish council, as a member of *Sociedad Guadalupana*, and as the choir director for Spanish Mass.[366]

While Mercedes was not at every public meeting advocating for the local Mexican and Mexican American community she was often advising Cresencio. The

---

[365] Interview with Mercedes Padilla at her home on August 9, 2016. Royal Oaks, California & Phone interview. August 24, 2016.

[366] *The Salinas Californian*, "Winning Ways: Top Latinos Recognized at Awards Banquet," July 25, 1986. Staff Writer. Both Cresencio and Mercedes were Catholic and involved with the local parish. On the role and importance of Catholicism within civil rights activists, see Gina Marie Pitti, *To "Hear About God in Spanish": Ethnicity, Church, and Community Activism in the San Francisco Archdiocese's Mexican American Colonias, 1942-1965* (unpublished Ph.D.)—Thesis (Stanford University, 2003. *The Californian*

family became solely dependent on her income from the Driscoll strawberry fields when Cresencio was dismissed from his job as an aide with the Anti-Poverty Council in 1971.[367] Cresencio Padilla was never shy of making his thoughts heard and on one occasion he criticized his supervisor, director John Mathis, for not following through on a promise to fund the REDI Corporation of Castroville, a delegate agency of the Anti-Poverty Council.[368] Local residents signed and submitted a petition for his reinstatement to a board overseeing the organization and weeks later he was reinstated.[369]

Cresencio Padilla was well known by people from diverse ethnicities in the Monterey Bay region. Whites in the community called him Chris instead of Cresencio. He was even invited by the Italian American business community to join the local Rotary Club, because, he says, the white establishment considered him "a good Mexican."[370] Anglo or whiteness were complex terms to describe the ethnic diversity of the region and explain the racism that Mexicans encountered. As far as color was concerned, Padilla's complexion was in fact lighter than most of the Italians in the Monterey Bay area. The Italian Americans and the mostly Scotch-Irish migrants who had come from the Oklahoma Dust Bowl in 1930s to the region could

[367] Staff Writer,d "3 Fired Poverty Workers to Get Hearings." & "Federal Officials to Hear Poverty Council Criticism. April 1, 1971..
[368] Staff Writer, "Poverty Council's Personnel Board Upholds Firings," ,*The Salinas Californian*, Thursday, October 21, 1971.
[369] Francisco O. Burrruel, "Public Forum: Padilla's Job Threatened," *The Salinas Californian*, October 6, 1971.
[370] Interview with Cresencio Padilla, Watsonville, CA. January 20, 2016.. Padilla Family Archive & Cresencio, Padilla. *LULAC Legacy in Monterey County*. (Self-published autobiography manuscript, 2011): 20-25.

not quite understand why Padilla and Mexican Americans from various parts of the Southwest and Mexico were claiming racial discrimination.

In 1972, Padilla attended a LULAC district meeting in San Francisco as a representative of Head Start. At the meeting, Padilla was pleasantly shocked by what he witnessed—Latinos who were dedicated and passionate about civil rights. "I was surprised by the caliber and dedication I witnessed there. It was amazing to see professionals, people of trade, educators, and lay people involved in one cause," he recalls. For Padilla, LULAC was the civil rights organization that Latinos needed in Monterey County because of its national reputation and track record advocating for civil rights.[371]

Padilla convinced the Concerned Parents Committee of Castroville that they should establish a local LULAC chapter, which they did in 1973.[372] They now had a credible civil rights organization with the backing from a national office. On March 11, 1973, they received their official LULAC charter and a few months later—Thursday, June 2, 1973—at the Castroville Community Center, the officers of the Castroville-Salinas LULAC Council #2055 were installed during a dinner celebration. Cresencio Padilla was elected president, Patrick Perez vice president, Maria Ojeda secretary, Julian Martin sergeant at arms, and Frank Aquillon treasurer. The officers

[371] Interview with Cresencio Padilla conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez.
[372] LULAC Meeting Minutes. Castroville, Ca. Cresencio Padilla Personal Collection. 22 January 1973. B) "It was motioned, seconded, and approved that the Concerned Parents Committee merge with the LULAC organization. C) A was motioned, seconded, and approved that the funds under the Concerned Parents committee Treasury merge to the LULAC treasury. D) It was motioned, seconded, and approved that the initial charter/ membership costs be incurred with the funds transferred from the Concerned Parents Committee treasury to the LULAC treasury and that the membership initiation be fees collected as soon as possible to reimburse the treasurer for costs of charter/ membership costs."

received their LULAC pins and took pictures with a Mexican and U.S. flag as a backdrop.[373]

Just six years after Cresencio Padilla's chapter of LULAC was founded, it was named Best Council of the Year during LULAC's state convention held in Oakland. Out of California's fifty-one chapters the Monterey Bay area's was considered "the most fully involved in community affairs for 1978-1979."[374] Cresencio Padilla, its founder, was named Man of the Year.[375] And LULAC's work continued. Gary Karnes, a local organizer and activist, shared:

> He did not graduate from high school or college, by his sheer will power and strength of character; Padilla provided the leadership that LULAC needed to be a forceful advocate on behalf of individuals and plaintiffs over the decades. Over time almost every public agency, labor union, and grower/shipper heard from LULAC, with Padilla as the spokesperson fighting injustice wherever it raised its ugly head.[376]

[373] "Officers of the Castroville-Salinas #2055 LULAC," *Castroville Times and Moss Landing Harbor News*, Castroville, California. June 7, 1973.
[374] "City LULAC Chapter 'Tops in State,'" *Valley Today*, Salinas, California, May 29, 1979. Staff Writer. Page 9.
[375] "Trio honored by LULAC for service to community," *The Salinas Californian*, Saturday, March, 3, 1979.
[376] Karnes. *Voices of Change*: 309. & Interview by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez with Juan Martinez 2013.



Figure 43. Early 1970s LULAC chapter meeting. Left; Sam Bertram, unidentified, Herman Peña, Chris Padilla, Robert Melendez. Middle standing: Art Estrella, sitting center: John Saavedra, Phillip Tabera, Cosme Padilla, Azael Treviño, Hope Garcia.

Employment Discrimination and Affirmative Action

LULAC partnered with other organizations, notably CRLA and MALDEF on lawsuits to get policies changed was not afraid to work within the system to fight its battles. Minority residents of Monterey County had been lobbying the Board of Supervisors to hire more minorities as early as April 1968, four years after the passage of the Civil Rights Act. But numbers in minority hiring continued to lag until LULAC filed a lawsuit against employment discrimination in 1974.[377]

During the 1970s the Mexican and Mexican American population increased rapidly in the Monterey Bay area. In 1970 the U.S. Census reported that Monterey County had a total population of 247,450. Its Spanish-surnamed population was

[377] Staff Writer, "Board Pledges to Help Minorities Find Jobs," *Salinas Californian*, April 10, 1968.

50,643 or 21.1 percent of the county's population while only 8.1 percent of the county employees were Spanish-surnamed.[378] By 1980 the population was 299, 444, with 75,225 Spanish-surnamed.

On February 1, 1974, LULAC and CRLA sued Monterey County and filed a lawsuit in court through the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), charging Monterey County with employment discrimination against Spanish-surnamed employees. They cited the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibited discrimination based on race, color, sex, religion, or national origin.



Figure 44. Cresencio Padilla upon being hired for a temporary job with the Monterey County Public Defender's Office as an investigator in 1975. Padilla stayed for twenty-three years. Courtesy of Cresencio Padilla personal collection.

Jobs with the County of Monterey were comparatively lucrative for Mexican Americans, who were just a generation away from stoop labor in the agriculture fields of the Monterey Bay area. Nevertheless, according to the complaint, Spanish-

[378] *Racial Injustice*, 58-60.

surnamed persons were continually employed at substantially lower rates than that portion of the county workforce which they represent, and the ones who are employed are concentrated in the lowest-paying, non-policy making jobs. LULAC and CRLA charged that no meaningful effort had been undertaken by the County to correct the effects of past discrimination and to engage in an affirmative action program to increase or upgrade Spanish-surnamed employees.[379]

The plaintiffs in that lawsuit were Hisauro Garza, an honors graduate of the University of California at Santa Cruz; Manuel Martinez, a journeyman mechanic; and Inocencio Martinez, a high school graduate with a background in the agricultural industry. The three plaintiffs testified that they were all highly qualified for jobs for which Monterey County turned them down. The jobs they applied for in each case went to Anglo candidates who they said were less qualified. In addition, only 8.4 percent of employees on Monterey County's full-time job rolls as of September 1973 were Spanish-surnamed, as compared with a Spanish-surnamed population of 21.1 percent.[380]

The Monterey County Board of Supervisors reached a partial agreement with CRLA, admitting no wrong but agreeing to meet the goal of hiring minority-group members in proportion to their percentage in the County's workforce. The lawsuit was settled when Monterey County agreed to hire more "Hispanics" and referenced as the

[379] Cresencio Padilla, "Charge of Discrimination" application, February 1, 1974. Cresencio Padilla Personal Collection.
[380] *Monterey Herald*, "Monterey County Accused of Discrimination on Jobs."

Garza v. County of Monterey Consent Decree.[381] As J. Morgan Kouser indicated in his report written for the board of supervisors, these cases demonstrated the widespread incidence of employment discrimination complaints against governments in Monterey County.

The court ordered CRLA to monitor the consent decree and review its enforcement. The decree ordered the county to actively recruit racial or ethnic minority members for the position of personnel director. It also ordered the county to advertise the fact that certain characteristics would be desirable traits for a personnel director, such as the ability to speak Spanish; a knowledge of and sensitivity toward cultural characteristics of racial and ethnic minorities; and understanding of and commitment to equal employment opportunity.

Another goal of LULAC was to implement affirmative action programs at Salinas City Hall and at various agencies governed by Monterey County.[382] LULAC and the CRLA office in Salinas often collaborated in order to address grievances. For example, Luis Jaramillo, a CRLA civil rights attorney in Salinas, filed lawsuits against the North Monterey County and Salinas Union High School districts in the early 1970s. The districts lacked bilingual education services and were placing native Spanish speakers in classes with students who were developmentally delayed. [383]

---

[381] Cresencio Padilla, "Charge of Discrimination" application, February 1, 1974. Cresencio Padilla Personal Collection.
[382] LULAC Meeting Minutes. Castroville, Ca. Cresencio Padilla Personal Collection. 22 January 1973.
[383] Luis Jaramillo, Esq. Email correspondence. September 19, 2013. Diana, et al, V. State Department of Education U.S.D.C (N Cal.), Case no. C-70 37 RFP. Mo Jourdane and Marty Glick. Lori A. Flores. *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farm worker Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

"Refusing to Work for a 'Wetback'"

The Castroville-Salinas LULAC chapter continued to be involved in every major legal case and civil rights issue affecting the Mexican and Mexican American community in the Monterey Bay region. During the 1970s various municipalities were legally bound to implement affirmative action programs in their efforts to recruit, retain, and promote minorities within their agencies, including the police and fire departments. Yet minority police officers and firefighters often failed to receive promotions.[384] On September 5, 1978, LULAC approached Congressman Leon Panetta to request an investigation of the affirmative action program in Salinas. LULAC also suggested that Monterey Bay area cities be required to have affirmative action plans in place before contractors or municipalities could receive federal grants. One case that received a lot of local media coverage was the case of firefighter Gilbert Padilla, Crecencio's brother.

Gilbert Padilla became a Salinas firefighter in 1965, one of two Mexican Americans out of fifteen firefighters hired that year.[385] His fluent Spanish was a valuable skill to possess as the region's Mexican community grew, and he was well liked by his peers in the department. He often applied for promotions, but was always told he was simply lacking one skill or another. He took the exam for a Lieutenant position six times in twelve years and passed every time, but was always denied

---

[384] J. Morgan Kouser, "Racial Injustice & the Abolition of Justice Courts in Monterey County," September 9, 2000. Unpublished report. "LULAC v. Salinas - Selection Process for Firefighter and Fire Cadet - charts, graphs, data on professional services, 1972 to 1980." Box 1259. Folder 6. Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund Records, M0673, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.

[385] Michael G. Mooney, "Gilbert Padilla Case: City Decides to drop Discrimination," *The Salinas Californian*, January 13, 1982.

promotion.[386] He saw that firefighters in the department with less experience than he had began to get promoted before he did. For Padilla, it was unequivocal that was racial discrimination.

The turning point came during an interview for a promotion to captain. He had followed the department's promotion guidelines by applying and waiting for an interview, even though he knew that historically, firefighters in Salinas were hired by word of mouth and promotion decisions were often made by the department's chief.[387] During his interview, an assistant fire chief of Italian ancestry asked him the following question: "What would you do if a firefighter refused to work for a wetback?"[388] Aside from the term "wetback" being derogatory, used to imply that someone was undocumented or even a criminal, the question was apparently only asked of Mexican American applicants and not their fellow Anglo firefighters. Padilla recalled that the entire oral exam was filled with insulting remarks and questions that were irrelevant to the position he was applying for. It was time to act. Denied the promotion once again, Padilla quickly sought legal support from LULAC and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF).[389]

---

[386] Interview with Gilbert Padilla. Telephone interview via Chapala, Jalisco, Mexico. August 19, 2016. J. Morgan Kouser. "Racial Injustice & the Abolition of Justice Courts in Monterey County." September 9, 2000. Unpublished report.

[387] "LULAC v. Salinas. Plaintiffs pretrial statement." July 28, 1980. Box 929. Folder 5. Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund Records, M0673, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.

[388] LULAC v. Salinas fire dept. deposition of Gilbert Cruz Padilla. Box 937. Folder 4. Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund Records, M0673, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.

[389] Interview with Gilbert Padilla conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez.

After a lengthy trial in 1977, U.S. District Court Judge Spencer Williams ruled that the City of Salinas had discriminated against Gilbert Padilla in not granting him the promotion.[390] The city vehemently fought the charges of discrimination for five years, spending more than $300,000 to defend itself against discrimination charges and arguing that the city was innocent.[391] After two courts had decided in favor of Padilla, locally and in the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, the city filed a petition for a rehearing. Should the city lose at that level its last option would be to go to the United States Supreme Court.[392]

LULAC was putting pressure on the city to settle the case. In January 1982, the city council met in closed session to decide whether it would continue to pursue the case. During a meeting that lasted only thirty minutes the council decided to drop the appeals process. "In order for harmony to continue in our community and the fire department…the city council has decided to drop any further appeal in the Padilla case,"[393] stated city council member Jim Barnes. The city manager, Roger Christofferson, continued to maintain that the city did not discriminate against Gilbert Padilla. But the impact LULAC was having in its civil rights advocacy became clear when Christofferson stated publicly that "…we enjoy a good relationship with the leadership of LULAC. Now we can go forward in a constructive mode."

---

[390] "LULAC v. Salinas - [judgment and finding of fact October 31, 1979." Box 929. Folder 3. Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund Records, M0673, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.

[391] Michal G. Mooney, "LULAC Wants to Know City's Plan for Lawsuit," *The Salinas Californian,* December 5, 1981.

[392] Letter from MALDEF attorney Ann Hill to Jim Gonzalez. August 25, 1981. Padilla Personal Collection.

[393] Michael G. Mooney, " Gilbert Padilla Case: City Decides to drop Discrimination," *The Salinas Californian*, January 13, 1982.

LULAC's advocacy and class action lawsuit against the City of Salinas prompted major reforms.[394] Specifically, there were major changes in the city's testing and hiring procedures within the fire department.[395] LULAC had filed a separate lawsuit against the city regarding the firefighter writing exam and the city had agreed to implement an affirmative action program to hire more minorities.[396] Specifically, the city agreed to "...distinguish between Mexican Americans and Hispanics when hiring new firefighters. Under the agreement 24 percent of the city's fire department workforce must be Mexican Americans within five years." Lily Cervantes, Cresencio Padilla, and Juan Sanchez of LULAC were appointed to a subcommittee that would oversee hiring practices by the City of Salinas, establishing recruitment goals and timetables for hiring Mexican Americans. Gilbert Padilla felt relief that he won. "…After five years it's been a terrible struggle," he said, adding that it was all was worth it because "a lot of Mexican Americans will not only have a better opportunity to work for the city but to advance."[397]

[394] Letter from LULAC President Jesse Sanchez, Esq., to B.J. Miller. Fair Employment Practices Commission. November 12,1976. Padilla Papers.
[395] "LULAC v. Salinas - Selection Process for Firefighter and Fire Cadet - charts, graphs, data on professional services, 1972 to 1980." Box 1259. Folder 6. Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund Records, M0673, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.
[396] Letter from Cresencio Padilla to Theodore E. Simmons. Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. February 1, 1979. Padilla Papers.
[397] Michael G. Mooney, "Gilbert Padilla Case: City Decides to drop Discrimination," *The Salinas Californian*, January 13, 1982.

"*La Migra*," Mexican Immigrants, Mexican Americans, and the U.S. Border Patrol

LULAC witnessed rampant power abuses by the United States Border Patrol in the Monterey Bay area during the 1970s.[398] Harassment and threats by the Border Patrol, which had a satellite office in Salinas, were common during this period and officers used various tactics to instill fear in the local population. They often overstepped their jurisdictional authority by arresting U.S. citizens. The officers also arrested undocumented migrants and took them to the local station until they were deported.

Juan Oliverez, who grew up in Salinas and returned to teach at the local community college after receiving a PhD from UC Berkeley, remembers immigration officers driving around the Monterey Bay area in green Ford cars and Ford Broncos intimidating the Mexican and Mexican American population.[399] On one occasion, the Border Patrol even arrested local UFW organizer Marshall Ganz.[400]

The continued harassment and raids by the Border Patrol in the agricultural fields and in public and private settings led local residents to seek the assistance of LULAC. In 1976, for example, Cresencio Padilla wrote to the U.S. Department of Justice that "…in late August 1975 and on February 1, 1976 members of our organization saw Border Patrol officers park their official vans close to the Christ the King Church in Salinas, position themselves close to the church exits, and check the

---

[398] Staff Writer, "Border Patrol Accused," *The Salinas Californian*, April 6, 1976; Staff Writer, "Patrol Accused of Harassment," *The Monterey Herald*, April 9, 1976
[399] Interview by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez with Juan Oliverez.
[400] Miriam Pawel, *The Union of Their Dreams: Power Hope and Struggle in Cesar Chavez's Farm Worker Movement* (New York, 2009), 163.

residency status of the faithful as they exited from the building following the mass."[401]

With so many complaints about abuses by the Border Patrol officers, residents started a committee against the Border Patrol, *Comité En Contra La Migra*. An April 1976 story in the *Monterey Herald* described the committee's frustration with policing by the Border Patrol. "The *Comité* says that in at least three instances since last August, Border Patrol vans have been parked near Roman Catholic churches with predominantly Spanish-speaking parishioners in Salinas and Pajaro."[402]

In a written response to Padilla's letter, dated June 7, 1976, Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) Deputy Commissioner James F. Greene described the role of the Border Patrol in the region:

> As you are aware, Mr. Padilla, the state of California, as well as many other areas of the nation, has experienced a tremendous influx of illegal entrants. This is depriving many U.S. citizens and lawful permanent resident aliens of employment and has imposed a staggering burden on the economy in the area. We are attempting to remedy this situation thorough the direction of the bulk of our enforcement efforts toward locating illegal aliens employed on farms, ranches, and in factories. We feel that all residents of the area will benefit as a result of this course of action.[403]

A particularly egregious incident that drew media attention and LULAC's advocacy occurred on September 24, 1976, in Salinas. Ramon Marquez Magana was working at the Firestone plant located at Cassin Ranch on Silliman Road in Watsonville. He heard yelling and noticed that the U.S Border Patrol was chasing

---

[401] Staff Writer, "Border Patrol Accused," *The Salinas Californian*, April 6, 1976.
[402] Staff Writer, "Patrol Accused of Harassment," *The Monterey Herald*, April 9, 1976.
[403] Letter from INS Deputy Commissioner James F. Greene to Cresencio Padilla. June 7, 1976. Padilla Papers.

farm workers who were working in a nearby field. He saw one of the officers finally catch up to a worker and hit him on the head with a club. The individual, Juan Casimiro, fell to the ground, where officer Frederick A. Hawkins hit him four more times, this time on Casimiro's back. Then the officer handcuffed Casimiro and arrested him.[404]

Besides Marquez Magana, thirty farm workers witnessed the incident. The farm workers summoned LULAC and Cresencio Padilla demanded an investigation by INS. Unfortunately for Juan Casimiro, he was deported to Mexico on October 1, 1976 and was on his way back to Michoacán, Mexico. But even though Casimiro was deported, LULAC did not abandon the investigation. Workers who witnessed the beating signed a letter on October 12, 1976, documenting the beating by the Border Patrol.[405]

Cultivating a Link to Power: Leon Panetta and Inter-Ethnic Solidarity

In the fall of 1976, as LULAC was seeking a federal investigation into the brutality of Juan Casimiro, there was a close congressional race between the incumbent Republican, Burt Talcott, and an Italian American, Leon Panetta. Cresencio Padilla wrote to Rep. Talcott on October 17, 1976 regarding the Casimiro

[404] Record of Sworn Statement. United States Department of Justice. Immigration and Naturalization Service. December 9, 1976. LULAC Papers and Padilla Papers.

[405] "El dia 24 de septiembre del año en curso, en Sillman Road en un rancho de fresa, se present el Border patrol con dos carros y dos vans para arrestar a personas indocumentadas. Un trabajador de nombere Juan Casimiro de 22 años de edad despues de ser arrestado por un official del Border Patrol, fue tirado entre los surcos y golpeado por dicho official, resultando el trabjador con la cabeza rota a consecuncia de los golpes recibido. Las Perosnas que estuvimos presents como testigos oculares a continuacion firmamos, Amelia Mcias, Roquel P. Sanchez. Ma. De Jesus Marquez, Ramon Marquez, Jr.

case, to which Talcott responded that he would look into the matter. But by early November he had lost his seat to Panetta.

Leon Panetta's parents were immigrants from Italy. Growing up Panetta witnessed firsthand how immigrants worked to better their livelihoods and created better opportunities for a second generation. He was taught at an early age to respect immigrants and be proud of his ethnic Italian heritage. In turn, as an adult he saw that the Mexican immigrants living in the Monterey Bay area were hard workers who, like previous immigrants, were heavily exploited. They closely resembled the Italians, who were Catholic, family-oriented, hard workers, and to a certain extent were predominantly immigrant peasants like his father had been.

Panetta's public service work began in the 1960s on the staff of U.S. Senator from California Thomas Kuchel and later in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Ousted from HEW over political differences Panetta joined John Lindsay's mayoral campaign in New York but found that he was not passionate about city politics. In 1970 Panetta returned to the Monterey Bay region to work as an attorney at his brother's law firm.[406] But after a few years back home in the Monterey Bay area, Panetta missed public service and the politics involved in federal governance.

[406] Leon Panetta, and Jim Newton, *Worthy Fights* (New York: Penguin Press, 2014). One of Leon Panetta's first cases was representing a group of Latino students and staff members at the relatively new University of California, Santa Cruz, who felt that the university was not doing enough to promote diversity on campus. Panetta settled the case after the university agreed to encourage ethnic diversity in its admission and hiring practices.



Figure 45. Julian Camacho ran for the 17th Congressional District seat in 1972 and 1974. In this picture famed photographer and environmentalist Ansel Adams (holding a hat) stands at Camacho's left. Adams served as Camacho's campaign photographer and supported Camacho financially by funds from pictures he sold. In Camacho, Adams found a candidate who was willing to protect the environment and the Monterey Bay coastline. Courtesy of Julian Camacho.[407]

He watched from afar in 1972 and 1974 when a young Mexican American, Julian Camacho, ran for Congress in the 17th Congressional District, which covered the larger Monterey Bay area. Julian Camacho lost two very close races to the Republican incumbent Burt Talcott. During the 1974 race Camacho had UFW's endorsement and support to campaign, but the backlash from a conservative Salinas Valley was felt when he lost by just 2,000 votes out of 150,000 that were cast.[408] Talcott not only had no record of advocating for the growing Mexican American community in the region, but also was vocal about his anti-immigrant feelings in

[407] Telephone interview with Julian Camacho, Sacramento, California, July 11, 2016.
[408] Leon Panetta, and Jim Newton, *Worthy Fights* (New York: Penguin Press, 2014).

general. Regarding Vietnamese and other Asian immigrants seeking refugee status during the Vietnam conflict, he posited, "…we have too many Orientals already. If they all gravitate to California, the tax and welfare rolls will get over-burdened and we already have our share of illegal aliens."[409]



Figure 46. Julian Camacho with Leon and Sylvia Panetta in Monterey, CA, 2015. Courtesy of Julian Camacho.

Since Julian Camacho opted not to try a third time, in 1976 Leon Panetta ran for Congress and won. He believes that this success came because of the previous campaigning done by Julian Camacho and the Mexican American community in the region against Burt Talcott. He always felt he owed something to the local immigrant Mexican and Mexican American community and was supportive of LULAC throughout his tenure in Congress.

Panetta listened to LULAC and he understood the civil rights advocacy by the local Mexican and Mexican immigrant population that often reminded him of his

[409] Panetta and Newton, *Worthy Fights*, 52-55.

parents.[410] Gilbert Padilla recalled how whenever Leon Panetta spoke at LULAC meetings or an event, he began by talking about his immigrant parents and the poverty they came from. Gilbert added that, Panetta had a way of negotiating with people, to turn people around and see another side.



Figure 46. Leon Panetta speaking at a LULAC event. Circa 1980s. Courtesy of Cresencio Padilla Papers.

Padilla had written on October 7, 1976 that he had asked the Border Patrol for an investigation into the alleged assault on Juan Casimiro.[411] On December 22, Herbert E. Walsh, Deputy Chief for the Border Patrol station in Pleasanton,

[410] Interview with Leon Panetta conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, Monterey, California, July 7, 2008.

[411] On the U.S Border Patrol abuses see, Kelly Lytle Hernandez, *Migra!: A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Marshall Ganz, *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Rachel St. John, *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), Frank Bardacke, *Trampling Out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers* (London: Verso, 2011); Matt García *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movemen*t (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

California, informed LULAC that the investigation was completed and the results would be available within thirty days. On February 7, 1977, LULAC contacted Walsh for the results of the investigation. Walsh responded that the investigation results would be available by February 16, and that LULAC should contact Knox, who was about to replace Walsh as deputy chief at Pleasanton. But on the 16th, Knox told Cresencio Padilla that the investigation was still open.

Frustrated and concerned for Juan Casimiro, on February 22, 1977, nearly five months after the incident with the Border Patrol, LULAC wrote to Leon Panetta about the role and importance of LULAC as a civil rights organization and asked him to pursue an investigation into the Casimiro incident:

> Congressman Panetta, LULAC stands as a vanguard for the majority of Latin American Citizens of Monterey County and with acceptance of this responsibility goes the burden of following through with matters brought before it for some satisfactory reply and or conclusion. For this reason we, the members of LULAC, are monstrated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). Their attitude and lack of concern lends covered-up by the INS. LULAC cannot and will not allow a matter as grave as this be covered up or fall to the wayside.[412]

With the letter Padilla included an affidavit signed by thirty eyewitnesses that described Casimiro's brutal assault. Padilla told Panetta that LULAC did not believe that any physical force was warranted during the arrest. On April 29, Panetta informed LULAC and Padilla that he would personally look into the investigation directly with the INS and promised to meet with the incoming INS Commissioner.[413]

---

[412] Cresencio Padilla to Leon Panetta. February 22, 1977. Padilla Papers. No Identifiable Box. Folder Labeled LULAC. Stanford University Department of Special Collections.
[413] Leon Panetta to Cresencio Padilla. April 29, 1977. Padilla Papers. No Identifiable Box. Folder Labeled LULAC. Stanford University Department of Special Collections.

Panetta added that if a satisfactory resolution is not reached by that time there are several options open for further action. A letter could be sent to the U.S. Attorney General requesting an investigation into the Border Patrol's role in this matter. A formal request could be made that the new IRS Commissioner implement a new investigation, independent of the Border Patrol's own internal investigatory office. Or the Immigration Subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee could be asked to make its own inquiry into the manner in which the INS has handled the investigation.[414]

By July 30, the U.S. Border Patrol had finished its investigation into the Juan Casimiro case. However, by that time "WANTED" posters depicting the Border Patrol agent Fred Hawkins had been circulated in Watsonville and Salinas.[415]

[414] Leon Panetta to Cresencio Padilla. April 29, 1977. Padilla Papers. No Identifiable Box. Folder Labeled LULAC. Stanford University Department of Special Collections.
[415] Cresencio Padilla Papers. No Identifiable Box. Folder Labeled LULAC. Stanford University Department of Special Collections.

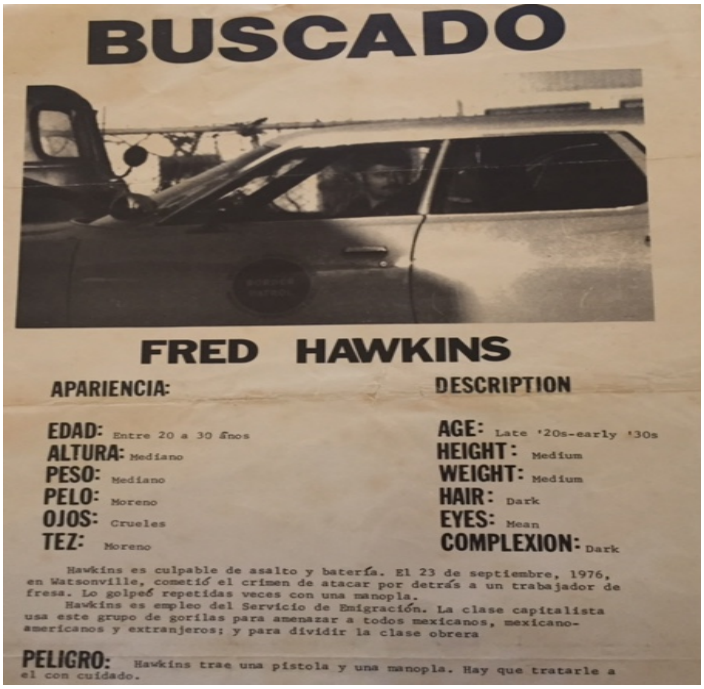


Figure 47. Former INS commissioner L.F. Chapman, Jr. had already written to Panetta describing his concern over the flyers:

> On January 27, 1977, a number of posters began to appear in the Salinas area….About 500 such posters have since been found about the area. The effects of this campaign on Agent Hawkins and his family have been so deleterious that the Service was finally obliged to transfer them to another location. It has since been learned that the post office listed on the wanted poster. P.O. Box 1364, is a well-known mail drop for various organizations such as the "Committee Against the Border Patrol.[416]

After the investigation was concluded, Officer Hawkins was cleared of any wrongdoing. It was determined that Hawkins used force that was necessary to effect the arrest.[417] No disciplinary action was taken against him. Hawkins, concerned for

[416] Cresencio Padilla Papers. No Identifiable Box. Folder Labeled LULAC. Stanford University Department of Special Collections.
[417] Staff Writer, "Border Patrolman Vindicated of Charges by Second Probe," *The Monterey Herald*, July 30, 1977, 17.

his safety in Salinas, requested and received a transfer to Tucson, Arizona.[418] LULAC demanded that the investigation be re-opened. Panetta told the local newspaper that if he found that the INS investigation was inadequate he would ask INS Commissioner Castillo to reopen it.[419] The *Comité En Contra La Migra* and LULAC held a press conference and called the INS investigation a whitewash. Carla Chavez of the *Comité* said that the investigation was not acceptable. "We don't intend to let the controversy over the beating die down." Alvaro Sanchez, one of the witnesses to the attack, was at the press conference and stated that Casimiro was clubbed even after he was knocked to the ground and offered no further resistance. "He [Casimiro] was stunned" by the initial blow from the billy club," stated Sanchez. Chavez stated that Hawkins had taken his badge off and refused to give his name and badge number to witnesses who wanted to report the incident. INS Commissioner Castillo, in a final letter to Panetta, reiterated that there was no evidence after two investigations to indicate that Hawkins used unnecessary force in arresting Casimiro.

Panetta was already aware of the Casimiro investigation when, on June 6, 1977, he wrote to INS Commissioner Leonel Castillo urging him to appoint Cresencio Padilla to the Hispanic Advisory Committee on Immigration and Naturalization:

> Mr. Cresencio Padilla has been extremely active in Monterey County and with the concerns of California's Hispanic population. His work involves daily contact with Mexicans and Mexican Americans who are experiencing

[418] Cresencio Padilla Papers. No Identifiable Box. Folder Labeled LULAC. Stanford University Department of Special Collections.
[419] Staff Writer, "Border Patrolman Vindicated of Charges by Second Probe," *The Monterey Herald*, July 30, 1977, 17.

difficulties related to the Immigration and Naturalization Service. He is attuned to the problems and needs of Hispanics and has a great wealth of knowledge and expertise to offer the committee."[420]



Figure 48. Mercedes and Cresencio Padilla with Sylvia and Leon Panetta at a LULAC *5 de Mayo* event, 1986. On right with Panetta in Washington, D.C. Courtesy of Cresencio Padilla Personal Collection.

