

By Forests or By Fields: Organizing Immigrant Labor in the Pacific
Northwest, 1940-1990

By Mario Jimenez Sifuentez II

B.A. University of Oregon 2002

M.A. University of Oregon 2004

M.A. Brown University 2005

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of American Civilization at
Brown University

Providence, Rhode Island

May 2010

©Copyright 2010 by Mario Jimenez Sifuentes II

This dissertation by Mario J. Sifuentes II is accepted in its present form by the
Department of American Civilization as satisfying the dissertation requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Date _____

Matthew Garcia, Advisor

Recommended to the Graduate Council

Date _____

Evelyn Hu-DeHart, Reader

Date _____

Karl Jacoby, Reader

Approved by the Graduate Council

Date _____

Sheila Bonde, Dean of the Graduate School

Curriculum Vitae
Mario Jimenez Sifuentez II

Date of Birth:
March 25, 1979

Place of Birth:
Nampa, Idaho

Education:
Ph.D., American Civilization, Brown University, Providence, RI, 2010
M.A., American Civilization, Brown University, Providence, RI, 2005
M.A., History, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR, 2004
B.A., Ethnic Studies, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR, 2002

Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by thanking the most important people in my life, Mario and Lilia Sifuentez. It would be cliché to say that none of this would have been possible without them, but in this case, fitting and true. My parents are two of the hardest working people I have ever know and I am grateful that I have inherited a small portion of their work ethic. From an early age my parents instilled in me a profound sense of social justice that I strive to live up to.

My sister also deserves credit for this dissertation. We grew up close and I count her among one of my very best friends. I also live vicariously through her. While I write about labor organizing, my sister is entrenched in it. Her work with Jobs with Justice is invaluable and makes concrete change in people's lives. I don not tell her nearly enough how proud of her I am. Hopefully, now that it is committed to paper she can look at these printed words and know how often I think of her.

I would like to thank my enormous extended family. There are way too many of you to name, but know that each one of you has influenced my life and politics. My family has labored in the fields for over five decades and I am indebted to the sacrifices they made so that future generations could take advantage of opportunities they never had. My grandmothers have been an inspiration to me. Although very different from one another, I have never met two more powerful forces of nature.

My director, advisor, mentor, and brother Matt Garcia has played the most influential role in my life, with the exception of my parents. He continues to mentor me through a profession that I was ill equipped to handle. As the son of migrant farm workers and a first generation college student I had no idea what the writing of a

dissertation entailed. Matt Garcia has guided me through the transition from consuming knowledge to producing it. Matt welcomed me into his family and made the transition to graduate school an easier one. His children Mauricio and Timotea put a smile on my face more times than I care to count.

I would like to thank Karl Jacoby for his expertise in western history, environmental history, and for being a reader of my dissertation. Karl's passion has ignited in me a desire to become a better student of the environment and the West. I would also like to thank Evelyn Hu-DeHart for being a reader and for providing me a workspace at the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity. Evelyn also consistently opened the doors to her home for graduation, Super Bowl, and playoff parties. I learned a lot from Evelyn not only academically, but also as her *sous-chef*. While I am not yet a master of Chinese cuisine, I believe I am well on my way. My fellow graduate students, Matt Delmont, Marcia Chatlain, Sarah Wald, Julie Weise, Jerry Cadava, Hilary Jenks, Felicia Salinas-Moniz, and Mireya Loza, at one point or another offered invaluable advice, comments, sources, and suggestions.

My special thanks goes to Larry Kleinman and the people at PCUN. They have been gracious with their time, memory, and archives. I am grateful for their trust and for their work in the farm worker community. Larry Kleinman was essential to the completion of this dissertation. His insight, candidness, and connections led me down a fruitful path of discovery. The staffs at the University of Oregon special collections, the Four Rivers Cultural Center, Malheur County Library, University of Texas El Paso Oral History Project, and the Smithsonian all contributed to the completion of this dissertation. Special thanks goes to Erin Linell, for her help tracking down legal cases. Most

importantly I would like to thank the numerous people I interviewed for this dissertation. Their stories make up an important part of the history of this country and it was a privilege to share them.

As a working class student, affordable housing is at a premium and I would like to thank Julie Prince and Cuong Ong for providing a roof over my head while I wrote. In the same vein, during graduate school I worked as a construction worker, martial arts instructor, club security, and DJ. I am grateful to have met so many wonderful co-workers in particular Mannish, Cloudy, Mr. J, and Anibal. The political discussions that we had during work and after hours rival any that I have had in a classroom.

I would like to thank my other family. My family of friends that have kept me humble and grounded but still fiercely competitive. My best friend and brother Ty Shaw has been with me every step of the way since we were six years old. I am so proud of your accomplishments on the basketball court but even prouder of how you have grown as a human being. Your mother and father were instrumental in making me feel like I was somebody who had something to say. I hope that someday I can repay them for the generosity they showed me. I also hope that some day I can pay you back for all that you have given me.

A special acknowledgment to the other members of the Four Horsemen: Keith Allen, Ryan Shaw, and Marley Tucker, without you guys I would not be the person I am today. I will always remember our time at Oregon together as some of the most enjoyable and wild times of my life. I have enough stories to write a book, lets hope I never have that urge. I look forward to making more stories together in the near future.

While I was at Oregon I was also lucky enough to make the acquaintance of Huy Ong. Huy you are a tremendous activist and organizer. I appreciate everything that you have done for my sister and me. Your work is almost as priceless as it is thankless. Know that future scholars will be writing about the work you and your fellow activists do. As a graduate teacher at Oregon I had the pleasure of teaching many gifted students but one stood out amongst the rest. Mark Tanachi Padoongpatt is one of the reasons I love teaching so much. I am grateful to have had you as a student, a friend, and very soon a colleague.

To my friends I grew up with, you guys are a special inspiration to me. We faced many of the same difficulties in our lives and we traveled a myriad of different paths. Yet I do not know a group of friends that remains as close as we do after all these years. Thank you, Benny, Spank, Big Roach, Lil' Roach, Dom, JB, Manzo, Twinkie, Pelota, Butler, and Hall.

I want to thank those people who made my final year in Providence a memorable one. Maria Hwang, Heather Lee, and Tam Tran are just the latest in a long line of American Civilization graduate students that know how to have fun and at the same time be exemplary scholars. Finally and most importantly I want to thank Sarah Garcia. Your companionship, comfort, and love have proven to be the final push I needed to get across the finish line. You are one of the most compassionate, caring, genuine, and understanding people I have ever met. You are well on your way to being an outstanding doctor in your own right, but like a real doctor!

**From the Forests to the Fields: Organizing Immigrant Labor in the Pacific
Northwest, 1940-1990**

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1- Many Miles from Home: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest.....	25
Chapter 2 - Los Tejanos: Texas-Mexican Diaspora in Oregon.....	66
Chapter 3 - The Genesis of the Willamette Valley Immigration Project.....	103
Chapter 4 - Whip that Hoedad in the Ground: Undocumented Workers in the National Forest.....	147
Chapter 5 - “Now I Can Hold My Own With Anybody”: Immigrant Organizing and the Pineros y Campesinos Unidos Noroeste (PCUN).....	199
Epilogue.....	239
Bibliography.....	240

List of Illustrations

Figure 1: Map of Pacific Northwest

Figure 2: Railroad Pick

Figure 3: Atanacio Jiménez López and other railroad workers. Albany, Oregon

Figure 4: Map of Malheur County

Figure 5: Colegio César Chávez Poster

Figure 6: Willamette Valley

Figure 7: Ramón Ramírez

Figure 8: Map of Woodburn, Oregon

Figure 9: Hoedad

Introduction

In 1975 Ernest Callenbach's novel *Ecotopia*, about a secessionist, ecologically stable Northwest, gripped the nation. The novel was one of the first attempts to portray a sustainable society and influenced generations of environmental activists. It has sold over a million copies in nine different languages, was reissued in 2005 on the 30th anniversary of its release, and is a staple in environmental studies courses across the country.

For Callenbach the Pacific Northwest represents the solution to the ecological consequences of capitalism. *Ecotopia*'s high-speed rails, recycling programs, green-buildings, and population control have all become essential aspects of the "green" movement. Callenbach's world also has one other defining feature: people of color are essentially absent. Blacks have "self-segregated," Native Americans are relics of the past that allows *Ecotopia*'s residents to "play Indian," even going as far to give themselves "Indian" names and partake in ritualized warfare. Mexicans are non-existent in this ecological wonderland. In *Ecotopia* the workweek has been cut down to 20 hours. People who want to use the nation's abundant timber supplies must travel to the forest and contribute a month of labor to make up for their consumption. The residents of *Ecotopia* grow their own food on community farms and hunt for meat. For *Ecotopians*, work is not labor, it is a pleasurable exercise in sustainability. Perhaps *Ecotopia* does not need any Mexicans, because it does not need any workers?

For my family the Northwest represented something very different: work. Although born in Mexico, my father and the majority of his family considered themselves Tejanos. His father was born in Houston, Texas and left "voluntarily" during the depression. Twenty years later he returned with his brothers to the United States. As early

as the 1950's my father's family, along with other Tejano families lived, played, and labored in the labor camps, dance halls, and fields of Nyssa, Oregon. My mother came to Ontario, Oregon much later as a Mexican immigrant with her family. As the oldest, she labored in maquiladoras, in Texas cotton fields, and eventually made her way to Oregon where she met, fell in love with, and married my father. My parents represent two distinct waves of Mexican immigrants to Oregon: the Tejano migration that lasted from the 1950s to the early 1970s and the migration of Mexican nationals that followed in their wake. As a child my cousins and I worked in the fields alongside our parents, until eventually the agricultural sector in eastern Oregon declined.

The aim of this dissertation is to examine the role that ethnic Mexican labor played in fashioning the Northwest into one of the most productive regions in the country after the Second World War. Expanding water development projects, accelerated timber harvests, and a booming agricultural sector owe their success in large part to the labor of braceros, Tejano migrants, and Mexican immigrants, both documented and undocumented. This dissertation is a social, cultural, and political history of the lives of ethnic Mexicans in the Northwest and examines their struggles against racism and labor exploitation to carve out a place of their own.

A crucial component of that struggle is the history of the Piñeros y Campesinos Unidos Noroeste (Northwest Treeplanters and Farm Workers United), known by their Spanish acronym PCUN (pronounced "Pe-Coon"). The reforestation, nursery, and farm workers union's goal is to empower farm workers and eliminate systematic oppression and exploitation through collective bargaining, boycotts, legislative campaigns, and, most importantly, immigrant organizing. PCUN challenges previous notions of the

unorganizable nature of undocumented workers long held by labor unions who have struggled with the issue of citizenship, labor rights, and union organizing. Their commitment to organizing undocumented and documented immigrants make PCUN a leader among peers who are rethinking the relationship between farm work and immigrant rights.¹

The story of PCUN contributes to an already substantial body of work concerning farm workers and the farm worker movement. Many scholars point to César Chávez and the United Farm Workers Union (UFW) as an initial salvo of the “Chicano Movement” that would later spread to urban centers. Chávez has been the subject of a range of studies from his charismatic leadership² to his use of religion as an effective organizing tool.³

Most works have rightfully celebrated the contributions made by Chávez and the UFW. Marshall Ganz at Chávez’ side during the UFW’s fights provides an insiders look at the strategies and tactics implemented by the union to “beat Goliath.” Linda and Theo Majka impart a similar insider perspective, having also worked for the union, to weave a succinct narrative of the UFW’s formation, the grape boycott, and the war with the teamsters.⁴ The work of Ganz and Majka highlight the strategies implemented by the UFW to win collective bargaining agreements for the union. My work demonstrates the extent to which PCUN utilized those strategies and yet defined its own criteria for success.

Far fewer works have focused on the UFW’s failures as a union.⁵ Dorothy Fujita-Rony challenged the focus on Mexican workers and Chávez by demonstrating that the UFW initially constituted a multi-racial movement but plagued by ethno-centrism. Fujita-Rony argues that the César Chávez alienated Filipinos within the movement by ignoring

the anti-Marcos sentiments among his own organization and accepting an award by Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos.⁶ In contrast, PCUN developed an internationalist critique of imperialism, capitalism, and militarism reminiscent of the International Workers of the World (IWW) and Centro de Acción Social Autónomo (CASA). Unquestionably the UFW influenced PCUN's strategies, tactics, and vision, but PCUN also learned from the successes and failures of other organizations.

After Chávez' death in 1993, a debate concerning how to remember Chávez and his legacy began to emerge.⁷ Frank Bardacke and Miriam Pawel have offered aggressive and controversial reconsiderations of César's legacy that have been challenged by the UFW.⁸ This debate has opened a space not only for reconsideration of Chávez, but also new attention to organizations whose history has existed in the shadows of the UFW. For example, organizations such as the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) led by Baldemar Velásquez in Ohio and Piñeros y Campesinos Unidos Noroeste (PCUN) in Oregon have received little attention.⁹

In the early 1970s, organizers who sought to improve the condition of farm workers in Oregon looked to the United Farm Workers for guidance. The UFW had an initial presence in Oregon but failed to establish a solid union there, effectively abandoning the state. Their departure created a vacuum that PCUN later would fill. The union has been able to succeed and sustain itself as a movement, even during the anti-labor era of the Reagan administration, during which organized labor lost many struggles.¹⁰ PCUN's success came partly in being able to form a separate union, independent from the UFW. Three main factors contributed to their formation: the

leadership of Cipriano Ferrel a former UFW organizer and close friend of Chávez, the war with the Teamsters, and their commitment to organize all immigrant workers.

The conflict between Mexican Americans, resident aliens, and undocumented immigrants has deep historical roots, beginning with the Mexican Cession to contemporary debates over legalization. Historian David Gutiérrez traces the development of a Mexican American political culture that emerges at the end of the Mexican-American War to the evolution of differing political beliefs surrounding immigration and ethnic conflict in the civil rights era.

In *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity*, Gutiérrez examines the varied responses to undocumented immigration by the labor leaders Ernesto Galarza and César Chávez.¹¹ Similarly, I examine the attitudes, circumstances, and influences that led to PCUN's decision to organize workers within the context of immigrant rights, and how that decision has led to their long-standing success as union. Therefore my focus on PCUN contributes not only to the historiography of farm workers, but also to an increasing scholarship on immigrant right's movements, immigrant organizing, and transnational labor.¹²

Building on the work of Gutiérrez, I explore the connections between braceros, Tejanos, and undocumented immigrants in the Northwest. My dissertation traces competition and cooperation between the groups for jobs and social space. Like Gutiérrez I demonstrate the overlap between Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants. At various historical moments, such as Operation Wetback and the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act, the mixed immigration status of families became

painfully apparent. I survey those moments within this dissertation to make an argument for the diversity among Mexican laborers.

