

The UFW: Songs and Stories
Sung and Told by UFW Volunteers



"This song is Copyrighted in U.S., under Seal of Copyright # 154085, for a period of 28 years, and anybody caught singin' it without our permission, will be mighty good friends of ourn, cause we don't give a dern. Publish it. Write it. Sing it. Swing to it. Yodel it. We wrote it, that's all we wanted to do." *Woody Guthrie*

Table of Contents

Introduction	Jan Peterson Terry Scott
1. De Colores <i>Comments by:</i>	Kathy Murguía Abby Rivera
2. El Picket Sign <i>Comments by:</i>	Lorraine Agtang-Greer Abby Rivera Agustín Lira
3. Pastures of Plenty <i>Comments by:</i>	Anamaría De La Cruz
4. Solidarity <i>Comments by:</i>	Lupe Murguía Francisco Garcia Jerry Kay Agustín Lira
5. Deportee <i>Comments by:</i>	Terry Scott Sharon Delugach
6. La Peregrinacion <i>Comments by:</i>	Agustín Lira
7. Roll The Union On <i>Comments by:</i>	Steve Jones
8. Huelga en General <i>Comments by:</i>	Lorraine Agtang-Greer Agustín Lira
9. Brown-Eyed Children of the Sun <i>Comments by:</i>	Joaquin Murguía
10. We Shall Not Be Moved <i>Comments by:</i>	Kathy Murguía

11. **Despedida de César Chávez**
Comments by: Francisco Garcia

12. **Brand New Life**
Comments by: Terry Scott

13. **We Shall Overcome**
Comments by: Gene Boutilier
Agustín Lira

14. *Comments by:* John Steinbeck

Introduction

Researching the history of the origins of many of these songs was quite a revelation. I was astounded to discover while many songs were created by the *Teatro Campesino* and others specifically during the UFW strikes, some of the songs had a much older history. How was it possible that a Civil War marching song became the anthem of the labor movement, fifty years later? That songs sung in church ended up on the picket line? That gospels from the deep South ended up in Spanish in the Southwest? As you read below, you will discover these connections.

I think, as well, you will see how for many of us, these songs were the life-blood of our work with the Farm Workers' Union. There were many times on the UFW picket lines that songs were all that we had. When the growers lined up with their goons and their guns, with their arsenal of political and economic and social power that they wielded without compunction; with their squad cars and their pick-up trucks, and their tractor-trailers and the scabs that they had brought from far away; there we stood: we sang. We sang when we were sad or discouraged; we sang when we were angry or defiant; we sang when we were proud; we sang to lift our spirits.

And we carried that singing with us everywhere: to meeting halls, to cities, to other countries, even to other continents. Many of these songs have traveled--just as farm workers have always done--from one generation to another; from one race to another; from one time to another; from one worker to another—to weave themselves into a single thread of truth; a soaring of the human spirit—a laughing, irreverent, spirit, at times—determined, in the face of the greatest odds, to take a stand for human dignity.

So now, once again, after all of these years, we have come together to sing again, and to celebrate those times and the songs that were born during the farm worker struggle.

Jan Peterson

This recording project has been tremendously fun and uplifting. It's been a real treat to rediscover these songs, most of which I haven't sung since leaving the UFW 17 years ago. The amazing thing to me is how powerfully they still resonate—there is so much emotion and spirit and humor in them! Sadly, a lot of what you hear on the radio today values form over substance. Music has gotten away from being about real people; that's the great thing about Woody Guthrie songs, and songs inspired by hard times. You can *feel* the difference in your gut: they are coming out of a real experience, and although there are still musicians currently writing songs with that frame of reference, their music is, for the most part, flying under the radar of the general population. But these songs, and the larger tradition of expressing the heartfelt ups and downs of life through music, are so important. Making this CD was truly a labor of love, and I feel very happy that we've been able to contribute to keeping this music alive for the generations yet to come.

There is an undeniable bond that exists between those of us who were part of the UFW family. It's been wonderful to see old friends again and to meet some new folks who shared the experience of working for the union but whom I did not know personally before this project. We all love the songs, and coming together to record this CD has reminded me in so many ways of my days in the Union. Remember those assignments where we literally had no idea how we were going pull it off? Huge undertakings with seemingly impossible deadlines where we “flew by the seat of our pants” since we were making it up as we went along? Recording this CD had a lot of those same challenging aspects—most of the folks who participated had no experience recording music before. We came together over 4 weekends—people traveled from all over the state and jumped

right into this project with the same creativity, enthusiasm, and “Si Se Puede” attitude that characterized so many of the UFW organizing campaigns. And, I hope that we’ve managed to adequately capture the spirit of these songs. We definitely shared a lot of laughter and had a good time recording them.

