

25TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

# FOOD AND JUSTICE

Published by the United Farm Workers

May 1987



**WE DID IT!**



**“WE Did It!”**

As we prepared this month’s issue, we were also putting the final touches on our fiesta plans for May 23 — the day we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the birth of our union (March 31, 1962).

We have devoted almost the entire issue to what is for us such a momentous milestone — momentous enough to stop for a day to cry out in unrestrained joy: “We did it!”

In the midst of our joy, we gratefully remember how broad that “we” is. “We” includes all those farm workers in the past who courageously tried to organize themselves, only to be abused, beaten, jailed, their would-be unions crushed out of existence by an unholy conspiracy of agricultural and political power. So when we throw up our hands in the air and shout, “We did it!” each one of them stands alongside us in spirit. We will never forget them.

There are others in that “we” who will never be forgotten: you. As you turn the pages of this issue and read about our struggles and achievements, bear in mind that in our shout, “We did it!,” we have not forgotten you, our friends in the labor movement, in churches, in minority groups, in community organizations. We have not forgotten every penny you sent us, every grape you didn’t eat, every foot you marched, every minute you picketed, every letter of support you wrote.

But, as you will see on the last page, the joy of our 25th anniversary is tempered by the reality that once again we are forced to carry on another grape boycott. Naturally, we would rather not be boycotting, but we will do what we must, we will meet the challenge.

The spirit of our predecessors is the conscience that drives us on, and your loyal support gives us courage.

And in the end, WE shall win again! 🍷

**Food and Justice**

May 1987

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**THE VISION**

The National Sharecroppers Fund Collection



*The backbreaking short-handled hoe symbolizes why a union for migrant farm workers was needed. Stooped under the weight of grower abuses and indignities for more than a century, U.S. farm workers were inspired by Cesar Chavez to rise up and demand that they be treated like dignified human beings.*

**Glimpses of What Would Be**

Even as a young boy, Cesar Chavez began registering glimpses of what would one day become a clear vision of how to eradicate the misery of migrant farm workers.

He didn’t have to look far for glimpses of misery to know *WHY* something had to be done: the backbreaking short-handled hoe he and his family used; the long work days with children getting 8 cents and parents 12 cents an hour; the filthy labor camps unfit for humans.

Glimpses of resistance were rarer but left equally indelible impressions. “My father,” Chavez said, “would walk out of the fields every time he heard the word ‘huelga’ [strike]. He taught us how to keep something that belonged to us — our dignity.”

Later, some bold organizers, even though their successes were shortlived, gave Chavez glimpses of the power of solidarity among workers: Pat Chambers and the cannery and agricultural

workers union; Fr. Thomas McDonnell in San Jose and Fr. Thomas McCullough and the Agricultural Workers Association in Stockton; and Ernesto Galarza and the National Farm Labor Union.

Why a union? That was as obvious as slave wages — but how? The Eureka glimpse that brought the vision together came when, in the 1950’s, Chavez joined Saul Alinsky’s Community Service Organization and learned how to organize poor people from a master practitioner, Fred Ross, Sr.

Once Chavez found the solution, he left the CSO and in 1962 began driving up and down the San Joaquin Valley, talking, talking, talking to farm workers. He soon signed up enough to form the National Farm Workers Association, the first step in building a union that would last — not long enough to win a strike or two but one that would, 25 years later, be able to celebrate both survival and success. 🍷

## THE STRUGGLE



Cathy Murphy

*Driving up and down the San Joaquin Valley, holding meeting after meeting, Chavez talked about organizing and farm workers responded eagerly to the first real sign of hope in their lives.*

## A Saga of Sacrifice

**T**wenty-five years do not a saga make, of course.

However, farm workers should be forgiven for thinking so, considering all that was packed into that quarter of a century from the time Cesar Chavez' National Farm Workers Association, with little more to show for it than a newly hatched black eagle, was founded in 1962, until this year when a full-fledged United Farm Workers of America celebrates its silver anniversary.

The achievements won by the UFW for farm workers in the field and in the community (pp. 8-14) are the results of a long, hard struggle — a series of sacrifices that included strikes, marches, boycotts, fasts, vigils, jailings, mayhem and murder, a series of sacrifices that produced a range of emotions all the way from restrained rage and bottomless grief to whoops of victory and the satisfying joy of vindication.