The farm worker struggle has long been one of the main foci of Chicano/a Studies scholarship and thus has influenced my work. The majority of this historiography has stressed the importance of Texas and California. Many think of Texas and California as main hubs for Mexican labor because of their proximity to the border. Devra Weber, in her book *Dark Sweat, White Gold: California Farm Workers, Cotton, and the New Deal* for example focuses on cotton workers during the New Deal in California. Weber elucidates the relationship between worker's culture and the industry, demonstrating that even as early as the 1930s workers saw themselves as transnational laborers. That consciousness is evident among the workers I explore in this dissertation. During the PCUN strikes, organizers encountered both resistance and cooperation from hometown associations that often determined the direction of a particular strike.¹³

Camile Guerin-Gonzales, in her *Mexican Workers and American Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939*, also prioritizes the role of culture as the basis for action by farm workers and growers. Specifically, Guerin-Gonzales interprets the ways in which Mexican farm workers and American growers internalized the notion of the "America Dream" that resulted in claims to legitimacy. provides an important tool for interpreting the actions of undocumented workers, who, in a legal sense, have very few claims to the American dream, yet at various times make claims on legal rights, citizenship rights, and civil rights. Both braceros and Tejanos had, in the eyes of the state, a more legitimate claim to legal rights than undocumented

workers yet did not engage in the radical labor organizing that those without papers engaged in.¹⁴

Although, David Montejano's *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* is not a farm worker history, it nevertheless is an extremely influential work in Chicano/a history. It is of particular importance to me because it lays out the historical, economic, and social forces that drove many Tejanos to leave South Texas and look for work in other parts of the country as farm workers. My work follows the lives of Tejano migrants after they have left Texas. With some exceptions, the Tejano migrations into the Midwest and the Northwest have been largely neglected. Dennis Valdés has made significant contributions, writing several books on Tejano agricultural workers in the Great Lakes region. Valdés' *Al Norte: Agricultural Workers in the Great Lakes Region, 1917-1970*, traces Midwestern sugar beet production from a labor force dominated by European immigrants to the eventual ascendancy of Tejano migrant laborers. In his follow up book, *Barrios Norteños*, Valdés examines how Tejanos and Mexicans settled and created an ethnic Mexican community in St. Paul, Minnesota; much in the same way Tejanos and Mexicans did in the Northwest.¹⁵

Zaragosa Vargas' book *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933* also contribute to the history of Tejano migration to the Midwest. Even though Vargas' main concern is the transition and daily life of Mexican industrial workers in the Ford manufacturing plant, he nevertheless contributes to the historical context of Tejano migration and expands the predominance of Chicano/a labor history¹⁶. W.K. Barger and Ernesto Reza add a sociological treatment of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), a farm

worker's movement based in Ohio and Michigan made up largely of Tejanos. The authors utilize "social change" theory to explain the successes of FLOC organizing efforts.¹⁷ Recent scholars have continued to stretch the geographical limits of Chicano/a history beyond the Southwest. Lilia Fernandez, Mireya Loza, and Gabriela Arredondo have all focused attention on the large Mexican population in Chicago. Arredondo's *Mexican Chicago: Race Identity and Nation: 1916-39* in particular explores the meaning of "Mexicanidad" in multi-racial Chicago and demonstrates the existence of a long-standing Mexican community in the heart of the Midwest. These works demonstrate both an urban and rural approach to Chicano/a history in the heartland.

Scholars from labor history and anthropology have also looked outside the Southwest to find examples of work place organizing among immigrants. Leon Fink's *The Maya of Morganton: Work and Community in the Nuevo New South* and Lynn Stephen's *Transborder Lives: Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon* both demonstrate the importance of indigeneity to migrations networks and grassroots organizing. Many of the new immigrants to places like North Carolina and Oregon are increasingly from indigenous communities in Mexico and Guatemala. My dissertation builds on the work of Stephens and Fink to demonstrate the capacity of indigenous and often undocumented workers to organize and their significance to the economies of locales outside the Southwest.¹⁸ I suggest that the large number of Mexicans in Northwest is indicative of the importance of Mexican labor to the country as a whole.¹⁹

Juan Gómez-Quiñones' tome, *Mexican American Labor, 1790-1990*,² is an impressive and wide-ranging look at the various levels of participation of Mexican Americans in the labor movement as a whole. Cleto Daniel's *Chicano Workers and the*

Politics of Fairness, Emilio Zamora's *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas*, and Zaragosa Vargas' *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights* all build upon Gomez-Quinones' work and closely examine the struggles of rank and file union members in various locales throughout California and Texas. All three furnish responses by Mexican workers and ethnic Mexican organizations to the formation of the Fair Employment Practice Committee and Roosevelt's Executive Order 8022 and 93346, which prohibited discrimination in wartime industries, government employment, and unions.²⁰

The focus on World War II era labor strife includes various works on the bi-lateral worker importation program between the United States and Mexico that came to be known as the bracero program. Manuel Garcia y Griego's article "The Importation of Mexican Contract Labor to the United States 1942-1964" remains one the most important pieces written regarding the bracero program. Garcia y Griego's macro-level narrative argues that the bracero program established the major contours of Mexican migration into the United States.²¹ Nowhere is that more true than in the Pacific Northwest. Previous to the bracero program the Mexican population of the Northwest was limited to scattered communities of migrant workers. Today, due in large part to the bracero program, Mexicans are the largest ethnic group in the Northwest. Thus this dissertation begins with the bracero program. Growers scrambled to fill the void left by the end of the bracero program in the Northwest and turned to Tejanos and Mexican immigrants to fill the labor need.

Ernesto Galarza's *Strangers in our Fields* and *Merchants of Labor* are scathing critiques of the inhumane conditions that braceros suffered at the hands of their employers.²² His works also go to great lengths to demonstrate the adverse affects that

the bracero program had on Mexican American workers. At times Galarza seems staunchly anti-immigrant, but his work belies the ambivalent position that Galarza would later develop as demonstrated by Stephen Pitti's *The Devil in Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race, and Mexican Americans*.²³ In the Northwest the exploitation of the bracero program paralleled the program in California in some ways. Housing and food were substandard, contracts were often violated, violence was prevalent and the days were long.

On the other hand, braceros in the Northwest received on the whole better wages, struck more often, and generally demonstrated a more militant stance towards their employers. My work seeks to complicate the conversation about the bracero program by examining the bittersweet experiences of men and families that participated in the bilateral labor program in the Northwest. While, the program as a whole was exploitative and inhumane, the men who engaged in the work saw themselves as agents of their own labor and performed with dignity. Erasmo Gamboa's *Mexican Labor and World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest 1942-1947*, details some of the numerous strikes, slow-downs, and walk-outs that braceros engaged in during the program. Gamboa's work stands as one of the few book-length studies on Mexican immigration to the Pacific Northwest. I build on his work through the use of oral interviews with braceros that worked in the Northwest at the time. The oral interviews provide a vivid and detailed account of the life a bracero and testify to the uniqueness of the program in the Northwest.

Studying Mexican immigration to the Pacific Northwest indirectly requires an engagement with the environmental history of the region. Major dam projects during the World War II brought millions of previously arid acres under cultivation for the first time

in eastern Oregon, Washington and western Idaho. The national forests of the Pacific Northwest are an essential part of the regions economy and reputation. Both have been the subjects of various works on the Pacific Northwest. William Robbins' *Landscapes of Promise* delineates the transformation damming and changing agricultural practices had on the Native America ecosystems in Oregon. His follow up book, *Landscapes of Conflict*, argues that the movement to the suburbs, the automobile, and the increasing fascination with outdoor recreation profoundly shaped Oregon's landscape. The intense use of land and timber would not be slowed until the 1970's when conflicts between environmental activists and the timber industry resulted in state regulations regarding land use, federal environmental standards, and the Endangered Species Act.²⁴

Unfortunately, Robbins fails to analyze the role that braceros, Tejanos, and Mexican immigrants played in the promise or conflict in the Oregon story. In contrast my work highlights the essential contributions they prominently played in Oregon agriculture.

In general, this project locates new points of intersection among labor history, Chicano/a history and environmental history.²⁵ Environmental historians have often been the culprit of macro-histories, stories that focus on the writings of great men about "nature," the corporations that destroy the natural environment, and the state apparatus that shape policy. Exceptions to the rule include environmental historians like Richard White, William Cronon, and Andrew Hurley have made concerted efforts to build the link between labor and environmental history.²⁶ White's work on the Columbia River connects the worlds of natural history and human history. He examines the labor organization of Native Americans on the river and lauds the connection that workers, such as fisherman and boat captains, have with the river. I expand this marriage of

landscape and laborers to contemporary Mexican laborers and extrapolate the meaning that they gave to their work with nature.

Despite these efforts, as Gunther Peck points out, “there remains little ‘nature’ in labor history and few working-class subjects in environmental history.”²⁷ My contribution seeks to add to those environmental histories that highlight the importance of the laborer. By focusing on the labor of immigrants I maintain that their work in the national forests constitutes farmwork and should expand our definition and narrative of agricultural work and environmental history. Dealing with immigrants also forces us to engage an analysis of race that is often missing from environmental history. Carolyn Merchant’s article, “Shades of Darkness: Race and Environmental History,” is a call to arms for environmental historians to include race into their courses and their conceptual frameworks. My work incorporates themes of environmental history, such as land use, the concept of “wilderness”, national forests, and pesticide use, in a manner that is in conversation with race, labor, and social justice.

The geographical focus highlights the importance of the national forest and the fields to the immigrant work experience. In addition to working in traditional row crops, undocumented Mexican immigrants labored in the national forests of the Pacific Northwest. Carey McWilliams’ *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California* exposed California agriculture as an exploitative industry. Many scholars have followed suit by debunking the myth surrounding particular crops; yet one crop that has continued to escape that debunking is the timber industry. In fact timber has escaped classification as a crop altogether until the mid-1980s. My research has demonstrated that the federal government does indeed see its national forests as a crop.

Consequently, the laborers in the forest should be thought of as farm laborers. My work builds on the efforts of environmental historians to illuminate the treatment of the national forest as an agricultural commodity.

Equally important, another goal is to follow in the tradition of scholars that have expanded the definition of resistance. Although traditionally labor militancy such as strikes, boycotts, and walkouts make up a portion of the resistance in this book, I seek to demonstrate the subtle and nuanced tactics that Mexican laborers implemented to alleviate their exploitation. Matt Garcia, Robin Kelley, and George Lipsitz have extended Antonio Gramsci's analysis of hegemony to working-class people in the United States. Kelley's notion of "infrapolitics" is crucial to understanding the actions of braceros, migrant farmworkers, and undocumented immigrants, as resistive.²⁸

My dissertation includes an array of differing forms of resistance. As James Scott demonstrates in *Weapons of the Weak*, workers resist in the forms that are available to them.²⁹ Thus, the braceros in my dissertation found ways to resist intolerable situations by skipping out on contracts. The Tejanos found cultural arenas to express their frustrations through sport and dance. Reforestation workers in the Northwest were undocumented and isolated and had very few options available to them. Yet they still sought out the help of the Willamette Valley Immigration Project, an organization whose history I document here. The workers filed back wage claims, procured immigration status adjustment, and eventually moved on to better work.

The later incarnation of the project, PCUN, learned from those lessons and also set goals that differed from traditional unions. Although PCUN's main goal remained the signing of collective bargaining agreements, they also saw wildcat strikes, slow-downs,

walk-outs, raise wages, back wage claims, minimum wage laws, and various other forms of resistance as a victory for farm workers and for the union.

Methodology

Through archival documents and oral histories, I attempt to illuminate the daily lives and struggles of ethnic Mexicans in the Northwest. While the archival work contextualizes and historicizes the lives of the workers, the “official” record often tells us more about what officials thought about Mexicans, rather than their actual lived experience. Coupled with the dearth of written records left by guest workers, migrants, and immigrants, ascertaining the thoughts, desires, dreams or anguish of the workers is a difficult task. For this reason, oral histories make up a significant portion of the source material for my dissertation.

I acknowledge that using oral histories produces certain obstacles to writing history. The interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee can obscure reality. People remember and interpret things through their own historical lens. Recognizing the potential for obscuring history, I critically examined the oral histories and placed them within historical context. In the interest of full disclosure, the majority of the interviews I conducted were in Spanish and hence translated by me. I acknowledge that this adds another opportunity for distortion or misrepresentation. I have consulted with colleagues, native Spanish speakers and texts for translation. Despite all the potential pitfalls of oral history I have chosen to use them because I believe that the insights of my interviewees far outweigh the potential for distortion. I agree with Gary Okihiro when he writes: “the

collective voice of the people once silenced has a right to be heard. Oral history is not only a tool or method for recovering history; it is also a theory of history which maintains that the common folk and the dispossessed have a history and that this history must be written.”³⁰ I was fortunate enough to do numerous interviews with individuals who lived through the circumstances that I write about. Over the course of the interviews my informants conveyed to me the importance they placed on me recording their history. I often heard complaints about the younger generation not knowing about the struggles, indignities, and victories they experienced as youth and young adults.

Their fears weighed heavily on me as it became clear that most of their memories did not appear in history books or even the archival sources. If we lose these stories we risk perpetuating the myth of the Northwest economy being a product of nature’s gift and not the labor of hundreds of thousands of Mexican migrants. We do not interrogate the origins of the food on our table, the roof over our head, and the comfort immigrant labor provides most Americans. I have included their voices in this dissertation in an effort to preserve those memories and provide insight into how they experienced their own lives.

The interviews served as a point of departure for many of the arguments in the dissertation and complicated many of my original archival findings. For example, the interviews expand the narrative by demonstrating the diversity of the ethnic Mexican community in the Northwest. Side-by-side Mexican nationals, Tejanos, documented and undocumented immigrants from the border state and the interior of Mexico all labored in the fields and the forests of the Northwest. This reality deconstructs the image of the Mexican peon, fleeing his or her rural village to the United States in search of a better life. The migrant stream consisted of guest workers, citizens, resident aliens and

undocumented aliens. They migrated for a variety of reasons, economic hardships, racial oppression, gender oppression, love, and adventure.

Chapter Overview

In my first chapter I introduced the bracero program in the Northwest. The presence of Mexicans in the Northwest dates back to the early 1800's. Mexican mule packers and cowboys made their way into Oregon, Idaho and to a lesser extent Washington. The influence of *Vaquero* (Cowboy) culture can be seen today in various work techniques, language, and customs. The 1900s saw a substantial amount of Mexican immigrants working in agriculture in the Northwest. Sociologist Paul Taylor made mention in passing in some of his field notes to the growing numbers of migrant workers moving further north up the West coast. These passing references, however, did not come close to matching the influx of Mexican nationals that came through the bracero program.

The bi-lateral agreement between the United States and Mexico introduced Mexican nationals on a large scale to regions not familiar with Mexicans. The experience of the braceros in the Northwest differed from their counterparts in the Southwest. Through the use of oral history and archival documents I look at the quotidian lives of braceros in the Northwest and their reactions to oppressive conditions. The chapter brings a voice to workers who we know very little about outside of the official record. Public Law 45, popularly known as the Bracero Program, has been the topic of various books. With few exceptions these works have all focused on Bracero workers in the US Southwest. The impetus for this project stems from my desire to fill this gap by taking a closer look the type of work the braceros performed, the conditions they worked in, the

treatment they received and their resistance. Also, how it was either congruous or discordant from mainstream conceptions of the bracero experience.

After 1949, the majority of bracero contracts in the Northwest were not renewed, but Mexican immigration did not stop. In fact the post-war period triggered increased immigration to Oregon thanks largely to massive dam projects that irrigated huge tracts of land. Despite its reputation as a green state, the majority of Oregon is arid land; the area east of the Cascades is considered high desert. Not much grows there besides sage brush, but the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project, the Grand Coulee Dam, Owyhee Dam Project and other efforts by the Bureau of Reclamation brought over a million acres of land under irrigation.

Chapter 2 focuses on the Tejano/a migration that filled the void the braceros left after the wartime portion of the program ended. With the increase of productive land, farmers needed a steady supply of labor and they found it in ex-braceros and their migration networks. These migrants were constituted mainly of internal migrants from Texas. The Tejanos were often second generation and children of braceros who had settled in the United State after their initial sojourn north. These migrants and their attitudes are of particular interest as their movement north was spurred just as much by opportunity as it was by the boom in undocumented Mexican immigration to the borderlands. These ethnic Mexicans who were also American citizens found themselves in competition with newly arrived Mexicans. David Gutiérrez was one of the first to posit the differences between Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants and its resulting tension.³¹ This model applies to my discussion about the tensions between Tejano migrants to the region and Mexican immigrants.