With much love and thanks to all who contributed their talents to this CD, and to LeRoy Chatfield for asking us to do it! Viva la Causa!

Terry Scott

De Colores

Kathy Murguía: I remember singing *De Colores* at the weekly Friday night strike meetings that were held in Delano before the merger of the NFWA with AWOC (1965/66). They were held at a Church Hall we rented. It was called Negrito Hall by the Baptist Church, located on the west side of Delano where the African-American community lived.

Cesar ran the meeting asking for reports from the picket captains. He would make comments and provide information about outside support, which always brought a rousing applause. If there was an outside supporter, they would be introduced. There would be a report on donations, which Jim Drake was in charge of. I kept minutes in a grey ledger book that also was used for marking off the \$5 weekly stipend that was distributed at the end of the meeting. Every meeting ended with us joining hands and singing *De Colores*, which enhanced a sense of community, of being connected in a struggle for justice. We continued to sing it in the decades following those early meetings, during Union events and other gatherings, often as a closing. The rooster, the hen, the chicks that sing, the great loves of many colors---these images brought such joy, such pleasure and lastly for those who sang it, such hope.

For me, singing *De Colores* felt powerful. Even today, recalling the smiles and brightness on the faces of the workers as they sang provides a sense of hope. We were part of a Movement, and in small incremental ways, we believed we were changing the course of history, and ending exploitation.

The song's origin: It was first sung, I believe, in the Cursillo Movement, a lay movement in the Catholic Church. The goal of the movement was to spiritually revitalize its members, and began in the 50's. It involved weekend retreats for church members. The notions of social justice and reaching out to others with love were central to the mission. Many of the farm worker families were familiar with the song. While the lyrics don't speak of social justice, it is a song of the season of springtime and beauty, of life and colors---and we were all kinds of different colors. I believe as we sang, our hearts were longing for the beauty that comes with gentle love and justice.

Abby Rivera: I was familiar with *De Colores* as a child but never learned all the words until I was with the Union. We sang it all the time, before, during or after membership or staff meetings, at special events, at funerals, and at memorial services. We always stood, with arms crossed in front---reaching to the right and to the left---to hold hands with someone else.

I grew extremely weary of this song early on until I discovered something uncanny about it. "Here we go again," I would complain to myself many times while making faces. Then we would begin to sing, and after the first few lines my entire demeanor and attitude would change. By the time the song was over, a total transformation of my spirit would occur, making me glad that I had sung it after all. It came to be considered my spiritual cleansing song, because the words reached deep into my soul and took me to another place where things are perfect, in harmony, of like mind and purpose. It is easy to understand why this simple song has survived centuries.

History: *De Colores* symbolizes the spirit of a new beginning. According to writer Chuy Varela of *El Tecolote Magazine*, *De Colores* was brought to the Americas from Spain in the 16th century, and is a traditional song sung throughout the Spanish-speaking world. *De Colores* was adopted as the anthem of the Cursillo movement, a Catholic revivalist

movement that originated in Spain in the 1940s, and moved to the Spanish-speaking Southwest of the U.S. in the late 1950's, beginning in the state of Texas. Founded on the concept of renewing one's faith through weekend retreats, the Cursillista or 'short course' movement eventually spread throughout the United States to the entire Catholic community. The song, *De Colores*, with its uplifting message of peace and hope, symbol of both the Cursillo movement and of traditional Mexican heritage, was a well-known song in the farm worker community for both historic and religious reasons.

El Picket Sign

Lorraine Agtang-Greer: Being on the picket line was the first time that I had ever done anything that was questioning authority. It was the first time that I did anything about farm worker oppression. Oppression was the way we were treated and you accepted it if you wanted to work. My father came here to the United States after WWII. He fought against the bad treatment in his early days, but after having a family, he had to feed and house us so he accepted it, like everyone else. People were just used to being paid low wages, not having any toilets or clean drinking water, and being treated like crap. It had gone on for years and years.

So going on strike and being on the picket line was the first time I said "no more;" it was time for change. For the first time, we were standing up and saying that we had a right to be treated with respect, to have clean water, just to have bathrooms!

I like to sing this song because I worked for Pagarulo, for Pavich, and Radich and Zaninovich.

