

“The Union of Their Dreams:
Power, Hope, and Struggle in Cesar Chavez’s Farm Worker Movement.”
By Miriam Pawel. Bloomsbury Press 2009.

Commentary

By LeRoy Chatfield, Founder/Director
Farmworker Movement Documentation Project

I recommend and encourage those interested in Cesar Chavez and his farmworker movement to read Miriam Pawel’s book, “The Union of Their Dreams.” It is well-written, interesting, informative, and provides a context to understand one of the most tumultuous and gut-wrenching times of the movement.

Using the stories of eight former United Farm Worker (UFW) volunteers – Chris Hartmire, Eliseo Medina, Jerry Cohen, Ellen Eggers, Sandy Nathan, Gretchen Laue, Sabino Lopez and Mario Bustamante – the author narrates the chronology of the movement from 1965 to 1989 more or less in a summary fashion with many historical milestones of the movement disposed of in a few paragraphs or a page and a half. The exception are the years 1975-1981 – 50% of the book – which are covered in far more detail, but still using the stories of the selected volunteers to weave it together.

Of course, not all volunteers are equal. Far and away, this book is about Chris Hartmire, the director of the National Farm Worker Ministry, and his sometimes conflicted, but strongly held belief, that church and religious leaders should be an integral part of the farmworker movement for social justice by standing with, defending, promoting, and always being responsive to the leadership that is spearheading and organizing the struggle.

The book is about Eliseo Medina, a teenage Delano farmworker who was instinctively swept up into the movement, took full advantage of the opportunities presented to learn how to organize, speak in front of audiences, and provide inspirational leadership, not only for farmworkers, but for people in urban areas who wanted to work fulltime in the movement and/or support it in a variety of other ways such as the grape boycott.

And the book is about Jerry Cohen, the young rumpel, irreverent, whip-smart, crusading attorney who learned how to become a consigliere to Cesar Chavez and his farmworker movement.

The remaining volunteers have important (and interesting) stories that serve the author’s purposes, but they are not featured nearly as much as the “Big 3”.

Despite the readability of the book and the stories of the former volunteers, many readers will tire as they try to navigate the rip tides of insider union politics, and read about the inevitable clashes regarding mission and purpose and how to achieve it, the adjustments the organization desperately needed to be make to cope with the advent of the newly minted

California farm labor law, and whether to change the union volunteer system to that of paid staff, and many other related issues. Nitty-gritty stuff with no easy answers, strong willed people understaffed and overworked, and no one-size-fits-all solution makes for a lot of frustration.

You can appreciate that any book about a 31-year movement - 50 % of it devoted to a five year period - will have its fair share of shortcomings and inaccuracies. Some of these will be pointed out during the course of this commentary.

1. Pg xi – *“The history of the United Farm Workers union begins and ends with Cesar Chavez, who had the audacity to single-handedly challenge California’s most powerful industry, and the will to keep fighting for three decades. By the time he (Cesar Chavez) died in 1993, he stood alone again.”*

Not quite. In 1962 when Cesar Chavez decided to live a life of voluntary poverty to be free to fight for social justice for farmworkers, he was joined by his wife, Helen, and their children. Without her full support and agreement, he would have been stymied, and without the help of his eight children, he could not have leafleted farmworker barrios the length and breadth of the Central Valley to broadcast his message. In addition, he had a handful of dedicated disciples and while they did not work with him full time during the first year of his organizing campaign, they believed in what he was doing, supported his dream, and helped out part time.

When he died in 1993, he was not alone, nor was he a tragic figure as the author seems to imply. His union was in place governed by its duly elected executive board, the movement’s charitable organizations were hard at work assisting farmworkers, 40,000 people attended his funeral, and Helen Chavez was still at his side, along with his children and grandchildren.