The Tejanos' position as American citizens and familiarity with English made the travel to Oregon more accessible than it was to recent arrivals. As Tejanos established themselves in Oregon, both of these factors often led to their entry into higher-level positions; as a result many became *contratistas* or contactors. By the 1960's these *contratistas* facilitated the migration of the newly arrived Mexicans and Oregon began to see an influx of ethnic Mexicans who were not internal migrants. This second chapter will explore 1950s as a time and space where the tensions, inequalities, and organizing traditions set the scene for social justice movements in Oregon. This chapter takes on added importance because of the time period. The 1950s has been overshadowed in Chicano/a historiography by a focus on World War II. The wartime generation receives ample attention and the Chicano/a Movement was, and to a certain degree remains, synonymous with Chicano/a Studies in general. Consequently, we know very little about the ethnic Mexican community during this time.

Chapter 3 traces the formation of the Willamette Valley Immigration Project (WVIP), a legal aid-based organization dedicated to servicing the growing immigrant community and battling the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). I trace the political influences of the United Farm Workers, the Centro de Acción Social Autónomo (CASA), and the other political organizations on the ideology of the WVIP and its growth into one of the strongest defenders of immigrant rights in the Northwest. Benefitting from Johnson's war on poverty, the WVIP solidified itself in the Willamette Valley through Community Action Program grants and would prove to be a thorn in the side of the INS and local authorities. The WVIP challenged the constitutionality of the INS' procedures and gained significant support from local citizens and immigrants alike.

Chapter 4 follows the WVIP's defense of immigrants in the reforestation industry. This chapter focuses on reforestation and the labor conflicts that arose between undocumented Mexican immigrants and the collective of white environmental activists and treeplanters known as the Hoedads. In the 1970's the federal commitment to reforestation gave rise to a new crisis, now that millions of acres forest lay bare, who would replant them? The Hoedads answered the call. Named after the specialized tree-planting tool, the Eugene-based collective of white male workers began as a group of like-minded leftist. The Hoedads saw reforestation work as the perfect opportunity to contribute to healthy forests and develop a worker's cooperative that put power in the worker's hands. Believing that the skill and difficult work that replanting trees required, gave them a decided advantage in contract negotiations, the Hoedads profited and expanded into a much larger cooperative, the Northwest Forest Workers Association.

But by the early 1980s the NFWA was faced with a new challenge, the influx of undocumented workers into reforestation. Initially the NFWA voiced sympathetic concerns to the conditions undocumented Mexicans labored under. Representatives of the cooperative insisted that the federal government and the contractors should be forced to pay an adequate wage to all workers. However, their actions and their words would change as the struggle intensified. I argue that this conflict demonstrates the gap between progressively minded white liberals and the problem that nation and race pose to their purported sympathy for all workers. Words like "local" and "sustainable" quickly came to carry nationalist and racist connotations as the NFWA saw Mexicans encroaching on "their" work. Their inability to work with the undocumented workers proved to be the

undoing of the NFWA and contributed to the continued exploitation of undocumented Mexican immigrants in reforestation.

Chapters 5 examine the development of the WVIP from an immigrant rights project to a full-fledged union. The failures of the WVIP to keep up with the INS as well as pressure from the immigrant community to do more pushed immigrant rights activists to reassess their strategies and think seriously about union organizing. With a small group of dedicated farm and reforestation workers, the WVIP rechristened itself the Pineros y Campesinos Noroeste (Tree Planters and Farm Workers United Northwest) better known by its Spanish acronym PCUN. The passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) had a lasting impact on the union. IRCA created a stir in the immigrant community. Unsure of the law's meaning, procedures, and eligibility standards, many turned to PCUN for answers. The union responded by continuing their tradition of immigration work, conducting immigration workshops, and helping people adjust their status. PCUN seized the opportunity to substantially build its base from 200 members to over 4,000. PCUN spent the next several years planning and building a base in order to take on the multi-million dollar agricultural industry in Oregon. The sixth and final chapter tells the story of that fight from the late 1980s to the mid 90s. Oregon saw its first agricultural strike in decades and PCUN rose to prominence as a legitimate political power.

When I was a teenager I was lucky enough to be given a copy of Rudy Acuña's *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*.³² I dutifully read the book from cover to cover, over and over, but the longer I read, the more attention I paid, and the harder I squinted, I still could not find a single reference to my neighborhood, my town, my state,

or even my region. I still have that third edition; it is marked up, highlighted, smeared, and food stained. It helped radicalize me. It gave me comfort and made me angry, but it could never answer my most pressing questions. Why there were so many of us here? How did we get here? Why do we work in the hardest jobs? Why did people treat us so poorly? One day while I was in the Malheur County library looking through 50-year-old newspapers, I ran across a story about a 23-year-old migrant worker who died on August 13, 1951. The details of the death were sketchy; the only thing for sure was that he suffered a head injury and that he left his wife and three small children behind. The man's name was Remijio Sifuentez, who I later learned was my grandfather's younger brother. The news came as a shock to me. I had never heard of this man and I had never heard stories about losing a family member. When I spoke to my parents, they confirmed that my father had lost an uncle before he was even born. He never knew much about the man and his family moved away. Shortly after Remijio's death my grandfather named his newborn boy after his brother. Until I read that newspaper article in the Malheur County Library, my Uncle Remi was the only Remijio Sifuentez I knew. I hope that what follows in these pages is a testament to those who labored and died in the fields, canneries, sugar refineries, packing sheds, nurseries, and forests so that their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren who they had yet to meet could live a better life. I write this in the hopes that my great-uncle's life was not in vain or forgotten.

¹ For instance see the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, a community based workers organization.

² Dalton, Frederick John. *The Moral Vision of César Chávez*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2003.

³ Hammerback, John C. and Richard J. Jensen. *The Rhetorical Career of Caesar Chavez*, 1st ed. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1998.

⁴ Ganz, Marshall. *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009; Majka, Linda and Theo Majka. *Farm Workers, Agribusiness and the State*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1982.

⁵ Ferriss, Susan, Ricardo Sandoval and Diana Hembree. *The Fight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farm workers Movement*. 1st ed. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1997; Griswold del Castillo, Richard and Richard A. Garcia. *Caesar Chavez: A Triumph of Spirit*, The Oklahoma Western Biographies; V. 2 Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995; Matthiessen, Peter. *Sal Si Puedes (Escape If You Can): Cesar Chavez and the New American Revolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000; Ross, Fred. *Conquering Goliath: Cesar Chavez at the Beginning*. 1st ed. Keene, California: United Farm Workers: Distributed by El Taller Grafico, 1989.

⁶ Fujita Rony, Dorothy. "Coalitions, Race, and Labor: Rereading Philip Vera Cruz.," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 3.2 (2000).

⁷ Chacón, Ramon D. "César Chávez Boulevard: Efforts to Suppress a Commemoration and Chicano Political Empowerment in Fresno, Ca.," *Latino Studies Journal* 6.2 1995. Mariscal. "Negotiating César: César Chávez in the Chicano Movement.," *Aztlan* 29.1 (2004).

⁸ Bardacke, Frank. "César's Ghost: The Decline and Fall of the U.F.W." in the *Nation* July 26, 1993 and Pawel, Miriam. *The Union of Their Dreams* Bloomsbury Press, 2009

⁹ Barger, W.K. and Ernesto M. Reza, *The Farm Labor Movement in the Midwest: Social Change and Adaptation Among Migrant Farm Workers*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994; Stephen, Lynn. *The Story of PCUN and the Farm worker Movement in Oregon*. Eugene: Department of Anthropology, University of Oregon, 2001. This edition had only a limited run of 500 copies.

¹⁰ Davis, Mike. *Prisoners of the American Dream : Politics and Economy in the History of the Us Working Class*. London: Verso, 1986.

¹¹ David Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

¹² Gordon, Jennifer. *Suburban Sweatshops: The Fight for Immigrant Rights*. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005; Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette. *Doméstica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

¹³ Weber, Devra. *Dark Sweat, White Gold: California Farm Workers, Cotton, and the New Deal*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

¹⁴ Guerin-Gonzales, Camile. *Mexican Workers and America Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor 1900-1939*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press 1994.

¹⁵ Valdés, Dennis. *Al Norte: Agricultural Workers in the Great Lakes Region, 1917-1970*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991 and *Barrios Norteños: St. Paul and Midwestern Mexican Communities in the Twentieth Century*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000

¹⁶ Vargas, Zaragosa. *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

¹⁷ Barger, W.K. and Ernesto M. Reza, *The Farm Labor Movement in the Midwest: Social Change and Adaptation Among Migrant Farm Workers*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994

¹⁸ Fink, Leon. *The Maya of Morganton: Work and Community in the Nuevo New South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003 and Stephen, Lynn. *Transborder Lives: Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.

¹⁹ Labor history and Chicano/a history often intersected given the predominance of most ethnic Mexicans' working class backgrounds and encounters with labor exploitation. The founding works in the field have focused exclusively on the Southwest. Mario Barrera's *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality*, Albert Camarillo's *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to America Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930*, and Mario García's *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920* are groundbreaking works in Chicano/a history and are instrumental to understanding the historical roots of the oppression of Mexican laborers.

²⁰ Daniel, Clete. *Chicano Workers and the Politics of Fairness: The FEPC in the Southwest, 1941-1945*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991; Gómez-Quíñones, Juan. *Mexican American labor, 1790-1990*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994; Vargas, Zaragosa. *Labor Rights are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth Century America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005 and Zamora, Emilio. *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas: Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II*. College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2009.

²¹ Manuel García y Griego "The Importation of Mexican Contract Labors to the United States, 1942-1964" in *Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigrants in the United States* ed. David G. Gutiérrez. Jaguar Series on Latin America. Scholarly Resources Inc. Wilmington Delaware

²² Galarza, Ernesto. *Merchants of Labor : The Mexican Bracero Story : An Account of the Managed Migration of Mexican Farm Workers in California, 1942-1960*. San Jose: Rosicrucian Press, 1964 and *Strangers in our Fields: Based on a Report Regarding Compliance with the Contractual, Legal, and Civil Rights of Mexican Agricultural Contract Labor in the United States* Washington DC, 1957

²³ Pitti, Stephen. *The Devil in Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race, and Mexican Americans*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003

²⁴ Robbins, William G. *Landscapes of Promise: The Oregon Story, 1800-1940*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999 and *Landscapes of Conflict: The Oregon Story, 1940-2000*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004.

²⁵ White, Richard. "American Environmental History: The Development of a New Historical Field" in *The Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 54 No. 3 1985 pp. 297-335

²⁶ Cronon, William. "Modes of Prophecy and Production: Placing Nature in History" *The Journal of American History* Vol. 77 Winter 1990 Andre Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1990*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1995; White, Richard. *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1995; White, Richard. "Are you and Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living" in *Uncommon Ground: Toward*

Reinventing Nature ed. William Cronon. New York: W.W. Norton, 1995; Worster, Donald. "Seeing Beyond Culture" *The Journal of American History* Vol. 77 Winter 1990.

²⁷ Peck, Gunther. "The Nature of Labor: Fault Lines and Common Ground in Environmental and Labor History" in *Environmental History* 11 April 2006 pg. 212-238

²⁸ Matt García, *A World of its Own: Race Labor and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001; Kelley, Robin. *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*. New York: The Free Press, 1994; Lipsitz, George. *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism and the Poetics of Place*. London: Verso, 1995.

²⁹ Scott, James C. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985

³⁰ Okihiro, Gary. "Oral History and the Writing of Ethnic History: A Reconnaissance into Method and Theory" in *The Oral History Review*, Vol. 9 (1981) pg. 27-46

³¹ Gutiérrez, David. *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995

³² Acuña, Rudy. *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* 3rd Edition, Harper Collins College Division, 1988

Chapter 1

Many Miles from Home: The Bracero Program in the Pacific Northwest

On August 4, 1942, the United States and Mexico entered into a bilateral agreement to bring temporary Mexican guest workers into the United States. Despite claims that the “bracero” program sought only to alleviate labor shortages brought about by the war, the program lasted until 1964. Over the course of 22 years, the bracero program issued 4.6 million contracts. During the early days of the bracero program the Pacific Northwest received a substantial number of braceros. Characterized by Mexico’s relatively powerful bargaining position, these early days of “Wartime Cooperation”¹ between 1942-1947 marked the largest influx of braceros into the Pacific Northwest. In a five-year period Pacific Northwest farmers imported over 40,000 braceros.²

Erasmio Gamboa’s *Mexican Labor and World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest, 1942-1947* argues that although certain rights and conditions were guaranteed by the workers’ contracts, those rights were often violated and contract workers often found themselves in exploited situations. I argue that braceros in the Pacific Northwest were more militant and organized than their brethren in the Southwest, and often-engaged in strikes, slowdowns, work stoppages, and other forms of resistance. This chapter seeks to further elaborate on the notion that the experience of the braceros in the Pacific Northwest constitutes a unique narrative not only for their militancy but also because of the type of work they performed, the wages they earned, and the migration patterns they established.

A close study of the Pacific Northwest demonstrates how circumstances played out on the ground. In addition to archival documents and newspaper articles, I use oral

interviews extensively.³ Although the interviews are anecdotal in nature, I believe they shed light on the everyday lives of braceros. In many instances the memories of the bracero reinforce the archival record. For instance, many recall squalid living conditions that various government reports, newspaper articles, and other sources confirm. On the other hand many of the braceros recalled, girlfriends, fights, and humorous stories that rarely appear in the traditional archive. These stories are essential to learning about the men who labored as braceros in the Pacific Northwest. In addition, these men began the dependence of growers on Mexican labor. Prior to the second world war the work force was multi-racial, consisting of Japanese, Filipinos, Native Americans, white dust bowl migrants, and Mexicans.⁴



Fig. 1: Map of Pacific Northwest

Early Mexican Migration to the Pacific Northwest

Even though large-scale migration of Mexican immigrants did not reach the Pacific Northwest (Oregon, Idaho, and Washington) until the advent of the bracero program, a small number of Mexican immigrant communities existed before 1942. For example, Erasmo Gamboa conducted a number of interviews in the 1970s and 1980s with long-time Mexican residents of Idaho and Washington, many of whom were present since the early 1900s. In Yakima, Washington one was even dubbed the “valley’s first Mexican” by the Yakima Daily Herald in 1923.⁵ The 1930 census recorded the number of US born ethnic Mexican’s in the Pacific Northwest at around 3,000, and the “foreign-born” Mexicans at 2,500.⁶ Although these numbers come fraught with complications, it nevertheless gives us an indication of the small presence of Mexicans in the region.⁷ During these years Mexicans worked in sugar beets, potatoes, and hops. Given the small communities of permanent residents, the population often doubled during harvest time. The Idaho-Utah Sugar Company brought in as many as 1,500 Mexican seasonal workers to Idaho in 1928.⁸ In addition to agricultural work, they also worked on railroad crews, sugar beet factories and construction crews.⁹ By 1929, “traqueros” or Mexican railroad workers made up 60 percent of the crews in the region.¹⁰

Scholars have generally considered the 1930’s a turbulent and traumatic time for the Mexican and Mexican-American community. The ravages of the great depression paved the way for anti-immigrant hysteria, and eventually, the deportation and repatriation campaign.¹¹ Government officials, citizen groups and media outlets blamed Mexicans for taking jobs away from citizens. This effort led to the eventual repatriation

of 500,000 people, both Mexican and Mexican-American. Given the few number of permanent Mexican residents in the Northwest few concerted efforts to repatriate Mexicans appear in local newspapers.

