

Raven Lidman (a.k.a. Candi Clarke) 1967–1968

My time with the UFW lasted from June of 1967 to August of 1968, and is divided into four very different experiences: Lamont pre-Giumarra; Lamont post-Giumarra; the Toronto boycott; and the New York boycott.

As I reflect back on the year I have four insights:

1. The UFW manifested an abiding belief in the strength of an appeal to justice and peace.
2. Still, 35 years later farmworkers are denied the basic rights of labor.
3. I have a great appreciation for the demands Cesar and Dolores and really everyone placed on themselves and on one another and how, as a result, we were able to work so hard and so effectively.
4. I worked with an incredibly diverse group of people.

Lamont: Pre-Table Grape Strike

I remember the day I arrived in Delano in the summer of 1967. I walked into Filipino Hall. (I did not anticipate Filipinos and had a lot to learn about the labor movement.) Tim Ryan (I think) was teaching a small group to play the recorder. (I later joined the group and still have my tenor recorder.) It was almost dinnertime. I ate my first burrito and rice noodles.

The hall filled fast with families: teens, babies, grandparents; volunteers; and single Filipino men. El Teatro Campesino and the San Francisco Mime Troupe performed. This was theater given as a gift to the audience. And this was the tip of the iceberg of the support network the farmworkers created for themselves. Food, art, community. There was a health clinic, a credit union, and housing.

I spoke some Spanish. I began by working in the Lamont office in the UFW service center to assist the union members under the DiGiorgio contract. As I recall, I had two major responsibilities: assisting members with Welfare, housing, and collection issues, and selling tires and auto parts. My ineptitude with the auto stuff was apparent and that part of the job passed on to someone who knew something. The short-term volunteers, like me and my friend Joan Landes, who worked with Jerry Cohen, played a background and supportive role.

Marshall Ganz and Mack Lyons ran the office. Maria was the receptionist-secretary. Judy and Michael Gilliam were already long-time volunteers. We three lived in the house of Adelina in Arvin. Juan hung around lots, and I think he later married Maria.

The space we worked in was a somewhat carved-up warehouse-type building for a former printing operation. At one point I was asked to clean the place up a bit. I found old *El Malcriados*, the UFW weekly magazine with news, satire, and brilliant cartoons. I made four copies. I left three for the union and kept one set. Recently, I donated my set to the library of the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University.

Lamont: Post-Table Grape Strike

Things changed radically once the strike against Giumarra started. It began with meetings in Delano. Cesar Chavez and Fred Ross led those meetings. They reported on the organizers who actually went and spoke with the farmworkers at Giumarra. They had gone through the process of collecting signed cards and asking for an election, which Giumarra had rejected.

Later the meetings were in the big room in the Lamont office. They were just before daybreak. We welcomed strikers and were divided up to go to various fields to try to stop workers from crossing the picket lines and to encourage those who did cross to leave the fields and join the strike.

Then many of us would go back to the day's work. In the evening there would be gatherings, often led by Cesar, Dolores Huerta, Rev. Jim Drake, Larry Itliong, and others.

The locations of the pickets expanded from Giumarra to the other table grape growers in the area. These growers were lending their labels to Giumarra. By August the strike had spread to the whole industry and the talk turned to boycott, a strategy that had worked against Schenley and Almaden in the past.

Toronto Boycott

Individuals were leaving for Los Angeles, Boston, and Chicago. In mid-September I was sent to Toronto to carry on the boycott activities begun there by Marianne Means. No longer was I supporting someone else. I was the sole representative. Boycott coordinators are organizers of a different sort. We worked with unions, churches, and civic groups. (Today I teach at Seattle University, a Jesuit university. The rector of the SU Jesuit community is Peter Ely, S.J. He was in Toronto at that time and helped out on the boycott.) My car was from the UAW; my housing was provided at first by a wonderful woman, Marjeleena Repo, and then from the hotel workers' union. My office was in space provided by the Office and Professional Employees International Union on Spadina Avenue near the Portuguese market. My job was to stop grapes from coming into Toronto in any way I could and build support for the union.