From the earliest years to the present, both living and working conditions demanded many strikes, beginning with

a 1964 rent strike at the Woodville labor camp and continuing right up to the current Egg City strike begun last year. In between, the most notable were the Delano grape strike that started in 1965

*Dolores Huerta, a leading force in the farm worker movement from the earliest days, holds the "Huelga" (strike) sign during the Delano grape strike and boycott (1965-70) that produced contracts with both Coachella and Delano grape growers.*



## THE STRUGGLE...

and lasted until the grape boycott victory in 1970, the big vegetable strike in Salinas in 1970, another grape strike in 1973 after growers signed sweetheart contracts with the Teamsters, and the massive vegetable strike in the Imperial and Salinas Valleys in 1979.

Marches, too, seemed individually and collectively endless over the past 25 years. The most memorable of them all was the 300-mile march from Delano to Sacramento. Led by the Black Eagle and Our Lady of Guadalupe banners, Chavez and 75 grape strikers started out on the 300-mile journey from Delano to Sacramento in mid-March and arrived, 4,000 strong, at the state capitol on April 10, Easter Sunday. Four days before the march ended, marchers received the electrifying news that Schenley Industries had agreed to negotiate the very first contract with the union.

One of the least known of the many marches was the longest and most exhausting. On July 1, 1975, after the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act had just been passed, Chavez embarked upon a 1,000-mile, two-month march from San Ysidro, near the

*A few months after the start of the grape strike, Walter Reuther (center), president of the United Auto Workers, marched in Delano with grape strikers: the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee, the largely Filipino group led by Larry Itliong (left), and the NFWA led by Chavez. The groups later merged as the UFWOC (1966). In 1973, the UFWOC was granted a charter as the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO.*

George Ballis, Wayne State University



*Canadian boycotters during the first grape boycott provide evidence of the UFW's 25-year struggle to protect farm workers and consumers from pesticides.*

U.S.-Mexican border, up to Fresno in the San Joaquin Valley, stopping, almost literally, wherever even two or three were gathered, to explain the new law to farm workers and urge them not to be afraid to vote in the coming elections. During this march, Chavez broke all previous records in every category, including sweat, blisters, worn-out socks, and sneakers.

There have been many boycotts, too, costly measurements of the 25-year



Dick J. Darby Compliments of Wayne State University

*At a mass in Delano on March 11, 1968, Chavez ended a 25-day fast against violence. Sharing the Eucharist with him is Senator Robert F. Kennedy. At left is Chavez' wife, Helen, and at right is his mother, Juana, now 96. His father, Librado, died in 1983 at the age of 101.*

## THE STRUGGLE . . .

struggle. Two remain etched in the hearts and minds of both farm workers and their ultimate hall of justice: The

*In September 1974, Chavez embarked upon a European boycott tour of London, Oslo, Stockholm, Geneva, and Brussels. On September 25, he met privately with Pope Paul VI and presented him with a UFW "Huelga" flag. Chavez was accompanied on his visit to the Vatican by his wife, Helen (center), and Richard Ybarra (right).*



Court of Last Resort, men and women of good will who rallied to La Causa in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The first was a boycott against grape growers that began in 1967 and lasted until 1970, when the previously arrogant table-grape industry, devastated by the nation-wide boycott, agreed to negotiate. Contracts were first signed by Lionel Steinberg and other grape-growers in the Coachella Valley and then by John Giumarra, Sr. and others in Delano.

Just as memorable was the grape, iceberg lettuce, and Gallo wine boycott launched in 1973 after growers and Teamsters signed their infamous sweetheart contracts. This one resulted in the passage of the ALRA in 1975 and led to more than two hundred UFW election victories and contracts.

It was during this boycott that the Harris Survey revealed that 17 million adult Americans boycotted grapes, 14 million boycotted lettuce, and 11 million boycotted Gallo wines. The statistics were impressive but hardly news to boycotters — and certainly not to grape growers, who had already gathered as

## THE STRUGGLE . . .

much from their wallets — their ultimate moral imperative.

During two major fasts, Chavez was joined by thousands of farm workers and supporters in person and in spirit: a 25-day fast in Delano to counteract violence, ending with a mass attended by Senator Robert F. Kennedy on March 11, 1968, and a 24-day fast in Arizona in May 1972, during which he was visited by Coretta Scott King.