The depression did not hit Pacific Northwest farms as hard as the rest of the nation. Residents of the region often lived on farms and fed themselves. Other farms took advantage of their diversified farms to switch production to profitable crops.¹² For example, the repeal of prohibition saw the acreage in hops expanding exponentially.¹³ Hops, a labor-intensive crop with a relatively short growing period, required a large army of labor. Five thousand acres of hops required the same amount of workdays as 54,000 acres of orchards. Many newspapers at the time reported that in small towns throughout the Northwest, Mexicans came in the hundreds to labor in the hop fields during the depression.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the Idaho-Utah Sugar Company continued to recruit Mexican workers into the region. In 1909, the Immigration Commission reported that the majority of sugar beet workers in Oregon were Japanese, but with the Japanese slowly moving into truck farming, other sources of labor were required. A short decade later, Mexicans came to dominate in the sugar beet fields.¹⁵

The communities met the Mexican immigrants with varying degrees of resistance, ranging from angry letters to the local papers, protests, criminalization and even violence. In response to the complaints from Idaho labor leaders, the Idaho Sugar Beet Growers Association defended their practices by claiming the local white population did not have the “expertise” that the Mexicans possessed. In reality Northwest farmers went to great lengths to recruit skilled Mexican workers. They often traveled to recruiting centers in Mexico well before the harvest to train potential employees. By the time the bracero

program went into effect growers association had already been familiar with the Mexican field worker.¹⁶

Once the US became involved in World War II, the fear of labor shortages in agriculture reached a fevered pitch. The war drafted hundreds of thousands of able-bodied men into the military, while the need for workers in the defense industry drew people away from farms and to the cities. Places like Seattle, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Portland became critically important ports for the war effort.¹⁷ In the Northwest, Seattle and Portland became crucial production centers; Boeing and Kaiser attracted thousands of workers from the region and beyond.¹⁸ Although some Mexican American men found increased job opportunities, most jobs went to whites. African Americans found some respite from the discrimination through the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) established by Franklin Roosevelt.

Clete Daniels establishes in his book, *Chicano Workers and the Politics of Fairness*, that the FEPC failed to address the grievances of Chicano workers because of fear that abuses against Mexican American workers would reflect poorly on the United States effort to administer the bracero program. Roosevelt reasoned that if Mexican officials learned about the abuses Mexican American workers suffered they would be less likely to send braceros to the United States.¹⁹

The shortage of agricultural workers hit eastern Oregon particularly hard. Malheur County in eastern Oregon has long had one of the largest populations of Mexicans in Oregon by number.²⁰ Dependent on Mexican migrant labor, Malheur County officials noticed fewer and fewer Mexicans coming to work in the fields in the months following Pearl Harbor. This fear was compounded by the fact that Idaho and Oregon had

just recently made a large investment in farmland. By 1940, Idaho and Oregon had irrigated and cleared nearly 2,895,000 acres of formerly sagebrush-covered land.²¹ With reclamation projects coming to a close, Malheur County and other eastern Oregon counties desperately needed labor. In eastern Washington, an analogous situation arose. Yakima officials sent sheriff's deputies onto the Yakima Indian Reservation in search of loitering "Mexicans and Negroes".²² Ostensibly, the "Mexicans and Negroes" avoided work by passing themselves off as Indians and hiding out on the reservation.

Local newspapers urged all able-bodied people to get out into the fields and work. Schools ended early in order to allow students to aid in harvesting crops. Stores limited their hours of operation during the harvest, and police officers rounded up the indignant and "hobos." Many farmers believed that farmers in California were responsible for "hoarding" Mexican migrants.²³ Farmers experimented with the Farm Security Administration's domestic migrant program, but found that many of the southern whites who relocated to Oregon and Idaho immediately skipped out on their contract to head for Seattle and Portland's defense industry jobs. Despite reservations, Northwest farmers had little choice but to turn to the recent development of a contract labor system with Mexico.

As Erasmo Gamboa demonstrates, growers initially resisted the idea of importing Mexican labor.²⁴ The growing labor crisis, however, forced farmers, politicians, and citizens to reconsider their position. The sentiment against the importation of foreign Mexican labor faded. By the end of the first phase of the Bracero program, 220,640 contracts were issued, 41,000 of them to Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. Idaho received 1,240, Oregon 1,300 and Washington 2,500 in the first year alone. These numbers would continue to swell during the life of the bracero program in the region.²⁵

The Bracero Program: Romance, Railways, and Reception

Initially the bi-lateral agreement between the United States and Mexico included a number of precautions intended to protect Mexican workers from abuse and exploitation. Employers could not use braceros for military service, as strikebreakers, or outside of agricultural service. The contract required employers to pay transportation costs to and from Mexico, guarantee employment for three-quarters of the contract, provide adequate housing, and pay a prevailing wage. Finally, discrimination of any kind was prohibited. Employers in the Northwest met the conditions haphazardly and inconsistently at best and braceros in the Northwest responded to violations in their contracts with strikes, slow-downs, and skipping out on their contracts.

The contracting of braceros varied from time to time but was a fairly standardized procedure. Mexican authorities under the auspices of Bureau of Migratory Farm Labor Affairs were responsible for recruiting workers in Mexico. Potential candidates had to demonstrate good character, receive a recommendation from local officials and could not own land, Mexican officials worried that small farmers would abandon their land for wage work. If a candidate met the requirements they would travel to an assembly center, usually located in a major city in Mexico. Hermosillo, Chihuahua, Monterrey, Mexico City, Guadalajara, Empalme and others served as major assembly centers throughout the program's history.

At the assembly centers the men answered standardized questions and had their hands revised for signs of wear. Rough and calloused hands were indications of a life of hard work, thus suitable for farm employment. After approval the men boarded trains or

trucks for the trip north, making one more stop at reception centers at the border. The arrival at the reception center meant another revision by potential employers, fingerprinting, and a medical evaluation. The medical evaluation included the degrading practice of stripping down nude in front of female nurses, inspected for venereal disease, tuberculosis and “disinfected” by being sprayed with DDT.²⁶

Once the men had passed their medical and immigration examinations, growers waited on the other side to select the men they wanted. In the reception center the supply frequently outnumbered the demand; as a result braceros had to take whatever offer the growers made to them. If a bracero failed to be contracted within five days he had to return to home.

As soon as the bracero completed his contract, he was returned to the reception center and given an identification card that served as a recommendation of sorts should he chose to return to work as a bracero. For many men the return trip lasted a day or two and they were immediately re-contracted and headed back into the United States, often for the same grower. Re-contracting occurred often and men often completed numerous work contracts in a year. In theory the bracero program functioned this way for twenty-two years but a closer look at the participants of the program reveal a more detailed and nuanced picture.²⁷

Atanacio “Nacho” Jiménez López was born in 1924 and orphaned at the early age of five. Taken in by family members, he was put to work and suffered beatings at the hands of his uncle. After one particularly vicious beating he ran away from home at the age of ten. Nacho found work in Guadalajara aiding cement workers for one peso a day. His board, an old barn that he had to share with assorted pack animals, cost him three

centavos a day. After a few years working in various occupations including harvesting wheat, López eventually made his way to the contracting center in Querétaro.

No sooner had he arrived in Querétaro than he was robbed of his entire savings. Although no official fees existed for enrolling in the bracero program the multitude of people seeking to be braceros provided the opportunity for corrupt officials to take “mordidas” or bribes for processing an individual’s application. Without the money for the bribe and alone in Querétaro, López was forced to look elsewhere for work. Hungry and without a job López sought work at a restaurant. When he was refused he attempted to steal some tortillas and was caught. In front of the court, he explained his precarious situation and the judge ordered the bailiff to take López back to the restaurant and check out his story. When the restaurant owner confirmed the story, the bailiff was ordered by the judge to buy López all the food he wanted and to direct the restaurant owner to give López a job. The restaurant owner gave him a job. He worked as a dishwasher for a few weeks until by chance a friend of his from his hometown came into the restaurant. Combined with the money he had made and a loan that he borrowed from his friend, López went to sign up at the contracting center.

Once contracted by the Mexican authorities, López boarded a train to Ciudad Juárez. In the early years of the program the reception center did not resemble the reception center of later years. López never went through the disinfection or examination period his first time through. He would later experience the spraying and examination when he returned from Oregon and reentered the United States as a bracero in the 1950’s. Waiting for them at the train station in Oregon, various farmers and contractors waited to separate them out like so many herd of cattle, “fifty this way, ten this way, they took us

off one train and put us on other ones [trains] headed to different places.”²⁸ López had no idea he was about to go work for a railroad company. As far as he knew they were all there to do agricultural work.

López began working on the railroads laying tracks in Tangent, Oregon. He remembered his primary boss with great fondness: “He was a big white guy from Texas, his name was Bill, he liked me a lot I worked really hard. I never stood still.” López’ industriousness earned him the ire of his crew boss, a Mexican national from León, Guanajuato named Modesto. Modesto and López often clashed; López recalled: “the old man was a despot and an ugly, ugly man.”²⁹ The clash between López and Modesto demonstrated that a shared heritage did not necessarily mean fair treatment. In fact as it was often the case, Mexican foremen abused and mistreated workers more so than Anglo employers.

Railroad work required an immense amount of skill. Upon arrival all of the braceros went through an extensive training period, during which they watched films and learned how to operate machinery. Their wages often reflected this, making a dollar an hour or more, far above the thirty cents an hour established as the prevailing wage by the bi-lateral agreement.³⁰ In reality braceros often earned less than thirty cents a day in California, yet still made more money than they could in Mexico. The wages in Oregon represented a significant increase in pay.

Railroad work was divided into three distinct jobs, removing and replacing railroad ties, laying track, and flagging. New arrivals would begin by removing and replacing old railroad ties. They would use a jack and pick to lift up and remove rotted out railroad ties, replacing them with new ones, then set the new ones in place and drive

down the railroad spikes with a sledgehammer. Once workers proved their ability to work hard they were promoted to laying and adjusting tracks.

As tedious as replacing railroad ties could be, laying and adjusting track was by far the hardest work. Although train tracks were held in place by ties and ballasts, every pass of a train would cause a tiny shift in the track. Over time the shifts become substantial enough to derail a train. Teams of braceros would revise a section of track to determine if there were any loose tracks and mark the track. Behind them followed another group of braceros that would pry the tracks back into place. López described the work: “We would put in a mile, two miles depending on the job...it was very rhythmic, it was like we were trying to make music, teams of two, usually the best guys, stand on each side of the rail and use this tool here (shows interviewer the tool) and we would work our way up the track ting, ting, ting, ting.”³¹ Every four ties one of the team members would place a spike on the rail and be held in place by one of the braceros and the other would strike the spike into the rail. Following them would be a team of braceros ensuring that the spikes were secure. One other job in railroad work required less manual labor and was paid better.



Fig. 2: Railroad Pick

The envy of the camp was the flagger. López eventually received the training to be a flagger: “If the boss trusted you enough you could be a flagger, that’s what I was. I was a flagger. I was young and single but I was always very responsible.”³² A flagger’s responsibility included walking up track from the worksite at least two miles to lay railroad detonators. A torpedo, as the workers often called it, was a device that made a loud bang in order to warn conductors of upcoming maintenance on the railway. Flaggers would strap the torpedoes to the rail using a lead strap. When the wheels of the train passed over it the conductor would hear the loud bang and begin to slow the train down for approach. Simultaneously the flagger would be waving a red flag but often in the fog, snow or darkness of the mountain the flag could not be seen, making the execution of the torpedoes essential. If the flagger failed to properly set the torpedo the train would derail at the worksite and the results would be disastrous. Once the train had stopped, the flagger, having few English skills, would have written instructions for the conductor on how to proceed. Overall, the work was difficult and carried an immense amount of responsibility, so braceros had to find a way to unwind.



Figure 3: Atanacio Jiménez López and other railroad workers. Albany, Oregon

After all the hard work the braceros still managed to find time for entertainment. López's testimony gives us a special insight into the social life of the bracero in Oregon. Although the Mexican community in Oregon was not as substantial as those in California, in nearby Salem, Oregon, López still found a community to escape to on occasion. Traveling north on highway 99 López went to Salem for Mexican Independence day every September since 1943.

Entertainment for the braceros also came on a more regular basis. López recalled the many dances during his time in Oregon with great enthusiasm: "Every Thursday and Saturday they had dances in Albany...those places were packed with women, all their boyfriends were gone off to war!"³³ The dances charged a fifty cents entry fee and were mostly attended by braceros and Anglo women. When asked if this interaction created any tension between them and the community, López responded "no way! They were happy to see us...as long as you had a nice *tacuche* on they were all over you!"³⁴

Although López frequented those dances and made many acquaintances among the local women, he only considered one his girlfriend, the daughter of one his Mexican bosses. López recalled, "they (his daughters) were born in the United States and they spoke English very well."³⁵ López found a welcoming community and consistent contact with Anglos. He often traveled to Eugene, Portland, Salem, and Corvallis on the weekends. He went to dances, movies, and the occasional patriotic festival. The 4th of July and the 16th of September, Mexico's Independence Day, were the most common occasion for celebrations in the camp. In most instances both holidays were recognized with song and dance but in some cases camp managers refused to celebrate Mexico's Independence Day.

Augustin Bautista, like López before him, also came to Oregon in the early years of the program with his older brother and worked on the railroads. Bautista was born in Jiquilpan, Michoacán, Mexico and made his first entry into the United States in 1943. His first contract in railroad work had him working on the Western Union railway that stretched from Sacramento to Las Vegas. After six months his initial contract was up and he returned to the border to reenlist in the program. He enjoyed railroad work so much that he sought out another contract in the railroads.

His second stint brought him to Klamath Falls a remote isolated town in southern Oregon. Bautista remembered the town fondly: “It was very comfortable but it snowed a lot.”³⁶ Like López, Bautista remembered the difficult and often dangerous work; a short time after arriving in Klamath Falls, tragedy struck. After only three days on the job, Bautista and his crew were riding on a flatcar with all their tools, eating lunch as they rode to the next job. Suddenly their car was derailed and one of his compatriots from Puebla, José Luis Vargas, fell onto the tracks and was killed: “Nothing happened to me and my brother was slightly hurt, but after that no one else was hurt. Thanks God,”³⁷ Bautista recalled. Over the next eighteen months, Bautista worked as a tracklayer and eventually also as flagger. The work took him all over Oregon and introduced him to a diverse cast of characters.

The multiracial composition of the Northwest workforce created opportunities for collaboration as well as racial hostilities. The *Idaho Statesman* reported that in Emmett, Idaho a “colorful harvest” began with “Mexican nationals...Gypsies and transient Filipinos.”³⁸ Farmer Louis Mort commented, “It is quite a sight, probably the most picturesque aspect of the scene being the colorful costumes of the Gypsies.”³⁹ Tom Hicks

of the United States Employment Service added that he saw “imported Mexicans, Japanese-Americans, Southern Negroes, somber Indians, Southern whites...and colorfully garbed Armenian Gypsies all working together.”⁴⁰

The exuberance about the “colorful” workers in the fields soon became stories of tension. Violence between workers often flared up in the camps. As Matt García demonstrates in his book *A World of Its Own*, braceros were surrounded by a culture of violence.⁴¹ Animosity towards braceros emanated from nativist rhetoric that often led to local residents harassing braceros. Law enforcement officials held prevalent views of Mexicans as vagrants, drunks, gamblers, and prone to violence. Police bias often led them to treat Mexican workers violently. In addition intra-ethnic tensions between resident Mexicans and the braceros often emerged from romantic competition as well. But fights also occurred over quotidian things such as laundry and food.