2. Pg xii – *“Almost all previous writings about Cesar Chavez have hewed close to his version of history. This book offers a reevaluation of his (Cesar Chavez) legacy. His (Cesar Chavez) ultimate shortcomings as a labor leader do not diminish his accomplishments or his influence. The real story may be less neat than the hagiography but no less impressive.”*

Webster’s defines hagiography as “idealizing or idolizing biography”. To what does the author refer when she states: almost all previous writings? The writings shown in the bibliography of this book are: John Gregory Dunne (1967); Jennifer Gordon (2005); Jacques Levy (1975); Peter Matthiessen (1969); Miriam Pawel (LA Times 2006); Fred Ross (1989); and Ron Taylor (1975). Presumably the author exempts her own writing from the charge of hagiography, but what about the others on the author’s list? And what are we think about other farmworker movement authors who were not listed? Joan London and Henry Anderson (1970); Mark Day (1971); Sam Kushner (1975); Dick Meister and Anne Loftis (1977); Pat Hoffman (1987); Richard Griswold del Castillo and Richard A. Garcia (1995); Susan Ferriss and Ricardo Sandoval (1997); A.V. Krebs (2003) and Randy Shaw (2008)? Which of these would the author dismiss as hagiographers? Without additional information, how is the reader to evaluate the author’s sweeping cocksure judgment?

3. Pg xii – *“Many books could and should be written about the history of the United Farm Workers. Many significant events and players beyond the scope of this book merit deep examination.”*

I agree. Pawel’s book takes a major step – long overdue, in my opinion – in discussing the role of Chris Hartmire and his National Farm Worker Ministry in the creation and development of the

farmworker movement. Much more needs to be done. The use of the worker-priest model is significant in the history of U.S. religion and needs to be examined and evaluated. And while this book highlights and discusses Hartmire's view about the role of religious leaders and the churches in a movement for social justice, it does not discuss the impact of the farmworker movement on religious leaders and their churches. Pat Hoffman's 1985 thirty-three oral history interviews on this subject would provide a good jumping off point for such a discussion.

In the course of my work with the Farmworker Movement Documentation Project, I have come to understand and appreciate the magnitude of the role Jim Drake played in the farmworker movement. Long before the 1965 Delano Strike and independent of Chavez, Drake had founded his own farmworker association in Porterville, and after merging his organization with Chavez's National Farm Worker Association in 1965, he was a major force in organizing strike support activities and managing the day-to-day work of the strike headquarters. Jim Drake was the initial founder of the farmworker boycott – first against Schenley Industries, then the DiGiorgio Corporation. Though he had a booming voice, Jim Drake was mostly quiet and thoughtful but possessed a powerful intellect, was well-read, exhibited keen insight, and was fiercely loyal to Chavez. Years later, he left the movement and organized Mississippi woodcutters and there his work was equally impressive – and inspirational.

A book about Dolores Huerta begs to be written. The same goes for Gilbert Padilla, especially his years with the Community Services Organization (CSO), his pre-Delano Strike organizing years in the Porterville area, his UFW work in Texas and elsewhere. Padilla was suave, a smart operator, and a very nice person. (I have received reports that Luis Valdez is writing a book, I hope so. Luis made a major impact on the development of the farmworker movement and far beyond that.)

Pawel's book does a good job in giving readers a look at the work of Jerry Cohen's UFW legal department, but it is the tip of that iceberg. Jerry Cohen's use of the law to mount an effective proactive offense on behalf of social justice for farmworkers is, in my view, a legal feat unparalleled in this country. Aside from Pawel's initial look, the national impact of the Cohen's work has not been examined and evaluated – and needs to be!

The development of health clinics as an integral part of Cesar Chavez's farmworker movement cries out for examination and evaluation – Delano, Selma, Salinas, Coachella, Calexico, Mexicali, etc. These clinics – in late 1960s and the 1970s – fully staffed by volunteer medical professionals were light years ahead in their thinking about how to provide outpatient health care, preventive medicine and medical advocacy for poor people. By the end of the 1970s they had mostly been closed down, which is regrettable, but also part of that story.

The use of photographs, graphics, fine art, cartoons, newspapers, magazines and music to carry the message of the farmworker movement is another subject for a book. Cesar Chavez developed his own graphic arts studio and print shop, which he called "Taller Grafico" and built his own mail house. None of this was accidental or happenstance, it was part and parcel of the founder's vision and quite remarkable.