Though Cresencio Padilla was never invited to serve on the committee, the region now had two very powerful figures that were vigilant of how the U.S. Border Patrol treated the local population. LULAC's efforts toward disciplining Hawkins in the Casimiro case did not succeed either, but Cresencio Padilla recalls that after the

[420] Letter from Leon E. Panetta to INS Commissioner Leonel Castillo. June 6, 1977. Cresencio Padilla Papers. No Identifiable Box. Folder Labeled LULAC. Stanford University Department of Special Collections.

turmoil of the Casimiro case, the local Border Patrol modified its tactics and treatment of the local population.[421] In fact, it was common for picketers to surround the regional office in Salinas demanding the Border Patrol officers respect the undocumented immigrants of the region who were hired by local employers and should be treated humanely.

But tensions with the Border Patrol continued. Five years after the Casimiro incident, Jose Antonio Garcia, a minor, was detained by the Border Patrol, labeled an undocumented resident, arrested, and taken to the local juvenile hall. When Raymond Garcia, Jose Antonio's father, attempted to free his son, he was told that his son would be deported. Garcia turned to LULAC. Cresencio immediately contacted Leon Panetta and even though Panetta's staff had responded by telling Padilla that Garcia should contact the congressman's office directly, Panetta was shocked by what had occurred and wrote directly to Cresencio:

> Dear Chris: Thank you for contacting my office to express your concern regarding Mr. Jose Antonio Garcia, the young man who is currently in Juvenile Hall, and was previously detained by the U.S. Border Patrol as an undocumented resident. I understand that he is a United States citizen, and that his father, Mr. Raymond Garcia, needed to determine if deportation proceedings are pending against his son. I also understand that he wishes to file a complaint against the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service regarding this matter. Chris, I will be happy to assist Mr. Garcia. However, as my staff advised you, he should contact my office directly concerning this matter. As yet, I have not heard from him.[422]

---

[421] Cresencio Padilla Papers. No Identifiable Box. Folder Labeled LULAC. Stanford University Department of Special Collections.

[422] Letter from Leon Panetta to Cresencio Padilla. May 20, 1982. Cresencio Padilla Papers. No Identifiable Box. Folder Labeled LULAC. Stanford University Department of Special Collections.

While many complaints were filed not many led to any monetary compensation. The Border Patrol regional office in Salinas closed a few years after the Casimiro case. While no direct correlation existed from the backlash of the Casimiro case, the community could finally live at peace without fear of the Border Patrol in the region.

Much later, in 1984, Panetta introduced a bill in Congress supporting a guest worker program for immigrants from Mexico, a political position that many Mexican Americans opposed, including the UFW and Cresencio Padilla. In a letter to LULAC and Padilla, Panetta pleaded:

> The issue is not whether foreign workers will come to this country but whether they will do so legally or illegally. Our nation has a long history of giving workers from throughout the world an opportunity to come here and be productive, and I believe that legal provisions for guest workers will continue that tradition while helping to end the exploitation which exists today. The abuses of the present system are no more acceptable than those of the old Bracero program. The reality is that we need a workable program, which will extend the protections of the law to foreign workers and their families.[423]

While some might argue that this statement was simply protecting the interests of growers in the region, there was plenty of evidence to support Panetta's genuine respect and passion for helping immigrant workers. Many farm workers were living as undocumented immigrants with no legal protections. Panetta was offering an alternative: legal status for immigrants working in agriculture, which would afford them greater civil rights and legal protections. Panetta added that under his proposed bill, "… foreign workers would be entitled to adequate housing, insurance against

[423] Letter from Leon Panetta to Cresencio Padilla. May 30, 1984. Cresencio Padilla Papers. No Identifiable Box. Folder Labeled LULAC. Stanford University Department of Special Collections.

injury, decent working conditions, and fair wages. None of those protections exists today for undocumented workers."[424] Panetta had a point. Since the end of the Bracero Program in 1964, agricultural companies had not had to provide their employees with housing, many workers who were undocumented had no legal recourse against their employers, and many could be deported.[425]

While Cresencio Padilla and Leon Panetta might have differed about the guest worker proposal, Cresencio found a link to power and cultivated a relationship with Leon Panetta that lasts to this day. By April 1985, Monterey Bay area LULAC had its first female president, Lydia Camarillo. For Camarillo, the trauma of the Border Patrol raiding homes and chasing undocumented migrants still haunted her years after they raided her childhood home in El Paso, Texas. "When I was growing up I heard a Border Patrol guard say, 'Stop or I'll shoot.'" She asked her grandmother to explain what was happening. "*Asi es la vida*," her grandmother said. "That's life."[426]

Camarillo had a passion for social justice and she continued LULAC's mission of advocating for the undocumented in the region, lobbying county and federal officials to do more to stop the abuses by the Border Patrol agents.[427]

---

[424] Letter from Leon Panetta to Cresencio Padilla. May 30, 1984. Cresencio Padilla Papers. No Identifiable Box. Folder Labeled LULAC. Stanford University Department of Special Collections.
[425] For more on the Bracero Program and abuses by employers see Deborah Cohen, *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in the Postwar United States and Mexico* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), Don Mitchell, *They Saved the Crops: Labor, Landscape, and the Struggle Over Industrial Farming in Bracero-Era California* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012). U.S. Senator Kamala Harris and Diane Feinstein as of May 1, 2017 have proposed a bill to provide a legal path for undocumented workers in the agricultural industry.
[426] Letter from Leon Panetta to Lydia Camarillo. April 24, 1985. Cresencio Padilla Papers. No Identifiable Box. Folder Labeled LULAC. Stanford University Department of Special Collections
[427] Fred Alvarez, "They See Law as Tool for Social Change," *The Salinas Californian*, August 12, 1986.

In 1985 LULAC received a letter from Leon Panetta outlining his proposal for the formation of a multijurisdictional task force to do the following:

> 1) Establish a coordinated effort of federal, state and local officials aimed at promoting better understanding of the rights and responsibilities of individuals and law enforcement authorities in the immigration area.
>
> 2) Review specific issues and concerns regarding INS activities to ensure that valid complaints are responded to and appropriate enforcement actions taken.
>
> 3) Provide information to the community regarding existing applicable laws as well as comments and recommendations on any possible legislative proposals to change those laws.[428]

Panetta added that his goal was to have elected officials at the federal, state, and local levels form the core of the task force. Law enforcement officials of the INS and the various communities, along with representatives of various concerned community groups, would serve as participants and resources to assist the task force in its efforts. He invited representatives from neighboring congressional districts, the region's state representatives, various mayors, and representatives of the INS and LULAC to discuss the issues.

Police Brutality

During the 1970s and 1980s, LULAC was summoned to address numerous complaints of police brutality toward young Mexican and Mexican Americans in the local community. The police departments in Salinas and Watsonville were notorious for harassing Mexican Americans by stopping them and asking them to provide proof of legal residency. LULAC filed more than one hundred formal complaints with

[428] Letter from Leon Panetta to Lydia Camarillo. April 24, 1985. Cresencio Padilla Papers. No Identifiable Box. Folder Labeled LULAC. Stanford University Department of Special Collections.

various state and federal agencies against the City of Salinas police department between 1976 and 1986. LULAC was contesting a long history of racial discrimination and police brutality in the region and predominantly Anglo administrators working for local municipalities felt threatened by what they perceived as ordinary police work. Over the years local police departments had gotten away with the use of unnecessary force, illegal arrests, and even killings. Police assaults on the local residents led LULAC to put even more pressure on the police departments to change their tactics.

On July 11, 1981, LULAC's national president, Tony Bonilla, spoke at a Castroville-Salinas LULAC dinner with about 200 people in attendance.[429] Bonilla told the audience that LULAC would be documenting alleged police abuse in Monterey County; and that LULAC was seeking a federal grand jury investigation to investigate police officers, prosecutors, and the district attorney in Monterey County.[430] At the same event, Bonilla commended Leon Panetta for standing up and not doing what "the John Wayne President" (Ronald Reagan) wanted. With this kind of clout at the national level, the local LULAC chapter's advocacy was placing law enforcement agencies on the defensive.

Lowriding

Lowriding—cruising "low and slow" in classic cars specially refitted to ride lower to the ground—on the main streets of Watsonville and Salinas had become a

[429] Irma Mendoza, "Hispanics Must Unite LULAC President Says," *The Salinas Californian*, July 13, 1981.
[430] Ibid.

regular Sunday evening event from about 6:00pm to 11:00pm, after which drivers would pull over and park their cars to socialize and network.[431] As hundreds and at times thousands of people showed up to watch or participate in the cruising, some fights, stabbings, and even shootings occurred. As an attempt to ostensibly maintain peace, police departments began to associate cruising culture with the violence and surveilled and regulated these events accordingly.[432]

[431] Interview with Philip Tabera conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, San Jose State University, September 6, 2016
[432] Ibid.



Figure 49. Chicanos from Salinas and the Lowrider club Barrio Pride. Philip Tabera of LULAC on the far right with vest and mustache. Courtesy of Philip Tabera. On the cover of the first Lowrider Magazine, January1977 a young Chicana, Gloria, from the Salinas Valley, Soledad, California. Courtesy of *Lowrider Magazine*.

After repeated failed local attempts to address police harassment against young Mexican Americans who often congregated for cruising on Main Street in Salinas, LULAC contacted the FBI, which essentially did nothing. In 1973, when LULAC's first complaint was filed against the police department, an agreement was reached between LULAC and California attorney general Evelle Younger's office about the Salinas harassment. By 1974 Cresencio Padilla, as president of the local

LULAC chapter, asked Phillip Montez, the regional director of the Civil Rights Commission, to investigate numerous cases of police brutality in the region:

> [A]t this time, we request that your office come and investigate these growing incidents. The local authorities are aware that this community is taking some action. They have increased their efforts to discourage people from testifying through actions such as harassing the family.[433]

On September 23, 1979 LULAC sent a formal complaint outlining its concerns to Younger and the news media. Phillip Tabera, a Chicano activist, LULAC member, chair of the criminal justice committee—and a lowrider himself— argued that the Salinas police department was violating "…constitutional and human rights and creating stress in the Mexican American community."[434] Tabera added that the police department was continuously "harassing suspected illegals," including making demands of Mexican American citizens to prove their legal status, in violation of an agreement between Younger's office and LULAC in 1973 when the first complaint was filed against the police department.

On June 23, 1979, Francisco Sanchez, a member of the United Farm Workers, was picketing during a strike against Sun Harvest in Salinas when deputy sheriff William Jenkins approached him and attempted to arrest him. According to Jenkins, he applied an arm lock when Sanchez resisted and broke Sanchez's arm. Deputy sheriffs had been dispatched to arrest as many strikers as possible after the number of

[433] Letter from Cresencio Padilla to Phillip Montes, October 16, 1974. Cresencio Padilla Papers. No Identifiable Box. Folder Labeled LULAC. Stanford University Department of Special Collections.
[434] Letter from Evelle Younger, Department of Justice to Phillip Tabera, LULAC. November 10, 1977. Cresencio Padilla Papers. No Identifiable Box. Folder Labeled LULAC. Stanford University Department of Special Collections.

picketers exceeded the limit set by a court order. With the assistance of LULAC, Francisco Sanchez sued the sheriff's department.

Although it took almost four years, on December 12, 1983, a jury in Monterey County awarded Sanchez the payment of all medical costs incurred from his broken arm. While Jenkins was cleared of the brutality charges, he was found guilty of using excessive force. For LULAC and other civil rights leaders this was a victory against police brutality in the region, but they cited twenty cases other cases of police brutality that were still pending an investigation.

Richard Borunda was drinking in the front yard of his East Salinas home when Salinas police officers approached Borunda and told him he was breaking the law by drinking in public.[435] Borunda responded that he was actually in his own private yard and ignored the officers by going inside his house. The officers chased Borunda into the house, beat him on the head, and hit his father George in the stomach multiple times. Both Borundas were arrested for drinking in public, resisting arrest, disturbing the peace, and assaulting a police officer.[436]

Though the Borundas were acquitted of all the charges they sought LULAC's assistance to file a complaint against the police department.[437] A federal jury subsequently ruled that the officers did not use excessive force, but stated they did violate the Borundas' fourth-amendment rights to be secure against unreasonable

---

[435] Letter from George Borunda to Cresencio Padilla. December 12, 1984. Cresencio Padilla Papers. No Identifiable Box. Folder Labeled LULAC. Stanford University Department of Special Collections; and *LULAC Legacy in Monterey County*, 248.
[436] Mark Wittington, "Victims Win Salinas Police Brutality Case," *The Salinas Californian*, June 8, 1987.
[437] "Salinas Ordered to Pay in Wrongful Arrest Suit," *The Salinas Californian*, November 9, 1988.

searches and seizures. The Borundas won a settlement of $22,000. Not too happy with the decision, Michael Groff, the Salinas city attorney, complained to the *Salinas Californian* that "LULAC and Padilla harp on some kind of policy and procedure of the Salinas police department against Hispanics." Groff added that "…Every time there's a scuffle between a white officer and a Hispanic person, they cry foul." The Borundas and LULAC felt they finally were making progress with the issue of police brutality, but it would not be the last case.

One of the most disturbing incidents of racial discrimination that was documented was a case that Cresencio Padilla witnessed. A twenty-year-old Mexican farm worker, Pedro Ramirez, was arrested for allegedly selling drugs. Ramirez was found guilty and convicted by an all-white jury in Monterey County. Jurors were required to be registered voters, and at the time, the majority of registered voters resided on the Monterey Peninsula and lived in the cities of Carmel, Monterey, Seaside, and Marina, not in Salinas, the county seat, where most of the Mexican and Mexican American population lived. Because so much of that population failed to register to vote or was ineligible to do so. Mexican and Mexican Americans faced with trials rarely had a jury of their peers.[438]

After Pedro Ramirez's trial, Cresencio Padilla was approached by one of the jurors, Arthur Hall, who told Padilla that he was disturbed by what he had witnessed during juror deliberations. According to Padilla, Hall was "…nearly in tears when he began to admit that Ramirez had been convicted not by the facts presented, but by the

[438] Padilla, *LULAC Legacy in Monterey County*, 37-39.

fact that most of the jurors were from Carmel." The juror claimed that more than one juror made racist statements during their deliberations. He told Padilla that he often heard them stating, "…all those Mexicans were 'lazy bums, sneaky, thieves, on welfare, and all using dope'." For Hall, the whole case resembled a lynch mob and exemplified the injustices that Mexicans and Mexican Americans faced in the Monterey Bay region. For Padilla, even more regretful was the fact that he advised Ramirez to wear his best clothing for the case and Hall reported that a juror had speculated during deliberations that "the defendant, Mr. Ramirez, was dealing drugs because you can't own a $100 pair of shoes chopping weeds."[439]

LULAC also sought support in the Hernandez case from the local NBC television station affiliate KSBW. In a letter dated May 25, 1978, a KSBW producer, Pat DeSilva, sent a letter supporting and addressing LULAC's concerns to Salinas Police Chief Ferguson, alleging police harassment against minorities, police brutality, discrimination, false arrests, and the lack of a police review board or human rights committee, and outlining specific cases. DeSilva wrote that the State Attorney General's office specifically says that "an officer cannot arrest an illegal alien for being in the United States unless he personally sees the alien cross the border illegally." Similar complaints arrived at the LULAC office. Padilla even witnessed a Salinas police officer whose last name was Huff requesting to see the "green card" of Pedro Hernandez in the hall of the local court. Three days later, Selia Arella was called to the local shopping center to pick up her son and when she arrived, police

[439] Padilla, *LULAC Legacy in Monterey County*, 37-39.

officers asked her to show proof of a green card.[440] One of them threatened Arella by saying that he could send her and her children back to Mexico if she could not prove their legal residency.

Racist incidents were also prevalent on school campuses where racial tension among Anglos and Mexican students were erupting into full-blown "race riots," as one local newspaper described the conflicts among students. On one occasion, Mexican American students at North Salinas High School heard Anglos yell, "Beaners go home." Then, the ensuing fistfights between Anglos and Latinos broke out on campus on March 10, 1979.[441] The "riot" forced the school principal to send the 1,925 students home because of reports that some youths had guns and knives. The newspaper account stated that the police confiscated ten knives, four homemade clubs, brass knuckles, and a machine-gun bayonet. One student from another high school told the police that he attended the cross-town melee in order to defend his Latino friend who had been beaten up by five Anglos. One newspaper reported that "…tension on campus had been growing since Tuesday when an Anglo and a Latino fought in the school gymnasium. By Thursday school officials had asked for help from the police."[442] Another news account reported that 75 Latinos and close to 125 Anglos stood in groups about 100 yards apart along East Alvin Drive in Salinas near

[440] Cresencio Padilla and Mercedes Padilla interviews conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, January 20, 2016, March 26, 2016, March 30, 2017 & Padilla, *LULAC Legacy in Monterey County*.
[441] Lopez v. Monterey County: photocopies of court case research documenting historical discrimination against Mexicans in Monterey County, California. Box 4 Folder 13. M0944, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.
[442] Ibid.

the high school. "They glared at each other, but there were no incidents."[443] According to one student, the Latinos asked friends from Watsonville and Gonzales to attend the confrontation because their group was outnumbered the day before. Similarly, Anglos reportedly enlisted white friends from Prunedale.[444]

As the Latino population grew in the Monterey Bay area they continued to encounter racial hostility. Despite a thorough intensive search of newspaper reports and court records from the 1970s and 1980s, LULAC continued to be the only civil rights organization in the Monterey Bay area reported to have spoken openly about the racist incidents against Mexicans and Mexican Americans.[445] But LULAC officers always felt there was more to do.

Affordable Housing

The Monterey Bay area is known internationally for its calm climate and scenic beauty, which attract residents from around the world but also make it one of the most expensive places to live in the United States. One of the most important issues facing the local community was affordable housing. Even into the 1980s, farm workers in the region could be found living in cars, garages, small cramped apartments, makeshift tent communities, and even in cave-like conditions.

---

[443] Ibid.
[444] Lopez v. Monterey County: photocopies of court case research documenting historical discrimination against Mexicans in Monterey County, California. Box 4 Folder 13. M0944, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.
[445] MALDEF and Joaquin Avila along with a group of local organizers compiled extensive research about racial discrimination and police brutality cases leading to lawsuits against Monterey County for voter disenfranchisement. Lopez v. Monterey County: photocopies of court case research documenting historical discrimination against Mexicans in Monterey County, California. Boxes 1-15 Folders 1-56. M0944, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.

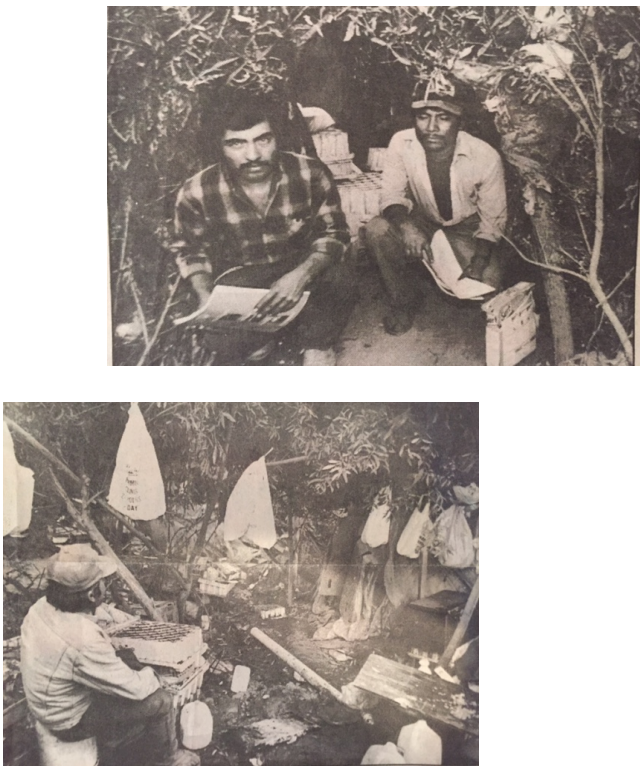


Figure 49. Farm workers were found living in cave-like conditions in the outskirts of Salinas, in 1985. Photos by Richard Green. Courtesy of *The Salinas Californian*.

Cresencio Padilla was advocating for farm workers' housing while he was still a social worker at Head Start and well before he founded the Castroville-Salinas chapter of LULAC.[446] On June 23, 1970, he went before the Monterey County Board of Supervisors to propose the building of housing units for farm workers in Castroville. "There's no doubt about it," he told the supervisors. "Farm families need housing and there's none available."[447] The board endorsed plans to build seventy-three units in Castroville for farm workers. Padilla remembers that the decision drew opposition from local residents who felt that building low-income housing would

[446] Interviews with Cresencio Padilla and Mercedes conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, January 20, 2016, March 26, 2016 and March 30, 2017.
[447] Staff Writer, "Board Endorses Plans for Castroville Units," *The Salinas Californian*, June 24, 1970.

devalue the neighboring real estate prices, or that the residents were simply criminals. One local resident, Elizabeth Kwandras, feared that the planned community would be too crowded. “An area of this sort can soon become a ghetto and may become a slum,” she said. However, the chairman of the Board of Supervisors, Loren Smith, stated that “there is still a definite need for this kind of housing.”

Even though, with the help of the Housing Authority in 1970, seventy-three units were built in Castroville, by the 1980s and 1990s housing conditions for farm workers became so bad that Padilla, with the support of an owner of an empty lot, established a tent city in Watsonville for farm workers who had been living in horrid conditions. Twenty years after the Castroville housing was built, Padilla addressed the same issue to the same county board. He told the supervisors that as a social worker for Head Start, his duties had included making home visits, and he became aware of the housing needs. Being a former farm worker himself, he had lived in a labor camp in Pajaro, in a home with three other families. But, he told the board, the situation had only become worse in the ensuing twenty years.

LULAC and Padilla proposed that the county sell 75 acres of land to the Housing Authority or CHISPA[448] at 75 percent of market value for immediate construction of farm-worker housing; set aside $300,000 for inclusionary housing; require developers to either set aside land or pay 15 percent as inclusionary housing

[448] CHISPA (Community Housing Improvement Systems and Planning Association, Inc.) is the largest private, nonprofit housing developer based in Monterey County.

fees; and provide transitional housing for farm workers for up to a year so they could find appropriate housing.[449]

LULAC and Cresencio Padilla's advocacy on behalf of farm workers for housing was creating an interesting environment in the larger Monterey Bay area. Padilla told the Board of Supervisors "…everyone is cooperating but the growers." He continued to pressure growers to do more, saying that growers were morally obliged to support low-income housing. With pressure coming from LULAC, local politicians and growers started listening.

Padilla and the task force originally proposed by Leon Panetta were trying to raise $1 million through taxes on agriculture. Padilla suggested that growers be taxed anywhere from one cent to twenty-five cents for every box that carried crops from the region. Some growers, such as Tim Driscoll—whose company was the largest berry grower in the world, with hundreds of workers in the region—thought the idea was interesting.[450] Rick Antle, another prominent grower, felt that wages for farm workers should be increased. "Bring all the wages up. That's the only true solution. Let's bring everything back up like the gains they made in the 1970s," he said.[451] For Antle the growers were not to blame for the low wages. It was the labor contractors who

[449] Before the Board of Supervisors in and for the County of Monterey, State of California. "Presentation by LULAC Concerning the Housing Crisis for Farm Workers." October 24, 1989. No Identifiable Box. Folder Labeled LULAC. Stanford University Department of Special Collections.
[450] Marty Burelson, "Growers Urged to Fund Worker Housing," *The Salinas Californian*, March 27, 1991.
[451] Roya Camp, "Summit Called on Farm Housing, Karas seeks Shelter Ideas," *The Salinas Californian*, September 26, 1991.

hired and paid workers meager wages, compared to his company who hired workers directly and was paying his workforce $10 an hour in 1991.[452]

By September of 1991, leaders in the agricultural industry, including owners of the largest firms, were meeting with union leaders and civil rights advocates to discuss housing for farm workers. "Yesterday's meeting was convened by Supervisor Sam Karas in response to the discovery this summer of more than 150 migrants living in cardboard shacks and caves burrowed into ravines on a Prunedale ranch," said one news report.[453] These meetings were unprecedented and marked a turning point in civil rights advocacy. LULAC and Padilla's leadership had brought the most important stakeholders of the region to the table and to the beginnings of agreement about one of the region's greatest needs for its workforce, the need to build housing for farm workers.

As LULAC became the most powerful civil rights organization in the larger Monterey Bay area, all social classes of the Mexican and Mexican American population sought the organization's support and advice. Unlike other LULAC chapters that might have avoided interactions with the working class and immigrant Mexican community, this chapter embraced the working-class backgrounds of many of its members. By 1985, LULAC was lobbying government officials and the business community to support the labor struggles that were evolving in Watsonville, as a group of Mexican female cannery workers went on strike.

---

[452] Susan Ferris, "Migrant Housing Crisis Tackled at Unusual Gathering in Salinas," *Monterey County Herald*, September 26, 1991.

On October 23, 1985, Lydia Camarillo, president of the local LULAC chapter, presented a LULAC resolution in support of the cannery strikers in Watsonville:

> WHEREAS: The Watsonville and Dick Shaw canneries are seeking to destroy the workers' decent wages and morale; and Whereas the strikers are suffering not only 37% to 40% reduction of their wages but also selective prosecution by law enforcement and the judicial system…LULAC strongly supports the strikers in their efforts….LULAC authorizes the President to work with the District Director to seek LULAC's state office assistance to help the strikers in their struggle.[454]

Led by Cresencio Padilla, LULAC members and Gloria Betancourt, a cannery employee and strike leader who had immigrated from Mexico as a young teenager, mobilized the region to support the cannery workers. Civil rights leaders from around the country, including Rev. Jesse Jackson, attended rallies in support of the workers. The region was transformed politically through a coalition of Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants. Immigrants were not scapegoated for taking jobs, or blamed for the racialized views that much of the Anglo population had of "all Mexicans." Here, Mexican Americans and the LULAC chapter defended and advocated on behalf of the Mexican immigrant population.

Conclusion

LULAC was the most successful civil rights organization advocating for the Mexican and Mexican American community in the Monterey Bay area during the 1970s, 1980s, and into the early 1990s. Through the 1990s leaders of the Monterey

[454] See Padilla, *LULAC Legacy in Monterey County*, 351; Lydia Camarillo. LULAC Resolution. October 23, 1985. Monterey County Chapter Council 2055. In Cresencio Padilla Papers. No Identifiable Box. Folder Labeled LULAC. Stanford University Department of Special Collections.

Bay area LULAC chapter, such as Mercedes and Cresencio Padilla, Phillip Tabera, Roberto Melendez, Dr. Juan Oliverez, Jesse G. Sanchez, Raul Calanche, Dr. William Melendez, Lydia Camarillo, and Lily Cervantes continued to draw attention to civil rights issues concerning Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the Monterey Bay area. Hundreds of letters were sent to the U.S. Department of Justice, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, members of Congress, the FBI, the Monterey County District Attorney's office, school boards, and other governmental agencies asking them to audit and investigate local agencies that were harassing and discriminating against the local population.[455]

LULAC lobbied the City of Salinas and County of Monterey to implement affirmative action programs and brought lawsuits against both for employment discrimination.[456] By 1976 lawsuits against the Salinas Union High School and North Monterey County school districts led to the implementation of bilingual education programs in both districts. In 1977, LULAC sought and won an increase in Spanish-language programming at the local NBC affiliate KSBW. That same year it successfully sued the City of Salinas and its fire department for discrimination in not promoting Mexican American firefighters. LULAC also won the support of the local private sector, working with the Pacific Telephone Corporation to provide Spanish-speaking operators.

---

[455] Cresencio Padilla and Mercedes Padilla interviews conducted by author. January 20, 2016. March 26,2016. March 30, 2017

[456] Employment Files. Lopez v. Monterey County: photocopies of court case research documenting historical discrimination against Mexicans in Monterey County, California. Box 10 Folder 39. M0944, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.

By the late 1980s, LULAC was continuing to provide support and to advocate on behalf of Mexicans and Mexican Americans, but its leaders finally agreed that they could only change the local establishment by encouraging Mexican Americans to run for elective office on the school boards, city councils, county board of supervisors, and the California State Assembly. The region still lagged in contrast to other areas of the country with high Mexican American populations.[457]

The early work by the local LULAC chapter established a strong foundation for civil rights and for the voting rights cases that MALDEF would eventually take on and successfully argue before the United States Supreme Court. Mexican Americans had spent decades fighting for civil rights against the Anglo establishment, but they soon would be embroiled internally over who would seek office or be elected the first Chicano to the city councils and school boards in the region. LULAC would soon pursue greater access to political power by encouraging certain members of the Mexican community to seek electoral office.

[457] See William Vincent Flores, and Rina Benmayor, *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space, and Rights* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 3-11.



Figure 50. Gilbert Padilla the firefighter who sued the City of Salinas running for school board on the left. Simon Salinas, Cresencio Padilla, and Jesse Sanchez on right. LULAC allies were united in the race to elect the first Mexican American councilmember in Salinas in 1989, but by 1992 old friends became enemies and new political factions evolved that remain today. Courtesy of *El Sol Magazine Newspaper.*

By the mid-1990s some of the LULAC founders were getting older, retiring and going their separate ways as factions involving politics and decisions about who would run for office arose. Jesse Sanchez died of cancer in 1995 and Cresencio Padilla had retired by 1996. On July 18, 1996, Maria Gonzalez of Castroville described her frustration over continued police brutality in the region in a letter to the *Salinas Californian*:

> For many years I saw two Latino Leaders on newspaper and television interviews fighting for the rights of the Latino community. They fought for various fronts such as job discrimination, housing, and police, and INS abuses. They also did registration drives, fundraising for scholarship and redistricting. One Latino leader, Jesse Sanchez, passed away last year. He fought for equality for many years. Another Latino leader was Cresencio Padilla…He fought many battles for many years. Who is speaking for the present injustices, the immigrant bashing, police abuses, or affirmative action?

> Why aren't they speaking up about the recent police shooting of Bulmaro Quiroz Reyes? Wake up Salinas do something about it! I know that if Mr. Cresencio Padilla was still involved he would have tried to do something about it.[458]

Police shootings still had not ended, and LULAC had lost a lot of its influence and momentum by the late 1990s. Even Cresencio Padilla, often frustrated at the drop in attendance and membership of LULAC, would simply go directly to the elected officials to file grievances over housing and what he saw as the ongoing abuse of power by law enforcement in the region. In 2007 the Monterey County sheriff's department was aggressively patrolling the road headed to Watsonville with checkpoints to profile farm workers who they believed were undocumented.[459] Many farm workers who did not have driver's licenses had their cars impounded, which then cost each of them hundreds of dollars and precious time from work. But by then Diana Jaramillo, a former farm worker and immigrant from Mexico now working in the Monterey County Health Department, who had grown up hearing about Cresencio Padilla and other civil rights leaders, had begun to get involved in LULAC and started asking questions about the abuses she was seeing. Carrying LULAC forward was now up to a younger generation of leaders.

---

[458] Maria Gonzalez, "Letter to the Editor: Where are the Latino Leaders in Salinas?" *Salinas Californian*, Castroville, CA, July 18, 1996.
[459] Interview with Diana Jimenez conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, July 26, 2016; Zachary Stahl, "Walking the Color Line," *Monterey County Weekly*, November 1, 2007.

CHAPTER FOUR: *GUERILLERAS HUELGISTAS Y PELEONERAS*: MEXICAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN TRANSFORM THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE OF WATSONVILLE, 1980–1990

> *Yo soy puro Mexicano y vivo en Watsonville trabajando en la caneria y en el fil. Pero estamos oprimidos aunque somos la mayoria.Porque los ricos controlan este pueblo noche y dia.* (I'm pure Mexican and I live in Watsonville working in the canneries and the fields. But we are oppressed even though we are the majority because the rich control the town night and day.)
> —Mexican *Corrido* (ballad)

> Tomorrow when the sun's rays penetrate through the window of your house. Your children will skip hop jump out of their beds greeting the new dawn. They will see you old and tired running towards the factory and they will remember yesterday when you exposed your body in the picket lines to feed them. You will see them "Every inch a man" "A little woman lady" you'll think and "is it worth the fight " you'll say, and You will look in the mirror And it will tell you that your skin has been worn away by time and you will respond that your skin yes, but that your spirit strong and a fighter is still young. Tomorrow striking woman you will kiss the roses of the thorns that today torture your body.
> —Poem *Mujer Huelgista* (Striking Woman)[460]

Guillermina Rodriguez began working at Watsonville canning when she arrived from Mexico in 1970, but only became involved in union meetings until 1982. When she began to attend union meetings she learned for the first time that she had many more financial and health benefits than she knew she had.

> We had no clue that we had a contract that included stipulations about vacation, seniority, over-time pay. Many of the women had no clue about their labor rights. When we finally went to ask the supervisors for the union contract they responded; what contract? So we could turn away, but we didn't, we continued to demand to see the contract and finally they gave us a copy, but it was written in English. The majority of the women did not speak or read

[460] Poem written by Pixote about the women cannery strikers during the cannery strike. Oscar Rios, "*Los Trabajadores de Watsonville en Mesa Redonda*." *Adelante*: *Revista de Pensamiento Socialista*. February 1987, Pgs. 35-39.