Twin Falls, Idaho was the scene of a violent confrontation between Jamaican workers and southern whites over the use of the laundry facilities.⁴² The disturbance began when white southerner James Visser struck a Jamaican camp supervisor attempting to quell an argument between Visser and an unnamed Jamaican. The half-hour long brawl ended without serious injuries, but Visser landed in the county jail. Perhaps used to the racial order of things in the south, Visser’s father was irate that his son was being held in jail and responded with veiled threats of continuing violence. When pressed, he backed off his threats and stated that he was moving his family out of the labor camp and that “several other white workers are doing the same thing.”⁴³

In Weiser, Idaho a “near riot” broke out when braceros began to complain about the food that their Jamaican cooks had prepared. Mexican braceros told the reporting

sheriff that the Jamaican cooks gave the best food to the Jamaican guest workers. The braceros dumped their food on the floor of the mess hall and protested. The men refused to go back to work until they received assurances that Mexicans would also be allowed to cook.

Bautista for his part never had complaints about the food and had a more pleasant experience with other races. It seems he fell into a unique situation: “There were some Chinese that ran a little restaurant and the food was good and they treated us very well. They even spoke Spanish and told us they were contracted from Veracruz.” The Chinese cooks’ Spanish proficiency seemed to be attained while living in Veracruz. Chinese immigrants have a long history of migrating to Mexico and crossing into the United States. Bautista did not know how the Chinese arrived in Oregon or if they worked as braceros, but this is potentially a case where Chinese immigrants passed themselves off as Mexican braceros in order to enter into the United States.

Monitoring living conditions on the farms proved to be a particularly difficult task. In 1943, the bracero program had only two inspectors housed in Portland’s Mexican consulate to oversee the labor camps in five states: Utah, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and Montana.⁴⁴ Bautista recalled that the presence of inspectors was sparse: “We saw them every now and then to check the camps but we were comfortable.”⁴⁵ Housing for both López and Bautista varied from comfortable to barely tolerable. If they were operating from their home base they lived in adequate housing “it was a house made out of railroad ties, you know like they had in the old west. We had heaters and wood stove for cooking.”⁴⁶ However if their work took them to remote locations, which railroad maintenance often did, they would sleep in railroad cars

Wherever the train dropped us off along the line they would also leave a converted railroad car. You could fit about 10-12 men on bunk beds in each car.... it got cold at night. Man it was cold out there; snow would come down like you wouldn't believe...balls of ice.⁴⁷

For their part Bautista and his fellow braceros never complained about the living conditions. Elsewhere, however, braceros fought bitterly to improve their housing. In *Mexican Labor and World War II*, Gamboa describes over fourteen different strikes in the first three years of the program. Most of the labor action resulted in higher wages and improved housing for the braceros.⁴⁸

Bautista's isolation made it difficult to experience the same amount of freedom that López enjoyed. Bautista explained, "We never really went into town. We just bought our beer at the local store and hung out in the cabin."⁴⁹ Occasionally however, they were able to travel to Portland on the weekends: "Every now and then they would put us on a train to Portland. We wouldn't ride on a regular train either; we rode in a passenger car *puro* first class! We had no idea where we were going. We just got off wherever the train stopped."⁵⁰

If per chance they ended their week's work in the vicinity of a town they often tried to explore the town. In one instance their work brought them near the small town of Chiloquin, Oregon that has a majority Native American population. Bautista found he was attracted to many of the women in Chiloquin and confessed to his boss "Tex" that he believed they were interested in him too: "Go talk to them, Tex would tell me...what was I going to say to them? I didn't speak English. But man they were beautiful; they looked

just like Mexican women.”⁵¹ Bautista remained in Oregon for fourteen months and remembered his time in Oregon with great fondness.

Bautista and López’ fondness for Oregon was in part influenced by the type of work that they performed and the timing of their arrival. Manuel García y Griego writes, “The employment of contract laborers by this industry, particularly in tasks related to the maintenance of railway, was unique to the wartime period and an aberration in the history of the bracero program.”⁵² While this time period represents a relatively short phase of the bracero program it nevertheless is an important window into the lives of guest workers.

Juan Contreras also came to Oregon in the early years of the program as an agricultural worker. Born the son of a soldier stationed in Chiapas, Juan left home at an early age and left for Mexico City in early 1942. He had heard rumors that the program was going to be initiated but it had not been signed into law yet. Nevertheless he went to the Secretary of External Relations in Mexico City to pre-enroll in the program.

About fifteen days later he received a telegram at his home informing him that if he was still interested then he needed to present himself at the Buena Vista train station, in Mexico City. When he arrived there he received his bracero contract, number seventy-six. Contreras recalled: “I was one of the first braceros.”⁵³ At the train station American officials handed out jackets and shoes. The mood was festive, musicians awaited them and bid them farewell playing “Las Golondrinas.” In true Catholic Mexican tradition, a priest blessed the rail car and the men. Since the program was new, many rumors circled around the intention of the program.

Initially, many were excited about the prospects of traveling north, some believing that it was their patriotic duty to aid in the war effort. Others lost their nerve and started to believe the rumors that they were being conscripted into the army “a lot of people jumped off the train at the first stop. They thought we were going to the war. Me and my friends that were with me, we decided oh well if they want to take us to war, we will go to war...we started with seven Pullman cars full of braceros and by the time we got to El Paso there were only three or four cars full.”⁵⁴

This adventurous spirit was typical of many of the first braceros and many of them were not campesinos in their daily lives in Mexico.⁵⁵ Instead they sought adventure and in many cases found it in the United States. This was only possible for the early braceros; later in the program an inspection process at the border was set up to screen the braceros for soft hands. If their hands were not calloused enough they would be denied entry. For instance Contreras, a resident of Mexico City had not previously done manual labor, a fact that ill-prepared him for his time in Oregon.

When the train arrived, a throng of intrigued spectators lined the Portland train station. An American style band played as the men walked off the train carrying both Mexican and American flags. The crowd however was in for a surprise: “a lot of them thought we were going to walk off with a huge sombrero and a serape...but that was a lie, because most of us were from Mexico City, we didn’t dress like that. They must have been thinking ‘what are these *cabrones* (bastards) wearing!’”⁵⁶ In Yakima, Washington, the locals also eagerly anticipated the arrival of the braceros, and in this case, got exactly what they were expecting according to newspaper reports. The *Yakima Daily News* sarcastically described the men and their attire: “Many of them wore their native broad

brimmed hats, which will stand them in good stead later on.”⁵⁷ The implication of course is that the clothes that these newly arrived braceros wore would not suit them well for the bitter Northwest weather.

These misunderstandings between the braceros and their American hosts occurred more than once. On one occasion the camp managers threw a “party” for the braceros, the gringos’ idea of fun was vastly different from what the men had imagined. Contreras recalled laughing, “we thought they were going to bring us alcohol and have a party, when we showed up, they had ice cream for us,”⁵⁸ The cultural missteps did not end there:

...they tried to make us feel comfortable you know, they brought a woman in to teach us how to dance. Since we were Latinos they wanted to teach us a Latin dance. But you know she was from Argentina or Brazil somewhere...she asked if we wanted to dance with her, one guy got up and told her I can’t dance with you. I don’t know how to dance like that. I dance like we dance in Mexico. She told us ‘I will find some music for you’.⁵⁹

The next week the woman came back with an Augustin Lara album and the men ended up teaching the woman how to dance. She never returned to the camp. The Americans however, were not always so welcoming.

In California, established Mexican American communities offered braceros the opportunity to court, date, and marry Mexican American women. As historian Matt García demonstrates, this courtship often led to violence between Mexican Americans and braceros.⁶⁰ But in Oregon the lack of a Mexican American enclave meant that braceros often sought out Anglo women to court.

Employers worried constantly of the potential threat braceros posed romantically. Fear of miscegenation led camp managers to issue warnings to all the arriving braceros. Contreras recalled: “We received warnings about socializing and flirting with *gringas*. He [the camp manager] told us that if we flirted with *gringas* then the police would come and take us to jail and put a ball and chain on us, but it wasn’t true. The *gringas* would come looking for us! One time three or four of them came looking for us and took us to a creek. Before you knew it they were naked and jumping in the water. We followed in after them...and they were even Mormon!”⁶¹ For all three men, the absence of rival men created a unique situation for them in Oregon. The lines of masculinity and miscegenation were clearly drawn for them prior to arrival but they constantly transgressed and pushed the boundaries. Anglos were either unwilling or unable to police those lines to the extent that would limit the braceros access to white women.

Contracted by the fruit canning company Libby’s, Contreras found his housing to be fairly comfortable. After arriving in Portland they were driven to a camp outside of town. Their Mexico City heritage betrayed many of the American’s expectation when they stepped off the train, but their urban lifestyle would soon betray the braceros in the field. In the first few weeks of cherry picking. Contreras joked: “I think we ate about as much as we picked.”⁶² They received a dollar per bucket but Contreras failed miserably, “for my part, I never filled a bucket,”⁶³ luckily for Contreras the cherry only last about a month. After the cherry harvest ended, Libby’s passed them from fruit orchard to fruit orchard so often that Contreras lost track of his whereabouts.

With the fruit harvest over, Contreras remembers being handed over to the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company and working in Idaho. Contreras explained: “Sugar beets grow at

different times in different areas, they grew in zones, so we would thin one zone, harvest another, and then come back to harvest the zone we had thinned earlier.”⁶⁴ Unfortunately his wages in the sugar beet harvest paled in comparison to the cherry harvest. The growers, recalled Contreras, “had all kinds of excuses, the sugar beets weren’t packed right, they were too green, they never left us with much money.”⁶⁵

Newspapers reports indicate that companies transported braceros to various locales throughout the three states. The procedure to attain braceros required farmers to form associations to determine their labor needs collectively. Made up of small farmers, association members often only needed three or four braceros. Such a small request would have been denied by the Department of Labor. The associations requested large number of braceros and passed them from one member to another. Under these circumstances the treatment of braceros varied greatly, literally changing on a week-to-week basis. In some cases, braceros worked in Idaho during the day and slept in Oregon.

In the case of eastern Oregon and western Idaho, associations formed on the border of the two states that included both Oregon and Idaho farmers.⁶⁶ Although belonging to the same association, farmers often paid different wages. Braceros in Oregon on the whole tended to receive better wages and housing than their counterparts in Idaho. The braceros noticed the difference, especially since some of them worked in Idaho one week and Oregon the other.

Initially, local employers were pleased with the work of braceros. They spoke often about the pliable nature of workers and their ability to learn quickly. *Northwest Farm News*, a weekly periodical based out of Bellingham, Washington, consistently praised the efforts of braceros; one farmer stated: “The men are good workers. They want

to work and they do the work.”⁶⁷ It seemed early on that the employers had found exactly what they were looking for.

The desire for cheap labor was limited to what the local employers believed was inherent in the braceros’ culture while at the same time quite different from earlier Mexican migrants. A farmer’s wife commented to the local newspaper: “We sure like these new Mexicans, they want to work all the time...they are eager to get their money to send it back to Mexico.”⁶⁸ But that fondness would not last for long, soon braceros began to resist the exploitative conditions.

Bracero Resistance

Workers resisted in a variety of ways. Depending on the means available braceros implemented various practices to challenge exploitation. One innovative practice called “loading sacks” became so commonplace that camp managers wrote about it extensively in their reports. In the bean harvest for example, braceros weighed down bags with rocks in order to make their pick heavier and as result get paid more.⁶⁹ Braceros found a myriad of ways to make their lives more bearable, including walking away.

Camp managers complained more heavily of desertion than anything else. Regardless of the decent pay and community reception, many of the braceros still skipped out on their contracts. The local economies made this an attractive option, as jobs were plentiful in other sectors of the economy. Some scholars have argued that desertion was less likely in areas outside of Texas and California because of the lack of a stable Mexican community in which to blend into and the distance from the Mexican border made it hard for braceros to return home.⁷⁰ The WFA in Portland however estimated that

close to twenty percent of the braceros had abandoned their contracts in 1945.⁷¹ “López saw many of his compatriots leave for greener pastures, he recalls: “People would leave all the time. The work was hard and it was a lot of responsibility. Some people couldn’t handle it and went back to California.”⁷²

In addition to leaving for California, many braceros traveled throughout the Northwest looking for other work. Stipulations in the bracero agreement between the two nations limited the eligibility of braceros to agricultural work. Farm Labor Associations interpreted these stipulations as allowing cannery work. Many of the farmers also owned canneries and began placing braceros in the canneries in violation of the braceros’ work contract.

Across the country growers often used braceros in jobs that fell outside of purview of the original contracts. Farmers could easily argue that locals were not suited for and did not want farm jobs, especially in the wake of upsurges in defense industry jobs. Cannery work however was something entirely different in the Northwest. . Matt García, Vicki Ruiz, and Patricia Zavella have each demonstrated that cannery work was often considered a “good job” and filled primarily by whites.⁷³ Unable to compete with the rising wages of defense work, cannery managers responded by offering lower wages to Mexican women. In the Pacific Northwest, cannery managers turned to bracero labor.

The displacement of white workers by braceros caused a stir, but farmers continued to use braceros in the canneries despite the protests from the white community. Responsible for placing braceros on worksites, the local extension service refused to certify workers in these new jobs and warned farmers not to place them in non-agricultural jobs.⁷⁴ Farmers ignored the threats from the extension service and continued

to argue that cannery work constituted agricultural work. They were so pleased with the braceros performance and cheap labor that they began to employ braceros in a variety of jobs that were not approved by the work contracts.⁷⁵

Eventually the fears of the extension service came true. Protests of white workers sprang up all across the Northwest. In Washington alone, Mt. Vernon, Puyallup, Seattle, Wenatchee, Prosser, Kennewick, and Walla Walla all saw instances of white workers protesting and picketing canneries, that frequently erupted into violence against braceros.⁷⁶ The tension spilled over to other canneries and generated friction between canneries run by association members and independent canneries. Independent canneries began to get in on the action and recruited workers away from the farmers who held the braceros' work contracts.⁷⁷ This caused a great deal of tension between the canners and farmers, but it also provided an unexpected benefit for the braceros. Mexican workers jumped ship and went to work for one of the better paying canneries, nurseries, and packing plants in the Northwest. Employers eager to acquire the labor of braceros were willing to pay more than what they were able to earn in the fields.

Of course, in order to skip out on a contract, braceros needed a reliable form of transportation. In Contreras' case, a way out came in the form of an automobile. Together with four of his fellow braceros, they saved enough money over time to buy a car. Although still racially stigmatized, underpaid and now in the country illegally, the car gave Contreras and his friends a limited amount of freedom and mobility.⁷⁸ Contreras felt free if only for a moment. Coupled with that newfound mobility, another competitor for the cheap labor came from other farmers who were not certified to have braceros.⁷⁹

Contreras remembers that a farmer had told him that he could make more money on another farm: “Most of the guys were skeptical, but a few of us were willing to try anything, he told us to meet him at the other end of the field in the morning and he would pick us up.”⁸⁰ In a practice that came to be known as bootlegging, after getting their assignments braceros, would wander off to other fields where word of mouth was that they were being paid better wages than in the current camp. Workers would go pick on another farm get paid in cash and then return to their camp and still receive wages from the base camp.⁸¹ This provided some measure of relief for the braceros who were finding the conditions in the labor camps unbearable. Of course skipping out on their contract also posed the risk of apprehension and deportation.