Abby Rivera: The first time I recall ever hearing it was at the Filipino Hall when Luis Valdez first sang it to us in the early years of the strike. What I recall was how all of us packed in that hall laughed throughout the song. The irreverent images of the song hit home; the Zaninovich Brothers from Delano and the play on words for "bitches" caused us to gasp delightedly; the great jab at the scabs that sold themselves cheaply for frijoles/beans (or "for peanuts" would be the English equivalent); and how proud we felt not to be in that group of slugs. It reminded us that the strike was on its third year (later it was changed to seven, then more years) and how one grower was now a grandfather and there you could still find us picketing. How proud we felt of what we were doing at the mention of Juarez and Zapata!

What many may not know is that all these lyrics were familiar to us who were in the daily strike lines in the grape fields. "Sálganse, no se vendan por frijoles." Sálgansen de aquí con estos "Sanna-Vitches", mira que al rancho ya le están saliendo las canas pero de aquí no nos vamos (look at the grower; his hair is turning gray but we aren't leaving, we're staying), etc. The lyrics were about things being said out in the picket line and we loved hearing them put to music. It was hilarious! One final point about this song: I remember when Cesar first heard it with us. He was up in front standing quietly listening. Every time he heard a funny phrase his face would light in a huge smile and he would just shake his head back and forth. His smile made us all laugh more and we would cheer louder! We never could hear that song enough times. Many may believe the song was written for the boycott picket lines in front of stores like Safeway, but in reality the song was referring to the strikers in the picket lines in the fields around Delano and later in Coachella.

History: Agustín Lira: *El Picket Sign* comes from a Mexican song, "*Se Va El Caiman*," (The Crocodile Goes Away) which probably originally has its roots in either the

Caribbean or maybe even in Africa. It has a real Caribbean rhythm. Songs like *El Picket Sign* helped so much to deal with morale. We were all human beings; we would get depressed, having to deal with the cops, with the scabs, with all of the injustice. It was a very unique time in history. I think that the *Teatro Campesino* was of real importance to the movement, especially because we had to address this issue of morale. The *Teatro* helped to get people involved in the power and the beauty of our *Teatro* and its messages. Singing these kinds of songs really helped to bring that message home.

Pastures of Plenty

Anamaría De La Cruz: Some of my earliest memories as a child growing up in the UFW are of singing. I remember that on Sundays we would sing together in the Administration building, where the community meetings were held. Sitting on my parents' shoulders, on the picket lines, UFW songs lent so much power and energy to our group.

Pastures of Plenty is an honest portrayal of how difficult work in the fields is and a tribute to how powerful farm workers are. The music and the lyrics represent this vulnerability and strength. The chords shift from minor to major (C# minor, E major), and the song begins with the plaintive "It's a mighty hard row that my poor hand has hoed", but ends with the more powerful declaration that "My land I'll defend with my life if it be, cause my pastures of plenty must always be free." Singing this song, the contrast between the words "I" and "your" jumps out at you -- "I worked in your orchards...I make all your crops...cut the grapes from your vine, to set on your table your light sparkling wine" -- expressing the gulf between farm workers and growers, and the alienation and disenfranchisement felt in watching someone else reap the benefits and profits of your hard labor.

The rhythm of the song lends itself to the feeling of movement that the words also portray. ("California, Arizona, I make all your crops...North up to Oregon...Every state in this Union us migrants have been.") Recording this song, we hoped to capture that sense of vulnerability, that sense of movement, and ultimately, that sense of strength.

* In keeping with UFW tradition, some of the words of this version of *Pastures of Plenty* are slightly different from those of Guthrie's original version.

History: In May 1941, Woody Guthrie began working for the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), a job that required him to write songs to promote development of the dams on the Columbia River. He would later claim that he wrote a song per day during his month-long association with the BPA, making it one of the most productive periods of his life. These songs were gathered together in a collection entitled "The Columbia River Songs." Several of his best-loved songs came from this period, including "Ramblin' Round," "Hard Travlin'," and "Pastures of Plenty." www.woodyguthrie.org

"Woody is just Woody. Thousands of people do not know he has any other name. He is just a voice and a guitar. He sings the songs of a people and I suspect that he is, in a way, that people. Harsh voiced and nasal, his guitar hanging like a tire iron on a rusty rim, there is nothing sweet about Woody, and there is nothing sweet about the songs he sings. But there is something more important for those who will listen. There is the will of the people to endure and fight against oppression. I think we call this the American spirit." *John Steinbeck; quoted in Joe Klein, Woody Guthrie: A Life, London, 1981, p. 160.*

Solidarity Forever/Solidaridad para Siempre

Lupe Murguía: *Solidarity* reminds me of the strike in Coachella, in 1973. I remember this song because of all of the hard times that we had on the picket line. We had to get up at 3 in the morning. We had to make sure everyone was in their place on the picket line, so that when the scabs arrived, we would be ready to talk with them when they came.