> English. That was the moment I became really angry and decided to get more involved and demanded that the contract be translated.[461]

Once the Mexican women working in the canneries agreed on their grievances they mobilized and organized to begin a labor strike. Reyna Guzman shared how the terrible working conditions and poor treatment by management in the cannery angered and motivated many of the women to demand a strike and defend their labor rights:

> I woke up during the strike my mind woke up. I learned to be active, to defend my rights, to speak in front of supervisors, the city council, I woke up! That strike was something strong. The strike woke us up. I lost any fear of the management. We learned to speak with authority. That strike taught me to defend my self, to say no, that's not just. We deserve better![462]

The immigrant female strikers became militant organizers that not only demanded better treatment from the management, but also their union representatives. The women became empowered by their organizing and activism during the strike to demand better wages, health benefits, but also electoral representation. The decision to go on strike would forever change families, the city of Watsonville and transform the political landscape of the city from a predominantly white-male leadership to one that included Latinos and women.

In 1983, Watsonville, California cannery owner Mort Console of Watsonville Canning, along with Richard Shaw Inc. had negotiated a pay cut from $7.00 to $6.66

[461] Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Guillermina Rodriguez. 28 of August 1994. Watsonville, CA. M0905_S12a_B02_09a. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives.
[462] Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Reyna Guzman. 23 of August 1994. Watsonville, CA. M0905_S12a_B02_05a.wav. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives.

per hour with Teamsters Union Local 912, which represented his workers.[463] Other canneries in Watsonville soon followed with wage cuts for their workers.[464] By 1985 the Richard Shaw workers' contract had expired and the company lowered their hourly pay even more — from $6.66 to $4.75 an hour, and also terminated numerous medical, pension, and seniority benefits.[465] These largest canneries claimed that they had to lower wages because the American diet was changing and also because suppliers from Latin America and from Texas were paying lower wages.[466] As one worker told the *Los Angeles Times*, "I could barely make it getting $6.66 an hour. How am I going to survive on $4.75?"[467] Another cannery worker, Guadalupe Guerrero, explained to *The New York Times* how she would be directly affected by the cuts: his take-home pay before the pay cut was about $240 each week, but with the cut he would have to accept a new salary of $170 a week. Paying monthly rent of $400, "with gas, lights, water, garbage, I'd have nothing left for food."[468] Workers also began to question how it was possible that their union representatives had negotiated any agreement with the owners without their input. The mostly Mexican immigrant workers wanted answers from their all-white union leadership.[469]

---

[463] Tricia, Lootens, "Victory at Watsonville," *Off Our Backs: A Women's Journal*, May 31, 1987, 19.
[464] Ibid.
[465] Associated Press, "Contract Backed at Food Plant," *The New York Times*, March 12, 1987, A 26.
[466] John Silver, *Watsonville on Strike,* "Migrant Media Productions" (Watsonville, CA: 1989).
[467] Miles Corwin, " Canning Workers' Bid Devastates Lives Economy of Watsonville," *The Los Angeles Times,* September 14, 1986, A3.
[468] Robert Lindsey, "Eating Patterns affect Packers Strike," *The New York Times*, January 1, 1986, 6.
[469] Kathy Salaman, "Food Workers Approve Strike Fund," *Watsonville Register-Pajaroinian*, August 19, 1985; "Tension Growing at Food Plants; Strike Imminent," *Watsonville Register-Pajaronian*, August 30, 1985.

On September 9, 1985, hundreds of vegetable cannery workers, members of Teamsters Union Local 912, went on strike in the city recognized as the "frozen food capital of the world," Watsonville, California.[470] The strike was called and—unlike previous strikes in Monterey Bay area agriculture—was led by hundreds of immigrant women. The women of the cannery strike—self-described as *huelgistas* as well as more militant women *guerilleras*—mobilized the city of Watsonville. Their advocacy for labor rights became a transformative and epochal moment in their lives, as well as in the Monterey Bay's labor and political history. The strike also shed light on the lack of political representation in the city of Watsonville. Members of the larger community began to question why the Mexican population in Watsonville was close to 50 percent, but had no elected officials on the city council or county board of supervisors.

This chapter analyzes the role played by Mexican immigrant women who became leaders in the struggle by agricultural workers in the Monterey Bay area to attain labor rights.[471] The strike is a turning point in United States labor history and Mexican and Mexican American history for two main reasons. First, women were at the forefront. The *huelgistas* became active agents of their destiny by organizing and leading the strike, but also by challenging the local elite. As one organizer stated, "I

---

[470] Lillian Elizabeth Duck, *"Juana Huelgista": Latina Women on Strike in Watsonville, California, 1985-1987*, (1996) Master's Theses; & Jon Silver, *Watsonville on Strike*, "Migrant Media Productions," (Watsonville, CA: 1989).

[471] See Mark Brilliant, *The Color of America Has Changed: How Racial diversity Shaped Civil Rights Reform in California, 1941-1978* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 149. Historian Mark Brilliant has contributed to the literature on the long Civil Rights Movement by calling for a rethinking of the civil rights era, "…as not only 'long' but also 'wide,' wide geographically, wide demographically, and most importantly, wide substantively in terms of the range of 'race problems' and responses to them."

used to feel people like [cannery owner] Mort Console were superior to me. I thought they were gods, but not anymore. I'll never be sorry I went out on strike."[472] Second, and just as important, immigrant *Mexicanos* built alliances with a Mexican American generation that had previous experience with political activism; together they continued advocating for social justice in Watsonville long after the cannery strike was over.

The strike was the catalyst that united a population to advocate for labor rights and political representation. It would serve as a transformative period in the history of Mexicans and Mexican Americans living in the United States. The Mexican workers on that strike would demonstrate that they were not docile immigrants who succumbed to their exploitative workplace. As ethnographer Gilbert Mireles reported about immigrant farm workers in Watsonville, "The workers weren't the docile keep you head down immigrants imagined by some people, but neither were they untapped political agents with a dormant class consciousness waiting to erupt with the right catalyst."[473] After the workers had been on strike for a month, the union members had grown impatient with the labor negotiations and gathered to confront their union representatives. Shaw cannery workers questioned their union representative Fred Hime about the negotiations with the canneries. Instead of offering any kind of explanation, Hime shouted back at them, "Half of you in this room are non-paying union members and do not belong here." One worker responded, "We pay thirteen

[472] Elizabeth Duck, "*Juana Huelgista:" Latina Women on strike in Watsonville, California, 1985-1987*.
[473] Gilbert Felipe Mireles, *Continuing La Causa: Organizing Labor in California's Strawberry Fields* (Boulder: First Forum Press, 2013), X.

dollars a month and our dues pay for your salary!"[474] Tensions between the workers and their union representatives had been mounting for months. The mostly Spanish-speaking Mexican workers did not trust the local Teamsters leadership, and they felt quite distant from Hime, who did not speak Spanish.[475]

The strikers were adamant about staying on strike until they received fair wages and their health benefits were reinstated. According to Gloria Betancourt, who had worked in the canneries for twenty-three years and became a leader during the strike, "The top [Teamsters Local] 912 leaders never wanted us to go out on strike in the first place. Once we went out, they did nothing to help us. We've had to organize ourselves."[476] The cannery workers grew tired of wage cuts, denial of health benefits, racist treatment, and increasingly hostile working conditions as employers attempted to break the union.[477] The women felt that their labor conditions were growing dire and the union leadership was not helping them. Ultimately, the strikers did not trust the cannery owners, management, or their union representatives. The strikers grew even more distrustful of union leaders who they felt were corrupt for previously accepting contracts workers did not approve.

The cannery workers simultaneously had to organize and negotiate with their employers, but also with a Teamsters Local that had a reputation of signing labor

---

[474] Silver, *Watsonville On Strike*.
[475] "Weapons Found near Plant," *Watsonville Register Pajaronian*, September 11, 1985.
[476] Duck, "*Juana Heuelgista*"; William Segal, "Watsonville Strikers Hang Tough," *The Labor Center Reporter Series* No. 174. Berkeley, CA: Center for Labor Research and Education Institute. February 1986.
[477] Research by Debra Anne Weber captures earlier moments in Mexican labor history where women were at the forefront of organizing during major strikes. See "*Raiz Fuerte*: Oral History and Mexicana Farmworkers. " *Oral History Review*. 17, (Autumn 1989), 47-62; Weber, *Dark Seat, White Gold: California Farm Workers, Cotton and the New Deal* (Berkeley: 1994).

agreements with employers without worker input.[478] Moreover, union leaders like Richard King, then president of Local 912, "used to play poker and drink with the management at the company."[479] That kind of arrangement might have worked for a previous population of cannery workers, but by the 1980s the workers—for the most part women and immigrants from Mexico—were beginning to demand a voice in labor negotiations. Gail Sullivan, a former Teamsters business representative, stated that for women in the canneries it was twofold discrimination. "Teamster officials have a 'good old boy network' that discriminates against women," she said. "Nobody says 'you don't understand this because you are a woman,' but you are just excluded."[480]

A new leadership that would contest the established patriarchy evolved from the largely female Mexican immigrant workforce. As Patricia Zavella pointed out, the strike polarized Watsonville around race because management in the canneries, forewomen, and business sympathizers were ultimately offended—and undeniably threatened in terms of business management tactics—by the militancy of the predominantly Mexican immigrant female strikers.[481] For some women in Watsonville the strike also became very personal and had an impact on their personal lives fighting for greater autonomy at home. Most of the *huelgistas* were also

---

[478] Kathy Salaman, "Food –processing Talks Continue to Avail," *Watsonville Register Pajaronian*, August 21, 1985.
[479] Miles Corwin, "Canning Workers' Bid Devastates Lives Economy of Watsonville," *The Los Angeles Times,* September 14, 1986, A4.
[480]Reese Ehrlich, *The Christian Science Monitor*, "New Twist for Union Leadership," Boston, Mass., December 14, 1988.
[481] Patricia Zavella, *I'm Neither Here nor There: Mexicans' Quotidian Struggles with Migration and Poverty* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 101-103.

mothers, and many were single parents. Many married *huelgistas* not only faced rampant gender discrimination in the workplace, but also came home to a historically patriarchal home life with husbands who were not used to their wives attending meetings after long hours at work. Single mothers often had to justify to their extended family the importance of organizing during the strike.[482]

Historically unions had viewed immigrants as a threat to labor organizing, but in Watsonville by 1985, the agriculture labor force was largely made up of both legal and undocumented immigrants that had union representation from the Teamsters International. The Teamsters had organized agricultural workers as far back as 1961 with the Bud Antle Corporation in Salinas. The cannery industry was far from being the only one where women and immigrants were demanding a voice in labor negotiations during the1980s. Labor unions across a variety of industries had seen countless new attacks on their livelihoods. Numerous strikes were organized beginning with TWA flight attendants and traffic controllers in 1982. Mexican immigrant workers in Watsonville continued to demonstrate their ambition to organize and to maintain union membership.[483] Mexican Americans were not rushing

---

[482] On gender and gender roles in the work place see, Vicki Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987); Patricia Zavella, *Women's Work and Chicano Families: Cannery Workers of the Santa Clara Valley* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002).

[483] Both labor unions, and Ernesto Galarza attacked immigrant farmworkers publicly even though they knew there were other factors affecting their ability to organize, including the rapid mechanization of agriculture work that was depressing wages. The innovation by Bud Antle to incorporate vacuum cooling led to hundreds of jobs being lost in the Salinas Valley. See Stephen Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race, and Mexican Americans* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 146-147. According to Pitti, Ernesto Galarza went as far as writing letters to be used by union locals to summon the Immigration Service and report undocumented workers. One letter read, "

to take these jobs; rather, they supported their immigrant neighbors. By 1985 Mexican Americans in Watsonville, inspired by the civil rights and Chicano movements, were promoting the idea of building coalitions across gender, race, ethnicity, and legal status. Ultimately the cannery strike garnered support from men and women, Mexican Americans, whites, and other unions in the region. Furthermore, the strike even attracted a visit by Cesar Chavez, whose views about undocumented workers were drastically changing.

As the strike went on, Mexican immigrant women rose from their marginalized positions in the workplace to become the lead organizers and ultimately agents of labor and political change in their community. By 1985, the population in Watsonville had reached just over 33,000, half of whom were Mexican. But the city's elected officials were entirely Anglo. The Watsonville cannery strike, like the Salinas Valley vegetable strike of 1970, arose from poor working conditions, but the cannery strike and activism surrounding it united a community that lacked full civil rights. As the strike persisted, it magnified larger societal issues over access to bilingual schooling, to jobs, adequate housing, and ongoing racial profiling by the police and the U.S. Border Patrol. Ultimately, the strike empowered the larger local Mexican and Mexican American population in Watsonville to successfully seek political

---

Dear Sir: Members of this Local have reported to the Executive Board that persons who entered this country illegally are working, living or generally being harbored on the premises indicated below… Since we have reason to believe that these requirements have not been met in the present case; and further since it appears that the presence of these unregistered aliens suggests fraudulent arrangements to violate Federal laws, we request that the Department of Justice investigate these premises without delay."

representation.[484] William Flores, who volunteered as a member of the Northern California Watsonville Strike Support Committee, said, "The strikers grew to view their strike as a struggle of the entire Mexican community against the injustices that all Chicanos and Mexicans faced in the town."[485] The strike mobilized the Mexican population politically to counter the injustices they faced at work, school, places of recreation, at the grocery store, and many other locations.

Mexican *huelgistas*, Mexican Americans, and civil rights organizations jointly mobilized the community to support the strike. The *huelgistas* wanted to secure a reasonable hourly wage for their work and commitment to the canneries. They also wanted to secure health, retirement benefits, and job security through a modified seniority system. Early on they understood that they needed to get larger support for their strike from the community, and they did so. The cannery strike, one of the longest strikes in American history, was also an outlier in labor history for four major reasons. First, the majority of the workers were women. Second, the women were Mexican immigrants—many of whom were undocumented—yet they were dues-paying members of the Teamsters union. Third, during the eighteen-month strike, not one worker out of hundreds crossed the picket line. And fourth, the cannery workers all lived and worked in the small city of Watsonville.[486] They lived in the same neighborhoods, played on the same soccer leagues, attended the same churches, and

[484] William Flores, "*Mujeres En Helga*: Cultural Citizenship and Gender Empowerment In a Cannery Strike," HJSR, 1996.
[485] Ibid.
[486] Frank Bardacke, "The Workers United," June 1995.

their children attended the same schools. Many of them were related or had migrated from the same towns in Mexico.

Watsonville activist and journalist Frank Bardacke called the strike "a deep lesson in the power of unified action." Ultimately the strong solidarity and bonds among the largely female workforce led them through the hardships they faced during the strike. The strike ignited worker frustrations into an organized labor and civil rights movement and catalyst that carried through to electoral politics.[487] The cannery strike put the city of Watsonville in the national spotlight as hundreds of workers picketed and organized for labor rights.

Cannery Work

Cannery jobs were lucrative for a generation of immigrants who had worked with the *cortito*, the migrant circuit.[488] Cannery jobs were more lucrative, because unlike many of the agricultural workers of the Salinas Valley, cannery workers did not have to migrate. Migrating meant taking children out of school and moving the entire family to Arizona for four months every winter. In some cases, a father would migrate alone but away from the family four to six months out of the year. Year in and year out, migrations took a toll on the entire family.

---

[487] Vargas Zaragoza, "Citizens, Immigrants, and Foreign Wage Workers: The Chicano Labor Refrain in U.S. Labor Historiography," 1997 & *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers In Twentieth Century America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005).
[488] On chain migration in agriculture see Gilbert C. Gonzalez*, Guest Workers or Colonized Labor?: Mexican Labor Migration to the United States*. 2nd edition (Boulder, Paradigm Publishers, 2013); Juan Gòmez-Quiñones, *Mexican American Labor, 1790-1990* (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1994), 153-176; Ronald L. Mize and Alicia C.S. Swords, *Consuming Mexican Labor: From the Bracero Program to NAFTA* (North York, Ont.: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

Cannery work was for the most part divided along gender lines. Just as Patricia Zavella found in Santa Clara County canneries a decade before the strike, the Watsonville canneries also had a racialized and gendered occupational structure. Men and women worked sorting the vegetables, but only men stacked and packaged them.[489] The men physically moved boxes of vegetables and placed them on pallets to be lifted by forklifts to load the trucks on their way across the country. Men also worked as machine operators, mechanics, and plant engineers, jobs that paid higher wages and were year-round. What cannery management regarded as "women's work" was often thought of as "lighter work," yet this was a serious misnomer. In all actuality, these jobs demanded very physical and difficult labor.[490] The work took skill and women developed physical dexterity for doing the work that demanded long hours and high production quotas.[491] The work might have been assessed as a

[489] On gender, labor and migration see Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 91, No. 5 (Dec., 1986), 1053-1075, See also Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), on the long history of wage earning women see Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983). On gendered migrations see Jorge Durand and Douglas S. Massey, *Crossing the Border: Research from the Mexican Migration Project*, (New York, NY; Russell Sage Foundation, 2004), Chapter 6, "Migration and Gender", 111-120, and Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor*, (Cambridge, Mass; Harvard University Press, 2002), Vicki Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987); Sarah J. Mahler and Patricia R. Pessar, "Transnational Migration Bringing Gender In" Center for Migration Studies of New York, IMR Volume 37 Number 3 (Fall 2003): 812-846; Deborah Cohen, "From Peasant to Worker: Migration, Masculinity, and the Making of Mexican Workers in the US," *International Labor and Working Class History, Inc*. 2006, 81-103; Sonia Hernández, *Working Women Into the Borderlands* (College Station, Texas A&M University Press, 2014).

[490] Patricia Zavella, *Women's Work & Chicano Families: Cannery Workers of the Santa Clara Valley*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); Devra Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold: California Farm Workers, Cotton, and the New Deal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

[491] See the work of Vicki Ruiz and Frank Bardacke on the skills involved to do agricultural work that often gets overlooked as unskilled labor. Vicki, Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque:

significant step up the social ladder for many immigrant workers who previously worked in the fields stooped over cutting vegetables; yet the work in the canneries was still arduous labor. It was tedious and difficult, and the body suffered, especially hands and backs from standing all day in the freezing environment. Women at the canneries often fainted from the rigors of the work, having to stand for long hours and stare at a moving conveyor belt for long periods of time without a break. Reyna Guzman explained how much pressure she faced while at the cannery just before the strike in 1985:

> There was so much pressure to work fast, the supervisors would snap their fingers and yell, "move your hands," you were exhausted after eight hours of work. They also began to demand from us to package product that took ten hours and finish in eight so they wouldn't pay over time.[492]

Women's cannery jobs were mostly seasonal, but required more workers during the peak periods. Many women often used the time off to care for children or travel to Mexico. The canneries also offered health benefits and permanent employment.

University of New Mexico Press, 1987); Frank Bardacke, *Trampling Out The Vintage: Cesar Chavez and The Two Souls of the United Farm Workers* (New York, NY: Verso Press, 2011).

[492] Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Reyna Guzman. 23 of August 1994 Watsonville, CA. M0905_S12a_B02_05a.wav. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives.




Figure 51. Left: A worker operates heavy machinery. Figure 52. Right: A worker cuts broccoli before it is frozen. Courtesy of San Francisco State University Labor Archives.

In her research of cannery workers across California in the 1930s and 1940s, historian Vicki Ruiz found that "Women labored long hours for low pay, under hazardous, unsanitary conditions. Moreover, sexual and ethnic divisions of labor…served to separate workers from each other."[493] In 1985, women cannery workers in Watsonville still worked under the same conditions that Ruiz had found decades earlier.

Worker Grievances

The cannery workers had regular breaks and time off to eat during their shifts, but in the months leading to the strike, they began to notice harsher treatment by company supervisors as breaks were shortened. As crews numbering over eighty took a ten-minute break, there was simply not enough time even to use the restroom since there were not enough restroom stalls to accommodate that many people in such a short time. Workers began to stay away from the restroom to avoid the long lines and

[493] Vicki Ruiz, Cannery Women, *Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 20-22.

focused on resting. The companies also started demanding increased production rates, which meant cutting, moving, and packing vegetables much faster, which in turn could lead to injuries and exhaustion. In fact, some women were cut and lost fingers as they handled the broccoli cutters on conveyor belts.[494]

Reyna Guzman suffered a serious accident on the job when she was cutting broccoli heads on a conveyer belt. She accidently cut one of her fingers severely and it was partially removed. She explained how the extreme pressure they called *carilla* to speed up the work pace led to higher rates of worker injuries.

> We worked with very sharp knives cutting broccoli with both hands. I was always working at night and one day they asked me to work during the day. The forewoman wanted to tell me how to cut quicker. I was fast, but out of pressure please her, I was trying to cut the broccoli faster when I felt the sharpness and the pain with blood through the thick glove I wore. I had cut my finger pretty bad. They had to rush me to the hospital in an attempt to save my finger. I suffered a lot from the accident that they rested me for two weeks, I received disability insurance, it was about $102 a week more than half what I earned working so I had a lot of pressure to return to work and returned not completely healed after two weeks. Another time I fell and hurt my knee so badly I couldn't bend it. They took me to the nurse and had me ice it, but I still couldn't bend it. Cuca Lomeli had to drive me home. There were a lot of accidents because of the pressure to produce.[495]

While some workers complained, the politicized nature of the work environment left others feeling frustrated because if they complained they could be sent home after their minimum six-hour shift rather than be eligible for more hours at the cannery.[496] Guillermina Rodriguez spoke about the pressures to not miss work:

---

[494] Interview by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez with Gloria Betancourt.
[495] Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Reyna Guzman. 23 of August 1994. Watsonville, CA. M0905_S12a_B02_05a.wav. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives.
[496] Elizabeth Duck, "*Juana Huelgista": Latina Women on strike in Watsonville, California, 1985-1987*, 66-72.

> *A si se trabajaba lloviera o tronara;* you went to work whether it rained or there was thunder. There was a lot of sacrifice so you wouldn't lose your seniority. Whether you were sick, or feeling bad, you had to be at work to maintain your seniority; I would even leave my son in the car outside the canneries sometimes because I worked year round and daycares were not always available.[497]

In the summer of 1985, workers also noticed the reduction of benefits at the canneries. For example, new hires in the cannery had to work longer shifts, accumulate more hours on the job, and work multiple seasons before they could earn enough seniority rights to qualify for health benefits and vacation pay. The conveyor belts on which the vegetables were cut and washed was sped up by 30 percent, from fourteen pieces of broccoli that had to be cut and packaged to nineteen pieces.[498] As the work sped up, though, accidents increased and some workers simply could not keep up with the faster pace of the work. At Watsonville Cannery, twenty-five women were fired that summer. One, who was fired with no recourse, said, "After all the years they fired me. I felt so ashamed. How was I going to tell my family?"[499]

Marginalized communities often exercise and participate in informal modes of resistance prior to official political mobilization. The Monterey Bay region was the site of over a hundred years of racial violence and discrimination against the Mexican and Mexican American community. What began as unconventional demonstrations of political mobilization in the canneries by Mexican immigrant women soon led to

---

[497] Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Guillermina Rodriguez. 28 of August 1994. Watsonville, CA. M0905_S12a_B02_09a. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives.
[498] Miles Corwin, " Canning Workers' Bid Devastates Lives Economy of Watsonville," *The Los Angeles Times.* September 14, 1986.
[499]William Flores, and Rina Benmayor, *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space, and Rights* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 222-225.

more structured and visible political organizing outside of the workplace. As the cannery workers experienced hostility at work from supervisors, the lowering of wages, increased production requirements, and reductions in benefits, they also became more militant and moments of resistance were more evident. They showcased their resistance in various ways, such as by forcing the conveyor belts to malfunction, effectively organizing worker slowdowns, and beginning to counter management pressures, to name a few.[500]

As pressure for a strike began and grew, the workers did not wait for a union leader to file labor grievances or lead their strike. Rather, they built alliances and mobilized a movement of support with the larger community in Watsonville, both legal and undocumented residents. Watsonville's cannery strike was unique in contrast to other strikes during the 1985–1987 period. Unlike flight attendants, winery workers, or nurses,

Becoming Civil Rights Leaders

On September 9, 1985, the first day of the cannery strike, Gloria Betancourt sent a letter signed by eighty-six of her fellow cannery workers seeking representation from one of the oldest Latino civil rights organizations in the United States, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC).[501] Betancourt had seen the Castroville-Salinas chapter's founding president, Crecencio Padilla, on television being interviewed by a local news station and heard him advocating for the civil rights of

[500] On immigrants and work place resistance see, Jennifer Guglielmo, *Living the Revolution: Italian Women's Resistance and Radicalism in New York City, 1880-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 198-231.
[501] Interview with Oscar Rios and Gloria Betancourt, Watsonville, CA, Offices of The *Allianza*. Saturday, March 26, 2016.

Mexican Americans in neighboring Salinas. Padilla, like Betancourt, was the child of a former bracero and immigrant from Mexico. In the letter she told Padilla that the cannery workers needed LULAC's assistance and support. [502]

Betancourt had been a cannery worker for twenty-three years, and she knew that the largely female industry had never had a Latina union official. While Watsonville had a LULAC chapter, Betancourt says that it had declined to help the strikers because one of its members had a relative who worked for one of the canning companies.[503] Padilla, who at the time was LULAC district director for Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz counties, felt obligated to help the strikers. "Anytime there were injustices committed, LULAC should help, in any possible way, and this time it was the strikers," he had said.[504] It was Betancourt's persistence that finally got the strikers assistance from LULAC. Gloria Betancourt was quickly becoming a leader who the strikers could trust.

The strike and the upheaval surrounding it empowered Gloria Betancourt and fellow cannery workers Cuca Lomeli, Anita and Esperanza Contreras, Reyna Guzman, and Guillermina Rodriguez to mobilize the community and become active not only in union negotiations, but also in the larger political arena. It also led the strikers to form their own committee within the union rank and file because of a lack of trust of the union leadership. According to Betancourt, "The Teamsters Local 912 in Watsonville was run undemocratically for thirty years and excluded women from

[502] Correspondence received from Gloria Betancourt in Crecencio Padilla Archive. September 9, 1985.
[503] Interview with Gloria Betancourt conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, Watsonville, CA, March 26, 2016.
[504] Crecencio Padilla. *LULAC Legacy in Monterey County*; & interview with Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, January 25, 2016. Cypress Oaks, CA.

major elective office. The union election rules prohibited many women who were seasonal workers from voting."[505] Betancourt added that many of the women had responsibilities at home that prevented them from participating with the union, but she considered the exclusion to be largely based on gender.

On October 6, 1985 the Watsonville chapter of Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU)—a grassroots organization of rank-and-file Teamsters Union members—organized a Solidarity Day March in support of the strike. The TDU was well organized and was primarily responsible for mobilizing the community to support the strike. At contract meetings with the Teamsters leadership the TDU also coordinated strike support to raise funds and organized members to advocate for workers .[506] The strike had drawn support across race, ethnicity, and gender, and hundreds of workers and community members participated in the march.

Former braceros who a decade earlier worked with the now illegal short-handled hoe marched alongside cannery workers like Gloria Betancourt whose parents were former braceros and Mexican American activists in the streets of Watsonville in support of the strikers. [507] Pablo Camacho had migrated from Mexico as a bracero and ended up staying in Watsonville to work in the celery fields. By 1985, Camacho had become an organizer for the United Farm Workers union, as well as a supporter of the cannery strike because he had two daughters that worked at Watsonville Canning. Camacho attended every strikers' march waving his UFW flag.

---

[505] Erlich Reese, "New Twist for Union Leadership," *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 14, 1988.
[506] Esperanza Torres interview conducted by Elizabeth Duck. December 4, 1994.
[507] Interview with Frank Bardacke by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, Watsonville, CA, February 7, 2014

But as an organizer, he knew how union negotiations worked and he remained skeptical of union leadership associated with corrupt labor agreements. He also had become a vocal critic of Cesar Chavez and the UFW leadership by the 1980s as immigrant members demanded greater local autonomy in the union and were willing to remove their leadership if need be—whether they were mostly white men who did not understand or speak Spanish, or, like Chavez, had long been biased against undocumented Mexican immigrants. [508]

Watsonville police showed up to the Solidarity Day March in riot gear, which created greater tension among the marchers, city residents, and government leadership. The workers asked the community to get involved because of what they perceived as a bias within local law enforcement. *Huelgistas* adamantly believed the Watsonville police department and deputies with the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's department were defending the interests of the cannery owners.

[508] Interview conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez with Pablo Camacho, Watsonville, CA, February 24, 2014.



Figure 52. Santa Cruz County Sheriff's deputies and Watsonville police officers stand in front of Watsonville Canning as marching strikers approach. Watsonville, CA. October 6, 1985. Courtesy of *Adelante*.

The march was also organized to contest what the strikers called an "unconstitutional court order" that a local judge had enacted to prevent more that four cannery workers from picketing outside any of the canneries.[509] When the strike began, the women picketed in front of Watsonville Canning, and on the same day were approached by Teamsters business representative Sergio Lopez.[510] He told *huelgista* Esperanza Contreras that only four of them could picket at one time. Contreras, frustrated by her union representative's request to leave the premises, responded, "'But how can a judge have reviewed this case so quickly? The strike just started, Sergio.' I was very angry, I could not believe Sergio, and even treated him

[509] Tricia Lootens, "Victory at Watsonville," *Off Our Backs: A Women's Journal*, May 31, 1987, 19.
[510] Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Esperanza Contreras, Watsonville, CA, August 23, 1994. M0905_S12a_B01_44. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives.

very bad. I called him names because I was so mad that we were being told to move."[511] Contreras also began to further distrust the Teamsters representatives.

Huelgistas believed that the TDU had good intentions but like the Teamsters union itself, it was led by white men, Frank Bardacke and Joseph Fahey. The workers, more than 80 percent of whom were Mexican, did not entirely trust the TDU and felt that they needed their own committee. A week later, on October 15, 1985, more than four hundred workers met at the union hall and agreed to start a strike committee separate from the Teamsters Union and the TDU. Gloria Betancourt and Chavelo Moreno were elected to lead the new committee. It was a watershed moment as women's voices were finally being taken seriously and women were playing an active role in the organizing.

Mexican Immigrant Cannery Workers*: Lideres Huelgistas (Strike Leaders)*

Many of the female strikers were immigrants from three specific states in Mexico, Jalisco, Guanajuato, and Michoacán. These three states also sent the largest number of braceros during the program's lifetime (1942 –1964). After establishing a set of interconnected networks that included places to live, familiar places of worship (Catholic churches), and job networks, many former braceros who stayed in Watsonville had encouraged their sons and other male relatives and friends to join them. Eventually they began to invite their older daughters to join them and work in

[511] Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Esperanza Contreras, Watsonville, CA, August 23, 1994. M0905_S12a_B01_44. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives.

the United States as well.[512] An invitation from the family patriarch to work in Watsonville was a major turning point in Mexican gender relations and advancement in the traditional role of many Mexican women who previously were discouraged from migrating or pursing work outside of domestic spaces.[513] Daughters of former braceros were leaving Mexico in greater numbers and finding work in Watsonville's canning industry. The cannery jobs afforded the women greater autonomy in their nuclear families, as they became wage-earning members of the extended family. Reasons for migrating to the U.S. varied, but many of the *huelgistas* saw poverty in Mexico as a motivator, and the opportunity of beginning a new life in the U.S., where their children could one day have access to better schooling.[514]

Labor historians have often focused on women leaders of major strikes and labor unions, such as Luisa Moreno, Emma Tennayuca, and Dolores Huerta. Their roles as union activists were important in United States labor and women's history. However, the Watsonville cannery strike that lasted from 1985 to 1987 showcased how immigrant Mexican women cannery workers became the leaders of one of the longest strikes in United States history. Their leadership, activism, militancy, and unity during the cannery strike led to a labor and political transformation in

---

[512] See Ana Elizabeth Rosas, *Abrazando El Espíritu: Bracero Families Confront the US-Mexico Border* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); Luz María Gordillo, *Mexican Women and the Other Side of Immigration: Engendering Transnational Ties* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010).
[513] For a discussion on historically unpaid work in the family household and how female immigrants network for paid jobs see, Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Doméstica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 46-75.
[514] On reasons immigrant women migrate see the works by, Gabriella F. Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation, 1916-39* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 36. Jennifer Guglielmo, *Living the Revolution: Italian Women's Resistance and Radicalism in New York City, 1880-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 58-64.

Watsonville, the larger Monterey Bay area, and even a global influence in terms of their far-reaching legacy.

Gloria Betancourt was the daughter of former bracero Pascual Morales. Born in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico, she and her family migrated to the United States in 1962 when Betancourt was a young teenager.[515] She was given the choice to go to school or go to work. She briefly attended Coachella Valley High School in Southern California, but soon migrated with her family and worked in the orchards of the Santa Clara Valley during the 1960s. Betancourt was fifteen when she started to work in the canneries; eighteen was the minimum working age, but she looked old enough. She was hired at Watsonville Canning and stayed there until just after the strike ended in 1987.

Simply being born female was enough for Betancourt to learn the social and gender injustices in society, as she grew up battling gender inequality as a child and into adulthood. She summarized, "*Desde niña uno ve las injusticias*" (Even as a little girl we saw the injustice). She recalled a time when she ran for union representative and the men commented that if she won, "*Le van a tener que construir un salon de belleza a Gloria*." (They would have to construct a beauty salon for Gloria).[516]

[515] Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Gloria Betancourt, Watsonville, CA, August 1994._B_M0905_S12a_B01_42.wav. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives.
[516] Interview by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez with Gloria Betancourt, Watsonville, CA, Saturday, March 26, 2016.

