

THE FARM WORKER STRUGGLE: A CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

- 1860's Chinese begin work on the Transcontinental Railroad. Upon completion, domestic workers push Chinese out of Utah.
- Because Chinese workers present themselves as a very cheap labor supply growers begin to use them for 75% of the California farm labor work force.
- The presence of the Transcontinental Railroad makes transport of farm products easier, and enables California growers to serve a larger market. Expansion is dramatic in perishable fruits and vegetable crops.
- 1883 - White workers migrate to California fields during depression.
1886
- 1890 Japanese immigration brings many new workers to the fields. Japanese workers displace Chinese by taking lower wages. This exemplified the growers' exploitation of one race against another.
- 1910 Many Hindus, recruited by shipping companies find their way to the California fields after exclusion from other jobs.
- 1924 Asian Immigration Act excludes Asian labor from job market. California growers entice Filipino workers to come here to work, and to leave their families behind. Growers promise workers a fortune they will be able to send back to their families. Many of these workers are still working here, without their families.
- 1930's A new wave of White and Black workers from the dust bowl area of Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas comes to California because of bad weather at home, and the depression, as chronicled by John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath.
- 1935 The National Labor Relations Act is passed to grant collective bargaining rights to workers. Farm workers are specifically excluded.
- Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (CAWIU) begins organizing field workers, while the AFL-CIO organizes shed workers.
- 1939 Two workers are killed in Pixley, California as they leave a meeting hall where workers were meeting to decide whether to strike against extremely oppressive growers. A posse of growers shoot into the crowd of workers. There are no convictions.
1942. When the city job market opens up during World War II, Agribusiness appeals to Congress for more alien farm labor. An "emergency" order, the Bracero Program is issued for male Mexican citizens to labor during California's harvest season. (This "emergency" measure is renewed in 19
- 1940's Fred Ross, Sr., travels through California organizing the Community Service Organization (CSO), to develop self-help for Mexican-Americans in urban areas.
- 1952 Fred Ross enlists the support of Cesar Chavez to organize on a full time basis for the CSO. The two men meet in Chavez' home in the San Jose barrio of Sal Si Puedes.
- 1957 Filipino farm workers form the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) in the Coachella Valley and affiliate with the AFL-CIO.

- 1962 Chavez leaves the CSO to begin organizing farm workers in Delano, Ca. Fred Ross later joins his efforts. The association that Chavez begins to build is called the National Farm Workers' Association (NFWA).
- 1962-1965 NFWA develops, providing a farm workers' credit union, newspaper, small life insurance program, service center. Membership grows; dues are \$3. per month.
- 1964 Because of pressure from labor, church and civil rights groups, the Bracero Program ends.
- 1965 The AWOC strikes ranches in Coachella for \$1.40 an hour. They then migrate north to Delano and strike there at 10 grape ranches. The NFWA joins them and the strike spreads to 48 ranches (5 years before the NFWA planned to strike). The NFWA, in joining the strike makes a formal commitment to non-violence.
- Dec. 1965 NFWA sends farm workers across country to gain support for the first boycott, the boycott of Schenley Products, which is aimed at supporting the AWOC and NFWA strike at the Delano ranches.
- March 1966 The two unions, one largely Filipino, the other largely Mexican-American hold a pilgrimage from Delano to Sacramento. During the march, Schenley signs a contract with the NFWA and the boycott shifts to DiGiorgio Company (S&W Products), another struck ranch.
- August 1966 AWOC and NFWA merge to form United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, AFL-CIO.
- Aug. 30, 1966 UFWOC wins representation election at DiGiorgio ranches with the Teamsters and No Union on the ballot. Elections are supervised by the American Arbitration Association.
- Sept. 18, 1966 Perelli-Minetti ranch signs a contract with the Teamsters Union without representational election (sweetheart contract). UFWOC calls a boycott not only of Perelli-Minetti but also of the stores that carry Perelli-Minetti products.
- July 1967 Teamsters give up Perelli-Minetti contract after UFWOC wins a representational election there. UFWOC signs a contract with Perelli-Minetti. Teamsters and UFWOC sign a jurisdictional agreement.
- 1966-1967 UFWOC wins elections and signs contracts with Christian Brothers, Gallo Almaden, Italian Swiss Colony and Paul Masson Wineries.
- Feb. 11, 1968 Cesar Chavez fasts 25 days to strengthen workers commitment to non-violence.
- 1967-1970 Farm workers and volunteers in every major city organize international table grape boycott.
- April 1- July 29, 1970 Table grape growers sign contracts with UFWOC in Coachella and San Joaquin Valleys.
- July 23, 1970 With grape strike and boycott coming to an end, UFWOC sends telegrams asking for union recognition from lettuce growers in Salinas, Santa Maria and Imperial Valleys.

- July 23,
1970 Salinas growers meet and decide to "feel out the Teamsters" about a contract for field workers. (This fact testified to in court by Cal Watkins of United Fruit on Sept. 1, 1970.)
- Summer 1970 UFWOC repeatedly requests elections at lettuce farms.
- Aug. 11,
1970 Teamsters and UFWOC announce new jurisdictional agreement. Teamsters agree to withdraw from lettuce contracts. Catholic Bishops Committee witnesses agreement. Growers refuse to sign with UFWOC.
- Aug. 24,
1970 7,000 lettuce workers strike growers with Teamster sweetheart contracts and ask for representational elections. The Los Angeles Times calls it the largest farm labor strike in U.S. History.
- March 26,
1971 Teamsters and UFWOC sign 3-year agreement countersigned by Meany of the AFL-CIO and Fitzsimmons of the Teamsters.
- Nov.
1971 After further negotiations and stalls, the UFWOC announces resumption of the lettuce boycott.
- Jan. 25,
1972 Nan Freeman, an 18 years old college student who responded to the strikers' call for help at Bell Glade, Florida was killed while picketing.
- Feb. 1972 AFL-CIO grants UFWOC an independent charter. New Name - United Farm Workers.
- Feb. 29,
1972 First contract in Florida with the Coca Cola company covering the worker in their Minute Maid citrus groves.
- May 3,
1972 UFW wins legal struggle with National Labor Relations Board. For the UFW to be covered by the NLRA at such a young age, would cripple it's ability to organize. Because of the Taft Hartley amendments, the NLRA makes it very difficult for new unions to form.
- Nov. 7,
1972 Proposition 22, a repressive farm labor initiative placed on the California ballot by the California Farm Bureau is defeated by a 61% majority.
- 1972 Arizona legislature passes repressive farm labor bill. Cesar Chavez begins a 24-day fast. A movement to recall Arizona's governor begins.
- Dec. 1972-
Jan. 1973 Frank Fitzsimmons visits Farm Bureau Convention; Teamsters announce new contracts with lettuce growers.
- April 16,
1973 Majority of Coachella Valley table grape growers refuse to renew contracts with UFW, signing instead with the Teamsters. Strike and renewed grape boycott begin.
- Summer
1973 San Joaquin Valley Growers also sign contracts with the Teamsters. On strike lines, mass arrests of farm workers and supporters are made, including many religious supporters.
- Summer
1973 Two UFW members, Nagi Daifullah, an Arab Immigrant and Juan De La Cruz, a 60 year old veteran of the UFW from its inception, were killed during the grape strike. Cesar Chavez calls off the strike.