It is impossible to gauge the depth of pain and heartache felt by the loved ones of five martyrs whose sacrifice was supreme: Nan Freeman, struck and killed by a truck on a picket line in front of a sugar company in Florida in 1972, just a few weeks after workers had won a contract at Coca-Cola; Nagi Daifullah, a young South Yemenite clubbed to death by a deputy sheriff in Lamont, and Juan de la Cruz, shot on a picket line in Arvin, both in August 1973; Rufino Contreras, shot by Saikhon foremen near Calexico in 1979; and finally, just three and a half years ago, Rene Lopez, shot to death by a strikebreaker accom-



*Francisco and Dolores Lopez grieve over their son, Rene, the fifth UFW martyr, murdered near Fresno in September 1983.*

panied by the owner's brother-in-law, just a few hours after he had voted for the UFW in a state-conducted election at the Sikkema Dairy, near Fresno.

If "saga" is a slight descriptive exaggeration of the farm worker struggle the past 25 years, "sacrifice" is definitely an understatement. What is right on the money, however, is that, in spite of all that was asked of both farm worker and supporter, neither would have wanted to miss any of it. 🌻

*The first grape boycott produced contracts with grape growers in the Coachella and San Joaquin Valleys. At this contract signing at the union's Forty Acres headquarters in Delano on July 29, 1970, are, seated, left to right, Larry Itliong, UFWOC vice-president; Cesar Chavez, UFWOC president; and grower John Giumarra, Sr. Standing, left to right, are William Kircher, AFL-CIO organizing director; Jerry Cohen, former UFWOC attorney; Bishop Joseph Donnelly (now deceased); Msgr. George Higgins; Jerry Sherry, Catholic Monitor editor; and John Giumarra, Jr.*

Cris Sanches





*Alone with the simple coffin bearing the remains of her son is the mother of Juan Chabolla, who in August 1985 collapsed and died while working in a tomato field that, unknown to him, had been sprayed with the deadly pesticide, Monitor.*

## Working With Dignity

Bringing better wages, shorter hours and safer working conditions to farm workers in the fields through effective boycotts and negotiations has always been one of the UFW's reasons for being. But this task, fraught with blood and tears, has never been easy. Even to embark on such a road demanded courage and vision.

Despite the millions of dollars that growers have spent to defeat the UFW or blunt its progress, farm workers everywhere, both union and non-union, have benefitted from its efforts.

Some of the UFW's achievements:

### Pesticide Protection

Pesticides and agricultural chemicals have always posed a serious health hazard. The UFW has marched, picketed and boycotted to focus public attention on pesticides injurious to farm workers, consumers and residents of agricultural communities. In the past, as a result of its first successful grape boycott, the UFW helped rid California fields of

*This is 1985, not 1885: farm workers at the non-union K.K. Larson Company in southern California trying to survive in a neighboring orchard. In other parts of California, farm workers still make their "homes" in caves, fields, and dilapidated shacks.*



## ACHIEVEMENTS — IN THE FIELDS ...

DDT and Dieldren — well before the federal government banned their use. Most recently, the UFW publicized the dangers of the chemical Dinoseb and helped influence the EPA to suspend its general use.

To counter the threat posed to farm workers in the fields by dangerous pesticides, the UFW demands in its contracts that growers obey all laws relating to pesticides and not use those chemicals the UFW deems too dangerous for worker safety.

UFW contracts also demand that farm workers must be informed about what chemicals are being used, where and when they will be sprayed and what the safety requirements are for their handling and human contact.

Contract provisions about pesticides replace state and federal laws routinely ignored by growers. Ultimately, workers with contracts will never be required to work in a situation that would endanger their health. A safer work place also means a safer food supply and safer agricultural communities.

*The grape boycott of 1973-76 led to the passage of the historic Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975, introduced by California Assemblyman Richard Alatorre and signed by Gov. Edmund G. (Jerry) Brown.*



### The ALRA

In 1975, under pressure from the UFW and amidst the cries for relief from growers and supermarket chains reeling from the effects of a tremendously successful boycott, California passed the historic Agricultural Labor Relation Act, a law heralded as a "Bill of Rights" for farm workers.

The ALRA, administered by a five-member board, was designed to protect the rights of farm workers to associate freely, self-organize, vote in certification elections by secret ballot and choose their own representation.

In the beginning, the UFW won over 70 percent of the elections held under the protection of the law. A certain measure of peace returned to California fields and farm workers with new contracts saw their wages rise, their benefits broaden and democracy in the fields increase. Under protection of the law, farm workers who at one time might have been fired for union activities could now file unfair labor practice suits against growers.