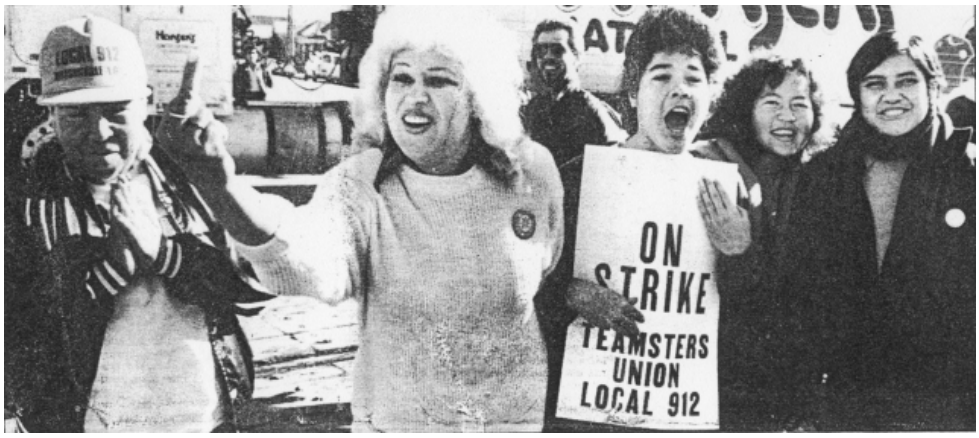


Figure 53. Gloria Betancourt expresses her feelings to NorCal Frozen Foods officials during the strike. Far right, Cuca Lomeli. Photo by Chip Scheur, *Watsonville Register Pajaronian*. Circa 1986.

Guillermina Rodriguez left Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico, for Watsonville in 1970 and lived with her older brothers, sisters, and father.[517] A sister and a brother worked at Watsonville Canning and Rodriguez quickly found a job there. Although she was undocumented, she said it was easy at the time to attain the necessary documentation like an illegitimate Social Security number. Although the company also knew about this process, it did not reject workers over the issue of documentation. Rodriguez remembers the exact day she began to work at Watsonville Canning—December 11, 1970, during the night shift. She worked at the cannery continuously full time for fifteen years until the start of the strike in 1985.

Esperanza Contreras was born in Coalcomàn, Michoacán, Mexico. She lived in a poor rural region with no formal public schooling. Her father had made numerous migrations to the United States and in 1976 she joined him. She had another relative

[517] Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Guillermina Rodriguez. 28 of August 1994. Watsonville, CA. M0905_S12a_B02_09a. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives.

who worked at Watsonville Canning and helped her get a job there. Soon married and eventually the mother of seven children, Contreras worked long hours and often at night so she could care for her children during the day. But just before the strike, it had become more difficult to work at the cannery because of poor treatment and verbal abuse by supervisors and forewomen and the pressure to move quicker and keep up with the speed of the conveyor belt which could lead to serious physical injury.

Reyna Guzman also was born in rural Michoacán and shared how restless she was during her youth. "I always wanted to be doing something. I always had to be doing something, helping my mother, grandfather and during the harvest of corn and beans we would leave for two weeks and return and clean the corn." She said she was the only one of nine daughters who agreed to do farm work. The oldest of the daughters would assist her mother with housework, the second was always sick and as the third oldest she volunteered to help. Guzman and her husband immigrated to California's San Joaquin Valley in the late 1960s. She said that the hardest work she ever did was hoeing sugar beets in the San Joaquin Valley during the late with *el mentado cortito*, (the damn short-handle hoe). Later they lived in Long Beach, but missing agricultural work they came to Watsonville and found work in the strawberry harvests. By the time Contreras began work at Watsonville Canning in 1980 she considered it much less labor-intensive.

Mexican Americans in Watsonville and Leaving the Fields for Good

Watsonville's population also included a large number of Mexican Americans, U.S. citizens of Mexican descent. Many were motivated by a Mexican immigrant generation to better their livelihoods and leave the arduous agricultural work for good. Though many historians have argued that the two groups fought each other for the same jobs, and that Mexican immigrants were responsible for displacing a domestic population of Mexican American farmworkers by depressing wages, In Watsonville, Mexican Americans did not view undocumented workers in the canneries as a threat to their livelihoods. In fact, Mexican Americans were leaving cannery and agricultural jobs in greater numbers and for good reason. With U.S. citizenship and higher levels of schooling, Mexican Americans had better opportunities than undocumented immigrants living and working Watsonville. For many Mexican Americans living in Watsonville, the Chicano movement ideals called upon their generation to seek higher education and return to their communities after graduating to seek professional work outside of agriculture.[518]

A large population of Mexican Americans dropped out of high school, and for those who graduated, college was not an option for all of them at that time in their lives. For Mexican Americans who did not want to continue going to school or were

[518] For a discussion on Mexican immigrant and Mexican American relations see George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); David Gutierrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); George Mariscal. *Aztlán and Viet Nam: Chicano and Chicana Experiences of the War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) & *Brown-Eyed Children of the Sun: Lessons from the Chicano Movement, 1965-1975* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005); Catherine Sue Ramírez, *The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, and the Cultural Politics of Memory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

stymied by discrimination, the fields or canneries were an alternative.[519] After a few days their immigrant co-workers would question or taunt them with disappointment and disbelief about what exactly a privileged person was doing in the fields or canneries: *Pero que estas haciendo aqui, tu hablas ingles, fuiste a la escuela, tienes papeles, por favor aprovecha."* (But what are you doing here? You speak English, you went to school, you have papers [U.S., citizenship]. Take advantage.)[520] This reaction from Mexican immigrants would resonate in the lives of Mexican Americans who suffered their own forms of discrimination and often felt alienated from a traditional "American" experience of inclusion.[521] Those who did leave for college and then returned to communities like Watsonville joined forces with an immigrant generation of Mexicanos who experienced rampant discrimination in the workplace, at school, and in recreation settings—a narrative that a Mexican American generation was familiar with.

Building Alliances with Chicanos: Dolores Cruz Gomez and Oscar Rios

Dolores Cruz Gomez grew up in Goleta, California, home of the University of California, Santa Barbara. Gomez moved to Watsonville in 1979 to work for a nonprofit organization, *Salud Para La Gente* (People's Health), which focused on improving nutrition. Gomez witnessed firsthand the widespread forms of overt and

[519] For a Mexican American generation who witnessed social and economic mobility through factory work see, Elizabeth Rachel Escobedo, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits: The Lives of Mexican American Women on the World War II Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).
[520] Interview with Oscar Rios & Gloria Betancourt, Watsonville, CA, March 26, 2015.
[521] On Mexican and Mexican American society see the works by George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); David Gutierrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995);

covert racism in the city of Watsonville. As the population of Mexican immigrants grew, Gomez was increasingly involved in community organizing and became a leading spokesperson for the local Mexican population.[522] In 1983, she was the first Mexican American to run for city council.



Figure 54. Dolores Cruz Gomez during the cannery strike. Watsonville police and Santa Cruz County Sheriff deputies behind her in riot gear. Courtesy of San Francisco State University Labor Archives.

With underwhelming support for the strike from their own union local, a group of Watsonville *huelgistas* met with Oscar Rios, a Teamsters representative for hotel workers in San Francisco, in October 1985. Rios agreed to visit the strikers in Watsonville that following weekend to see how his local could help. For Rios, it was a chance to get out of the busy city he grew up in and experience the more rural setting of the Monterey Bay area. When he joined the October 6 Solidarity Day March for the cannery strikers, he knew that he was witnessing something radical and special within a labor movement that, like the civil rights movement, he felt needed a larger audience across the nation.

[522] Interview with Dolores Cruz Gomez conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez. September 12, 2016.

Oscar Rios was the son of a Mormon pastor from El Salvador. The Rios family had experience with farm work and had been migrating to Idaho to pick potatoes. The family eventually settled in San Francisco, where he learned about Chicano history and culture and became involved in numerous causes surrounding civil rights advocacy.[523] Some of his friends were involved in the 1968 student strike at San Francisco State University, when students walked out of classes to demand an ethnic studies college. This activism inspired Rios to attend college, and with other Chicano activists he studied at the junior college in suburban San Mateo.

Rios said that his understanding about social justice was forever marked in 1969.[524] *Los Siete de la Raza* was a group of seven young Latino adults who were accused by the police of having killed one of their fellow officers during an altercation in San Francisco's Mission District. As the police investigated the incident, they harassed the community over the whereabouts of *Los Siete*, and at one point even shot at Rios's house. In the following days the entire Latino community faced increased surveillance. The incident led to a campaign to free the seven from jail. Rios helped with the organizing of a defense committee and became deeply involved with it.[525]

---

[523] Oscar Rios interview conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, Watsonville, CA, March 26, 2015.
[524] Todd Guild, "Stretch of Hwy. 129 named after Oscar Rios," *Register-Pajaronian*, Friday, November 15, 2014.
[525] Reynaldo Berrios, *Cholo Style*: *Homies, Homegirls and La Raza* (Los Angeles, CA; Feral House, 2006) , 148-150.

Inter-ethnic Alliance? Or Appropriating a Labor Movement?

Oscar Rios and Gloria Betancourt were both skeptical of the white leadership behind the Solidarity Day March, who came mostly from the TDU.[526] Rios and Bettancourt felt that the strike needed a leadership not associated with the Teamsters or the TDU. Although the TDU had good intentions, Rios and Betancourt felt that it was not much more than an extension of the corrupt Teamsters Union that had been in power for decades and also was not as progressive or radical as the workers. They felt that Frank Bardacke and other TDU members believed that the Mexican *huelgistas* did not have the skills or capacity to lead the strike movement.[527]

For Rios and Betancourt, it was not just a racial matter. They were critical of Mexican immigrant Teamster leaders like Sergio Lopez, too. Lopez had replaced Richard King, a white Teamster official, as an elected business agent for the union. Having a Spanish-speaking representative was a good thing, but it did not necessarily mean that he had an independent mind. Betancourt felt that Lopez received his job based not on merit but rather because he befriended King at the bar where Lopez worked as a waiter, and that Lopez could easily be manipulated by his boss. Betancourt and Rios also did not like that documentary filmmakers were recording the events unfolding around the strike, feeling that they were only attending marches and meetings to garner attention as filmmakers, and not really helping the strikers'

[526] Interview with Oscar Rios & Gloria Betancourt, Watsonville, CA, Offices of The *Allianza*, Saturday, March 26, 2015.
[527] Interview by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez with Gloria Betancourt, Watsonville, CA, Saturday, March 26, 2016 & Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Guillermina Rodriguez. 28 of August 1994. Watsonville, CA. M0905_S12a_B02_09a. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives.

cause. They also felt that the filmmakers and the TDU leadership were only showing one side of a complicated movement; the documentary was capturing the stories of Joseph Fahey, Frank Bardacke, and other white TDU leaders, but not those of the *huelgistas*.[528]

Varying Factions Supporting the Strikers and Political Strategy

The strike did gain national media attention, and supporters from around the state and neighboring San Francisco Bay Area flocked to support the *huelgistas*. Students, academics, labor organizers, socialists, and even anarchists came to Watsonville to help the *huelgistas* win the strike.[529] Motivations for doing so were for the most part accepted as genuine by the *huelgistas*, but after a few weeks various factions of supporters and leaders evolved. Most of the major disagreements among supporters of the strike were about philosophical strategies on how to win the strike. Yet, *huelgistas* often spoke about their frustrations with outsiders who they believed came to Watsonville in search of media attention, like the filmmakers. According to Frank Bardacke with the Teamsters for a Democratic Union and William Flores, the TDU membership included several anarchist and white radicals, and they maintained tight control of the rally. But Chavelo Moreno said, "They wanted to control the rally. They didn't let one striker speak at the rally. That's when we knew we couldn't trust them."[530]

---

[528] Interview with Oscar Rios & Gloria Betancourt, Watsonville, CA, Offices of The *Allianza*, Saturday, March 26, 2015.
[529] Students were encouraged by professors to organize and learn from the strike. Academics, most notably William Flores conducted ethnographic research that led to publication.
[530] William Flores, and Rina Benmayor. *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space, and Rights* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997).

Tensions existed primarily between two support organizations, the Northern California Watsonville Strike Support Committee and the Watsonville TDU. Frank Bardacke said that these organizations were led by "…an amorphous grouping of radicals working together with the Communist Party (CP). The League of Revolutionary Struggle (LRS) worked with the Strike Committee and Northern California Strike Committee."[531] Those organizations and the *huelgista* committee were divided about whether to call a general strike of the entire industry, including vegetable workers in the Salinas Valley, or a strike directed at the cannery industry. Another division existed about whether to garner support from Teamsters union representatives like Sergio Lopez who some believed had "sold out" and could not be trusted. Oscar Rios believed that the *huelgistas* needed broad support, including financial and political support from their union, the Teamsters.

Further tensions also existed between Dolores Cruz Gomez and Oscar Rios. For some *huelgistas*, Dolores Cruz Gomez was a local from Watsonville who they felt had done a lot for the community, including running unsuccessfully for office and spearheading the district election lawsuit. *Huelgistas* such as Esperanza Contreras and Gloria Betancourt acknowledged that Cruz Gomez had done a lot for the strike, but also felt she believed she was speaking for the *huelgistas*. Other *huelgistas* supported Oscar Rios who they felt a genuine respect and admiration for because he always wanted strikers at the forefront of meetings and rallies, and lobbied for larger support. According to Esperanza Contreras and Gloria Betancourt, Oscar Rios

[531] Frank Bardacke, *Reshaping the US Left. Popular Struggles in the 1980s,* Vol 1, 3rd edition (Haymarket; New York, 1988), 150-80.

believed that organizers should support the *huelgistas*, but should take a secondary role to the voices of the *huelgistas*, *who* he believed should always speak for themselves.[532]

As the strike intensified, worker and labor management tensions broadened. On October 15, 1985, Betancourt and Rios led a meeting to organize a strike committee called the *Comitè de Huelga*. The purpose of the committee was to function independently of the Teamsters Union and the TDU and was to be led by the rank-and-file leadership of the strike, predominantly Mexican immigrant workers. More than four hundred people in attendance elected Gloria Betancourt and Chavelo Moreno, both immigrants from Mexico, as leaders of the committee.[533]

By February 1986, six months into the strike, the strikers were feeling greater anxieties about simply surviving. Strike benefits were limited to $55 a week ($124 in 2017 dollars). As strikers they were denied federal aid such as food stamps or unemployment benefits. Workers and their families began to be evicted from their homes. Local schools were witnessing the children under duress, agitated by the effects of the strike on the entire family. Behavioral problems were felt at local schools and teenagers were dropping out in greater numbers to help supplement the

[532] Betancourt interview by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, Watsonville, CA, Saturday, March 26, 2016. Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Gloria Bettancourt, Watsonville, CA, August 1994._B_M0905_S12a_B01_42.wav. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives. Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Esperanza Contreras, Watsonville, CA, August 23, 1994. M0905_S12a_B01_44. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives. See also William Flores, and Rina Benmayor, *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space, and Rights* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 288-289.
[533] Betancourt interview by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, Watsonville, CA, Saturday, March 26, 2016.

family household income by getting part-time employment wherever they could. Whatever savings families had were used to survive.[534]

As the strike went into May 1986, the strikers took their grievances to the Teamsters International, but the strike committee members felt disillusioned when their call for a boycott on vegetables at the canneries was rejected. Instead, the strikers received greater support from the larger Monterey Bay area and other labor unions and civic organizations in the region, including LULAC. Mexican Americans like Dolores Cruz Gomez also became fierce supporters of the strike and the workers. William Flores, an ethnographic researcher, became directly involved by organizing the Latino Agenda Coalition. At the Coalition's statewide conference, Flores invited strikers to speak and organized a meeting with LULAC's state president, Mario Obledo, Mexican American Political Association president Ben Molina, and Rev. Jesse Jackson, at the time a U.S. Presidential candidate.[535] On June 28, 1986, a second mass rally took place in support of the strike. This time over four thousand people marched through the streets of Watsonville. The rally received international media attention. Jesse Jackson drew parallels between Watsonville the early civil rights movement in Selma, Alabama:

> Watsonville, California, is today to economic justice, what Selma, Alabama, was to political justice just twenty years ago. Wherever a group of men and women organize, and they stick together, and as these workers are doing, love together, and suffer together, and build together, they can make progress

[534] Watsonville and Santa Cruz Strike Support Committee. Strike Leaflet. Frank Bardacke Papers. SFSU Labor Archives and Research Center.
[535] 226-227.

> together. These women are standing for all of us. All of us must support them.[536]

When the cannery workers asked Cesar Chavez to support their strike by calling a walkout in the fields of the Salinas Valley, he backpedaled and told them they should focus on a boycott of Wells Fargo Bank, which had been lending money to cannery owners. He did not want his UFW members to mobilize a strike over their own grievances in the fields of the Salinas Valley or to strike in solidarity with the cannery workers. He was persistent about pursuing a national boycott on fruits and vegetables as a tactical strategy. Chavez was still hated by the Teamsters union, who he had fought against during the 1970 vegetable strike in Salinas.[537]

By August 1986 cannery owners like Mort Console of Watsonville Canning were attempting to hire replacement workers, negatively referred to as scabs. The strike committee, now led by Gloria Betancourt and Cuca Lomeli, organized anti-scab protests and passed out leaflets to potential strikebreakers.[538] One flyer read, "SCABS, the most selfish animals on earth, are trying to break our strike for decent wages and benefits. Scabs are working with company owners Mort Console of Watsonville Canning and Richard Shaw. Please pass this flyer on to your friends."[539] Strikers warned family members about the attempt by cannery owners to hire

---

[536] Jon Silver, *Watsonville on Strike* (Watsonville, CA: Migrant Media Productions. 1989).
[537] William Flores, and Rina Benmayor. *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space, and Rights* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 228-229.
[538] Betancourt interview by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, Watsonville, CA, Saturday, March 26, 2016; Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Gloria Bettancourt, Watsonville, CA, August 1994._B_M0905_S12a_B01_42.wav. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives.
[539] Frank Bardacke Papers. San Francisco State University Labor Archives. Teamster Leaflets 1985-1987.

replacement workers, which was in violation of their union contract. The strikers were well organized and many felt it was their duty to get the word out about their grievances to a larger audience. As some men and women volunteered to become picket captains, others went on tour to the San Francisco Bay Area speaking and lobbying for support from university students, other labor unions, churches, and nonprofits. With strike benefits of just $55 a week, many who had mortgages and large families simply could not survive on such a meager amount and they sought work in the Salinas Valley fields, or in other regions. Reyna Cruz, for example, moved temporarily with her husband to Fresno to work during the grape harvest, leaving her children in Watsonville, with the eldest caring for the younger five children.[540]

[540] Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Reyna Guzman. 23 of August 1994 Watsonville, CA. M0905_S12a_B02_05a.wav. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives.



Figure 55. MECHA students from UC Santa Cruz marching in support of *huelgistas*. Unknown Photographer. Courtesy Pajaro Valley Historical Association and San Francisco State University Labor Archives.

Some *huelgistas* traveled in groups to university campuses and spoke with students about the strike and many student groups like Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano/a de Aztlan (MEChA) from UC Santa Cruz went to Watsonville to march and picket in support of the strike. Guillermina Rodriguez and Gloria Betancourt made multiple visits to San Francisco State, UC Berkeley, and traveled to New York, Boston, and Los Angeles to speak and lobby larger support from university students and other unions.[541] The strike committee was also successful in keeping replacement

[541] Betancourt interview by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, Watsonville, CA, Saturday, March 26, 2016. Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Gloria Bettancourt, Watsonville, CA, August 1994._B_M0905_S12a_B01_42.wav. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and

workers away from the canneries; a militant group of strikers organized caravans in search of scabs, often at night.

"Haciendo Travesuras:" Resistance and Violent Confrontation During the Strike

Various articles ran in the *Watsonville Register-Pajaronian* (the local newspaper) detailing the frustrations and violence in the aftermath of picketing at the canneries, or in trying to prevent replacement workers from entering the canneries. Strikers threw rocks at buses, and windows were broken, car bombings were reported, and vehicle tires were slashed. According to one account, the Watsonville Canning plant was also set on fire.[542] Many of the women *huelgistas* became militantly active in preventing strikebreakers. Gloria Betancourt described the women who became leaders and active participants in the strike as, *mujeres guerilleras y unas mas huelgistas peleoneras* (women guerillas and fighters). The strikers were also threatened physically and assaulted with rocks and tear gas, their cars were burglarized, and their homes were also vandalized.[543] Reyna Guzman shared how frustrations over scabs attempting to break their strike led to moments of violence:

> A van would arrive to protect the strikebreakers and the *huelgistas* surrounded the van; we were going to tip over the van, but we didn't do anything and we ran. *Haciamos travesuras pero coriamos*; (We committed mischief, but we ran.) We were prepared to fight when the scabs made fun of us. All we had was rocks; all the women had rocks and threw them as busses transported scabs to the plant.[544]

University Archives; Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Guillermina Rodriguez. 28 of August 1994. Watsonville, CA. M0905_S12a_B02_09a. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives.

[542]Lilian Elizabeth Duck, *Juana Huelgista*. 85-86; Betancourt interview, Watsonville, CA, Saturday, March 26, 2016.

[543] "Weapons Found near Plant," *Watsonville Register Pajaronian*, September 11, 1985.

[544] Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Reyna Guzman. 23 of August 1994

The more militant strike leaders like Esperanza Contreras described their militancy to physically prevent scabs from breaking their strike as *haciendo travesuras* (making mischief). They first attempted to warn scabs and educated them about the strike before they ever boarded a bus that would transport them to the canneries. If their lobbying failed, they would then resort to *travesuras* or mischief. Esperanza described their tactics:

> We would wear multiple layers of clothing and then take them off after we did what we had to so they couldn't identify us by saying she was wearing x color clothing, so we just took off one layer. I would wear a large jacket and then take it off. We would go scare the *esquiroles;* strikebreakers, we would scare them. We never allowed them to work, they couldn't do the work, their product was useless; the product they produced they had to throw it away. The same strikebreakers had to go and clean up the mess because they simply couldn't do the work right.[545]

Guillermina Rodriguez also participated in preventing scabs from breaking their strikes. However, she was concerned about her sensitive legal status at the time and was not willing to be more militant. "I wasn't going to commit violence, I didn't have to be committing violence. I had to think about myself, and my son, I was undocumented at the time. Cuca Lomeli was arrested many times for the cause."[546]

Watsonville, CA. M0905_S12a_B02_05a.wav. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives.

[545] Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Esperanza Contreras. 23 of August 1994 Watsonville, CA. M0905_S12a_B01_44. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives.

[546] Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Guillermina Rodriguez. 28 of August 1994. Watsonville, CA. M0905_S12a_B02_09a. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives.

The strike, now at nearly eighteen months, was taking its toll on the strikers, the management, and the entire community.[547] By that time many strikers had been evicted and lost homes to foreclosure, cars were repossessed, and couples divorced. In some cases, children had been sent to live with other family members. Some women had even entered prostitution to earn money.[548]

By February 1987, the strike had bankrupted cannery owner Mort Console, but he was able to negotiate with debtors a settlement to sell his cannery to Nor Cal Frozen Foods, led by David Gil of King City, California. Gil, under enormous pressure to avoid losing his spinach harvest in the Salinas Valley, offered the strikers a $5.85 hourly wage. The offer was much higher than the $4.25 an hour the growers had offered at the beginning of the strike. The union presented the offer to the cannery workers, considering it a victory, but the offer did not include health benefits. Strikers met for a vote on whether to agree to the terms and they elected Gloria Betancourt as the lead negotiator to bargain with David Gil. While the offer seemed fair to many, Gloria Betancourt felt that the offer was simply not good enough without the health benefits. Though strikers were exhausted and simply losing faith in the process, she turned the offer down. The *huelgistas* had another plan.

[547] Steve Turner, "Strike Town USA," *The Examiner*, June 1987, 36-37.
[548] Miles Corwin, " Canning Workers' Bid Devastates Lives Economy of Watsonville," *The Los Angeles Times,* September 14, 1986, A4.



Figure 56. Gloria Betancourt (rear, right), Cuca Lomeli (front, right), on the first day of their hunger strike. Photo by Kurt Rodgers, *San Francisco Examiner*.

***La Peregrinación* y *Caminata a la Iglesia de San Patricio*, Pilgrimage to St. Patrick's Church and *Huelgistas'* Catholic Faith**

On March 9, 1987, Esperanza Contreras, Gloria Betancourt, Cuca Lomeli, and Maria Coralejo began a hunger strike to draw attention to negotiations over health benefits.[549] By this time in the strike, the women were not simply asking for a miracle, but recognition and respect by holding out for their health benefits. The next day, Anita Contreras suggested a *caminata* (march) and hundreds of women organized a pilgrimage march, to the local Catholic Church, St. Patrick's. The purpose of the march was attempt to unite the strikers in greater solidarity as some were losing their patience and wanted to return to work. For the leading strikers like Cuca Lomeli and Reyna Guzman, there was no reason to give in to ownership

[549] Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Reyna Guzman, Watsonville, CA, August 23, 1994. M0905_S12a_B02_05a.wav. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives.

demands after being on strike for eighteen months. It was critical for them that health and pension benefits be included in the final labor agreement.

On the day of the pilgrimage hunger strikers Gloria Betancourt and Esperanza Contreras witnessed how Watsonville police officers laughed at their religious devotion and taunted them. Militant and ready to yell back at them, Betancourt was stopped by Esperanza Contreras who reminded Betancourt about their larger purpose. "I grabbed Gloria from the shoulder and told her, no, Gloria, don't do it. If you approach and taunt them back this pilgrimage will lose its value."[550] Instead, the *huelgistas* continued to march, some kneeling the entire way, to St. Patrick's.

[550] Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Esperanza Contreras. 23 of August 1994 Watsonville, CA. M0905_S12a_B01_44. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives.



Figure 57. (Center) Esperanza Contreras; Octivina Serriteno (right) carries a picture of Christ supporting the strikers. The striker supporters placed blankets and mats as strikers kneeled their way to St. Patrick's Church. Photograph Courtesy of Kurt Ellison for the *Register-Pajaronian*. Pajaro Valley Historical Association and San Francisco State University Labor Archives.

Historically, St. Patrick's Church in the center of Watsonville had been the worship setting for the large Irish, Italian, Portuguese, Yugoslavian, and Croatian ethnic groups in the city. As Father Mike stated, "…It was where the Irish, and the Portuguese learned to get along with each ethnic group as they listened to mass in the same pews."[551] The Mexican church, where Spanish Mass was conducted, was in

[551] Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Father Mike. St. Patrick's Church in Watsonville, CA. August 16, 1994. M0905_S12a_B02_07.wav. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives.

Pajaro, the neighboring smaller rural town. The Irish priest at St. Patrick's, had seen the demographics of Watsonville rapidly change during his seventeen-year tenure. The historically European immigrant membership numbers had dropped while the Mexican immigrant population began filling St. Patrick's in larger numbers. The pilgrimage during the strike characterized the racialized divisions in Watsonville, but it was also a moment when the church would either become more accepting of its Mexican immigrant flock or have to shut down.

When the strikers and supporters finally arrived at St. Patrick's they were turned away. They had asked the Irish priest in charge for support and to allow them in church. For the priest, it was better for strikers to "be good girls and go home." But the *huelgistas* would not give up; instead they sought the support of a Latino priest from Central America, Raul Carvajal, who was also at St. Patrick's. Father Mike, who came to Watsonville two years after the strike, explained why the Irish priest might have declined to support the strikers at the time:

> The priest at the time was afraid of Mexicans. He was from Ireland. He was well kept and orderly and had clear expectations and predictable ways. He was neat and orderly, a very structured person. Just imagine when the strikers arrived. He was probably terrified of the women and the strikers' demands.[552]

Father Mike added that historically the Catholic Church had clearly responded more supportive to the wealthier population and conservative establishment in Watsonville.[553] Ultimately, Raul Carvajal was more supportive of the strikers and

---

[552] Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Father Mike. St. Patrick's Church in Watsonville, CA. August 16, 1994. M0905_S12a_B02_07.wav. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives.

[553] On Catholicism and Mexican communities see the following scholarship. Jay P. Dolan, Jay P., and Gilberto Miguel Hinojosa, *Mexican Americans and the Catholic Church, 1900-1965* (Notre Dame:

eventually allowed them in St. Patrick's. Carvajal also adamantly encouraged the women to continue on strike until full health benefits were restored.

Two days later Cannery owner David Gil agreed to the strikers' demands. On March 11, 1987, the union and Gil ratified a new contract that would pay the workers partial health benefits and the $5.85 an hour wage they demanded. Gloria Betancourt was not completely happy, but she viewed the agreement as a victory.[554]



Figure 58. Sergio Lopez hands a strike bumper sticker to David Gil (owner of Watsonville Canning) after signing a new contract on March 11, 1987 that included health benefits. Gloria Betancourt (background, far left) and Cuca Lomeli (behind Gil) applaud. Courtesy of Pajaro Valley Historical Association and San Francisco State Labor Archives.

University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 56; Mario Garcia, *Catolicos: Resistance and Affirmation in Chicano Catholic History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 15; Jeanette Rodriguez. *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment Among Mexican-American Women* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994); Gina Marie Pitti, *To "Hear about God In Spanish": Ethnicity, Church, and Community Activism In the San Francisco Archdiocese's Mexican American Colonias, 1942-1965*, Ph.D. dissertation (Palo Alto: Stanford University, 2003); George E. Schultze, *Strangers In a Foreign Land: The Organizing of Catholic Latinos In the United States* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007).

[554] Bettancourt interview. Associated Press. "Contract Backed at Food Plant," *The New York Times*, March 12, 1987, A 26.



Figure 59. Anita Contreras leads hundreds of cheering workers through Watsonville after ratification of a three-year contract. The banner reads Justice, Dignity and Victory. Courtesy of Pajaro Valley Historical Association and San Francisco State University Labor Archives. March 1987.

Politics of Inclusion in Watsonville

Days later the *huelgistas* and their supporters once again marched through Watsonville, but this time singing and cheering in solidarity while yelling "*Victoria*" (victory). The women were inspired to better their conditions as workers, but also as mothers, wives, and partners. Together with the Mexican American population and larger labor union community, *huelgistas* built alliances modeled after the Civil Rights and Chicano Movements to demand labor and civil rights.[555]

What the cannery workers and residents in Watsonville were ultimately advocating for was labor representation that was fair, but also full access to the democratic process or what David Montejano has called political inclusion:

[555] Paule Cruz Takash, *A Crisis of Democracy: Community Responses to the Latinization of a California Town Dependent on Immigrant Labor,* PhD dissertation (Berkeley: University of California Berkeley, 1990); Patricia Zavella, *I'm Neither Here nor There: Mexicans' Quotidian Struggles with Migration and Poverty* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 100-105.

> The basic recognition of Mexican Americans as a legitimate U.S. citizenry. Inclusion refers, in the most specific sense, to the extension of and exercise of first-class citizenship. At the most general, it may refer to a broadening of the political culture and means associated with "Americanness."[556]

The Mexican immigrant *huelgistas,* many of whom were undocumented, wanted political inclusion, but they would have to seek political representatives that understood their tenuous residency status in the United States. Since the Mexican and Mexican American population in Watsonville acutely understood their mixed-status families and sought political inclusion, they mobilized politically to take it from an established Anglo elite with many decades of political clout. The Mexican and Mexican American residents built successful alliances in support of labor and social justice causes, and they did not discriminate immigrants based on their legal status. Both groups understood that they needed each other. They were also willing to continue the struggle for electoral representation and were well prepared to contest the established elite.

Conclusion: Victory or Loss

As the women reflected on the strike and their lives working in the canneries, set definitions and levels of success varied. Some of the *huelgistas* described being content after the strike because they managed to save their homes from foreclosure. Many continued to work in the cannery. For some like Reyna Guzman, their children were the evidence of a longer struggle to better their livelihoods in the United States and their jobs in the canneries allowed their children to receive a formal education, an

[556] David Montejano *Chicano Politics and Society in the Late Twentieth Century* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), xiii.

opportunity they never had. They also had children who became the first to graduate from high school and attend college.

For Esperanza Contreras, success meant that her children had received better schooling than she ever did. Five of her seven children had married and were living *como manda dios (*how God dictates).[557] They married in the Catholic faith and had their own homes and sound jobs. As you listen to an oral history with Contreras and she speaks about the strike, you hear a woman with self-confidence and agency. She became an active participant in the strike, learned to organize, and demanded labor and civil rights. For other *huelgistas* who were heavily active during the strike, such as Guillermina Rodriguez, the strike was a painful reminder of trauma she lived through. As she spoke during an oral history interview seven years after the strike, in 1994, she began to cry when she reflected on her time in the cannery. The strike upheaval, the violence, even the site of the cannery put her in a state of psychological trauma. "I get sick passing by the cannery. Sometimes I have nightmares that I can't do my job, I freeze and can't move. I don't like remembering that period in my life."[558]

For Gloria Betancourt, the end of the strike and return to the cannery as a forewoman put her in a tumultuous position because of her leadership roles during the strike. The single mother of four shared how the strike marked her as a militant and

[557] Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Esperanza Contreras. 23 of August 1994. Watsonville, CA. M0905_S12a_B01_44. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives.
[558] Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Guillermina Rodriguez. 28 of August 1994. Watsonville, CA. M0905_S12a_B02_09a. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives.

rebellious cannery worker. When she returned to work at the cannery she found there were major divisions among the workers because the ownership allowed former scabs to work alongside seasoned cannery workers like herself. Betancourt explained:

> You became marked forever; the management always viewed me as an enemy. They knew that you would never be on their side. When I returned as a supervisor, they wanted me to treat people the wrong way and I wouldn't. I've always rebelled against injustice. So many people abuse their posts. I never liked that; we need to treat people with respect. The irony was that a former scab was my supervisor after the strike. Within three months he wrote me up for poor job performance. It took support from other workers. We gathered 600 signatures to retain my job and the union fought to give me my position back. It was a personal vendetta, not about my job performance. The scabs wanted to feel superior. Why am I going to be inferior? They are not the owners, they are wage earners just like us.[559]

The community in Watsonville and the larger Monterey Bay area viewed the cannery strike and the labor agreements as a victory. The momentum from the victory mobilized Mexican and Mexican Americans to demand greater civil rights in the region. As the strike ended, the struggle for electoral representation continued. Others were more pessimistic about the outcome of the strike. While the strike and the advocacy surrounding it empowered the community, wages and benefits were lost permanently because of a decision by strikers to return to work at Richard Shaw six months into the strike and accept a wage cut from $7.00 to $5.85 an hour. That wage negotiation created a cap on what Watsonville Canning strikers could demand during the remainder of the strike.[560]

---

[559] Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Gloria Bettancourt. Watsonville, CA, August 1994._B_M0905_S12a_B01_42.wav. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives

[560] Bardacke Interview; Lilian Elizabeth Duck, *Juana Huelgista*, 35-38; Betancourt interview, Watsonville, CA, Saturday, March 26, 2016.