How many more years (or decades) must pass before a definitive book about Filipino farmworkers is written? One of the most shameful chapters in our country's history - the importation and exploitation of Filipinos by American agribusiness - needs to be aired and repaired. The influence of the "Filipino Brothers" on Cesar Chavez and his farmworker movement and its volunteers was subtle, but enormous, and it needs to be fleshed out.

Finally, a book difficult to write – perhaps impossible - is about the farmworker boycott. Pawel writes (pg 3): “At the height of the boycott, seventeen million Americans stopped eating grapes so that farmworkers in California could win better wages and working conditions.” The stories of Eliseo Medina, Ellen Eggers and Gretchen Laue recounted in “The Union of Their Dreams” gives us a good look at the boycott in action, but the book I advocate deals with answering this question: how was it possible for a group of fulltime volunteers, probably less than a 1000, to create enough moral leverage that 17 million people were moved to honor their request not to buy grapes? How did this happen? How was it planned, organized, implemented and financed? And why, for goodness sakes, would 1000 volunteers be willing to leave everything, set their “regular” lives aside or put them on hold, and want to do this? This was an amazing time in our country’s history and the farmworker boycott is a significant part of that story.

If you are counting, that is nine books so far. They will not all be written, but perhaps the publication of “The Union of Their Dreams” with its different approach to the farmworker movement story will provide the spark for a few of them. I hope so.

4. Pg 2 – *“Today they (former UFW volunteers) are union leaders, community activists, labor lawyers, teachers, judges, environmentalists . . . In Cesar Chavez’s union they met husbands, wives and best friends. They (UFW volunteers) found work that had meaning, and discovered hope, betrayal, and disillusionment.”*

Finding meaningful work, discovering hope, betrayal and disillusionment is by no means limited to joining the UFW. I daresay joining the Peace Corps, a presidential campaign, or becoming a member of a Catholic religious teaching order might well lead to the same discovery. As I think about it, so might the institution of marriage.

5. Pg 13 – *“Wide-eyed, he (Eliseo Medina) watched in the fall of 1965 as they flocked to Delano – college dropouts, families, nuns, Communists, Protestants, Jews, long-haired guys, and Berkeley girls.”*

This is a very clever sentence and I hate to mess with it, but it is not accurate. Nuns did not flock to Delano in the fall of 1965 for the simple reason they had not yet been emancipated by Vatican Council II. Nuns did participate from time to time in the 1966 March to Sacramento, but they came only for a day at a time and with a companion or in a religious community group.

6. Pg 16 – *“The highlight of his (Eliseo Medina) was always the Friday night union meeting, timed so that weekend visitors could take part . . . Eliseo and his mother were among the contingent of faithful Delano supporters, but the audience, like the picket lines, had more students and volunteers than farm workers.”*

Not accurate. I attended Friday night meetings; I was on picket lines as were many others who read this sentence. The Farmworker Documentation Project has published dozens of photos of Friday night meetings and hundreds of photos of picket lines in 1965 and 1966 and there were never more students and volunteers than farmworkers. I understand the general point the author wishes to make, but this statement is misleading.

7. Pg 17 – *“Chris (Hartmire) first aimed his earnest entreaties at religious supporters. . . He cloaked the cause in an unambiguous appeal to Christian conscience. ‘there is no relevant middle ground on a moral issue that is as clear as the farm workers’ fight for opportunity and self-respect . . . Silence and neutrality inevitable become the allies of the established, unjust way of doing things.”*

Call me picky, but how was it possible for Hartmire to cloak the cause in an unambiguous appeal to Christian conscience? Instead of “cloak” should the word be “framed”? Perhaps I have missed the point altogether.

8. Pg 17 – *“The movement lacked support from the Catholic Church; the Protestant clergy would have to suffice as symbols of the workers’ religious allies.”*

The fact is the movement at this very early stage lacked support from both the Catholic Church and the Protestant Church, but it did enjoy the support of individual Catholic clergy (Father Keith Kenny, Father Eugene Boyle, Father James Vizzard, Father Alan McCoy, etc.) and - thank God! - it enjoyed the fulltime support of individual Protestant clergy (Jim Drake, David Havens, Phil Farnham, Chris Hartmire, Gene Boutilier, etc.)