But with time and a new pro-grower, anti-union administration in California, the ALRA became worthless because of non-enforcement. Growers, by appealing to the courts, began ignoring ALRB



*These workers under UFW contract no longer have to relieve themselves in the fields or put up with other forms of degrading harassment from foremen and growers.*

## ACHIEVEMENTS — IN THE FIELDS ...

decisions granting settlements to farm workers in unfair labor practice suits. Organizing under these conditions became impossible, and the UFW once again turned to a new boycott.

### Field Sanitation

After 15 years of foot-dragging and

*These workers under UFW contract never have to fear the agonizing back injuries thousands of others suffered from using the short-handled hoe. Though banned in many states, growers get away with forcing workers to use it because the law is poorly enforced.*



excuses, the federal government announced in February it would soon require growers to provide farm workers with fresh drinking water, toilets and hand-washing facilities in the fields. California already has such a law but it is ignored by many growers and rarely enforced by the state.

Both the UFW and growers know that despite the government's good intentions, farm workers will get better working treatment in the fields only when they have collective bargaining agreements.

In its contracts, the UFW always demands that workers have easy access to regularly serviced toilets (separate for men and women) and that workers have hand-washing facilities. Contracts also require that growers provide cool, adequate and potable drinking water in the fields with individual paper cups for every worker.

To protect farm workers, the UFW included these provisions in its very first contract in 1966.

### Short-Handled Hoe

After a 20-year battle, the short-handled hoe was finally banned, at least on paper, by the California Supreme Court in 1975. But unfortunately, farm workers without contracts must still use the hoe, or "El Cordito," at ranches



*Children of parents working under UFW contract now can go to school during the day instead of to work. At non-union ranches, however, child labor is far from eliminated.*

## ACHIEVEMENTS — IN THE FIELDS ...

where growers ignore the law.

This crippling tool, used to chop weeds from or to thin crops, is unsafe because it causes permanent back injury. With UFW contracts, farm workers no longer are bent over double in California fields, forced to use a tool that is also called "the arm of the devil."

### Wages/Benefits/Grievances

Long days, low pay, child labor, favoritism and the fear of devastating illness or accident are the conditions many non-union farm worker families must endure to earn a meager living. Non-union farm workers have no assurances that a promised wage will be paid, that they will have a job from one day to the next or that they will receive a deserved promotion.

All these uncertainties, which add to the stress of a farm worker's life, disappear with a contract — that time-honored tool of labor that protects wages, job classifications, and seniority. Contracts provide medical coverage, vacations, holidays and a pension plan, and they preclude favoritism in hiring and promotions.

In addition, farm workers with contracts have the grievance and arbitration process — a formalized way to deal with contract violations and abuse by non-cooperative growers.



*The Juan de la Cruz Farm Workers Pension Fund has made a reality of what once seemed a preposterous dream — farm workers receiving a monthly pension and living out their last years in dignity.*

Even when unionized companies close their operations, the UFW helps workers by demanding and negotiating both severance pay and retraining. When a company is sold, a contract continues protecting workers through a "successor clause" which requires a buyer to recognize the union's certification and accept or renegotiate its contract.

With the UFW boycott and contracts, farm workers have hope. With grower promises, farm workers have nothing.

*Medical benefits negotiated in UFW contracts allow farm workers to get the excellent medical care they once could not afford.*





*The UFW has been at the forefront of many proposition, voter-registration, and get-out-the-vote campaigns involving political issues related to the rights of farm workers, minorities, and the poor.*

## Out of the Migrant Stream

### ACHIEVEMENTS — IN THE COMMUNITY

Once farm workers have job security, safer working conditions and a decent wage, they can begin to accept their responsibilities as residents of communities and as citizens.

In its 25 years of nonviolent organizing, lobbying, community education and political action, the UFW has influenced numerous changes and improvements for farm workers which have led to profound and lasting effects.

#### Political Action

In May of 1972, the Arizona Legislature, dominated by conservatives, passed a bill dangerous to farm worker interests. In retaliation for the measure, the UFW organized a voter registration drive among minorities and the poor in Arizona to force a recall of the governor, who had signed the legislation less

than an hour after receiving it.

The recall was blocked by the Arizona attorney general but the voters, with a heavy turnout of Navajo Indian and Mexican Americans, elected for the first time

*Dolores Huerta, UFW first vice-president, has led the union's efforts to pass state and federal legislation to secure the same rights and protections that other American workers enjoy.*



### ACHIEVEMENTS — IN THE COMMUNITY . . .

in history four Hispanics and one Navajo to the state senate and one other Navajo to the state house of representatives.