And after the scabs had entered the fields, the Teamsters would arrive. They were always there, on the side of the growers, trying to humiliate us and hurt us. We always had to be careful, because the Teamsters were always roaming around, trying to catch us off guard.

This is the only song that we all knew. The whole picket line would sing the song. We never had a guitar, but we would all sing together. We would either pray, or sing *Solidaridad*. It gave us courage, and strength, and spirit, and valor.

Francisco Garcia: I remember this song a lot. I was in Salinas. I had never heard songs like this sung before. I liked it so much. This song was so important, because it talked about the unity that we all needed to have to struggle together, so that we could win.

Jerry Kay: *Solidarity* came from the labor movement and *We Shall Overcome* from the civil rights movement. At the time (late 60's-early 70's), *We Shall Overcome* was probably better known and more contemporary and I was immediately comfortable singing it. *Solidarity* felt a little old, but said something absolutely important to winning any struggle. But the way we sung them, mixing Spanish and English, sometimes changing the tempos or syllables made them 'ours' and fresh and gave us all something we could join in on together even when we weren't too proficient in one language or another. So the very act of farm workers and volunteers singing together these two important songs brought us closer and brought other supporters in because of the warmth and spirit of the songs and how we sang them.

I remember singing them in labor union halls and church meeting rooms in New York City, San Francisco and Miami---in any city we could muster support. I remember singing them in Filipino Hall in Delano, La Paz, and in Salinas, in the union hall and on the picket line. On the picket lines out in the fields with the strikebreakers working a half mile from our road, we sometimes felt awfully alone when we sang, and the songs were a great comfort, like a warm bowl of soup for the soul. When our spirits sagged, they lifted us up and our singing re-kindled the feeling we needed to hold on to in order to go on another day, another month, another year.

History: This stirring song was originally written by a South Carolinian, William Steffe as a religious revival song, in 1856. The song was transformed into the unofficial anthem of the American Civil War by a Boston-based regiment of soldiers who included, amongst them, a soldier named John Brown. As a jest to their fellow soldier, this company wrote the lyrics commemorating the fiery John Brown of Kansas, whose attempt to free the slaves in 1859 led to his death.

On March 1, 1862, this same regiment sang *John Brown's Body* as a memorial on the very spot in Charleston, Virginia, where John Brown had been hung. It had already become an anthem for Northern soldiers of the Civil War.

Visiting a Union Army camp at the request of President Lincoln in 1862, Julia Ward Howe, a well-known writer, was present as the soldiers sang *John Brown's Body*.

"A clergyman in the party, James Freeman Clarke, who knew of Julia's published poems, urged her to write a new song for the war effort to replace "John Brown's Body." She described the events later:

"I replied that I had often wished to do so.... in spite of the excitement of the day I went to bed and slept as usual, but awoke the next morning in the gray of the early dawn, and to my astonishment found that the wished-for lines were arranging themselves in my brain. I lay quite still until the last verse had completed itself in my thoughts, then hastily arose, saying to myself, I shall lose this if I don't write it down immediately. I searched for an old sheet of paper and an old stub of a pen which I had had the night before, and began to scrawl the lines almost without looking, as I learned to do by often scratching down verses in the darkened room when my little children were sleeping. Having completed this, I lay down again and fell asleep, but not before feeling that something of importance had happened to me."

The result was a poem, published first in February 1862 in the *Atlantic Monthly*, and called "[Battle Hymn of the Republic](http://www.womenshistory.about.com/library/weekly/aa013100a.htm)", becoming the best-known Civil War song of the north. <http://www.womenshistory.about.com/library/weekly/aa013100a.htm>

It was not the lyrics of the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, however, but *John Brown's Body* that Ralph Chaplin, a poet, artist, writer, and organizer for the Industrial Workers of the World, turned to during a 1915 coal miners strike in the Kanawha Valley of West Virginia.

"Chaplin said he wanted "a song...full of revolutionary fervor" with a chorus that was "singing and defiant." Using the melody from the infinitely adaptable "John Brown's Body," Chaplin created just that." <http://www.iup-apsconf.org/songs>.