9. Pg 42 – *“After he (Cesar Chavez) left the meeting where he explained his fast, Chavez walked three miles from Filipino Hall to a scrubby lot on the western edge known as Forty Acres. The union had acquired the undesirable plot, between a dump and some radio towers, for its new headquarters.”*

Beware the harsh judgment of the historian 42 years hence. “Scrubby lot”? “Undesirable plot”? Oh my, in 1967 this 40-acre parcel was the pride and joy, the future and the permanence of the farmworker movement. In the course of a few years it would house the coop gas station, the union headquarters, the medical clinic and the retirement center for the aging Filipino Brothers and was the site for the Fast for Nonviolence, the Fast for Life, and the funeral of Cesar Chavez. Purchased for approximately \$5000 – money cobbled together God knows how – Forty Acres must be worth millions today. (“Some radio towers” is the Voice of America and poor people are generally less concerned about owning a piece of property next to a city dump.)

10. Pg 71 – *“A short Mexican wearing a large hat brushed by Sabino and excused himself as he made his way to the front of the room. When he took the podium, Sabino realized he had just had his first encounter with Cesar Chavez.”*

I have no reason to doubt the accuracy of this statement but I have to report that having known Cesar Chavez personally for a decade and having created the Farmworker Movement Documentation Project over a five year period and posted a thousand photos of Cesar Chavez to the Website, I am aware of only two photos with Cesar Chavez wearing a hat – that taken by Cathy Murphy c.1976 at La Paz with Chavez playing gardener for a day while wearing a straw hat and carrying a shovel across his shoulders, and again by Cathy Murphy in 1975 during the Thousand Mile March. (If there are any other photos floating around with Chavez wearing a hat, I would like to publish them on the Website.)

11. Pg 98 – *“So when Proposition 22 qualified for the November ballot, Chavez again relied on Chris (Hartmire) . . . Chris loaned LeRoy Chatfield a couple of tenacious diggers who worked in the farmworker ministry. They produced enough evidence for the union to launch a full-scale campaign to document the extent of fraud.”*

Pg 101 – *“More than 58 percent voted no on Prop 22, and only 24 in favor.”*

These passages show a lack of adequate research on the part of the author. Let the record show: (1) Bonnie Chatfield uncovered the fraud used to qualify Proposition 22; (2) She did not work for the farmworker ministry; and (3) Proposition 22 was defeated 58 percent to 42 percent.

At the risk of self-promotion, if anyone is interested in reading about the 1972 Proposition 22 campaign and the fraud that was uncovered, the use of the fraud issue by then Secretary of State

Jerry Brown to publicly smear the proposition, the creation and use of Human Billboards, and the pre-election selection of LeRoy Chatfield (me) to serve as the UFW scapegoat in the event that Prop 22 was not defeated, you may read about it [here](#).

12. Pg 328 – *“On the program for the funeral service was one of Chavez’s most famous quotes (from 1968 Fast for Nonviolence) . . . ‘The strongest act of manliness is to sacrifice ourselves for others. God help me to be a man’ But the quote the mourners read substituted ‘humanity’ for ‘manliness’ and concluded: ‘To be human is to suffer for others. God help me be human.’ Political correctness trumped truth. Those who inherited his union had learned from Chavez how to rewrite history to suit their needs.”*

Really now, let’s take a deep breath and consider that over the course of two and a half decades, the words used in prayer and liturgy changed dramatically because of the women’s movement. Gender neutral became the norm, not the exception. There is no significant change of meaning in this instance. Truth has not been trumped, the Chavez family has not rewritten history to suit their needs, nor did Cesar Chavez teach them how to do so. The author undermines her credibility with this drive-by journalistic shooting and trivializes her effort to tell the “story of a different set of winners, a significant chapter of American history that deserves to be told in all its complicated glory.”