By the end of 1946, the Work Force Administration had issued an official statement informing local canners and their employers that the hiring of braceros without a contract was illegal and that they would be sanctioned for it.⁸² However the practice did not stop and there is little evidence that the employers were ever punished. The grower that encouraged Contreras to skip out on his contract needed help on his small farm because his sons had been fighting in the war and only required help for a few months. During their time on the farm, the grower taught Contreras and his friends a great deal about harvesting and thinning sugar beets, including providing them with better equipment.

After completion of the work on the Texan’s farm, they took their newfound skills, equipment and car, and set out to look for new work. They found work that paid significantly better: Contreras exclaimed: “We made between eighteen and twenty dollars a day each, before that we made three or four [dollars a day]!”⁸³ The more time braceros

spent in the Northwest the more astute they became and the more opportunities they created for themselves. Workers like Contreras took advantage of situations as they arose and farmers began to take notice.

One Anglo camp manager summed up the belief that workers needed to be constantly recycled through the bracero program: "In the first year they are very cooperative, in the second year they are too smart for their own good, the third they begin to think they are running things and by the fourth they expect to take over."⁸⁴ He and many others argued that the longer the workers stayed in the United States the more unmanageable they became. An unidentified camp manager wrote, "I conscientiously believe, we would have a better working condition if we had a yearly change."⁸⁵

Although there is some obvious apprehension and perhaps paranoia about workers in the statements made about the braceros, there was reason to believe that the more time workers spent in the United States, the more aggressively they asserted their rights. The number of braceros in the Northwest began to tail off during the five-year period the program operated in the region while labor demands stayed virtually unchanged. This leads one to believe that thousands of braceros worked in the region after their contracts expired or skipped out on their contracts all together.⁸⁶

In the first year of the braceros' arrival, there was very little mention in newspapers of strikes or resistance from workers. By the second year, however, these incidents became commonplace. In Twin Falls, Idaho, 285 braceros struck the Amalgamated Sugar Company for two days in June of 1945. Braceros had been receiving fifty cents an hour for harvesting beets, twenty cents above the prevailing wage set by Mexico and the United States, yet they were not happy with the pay. The strike involved

only the braceros in the camp that were working an hourly wage. The more skilled work, thinning and hoeing, paid on a piece-rate of eleven dollars an acre. A skilled worker could finish between one or two acres a day.

Braceros that worked in the harvest clearly felt that they were being underpaid and as a result went on strike. Bracero representative Rubén Gómez called a meeting with the Farm Labor Association of Twin Falls demanding a wage increase to eighty cents an hour. The labor association deliberated and came back to the braceros with an offer of seventy cents an hour, and Ruben Gomez accepted on behalf of the braceros he offered the farmers a way out of the strike: “If we are paid seventy cents per hour, there will be no difficulties from now on.”⁸⁷ Country Agent Albert Mylroie assured readers that “the agreement will be strictly enforced on both sides...and the first worker violating it will be sent back to Mexico.”⁸⁸ In retrospect, the threat seems empty. If the Amalgamated Sugar Company and the Twin Falls Labor Association had the desire or wherewithal to deport the braceros it would have seemed prudent to do so at the first sign of trouble. Instead they chose to negotiate and no further disturbances were reported.

Even before the first braceros arrived, the Idaho legislature took steps to try to avoid such an event. In 1943, Idaho approved a draconian antiunion law in anticipation of union leaders flooding the state and unionizing workers. The law made picketing and boycotting agricultural products illegal and made it unlawful for any union organizer to set foot on a farm without the owner’s consent.⁸⁹ What the Idaho legislature had not anticipated was that braceros would lead themselves.

Only two months later on Wednesday, August 7, a separate group of 170 braceros working at the Lincoln labor camp in Twin Falls, Idaho staged a strike. The action was

stirred up by the arrival of fifty new braceros from northern Idaho, where they had been receiving seventy-five cents an hour for picking cherries. Stanley Boyle, the placement officer, informed the newspaper that “upon their arrival they advised camp officials they would not work at the current sixty cents per hour for common farm labor here, at the time, others in the camp went to work as usual.”⁹⁰ The next day, however, no one entered the fields. Overnight the men had been able to convince 120 other braceros not to go to work; Boyle claimed that men had approached him to work but that they were afraid of the strike leaders.

Nevertheless, when three braceros attempted to enter the fields, the cadre of strikers began to boo them and they promptly left, got into a contractors’ car, and drove away, presumably to another work location. Believing that the men were under duress from the strike leaders, labor camp officials called in the sheriff’s office claiming that a riot was developing. The braceros, however, remained calm and did not force a confrontation with the Sheriff. The officers went on to inform the strikers that if they wanted to work, the sheriff’s deputies would protect them. No one took him up on his offer. Labor camp officials capitulated and raised the men’s wages to seventy cents an hour. The strike committee promptly accepted the offer and returned to work the following Monday.

Disturbances, strikes, work stoppages, and walkouts occurred monthly. One camp manager decided to bring in a new crew of braceros and remove the ones that he had on the site for nearly three years after those braceros went on strike. When he returned to remove the workers, he found them staging a sit-in inside one of the barracks that housed them. He refused to negotiate with them and instead called on local law enforcement to

have them forcefully removed. However, when the new arrivals, witnessed the action they too refused to work and the camp manager was forced to renege on his threat.⁹¹

At Dixie camp in Walla Walla, Washington only, 29 out of the 500 men brought in through the bracero program were employed. They spent most of their day sitting around the camp while at the same time being charged for meals and boarding. To protest the lack of jobs, all of the men refused to work unless at least half of them were given jobs. When the farmer refused to agree to such conditions, over 300 of them staged a massive walk off and began working in local canneries.⁹²

Despite farmers' hard-line stance toward labor militancy, they nevertheless had their hands tied in many instances when dealing with the braceros. Unlike in the Southwest when workers went on strike, they could not be easily replaced. The long distance between the contracting centers and the farms meant losing valuable time if they tried to import new braceros. Farmers often had little choice but to give in to some of the demands in order to get braceros back to work. This made the Northwest a hotbed of labor unrest. In part this made the consulate in Salt Lake City particularly bold in its defense of braceros and the fact that the majority of all Mexican nationals in the region were braceros forced the consulate to focus its attention on the braceros plight.

The Mexican Consuls and Bracero Militancy

Numerous studies abound in Chicano/a history concerning the role that the Mexican consuls have played in the Mexican American and Mexican immigrant community. The works range from dismissing the consuls as uninterested in the plight of

common people to being a crucial defender of the rights of Mexican workers.⁹³ Gilbert González argues in his book, *Mexican Consuls and Labor Organizing*, that the consul played a crucial role in the labor politics of southern California during the pre-war era. The consul operated on a conservative, largely nationalistic, premise that often caused divisions within the unions.⁹⁴

The consuls continued their conservative trajectory during the bracero era in southern California. Unions such as Galarza's National Farm Worker Union saw the consul as an impediment to labor organizing. Growers used braceros as strikebreakers despite provisions that prohibited them from doing so. González demonstrates that the consul took no action and in fact condemned the union. In the Northwest the consuls took on a decidedly different role. The consuls in the Northwest went to great lengths to protect braceros from abuses and negotiate on their behalf during strikes. Perhaps, because the majority of the Mexican nationals in the Northwest were braceros, or because of the distance from Mexico City, Northwest consuls appeared to have slightly more autonomy than their counterparts in southern California.

In a routine inspection of the labor camps and surrounding areas in the Northwest, a consul official noticed signs in various Idaho towns. Twenty and forty miles west of Boise, Idaho, establishments in Nampa and Caldwell, Idaho hung signs reading "no Mexicano aqui" and "we cater to white trade only."⁹⁵ The consul responded to the signs by threatening to remove all braceros from Idaho as per the "no discrimination" clause in the bilateral agreement with Mexico. Texas had already been blacklisted before the start of the program and Idaho was on the verge of being removed as well.

The Notus Farm Labor Committee acted quickly to meet with the owners of the businesses and had the signs removed from Caldwell restaurants and bars. It clearly understood the importance of the braceros to their members' operations: "We have worked hard to get the labor in here and it is doing us a service...if by our discriminating signs we are to lose the labor it will be a blow to the farmers of this area."⁹⁶ Twenty miles east in Nampa, the Franklin Farm association met with the Nampa Chamber of Commerce to protest the placement of "trafico blanco solo" (white customers only) signs from various stores. The lack of an established Jim Crow tradition made the newly placed signs vulnerable to pressure.

In a letter sent to the chamber of commerce, Arthur L. Wittenberger stated: "The signs are irritating to the workers and to their government, whose operation is necessary to the continuation of the laborers"⁹⁷ Again the chamber capitulated to the requests of the farm labor association. These conflicts underline the existing tension in Idaho about the presence of Mexicans in the community. The elimination of Jim Crow signs and the raising of wages are indications of the braceros' determination and the Mexican consuls resolve. It also reveals the relatively weak bargaining position of Northwest farmers. Unfortunately the end of the war brought about administrative changes in the program that put the power back in the farmers' hands.

The end of the war weakened the bargaining position Mexico held. With soldiers returning from the war, US farmers felt they no longer had to bend to the will of braceros. Strikes occurred less often and bracero advocates felt the repercussions. The removal of Ignacio Pesqueira, the consulate in Salt Lake City was another sign of Mexico's deteriorating status. Ignacio Pesqueira often encouraged workers to go on strike and

protest for their rights as workers under the arrangements made in their contracts. He mediated various strikes throughout the region and more often than not won concessions for braceros. He was involved in strikes in Preston, Sugar City, and Lincoln, Idaho but his stellar record would not last long. For reasons that are unclear, he was reassigned to New Orleans and replaced with the more conservative Carlos Grimm.⁹⁸ The braceros, however, continued to pursue militant action.

In June of 1946, over 1,000 braceros and non-braceros, walked out of Nampa and the surrounding labor camps to protest working conditions as well as wages.⁹⁹ The strike lasted from June 17 until June 26, when Consul Carlos Grimm of Salt Lake City intervened.¹⁰⁰ At its peak the strike involved 500 braceros in four different labor camps. The existence of cooperation between braceros and non-braceros belies the notion that braceros were always in competition with local workers. In this case the braceros made up half the striking workers and even called in the Mexican consul. The strikers agreed to return to work for ten days until a meeting could be held between local farm officials and the Mexican consulate. Ten days later, the Mexican Consul had yet to show up. The men went back on strike.

The Mexican consul responded by sending a telegram urging the braceros to go back to work. At two separate nighttime meetings with farm labor officials, representatives of the braceros agreed to return to work the following morning. Both times the promise failed to materialize and the braceros continued the strike. The strike lasted for eight days when a meeting between the consulate and the farm labor committee finally took place to discuss a prevailing wage. The meeting resulted with farmers and the consulate agreeing that the sixty cents per hour was reasonable and did not give in to the

braceros demands for seventy cents per hour. An indication of Mexico's waning position vis-à-vis the United States government, the braceros went back to work without incident signaling demise in the strong bargaining position they once held.

Braceros in the National Forest

Uncertified farmers, rogue contractors, and canneries all vied for the labor of the bracero and contributed to the assertiveness of the bracero. Soon the federal government would become involved, too. In 1944, the National Forest Service began to recruit braceros to work on their fire crews and in reforestation.¹⁰¹ Once the work on the farms was done, state officials moved workers into industrial forest management. J.R. Beck, state supervisor of the emergency farm labor program, announced in the *Oregonian* that “now that the canning pea and cherry harvest are completed...there will be about 600 Mexicans in excess of farm demands until the middle of August...if not employed they may be moved to the Middle West.”¹⁰² Instead of losing the workers to Midwest farmers, state officials put braceros to work in the forest.¹⁰³ The transition from industrial forest management to forest firefighters happened quickly.

Various fires broke out in the summer of 1945 near the Coeur d'Alene National Forest and Nez Perce National Forest in Idaho prompting the National Forest Service to bring in workers from surrounding labor camps.¹⁰⁴ The blazes destroyed more than 200,000 acres and required an immense amount of labor. Department of Agriculture official José Romero reassigned 210 braceros from the labor camps in eastern Oregon and western Idaho to the major fires burning throughout Idaho.

The majority of the braceros were selected to dig fire lines; other jobs included reforestation and pest control. Unlike cannery jobs or packing jobs, the braceros often had no choice when it came to working for the NFS. Despite the WFA's insistence that the men go voluntarily, the NFS rarely obliged. Rounded up and put into trucks, the braceros never knew their destination until they reached the forest. As time passed, the practice was cemented and it became a routine procedure. While job competition created higher wages for braceros in the canneries and packinghouses, the forest service offered no such bonus.

In fact the wages the NFS paid were considerably less, even lower than what the braceros were paid on Oregon farms.¹⁰⁵ Francisco Murillo Almaraz was contracted as a reforestation worker in Oregon. Despite the low wages, Almaraz still made more money in reforestation in Oregon than he did doing farmwork in California but in the end, it was not enough to keep him in Oregon. Almaraz complained: "It was too cold and there were too many snakes."¹⁰⁶ He lasted three months and skipped out on his contract. He returned to Enpalme, Sonora, and found a new contract that kept him in California for the years to come.

We know very little about the braceros who worked in industrial forest management. Almaraz' short stay is indicative of the high turnover rate of braceros who worked for the National Forest. The newspapers consistently mentioned the bracero presence in fighting forest fires, digging fire lines, and thinning and replanting trees, but we still know very little about them. Thirty years later Mexican immigrants working in the national forest would once again dominate the headlines. (See Chapter 4)

Conclusion

As the war drew to and end, the bracero program in the Northwest for all intents and purposes ended as well. The story of the braceros in the Northwest provides a story of resourceful resistance. Braceros pushed the limits of power beyond what most people have given them credit for. They understood the pressures on farmers and exploited them to gain whatever advantage they could. Despite Mexico's privileged position, the men still risked a great deal to stand up for their rights and in the Northwest the story was frequently triumphant. Unfortunately post-war changes to the bracero program took much of the power out of the Mexican government's hand. It was during the post-war period that the majority and most-heinous abuses against braceros occurred.

The presence of braceros in the Pacific Northwest had a lasting impact. Undoubtedly workers suffered hardships and trying times like their counterparts in the Southwest, but the program also afforded many of these men an opportunity for adventure and to better their lives. They also began a large-scale migration of Mexican-Americans and Mexican immigrants into the Northwest. Many of the men returned as undocumented immigrants after their contracts expired. Some made a home in the Northwest and others brought friends and family.

On January 11th, 1948 the *Oregonian* proclaimed the return to normalcy on Oregon's farms and announced "the farmer can again get his cherries picked without wondering how to say it in Spanish."¹⁰⁷ The *Oregonian* echoed the sentiments of the majority white population; they believed that the presence of Mexicans in the Northwest had been an aberration, a temporary evil brought upon by the war effort. Local whites believed that "the Mexican nationals are gone and won't be coming back."¹⁰⁸ The

Oregonian, however, could not have had it more wrong. The flow of ethnic Mexicans and Mexican nationals had just started. In spite of the trouble that braceros caused farmers, they persisted in the belief that Mexicans were suited for fieldwork. Coupled with the never-ending pursuit of cheap labor, farmers continued to seek out Mexican farm workers. An unidentified farmer appearing in the same story indicated his intention: “In eastern Oregon we will still be recruiting Mexicans, this time from Texas and California, to work in the sugar beets.”¹⁰⁹ The Texas-Mexicans (or Tejanos) that the farmer referred to came to characterize ethnic Mexican migration for the next twenty years.