Solidarity Forever became an anthem for union struggle throughout the United States, as a symbol of worker unity in the struggle for union representation.

Translation into Spanish: Agustín Lira: Luís Valdez and Felipe Cantú and I were the ones who translated *Solidarity* into Spanish. We didn't have much time to think about who was doing what: there was always just so much work to do!

Deportee

Terry Scott: I first discovered Woody Guthrie songs as a teenager in the early '70's. The public library in our town had a terrific collection of Smithsonian Folkways albums, as well as some of the older Rounder Records releases. They were pretty scratchy but it was powerful stuff hearing Woody sing. His songwriting was so good and his music was so accessible: a very down-to-earth voice accompanied by simple guitar arrangements.

Listening to him made me feel that creating music myself was not out of reach, i.e., something reserved only for musical virtuosos.

As far as the song “Deportee,” the first time I heard it was on a Judy Collins album. I remember being so moved by how poignant the story is—especially the poetic imagery in the last verse: “*to die and be scattered like leaves on the topsoil, to be called by no name except deportee...*” It’s heart-wrenching to realize that people could be treated so callously. Woody’s song reminds us that these were real people deserving of dignity and respect.

As a songwriter myself, I find it interesting that Woody Guthrie’s original inspiration for “Deportee” came from reading a newspaper story about the plane crash. Creative inspiration comes from many sources and I have also had the experience of reading a news story and using it as the basis for writing a song. Throughout my life, I’ve been keyed into how powerful a force music can be. It’s always seemed to me that a good song can accomplish in a matter of minutes what hours of talking might not be able to do. *Deportee* is a wonderful example of that kind of power.

Sharon Delugach: I’ve always loved *Deportee* and I love Woody Guthrie. I’ve heard different versions of this song: I first heard Woody Guthrie sing this song, and I think that it was either Joan Baez or Luis Valdez who changed some of the lyrics to reflect the Farm Workers’ movement. It’s a haunting and plaintive song.

I started working for the Union when I was fifteen. I was on the *Juan De La Cruz Liberation Brigade* because I was too young to drive so I couldn’t be an organizer. When we picketed outside grocery stores, it always shocked me that people wouldn’t realize where the food came from. *Deportee* captures the disconnection and the dehumanization farm workers experience. It’s so easy to dismiss the farm workers and the way that they live and the kinds of lives that they have. Woody Guthrie has such a powerful way of expressing that emotion in this song.

We sang in the van driving to and from the picket line. That’s how I learned Spanish; by singing songs in Spanish, and by learning the chants.

There was always so much singing, and telling stories by song in the Union; it was something that I missed so much when I left! The first job that I got after I left was a job in the bank, and John Brown, [a UFW volunteer] said, “so what kinds of songs do you sing at your morning meetings at the a bank?” And of course, we didn’t sing any songs, and there weren’t any staff meetings, and we didn’t have any camaraderie: I missed that so much.

At Cesar’s funeral, even though there were 40,000 people, all my friends knew where to look for me---I was with the group of people who were singing, because I love singing so much. I was also in the Bay Area during Prop 14 with Ken Fujimoto and Paul Milne. I was all of 20 years old, leading a staff of 100. It didn’t seem so amazing then, but it seems amazing to me now. Everyone was pretty young, with varying degrees of experience; for many, Prop 14 was their first initiative campaign. We began and ended every long day with singing: it brought us together, and reminded us about why we were there, and it was so important for our spirit.

Singing was tremendously important for building the character of the farm worker movement. We sang to fortify our spirits and it always helped us to remember why we were doing what we were doing.

I worked for the UFW for about two years, from 1975-1977. The Union changed my life, sent me in a new direction, and I have continued on that path.

History: The *New York Times* of January 29, 1948 reported the wreck of a "charter plane carrying 28 Mexican farm workers from Oakland to the El Centro, CA, Deportation Center.... The crash occurred 20 miles west of Coalinga, 75 miles from Fresno."

This very small newspaper caption caught Woody Guthrie's attention, and in response, he wrote the lyrics for *Deportee*.