13. Pg xi – *“In writing the book, I melded two disciplines – history and journalism. The narrative is based largely on primary source materials . . .”*

“The Union of Their Dreams” is 334 pages in length and contains 478 notes – an impressive number to be sure, and prods the reader to make the transition from journalism to the discipline of history. However, I take note that 154 notes – 32% - relate to sources called “private collections” and without any indication whose private collection is involved. My question is: are these private collections generally accessible to the public, and if so, how does the attentive reader access them? Or, are these sources privileged and the reader is expected to rely on the author for her reading and interpretation of these privately held materials? The discipline of history requires peer review and with 32% of the sources held privately, how would this review be accomplished? I am not making a negative inference here, I am simply asking the obvious question.

14. Cesar Chavez’s use of the Game is one of the highlights of Pawel’s book, and she does an excellent job discussing it - she provides her readers with context. After the passage of the new California farm labor law that spawned hundreds of secret ballot union elections involving more than 40,000 farmworkers in just a period of a few months, Cesar Chavez realized he needed to revisit his vision, renew it if necessary, or even alter course.

“ ‘The whole fight’s going to change’, he (Chavez) predicted . . . From now on the fight would center on issues Chavez considered more mundane – contracts, wages, benefits, and grievances” (pg 156) . . . “If they did not expand to embrace poor people in the cities, Chavez warned, the movement would wither” (pg 156). . . “‘The more we win, the weaker we’re going to get,’ Chavez said.” (pg 156) . . . “Workers must be educated about the importance of sacrifice, Chavez said, praising the volunteers who led by example and shamed the workers into understanding. He warned again about the likelihood that future leaders would abandon the union’s commitment to pay its staff only a subsistence pay.”(pg 185) . . . “Farmworkers must understand the importance of sacrifice and the volunteer system before they assumed positions of leadership.” (pg 185) . . . “In the spring of 1976 . . . Chavez focused on building his community at La Paz and on more ambitious plans for communal farms.” (pg 187) . . . “Chavez told the board he had brought them to Home Place

(Synanon) to explain his ideas about community, to introduce the Game, and to solicit input on the future of the union. His unspoken agenda was to force a renewed commitment to the volunteer system and to a movement that offered community and shared sacrifice as psychic rewards for helping the poor.” (pg 203) . . . “There were only two options, Chavez kept saying. They could start paying people and be like a regular union. That was fine, but he would leave. Or they could become a real community. (pg 206) . . . “Chavez declared the board was at an impasse on the question he kept pressing: Pay salaries or form a community.” (pg 208) . . . “Two weeks before his fiftieth birthday, Chavez told his board he felt trapped: tied down by the demands of administering contracts (‘a string around your neck’); frustrated that he could not focus on helping the poor., the senior citizens, the alcoholics, and the prisoners; and frightened by the prospect of the UFW becoming the kind of traditional union he had always disdained. He felt stymied by the challenge of teaching farmworkers to value sacrifice and disgusted by those who expressed no gratitude for their contracts but instead made more demands. (pg 217) . . . “Chavez talked about Winston Churchill, founders of movements and their fates. He could see the signs, that it was time for him to go before he was pushed. He talked about the impact of the landmark state law and reminded Jerry (Cohen) how he had called as soon as it passed, ‘Jerry, this changes the whole ballgame.’ . . . Jerry (Cohen) voiced sympathy. He urged the others to do as Chavez asked, to play the Game, to support his efforts to build community. ‘You trained us well, Cesar,’ Jerry said. ‘There’s a lot of brain power around here. It’s got to be hard for you to deal with the people in this room.’” (pg 221)

Cesar Chavez’s use of the Game was his way of promoting open, honest and frank communication among the union’s leadership to help him – and them - come to grips with whether they were destined to become a labor union or a movement? He opted for movement, and he hoped to convince the leadership to do likewise.

(I saw no mention in Pawel’s book of Chavez’s use of the Game two years prior during the One Thousand Mile March (1975). During that march Chavez and his aides learned the game from Delancey Street members, and starting in San Luis Obispo, they played the game almost daily until the end of the march.)