Many of the women, who were heavily active during the labor strike, including Guillermina Rodriguez and Cuca Lomeli, never went back to the canneries. Rather, they took jobs at community organizations advocating for the most impoverished in the community, including the homeless. Guillermina Rodriguez also felt the strike allowed her to finally pursue an education.

> Thanks to the strike; I have the opportunity to study; if not I'd be more ill; full of arthritis; older; and I say thank you to the strike; I learned that in this life work is not secure; I felt so confident; and I used to see the older women and I would think I'll be retired by then. A younger student I attend classes with shared with me recently that her supervisor encouraged her to take a management position at a retail store and she asked me for my advice abut staying enrolled in school or leaving and taking the job.[561]

Rodiguez told the student:

> …money comes and goes and if you leave your school; two three years will pass and then what if they fire you or they give your job to someone else; I'd advise you to pursue your education. You sacrifice a lot going to school, but in the end it's worth it.[562]

Fidelia Carissoza felt that the strike liberated her from the constraints of the cannery. "We learned that we could *superarnos* (better our selves) that there were other jobs aside from the factory. We showed that *luchando* (fighting) we can reach any of our goals. We had other *horizontes* (horizons)."[563] However, according to Sergio Lopez, who remained with the Teamsters as a business agent, 75 percent of the strikers were still working at the canning companies ten years after the strike in 1995.

---

[561] Interview conducted by Cherríe L. Moraga with Guillermina Rodriguez. 28 of August 1994. Watsonville, CA. M0905_S12a_B02_09a. Stanford University Department of Special Collections and University Archives.
[562] Ibid.
[563] Interview with Fidelia Carissoza conducted by Gladys Puente, Watsonville, CA, August 2, 2014. "*Dignidad and Conscientizacion:* Oral History of A Watsonville *Huelgista*," MA Thesis (SF State, May 2015), 91.

The Chicano movement and its legacies were active in the workplace and larger community of the Monterey Bay area beyond the traditional end-point of 1975. Mexican immigrant women and Mexican Americans took to the streets and created alliances that crossed citizenship and residency status with its more experienced activist Mexican American neighbors to continue advocating for civil rights during the 1980s.[564] As cannery strike co-organizer Chavelo Moreno told Oscar Rios in an interview for *Adelante* shortly after the strike was settled, the strike put him in contact with support networks at university campuses, specifically from Mexican Americans. "I've been able to learn from others, from Chicano students. I've been able to see the struggles of student movements and have learned from them. Our children have learned about our struggles and I would like to see them learn from our struggle."[565] Gloria Betancourt agreed. "There's been a lot of support from students and the Chicano community has been active in supporting us, and they have also learned from us. They have learned to fight for their benefits as students."[566]

Many of the children of the immigrant population in Watsonville became the first in their families to attend college, graduate, and return to Watsonville, some to serve as elected officials. The labor organizing and activism for civil rights that took place in Watsonville during the cannery strike of 1985–1987 built the necessary alliances and networks to achieve successful voting rights victories and electoral

[564] Interview conducted by author with Frank Bardacke, Watsonville, CA, February 7, 2014; John Womack, Jr., "Trampling out the Sanctimony," *Monthly Review*, September 4, 2012.
[565] Interview conducted by Oscar Rios, *Adelante*, February 1987.
[566] Ibid.

representation by the end of the decade and into the 1990s.[567] Through the 1990s a second generation was entering electoral politics in greater numbers. The strike was a labor activism turning point for the Monterey Bay area and beyond. Chapter Five examines the political mobilization that took place to demand electoral representation for Mexican Americans, leading to a political turning point in the Monterey Bay area's political history.

[567] Frank Bardacke, *Trampling Out The Vintage: Cesar Chavez and The Two Souls of the United Farm Workers* (New York, NY: Verso Press, 2011); Kelly Lytle Hernandez, "Mexican Immigration to the United States", OAH Magazine of History. Vol. 23, No. 4, *North American Migrations* (Oct., 2009), 25-29; Jon Gjerde, and Mae Ngai, *Major Problems in American Immigration and Ethnic History: Documents and Essays*, 2nd ed. (Boston, MA: Wadsworth/Cenage Learning, 2013), Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

CHAPTER FIVE: MALDEF LITIGATING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND VOTING RIGHTS, 1980–2000

> Our ultimate objective is just to give Hispanics a fair opportunity to compete. All of our work, that's all it's doing. It's providing educational opportunities for children, it's providing employment opportunities, it's giving Hispanics the opportunity to have their vote count on the same level as someone else's.[568]
>
> Political power is never given away, you have to take it. So that's what I do. I saw that once elections converted to district elections, it made a big difference. In Watsonville it made a big difference, and in Salinas it made a big difference.[569]
>
> —Joaquin Avila
>
> There are two armies now and everyone is going to go out to win.
> —Fernando Armenta

On June 6, 1989, a large group of Mexican American political organizers gathered at Los Arcos Restaurant in Salinas, California.[570] The crowd anxiously awaited the results of a closely contested three-way city council race. Two of the candidates were attempting to become the first Mexican American elected to the town's council. Since 1872, in the entire Monterey Bay area there had been no Mexican Americans elected to school boards, city councils, the county board of supervisors, the state assembly, or the U.S. Congress. On this day, the people gathered at the restaurant would celebrate the election victory of Simon Salinas, a charismatic thirty-three-year-old schoolteacher and son of a former bracero. Salinas

---

[568] Joaquin Avila. "MALDEF's Goal: A Fair Opportunity for Hispanics to Compete." *Nuestro*. August 1983.
[569] Sara Rubin. "Meet Voting Rights Champ and Genius Joaquin Avila." *Monterey County Weekly*. August 22, 2015.
[570] Author interview with Simon Salinas, June 30, 2014 and, May 7, 2015. Author interview with Dr. Juan Oliverez, June 3, 2015; Ken Schultz. "One incumbent beaten, another trails in voting for Salinas council seats: city holds 1st district elections." *The Herald*. June 7, 1989. Jamie Marks. "Latino scores council seat in Salinas city election." *The Santa Cruz Sentinel*. Thursday, June 8, 1989. [570] Roya Camp. "Salinas First Latino supervisor in 100 years. 'Equality At Work.'" *The Californian*. August 11, 1993.

had successfully won the support of the Monterey Bay Mexican and Mexican American community, securing the endorsement of such civil rights organizations as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA) for a hotly contested city council seat representing East Salinas over both an Ivy-League-trained Mexican American attorney and an African American business owner.[571]



Figure 60. Simon Salinas (center) hearing election results with campaign volunteers Cynthia Peña (left), and Eileen McKenzie (right) on the night of June 6, 1989.[572] *The Californian*.

The election of Simon Salinas in 1989 to the Salinas city council marked a political turning point for the Mexican and Mexican American population of the Monterey Bay region. It was the culmination of years of civil rights advocacy and

[571] Both LULAC and CRLA are nonpartisan organizations. Members of LULAC often supported candidates and invited them to speak at meetings. Some CRLA attorneys were heavily involved politically in Salinas and many eventually ran for office. This list includes Anna Caballero, Juan Uranga, Luis Alejo, Ana Ventura Phares, Bill Manning, and Lydia Villarreal (who later became a Monterey County Superior Court judge).

[572] "Council Gets First Mexican-American: Salinas supporters turn out in force." *The Californian*. June 7, 1989. Marty Burelson; Ken Schultz. "One incumbent beaten, another trails in voting for Salinas council seats: city holds 1st district elections. *The Herald*. June 7, 1989.

political organizing by Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the Monterey Bay region. His victory represented hope and a turning point for the community. Tina Delgado, one of his campaign advisers, stated, "For the first time in history, [East Salinas Hispanics] have someone to listen to their concerns and to bring them up to other council members." [573]

In the landmark lawsuits *Gomez v. City of Watsonville* and *Armenta v. City of Salinas*, the legal victories that the Mexican American Legal and Education Fund (MALDEF) and its lead attorney, Joaquin Avila, secured for Mexican Americans are what finally paved the path for the successful election of the first Mexican Americans to city councils in both cities.[574] This chapter focuses on the political mobilization and participation of Mexican and Mexican Americans in the Monterey Bay area and its implications, statewide and nationally.[575] Why did it take so long, and what finally opened the door to Mexican American electoral representation? While activism by local civil rights leaders had proved important, the work of Joaquin Avila and MALDEF finally secured legal protections that guaranteed the region's Mexican American population permanent access to electoral representation. The two lawsuits changed city council elections from at-large to district in the two cities. Most important, they transformed the political power structure and gave the Mexican and

[573] "Council Gets First Mexican-American: Salinas supporters turn out in force." *The Californian*. June 7, 1989.
[574] Claudia Melendez Salinas. "Voting Rights Attorney Credits Locals." *Knight Ridder Tribune Business*. May 19, 2006.
[575] Molly Colin. "For Latinos, Immediate Objective is City Council Membership." *The New York Times*. Sunday, September 4, 1988.

Mexican American community a seat at the political table.[576] MALDEF and Avila's victories in changing the electoral system were not just about the right to vote, but also and more importantly about what voting rights did to insure the community electoral representation. The electoral transition changed the power structures and shifted power lines with the security of voting rights in a way never before seen in the region. MALDEF's work enabled the Mexican and Mexican American population to finally attain political power and influence by achieving victory with candidates who represented their interests.[577] They had a new voice that represented their interests in city politics and in issues surrounding housing, recreation, safety, and transportation in their community.

Two years before Simon Salinas's election to the Salinas city council, and while the 1985-87 cannery strike was still going on, Watsonville labor leader Gloria Betancourt made her feelings known about the political climate in her city before district elections:

> In the upcoming elections we have to unite and vote to give Latinos more representation, because all the [city council members] are white…. The times we have gone there, it has been very noticeable that they see us with great indifference. They don't care about *Raza* workers. That is why we want to unite to get more Latino representation.[578]

---

[576] On at-large and single-member district elections in minority communities seeFlorence P, Adams,. *Latinos and Local Representation: Changing Realities, Emerging Theories*. (New York: Garland Publ, 2000).

[577] Interview with Joaquin Avila conducted by author. Seattle University, Washington. December 17, 18, 19, 2012. Author interview with Simon Salinas, June 30, 2014 and, May 7, 2015

[578] Anne Adams, Carl Davidson and Michael Lee. "Round Table Discussion with the Watsonville Workers." Foreword 7:1 January 1987, 3-25; Joaquin Avila, Paule Cruz Takash, "Latino Political Participation in Rural California" *California Institute for Rural Studies*. Working Group on Farm Labor and Rural Poverty Working Paper #8. February 1989.

Betancourt's frustrations over political representation characterized the long history of Mexican American exclusion from both electoral politics and civic leadership roles in the Monterey Bay region. Before 1987, no one of Mexican origin had held leadership roles in unions, city commissions, the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, the local women's club, or other civic and service organizations.[579]

This chapter also examines the electoral campaigns in Watsonville and Salinas that ultimately allowed Mexican Americans to seek elected office and win. In the aftermath of the voting rights lawsuits filed by MALDEF and Avila, Watsonville and Salinas implemented district elections. But a dilemma arose in both communities about who should seek elected office, leading to identity politics and new political factions within the Latino community that linger to the present.

While the 1970 United Farm Workers strike in Salinas and the 1985–87 Watsonville cannery strike focused on union organizing they also energized and mobilized the community to seek civil rights and highlighted the absence of Mexican Americans in elected office.[580] The local chapter of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and its leadership, at the forefront of civil rights advocacy, brought local elected officials to the table. But LULAC did not have the legal means to hold various institutions and politicians accountable the way voting

[579] Ibid., 14-16.
[580] On the lettuce strike in Salinas see, Frank Bardacke, *Trampling Out the Vintage*: Cesar Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers. (London: Verso, 2011). Bruce Neuburger, *Lettuce Wars: Ten Years of Work and Struggle in the Fields of California*. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2013). Lori A. Flores. *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farmworker Movement.* (New Haven. Yale. 2016). On the Watsonville cannery strike see, Frank Bardacke, *Good Liberals and Great Blue Herons: Land, Labor and Politics in the Pajaro Valley*. (Santa Cruz, Calif: Center for Political Ecology, 1994).

rights legislation and enforcement did. The UFW and labor organizer Cesar Chavez drew unprecedented attention to critical farm worker advocacy in the region. Chavez energized the population to demand better wages and working conditions for farm workers, but there were other important and pressing civil rights causes that the Mexican American community sought to remedy. However, because Mexican American electoral representation was nonexistent in the region, only after voting rights grievances were legally filed did Mexican Americans win electoral seats. MALDEF and Avila applied the law in a way that no other institution had done before in the region. By citing the Voting Rights Act (VRA), specifically Section 5, they ultimately were able to secure district elections for the Mexican American community.[581]

By the 1980s California still lagged behind southwestern states in political representation by Mexican Americans. In the 1980s, MALDEF was heavily active in voting rights cases in Texas where Latinos had three times as many Latino elected officials as California. According to political scientist William Flores, from 1973 to 1988 Latino elected officials in Texas tripled from 565 to 1,611 and nearly tripled in Arizona… from 95 to 237.[582] However by 1989 there were only 7 Latino state legislators in California, compared to 25 in Texas and 41 in New Mexico. A few major factors prevented a greater number of Latinos from attaining electoral office in

[581] Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States*.(New York: Basic Books, 2009).
[582] "Latino Political Participation in Rural California" *California Institute for Rural Studies*. Working Group on Farm Labor and Rural Poverty Working Paper #8. February 1989. Pgs., 2-6; Navarro, Armando. *Mexicano Political Experience in Occupied Aztlan: Struggles and Change*. (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2005).

California. First, half of the Latino population in California during the early 1980s was not eligible to vote because they were not U.S. citizens. Second, California has fewer government jurisdictions—58 counties, as opposed to Texas, which has 254 and in the 1980s had 1,200 elected county officials. Third, as late as 1987, 417 out of 445 cities in California had the at-large system, which protected white incumbents and kept them in office for multiple terms. For example, by 1990, Los Angeles County had 2.6 million Latino residents, but there were still no Latinos on the county board of supervisors. Among the cities with at-large elections were many in the Monterey Bay area, even in towns with large Mexican and Mexican American populations like Watsonville and Salinas. By running at-large instead of in single-district elections, Latinos had a difficult time getting the necessary resources, including financial support, to win elections. School board members were also mostly elected at-large, too. In the mid-1980s, California had more than 5,000 school board members and 2,000 city council members, and only 223 of the former and 117 of the latter were Mexican American.[583]

Though many scholars have claimed that MALDEF essentially went away after the Chicano movement of the 1970s, this chapter seeks to reincorporate MALDEF into a longer and wider civil rights struggle as a legal organization that continued and affected significant change into the 1980s. MALDEF, and Joaquin Avila fundamentally altered community relations and realigned power structures in the Monterey Bay area. MALDEF was responsible for filing a federal voting rights

[583] Ibid., Pgs. 23-30. William A. Flores. "Chicano Empowerment and the Politics of At-Large Elections in California: A Tale of Two Cities." Working Paper Series. No. 28. February 1990.

case that forever transformed politics in the Monterey Bay region and had major voting rights implications across California in cities where Latinos lacked electoral representation.[584] The case, *Dolores Cruz Gomez v. City of Watsonville*, argued in 1985 that at-large elections denied Latinos, who were approximately 50 percent of the city's population, electoral representation on the city council. Using the victory in Watsonville, Joaquin Avila filed a similar lawsuit in Salinas, California, seeking district elections. Hostility toward the Mexican and Mexican American community in both towns led MALDEF, Avila, and community activists to file grievances of discrimination seeking equal electoral representation in the larger Monterey Bay region.[585]

History of MALDEF

In order to understand the significant impact MALDEF made on the Monterey Bay area, a historical overview of its origins in Texas is necessary. In the fall of 1968, 192 Mexican American students walked out of their high school in Hidalgo County, Texas.[586] Sixty-two were subsequently expelled. The students had presented the school board with fifteen demands related to educational inequities at the school, but the board refused to hear the students' demands. MALDEF, founded just a few

[584] Paule Takash Cruz. "Remedying Racial and Ethnic Inequality in California Politics: Watsonville Before and After District Elections." Center for Latino Policy Research. UC Berkeley: Center for Latino Policy Research (1999).
[585] On voting rights see Howard Dale Krane. and Thomas P. Lauth. *Compromised Compliance: Implementation of the 1965 Voting Rights Act*. (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1982). Edward, Blum. *The Unintended Consequences of Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act.* (Washington, D.C.: AEI Press, 2007). Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States*.(New York: Basic Books, 2009).
[586] "MALDEF's Goal: A Fair Opportunity for Hispanics to Compete." *Nuestro*. August 1983.

months before, filed a lawsuit against the school board on behalf of the expelled students, citing that the school had violated the students' right to protest.

MALDEF was founded in 1968 when Texas civil rights attorneys Pete Tijerina, Mario Obledo, Roy Padilla, Albert Peña, and James DeAnda received a Ford Foundation grant for $2.2 million to start a legal organization that would focus on civil rights issues affecting Mexican and Mexican Americans in Texas.[587] The founders had no idea of the vast issues affecting other southwest states.[588] According to historian Al Camarillo, "MALDEF is a product of both the modern civil rights movement and the Chicano movement. The legal victories of the civil rights era combined with an emerging ethnic solidarity movement among Chicanos in the late 1960s to create an environment for its founding in 1967."[589]

MALDEF was involved in seminal legal cases in Texas that would pave the path for future success in places like Watsonville and Salinas.[590] In one way, Texas civil rights advocacy was the "miner's canary" for Mexican and Mexican American civil rights advocates of the Monterey Bay area.[591] Civil rights leaders in Texas had been advocating for voting rights and equal access to schooling during the 1960s and

---

[587] Guide to the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund Records, M0673. Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.
[588] Jack Greenberg, *Crusades in the Courts: How a Dedicated Band of Civil Rights Lawyers Fought for the Civil Rights Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); David Badillo. "MALDEF and the Evolution of Latino Civil Rights," Border and Inter-American Affairs Research Report, *Institute for Latino Studies, University of Notre Dame* (2005); Pgs., 4-6.
[589] Ibid.
[590] Maria Velez, B. *The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF): An Historical Documentation and Political Analysis* (1992); Michael A. Olivas. "From a 'Legal Organization of Militants' into a 'Law Firm for the Latino Community': MALDEF and the Purposive Cases of Keyes, Rodriguez, and Plyler," (September 23, 2013). 90 *Denver University Law Review*. pgs., 1163-1165.
[591] See Lani Guinier, and Gerald Torres. *The Miner's Canary: Enlisting Race, Resisting Power, Transforming Democracy*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002).

1970s. Mexican American voting rights advocates in Salinas and Watsonville observed the legal cases in Texas from afar. The voting rights advocacy that began in Texas was reproduced in other regions like the Monterey Bay region where activists like Dolores Cruz Gomez were trained by the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project (SVREP).[592]

Soon after incorporating MALDEF, the founders identified voting rights irregularities as one of the most pressing civil rights issues affecting the Mexican American community across the Southwest.[593] Because MALDEF was initially based in San Antonio, Texas, two critical legal cases in that state would affect Mexican American civil rights throughout the nation. *White v. Regester,* a voting rights case in 1970, safeguarded communities in Texas from at-large redistricting. systems. Historically, the Texas legislature had gerrymandered districts across the state to essentially deny any ethnic minority community from having political sway in elections.

In 1982 MALDEF also won a second historic case, *Plyler v Doe,* before the United States Supreme Court when it defended the rights of immigrant students in Texas and their access to public schooling.[594] Historians often cite California's highly publicized and politicized Proposition 187 in 1994 as one of the first attempts to deny undocumented immigrants access to public schooling in the United States. However,

---

[593] Benjamin Marquez. "Mexican-American Political Organizations and Philanthropy: Bankrolling a Social Movement." *Social Service Review 77*, no. 3 (2003): 329-46.
[594] Antonia Hernandez. "The Proposed Immigration Model: A Response from the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund." *International Immigration Review*. In Defense of the Alien 4 (1981): 91-97.

Texas legal policies had experienced heavy anti-immigrant sentiment dating back to 1975 when the legislature attempted to charge undocumented students tuition at public schools. In *Plyler v Doe*, MALDEF won guaranteed free public schooling to all children, including children with families of mixed legal status and students who were undocumented.[595]

MALDEF's history in Texas is critical to understand its foundational philosophy and influence on Chicano activism in Texas during the 1960s. That activism would also result in blowback from a powerful Mexican American member of Congress from Texas, Henry B. Gonzalez, who would lobby the IRS, FBI, and other agencies to investigate and audit the Ford Foundation, which funded MALDEF.[596]Eventually, under pressure from the Ford Foundation, MALDEF was urged to reconsider its leadership structure and legal strategy.[597] Ford Foundation board members advised MALDEF to function less as a legal aid office and focus instead on larger civil rights cases, and to move its headquarters out of Texas because "some of the MALDEF staff was deemed militant." The Foundation suggested that MALDEF move to San Francisco, which it did in 1970.[598]

---

[595] Michael Olivas, A. *No Undocumented Child Left Behind: Plyler v. Doe and the Education of Undocumented Schoolchildren*. (NYU Press, 2012).
[596] David Montejano. *Quixote's Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano movement, 1966-1981*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010. Pgs. 243.
[597] Benjamin Marquez, "Mexican-American Political Organizations and Philanthropy: Bankrolling a Social Movement." *Social Service Review 77*, no. 3 (2003): 329-46.
[598] David Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano movement, 1966-1981*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010. Pg. 235.

Joaquin G. Avila

Joaquin Avila's first exposure to MALDEF was as a college undergraduate. Avila was valedictorian in his 1966 Compton (California) High School graduating class and that same year became one of the first Chicano students at Yale. While at Yale, he attended an event for Latino students where he met the speaker, Vilma Martinez, the first woman to serve on the MALDEF board. [599] Born in San Antonio, Texas, Martinez was the oldest of five children and daughter of a carpenter. Martinez earned a scholarship to the University of Texas, Austin and in 1967 a law degree from Columbia.

After graduating from law school, Martinez quickly became a strong and outspoken advocate of Chicanos pursuing higher education. In fact, Martinez often toured the country speaking to students and motivating them to pursue civil rights and legal careers.[600] During her conversation with Avila, Vilma Martinez encouraged him to apply to Harvard Law School. Taking her advice, he applied, was accepted, and graduated in 1973. Avila stayed connected to Martinez and their conversations about social justice motivated him to ignore offers to become a corporate attorney from Fortune 100 and Wall Street companies. Instead, Avila opted to pursue a less glamorous career advocating for Mexican American civil rights and began his career as a staff attorney with MALDEF in San Antonio, just a year after graduating from law school.

---

[599] William Gildea. "Martinez and Mexican Americans: 'What Have You Done for Us?' June 13, 1976. *Washington Post*.

[600] Karen O'Connor and Lee Epstein. "A Legal Voice for The Chicano Community: The Activities of the Mexican American Legal and Education Fund, 1968-1982."*Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 65 No. June 1984. Pgs., 245-256.

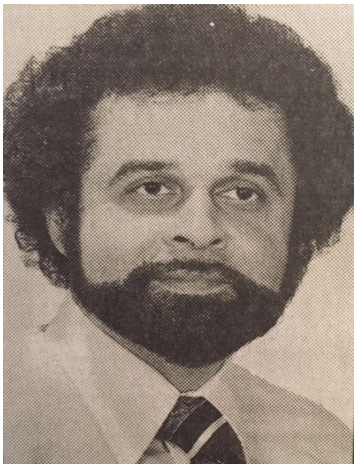


Figure 61. Joaquin Avila, circa 1983

It was in Texas where Avila found his intellectual life calling, voting rights:

> I knew that voting rights was a good thing, but I didn't get a passion for it until I went to Texas and worked with MALDEF and saw how people were struggling for decades to make the political process more accessible. I'd talk to people who for generations had gotten beat up, fired, or harassed when they advocated voter registration in minority communities.[601]

The social networks that Joaquin Avila developed in San Antonio when MALDEF had its headquarters there would have a lasting impact on civil rights advocacy beyond Texas, specifically in the Monterey Bay area. In particular, the voting rights advocacy that MALDEF and the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project (SVREP) collaborated on paved the way for long-lasting voting rights successes years after. Avila also directed the Voting Rights Project for MALDEF in San Antonio.[602]

In San Antonio Joaquin Avila collaborated with and become close friends with Willie Velazquez, founder of SVREP, which had a simple mission: increase

[601] Sara Rubin. "Meet Voting Rights Champ and Genius Joaquin Avila." *Monterey County Weekly.* August 22, 2015.
[602] "Memos Avila." Box 173 Folder 1. Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund Records, M0673, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.

voter registration among Mexican Americans. Through collaborative projects, SVREP and MALDEF were successful in lobbying to ensure that the 1975 extension of the VRA included Spanish-surnamed citizens in the Southwest. MALDEF and SVREP filed eighty-eight lawsuits related to voting rights irregularities between 1974 and 1984.[603] This advocacy resulted in Texas becoming one of the states with the largest number of Latino elected officials, spanning both the municipal and state levels. Vilma Martinez, Avila's mentor, left MALDEF in 1982. By this time Avila had become director of the MALDEF Voting Rights Project and was in charge of the San Antonio office. Upon Martinez's departure, Avila was named general counsel for the entire organization. He and his family moved to Fremont, California to be near the San Francisco MALDEF headquarters, but he stayed connected with his contacts in Texas, including Willie Velazquez of SVREP.

Once in the Bay Area, Avila developed a passion for correcting the long history of discrimination against Mexicans and Mexican Americans residing in the Monterey Bay region. It was a narrative he was all too familiar with from his time in Texas. He and MALDEF, together with the SVREP and two Bay Area civil rights law firms, were studying fifty jurisdictions in California to see if there was evidence of unequal representation due to at-large elections.[604] Watsonville, for example, maintained the at-large system even though Latinos had grown to be more than half

---

[603] David, Montejano. *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), Pgs., 294-297; Guadalupe, San Miguel. *"Let All of Them Take Heed": Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910-1981*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987).

[604] Kenneth Reich. "Watsonville Loss on Election Issue Could be Victory for state Latinos." *The Los Angeles Times*. May 1, 1989.

of the town's population but had no electoral representation. The at-large system, MALDEF argued, continuously prevented Latinos from achieving electoral representation on city councils across California.[605]

For Joaquin Avila, the only way that Mexican Americans of the Monterey Bay area would attain equal voting rights under the U.S. Constitution and the 1965 Voting Rights Act was to sue municipalities that were violating the law and to enact district elections in cities like Watsonville and Salinas. Changing the way council members were elected was a difficult task because the primarily white establishment in the Monterey Bay region fought any changes to the at-large system. As in San Antonio, the Monterey Bay's white elite, primarily composed of agribusiness and banking leaders, feared a Chicano takeover in Watsonville and Salinas if district elections were adopted. But Mexican and Mexican Americans in the region were organized and prepared to support MALDEF and contest the at-large system.

While inroads were being made in major urban centers like San Antonio and Los Angles to get Mexican Americans elected to city councils, smaller rural/suburban communities like Salinas and Watsonville lagged in electoral representation. A decade earlier in 1973, attorneys with MALDEF had brought the at-large system in San Antonio before the U.S. Justice Department and had received a ruling that led to the eventual adoption of single-member districts in San Antonio—but not without a

[605] Mark A. Stein. "Suit Alleges At-large City Council Elections Are Discriminatory." *The Los Angeles Times*. January 23, 1987.

racialized campaign that opposed district elections.[606] As in San Antonio, the Monterey Bay's white elite, primarily composed of agribusiness and banking leaders, feared a Chicano takeover in Watsonville and Salinas if district elections were adopted.

As more young Mexican Americans completed college and graduate programs, they returned to their communities with a new tenacity for social justice and became politically active. As frustrations grew about not being able to attain elected office, Mexican Americans in the region began to discuss the issue with activists from San Jose, Los Angeles, and San Antonio and other areas where the Mexican American community had been disenfranchised in regards to voting.[607]

In the early 1970s a young attorney, Jesse Sanchez from Salinas, returned to his community after graduating from University of California, Davis Law School. As Sanchez became involved in community affairs, including LULAC, he assessed why his working-class East Salinas neighborhood—known by locals as the Alisal—had no electoral representation on the city council.[608] The five elected council members were all white and lived in South Salinas, where most white-collar professionals and the town's elite and middle class lived.

Meanwhile, Joaquin Avila had been looking for a lawsuit that would take advantage of the 1982 amendments to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which said that

---

[606] "Data on Mexican-American voting in 1968 and 1972 for present Discussion of various aspects of the law - Voting Rights Act." Box 247 Folder 8. Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund Records, M0673, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.
[607] Author interview with Simon Salinas, June 30, 2014 and, May 7, 2015. Author interview with Dr. Juan Oliverez, June 3, 2015.
[608] See oral history interviews with Philip Tabera, David Serena, and George Sanchez in Gary Karnes. *Voices of Change: The People's Oral History Project*. (Pacific Grove, Ca. 2015) Pgs. 350-364.

proving intentional discrimination was no longer required in challenges to state and local voting practices.[609] Right around that time, a young Salinas attorney, Jesse Sanchez, asked Avila to file a lawsuit against the city of Salinas for maintaining at-large elections.[610] But MALDEF decided instead to bring suit against the city of Watsonville, which statistically had greater voter polarization at the time than did Salinas. Avila, however, stayed connected with Salinas's community activists such as Sanchez. As the litigation in Watsonville moved forward in the courts, young activists returning to Salinas to begin careers in law and education, including Simon Salinas, Juan Oliverez, and Lily Cervantes, kept a close eye on the Watsonville litigation and assessed what steps they would take in Salinas. Would it be filing suit and litigating against the city of Salinas like in Watsonville? Or would they take the fight to the ballot?

Watsonville

By the 1980s, Mexicans and Mexican Americans had lived in Watsonville for over a century. But never had a Mexican American held office at any level there or anywhere in the county of Santa Cruz. In 1985 Watsonville had a population of 30,000, about 60 percent of who were Mexican and Mexican American.[611] Latinos in Watsonville had run unsuccessfully for school board and for the community college board of trustees as early as 1969. Julian Camacho ran for Congress in 1972 and

[609] Interview with Joaquin Avila conducted by author. Seattle University, Washington. December 17, 18, 19, 2012.
[610] Ibid.
[611] Kenneth Reich. "Watsonville Loss on Election Issue Could be Victory for state Latinos. *The Los Angeles Times*. May 1, 1989.

1974, but was defeated by long-time incumbent congressman Burt Talcott.[612] Between 1971 and 1985, eight Mexican American candidates ran for seats on the Watsonville city council, but none was elected. Mexicans and Mexican Americans also had a long history of civil rights advocacy and political engagement supporting and endorsing white candidates, but were never deemed qualified or suited for electoral office by the white establishment. According to anthropologist Paule Cruz Takash, "…white Watsonville voters deemed that Latinos lacked the requisite knowledge of American political institution and the necessary qualifications to hold office." When Maria Bautista lost her city council bid in 1985, the Latino community in Watsonville turned to MALDEF for assistance.

Dolores Cruz Gomez, a community activist who had been trained by the SVREP[613] had run unsuccessfully for a Watsonville city council seat in 1983. Born in Goleta, California, home to the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), Cruz Gomez grew up with farmworker parents working on a ranch in Goleta where they picked walnuts, lemons, and avocados.[614] She was bussed to a predominantly white school and later Santa Barbara High School, but graduated in 1959 from high school in Stockton, where the family had moved to find work. She then worked at the telephone company, married, had two children, but divorced after four years.

With very few professional prospects, Cruz Gomez decided to go back to Santa Barbara where she attended Santa Barbara City College and transferred to

[612] Interview with Julian Camacho conducted by author. July 5, 2016.
[613] Dolores Cruz Gomez interview by author. September 12, 2016.
[614] Dolores Cruz Gomez interview by author. September 12, 2016.