"The song, as he wrote it, was virtually without music -- Woody chanted the words. [Deportee] wasn't performed publicly until a decade later when a schoolteacher named Martin Hoffman added a beautiful melody and Pete Seeger began singing it in concerts." *Joe Klein, Woody Guthrie: A Life, London, 1981, pp. 349-350.*

"The workers were being deported because ofThe agreement of 1947 [between Mexico and the U.S.] that contained a novel provision which established amnesty through deportation. Under its terms, undocumented Mexicans who were sent back across the border could return to the U.S. as temporary contract laborers; during the life of their contracts, they could not be again deported. In practice, employers often called Border Patrol stations to report their own undocumented employees, who were returned, momentarily, to border cities in Mexico, where they signed labor contracts with the same employers who had denounced them. This process became known as "drying out wetbacks" or "storm and drag immigration." "Drying out" provided a deportation-proof source of cheap seasonal labor... *Dick J. Reavis, Without Documents, New York, 1978, p. 39.*

"I was born and raised in Coalinga and can remember going to the crash site the day after the incident. My father, older sister, and I viewed the crash and even though I was about six years old at the time, I can remember it as if it happened yesterday. It was a cold and damp day and even though the reports were that the site had been cleaned up, this was not the case. The sadness of seeing the meager possessions of the passengers and the total lack of respect by those who had the task of removing the bodies will be something I will never forget or forgive." (*milnsue@aol.com*) *added the following personal recollections on rec.music.folk, Mon, Apr 21, 1997.*

La Peregrinación

Agustín Lira: As for me, I kind of grew up in the movement. I became a person within the movement. When I was a farm worker, working hard in the fields, I wanted to fight back, but I didn't know how. The Union is where I got my education; I didn't get an education in school---they were just babysitting me: Do you need 12 years to learn how to read and write and do math? We came out of school dumber than when we went in. It took years and years to undo the ways that they had taught me to think about myself and my people, and my history. Years and years. Of how to think about yourself, and what you're capable of.

I started singing when I was around 13. When I was 18, I finally got a guitar, and I started to play and sing in a rock band. I had been in a quartet in school, and in the

choir, and I had been in some plays, so I had a basic understanding of music and theater. But I didn't know anything about being a playwright. I learned how to be a playwright in the Union.

I was really, really lucky to find a door [the work for the UFW], and that door opened to many others. If it hadn't have been for the Union, I would have been off to Vietnam, just like all of my other friends.

We started the *Teatro Campesino* in 1965. We had been picketing all day. Luis was there and he asked us if we wanted to go to the restaurant to get some coffee. Sitting in the restaurant, he told us that he had an idea about starting a theater group, and about recruiting other members into it. We didn't even ask Cesar's permission in the beginning--not until later. In the beginning, we just recruited members and started practicing our actos after the picket lines, in the office, or at the meetings. It started to really take off, and that's when we went to Cesar to get his permission to recruit people into the *Teatro*, and to take it on the road. We started making plans, building the actos, trying them out on the farm workers after the picket line, and then finally, when it really took off, we started to go outside of California.

in 1966, the UFW decided to do the march from Delano to Sacramento, and Cesar approached me two days before the march and asked me to do a song for it; I said, "Only two days? That's pretty short notice!" And he said, "Well, the march is going to last for 30 days, so if you can do it while we're on the march."

The first day of the march, I stayed behind, and so did Cesar. I was working directly across from his office in the pink house, and he came in and asked me how it was going. I played what I had composed up to that point, and he said that he really liked it. He asked me how long it would take me to finish it. I kept on working on it, trying to add two more different verses, but they just wouldn't fit, and so by the third day of the march, I joined them, and I just started singing it, and I sang it every day on the way to Sacramento.

I have to tell you that it was a tremendous struggle, a spiritual struggle for me to write this song. When I first arrived in Delano, I did not believe in God. I had lost my mother in 1963, and I had a fight with God, and God lost: I didn't need him in my life. However, when I got to Delano, my job was to write songs for the community, and I had to put my own beliefs aside, because I was working for the movement. So adding the verse about the Virgin of Guadalupe was really a struggle. It was almost like torture: I didn't want to put it in, but I knew that it was something that the farm workers cared about. So I finally decided that it was more important to represent what they felt, and not just what I felt.

I took the ideas of the words for this song from the picket lines, from the farm workers' lives. There were thoughts and feelings behind their actions: they were picketing for better wages, better conditions in the fields. But behind that, was self-respect and dignity.

Felipe Cantú wrote another song on the March to Sacramento, *El Corrido de Cesar Chavez*, and we performed that in Sacramento on the day that we arrived.