15. Pg 329 – “. . . *The UFW of the twenty-first century had mastered the art of cashing in on Latino political power. The union leaders excelled at parlaying the memory of Cesar Chavez into millions of dollars in public and private donations . . .*”

This broadside appears in the Epilogue at the very end of the book. Unfortunately it mars for me what otherwise was an enjoyable and informative read about Cesar Chavez and his farmworker movement. I believe the use of this unbridled language damages the author’s credibility as an historian. She abandons her storyline –“this is the story of eight people who joined Cesar Chavez’s crusade” and her use of “primary source materials from libraries, garages, and attics across the country.” Epilogues do not provide authors with free license to impugn others.

And even worse, in my view, the use of such loaded words as . . . “mastered the art of cashing in” “Latino political power” . . . “parlaying the memory” . . . “millions of dollars” shows her contempt for the Chavez family’s fiduciary handling of their father’s legacy.

I have the greatest respect for the Chavez family and what they have accomplished in the 21st Century to honor the legacy of their father. The Chavez family has created more than 5,000 units of affordable housing for low income families and seniors; educational programs beamed out 24 hours-a-day to a daily audience of more than a half million Spanish speaking workers; health programs for

seniors; tutorial programs, Saturday schools and summer schools for thousands of poor children; economic development for rural areas; community service programs for low income residents in California, Arizona, Texas and New Mexico, etc. (For more detail, please refer to the Appendix entitled: “The Chavez Family & the Legacy of Cesar Chavez”. It can be found at the end of my commentary.)

In 1967, I was the founding director of the National Farm Workers Service Center and now in 2009 to read what the NFWSC has accomplished for the community is stunning! I applaud the Chavez family (including the grandchildren) for making this good work possible and encourage them to press on with it. What a fitting legacy for their father and mother who are revered for lives of dedicated service to others - and for all of us who were once a small part of the farmworker movement. Thank you.

This concludes my commentary about Miriam Pawel’s, “The Union of Their Dreams”. This commentary will be published on the Website of the Farmworker Movement Documentation Project – www.farmworkermovement.us – in the section entitled: OTHER ESSAYS.

If readers have any written comments to make about Miriam Pawel’s book, I would be pleased to publish them along with my own.

* * * * *

APPENDIX

THE CHAVEZ FAMILY & THE LEGACY OF CESAR CHAVEZ 2000 - 2009

Affordable Housing for Low Income Families & Seniors – (1) The National Farm Workers Service Center (NFWSC) has completed over 300 single family homes for sale to low-income households and over 4000 affordable multi-family units at more than 28 separate sites. Through its 2003 Housing Fund Strategic Plan NFWSC is committed to serving 25,000 households within the next ten years. (2) NFWSC has developed housing in several underserved, rural communities. In Arizona these include El Mirage and Somerton. Examples in California are Parlier, Delano, Shafter, Hollister and Gilroy, among others. In New Mexico NFWSC is developing and co-managing 112 units at three properties in rural communities in the southern part of the state, and in Texas in rural areas such as Pharr, Edcouch and Mercedes. (3) For seniors, NFWSC has completed three separate properties, including a 61-unit development in Glendale, AZ. The other properties are an 80-unit complex in Delano, CA and a 69-unit development in Avondale, AZ.

Economic Development for Rural Areas - NFWSC has developed two retail shopping centers in California with a goal of providing essential retail services for neighborhood residents, as well as affordable facilities for minority-owned small businesses.

Community Services - For over 10 years, NFWSC has brought critical social services to the residents of its multi-family developments by developing two model programs to be replicated throughout all the NFWSC affordable multi-family housing complexes – the *Senior Spirit, Mind &*

Body Program and the *Si Se Puede! Learning Centers*, an on-site community center that operates after-school and summer programs for children and youth that reside on the properties.

Senior Spirit, Mind & Body Program

Launched in 2003 at an NFWSC property in Delano, California, the original focus of Senior Spirit, Mind and Body (then called La Otra Juventud) was to organize residents into a self-empowering advocacy and planning committee based on the promotora concept. This committee, self-named the Comité de Abuelas (committee of grandmothers), grew to be very proactive in outlining specific needs and in planning health-focused programming and events as well as community building events. Other activities have included an annual health fair, health education presentations, recreational events and participation on the Spanish language “Tu Salud” radio show broadcast by Radio Campesina. Additionally, a full on-site computer center and technology classes provide access to a world of resources, including online banking and contacts with family members through email. The program currently serves 120 low-income retired farm workers, spouses and other individuals and is funded by the California Wellness Foundation.