Kovacevich, Sabich, still trip off the tongue. It was almost a game going to the wholesale market in the morning in Toronto. They were checking to see if I was onto the latest switch. The union "grapevine" was fast, but it seemed to me that the wholesalers were always one step ahead. Not like the chain stores. Their turnover was slower and they might have labels a week old. We could mount some interesting actions.

My schedule was to get up early and go to the wholesale market. Then I was off to check the fruit section of the chains and the small fruit stores in the neighborhoods of Toronto. I spoke at any gatherings that would have me. I tried to raise money for the union and create

a consumer boycott. At the same time I worked with leaders in the retail clerks' and meatcutters' unions to put pressure on their employers. I also tried to get press coverage of the story of the needs of farmworkers, or a consumer picket line.

New York Boycott

Sometime in December, the union leadership decided to bring all the boycott coordinators together to New York City. The individual responsibility of the earlier boycott organization was exhilarating. But it was great to be back within the community of the union family. We lived in the dorms of the Seafarers International Union in Brooklyn. I think Dolores and Jim Drake ran the operation until about May or June when the group dispersed again. A smaller group of about six stayed behind. Fran Ryan was then put in charge of the office.

Initially, we numbered at least 50. Maybe more. We went to Hunts Point and Canal Street wholesale markets in the morning, then picketed grocery stores during the day and called to make appointments to speak, and went to meetings in the evening.

I was assigned the ILGWU, ACWU, the dry cleaners' union, the SIEU, and Jewish organizations. I once got the dry cleaners' union to donate all of the unclaimed clothing to the union. But I had them drop it off first at the seafarers' hall so that the boycott workers could have some "new" clothes. The clothing filled an entire big meeting room and weighed too much. It had to be removed very quickly.

We went with Dolores or Cesar to fundraising events. I remember going to a party at Gloria Steinem's office and one on Fire Island. Such diverse worlds we worked in. Sometimes after going to one of these posh parties, Antonia Salgado and I would picket from under the Westside Highway near the Canal Street offloading market from 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. I never would do that now, but union drivers and others always looked out for us.

This was the spring of 1968. There was a sense of hope. The UFW had natural allies in the antiwar movement and in the civil rights movement. Bobby Kennedy was running for president and was a supporter of the UFW.

But it was a time of tragedy. When Martin Luther King was assassinated, we went to different black churches to mourn. Since he had been working on a union campaign in Memphis, the strong union community in New York sent planeloads of union supporters to the funeral march. We were invited. And then came the killing of Kennedy. Cesar was a pallbearer and we went to the funeral mass. As I write now, I realize how discouraged I became by all these tragedies.

Sometime in May or June, we went to Gracie Mansion. I think that was when Mayor Lindsay announced that New York would be grape-free. I seem to remember someone telling me about another set of meetings or negotiations where all of the unions met with the retail chains. At earlier meetings, the Teamsters sat apart from the other unions. Finally

at the last meeting the Teamsters sat with the unions. That meant no more grapes would be trucked across a picket line. The boycott succeeded in New York. But it took much longer to get a contract with the industry.

I had gone to Delano straight out of college expecting to work a few months in the summer of 1967 and stayed through August of 1968. After a series of twists and turns, I became a lawyer in the Northwest. I worked at Legal Services doing the kind of work I began in Lamont, the same kind of work Gary Bellows at California Rural Legal Assistance was doing at that time in the San Joaquin Valley. Through Evergreen State College, I met Jose Gomez, who worked for many years with the union much later than I. I have seen Dolores Huerta twice, once at Evergreen in the late 1980s and recently in Seattle. She is an enduring inspiration, as are so many of the figures in this incredible organization.

My work has not, until recently, involved farmworker issues. However, this spring the International Human Rights Clinic where I teach will work with Becky Smith of the National Employment Law Project. She wrote and argued, with others, an amicus brief in support of Mexico's successful petition to the Inter-American Court. The court ruled that all members of the OAS, including the United States, must respect the human rights of aliens, including illegal aliens, and not discriminate against migrants regarding workplace conditions and remedies. Now our paths have recrossed and I hope I can be of service.