Roll the Union On

History: Steve Jones: John Handcox, an African-American working for the Southern Tenant Farmers Union in the 1930's, took the old gospel hymn, *Roll the Chariots On*, and made it a union song, "*Roll the Union On*." He was hounded by anti-union vigilantes and forced to leave Arkansas in the late 30's. While living in San Diego, he somehow got "re-discovered" in 1980 and was brought out to a Labor Arts Exchange in Washington, DC. He shared several old union songs he wrote that have become regulars on the picket line, like "There Are Mean Things Happening in this Land."

Huelga En General

Lorraine Agtang-Greer: I was born and raised in Delano. I am half Filipino and half Mexican. I like this song because it tells the history of the farm workers, and how it was the Filipinos who started the strike back in 1965. I felt proud to be a Filipino.

I think that this was Cesar's favorite song. We sang it at meetings, on many marches; it was the Union's anthem. It is a very powerful song. Everyone loved it!

When you're born part Filipino and part Mexican, it's a struggle, because those two communities don't necessarily get along. The Union was the first place that I felt peace and camaraderie among the Filipinos and Mexicans. That was my first positive experience, so different than my growing-up years.

History: Agustín Lira: When Luis [Valdez] returned from Cuba, he had a bunch of melodies that he brought back with him. *Huelga en General* is one of those songs; Luis didn't change the melody at all, he just changed the words. Actually, we all worked on it together. We all helped each other figuring out the verses. We were looking for material that we could use; that we could translate; that we could adapt; and also, material that we were creating on our own.

It was wonderful, frightening, horrific, beautiful, and scary: all of it. It was horrific and scary to see the kinds of injustices that the campesinos were made to endure, the harassments they had to put up with when they were trying to organize. It was beautiful and wonderful because it was people of all ages fighting for their rights; and they were farm workers---people who no one ever imagined would be able to stand up and fight for themselves.

Brown-Eyed Children of the Sun

Joaquin Murguía: The first time that I heard this song sung was in a rally in Salinas, in Alisal Park. I think that the contracts had expired, and the workers were getting ready to go out on strike: there was a big march, and then a rally in the park. Thousands of people were there.

I also recall a UFW-produced film that featured a farm worker child, with these huge, big brown eyes, looking up at you: *Brown-Eyed Children of the Sun* was playing on the soundtrack. Listening to that song and seeing that picture struck a chord in me.

The first time that I played this song was at a mass, in La Paz. Father Ken Irrgang was conducting the mass, and he had selected the passage from the scriptures that says, “*Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.*” (Matthew 19:14). To accompany that scripture reading, he asked me to play this song.

It’s remained a favorite of mine, because it’s such a haunting melody. I think that it speaks about my own dad’s experience, of coming here, in 1953, as a very young man, to help provide for his family back in Mexico. My dad always sent money back home to his family---to his mom, to his brothers and sisters. Even though my dad’s mother has passed away, he still sends money to his relatives, to this day.

I’m the first Murguía to be born in the United States. My father was a farm worker, and my life was directly impacted by his life, and his experiences. I have taken my own children to the fields, so that they can see how it is that the vegetables and the fruits that they eat come to their table. I have sung this song to both of my own mixed-race brown-eyed children.

It’s easy to get jaded; it feels, sometimes, as if nothing has changed, or that it has even gone backwards. Singing this song, re-connecting with people that I haven’t seen for 25 years, helps me to realize how far we’ve come. I am the son of a farm worker, who ended up working as a controller for one the biggest agricultural firms in the Coachella Valley, helping to improve so many company policies towards the workers.

History: Agustín Lira: This song was written by a couple from East Los Angeles. The woman’s name was Sylvia Parral; I can’t remember her husband’s name. It was 1969. We had four theatrical groups come to Del Rey to practice together: there were two groups from East LA, another group from Mexico, and the Teatro Campesino. We were trying to get together with other teatros and learn from each other. We eventually formed a group that went all over the Southwest. So *Brown Eyed Children of the Sun* was this woman and her husband’s contribution to our material—they wrote the words and the music.

We Shall Not Be Moved/No Nos Moveran

Kathy Murguía: I recall singing this song both in Berkeley on the Peace Marches and in Holly Springs, Mississippi at the local Church meetings during Freedom Summer (1964).

When the cops wanted to kick us out of Sproul Hall Plaza, that's what we sang. When the Hell's Angels converged at Sather Gate with their roaring cycles, that's what we sang. What I love is that counterpoint---you can have people talking back and forth to each other in this song.