The Si Se Puede! Learning Center Program

The Si Se Puede! Learning Center Program offers youths, teens, and families the opportunities to empower themselves to learn, achieve, and grow. It is NFWSC’s commitment through the program to provide quality services that emphasize education, leadership, and life skill throughout every NFWSC affordable housing community. Program components include:

- Homework assistance
- Literacy and Math Curricula
- Project-based learning strategies
- Access to Technology and Technology Education
- Boys and Girls Leadership Groups
- Life Skills
- Service learning projects

NFWSC staffs the programs in partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNS). CNS has awarded NFWSC a contract to place 30 AmeriCorps and 21 AmeriCorps*VISTA members at the properties to help develop and execute the programming. NFWSC also recruits up to 25 Summer Associates to assist with special summer programming at the family properties. In addition, a full-time Resident Services Coordinator (RSC) is employed at the properties for seniors. All on-site staff is supported by the Community Services Director, a full-time Volunteer Services Coordinator, and other administrative staff.

Cesar Chavez Education Institute

NFWSC initiated an educational program in 2004 to provide supplemental educational services for students in largely farm worker communities throughout California. Working after school, on weekends and during summer, hundreds of tutors are working with thousands of children in communities whose names are familiar throughout the Farm Worker Movement: Delano, Wasco, Parlier, Earlimart, Coalinga, Huron, Avenal, Kettleman City, Tulare, Visalia, Richgrove, Arvin,

Lamont, Shafter, Gilroy, Hollister, Watsonville, Salinas, Greenfield, Calexico, Coachella, among others. Over five thousand families in these communities have benefited from the program.

The Cesar Chavez Education Institute (CCEI) operates after-school tutoring programs, Saturday Academies for students who need additional concentrated time learning to read, summer school for students who did not meet their educational goals during the regular school year, and high school students in need of credit recovery opportunities.

Since its inception in 2004, CCEI has helped 325 high school students graduate from high school through summer school programs; it has helped 3,600 students in elementary schools reach their reading grade level standards-based goals; it has helped 2,200 middle school students pass their 8th grade state algebra examination; and it has taught parents in farm worker communities to advocate for their children in schools that all too often do not respect the voices of the working poor.

The work of the institute will expand this year to include more communities such as Fresno, Madera, Modesto, and at least 25 more school districts than previously served. CCEI will start the program in Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, and in the next twelve to eighteen months will serve thousands of additional families with a goal of educationally empowering a million students in the next ten years.

Radio Campesina

Background: NFWSC's popular Radio Campesina network extends the mission and promise of educational radio to an underserved, largely immigrant population and serves as an extremely effective, targeted outreach mechanism.

Audience: Programs target recent immigrants from Mexico and Central and South America between the ages of 25 and 49, an audience that has traditionally eluded educational ("public") radio. Radio Campesina reaches more than 500,000 Spanish-speaking listeners every day and consistently rates higher than both English and Spanish-language commercial stations in its markets – indeed, the highest-rated Spanish-language station in the Phoenix area.

Approach: The key to Radio Campesina's success is a format that attracts listeners through popular regional Mexican music, lively interactive talk shows, community mobilization on key relevant issues, on-air promotions, and community events that draw hundreds of thousands of people per year. Educational programming comprises more than 50% of the on-air broadcasting hours and is further supported by extensive, station-driven community events and outreach in each market area.

Radio Campesina has received public praise from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for its unique mixture of public education and accessible popular music.

Programming: Educational programming focuses on issues relevant to the daily lives of our listeners such as immigration, education, health, finance, women's issues, local politics, employment, and more.

1. "Punto de Vista" is broadcast over the network into all markets, includes news updates and a different guest interview each day with call-in and write-in input from listeners. The show has a schedule of weekly topics – immigration, women's issues, health, education, and finance.