UCSB. There she benefited from a 1967 economic opportunity program and earned a teaching credential. She also joined Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA), a Chicano student organization, and was introduced to Chicano Studies, which had a significant influence on her decision to teach.[615] Eventually she and her family moved to Santa Cruz where Cruz Gomez worked for a nonprofit. She made regular visits to Watsonville, where she felt more at home among the Mexican population and decided to move there. Once in In Watsonville, Cruz Gomez became the first director of *Salud para la Gente*, a nonprofit educational organization for the region's large migrant workforce. Noticing that the city lacked Mexican American political representation on the five-member city council, in 1983 Cruz Gomez decided to run for a seat on it, but lost. She studied the outcome of the election and came to understand how Mexican Americans would have a difficult time getting elected with the at-large system in place.

In early 1985, Dolores Cruz Gomez spearheaded an initial meeting to discuss voting rights between MALDEF attorneys and a group of community activists who had taken the name WatsCAN.[616] By this time Joaquin Avila had left MALDEF and begun a private legal practice specializing in voting rights, but he continued to collaborate with MALDEF on voting rights cases. WatsCAN began to consult with Avila and MALDEF attorneys on how to approach the voting rights issue.

---

[615] Ibid.
[616] Author interview with Dolores Cruz Gomez. September 12, 2016; Joaquin Avila, Paule Cruz Takash, "Latino Political Participation in Rural California" *California Institute for Rural Studies*. Working Group on Farm Labor and Rural Poverty Working Paper #8. February 1989, pp. 23-30.

Initially, WatsCAN wanted to put the issue of at-large elections on the ballot, but decided instead to follow MALDEF's advice to pursue legal action against the city. The organization also sought and received the support and endorsement of LULAC. By late May 1985 MALDEF had filed a lawsuit against the city of Watsonville, arguing that at-large elections denied Latinos electoral representation on the city council.[617] The lead attorney on the case was Joaquin Avila. This was one of his first cases in private practice.

Once MALDEF took on the Watsonville case, Joaquin Avila conducted meticulous historical and statistical research at various libraries, and assembled what came to be numerous volumes of evidence documenting decades of institutional racial discrimination in regards to voting. With the assistance of local community activist Daniel Dodge, Avila compiled evidence that referenced 150 years of newspaper articles documenting how Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the Monterey Bay area had been disenfranchised and discriminated with regards to voting rights, jury pools, employment, housing, and schooling.[618] The evidence cited hundreds of problematic legal proceedings where not one person of Mexican ancestry ever sat on a jury.

---

[617] "Gomez v. Watsonville, pleadings; plaintiffs' motions for injunction pending appeal, motions of stay, and plaintiffs' supplemental briefs." Box 2167. Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund Records, M0673, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.

[618] Joaquin G. Avila. "Lopez v. Monterey County: photocopies of court case research documenting historical discrimination against Mexicans in Monterey County, California, 1855-1991." Stanford University Special Collections and University Archives. See the Guide to the Mexican American M0673 3 Legal Defense and Educational Fund records M0673. Stanford University Special Collections.

In Watsonville, Avila sought the support of the local community and activists who had been organizing around the cannery strike that had polarized the residents of the small community into demanding greater political representation. As the strike made national news, to file a lawsuit, Avila needed plaintiffs. Being a plaintiff in a lawsuit came with legal and financial risks. Plaintiffs could be countersued, and the cases could become costly for them; they could lose assets, including their homes. Avila approached Dolores Cruz Gomez, Patricia Leal, and Waldo Rodriguez. Cruz Gomez stated that for her, there was nothing to lose, but she feared that because Waldo Rodriguez "had a home and family, he could have lost everything."[619] Eventually, though, the three agreed and the lawsuit moved forward.

In the lawsuit, MALDEF and Avila argued that Watsonville's at-large system was in violation of the Voting Rights Act because it historically and systematically denied Mexican American electoral representation.[620] The suit also included a proposal that would divide the city into seven city council districts. Two of the districts had large Latino populations and would practically guarantee that a Mexican American would be elected to the city council.

Gomez v. Watsonville went to the U.S District Court where in 1987 Judge William A. Ingram agreed with the plaintiffs that racially polarized voting existed in Watsonville, but ruled against them. Joaquin Avila appealed the decision to the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, which reversed the district court's decision a year

[619] Author interview with Dolores Cruz Gomez. September 12, 2016
[620] Kenneth Reich. "Watsonville Loss on Election Issue Could be Victory for state Latinos. *The Los Angeles Times*. May 1, 1989.

later, in July 1988.[621] By this time Watsonville's city council had one Mexican American member who had been elected through the at-large system. This was Tony Campos, a real estate developer with close ties to the Anglo business community. Campos, however, was not well liked by the Mexican American community. He favored the at-large system and had been against the Watsonville cannery strike of 1985–87.

The city council was contemplating an appeal, fearing that the city could be sued by its insurance company for not appealing to the U.S Supreme Court in order to seek a victory and not be responsible for legal fees in excess of a million dollars. But community residents, including the large Mexican American population, urged the city not to appeal the decision. The city council decided to hear from residents and agreed to have a meeting on January 10, 1989. Over 100 residents attended with a petition signed by 300 residents. Members of LULAC spoke up and cited rampant discrimination in municipal employment, while residents spoke about the uneven distribution of resources in neighborhoods and contrasted the difference in street lighting.[622] Despite the strong community feeling against a Supreme Court appeal, the city council went ahead with it. But on March 20, 1989, the Court refused to hear the appeal, forcing Watsonville to abide by the Ninth Circuit's decision and institute district elections. Watsonville had an election scheduled for May, but postponed it until November 1989 in order to institute district elections.

---

[621] Claudia Melendez Salinas. "Voting Rights Attorney Credits Locals." *Knight Ridder Tribune Business.* May 19, 2006.
[622] William A. Flores. "Chicano Empowerment and the Politics of At-Large Elections in California: A Tale of Two Cities." Working Paper Series. No. 28. February 1990.

On October 17, 1989 the Loma Prieta earthquake devastated the city of Watsonville's infrastructure. Entire neighborhoods caught fire and hundreds were left homeless. District elections were postponed still another month, but in December 1989, Watsonville voters elected 39-year-old Teamsters union official Oscar Rios to the city council.[623] Rios was an immigrant from El Salvador, a naturalized U.S. citizen, who had come from San Francisco to Watsonville in 1985 during the cannery strike. In Watsonville he had earned the respect of the Mexican community and was liked as a union leader. Rios was also the more politically progressive candidate who championed the Mexican American community's working class needs. Dolores Cruz Gomez also sought a seat on the city council in a different district in this election, but lost again.

The Watsonville case was a momentous legal victory for the plaintiffs, Avila, and MALDEF. It had major implications across other California communities with large Latino populations. The cities and school boards that were specifically in violation of the Voting Rights Act and would need to modify their elections could number into the hundreds. A study conducted during the Watsonville case found that 130 California cities still held at-large elections even though they had at least a 10 percent Latino population, but no Latinos on the city councils, and thus were in

[623] Mark A. Stein. " One Latino Wins, 3 Others Lose in Watsonville Vote." *The Los Angeles Times*. 6 December 1989. Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 67 RESOLUTION CHAPTER 141 Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 67—Relative to highways. Filed with Secretary of State September 2, 2014.

violation and could be forced to change the way the elected council members.[624] Avila told the *Los Angeles Times* that the decision "provides clearly a message to the political establishment that the Latino community cannot wait to be politically integrated, and that we now have an effective tool to accelerate that political integration."[625] Attorney Denise M. Hulett with MALDEF told the *Los Angles Times* that, "The Face of local governments in the state is going to change forever." Joaquin Avila and MALDEF did not have to look too far for the next legal challenge.

Salinas

The city of Salinas was next on the list of cities that had an at-large election system. Salinas city council members—all of whom were white and lived within a few miles of each other in South Salinas—were prepared to defend the at-large system in court. They argued that district elections would fragment the city and felt that only council members elected through the at-large system would truly represent the entire city. As of 1988 the city of Salinas had never elected a Mexican American to the council even though half of the city's population was Mexican or Mexican American.[626] The east side of Salinas, where the majority of the Mexican and Mexican American population lived, had one of the most densely populated square miles in the country. Previous city council members had approved overcrowded

[624] Mark A. Stein. " One Latino Wins, 3 Others Lose in Watsonville Vote." *The Los Angeles Times.* 6 December 1989. Emma Torres. " The Battle for California," *The San Francisco Bay Guardian.* June, 13, 1990.
[625] Kenneth Reich. "Watsonville Loss on Election Issue Could be Victory for state Latinos. *Los Angeles Times*, May 1, 1989.
[626] Jamie Marks. "Latino scores council seat in Salinas city election." *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, June 8, 1989.

apartment buildings with insufficient space for recreational activities or parking for multiple vehicles.

As in Watsonville, Mexican Americans in Salinas had a long history of running for office, but lost every race. Sally Gutierrez, a local activist, became the first Mexican American to run for elected office in Salinas in 1972.[627] In 1985 Jesse Sanchez ran for city council, received the majority of votes in East Salinas, but never gained the Anglo vote needed from South Salinas and subsequently lost the election through the at-large voting system. Jesse Sanchez lost his bid for city council to a Cuban American businessman who received 9 percent of the Chicano vote and 67 percent of the white vote.[628]

The Plaintiffs: *Armenta v. City of Salinas*

MALDEF and Joaquin Avila sought plaintiffs for the lawsuit against the city of Salinas for being in violation of the Voting Rights Act. As in Watsonville it was not easy to find volunteers to serve as plaintiffs because of the potential legal and financial risks. MALDEF and Avila asked numerous community activists and residents, and finally were able to gain the confidence of three Chicano leaders, Fernando Armenta, Marta Granados, and Simon Salinas. All three had been heavily influenced by the Chicano movement's teachings of social justice, had a close connection to the community, and were willing to take the risk because they believed

[627] Lori A. Flores. *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farmworker Movement.* (New Haven. Yale. 2016).
[628] Jesse Sanchez lost his bid for city council to a Cuban American businessman who received 9 percent of the Chicano vote and 67 of the white vote. See William A. Flores. "Chicano Empowerment and the Politics of At-Large Elections in California: A Tale of Two Cities." Working Paper Series. No. 28 (February 1990), Pgs., 28-29.

in the enormity of the case and its potential benefits for the Mexican and Mexican American community. They had hoped to persuade Juan Uranga, an attorney who worked with the California Rural Legal Association (CRLA), which represented the most destitute farm workers against their employers, to be one of the plaintiffs, but Uranga declined.

Fernando Armenta was born and raised in Salinas. He remembered growing up near John Steinbeck's childhood home and picking apricots from a tree in its yard on his way to catechism classes at Sacred Heart Church in Salinas.[629] While it took him decades to learn about the history of the famous home in his neighborhood, Armenta always felt a deep appreciation for his roots in Salinas. After serving three years in the U.S. Army, including a tour in Vietnam, Armenta returned to Salinas with little hope for the future until an uncle suggested he use his GI Bill benefits to enroll at the local community college, Hartnell. There, Armenta began attending rallies organized by the United Farm Workers and got involved with Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA). He continued his involvement with these organizations after transferring from Hartnell to San Diego State. After graduating from San Diego State he earned a master's degree in social work from San Jose State and eventually settled in his hometown. Back in Salinas, Armenta used his experience

[629] Larry Parsons. " Activists Wants Salinas to Be One Community." *The Californian.* September 19, 1988.

with the Chicano movement and politics by working and consulting on local political races for school board and eventually city council.[630]

Marta Granados was raised in McAllen, Texas, and remembers the small town vividly, including the Main Street shops and stores owned by Anglo residents, most of who lived on the north side of the Rio Grande Valley community. She took a job in Salinas with the Central Coast Counties Development Corporation in 1978. She drove through Salinas looking for a home, and the city's east side evoked memories of her Texas community. "Everybody was speaking Spanish. There was the '*pan dulce*.' It was like being back in Texas. I thought: this is where I want to be."[631]

Granados ran and was successfully elected to the Alisal Union Elementary School District board in 1987, and became a vocal proponent of education for the Latino community. Granados came from a working-class family. Her father repaired shoes for a living but managed to put all six of his children through college. Granados ran for office because she had learned a lesson from her time in McAllen as a teenager when she attended PTA meetings in lieu of her Spanish-speaking mother. Ultimately, Granados learned that when parents took part in school affairs, their children received more attention. "I was always there… I figured if my children were receiving that special attention then all the children should receive it."[632] Granados wanted parents in East Salinas to feel a sense of belonging and involvement and felt that government officials should be listening to the concerns of the community. "I

[630] Gary Karnes, Juan Martinez. *Voices of Change: The People's Oral History Project*. (Park Place: Pacific Grove, CA, 2016).
[631] Larry Parsons. " Activists Wants Salinas to Be One Community." *The Californian.* September 19, 1988.
[632] Ibid.

drive around Alisal and it's all apartments. There's nowhere where the children can play…I felt something had to be done about it." It took courage for Granados to serve as a plaintiff in the case against the City of Salinas, but she had a social justice calling to help her new community.

As the cotton harvester became widely used in the Texas Rio Grande Valley, Simon Salinas's family got off the migration trail that followed the cotton harvest from Texas to Oklahoma and in 1965 migrated to the Monterey Bay area to work the lettuce, apple, and strawberry harvests.[633] Eventually they were contracted as sharecroppers in Watsonville and Salinas. Simon, one of ten children in the Salinas household, and worked in the Watsonville strawberry fields with his family. Salinas reflected about the place where he gained his political conscience and recalled what it was like to work and live in Watsonville:

> I'd be in elementary school looking at U.S. history books and see not a mention of Mexican Americans and their contributions to this country's development. So we didn't know that there had been Mexican Americans fighting in the Civil War… I was an American citizen; I was born in Texas…so I think that led to a thirst in knowledge, for understanding. We used to migrate; we started migrating to California back in the early 1960s. And we followed the migrant route. My activism began at Watsonville High School. That's where I really got involved. We were migrants here, we sort of had to try to fit in, be flexible, with the groups that we would hang with, so there were the native Chicanos, the native Californians, the migrants from Texas, the migrants from Mexico, and then the Anglos from here, and the Filipinos. At Watsonville High… we said, 'let's start participating in school government.' Well we didn't want to participate in the traditional groups because they don't represent us, they don't represent our experiences…so we formed the Mexican-American Youth Organization called MAYO, so then

[633] "Simon Salinas: Salinas's First Mexican American Councilman." *El Observador*. Pg. 7F.

people said, 'you founded it you be the president.' So I became the president of the organization.[634]

Simon Salinas graduated from Watsonville High School in 1974, and with the guidance of his high school counselor went on to college. He graduated from Claremont College and Santa Clara Law School, and returned to the region to become an elementary school teacher before he ran for political office.[635]

The Ballot or the Court?

After MALDEF filed its voting rights lawsuit against the city of Salinas, council members met to weigh whether they should contest the lawsuit in court or allow the residents to decide the issue through a ballot initiative. Looming as evidence that they were in clear violation of the Voting Rights Act was the recent decision in Watsonville. Ultimately the council members in Salinas heard positions from both sides. Opponents of district elections argued that "council members who represent districts might ignore what's good for the city as a whole and concentrate on what benefits a small segment of the city." For the large population of Mexicans living in East Salinas, this argument simply enabled the overcrowded housing and traffic congestion to continue. They understood quite well how their neighborhoods had been ignored for years, because city council members were always elected from the more prosperous South Salinas. The at-large system was also costing candidates

[634] Gary Karnes, Juan Martinez. *Voices of Change: The People's Oral History Project*. (Park Place: Pacific Grove, CA, 2016) 344-346.
[635] Larry Parsons. " Reading Opens Avenues to Civic Commitment." *The Californian.* September 9, 1988. Pg. 3A.

more and more money every year; by 1988 successful candidates were spending over $20,000 to win a seat on the city council.[636]

The high cost of running for office was keeping some potential candidates out of the running, leaving it to the wealthy or those with a network from which to fundraise, but becoming too expensive for residents living in poorer neighborhoods. Yet some argued that district elections would result in the election of individuals based on their address instead of their qualifications.

After increased legal pressure from the MALDEF lawsuit and numerous presentations to the city council by Joaquin Avila about district elections, the city council voted 5–2 in favor of putting the issue of district elections to a special vote scheduled for December 6, 1988. Mexican American political activists quickly mobilized the community to register voters for the special election. Led by Jesse Sanchez, the Mexican American community registered more than 500 people to vote. Sanchez recalled, "About forty-five people worked on the campaign…five were assigned to each targeted voting precinct: their mission was to convince voters to support district elections and then convince them to go to the polls and vote."[637]

Furthermore, the three plaintiffs in the MALDEF lawsuit—Simon Salinas, Marta Granados, and Fernando Armenta—also worked on the campaign. Granados made calls to registered voters while Armenta was a key strategist in organizing the campaign for district elections and setting up the Alisal Committee for Fair

[636] Dave Doucette. "Salinas City Council Should Accept District Elections." *The Californian.* July 30, 1988. Pg. 6A; Alex Hulanicki "Elections Lawyers seek fees from Salinas. *The Herald*. June 7, 1989.
[637] Larry Parsons. "Salinas OK's District Voting." *The Californian*. June 7, 1988.

Representation, which raised $1,400 to spend on mailers. Armenta recalls that, "The whole campaign was put together in three weeks, from recruiting and training volunteers to 'implementing the plan.'"[638] The measure in favor of district elections passed by a mere 150 votes. The MALDEF lawsuit was dropped, but the city still owed over $200,000 in legal fees to Avila and MALDEF—a much smaller sum compared to the $1 million that the city of Watsonville was ultimately left responsible for paying in its fight against district elections.

Community Politics and Political Factions: The Race to Become the First Mexican American City Councilmember

Only weeks after the December 6, 1988, vote in Salinas, the Mexican American community—once united over the district election issue—was politically divided about whom to support in the race to elect the first Mexican American to the Salinas city council in the June 1989 election. The contenders were Simon Salinas, still at that time n elementary school teacher, and attorney Juan Uranga. Salinas, who was thirty-three years old when he decided to run, was well liked by his Mexican American peers like Granados, Sanchez, and Armenta, who were born in the U.S. and came of age during the Chicano movement, and by the large immigrant Mexican community in the city of Salinas. While many of those may not have been eligible to vote, they had relatives who were, and they could work on his campaign by walking precincts or volunteering at fundraising events. Another candidate who ran was Deloris Scaife-Higgins, an African American beauty shop owner. But the real race was between Uranga and Simon Salinas. While Scaife-Higgins attended multiple

[638] Ibid.

political forums she did not have a grassroots campaign, and did not raise enough money to buy media advertisements.

Simon Salinas was well spoken in both English and Spanish and could often "code switch" or "style shift" quickly in English and Spanish to make different audiences feel comfortable.[639] He dressed casually at many political events, rolled his sleeves up when he wore a collared shirt, and was not shy about having discussions with residents from a variety of ethnicities and social classes. Younger by seven years than Uranga, Salinas was an energized grassroots organizer who was not shy about meeting people and shaking hands door to door. One newspaper editorial described Salinas as "mild yet assertive mannered combined with a personal perspective as a parent and teacher."[640] For Salinas, it was important to stay connected to his roots and to treat the people in the community with the outmost respect.[641]

Juan Uranga had come to Salinas from his native El Paso, Texas, to serve as an attorney with CRLA, but had left the organization disillusioned with its decisions about not hiring more Chicano attorneys. He was an Ivy League-educated Mexican American attorney who often felt more comfortable speaking directly with his professional peers in the legal community. Uranga's support came primarily from

---

[639] Larry Parsons. "Council takes reins in Salinas: New Members Sworn in Before Overflow Crowd." *The Californian*. July 12, 1989. Pg.C1. On style shifting see Samy H. Alim. *You Know My Steez: An Ethnographic and Sociolinguistic Study of Styleshifting in a Black American Speech Community* (Thesis (Ph. D.)--Stanford University, 2004). H. Samy Alim, and Geneva Smitherman. *Articulate While Black: Barack Obama, Language, and Race in the U.S.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[640] "Objective voters should re-elect Supervisor Salinas." *The Californian*. March 15, 1996.

[641] Author interview with Simon Salinas, June 30, 2014 and, May 7, 2015.

professionals and many of the Mexican American attorneys he had worked with at CRLA and others he networked with in the private sector. Among the working-class Mexican and Mexican American community, Uranga came across as out of touch. In one picture Juan Uranga used for his campaign material, he is wearing a suit and talking to farm workers who had just finished their workday. Uranga struggled to gain the support of the working-class community.



Figure 62. Juan Uranga (right) speaking with farm workers in a Salinas Valley field during his run for city council in 1989. Juan Uranga campaign mailer. Simon Salinas Papers.

Once the campaign for city council started there were numerous community forums where Salinas and Uranga debated such issues as public safety, housing density, and improvement of streets, public transportation, and reducing gang violence. At one event, Salinas attacked Uranga about his commitment to run for the seat by citing how Uranga had missed seven out of nine traffic commission meetings and was late for the other two.[642] Earlier, Salinas had used this issue in a campaign mailer. Unsure how to respond and not seeking to debate Salinas, Uranga was

[642] "Elect Simon Salinas to City Council." *The Californian*. May 30, 1989.

flustered about a comment that Salinas supporter Jesse Sanchez had made before the debate.[643] Uranga brought up Jesse Sanchez during the forum because Sanchez was well known and liked in the community, but then claimed that Sanchez told Uranga that he, Sanchez, wanted to become the "godfather of East Salinas." Whether the statement was true or not, it was completely irrelevant to discuss at the forum and singlehandedly showcased the political divisiveness that had emerged.

The audience was as divided as the candidates. On one side were residents of the new District 2 who supported Simon Salinas, including Jesse Sanchez, who became a close adviser to Salinas, and also Fernando Armenta and Marta Granados, among many other community activists. On the other side was a faction led by Juan Uranga's wife, Anna Caballero, who was also a prominent lawyer in the community, and including former CRLA attorneys like Ana Vallarta and Lydia Villarreal, who was Uranga's campaign manager. At one forum between the candidates, over 150 of Simon Salinas's working-class supporters were in the audience and Uranga was heckled and intimidated by Salinas's supporters yelling out *vivas* for Simon Salinas. Villarreal told a local reporter that the Uranga campaign had invited undecided voters and that Salinas had clearly invited his supporters. The large number of Salinas supporters at the forum demonstrated his likeability among the large working-class population.

The class distinction among the candidates and their relationship with the community was evident in the way each candidate focused on issues and how they

[643] Larry Parsons. "Battle for East Salinas heated Candidates has similar positions, different styles." *The Salinas Californian*. May 26, 1989. Pg. 10.

spoke to the residents. As Ernesto Gonzalez, an educator and Salinas ally, stated, the race "was a bitter one, pitting the local Chicano community against the Democratic Party establishment."[644] Juan Uranga did not have a grassroots campaign and instead focused on fundraising and obtaining the endorsement of the local Central Coast Democratic Party. After Uranga secured an interview with the Democratic Party leaders seeking the endorsement, the Simon Salinas campaign quickly organized a picket line in front of the party's offices in the city of Salinas, claiming that they were making a non-partisan election partisan.[645] Simon Salinas also sought and won endorsements from prominent members of the large Filipino community in the city and ran an advertisement in their local newspaper, *The Philippine Press USA,* headlined "Salinas Cares about Salinas" and listing the Filipino leaders who endorsed him.[646]

Juan Uranga received prominent endorsements from the Democratic Party and a powerful political action committee, The Salinas Valley Builders' Exchange—among other developers in the region.[647] Salinas, however won the endorsement of the two major local newspapers, the *Monterey Herald* and the *Californian*. The *Herald* stated that Salinas would shake up the status quo and be a tough councilmember. The *Californian* editorial board said that Simon Salinas "recognized the tough decisions that council needs to make and did not seem intimidated by the

[644] "Elect Simon Salinas to City Council." *The Salinas Californian*. May 30, 1989. "Salinas For Salinas." *The Herald.* Wednesday, May 31, 1989.
[645] Larry Parsons. "Battle for East Salinas heated Candidates has similar positions, different styles." *The Salinas Californian*. May 26, 1989. Pg. 10.
[646] "Salinas Cares about Salinas." *Phillippine Press USA*. April, 1989. Vol. LVIII NO. 13.
[647] "Salinas Valley Builders Exchange, Inc. *The Salinas Californian*. May 23, 1989.

prospect" and added, "We are apprehensive Uranga would not supply the action and direction the city needs."[648]

By election day on June 6, 1989 supporters of the Salinas campaign gathered at Los Arcos Restaurant which was owned by the Del Real family, immigrants from the state of Jalisco, Mexico. As the results came in it was quickly evident that Simon Salinas was the clear winner of the District 2 election. Salinas had outspent Uranga, having raised over $18,000 to Uranga's $8,000. Salinas won 1,330 votes, Juan Uranga 580, and Deloris Schaife-Higgins 289.[649]

Simon Salinas was sworn in as the first Mexican American on the city's council on July 11, 1989. The Salinas city council had its first Mexican American. The *Californian* reported that Simon Salinas "overwhelmed lawyer Juan Uranga, 40, and beauty shop owner Deloris Scaife-Higgins, 56, for the District 2 seat, capturing 62.4 percent of the ballots cast in the east Salinas district."[650] Uranga and Salinas continued to attack each other after the campaign. Uranga alleged that Salinas "ran a dirty campaign" (though agreeing that the Salinas campaign was more effective) and Salinas responded that Uranga was too closely linked with special interests and was ultimately perceived as an outsider. Another Chicano attorney, Jose Velazquez, was furious at the Democratic Party for attempting to impose their handpicked candidate. Velazquez said, "For years the Chicano community has been the most loyal

---

[648] "Elect Simon Salinas to City Council." *The Salinas Californian*. May 30, 1989. "Salinas For Salinas." *The Herald.* Wednesday, May 31, 1989.
[649] "The Numbers are the Numbers." *The Salinas Californian*. Wednesday, June 7, 1989; "The Voting at a glance." *The Herald*. Wednesday, June 7, 1989.
[650] The Numbers are the Numbers." *The Salinas Californian*. Wednesday, June 7, 1989; "The Voting at a glance." *The Herald*. Wednesday, June 7, 1989.

Democratic constituency in the Salinas Valley... Many in the Chicano community felt they had suffered for years while conservative whites elected their own to the council. Now with district elections, the community was in no mood to be dictated by the Democrats as to who their leaders would be."

Jesse Sanchez contributed an article to *The Californian*, "Salinas elects Salinas: Chicano empowerment comes of age." The election of Simon Salinas marked a turning point in the Monterey Bay area, as Sanchez wrote, "…prior to his historic June 6 election the Chicano/Mexicano community of East Salinas, known as Alisal, had never had one of its own on the City Council, even though it comprises 50 percent of city residents." Sanchez, was adamant about writing that Juan Uranga refused to be a plaintiff in the MALDEF case against the City of Salinas and was supported by the local Democratic club and Democratic Party elected city officials."[651]

While the election of Simon Salinas to the city council marked a turning point for Mexican Americans, some disenfranchised whites who also lived in East Salinas agreed that district elections would bring attention to much-needed resources and services that had been neglected for decades.[652] Paul Cushman, a white school board member who lived in District 2 and supported Salinas, argued that the region had "suffered from the same neglect as Hispanics in our area of town." Fernando Armenta, Salinas's fellow plaintiff in the MALDEF suit for district elections, cited

---

[652] William A. Flores. "Chicano Empowerment and the Politics of At-Large Elections in California: A Tale of Two Cities." Working Paper Series. No. 28.(February 1990).

that "Simon was the candidate of the local community. … The election showed that local Chicanos who have fought for their community will be supported by that same community when it comes time for empowerment."[653] During the swearing-in ceremony at City Hall, Simon Salinas had the opportunity to introduce his father Julian, who had arrived in the U.S. as a contracted bracero, and his mother Octavia. Salinas remarked that his mother and father were his best teachers and translated his remarks from English to Spanish so that his parents, who did not speak English, could understand.[654]

It had been a long road for the Salinas family from their days picking cotton in Texas and as sharecroppers in Watsonville. The residents of District 2 in the City of Salinas, the county seat for Monterey County and home to a multi-billion dollar economy had just elected the son of a farmworker to the city council. Many organizations such as the UFW, LULAC, and others working in the struggle for social justice had a different role to play. Without them the Monterey Bay area would not have the transformative politics that took place. It was the years of civil rights advocacy and activism that resulted in the election of Simon Salinas and Oscar Rios to their city councils. It was the arrival of the UFW in 1970 that energized farm workers and the Mexican American community to demand greater labor rights. LULAC, along with its advocacy and its continued surveillance of social injustice in the region, was also a target of criticism. But it was the landmark legal work by

---

[653] Larry Parsons. "Council takes reins in Salinas: New Members Sworn in Before Overflow Crowd." *The Californian*. Wednesday, July 12, 1989. Pg.C1.
[654] Joe Graziano."1st Mexican-American joins Salinas Council: Simon Salinas hopes to erase fears." *The Herald,* July 12, 1989.

MALDEF and Joaquin Avila that finally resulted in electoral change, a transformation that could not have happened with civil rights activism alone.

Honeymoon Period Over

Just two months after taking office, Simon Salinas organized a community meeting over a public outcry related to a spike in crime. Some 300 to 400 people attended the meeting at Alisal High School where Mayor Russ Jeffries joined Salinas in addressing concerns over the crime spike. The numbers in citywide crimes like car thefts were up and the citywide felony arrest numbers for juveniles were up 69 percent.[655] On the agenda was discussion about the rise in gang membership across town. The meeting was organized in response to the death of a 29-year-old robbery victim the month before. The mayor and Simon Salinas made sure that they were focusing on issues affecting the entire city.

The region was also dealing with a high dropout rate among migrant students in local public schools. The migrant students, many of whom had been born in Salinas into farmworker families, were part of a very long migrant trail that stretched from Salinas to Huron, Oxnard, Yuma in Arizona, and back to Salinas on a yearly basis. The issue of education was outside Simon Salinas's jurisdiction as a city council member, but many Latinos in the community sought his input and lobbying power with state officials. As one article in a local newspaper acknowledged, "Everyday up to 150 elementary school kids from the Alisal neighborhood stay after school to attend classes helping migrant children catch up with their peers." During

[655] Author Unknown. *The Salinas Californian*. September 14, 1989.

the day teacher aides took students aside for special instruction and tutoring. Yet migrant students in the region were at risk of dropping out "at a rate worse than two to one."[656] Local schools were overflowing with students and the city was in desperate need of building three additional schools to accommodate the student enrollment.

Jesse Sanchez, Simon Salinas, and other community leaders led an effort to approve a ballot initiative in order to raise $15 million to construct the needed schools. But the community was faced with a political obstacle. Just a few years before, in 1978, the Jarvis-Gann anti-tax initiative had required school bonds to receive two thirds of the votes in order to increase taxes to property owners. Once again, local political leaders rose to the challenge, along with educators such as Ernesto Gonzalez, a local school principal, and others—many of whom had themselves been born into migrant families. Community activists registered more than 1,000 new voters.

The campaign to pass Measure A was successful on April 10, 1990, with 1,932 in favor to 612 against—better than a three-to-one margin.[657] The passage of this bond measure in District 2 on the East side of Salinas was a victory for local Mexican and Mexican Americans in providing the city's lowest-income children increased educational opportunity. The momentum of Mexican and Mexican

[656] Editorial. "It's time to do more than just say 'No.'" *The Californian.* August 16, 1989; "Councilman beckon residents to meeting on street crime." *The Californian*. September 14, 1989.
[657] "Most of the educators are aware of what it takes in the game because they were themselves migrant children." Unknown name of Newspaper article. Simon Salinas Papers.

American political organizers in the aftermath of district elections held just one year before was evident in the passage of such a measure.

Factions Continue to Evolve

Additional city council districts were created in the city of Salinas in 1990, just a year after the contentious Salinas-Uranga election. Juan Uranga and Anna Caballero moved into the newly created District 6 in North Salinas. In the next election, in 1990, Caballero decided to enter the race for city council. Quick to question her move was Jesse Sanchez. "She has a carpetbagger image," he said, adding that when Uranga lost to Salinas, "a couple of months later they moved to District 6 and she decides to run." Caballero countered the allegation, decrying, "This harks back to the days when Juan Uranga was running. Jesse wants to be the kingmaker. He doesn't want anyone else participating if they're Hispanic unless he chooses them."[658] In fact Sanchez had been supporting LULAC member Lilly Cervantes for the District 6 council seat, but having just completed law school at Santa Clara University, she dropped out of the race to study for the bar exam.

Four years after Simon Salinas was elected to the city council, a major new political opportunity opened for the Mexican American community in Salinas. It had been over one hundred years since a Mexican American had been elected to the five-member Monterey County Board of Supervisors, a prestigious and highly desirable paid position. As Monterey County was due to redraw district supervisor maps following the 1990 U.S. Census, the population breakdown would create an entire

[658] Walter Neary, "North Salinas Council Race Heats Up," *The Californian,* January 25, 1991.

district in East Salinas, guaranteeing that the next supervisor from District 1 would be a Mexican American. Once again, the community took on a lawsuit to get the maps drawn fairly. Ana Ventura Phares and Jesse Sanchez, among other community activists, and Joaquin Avila waged a two-year lawsuit against Monterey County.[659] Citing the Voting Rights Law they argued in favor of district maps that would favor the local Mexican and Mexican American community.[660] By February 1993, before the maps were even finalized, political campaigning for a new district seat started.