It was translated into Spanish in the fall of 1965, and was a hit on the picket lines. The NO aspect became a source of conviction that we’d never give up. I loved the counterpoint used at times to echo the NO. It was powerful.

History: Originally, *I Shall Not Be Moved* was a spiritual song, referring to the Psalm 1:3: “He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.”

This song was first sung on the picket line by striking North Carolina textile workers in the 30's. The employers called in the state troopers, killing fourteen workers. "The only place that could be secured for the meeting was the front of a dilapidated Negro schoolhouse....On the steps stood a mixed group of whites and Negroes and their wives, singing out their story and their hopes....On the road above, a group of State Police and guards watched, their guns conspicuously displayed." It was at this moment that the group burst out into song. Sung by the Manhattan Chorus, an amateur group assembled by Elie Siegmeister in New York City, *We Shall Not Be Moved* was recorded for Timely Records for the first time in 1937.

Despedida de César Chavez

Francisco Garica: I knew Cesar for many years. For many years, I worked on the boycotts in New York, in Washington, and in Los Angeles. I came to Delano to work in the Service Center. I also worked in the Service Center in La Paz. I worked in the building of the Union offices, with Cesar's brother, Richard, pounding nails, sawing and hammering. I worked with Cesar's son, Birdie, high in the mountains, laying the wire for the UFW communications systems. I wrote most of the words to this song on the day of Cesar's funeral. But I didn't finish it right away. I didn't know where his final resting place was going to be, whether it would be in Delano, or La Paz. And until I knew, I wasn't able to finish this song. These memories of a person we take with us always. We take them with us everywhere. We take them with us until we die.

Brand New Life

Terry Scott: While I wrote this song many years after leaving the UFW, it was very much inspired by the years I spent living and working with farm workers. This song is written from a more personal perspective in that it tells the story of two young lovers, but in the broader context of the basic struggles that many migrants and recent immigrants go through in their efforts to find a home and happiness in this country. It's also an expression of my admiration for those people who have the courage to take risks and jump into a "Brand New Life."

We Shall Overcome/Nosotros Venceremos

Gene Boutilier: This song has lots of different lives, because it has been sung not only in the union, but in the civil rights movement, and before that, as an old church song. It was wonderful, as the farm worker strike spread to the cities, to have African-American congregations adding the Spanish verses, *Nosotros Venceremos*, in solidarity with the Union.

And right after Dr. King's death, in the Poor People's campaign, we traveled by mule train and other ways to Washington DC from all over the country. I was on that mule train. The multilingual version of this song was a major point of unity.

Adding the verse in Spanish gave *We Shall Overcome* an added dimension. It linked the farm workers to the wider struggle for integration, civil rights, and justice.

History: A gospel song born out of the oppression of slavery, an adaptation of *I'll Overcome Someday, or It'll Be All Right*, was first sung on the picket line by striking tobacco workers—mostly women, and mostly black—in Charleston, South California, in 1945. One of the workers, Lucille Simmons, changed the tempo from a fast, hand-clapping style to a slow, rhythmic beat; she also changed the individual “I” to the collective “We.”

Zilphia Horton, music director at the *Highlander Folk School*, a labor school in Tennessee, learned it in 1947 from members of the Food and Tobacco Workers' Union. She subsequently taught the song to Union workers throughout the south.

In 1960, Guy Carawan, music director of the *Highland Research and Education Center* in New Market, Tennessee, introduced this, and many other songs, to young civil rights activists organizing the historic civil rights movement in the south. *We Shall Overcome* was sung at the first SNCC convention and from that moment on, became the anthem of the civil rights movement.

Translated by the *Teatro Campesino* into Spanish for the farm workers' movement, *We Shall Overcome* came to signify the resonance and unity between the civil rights' and the farm workers' struggles as the movements for justice for the poor spread to every city and every society in America.

Translation into Spanish: Agustín Lira: I walked into the pink house in Delano one day, and I remember hearing a record on the record player. It was a black group, a gospel group. I think that they were called the Freedom Singers. I remember hearing them singing those songs---it was a chorus---all of those voices, singing together. It was very powerful. They were all movement songs. We just took those songs and started translating them into Spanish. They were songs that a whole group of people could sing. I think that we actually got a chance later to hook up with that group, and sing with them.

Conclusion

"The songs of the working people have always been their sharpest statement and the one statement that cannot be destroyed....Songs are the statement of a people. Listening to their songs teaches you more about a people than any other means, for into the songs go all the hopes and hurts, the angers, fears, the wants and aspirations."

John Steinbeck