¹ Manuel García y Griego, “The Importation of Mexican Contract Labor to the United States 1942, 1964” in *Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigrants in the United States* ed. David G. Gutiérrez. Jaguar Series on Latin America. Scholarly Resources Inc. Wilmington Delaware

² Gamboa, Erasmo. *Mexican Labor and World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest 1942-1947* Austin: University of Texas Press 1990.

³ The interviews were conducted as part of the University of Texas El Paso’s Oral History Project in conjunction with the Smithsonian Institutes National Museum of American History, George Mason’s Center for New Media and Brown University’s Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America. Many of the interviews I conducted have been archived digitally at www.braceroarchive.org

⁴ Taylor, Paul S. “Migratory Agricultural Workers on the Pacific Coast” Presented at a joint meeting of American Association for Labor Legislation, Atlantic City, New Jersey, 1937.

⁵ Gamboa, Erasmo. *Mexican Labor and World War II* p.8

⁶ Taylor, Paul S. *Mexican Labor in the United States: Migration Statistics Vol.4* Berkley: University of California Press, 1933.

⁷ Sanchez, George. *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, p.293.

⁸ Jones, Errol D., and Kathleen R. Hodges. “A Long Struggle: Mexican Farmworkers in Idaho, 1918-1935” in *Memory, Community, and Activism: Mexican Migration and Labor in the Pacific Northwest* ed. Jerry García and Gilberto García. Julian Zamora Research Institute. Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 2005.

⁹ Friaz, Guadalupe. “A Demographic Profile of Chicanos in the Pacific Northwest” in *The Chicano Experience in the Northwest* ed. Gilberto García and Carlos S. Maldonado. Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co. Dubuque, Iowa

¹⁰ Jones and Hodges, “A Long Struggle,” p.53.

-
- ¹¹ Balderrama, Francisco A. *A Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930's* Albuquerque, New México: University of New México Press 1994.
- ¹² Peterson del Mar, David. *Oregon's Promise: An Interpretive History* Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2003.
- ¹³ Peterson del Mar, David *Oregon's Promise*, p.136
- ¹⁴ Gamboa, Erasmo. *Mexican Labor and World War II*, p.128.
- ¹⁵ Taylor, Paul S. "Hand Laborers in the Western Sugar Beet Industry" *Agricultural History*, Vol. 41 No. 1 p. 19-26
- ¹⁶ Gamboa, Erasmo. *Mexican Labor and World War II*, 135
- ¹⁷ Fujita-Rony, Dorothy B. *American Workers, Colonial Power: Philippine Seattle and the Transpacific West, 1919-1941*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- ¹⁸ Peterson, del Mar *Oregon's Promise*, p.201
- ¹⁹ Daniel, Clete. *Chicano Workers and the Politics of Fairness: The FEPC in the Southwest, 1941-1945* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991.
- ²⁰ Malheur Country Historical Society (Malheur County Or.), *Malheur Country History*, 2 vols. (Malheur County, Or: Malheur Country Historical Society, 1988).
- ²¹ Russell Lee and United States. Farm Security Administration, Vale-Owyhee Irrigation Project, Malheur County, Oregon, 1941-1942, and Robbins, William *Landscapes of Conflict: The Oregon Story 1940-2000*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004
- ²² *Yakima Daily Republic* August 18, 1941
- ²³ *Idaho Statesman* August 25, 1942
- ²⁴ Gamboa, Erasmo *Mexican Labor and World War II*, p.44
- ²⁵ Galarza, Ernesto. *Merchants of Labor: The Mexican Bracero Story: An Account of the Managed Migration of Mexican Farm Workers in California, 1942-1960*. San Jose: Rosicrucian Press, 1964.
- ²⁶ Galarza, Ernesto. *Merchants of Labor*, p. 83. Although Galarza makes no specific reference to being sprayed with DDT, numerous oral interviews confirmed this experience. For those interviews visit www.braceroarchive.org
- ²⁷ Galarza, Ernesto. *Merchants of Labor*, p. 85-87.
- ²⁸ Interview with Atanacio Jiménez López. May 24th 2006 Heber, CA. Interview conducted by Mario Sifuentez for the Bracero Oral History Project. Translated by the author.
- ²⁹ Atanacio Jiménez López, Interview
- ³⁰ Ngai, Mae M. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- ³¹ Atanacio Jiménez López, Interview
- ³² Atanacio Jiménez López, Interview
- ³³ Atanacio Jiménez López, Interview
- ³⁴ A tacuche is a pleated suit similar to a Macintosh suit or Zoot Suit.
- ³⁵ Atanacio Jiménez López, Interview
- ³⁶ Interview with Augustin Bautista. May 20th 2006 Coachella, CA conducted by Mario Sifuentez for the Bracero Oral History Project. Translated by the author.
- ³⁷ Augustin Bautista, Interview
- ³⁸ *Idaho Statesman*, June 12th, 1945

-
- ³⁹ *Idaho Statesman*, June 12th, 1945
- ⁴⁰ *Idaho Statesman*, June 12th, 1945
- ⁴¹ García, Matt. *A World of Its Own* p.174
- ⁴² Ourada, Patricia K. *Migrant Workers in Idaho*. Boise: Boise State University, 1980. Ourada details the use of Jamaican guest workers in Idaho.
- ⁴³ *Idaho Statesman*, October 30th, 1945
- ⁴⁴ *Idaho Statesman*, September 16, 1945
- ⁴⁵ Augustin Bautista, Interview
- ⁴⁶ Augustin Bautista, Interview
- ⁴⁷ Augustin Bautista, Interview
- ⁴⁸ Gamboa, Erasmo. *Mexican Labor and World War II*, p. 74-90
- ⁴⁹ Augustin Bautista, Interview
- ⁵⁰ Augustin Bautista, Interview
- ⁵¹ Augustin Bautista, Interview
- ⁵² García y Griego, Manuel. "The Importation of Mexican Contract Labor to the United States 1942, 1964" p.50
- ⁵³ Interview with Juan Contreras, May 26th, 2006 in Perris, CA conducted by Mario Sifuentez for the Bracero Oral History Project. Translated by the author.
- ⁵⁴ Juan Contreras, Interview
- ⁵⁵ For instance one of the braceros I interviewed was a funeral home director before he left for the United States. Interview with Jorge Flores y Nava May 23rd 2006 in Heber, CA conducted by Mario Sifuentez for the Bracero Oral History Project
- ⁵⁶ Juan Contreras, Interview
- ⁵⁷ *Yakima Daily Republic* April 27, 1943
- ⁵⁸ Juan Contreras, Interview
- ⁵⁹ Juan Contreras, Interview
- ⁶⁰ García, Matt. *A World of its Own*, p.174-180
- ⁶¹ Juan Contreras, Interview
- ⁶² Juan Contreras, Interview
- ⁶³ Juan Contreras, Interview
- ⁶⁴ Juan Contreras, Interview
- ⁶⁵ Juan Contreras, Interview
- ⁶⁶ *Idaho Statesman* May 23, 1943
- ⁶⁷ *Northwest Farm News* April 27, 1944
- ⁶⁸ *Northwest Farm News* July 13, 1945
- ⁶⁹ Correspondence December 1, 1946 Paul Hinchiff to O.B. Hardy, Oregon Historical Society
- ⁷⁰ Gamboa. Erasmo. *Mexican Labor and World War II* p.75
- ⁷¹ Memorandum December 3, 1945, Tolbert, Chief of Operations, Portland to Director of Labor, Washington D.C.
- ⁷² Atanacio Jiménez López, Interview
- ⁷³ García, Matt. *A World of its Own: Race Labor and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 2001; Ruiz, Vicki. *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican American Women, Unionization, and the Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950*. Albuquerque: University of New México

Press, 1987, and Zavella, Patricia. *Women's Work and Chicano Families: Cannery Workers of the Santa Clara Valley*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987.

⁷⁴ *Northwest Farm News* February 8, 1946

⁷⁵ "Farm Labor News Notes, Annual Report Emergency Farm Labor 1946" Extension Service

⁷⁶ Gamboa, Erasmo. *Mexican Labor and World War II*, p.89

⁷⁷ *Idaho Statesman* June 18, 1946

⁷⁸ Gunther Peck *Reinventing Free Labor: Padrone and Immigrant Workers in the North American West: 1880-1930* New York: Cambridge University Press 2000.

⁷⁹ *Idaho Statesman* June 22, 1946

⁸⁰ Juan Contreras, Interview

⁸¹ *Idaho Statesman* June 26, 1946

⁸² *Northwest Farm News* November 24, 1946

⁸³ Juan Contreras, Interview

⁸⁴ *Idaho Statesman* June 1, 1946

⁸⁵ *Northwest Farm News* Dec 1, 1946

⁸⁶ Farm Labor Report. Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Washington D.C. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947

⁸⁷ *Idaho Statesman* June 6, 1945

⁸⁸ *Idaho Statesman* June 6, 1945

⁸⁹ *Idaho Falls Post Register* September 12, 1943

⁹⁰ *Idaho Statesman* August 8, 1945

⁹¹ Oral Interview, unidentified camp manager, July 1946 Idaho Historical Society

⁹² Erasmo Gamboa, *Mexican Labor and World War II*

⁹³ Balderrama, Francisco. *In Defense of La Raza: The Los Angeles Mexican Consulate and the Mexican Community, 1929-1936*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982; Gamio, Manuel. *The Life Story of the Mexican Immigrant: Autobiographical Documents*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1931; García, Mario. *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology and Identity, 1930-1960*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991; Ruiz, Vicki. *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican American Women, Unionization, and the Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950*. Albuquerque: University of New México Press, 1987.

⁹⁴ Gonzalez, Gilberto. *Mexican Consuls and Labor Organizing: Imperial Politics in the American Southwest*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999.

⁹⁵ *Idaho Statesman* June 10th, 1946

⁹⁶ *Idaho Statesman* May 30th, 1946

⁹⁷ *Idaho Statesman* June 19th, 1946

⁹⁸ Erasmo Gamboa, *Mexican Labor and World War II*

⁹⁹ *Idaho Statesman* June 18, 1946

¹⁰⁰ *Idaho Statesman* June 25, 1946

¹⁰¹ Annual Report of State Supervisor of Emergency Farm Labor Program 1945, Extension Service

¹⁰² *Oregonian* July 23rd, 1944

¹⁰³ *Oregonian* July 23rd, 1944

¹⁰⁴ *Northwest Farm News* August 23, 1945

¹⁰⁵ *Northwest Farm News* August 23, 1945

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Francisco Murillo Almaraz, May 22, 2006 in Ripley, CA conducted by Mario Sifuentez for the Bracero Oral History Project.

¹⁰⁷ *Oregonian* January 11th, 1948

¹⁰⁸ *Oregonian* January 11th, 1948

¹⁰⁹ *Oregonian* January 11th, 1948

Chapter 2

Los Tejanos: The Texas-Mexican Diaspora in Oregon

As the end of the war drew near, changes in the bracero program made the program an unattractive option for Oregon farmers and forced them to seek out other sources of labor. Farmers believed that returning veterans would find work in agriculture and that the bracero program and the Mexican nationals would never return. But the expected return of veterans to the agricultural industry never materialized and farmers were forced to turn to another source of Mexican labor: the Tejanos, or Mexican-American citizens of Texas.

Aided by Japanese farmers, contractors, and large corporations like the Amalgamated Sugar Company, the Tejanos began migrating to Oregon during the early 1950s and well into the 1980s. This migration created a vibrant Tejano community in the Northwest in general and in Eastern Oregon in particular. A combination of mechanization and upward mobility of the Tejanos eventually ended the migration and created a diasporic community of Tejanos in the Pacific Northwest. This chapter describes the efforts on the part of Tejano workers to claim a work and social space.

The bracero program, which had operated under the auspices of an emergency wartime labor program, had lost its main rationale for existing. In the closing weeks of 1946, both the US State Department and Mexico's Secretary of Labor gave every indication that Public Law 45, otherwise known as the Bracero Program, would come to an end. The end of the program, however, was short lived. By April of 1947 Public Law 40 supplanted the previous version of the Bracero program. PL-40 brought with it a

number of new administrative changes that made it difficult for Oregon farmers to continue importing workers from Mexico.

The United States Department of Agriculture decided that the federal government would no longer bear the costs of recruiting, transporting, or screening Mexican workers and all contracts would be negotiated between employer and bracero. For farmers in the Southwest it was a reasonable trade; they could negotiate the terms of the contract and despite incurring some extra costs, they could easily afford to go into Mexico recruit and pay for round trip transportation. On the other hand, for farmers in the Northwest the expense of transporting Mexican nationals to the United States was cost prohibitive.

Oregon farmers and politicians argued that the new policy had a discriminatory effect on them and threatened their productivity and livelihood. In 1945 the round-trip cost from a labor-recruiting center in Mexico City to Oregon took seven days and cost the federal government close to \$160 per worker. The fact that many braceros in Oregon earned around \$200 in an entire season made such an arrangement unprofitable.

Occasionally farms in more isolated parts of Oregon contracted Mexican nationals; in Medford, Oregon, for example braceros were contracted well into the 1960's, but the vast majority of farms ceased importing Mexican nationals. Between 1947-1957, Oregon imported an average of less than 700 braceros, down from the wartime high of nearly 5,000.¹ In contrast to Southwest farmers who lobbied for the extension of the program, Northwest farmers had no reason to continue importing Mexican nationals.²

Northwest farmers' experience with braceros also left a bad taste in their mouths. The wartime labor shortage, the distance from the Mexican border and the strong state

power of the Mexican consul in the Northwest had emboldened the braceros to strike often in the Northwest. Residents had experienced on various occasions the bargaining power of the braceros and were weary of continuing their importation. Farmers worried about the blacklisting of certain states by the Mexican government, *Northwest Farm News* warned its readers that “no industry can long afford to remain on the seasonal importation of foreign labor,”³ and the blacklisting of Montana, Texas, Wyoming and nearly Idaho were an example of the tenuous relationship with the Mexican state.

The Oregon State College Extension voiced early on their fears concerning the continuation of imported workers: “It is reasonable to expect that the transported labor program will not continue long and unless local arrangements are made to maintain an adequate and dependable supply of labor, Malheur County farmers will be forced to change the type of agriculture drastically or suffer enormous financial losses because of lack of necessary help to harvest the crops.”⁴ Oregon farmers heeded the advice of their service agents and for the most part ended their participation in the bracero program.

Malheur County, Oregon

The continuation of the bracero program in the southern states forced the relocation of many Mexican Americans. The proximity to the border also meant that large numbers of undocumented immigrants came across the border in search of work. Employers use the braceros and undocumented workers as an excuse to lower wages and forced many citizens to travel north. Residents of the Rio Grande Valley in south Texas began migrating to other parts of the country in search of work.

Beginning in the 1950's Tejanos came to Washington, Oregon and Idaho in large numbers. They migrated, worked, and eventually settled in many different agricultural counties in these states. Malheur County was only one of these destinations for the Tejanos and it also became an area of convergence for Japanese-Americans seeking either to avoid internment or build a life after internment.⁵ The arrival of the Japanese into Malheur County set the stage for the Tejano migration. Located in the southeastern corner of Oregon, Malheur County, though sparsely populated, is the second largest county in Oregon totaling nearly 10,000 square miles, only 43 square miles of it water.