Two candidates immediately stood out, Simon Salinas and Jesse Sanchez. Just four years before, in 1989, they had been political allies in the race to win the Salinas election for city council. Jesse Sanchez was a popular attorney and political strategist, well liked by the Mexican community. Sanchez had claimed to be Salinas's campaign manager during the city council race. In fact Sanchez wrote various editorials and responded to press requests by supporting Simon Salinas for city council. Now, friends in the campaign to elect the first Mexican American to the city council soon became political foes as each sought a seat on the board of supervisors.

[659]California, "Hearing on Redistricting: Counties Covered by Section 5 of the Federal Voting Rights Act : Kings, Merced, Monterey and Yuba." (Sacramento, CA: Assembly Publications Office, 1991).
[660] Susan Ferriss, "Latinos Fight For District Elections. Activists Battle State Courts, Racially Polarized Voting," *San Francisco Examiner*, February 14, 1991.



Figure 63. Left to right: Simon Salinas, Cesar Chavez, and Dolores Huerta at a political rally at the Armory Hall in Salinas, California. July 4, 1989. *El Sol Newspapers*.

By 1993, Simon Salinas had accumulated four years of political experience on the Salinas city council and had benefited from publicity in local media, leading to greater name recognition across the city of Salinas and into the rest of Monterey County. With this greater visibility labor leaders who sought support from the local Mexican and Mexican American community courted Simon Salinas. He was young, motivated, and eager to move his political career from city council to a higher office.

"The Meeting"

Various Mexican and Mexican Americans in the region allege that a meeting of local leaders, Simon Salinas, and Jesse Sanchez took place about whose candidacy to support for the Monterey County supervisor campaign in 1993.[661] The meeting was

[661] Interview by author with Philip Tabera. San Jose State University, San Jose, Ca. September 6, 2016.

supposedly organized in order to unite the Mexican and Mexican American community to support the best-qualified candidate and to avoid dividing or diluting the Mexican American vote. Local civil rights leader Crecencio Padilla stated that "all [at the meeting] agreed that they would support Jesse Sanchez as the candidate to run for supervisor."[662] According to Padilla, Simon Salinas also agreed to stay out of the race. Philip Tabera, a member of LULAC and of Barrio Pride, a community organization, also stated that such a meeting took place, but that he was not at the meeting.

Whether this meeting actually occurred, and whether Simon Salinas agreed to stay out of the race, is not clear, since no minutes or recordings of the meeting exist. Jesse Sanchez was livid when Simon Salinas jumped back in to the race. "For a period of six months, he maintained he was supporting me…I'm somewhat stunned he's done this," Sanchez told Parsons.[663] Both Sanchez and Salinas announced publicly their intent to run in the same week of February 1993.

The Race for Monterey County Board of Supervisors

After the candidates formally announced their intention to run for the supervisor seat the political fighting between Salinas and Sanchez escalated. Sanchez supporters claimed that Simon Salinas had stabbed Sanchez in the back. Charges of betrayal and sexism were also lodged at Simon Salinas by the Sanchez campaign, which guaranteed a "bloody fight." The Salinas campaign spoke about "political

[662] Interview with Crecencio Padilla conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, January 20, 2016, March 26, 2016, March 30, 2017.
[663] Ibid.

evolution, disavowals of mudslinging and calls for any fights to be public fights."[664] Sanchez accused Salinas of sexism when he announced that Lily Cervantes would serve as his campaign manager. In response, Hartnell College trustee and co-chair of the Salinas campaign David Serena countered by stating that "philosophies, not gender, are at the root of his [own] differences with Cervantes. If I have a disagreement with Lilly, it's not because she's a woman, but because I disagree with her." Ultimately, the Salinas campaign added county health coordinator Linda Sanchez (not related to Jesse Sanchez) to the team and she dismissed accusations of sexism by the Jesse Sanchez campaign, asserting, "We want to see a campaign focused on the issues." At first most of the comments and accusations were made in private, or by speaking separately to reporters, but by April 1, 1993 a political forum was organized where the candidates stated their allegations in person.

At the forum the dissension between Jesse Sanchez and Simon Salinas intensified and took center stage, taking attention away from candidates who were running for the other districts. The two former political allies debated about who was a more qualified candidate. Jesse Sanchez also questioned Simon Salinas's "soul," and what that meant to the larger Mexican population in the region, especially Chicanos.[665] Both men had come of age during the Chicano movement's message of social justice and returning to communities to take on leadership roles, a message about uniting and not dividing a Mexican community as was occurring in this race.

---

[664]Ibid.
[665] Ricky de la Torre, "Former Allies Exchange Barbs at Supervisor Candidate Night," *The Californian*, April 2, 1993.

Sanchez told the audience that he wanted to focus on the issues and not let negativism affect their campaigns.[666] "Personally I wanted to take as much of the negativism out of it as possible, so it wouldn't be, 'look, the Mexicans are fighting each other.'" Simon Salinas countered his statement by saying how the negativism was turning the community away from participating: "Let's go at it on the issues…I think the voters are intelligent enough to understand what's going on."[667] As the campaign intensified the mudslinging worsened and the attacks turned to accusations about homosexuality.

Activists recall how the Salinas campaign made homophobic allegations about Jesse Sanchez at various political rallies and forums throughout the campaign.[668] Simon Salinas's supporters denied the allegations, but this person stated that while Salinas himself never made such remarks, he did nothing to quash the homophobic taunting by some in the Mexican community who were supporting Salinas. The activist stated, "Everyone knew that Jesse was gay, but those close to him protected him... you just didn't attack Jesse about his sexuality or even bring it up, and if you did, you could be vilified and completely alienated by his camp." Various activists also stated that Sanchez would often attend public events with Lily Cervantes to deflect any rumors about his sexuality.

---

[666] Roya Camp, "Salinas, Sanchez Face Off. Both Hope To Leave Mudslinging Behind," *The Californian*, 1993.
[667] Ibid.
[668] Crecencio Padilla insists that he still will not talk to Salinas because of the negative campaign Salinas ran against Sanchez in 1993.



Figure 64. Left to right: Juan Martinez, Lily Cervantes, and Jesse Sanchez at a LULAC fundraiser in Salinas. Circa 1989. Courtesy of Crecencio Padilla.

Dr. Bill Melendez, a former president of the local LULAC chapter and a long-time educator, echoed the activist's concerns:

> It saddened me because Simon Salinas started a campaign against Jesse Sanchez, whom I held in high regard, whom I thought was an ethical man, whom I thought of very highly. And Simon started bad mouthing him in the campaign, calling him a *joto* (derogatory term for a homosexual). I mean it was terrible. I still hold that against Salinas. I can't help but think about these things. And when you have a history in a community like we do, you remember that crap unfortunately. You've got to give a guy a break, he's done the best he could, but to bring up a man's sexual preference, making derogatory remarks to the public about him, that really saddened me.[669]

The special election was to be held on August 3, 1993. But on June 18, Jesse Sanchez suddenly terminated his campaign. Though the politics had become vicious, Sanchez stated health issues as the cause for terminating his campaign.[670] The Salinas campaign portrayed Sanchez as a sore loser who had quit because he knew he was

[669] Interview with Gary Karnes; *Voices of Change,* 72-78.
[670] "Salinas Questions Sanchez's Exit," *The Monterey Herald,* June 22, 1993.

going to lose.[671] With Sanchez out of the race, Simon Salinas won the election on August 3, 1993 and was sworn in as a Monterey County supervisor on August 10, 1993, becoming the first Mexican American to be elected to the board since Juan Bautista Castro, the founder of Castroville, in 1872.[672] At the swearing-in ceremony Salinas once again spoke in both English and Spanish, thanked his supporters and family, but also asked the audience to add prayers for Jesse Sanchez, who had recently gone through cancer surgery. Salinas called Sanchez "a pioneer, one of the forefathers of Monterey County and a consummate activist."[673]

Conclusion: Tragic Death and Aftermath

Jesse Sanchez died on August 2, 1995 at the age of 42. According to his obituary and family reports, he died of colon cancer. His extended family has protected his legacy in the aftermath of his death but questions about his sexuality and "real" cause of death lingered into the 21st century. Jesse Sanchez lived by the ideals of the Chicano movement. He graduated from UC Santa Cruz, was valedictorian of his class at UC Davis Law School, and then returned to his hometown where he resided among the poorest in his East Salinas community and became a political and legal strategist.[674] Sanchez was partially responsible for engineering the political mobilization and campaign seeking district elections, by lobbying for the legal

[671] Marty Burleson, "Simon Salinas Ready To Take Supervisor Seat," *The Californian*, August 4, 1993.
[672] Roya Camp, "Salinas First Latino Supervisor in 100 years. 'Equality At Work,'" *The Californian*, August 11, 1993.
[673] Ibid.
[674] Claudia Melendez Salinas, "Voting Rights Attorney Credits Locals," *Knight Ridder Tribune Business,* May 19, 2006.

assistance of Joaquin Avila and MALDEF.[675] Often referred to as the "godfather of East Salinas," Sanchez was more of a political strategist, or architect, a brilliant-minded individual with his East Salinas community's best interests at heart. Yet, one side of his community turned on him over rumors regarding his sexuality, and betrayed him by supporting his opponent in the 1993 race to become the first Mexican American Monterey County supervisor. Small communities entrenched in political fights do not forget, and healing over such fights takes years to get over. But in May 2006, when the Monterey Bay area chapter of *La Raza* Lawyers recognized Joaquin Avila for his voting rights advocacy, Avila credited the local community activists in Salinas for all of the successes. "My role as an advocate in Monterey, or whatever the perception of it, derived from the existing leadership in the community. It was the local community, and Jesse Sanchez, who made sure these issues were addressed."[676]

By the mid-1990s, the Alisal District School Board had all Mexican Americans on its board. The board voted to re-name a local school in honor of Jesse Sanchez. At Jesse Sanchez Elementary School, a portrait of the late Sanchez greets visitors in the main office. Sanchez is pictured in a navy blue business suit, and wearing his famous glasses, representative of his short career as the community's legal intellectual. When guests ask about him they are often handed a poster of Sanchez modeled after the portrait. This poster, by Jose Ortiz, depicts a very different portrayal of Sanchez, one that features iconic imagery surrounding Chicano

[675] George Sanchez interview with Gary Karnes; *Voices of Change.*
[676] Ibid.; Karnes and Martinez, *Voices of Change,* 350-353.

movement heroes. Behind Sanchez appears Benito Juarez, the only indigenous Mexican to become president of Mexico, along with an Aztec warrior; below is Cesar Chavez with farm workers behind him. On the other side stands Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata. The only woman in the poster is anonymous and masked in a veil, representing a farm worker. These images have historically been associated with a very masculine hetero-normative romantic portrayal of the Chicano movement era's artistic enlightenment, much different from how he is described and remembered by close friends and political foes alike.



Figure 65. Left, a portrait of the late Jesse Sanchez. Right, Jose Ortiz's portrayal of Sanchez surrounded by iconic Mexican heroes. Courtesy of Jose G. Ortiz.

Simon Salinas sought a second term as a Monterey County supervisor in 1996 and narrowly won after he was arrested for drinking and driving a few weeks before the election.[677] Even after his DUI arrest, local newspapers endorsed him as the more qualified candidate, writing, "Simon Salinas should be forgiven for exercising bad

[677] "Supervisor Salinas' Mistake a Lesson to Learn From," *The Californian*, February 21, 1996.

judgment."[678] His political career survived and his popularity blossomed as the local Mexican population grew and he became known as "*el hijo del pueblo*" or as the people's candidate.[679] Four years later, in 2000, Simon Salinas became the first Mexican American to represent the region in the California State Assembly. After serving six years in the Assembly he returned to Monterey County and ran for a county supervisor seat again where he has retained his seat since 2007.

Joaquin Avila continued to be the Mexican and Mexican American population's stalwart supporter regarding voting rights. He took his struggle over district elections to numerous cities across California, including his hometown, Compton, where the Mexican population was becoming the majority in this historically African American community. In 1996 he was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship Genius Award for his work on voting rights. By 2002 he had co-authored California's Voting Rights law with support from State Senator Richard Polanco. He became an advocate for undocumented Mexican immigrants living in California, writing in 2003 that "over 4.6 million noncitizen adults, or nearly 19 percent of the adult population, contribute to the state economy and government revenues but lack political representation."[680] He went on to become an assistant professor of law at Seattle University where he led the struggle over voting rights in Washington. Unfortunately, Avila suffered a massive stroke in 2010 and almost died. He was able

[678] Robert Jones, "Supervisor Salinas Arrested On Drunk Driving Charge," *The Herald*, February 18, 1996.
[679] "Objective Voters Should Re-Elect Supervisor Salinas," *The Californian*, March 15, 1996.
[680] Joaquin Avila, "Political Apartheid in California: Consequences of Excluding a Growing Noncitizen Population," *Latino Policy & Issues Brief*, December 2003.

to rehabilitate his speech, but is now partially disabled and wheelchair bound, living with his son and his son's family in Seattle.

Political factions in the Monterey Bay region persist to this day. There are still divisions between loyalists of Jesse Sanchez and Simon Salinas. Candidates running for elected office seek the endorsement of each faction, and over the past twenty years various groups have struggled over political power on school boards, city council, county supervisor, and state assembly races. Any elected official of Mexican American ancestry from the region can be traced to one or the other faction. Simon Salinas's supporters have won most campaigns, including a victory by Luis Alejo in 2016 to oust Fernando Armenta, an adamant defender of Jesse Sanchez's legacy, from the Board of Supervisors. Armenta, a plaintiff along with Simon Salinas in the original voting-rights lawsuit, in 2007 supported his top aide against Simon Salinas.

By 1993 the Salinas city council had four Mexican Americans, a majority, and in 1996 Anna Caballero, a former CRLA attorney and the wife of Simon Salinas's first electoral opponent, Juan Uranga, became the first Mexican American and the first female mayor of the city of Salinas.[681] After Simon Salinas served in the California Assembly, Caballero became the second Mexican American to serve in the Assembly. Caballero served for four years until she ran unsuccessfully for the California State Senate in a district that had been gerrymandered to a more conservative voting bloc. Even though she lost her senate bid, California Governor Jerry Brown appointed her to his administration as Secretary of Consumer Affairs.

[681] Ricky de la Torre, " A New Beginning for Salinas," *The Californian*, Wednesday, June 16, 1993; Editorials. "Latino Majority a milestone," *The Californian,* June 16, 1993.

Similarly, Watsonville elected the daughter of a former bracero, Ana Ventura Phares, to the city council and in 2005 she became that city's first Mexican American woman mayor.[682] The Mexican and Mexican American community of the larger Monterey Bay area witnessed considerable gains in the political representation beginning with the election of Simon Salinas in 1989. A year later, a young student, Jose Mandujano, heard Simon Salinas speak with students about his role as the newly elected councilmember of Salinas. Mandujano raised his hand and told Salinas that he lived in the Hebron Heights neighborhood, where a custodian repeatedly asked his group of friends to leave a gated park when the kids were playing football on the grass field. Parks or even grass to play on in Hebron Heights was a rarity, and the local park that Mandujano was referring to was in Salinas's district.[683]

A few weeks later the park custodian approached him and in a very different tone, and asked, "*Jose, porque me andas aventando a Simon Salinas*?" (Jose, why are you sending Simon Salinas to speak with me?) This example of children struggling to find recreational space in their community is representative of a larger struggle for civil rights that MALDEF, Joaquin Avila, and Mexican American elected officials finally were able to open for the minority populations of Salinas, Watsonville, and greater California. It not only opened access to various spaces not previously

---

[682] Michelle Caldwell, "Race to Sacto: Democratic primary winner will likely replace Salinas in the state Assembly," *The Monterey County Weekly,* May 25, 2006.

[683] This neighborhood was often referred to as "Little Oklahoma" because of the migrants who settled there during the 1930 who were migrants from Oklahoma. Jessica Lyons, "Unmaking History: Salinas' Latino leaders are fixing a problem that was created decades ago," *The Monterey County Weekly*, May 1, 2003.

available, but also access to institutions that could give minorities greater access to health care, schooling, better housing, and government. The lawsuits leading to district elections forced municipalities to elect officials who could answer to their constituency. The residents of Salinas and Watsonville finally had electoral representation in their neighborhoods and elected officials they could hold accountable.

By the end of the decade, Mexicans and Mexican Americans living in the Monterey Bay area had won seats on local school boards, the city council, and the Monterey and Santa Cruz County board of supervisors. Changing labor demographics, increased civil rights advocacy, and political mobilization for electoral representation highlight how Mexicans and Mexican Americans transformed the Monterey Bay area's political landscape, and that of many communities with large Mexican American populations struggling to attain the political representation that they had never had, despite the passage of landmark legislation in the federal Civil Rights and Voting Rights acts in 1964 and 1965.

CONCLUSION

> My father came to the Salinas Valley as a bracero from Mexico City. He met my mother in the fields of the Salinas Valley. They married had their family and we all went through the public school systems and eventually went on to various colleges. All are professionals working in various careers and we thank our parents for having come to the U.S. and for providing us with better opportunities that they did not have in Mexico.[684]
>
> —Fernando Torres-Gil, PhD
> Professor, University of California, Los Angeles

Significance of this Historical Study

This dissertation demonstrates how the Bracero Program filled the labor void from 1942-1964, but it also created a controlled labor supply for agribusiness that they could depend on. During the same period, the industry witnessed little labor upheaval and no wage increases during the Bracero Program's twenty-two years of existence. One of the missing stories in previous literature is the significance of bracero labor to the Monterey Bay area. Braceros were heavily exploited by agribusiness, but many who stayed moved up the agricultural industry, and their families greatly benefited. Bracero labor transformed the region's agricultural economy, saving it and also making it the agricultural capital of the world that it is today.[685]

This study shows how the Bracero Program served as a launching pad into careers in agriculture that allowed Mexican immigrants upward mobility. The Bracero program was not just about importing male labor; it provided a system of

[684] Interview with Dr. Fernando Torres-Gil conducted by author. May 6, 2016. Steinbeck Center, Salinas, CA.
[685] Mitchell, *They Saved the Crops*, 167–89.

chain migration that their family members followed. This dissertation has argued that the Bracero Program should be understood beyond a male labor oriented study. Previous studies have characterized an image of the bracero that failed to showcase the complexities of the program and the men who invited family members to migrate to the United States. Moreover it's not just about the male braceros, but also about the entire family and communities in Mexico. Few Mexican immigrants, including braceros arrived in the Monterey Bay area with any legal protections. Their migrations are an important case study to understand how their children evolved into activists. Their initial migrations to the Monterey Bay area paved the path for family members to reunite with them in the region. Thus allowed a younger, second generation of children and relatives to benefit from the social capital of braceros and either continue careers in agriculture or pursue schooling and other professional careers.

The region witnessed a dramatic population growth between 1964 and 1970 as former braceros such as Leon Ventura invited family members from Mexico to reunite with them and settle in the region. Sons and daughters of former braceros arrived in the Monterey Bay area to fill the agricultural industry jobs, but also moved out of the fields into careers in municipalities as firefighters, police officers, government officials, as well as elected public officials. In the Monterey Bay area Mexican immigrants made alliances with a Mexican American generation that was struggling with identity as Chicanos implemented the ideals and lessons of the Chicano movement. These alliances led to major improvements in labor and civil

rights in communities like Salinas and Watsonville. In their united struggle for equality, Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans guaranteed the enforcement of protections provided under the 1964 Civil Rights Act with regards to employment, schooling, and access to affordable housing.

The Struggle for Social Justice shows how grower profits—which were built on the backs of bracero laborers —were parlayed into agricultural technological innovation with regard to higher yields in crops and packaging and transporting vegetables across the world. By studying the crop reports we find the significant impact that bracero labor had on the larger Monterey Bay area. Missing from previous literature is the impact of bracero labor on the wealth of various regions. This research project begins in 1930 when the total value of agriculture in Monterey County was worth $ 22,813,500. In 1941, just one year before the start of the Bracero Program, the total value of agriculture for the region reached $ 32,839,670. In just over two decades, by the end of the Bracero Program in 1964, the total value of Monterey County agriculture had reached $152,679,620.

Between 1970 and 1980, during the decade in which the UFW had its most significant impact, the agricultural value of Monterey County skyrocketed from $227,624,370 to $745,478,224 in 1980. This was a 227% increase. By 2000, when this study ends, the total value of agriculture in the region was worth $2,923,269,850, or a 290% increase from the 1980 evaluation.[686] Despite the growing wealth in the

[686] Monterey County Agriculture Crop Report data gathered by author from the Commissioner's office, Salinas, California. http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/government/departments-a-h/agricultural-commissioner/forms-publications/crop-reports-economic-contributions#ag. Santa Cruz County

region, financial gains for agricultural workers, needed to be secured through a vigilant labor organization.

The end of the Bracero Program created an opportunity for agricultural workers to organize, and by 1970 the Monterey Bay area's agricultural workers organized the first major vegetable strike in over thirty years. With the end of the Bracero Program, however, the region also witnessed greater demand for agricultural workers. With an established social network started by former braceros, the area witnessed larger numbers of migrants from Mexico who settled in the region and found work either legally or as undocumented workers in the agricultural industry. While other regions in the Southwest experienced similar demographic changes, the Monterey Bay area's Mexican immigrant and Mexican American population grew consistently and they continued to build alliances to advance civil rights causes.

During the process of conducting oral histories and mining archival data, compelling and notable interconnections drove this from one story into its multiplicity of victories. The labor and civil rights victories originated from militancy that Mexican immigrants possessed long before they arrived in the Monterey Bay area. Once they built alliances with Mexican Americans, Mexican immigrants parlayed their upward mobility in the agricultural industry while Mexican Americans moved up in municipal and educational jobs while also attaining political office.

The proceeding pages center and contextualize the major civil rights mobilizations in the Monterey Bay area between 1970-2000 that redraws Chicano

---

Agriculture Crop Report data gathered by author form Commissioner's office and Walter Mayeda. http://www.agdept.com/AgriculturalCommissioner/AnnualCropandLivestockReports.aspx

movement geographies, recasts community activism and redefines traditional social justice periodization. These events showcase crucial stories of labor and civil rights at the heart of this era that were excluded or overlooked by previous agricultural and social justice scholarship. In undertaking this study, research illustrates how the Monterey Bay area as a conglomerate of rural suburban communities has an equally important labor and civil rights history that should be placed on par with larger urban areas such as Los Angeles, San Jose, San Diego, San Antonio, and similar settings.

The Significance of Mexican American Children to Produce Enormous Change in their Own and their Community's Status

The Struggle for Social Justice contends that Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans organized a civil rights and labor movement that led to a political transformation in the larger Monterey Bay area. The children of former braceros and farmworkers became leaders of this important moment in U.S. and Chicano labor history. They established the most successful civil rights organizations in the region that advocated for Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans. From 1985 to 1987, the daughters of former braceros led one of the longest labor strikes in U.S labor history and secured wages and health benefits. Cannery workers became the backbone of the community as they organized labor organization networks to contest agribusiness. The immigrant women such as Cuca Lomeli, Gloria Bettancourt, and Griselda Ramirez inspired the community to change the electoral process and leaders invited MALDEF and Joaquin Avila to file lawsuits in Watsonville and Salinas to implement district elections. As a result, both cities finally had Mexican American

council members and subsequently witnessed greater representation at all levels, from school boards to the California Assembly.

Mexican American Empowerment during this Transformation

During the 1970s the Monterey Bay area's Mexican American community was a generation removed from the fields. Mexican Americans who became involved in the Chicano Movement activism of the 1960s across universities returned to the Monterey Bay area and organized around civil rights causes, including the labor injustices faced by many local farmworkers. When Cesar Chavez arrived in Salinas and Watsonville former farmworkers, students, and an immigrant workforce mobilized the immigrant population along with Mexican Americans to advocate for labor and civil rights. Unlike other regions of the Southwest, the Monterey Bay area stands out because of the leadership showcased by immigrants and their children. Histories are often written through the prism of polarizing opposites, yet this region showcases how ethnic groups coalesced to transform the agricultural industry and built it. As the Mexican population grew and stayed in the region they struggled and fought for full civil rights guaranteed under the United States Constitution, the recently passed Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Political Activism in the Early 1970s

In late August 1970, Cesar Chavez made his first public visits to the Monterey Bay area. Chavez rallied the unique audience of local farmworkers who were ready to walk out of their jobs, a Mexican American second generation, and a multi-ethnic group of activists who were energized to organize farmworkers and demand better

treatment, higher wages, and environmental protections against pesticides and more. Mexican Americans had moved from working in the fields and migrating with their families from other states to becoming leaders in the farmworker movement while also successfully organizing an immigrant population to demand labor and civil rights. Ultimately, a multiplicity of energized civil rights activists worked together to transform the political landscape of the Monterey Bay area. The 1970 lettuce strike and the work of Dolores Huerta, Cesar Chavez, and the United Farm Workers drew attention to the farmworkers in the larger Monterey Bay area and mobilized a generation of organizers and civil rights activists to become more aware of the injustices in the region and advocate civil and voting rights. The end of the vegetable strike secured higher wages and made up for a twenty-two year period of wage stagnation. The 1970 labor strike was the catalyst that empowered the Mexican population to demand and advocate for greater labor, civil and voting rights.

Mexican Americans were leaving the fields for good in Salinas and Watsonville and choosing to follow the ideals of the Civil Rights and Chicano movements. The UFW had inspired and motivated many of them to follow through on the ideals of the larger Chicano movement and then bring their new skills and education back to their communities. Many former farmworkers or children of farmworkers sought to correct injustices surrounding housing, education, employment, and harassment by local law enforcement agencies. The 1970 lettuce strike inspired and motivated Mexicans and Mexican Americans to demand not only equal access to employment and schooling, but also to equal citizenship status.

Mexican Immigrants, Mexican Americans, and LULAC

From the energy and militant mobilization of Mexican Americans during the 1970 lettuce strike new civil rights organizations evolved. One year after the 1970 vegetable strike the parents of children who attended a public middle school in Salinas united together after a Superior Court judge made racist remarks about a student's speech during a graduation ceremony. The parents' organizing in reaction to the racialized incident led to the first LULAC chapter in the Monterey Bay area. Many of those parents were former farmworkers and had participated in the UFWOC strike or had witnessed the possibilities for change in the region. The most important and successful organization with regards to civil rights in the region was a local chapter of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), which was established by former immigrant farmworkers, Mercedes and Cresencio Padilla, who had worked picking strawberries with their families in the Salinas Valley and Watsonville.

The LULAC chapter's leadership began to organize around civil rights causes. Eventually this LULAC chapter was the most efficient and successful civil rights organization advocating for the Mexican and Mexican American community in the Monterey Bay area during the 1970s, 1980s, and into the early 1990s. As Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans faced repeated episodes of prejudice and racial discrimination they created an alliance to promote the founding of a LULAC chapter. Unlike other LULAC chapters, the Monterey Bay area's group was founded by immigrants from Mexico and welcomed other immigrants into the chapter. Without a

LULAC chapter in the region Mexican American civil rights may have lagged even farther after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

LULAC was successful in enforcing affirmative action plans at the county and city level and monitored hiring practices to assure Mexican American representation. The organization filed lawsuits calling for greater minority hiring and was successful in securing a higher percentage of Mexican Americans getting hired. LULAC kept a close eye on the police departments and Border Patrol abuses in the region and also filed landmark lawsuits on behalf of residents. Eventually, LULAC put pressure on the police departments to monitor police abuses and establish better relations with the Spanish-speaking population. Since the literature on LULAC has been heavily focused on urban areas, the Monterey Bay area's chapter highlights an important moment in Mexican American civil rights history where Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans built coalitions in order to promote full citizenship rights guaranteed under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the United States Constitution.

The Undocumented Immigrant Women's Strike in Watsonville Sparked a Revolution in Politics

During the 1980s, Mexican women in the Monterey Bay area's cannery industry struggled for wage increases, labor, and civil rights. Finally, in 1985, after struggling for over a year for wage increases, hundreds of Mexican immigrant women organized the community to support the strike of the cannery industry in Watsonville. Immigrant Mexican women who were undocumented led the cannery strike, and showcased their agency and militancy to organize and win a fair wage. The strike was one of the longest in United States history, lasting eighteen months, but the

cannery workers were able to win labor concessions, secured their health benefits, and continued to collectively bargain with their local Teamsters union. Moreover, this dissertation demonstrates how the immigrant women's activism and leadership inspired the community to demand voting rights, specifically greater electoral representation. Through their labor organizing and advocacy for civil and voting rights Mexican and Mexican Americans were able to contest the established elite's control over electoral politics by changing the at-large election system and in the process achieved political inclusion and representation.

This study contributes to a new way of thinking about immigrant history, labor history and Chicano history as it played out in a rural suburban community where the children of former braceros had become labor and civil rights leaders. It contests the idea that immigrants were taking jobs and that they prevented a Mexican American population from gaining full civil rights. On the contrary, this study shows how Mexican immigrants led and sought support from Mexican Americans as they organized for labor, civil, voting rights and political representation. This research reveals how immigrants and specifically women were at the forefront of the labor and civil rights movement in the Monterey Bay area.

In Watsonville, Gloria Bettancourt, the daughter of a former bracero, became the leader during the strike that organized and campaigned to protect health benefits and livable wages. The leadership by *Las mujeres huelgistas* paved the way for an electoral transformation—their stories of labor organizing and militancy are crucial for understanding the labor and civil rights moment of the Monterey Bay area. Even

after the strike, Gloria Bettancourt, Cuca Lomeli, and Griselda Rodriguez were sought by community organizations to consult and empower a new generation. Their advocacy along with Mexican American activists called on MALDEF, and Joaquin Avila to secure and safeguard their civil and voting rights. As a result, MALDEF and Avila filed the landmark lawsuits *Gomez v. Watsonville* and *Armenta v. Salinas* that secured legislation resulting in the election of the first Mexican Americans to electoral office.

Political Journeys of Mexican Americans in the Monterey Bay Area

The Mexican and Mexican American community of the larger Monterey Bay area witnessed considerable gains in political representation beginning with the election of Simon Salinas in 1989, which opened access to various spaces not previously available, as well as institutions that supported health care, schooling, better housing, and government. Due to successes in implementing district elections, the residents of Salinas and Watsonville finally had electoral representation in their neighborhoods and elected officials they could hold accountable. With the advocacy by Mexican American civil rights leaders, LULAC, MALDEF, Mexicans and Mexican Americans living in the Monterey Bay area won seats on local school boards, the city council, and the Monterey and Santa Cruz County board of supervisors. Changing labor demographics, increased civil rights advocacy, and political mobilization for electoral representation highlight how Mexicans and Mexican Americans transformed the Monterey Bay area's political landscape, and that of many communities with large Mexican American populations struggling to

attain the political representation that they had never had, despite the passage of landmark legislation in the federal Civil Rights and Voting Rights acts in 1964 and 1965.

The Monterey Bay area has a distinct history of agricultural workers struggling for social justice, but frequently reaching concession so agriculture could prosper. The Monterey Bay area is an important area to study as newer immigrants arrive and face new obstacles with regards to bilingual education. Many immigrants from Mexico arrive speaking indigenous dialects and no Spanish or English. Immigrants continue to be an important resource for the multi-billion dollar agricultural economy. The region faces new challenges as insular residents of the Monterey Peninsula are advocating for the preservation of the region's beauty and passing local legislation to prevent any major development even in the Salinas Valley. As these current residents contend, more new residents lead to more traffic along the majestic coastline. Yet, unlike other agricultural regions with polarizing debates about the environment, labor and civil rights, in the Monterey Bay area, the stakeholders from various differing perspectives engage in dialogue.

Due to the political transformation, Mexican Americans in the region are in constant dialogue with stakeholders at all levels. Any political issue with regard to housing, elections, education or law enforcement goes through the Mexican American channels where various perspectives are accounted for. Public policy surrounding education and housing, among other issues, is settled through ongoing communication. Mexican American electoral success has led to a different kind of

lobbying and advocacy. Growers and the General Counsel for the Grower Shipper Association Jim Bogart can count on calling the highest-ranking elected officials in the region Ana Caballero, Simon Salinas, and Luis Alejo to lead or moderate labor disputes or to discuss other issues such as housing.

One example of the kind of communication and transformation came when the largest grower in the area, Tanimura and Antle, wanted to build farmworker housing for their guest workers in 2016. The Vice President of the growing operation, Brian Antle, was able to set early meetings with Monterey County Supervisor Simon Salinas, the son of a former bracero, to discuss the project. On one hand, there was backlash from residents in the community who argued that housing should not be built for farmworkers in the small quaint neighboring town of Spreckels where the work is done. Supervisor Simon Salinas understood that being a farmworker is difficult work that comes with major health risks. However, he also understood the workers deserve to live close to their workplace and the jobs offer a population an opportunity to move upwardly, which then underscores the importance of providing affordable housing. The project won approval with support from Supervisor Salinas, growers, and farmworkers, but it was no longer necessary to march down Alisal Street as farmworkers did in the 1970 strike advocating for higher wages and affordable housing. By 2016 growers, farmworkers, and the community could mediate differences and discuss them with elected representatives who understood their concerns.