2. “Despierta Ya Campesino,” is broadcast over the network into all markets except Phoenix, and focuses on community organizing around important issues to the farm workers who mostly listen on their way to work and call in to ask questions. Each Thursday, programming focuses on immigration issues and features a guest attorney.

3. “Escucha y ponte Trucha,” is broadcast in the Phoenix area only, is also a call-in show that focuses on political issues particularly of importance to the Latino community in Arizona. Regularly scheduled recurring guests include an immigration attorney and representatives from the City of Phoenix police and fire departments among others.

Public Service Announcements and Live Mentions: Radio Campesina educates the public through PSAs and on-air mentions, not only during our talk shows but also during music programming. It runs PSAs 24 hours per day, including during prime time hours to ensure that the messages reach the audience and up to 30 PSAs each day, produced by or for our partner nonprofit and government groups.

Public Education Campaigns and Themes

In addition to the daily thematic programming, Radio Campesina runs public education “campaigns” (generally week or month-long) that emphasize important and timely topics.

Health and Safety: Throughout the year, Radio Campesina partners with local health departments, police departments, coalitions, clinics, and others to promote prevention of illness and injury, screenings, vaccinations, and more and also emphasizes risk factors and prevention of diabetes, prostate cancer, and HIV.

Radio Campesina also participates in numerous health-related events throughout the year out of all stations and works with the fire and police departments in both markets throughout the year on car seats, drowning prevention campaigns, and gang prevention.

Education: In the last year, the programs have particularly focused on parent involvement with schools PTAs and school-related programs. During 2008, Radio Campesina focused programming and community outreach around combating the epidemic high school dropout rate among Latinos through PSAs and more.

Civic Engagement and Voter Education: During election seasons, Radio Campesina is intensely involved in turning out voters for the primary and general elections as well as educating non-citizens to encourage the citizens in their lives (including grown children born in the U.S.) to vote. All candidates and their representatives are invited to speak or debate on-air.

Radio Campesina emphasizes civic engagement and volunteerism throughout the month of March, in celebration of Cesar Chavez Day and Hispanic Heritage month.

Worker’s Rights: In partnership a range of local and national groups, Radio Campesina provides information and mobilization of listeners on urgent issues for workers and their families, including in the farming, construction, and other trades. For instance, in 2008, following the well-publicized issue of heat-related death and illness among farm workers in the San Joaquin Valley, the radio ran an educational campaign on the rights of workers to shade, water, rest, and medical attention, if needed, as well as how to identify warning signs.

Financial Literacy: In the last year, Radio Campesina began addressing the serious financial crisis, including publicizing foreclosure preventions programs and workshops, such as No Home Owner Left Behind.

Cultural Programming: Throughout the year, Radio Campesina plays a leadership role in major cultural events, including Cinco de Mayo and Mexican Independence Day festivals – two-day events that celebrate Latino/Chicano history and culture in partnership with consulates, community groups, and many others.

Oaxacan Community Outreach: Radio Campesina has been working closely with the United Farm Workers and other partners to promote social integration for the sizable and growing indigenous communities of Oaxaca, Mexico – which highly populate the central California Valley and speak Triqui and Mixteco languages not Spanish. Radio Campesina has programmed specifically for this audience and looks forward to doing more to bring communication services to this community.

Radio Campesina has created a communications network that serves as the voice of the voiceless and provides a unique media platform that communicates to, with, and for the working poor and their advocates in the community.

The National Chavez Center at Nuestra Señora Reina de La Paz

Established in 2004 by the Cesar E. Chavez Foundation, the National Chavez Center at Nuestra Señora Reina de La Paz is the official, living memorial dedicated to the advancement of the legacy of Cesar Chavez.

The Chavez Memorial

As the final resting place of Cesar Chavez, the Chavez Memorial honors his spiritual, cultural, and agricultural heritage. The memorial features mission-style architecture with perimeter walls enclosing a place of reflection and contemplation.

The Visitor Center

The Visitor Center, built around the renovated wood-frame building where Cesar Chavez worked from 1971 to 1993, utilizes diverse communications media, including films and exhibits, to educate people about Cesar's life, work, and values and his philosophy and methods of nonviolent conflict-reconciliation and social change.

* * * *