After the UFW got out the vote using thousands of farm workers in the 1984 California elections, voters said "no" in overwhelming numbers to three propositions dangerous to farm worker and Hispanic interests.

#### Radio Campesina

Located in Woodlake, California, Radio Campesina (KUFW) broadcasts to six counties in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley. Begun in 1983 under the auspices and guidance of the UFW, Radio Campesina serves its community by broadcasting talk shows, popular music, call-in programs, investigative reports on labor abuses and pesticide poisonings, public meetings, public service announcements and the latest immigration information.

#### Health Care

Farm workers have always had prob-

*Radio Campesina, KUFW-FM, reaches thousands of farm workers in the San Joaquin Valley with news, education, and entertainment programs 18 hours a day, seven days a week.*



*One of the first concerns of the farm worker movement was workers' health. After a few years of meeting workers' health needs on an emergency basis, the first UFW clinic was opened in Delano in 1972.*

lems getting good health care. Many county hospitals had refused to treat farm workers because of residency requirements. To fill this gap, the UFW started the first farm worker medical clinic at Forty Acres in Delano.

The Delano clinic paved the way for federal and state rural health clinics now available to the rural poor throughout California and the United States.



## ACHIEVEMENTS — IN THE COMMUNITY . .

And because of the UFW, county hospitals are now open to farm workers.

### Social Programs

Farm workers in California first began receiving unemployment compensation in the 1970s. Before their inclusion in this income maintenance program, farm workers migrated after a harvest ended because they had to continue supporting their families.

The UFW lobbied to include farm workers in this benefit and eventually succeeded, but the UFW's job wasn't over. California officials had no idea how to notify farm workers of their new status, so they requested help from the UFW.

Using leaflets, bull horns and people power, the UFW went into barrios, communities, labor camps and fields to tell workers the news.

Also due to UFW efforts, a second state benefit, Aid for Dependent

Children with an Unemployed Parent, was extended to farm workers.

This benefit helped to further root farm workers in their communities because unemployed fathers no longer had to desert their families so that wives and children could survive during harvests.

Farm workers also receive other social benefits as a result of UFW efforts: disability insurance for injury or illness; eligibility for U.S. Department of Agriculture surplus food commodities; burial insurance for UFW members; and eligibility to use the UFW Credit Union.

### Education

Due to UFW efforts, farm workers now have bilingual and migrant education and scholarships for their children.

With better wages coming from contracts, farm workers can now afford to send their children to college. These children, because they have been influenced by the UFW, are returning to their communities in ever-increasing numbers to continue organizing for social justice. They serve as hope and guidance for farm workers everywhere. 🇺🇸

*More and more farm worker children are now staying in high school, graduating, and even going on to college — all because UFW contracts make possible a more stable life and better financial resources.*



*After the Deukmejian Administration gave the green light to growers to ignore the farm labor law with impunity, the UFW launched a new boycott of table grapes in 1984.*

## Another Struggle, Another Boycott

**T**here's a new pharaoh in the land. Rich overlords have their privileges restored. New taskmasters abound. Fear and intimidation are the rage, and the enslavement of workers is again in fashion in the fields.

When the United Farm Workers' boycott of grapes, lettuce, and Gallo wines prompted the passage of the historic California Agricultural Labor Relations Act in 1975, both the UFW and the millions of men and women who backed the boycott naively believed the law would be enforced.

It was — for almost eight years. Long enough, that is, until growers realized that sharing their profits with farm workers in the form of fair wages and decent living and working conditions was more justice than they had bargained for. Long enough for growers to re-group, support a candidate for governor who would understand their own

brand of fiscal responsibility, and then reap a rich reward from non-enforcement of the farm labor law in exchange for the million-plus dollars they gave to put him in office.

The UFW did not need eight years to react. On July 11, 1984, only seven months after Republican Gov. George Deukmejian promised to uphold the laws of the state, seven months after he made the 1975 farm labor law more worthless than the ink used to print it, Cesar Chavez announced a new table grape boycott.

The goals of this boycott have nothing to do with a law. Even just laws, farm workers have learned, are no better than the tyrants who will not enforce them.

So, after 25 years, the struggle goes on. The sound of "Boycott grapes!" is again heard in the land. And will be heard until the rights of farm workers are restored — law or no law. 🇺🇸



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