The Struggle for Social Justice demonstrated that the Mexican immigrant and Mexican American population became labor and civil rights leaders that led to a political transformation in the region. The electoral victories witnessed by Mexican Americans could have never occurred without the landmark passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965 and advocacy by civil rights leaders. The Mexican population merged with the historic labor farmworker movement led by militant immigrant women, and the region witnessed its own civil rights moment. Immigrant women cannery workers played a crucial role in this labor and civil rights movement and were pivotal organizers behind its success. The *huelgistas* also led and inspired the region to do more for civil and voting rights. The advocacy by the UFW, LULAC, and MALDEF was made possible by Mexican immigrant and Mexican American leaders such as Mercedes and Crecencio Padilla who led civil rights advocacy under the guidance of LULAC. By 2017, Santa Cruz County had 16 Mexican American elected officials, spanning the Mayor of Watsonville to school board members. In contrast, Monterey County had 85 Mexican American elected officials ranging from the California Assembly to water boards and judges. As of 2017, Ana Caballero was re-elected to the California Assembly for a two-year term and is the highest ranking Mexican American elected official

Within two generations an immigrant Mexican community allied with a Mexican American population and their children made dramatic social justice, civil, and voting rights advances in the Monterey Bay area. Immigrant farmworkers and their children challenged the agricultural business elites who held a political

hegemony over the region's institutional power structure. Mexican Americans were able to successfully run and reach electoral office for the first time, reaching school boards, city councils, county supervisor districts, the California State Assembly and appointments to serve as judges of local courts. In the end, Mexican and Mexican Americans fought courageous battles in the Monterey Bay area to secure labor voting and civil rights that many activists maintained was worth the struggle.



Pictured are Monterey County Supervisor Simon Salinas (Blue Shirt), Vanessa Vallarta, (middle orange dress) and (far back) Susan Matchum, Monterey County Supervisor Luis Alejo (far right in suit). Both Alejo and Matchum began their legal careers with CRLA. Salinas and Alejo are both heirs to former braceros in the region.

Table 1.

Total Value of Monterey County Agriculture

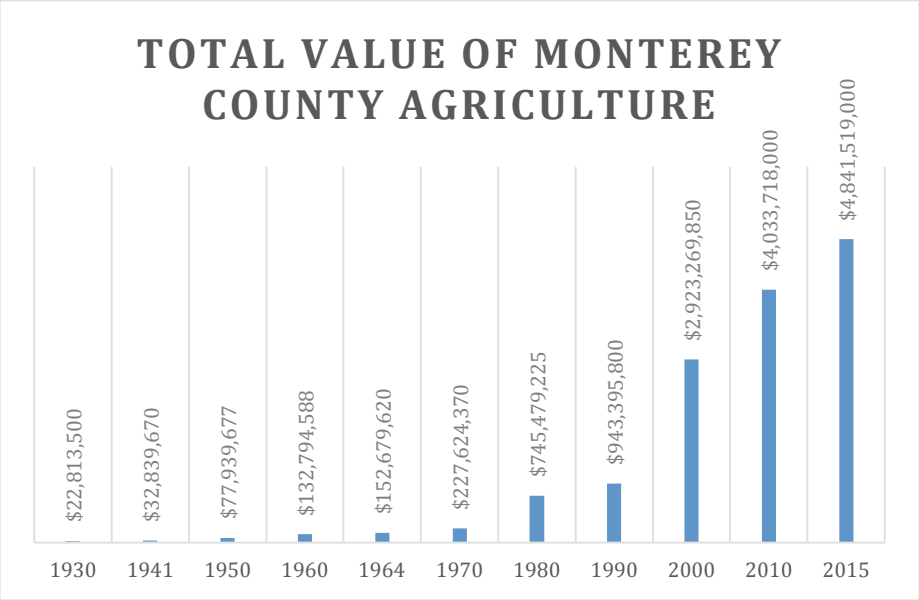
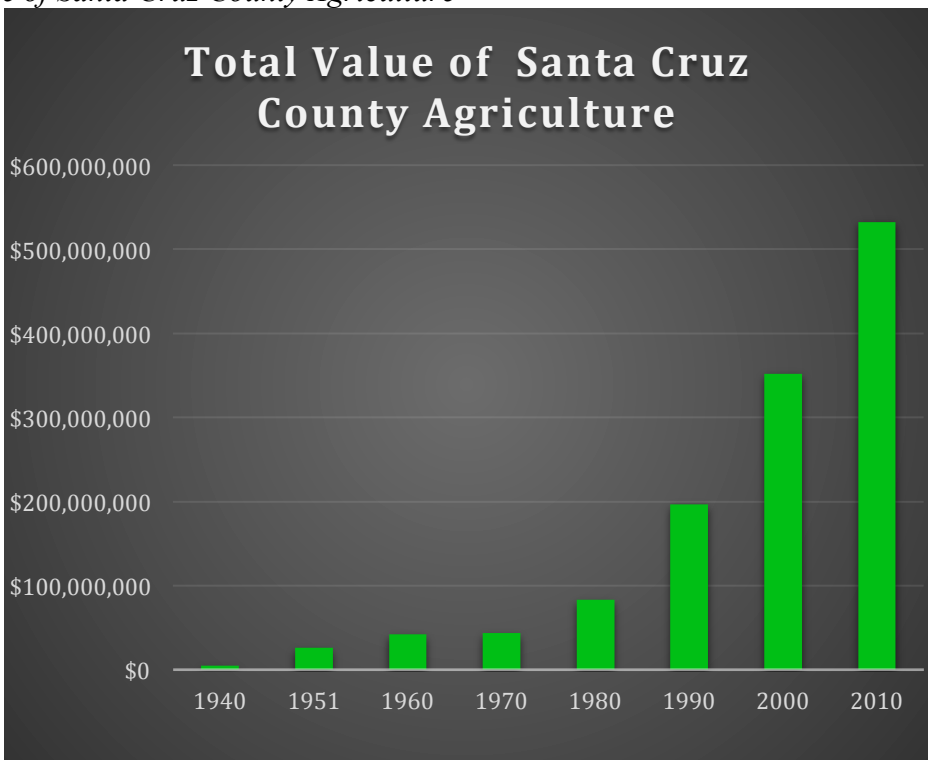


Table 2.

Total Value of Santa Cruz County Agriculture



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Archival Collections, Government Documents and Other Primary Sources

Anne Loftis Papers, Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.

Bert Corona Papers, Department of Special Collections, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, California.

California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. Records. Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, California.

Cesar Chavez Collection. Labor Archives & Research Center, San Francisco State University.

Cherrie Moraga Papers. Department of Special Collections, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, California.

Crecencio Padilla Papers, Department of Special Collections, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, California.

Donald McDonnell Papers, Archdiocese of San Francisco Chancery Archives, Menlo Park, California.

El Malcriado Newspaper Collection. Department of Special Collections, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, California.

Ernesto Galarza Papers, Department of Special Collections, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, California.

Farmworker Movement Documentation Project. Papers. UC San Diego Library.

Frank Bardacke Papers, Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.

———.Watsonville Canneries Strike Records. Labor Archives & Research Center, San Francisco State University.

Fred Ross Papers, Department of Special Collections, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, California.

Grower Shipper Association of Central California.

Herman Gallegos Papers. Department of Special Collections, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, California.

Juan Oliverez Papers, Personal Archive. Salinas, California.
Lopez v. Monterey County Collection, 1855-1991. Department of Special Collections, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, California.
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund Records, Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, California.
Office of the Agricultural Commissioner for Monterey County.

Office of the Agricultural Commissioner for Santa Cruz County.

Porter Chaffee. Regional History Project, UCSC Library; Chaffee, Porter Myron; Jarrell, Randall; & Reti, Irene. Porter Chaffee: Labor Organizer and Activist. UC Santa Cruz: Regional History Project. 2004.

Paul Schuster Taylor Papers, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Sal Alvarez Papers, Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.

Simon Salinas, Papers. Personal Archive. Salinas, California.

Government Documents

Forstall, Richard L. *"Population of States and Counties of United States: 1790-1990 Department of Commerce. U.S. Bureau of the Census Population Division.* March 1996.
Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1940.
Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950. Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1950.
Eighteenth Census of the United States, 1960. Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1960.
Nineteenth Census of the United States, 1970. Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1970.
Twentieth Census of the United States, 1980. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1980.
Twenty-first Census of the United States, 1990. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1990.
Twenty Second Census of the United States, 2000. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2000.

Films

Silver, Jon. *Watsonville on strike: a documentary. Watsonville*, Calif: Migrant Media Productions, 1989.

Newspapers and Periodicals

Adelante
The Californian
The Salinas Californian
The New York Times
The Monterey Herald
The Mercury News
Southern Railways
The Los Angeles Times
Chicago Tribune
The Monterey County Weekly
San Francisco Chronicle
San Francisco Examiner
Sports Illustrated
Watsonville Register-Pajoronian
El Malcriado
El Observador
El Sol
Philippine Press USA

Oral History Interviews

The Following interviews were conducted by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez. Recordings and/or notes are in author's possession.

Avila, Joaquin. 17, 18, 19 December 2012, Seattle University, Washington.

Antle, Brian. 19 September 2015, Tanimura and Antle Headquarters, Spreckels, California.

Bardacke, Frank. 31 July 2011. 7 February 2014, Watsonville, California.

Betancourt, Gloria. 26 March 2016, Watsonville, California.

Bogart, Jim. 7 November 2014, Salinas, California.

Bustamante, Salvador. 16 September, 2013, Stanford California.

Camacho, Julian. Telephone interview, 5 July 2016.

Camacho, Pablo. 14 November 2013, Watsonville, California.

Calderon, Hernandez, Oscar. 25 November 2013, Greenfield, California.

Din, Darlene. 7 November 2014, Salinas, California.

Drake Samuels, Susan. 3 September 2014, Soquel, California.

Fitch, Bob. 31 July 2011, 14 February 2014, Watsonville, CA.

Flores Barragan, Salvador (Chualar Crash Survivor). 12 September 2013 telephone interview, 13 October 2013, Chualar, California, 27 February 2014 Stanford, California.

Garcia, Roberto. 9 August 2016, Salinas, California. (UFW)

Garcia, Roberto. 8 July 2016. Steinbeck Center, Salinas, California. (*Tejano*).

Gallegos, Herman. 26 April 2013, Stanford University, 25 September 2013. Galt, California.

Gil-Torres, Fernando, PhD. 4 May 2016, National Steinbeck Center. Salinas, California.
Gomez-Cruz, Dolores. Telephone interview, 12 September 2016.
Jimenez, Diana. Telephone interview, 26 July 2016.
Karnes, Gary. 17 September 2013, Salinas, California.
Kapp, Joe. 15, 26 September 2016, Los Gatos, California.
Lopez, Sabino. 14 December 2014, Center for Community Advocacy, Salinas, California.
Martinez, Juan. 17 September 2013, Salinas, California.
Martinez Vasquez, Juan. 25 June 2013, King City, California.
Matsui, Gary. 8 July 2011, Monterey, California.
Mayeda,Walter. Telephone interview, 25 April 2017. Santa Cruz County Agriculture Commissioner's Office. Biologist.
Oliverez, Juan, PhD. 17 December 2014, Salinas, California.
Ortiz, Jose. Telephone interview, 3 November 2016.
Padilla, Crecencio. 20 January 2016, Royal Oaks, California.
Padilla, Mercedes and Crecencio Padilla. 20 January 2016, 26 March 2016, 30 March 2017, Royal Oaks, California.
Padilla, Gilberto. Telephone interview, 19 August 2016, Chapala, Jalisco, Mexico.
Panetta, Leon. 7 July 2008, Monterey, California.
Peña Ventura, Leon. 25 May 2013, Watsonville, California.
Phares Ventura, Ana. 15 March 2015, Capitola, California.
Piceno, Ana Maria. 15 March 2015, Salinas, California.
Ramsey, Bill. 11 April 11 2011, 15 March 2015. Mann Packing Headquarters, Salinas, California.
Renteria, Jose. 8 July 2011, Salinas, California.
Rodriguez, Maria. 15 March 2016. Salinas, California.
Rodriguez, German. 15 March 2016, Salinas, California.
Salinas, Simon. 3 June 2014, 15 March 2015, Salinas, California.
Silva, Eva. 15 March 2015, Salinas, California.
Silva, Ramon. 15 March 2015, Salinas, California.
Rios, Oscar. 26 March 2016, Watsonville, California.
Rodriguez, Guadalupe. 13 October 2013, Salinas, California.
Rubio Nuñez, Jose Maria. 21 June 2013. Salinas, California.
Saucedo, Salas, David. 10 January 2014, Salinas, California.
Silva Puentes, Rafael. 27 June 2013,Salinas, California.
Silva, Eva. 27 June 2013, Salinas, CA.
Tovar, Isidro. (Chualar Crash Survivor). Telephone interview, 26 February 2014, 28 February 2014, Steinbeck Center, Salinas, California. 28 October 2015, San Diego, California.
Tanimura, Gary. 7 January 2014, Salinas, California.
Tabera, Philip. 6 September 2016, San Jose State University.
Ventura, Alicia MD. 15 March 2015, Salinas, California.
Zúñiga Nieto, Eustaquio. 31 January 2014, King City, California.

Zúñiga, Benjamin. 31 January 2014, King City, California.

The following interviews are held in the Cherrie Moraga Papers, Department of Special Collections and University Archives.
Bardacke, Frank. 9 August 1994, Watsonville, California.
Bettancourt, Gloria. 24 August 1994, Watsonville, California.
Contreras, Esperanza. 23 August 1994, Watsonville, California.
Father Mike. 16 August 1994, St. Patrick's Church, Watsonville**,** California.
Guzman, Reyna. 23 August 1994, Watsonville, California.
Rodriguez, Guillermina. 28 August 1994, Watsonville, California.

Oral History Interviews conducted by Leroy Chatfield Farmworker Movement Documentation Project. https://libraries.ucsd.edu/farmworkermovement/medias/oral-history/#
Chavez, Chavez.
Govea, Jessica
Ganz, Marshall
Huerta, Dolores
Valdez, Luis

Secondary Sources

Acuña, Rodolfo. *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*. New York: Longman, 1972.

———. *Corridors of Migration: The Odyssey of Mexican Laborers, 1600–1933*. University of Arizona Press. 2007.

Alanís Enciso, Fernando Saúl, and Carlos Alberto Roque Puente. *NosVamos AlTraque: La Contratación De Braceros Ferroviarios En El ámbito RegionalDurante La SegundaGuerra Mundial* : El Caso De San Luis Potosí, 1944.1. ed. San Luis Potosí: Colegio de San Luis, 2007.

Alim, H. Samy and Geneva Smitherman. *Articulate While Black: Barack Obama, Language, and Race in the U.S.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Almaguer, Tomás. *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy In California*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

Arredondo, Gabriela F. *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation, 1916–39.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008.

Azuma, Eiichiro. *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Barajas, Frank P. *Curious Unions: Mexican American Workers and Resistance In Oxnard, California, 1898-1961*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2012.

Bardacke, Frank. "Watsonville: A Mexican Community on Strike." *Reshaping the US Left: Popular Struggles in the 1980s*. 3 (1998): 149–182.

———. *Good liberals and great blue herons: Land, labor and politics in the Pajaro Valley.* Santa Cruz: Center for Political Ecology, 1994.

———. *Trampling Out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers*. London: Verso, 2011.

Barnett, Teresa, and Chon A. Noriega. *Oral History and Communities of Color*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.

Bejarano, Christina E. *The Latina Advantage: Gender, Race, and Political Su*ccess. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013.

Bender, Thomas. *A Nation Among Nations: America's Place in World History*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2006.

Benton-Cohen, Katherine. *Borderline Americans: Racial Division and Labor War in the Arizona Borderlands.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009.Bohem, Deborah, A. "Now I Am a Man and a Woman!": Gendered Moves and Migrations in a Transnational Mexican Community, *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 35, No. 1, Engendering Mexican Migration: Articulating Gender, Regions, Circuits (January 2008): 16-30.

Bowem, Deobrah A. “Now I Am a Man and a Woman!": Gendered Moves and Migrations in a Transnational Mexican Community.” *Latin American Perspectives* 35, no. 1 (January 2008): 16–30.

Breschini, Gary S., Mona Gudgel, and Trudy Haversat. *Images of Early America: Early Salinas*. Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2005.

Brilliant, Mark. *The Color of America Has Changed: How Racial Diversity Shaped Civil Rights Reform In California, 1941–1978*. Oxford [England]: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Brundage, David Thomas. *The Making of Western Labor Radicalism: Denver's Organized Workers, 1878–1905*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994.

Camarillo, Albert. *Chicanos In a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios In Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848–1930*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996.

Cohen, Deborah. *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects In the Postwar United States and Mexico*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011.

Copp, Nelson Gage. "'Wetbacks' and Braceros: Mexican Migrant Laborers and American Immigration Policy, 1930–1960." Doctoral dissertation, Boston University, 1963.

Cruz, Takash Paule. "Remedying Racial and Ethnic Inequality in California Politics: Watsonville Before and After District Elections." Center for Latino Policy Research. UC Berkeley: Center for Latino Policy Research (1999).

Daniel, Cletus E. *Bitter Harvest: A History of Californian Farmworkers, 1879–1994.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981.

Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican: Global Migration, Localism, and Exclusion In the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012.

Deverell, William. *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of its Mexican Pas*t. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

Dewitt, Howard A. "The Filipino Labor Union: The Salinas Lettuce Strike of 1934," *Amerasia* 5, no. 2 (1978): 1–21.

———. *Violence in the Fields: California Filipino Farm Labor Unionization During the Great Depression*. Saratoga: Century Twenty One Publishing, 1980.

Dowd Hall, Jacquelyn. "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March 2005): 1233–1263.

Driscoll, Barbara. *The Tracks North: The Railroad Bracero Program of World War II*. Austin, Tex: CMAS Books, Center for Mexican American Studies, University of Texas at Austin, 1998. HD8039.R12 U6244 1998.

Duck, Elizabeth L. 1996. "Juana Huelgista:" Latina Women on Strike in Watsonville, California, 1985–1987." Masters thesis, San Jose State University.

Edwards, Harry. *The Struggle That Must Be: An Autobiography*. New York: Macmillan, 1980.

Escobedo, Elizabeth Rachel. "The Pachuca Panic: Sexual and Cultural Battlegrounds in World War II Los Angeles," *Western Historical Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (2007): 133–156.

———. "*From Coveralls to Zoot Suits: The Lives of Mexican American Women On the World War II Home Front.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013.

Fernandez, Lilia. *Brown In the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans In Postwar Chicago*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012.

Fink, Leon. *Workers across the Americas: The Transnational Turn in Labor History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Fisher, Lloyd H. *The Harvest Labor Market in California.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953.

Flores, Lori A." A Community of Limits and the Limits of Community: MALDEF's Chicana Rights Project, Empowering the "Typical Chicana," and the Question of Civil Rights, 1974–1983. *Journal of American Ethnic History* (Spring 2008): 81–110.

———. "An Unladylike Strike Fashionably Clothed: Mexicana and Anglo Women Garment Workers Against Tex-son, 1959–1963." *Pacific Historical Review* 78, no. 3 (August 2009): 367–402.

———. "Converging Communities In Fields of Division: Mexican American Struggles for Rights In an Agricultural California Town, 1940–1970." Doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 2011.

———. *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farmworker Movement*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 2016.

Flores, William Vincent, and Rina Benmayor. *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space, and Rights.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1997.

Foley, Neil. *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites In Texas Cotton Culture.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

Friedland, William H., Amy E. Barton, and Robert J. Thomas. *Manufacturing Green Gold: Capital, Labor, and Technology in the Lettuce Industry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Gabaccia, Donna R., and Franca Iacovetta. *Women, Gender and Transnational Lives: Italian Workers of the World*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.

———. “Immigrant Women: Nowhere at Home?” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 10 (Summer 1991): 61–87.

Galarza, Ernesto. *Farm Workers and Agri-business in California, 1947–1960*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977.

———. *Merchants of Labor*: *The Mexican Bracero Story: An Account of the Managed Migration of Mexican Farm Workers in California 1942–1960*. San Jose: Rosicrucian Press, 1964.———.Tragedy at Chualar: *El Crucero de las Treinta y Dos Cruces*. Santa Barbara: McNally & Loftin, West, 1977.

———.“Strangers in our Fields. Joint United States-Mexico Trade Union Committee,” Washington, D.C., 1956.

Gamboa, Erasmo. “Under the Thumb of Agriculture: Bracero and Mexican American Workers In the Pacific Northwest, 1940–1950.” Doctoral dissertation, University of Washington, 1984.

Ganz, Marshall. *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy In the California Farm Worker Movement.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Garcia, Ignacio. *Chicanismo: The Forging of a Militant Ethos Among Mexican Americans.* Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997.

Garcia, Juan Ramon. “Operation Wetback: The Mass Deportation of Mexican Undocumented Workers in 1954.” *Contributions in Ethnic Studies* 2. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1980.

Garcia, Mario T. *Desert Immigrant: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880–1920*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982.

García, Matt. *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus In the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900–1970.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

———. *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.

———. “Setting the Table: Historians, Popular Writers, and Food History” *Journal of American History* 103 (2016): 656–678.

García y Griego, Manuel. *The importation of Mexican contract laborers to the United States, 1942–1964: Antecedents, operation, and legacy*. La Jolla, CA, Program in United States-Mexican, University of California, San Diego, 1981.

Garcilazo, Jeffrey Marcos. *Traqueros: Mexican Railroad Workers In the United States, 1870 to1930*. Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2012.

Gill, Tiffany M. *Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010.

Glenn, Evelyn Nakano. *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped AmericanCitizenship and Labor.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Gómez-Quiñones, Juan. *Chicano Politics: Reality and Promise, 1940–1990.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990.

_____. *Mexican American Labor, 1790–1990*. University of New Mexico Press. 1994.

Gonzales-Berry, Erlinda, and Marcela Mendoza. *Mexicanos In Oregon: Their Stories, Their Lives*. Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2010.

González, Gilbert. *Guest Workers or Colonized Labor? Mexican Labor Migration to the United States.* Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2006.

———. *Labor and Community: Mexican Citrus Worker Villages in a Southern California County, 1900–1950*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994.

Griswold del Castillo, Richard. *World War II and Mexican American Civil Rights.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008.

Guglielmo, Jennifer. *Living the Revolution: Italian Women's Resistance and Radicalism in New York City, 1880–1945.* 2012.

Guglielmo, Thomas A. "Fighting for Caucasian Rights: Mexican-Americans, and the Transnational Fight for Civil Rights in World War II Texas." *Journal of American History* 92, no. 4 (2006): 1212–37.

Gutiérrez, David. *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

———. "An Ethnic Consensus? Mexican American Political Activism Since the Great Depression." *Reviews in American History* 19, No. 2 (June 1991): 289–295.

———. "*Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigrants in the United States*." Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1996.

Haas, Lisbeth. *Conquests and Historical Identities in California, 1769–1936*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

———. "The Bracero in Orange County: A Work Force for Economic Transition." La Jolla, CA: Program in United States-Mexican Studies, University of California San Diego, 1981.

Handlin, Oscar. *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that made the American People*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1971.

Haney-Lopez, Ian F. *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Rac*e. New York: New York University Press, 1997.

Harris Kessler, Alice. *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men and the quest for Economic Citizenship in Twentieth Century America*. New York, 2001.

———. *Gendering Labor History.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007.

Henke, Christopher. *Cultivating Science, Harvesting Power: Science and Industrial Agriculture in California*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008.

Hernandez, Kelly Lytle. *Migra!: A History of the U.S. Border Patrol*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.

———. "The Crimes and Consequences of Illegal Immigration: A Cross-Border Examination of Operation Wetback, 1943 to 1954." *Western Historical Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (2006): 421–444.

Herrera-Sobek, María. *The Bracero Experience: Elite lore versus Folklore*. Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, University of California, 1979.

Johnson, Kevin R. *The "Huddled Masses" Myth: Immigration and Civil Rights*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004.

Johnson, Susan Lee. *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush.* New York: W.W. Norton, 2000.

Karnes, Gary, and Juan Martinez. *Voices of Change: The People's Oral History Project*. Pacific Grove, CA: Park Place Press. 2016.

Kelley, Robin D. G. *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*. New York: Free Press, 1996.Keyssar, Alexander. *The Right to Vote: The*

Contested History of Democracy in the United States. New York: Basic Books, 2009.

Kousser, J. Morgan, "Racial Injustice and the Abolition of Justice Courts in Monterey County,"http://www.hss.caltech.edu/~kousser/redistricting/Racial%20 Injustice.pdf, 9 September 2000.

Krochmal, Max. *Blue Texas: The Making of a Multiracial Democratic Coalition in the Civil Rights Era*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016.

Laslett, John H. M. *Sunshine Was Never Enough: Los Angeles Workers, 1880–2010*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.

Leonard, Karen B. *Making Ethnic Choices: California's Punjabi Mexican Americans*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992.

_____. *The Battle for Los Angeles: Racial Ideology and World War II*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006.

Levy, Jacques E. *Cesar Chavez: Autobiography of La Causa.* New York: W.W. Norton, 1975.

Limerick, Patricia Nelson. *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*. New York: Norton, 1987.

———. "Going West and Ending Up Global." *Western Historical Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (2001): 5–23.

Mariscal, Jorge. *Aztlán and Viet Nam: Chicano and Chicana Experiences of the War.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

———. *Brown-Eyed Children of the Sun: Lessons From the Chicano Movement, 1965–1975.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005.

Marquez, Benjamin. *LULAC: The Evolution of a Mexican-American Political Organization*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993.

Massey, Douglas S. *Return to Aztlan: The Social Process of International Migration From Western Mexico*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
———."Understanding America's Immigration Crisis." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 151, no. 3 (September 2007): 309–327.

———. "Crossing the Border: Research from the Mexican Migration Project." *Journal of American Studies* 40, no. 2 (August 2006): 424–425.

———.“Pathways to El Norte: Origins, Destinations, and Characteristics of Mexican Migrants to the United States.” *International Migration Review* 46, No. 1 (Spring 2012): 3–36.

Massey, Douglas, Jorge Durand, and Nolan Malone, *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration*. New York: Russell Sage, 2003.

Massey, Douglas S., Jorge Durand, and Nolan J Malone. *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration In an Era of Economic Integration*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002.

Matsumoto, Valerie J. *Farming the Home Place: A Japanese American Community in California, 1919–1982*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993.

McKibben, Carol. *Beyond Cannery Row: Sicilian Women, Immigration, and Community in Monterey, California, 1915-99*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006.

———. *Racial Beachhead: Diversity and Democracy in a Military Town, Seaside, California.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012.

McWilliams, Carey. *North From Mexico: The Spanish Speaking People of the United States*. New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1949.

———. *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*. Santa Barbara: Peregrine, 1971.

Meister, Dick, and Anne Loftis. *A Long Time Coming: The Struggle to Unionize America's Farm Workers*. New York: Macmillan, 1977.

Mireles, Gilbert Felipe. *Continuing La Causa: Organizing Labor in California's Strawberry Fields*. Boulder: First Forum Press, 2013.

Mitchell, Don. *They Saved the Crops: Labor, Landscape, and the Struggle Over Industrial Farming In Bracero-Era California*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012.

Mize, Ronald L. and Alicia C. S Swords. *Consuming Mexican Labor: From the Bracero Program to NAFTA*. North York, Ont.: University of Toronto Press, 2011.

Molina, Natalia. *Fit to Be Citizens? Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879 1939*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

Monroy, Douglas. *Rebirth: Mexican Los Angeles from the Great Migration to the Great Depression.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Montejano, David. " Mexican Merchants and Teamsters on the Texas Cotton Road, 1862–1865." In *Mexico and Mexicans In the Making of the United States*, edited by John Tutino. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012.

———. *Quixote's Soldiers: a Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966–1981.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010.

———. *Anglos and Mexicans In the Making of Texas, 1836–1986.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987.

———. *Sancho's Journal: Exploring the Political Edge with the Brown Berets.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012.

Navarro, Armando. *Mexicano Political Experience in Occupied Aztlan: Struggles and Change*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2005.

Neuburger, Bruce. *Lettuce Wars: Ten Years of Work and Struggle in the Fields of California*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2013.

Ngai, Mae. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America, 1924–1965*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Orleck, Annelise. *Storming Caesars Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2005.

Oropeza, Lorena. *Raza Si!, Guerra No!: Chicano Protest and Patriotism During the Viet Nam War Era*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

Orozco, Cynthia E. *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009.

Padilla, Crecencio. *LULAC Legacy in Monterey County*. 2011. (Self Publication).

Panetta, Leon E., and Jim Newton. *Worthy Fights: A Memoir of Leadership in War and Peace*. New York: Penguin Press, 2014.

Pawel, Miriam. *The Union of Their Dreams: Power, Hope, and Struggle In Cesar Chavez's Farm Worker Movement*. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009.

———. *The Crusades of Cesar Chavez: A Biography*. New York: Bloomsbury Press 2014.

Pitti, Gina Marie. “To ‘Hear about God in Spanish’: Ethnicity, Church, and Community Activism in the San Francisco Archdiocese’s Mexican American Colonias, 1942-1965.” Doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 2003.

Pitti, Stephen. *The Devil In Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race and Mexican Americans*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.

Portelli, Alessandro. *They Say in Harlan County: An Oral History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Puente, Gladys. “*Dignidad Y Conscientizacion: An Oral History of A Watsonville Huelgista*.” Masters thesis, San Francisco State University, 2015

Ramirez, Catherine. *The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, and the Cultural Politics of Memory*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

Rosas, Ana Elizabeth. *Abrazando El Espíritu: Bracero Families Confront the U.S.-Mexico Border*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2014.

———. “Breaking the Silence: Mexican Children and Women’s Confrontation of *Bracero* Family Separation, 1942–64.” *Gender & History* 23, no.2 (August 2011): 382–400.

Rose, Margaret. “From the Fields to the Picket Line: Huelga Women and the Boycott, 1965–1975.” *Labor History* 31, no. 3 (1990): 271–293.

———. “Traditional and Nontraditional Patterns of Female Activism in the United Farm Workers of America, 1962 to 1980.” *Frontiers* 11, no.1 (1990): 26–32.

———. “Women in the United Farm Workers: A Study of Chicana and Mexicana Participation in a Labor Union, 1950 to 1980.” Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1988.

Ruiz, Vicki L. *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930–1950*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987.

———. *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Sackman, Douglas Cazaux. *Orange Empire: California and the Fruits of Eden*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

Sánchez, George. *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900–1945*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

———. " Face the Nation: Race, Immigration, and the Rise of Nativism in the Late Twentieth Century America." *International Migration Review* 31, no. 4 (1997): 1009–30.

———. "Race, Nation, and Culture in Recent Immigration Studies." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 18 (Summer 1999): 66–84.

Schmidt Camacho, Alicia R. *Migrant Imaginaries: Latino Cultural Politics In the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*. New York: New York University Press, 2008.

Scott, Joan W. "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis, "*American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1986): 1053–1075.

Segura, Denise A. " Chicana and the Mexican Immigrant Women at Work: The Impact of Class, Race, and Gender on Occupational Mobility." *Gender and Society* 3, no. 1 (1989): 37–52.

———. "Walking on Eggshells: Chicanas in the Labor Force." In *Hispanics in the Workplace*, edited by Stephen B. Krause, Paul Rosenfield, and Amy L. Culberston, 173–93. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1992.

———. "Working at Motherhood: Chicana and Mexican Immigrant Mothers and Employment." In *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, and Agency*, edited by Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Grace Chang, and Linda Rennie Forcey, 211–36. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Segura, Denise A., and Patricia Zavella, eds. *Women and Migration in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands: A Reader*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.

Self, Robert O. *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003.

Shaw, Randy. *Beyond the Fields: Cesar Chavez, the UFW, and the Struggle for Justice in the 21st Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

Sotelo Hondagneu, Pierrette, *Domestica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

———. *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

St. John, Rachel. *Line In the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

Street, Richard Steven. *Beasts of the Field: A Narrative History of California Farm Workers, 1769–1913*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004.

Taylor, Paul Schuster. *On the Ground In the Thirties*. Salt Lake City: G.M. Smith, 1983.

Treviño, Roberto R. *The Church in the Barrio: Mexican American Ethno-Catholicism in Houston*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1995.

Truett, Samuel. *Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

Tutino, John. *Mexico and Mexicans In the Making of the United States*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012.

Valdés, Dennis Nodín. *Organized Agriculture and the Labor Movement before the UFW: Puerto Rico, Hawaii, California*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011.

Valerio-Jiménez, Omar S. *River of Hope: Forging Identity and Nation In the Rio Grande Borderlands*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013.

Vargas, Zaragosa. Citizens, "Immigrants, and Foreign Wage Workers: The Chicano Labor Refrain in U.S. Labor Historiography." 1997.

_____. *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers In Twentieth Century America*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005.

———. *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917–1933*. University of California Press. 1993.

Weber, Devra. *Dark Sweat, White Gold: California Farm Workers, Cotton, and the New Deal*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

Williams, Carol. *Indigenous Women and Work: From Labor to Activism*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012.

Wilson, Diana. "Wage-Labor Migration and Class in Jalisco and the United States."

Latin American Perspectives, Vol. 31, No. 5, Migration and Identities: A Class-Based Approach (Sep., 2004), pp. 100–117.

Young, Phoebe S. K. *California Vieja: Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

Yu, Renqiu. *To Save China, to Save Ourselves: The Chinese Hand Laundry Alliance of New York.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992.

Zamora, Emilio. *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas. College Station*: Texas A&M University Press, 1993.

Zavella, Patricia. *Women's Work & Chicano Families: Cannery Workers of the Santa Clara Valley*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987.

———.*I'm Neither Here nor There: Mexicans' Quotidian Struggles with Migration and Poverty.* Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 2011.