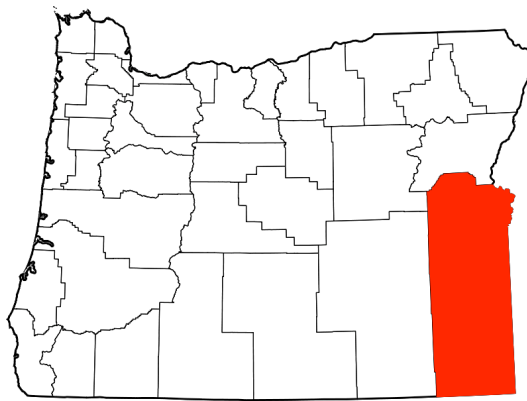


Figure 4: Map of Malheur County, Oregon

During the Great Depression the Works Progress Administration approved the building of two dams that brought water to eastern Oregon. The first, the Owyhee Dam was completed in 1932 and irrigated 192,000 acres of land. The largest dam in the United States at the time of its completion, the Owyhee dam provided the impetus to take on larger dam projects in the eastern Oregon. The second one of these dams was the Bonneville Dam on the Columbia River. Completed in 1937 the Bonneville dam irrigated nearly three million acres of unusable, sagebrush-covered land and ushered in a mass

migration of people looking to farm the new land. Malheur County's population nearly doubled from 11,269 to 19,767 between 1930 and 1940.⁶

The Nisei

Japanese-Americans from western Oregon sought to take advantage of the newly irrigated land. The Japanese in western Oregon had a history as farm workers and farmers, and saw the irrigation of eastern Oregon as an opportunity for financial advancement and an escape from racial prejudice. In 1930, Oregon's Japanese population of 4,958 was mostly concentrated in the Hood River Valley, Willamette Valley and Portland.⁷ The majority worked in agriculture either as truck farmers or as farm laborers. Many saw the opportunity in eastern Oregon to buy their own farm and start anew after suffering through the depression. The Japanese farmers that moved out to eastern Oregon were mainly Nisei⁸ (second generation Japanese immigrants), like Joe Saito's father.

A truck farmer in Clackamas County, Oregon, Joe Sr. had fallen on hard times during the depression and struggled to recover: "My dad came up here and saw that onions were growing everywhere and he knew some Japanese people who lived here [Ontario] that were from the same area of Japan that my folks came from....they helped us out and we got started."⁹ Shigeo "Sig" and Mitzuko "Mitzi" Murakami also came from the west coast to Oregon via Seattle. The Murakami's were both born in Washington and after a quick stint in Los Angeles came inland to Oregon to avoid relocation. In an oral history conducted by the Snake River Valley chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League, Mitzi Murakami recalls her husband's decision to move out east: "When we first

came here it was so desolate and so cold that I wasn't happy at all. The population I think was less than a thousand.”¹⁰

Other Japanese migrants to eastern Oregon had been well-educated and even middle class. Joe Komoto was born in Los Angeles, California and moved shortly after his birth to the Willamette Valley. Joe's father Gaichiro was a successful farmer and was able to afford to send him to college. Joe went to Oregon State College and graduated with a degree in pharmacy, but barely had a chance to use it. Less than a year after he graduated, the bombing of Pearl Harbor took place and Joe's future looked uncertain.

A schoolmate of Joe's, Roy Hashitani, a Japanese American, lived in Ontario, Oregon, and urged Joe to move his family to eastern Oregon where no evacuation order had taken place. His son, Robert Komoto, recalls: “The Hashitani's had been farming this area for quite some time. So he gave my dad a job as crew boss.”¹¹ Ontario served as a place of refuge for many Japanese families given its sparse population and because of the arrival of so many new migrants; the racial order had yet to be fully established.

The presence of Japanese in the area prior to World War II also made Ontario more receptive to the Japanese. An anecdote from Gaichiro's life illustrate the extent to which white residents had adjusted to the presence of the Japanese, going as far as learning Japanese to communicate with customers: “Joe's father [Gaichiro] says in Japanese ‘oh these pants do not have the quality I want’ and the Caucasian clerk comes over in Japanese and says ‘oh this is the highest quality of material you can get’ [he said it] in Japanese. We were shocked.”¹²

Japanese owned land in Malheur County, owned businesses, and even had the backing of Ontario Mayor and future Governor of Oregon Elmo Smith. Smith had owned

and operated the *Ontario Observer* since 1932, and often editorialized against racial prejudice and the treatment of the Japanese. By 1937 the Japanese community had built a “Japanese Hall” and had a budding community in Ontario. With wartime hysteria and racism rampant across most of the western states, Ontario proved to be a safe haven. The Japanese even went so far as to sign over the lease of the “Japanese Hall” during the war to the city. The Nisei anticipated that in the hands of the city, the white community had a vested interest in protecting it and hoped that it would be returned to them after the war. True to its reputation the city returned ownership of the hall to the Nisei after the war.

In his newspaper, Smith successfully lobbied the War Relocation Authority for the release of 17 Japanese internees to work in agriculture in Malheur County. Elmo Smith was so persuasive that by war’s end the number of internees working in Malheur County numbered 5,000, the largest number of free Japanese anywhere in the country.¹³ Malheur County also became a popular destination for “free zoners” because of its proximity to the west coast. Many of them anticipated a day when they could return to their homes after the war, and the move into Malheur County would facilitate the move home. In reality, many did not return home and stayed in Malheur County; close to half of the wartime “free zoners” called Ontario their post-war home.

Japanese contractors became an essential component of the growing Nisei farming community. Many of the contractors actively sought out Japanese internees and convinced them to leave the camps and work in the fields. Joe Komoto serves as an example of the efforts of contractors in the nearby internment camp in Minidoka, Idaho. Despite the promises and assurances of Mayor Smith, many Japanese were reluctant to leave the camps. Anti-Japanese rhetoric and violence permeated throughout Idaho and the

internees in Minidoka had little more than rumor to base a belief that Ontario was any better. In contrast Idaho Governor Chase Clark vehemently opposed the resettling of Japanese in Idaho.

Free Japanese, however, continued to travel to the internment camps in order to recruit workers. Joe traveled to Minidoka and urged his friends to come to Ontario, assuring them that it was friendly and safe. One of the first people that he convinced to leave was his future brother-in-law. Nelly Komoto, recalls: “Well first he convinced my brother to come out of the camps and later my parents, they were a little more fearsome about leaving.”¹⁴ After some convincing, they did leave and began working in the fields and living in Adrian, Oregon. Eventually Joe contracted large crews of Japanese-American workers. After the war many Japanese internees from the internment camp in Minidoka, Idaho came to Ontario after hearing about the lives other Japanese-Americans had made for themselves.

Once out of the camps many families went to work for Joe and other Nisei contractors, but this did not last long. Joe’s son Bob recalls, “At first my dad had a lot of Japanese working for him, but after a few years they all went on to other jobs, all of 2nd Ave became Japanese businesses.”¹⁵ The former internees established a thriving community complete with Buddhist temple, tofu factories, appliance stores, insurance agents, grocery stores, hardware stores and restaurants. The upward mobility left a whole in the labor force for many Japanese farmers and contractors and they were forced to look elsewhere to meet their labor needs.

The First Tejanos: Contractors, Workers, and Rebels

The Utah-Idaho Sugar Company had been contracting migrants for the sugar beet fields in Oregon since the 1920's. They not only contracted farmers and farmworkers to provide them sugar beets, they also built a sugar refinery plant in Nyssa shortly after the completion of the Owyhee Dam. Sugar beets were an extremely labor intensive crop that required thinning and weeding for eight months out of the year.¹⁶ White farm workers steadily left the fields in search of better wages, with the final coup de grace coming as west coast cities industrialized during the war. The company had long been involved with the recruitment of Texas-Mexicans as migrant laborers to its sugar beet fields all across the nation to states like Minnesota and as far away as Delaware.¹⁷

When the bracero program changed its administrative rules and the federal government no longer paid for the transportation costs of braceros, Utah-Idaho Sugar Company was one of the few companies with enough assets to consider continuing the importation of braceros. Ultimately, it decided against bringing in Mexican nationals, and focused on continuing to bring in Tejanos in large numbers. Most Tejanos arrived as family units with all members of the family providing labor. The *Ontario Argus* commented: "Concerning the domestic Mexicans, there seems to be a trend for certain families to return to the areas and neighborhoods where they found employment a year ago. In fact, one family near Vale is here for the third time and brought their neighbors with them this year."¹⁸

The Rivera sisters, Mercedes, Juanita and Josefa, serve as examples of the family unit brought in to work. The sisters were second-generation Tejanas born in El Indio, Texas. Their father operated a cotton gin but did not get paid enough to maintain his

family and so decided to join the migrant stream to Oregon. They were contracted in El Indio by their uncle Diego Martínez, who worked for the Amalgamated Sugar Company as a contractor, to work in the sugar beet fields of the Treasure Valley. They lived in the labor camp in Payette, Idaho, but worked on the Oregon Slope near Ontario, Oregon. Josefa remembers being shocked by the living conditions in the Payette labor camp: “We had one room with a bunch of cots, each house did not have its own bathroom, you had to go in the middle [of the labor camp] where the washrooms were, one for the women and one for the men. And the toilets were a hole outside.”¹⁹ The Rivera sisters encountered typical conditions in Oregon.

During the bracero era, the federal government operated and managed the housing units. They maintained a decent level of sanitation and overall acceptability. After the war, however, the camps fell into the hands of private owners. The private owners raised costs without maintaining upkeep and many of the camps fell into various states of disrepair. Originally designed for single men, the camps did not accommodate families well. The Oregon Bureau of Labor and the Oregon Migrant Health Project conducted various surveys of the camps in 1958, 1962, 1966, and 1969. The surveys found that migrants consistently paid over fifty percent of the family’s wages to pay for housing, sixty-three percent lived in a single room with no plumbing, heating, cooking appliances or refrigeration.²⁰ Ten years later in 1968 the situation worsened; eighty-eight percent had no running water and eighty-nine percent had no refrigeration.²¹ Despite the various studies, the state government accomplished little besides continuously demonstrating the horrendous living conditions. Even when camps owners received fines, warnings, or closed down, they simply re-opened their camps when migrants arrived.²²

The high cost of housing made it difficult to save money for the year. The typical Texas family left Oregon with an average of \$235 after expenses.²³ With the harvest in Oregon completed, many families returned to Texas to make more money. The Rivera family, for example, continued on the same migratory route that many Tejanos followed to the west Texas communities of Lubbock, Plainview and Post to pick cotton. Josefa recalled: “We had to stop in west Texas to make enough money to finish our trip home to El Indio.”²⁴ The meager wages forced the family to buy food on credit upon their return home, stopping in Eagle Pass: “We would buy flour, milk, and *fideo* (noodles) in bulk and we would use the money we made in Oregon to pay it back.”²⁵ Eventually the money did not stretch far enough, and the family could not afford to pay off the store credit they had taken out in Eagle Pass. Mercedes recalled the hardship: “It was too much, with my sister’s wedding and the money we owed in Eagle Pass, so we stayed, we stopped moving.”²⁶

Most of the migrant children worked in the fields early on, but by the time Juanita was old enough to go to school her family had decided to stay in Oregon and sent her to school. As for the youngest of the three daughters, Juanita’s adjustment to life in Oregon was difficult, “there were no Mexicans in my school, maybe four or five. I remember one time I was playing on the swing set and speaking in Spanish with my friend. The teacher came over and told us that if we wanted to keep speaking Spanish to go back to Mexico. I just stood there shocked. I had never even been to Mexico!”²⁷ Despite being born in Texas and being a US citizen, to some of the teachers and students they were marked as ethnic Mexicans and therefore had to be from Mexico.

Juanita finished high school and went on to work for the school district, but the majority of her peers did not finish school. In 1970, forty-five percent of the settled Hispanic adults had dropped out of high school. The majority Anglo institutions maintained discriminatory attitudes toward Mexicans. In addition to taunting, hazing, and other verbal abuse, confrontations between Anglo and Mexican students also turned violent.²⁸ Although Juanita struggled to adjust to her newfound surroundings, the decision to settle proved fortuitous. When the Riveras decided to settle in Oregon, they found more stable and better paying work with one of the many Japanese farmers in the area.

The Nisei farmers did not have the resources to recruit labor in south Texas and instead took to offering higher wages in their onion and potato fields. This strategy paid off as many of the Tejanos left the sugar beet fields and went to work for the Nisei farmers. Although they were essentially “bootlegging” workers from the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company, they were never really a threat to the massive corporation. By the late 50s large corporate farms changed the landscape of farming in Oregon. Mechanization, advances in pesticides and fertilizer benefited large-scale farms to the detriment of small family farms. Between 1950 and 1966, Oregon farms fell from 63,000 to 43,000, while at the same time the average size grew by 150 acres.²⁹

The Nisei responded by growing onions because the labor needs did not coincide with sugar beets. They operated what amounted to a niche row crop. Between 1947 and 1956, the acreage of sugar beets in Malheur County grew steadily from 14,478 to 16,496, a growth in terms of dollars from a little over 3 million dollars to 5 million dollars. In contrast the Nisei who grew primarily onions maintained a steady acreage between those

same years of 3,000 at an estimated worth of 1 million dollars.³⁰ Initially the Nisei operated small farming operations relegated to growing onions but would soon become the major players in packing, shipping, and selling onions as well. That the Nisei dominated the onion farming can be seen in the leadership of the Onion Growers Association of Malheur County, it counted among its association vice-presidents Joe Saito, Aye Nagaki, Harry Fukiage, Kay Teramura, Sig Murakami, Roy Hirai and Joe Komoto.³¹

After many years of working as a labor contractor and farmer, Joe Komoto, in partnership with the Nagaki brothers, bought the Ontario Produce packing shed in 1953. Komoto and the Nagaki's were only one of many Nisei farmers that moved into the packing shed business. The Nisei farmers had familiarized themselves with the packing shed industry and saw a potential to grow their business. Komoto, for instance, began working as a plant supervisor in Ontario Produce and learned the intricacies of the shed. They envisioned it as a way of controlling the prices of onions to the wholesale market. Previously, Nisei farmers felt at the mercy of the packing shed owners and decided that owning the packing sheds were the next logical step. The change of ownership also brought about a change in the workforce.

Previous to the Nisei ownership of the farms, packing shed work was done primarily by white and Japanese workers, but the transfer over to the Nisei meant year-round work for the Tejanos: "During the summer time we employed Mexicans, by the time the farming wound down we tried to use the same people to move the onions into the shed and keep them busy until the spring."³² Once in control of the sheds the Nisei, including Joe Komoto, implemented measure to insure the stability of their workforce,

arranging for work permits for nationals, renting homes to Tejanos, and even acting as a bank by providing loans to employees. Bob Komoto speculated that the internment experience made the Nisei sympathetic to the Tejano migrants: “I think my dad and his friends saw a little bit of themselves in the Mexicans [Tejanos].”³³

Much like their farming operations, the packing sheds began as a small operation, employing 20 or 30 people in its first years; they gradually grew to employing well over 100 people over the following decades. As the Nisei operations grew the need for labor also increased, they eventually started hiring their own contractors.

The Oregon Bureau of Labor reported that by 1957, 12,000 migrant workers traveled to Oregon every year to labor in the fields, and a handful of Tejanos contracted over half of those workers. The report indentified Isabel (Chabelo) Ruvacables as the most prolific of them. Ruvacables of Romansville, Texas handled 3,000 farmworkers, eight sub-contractors and forty crew leaders. A contractor like Ruvacables typically charged each worker five cents to eleven cents for every dollar earned. Out of this charge Ruvacables paid his subcontractors and kept anywhere from three cents to eight cents per hour per worker. Under this arrangement and assuming that each worker put in 8 hours a day, Ruvacables stood to make \$3,600 a week. In contrast, an average single worker in Oregon made eighty-four dollars a week.³⁴

The Nisei hired Tejano contractors as well, but they operated on a much smaller level. Osvaldo González worked as a contractor for the Nisei, but began his migration to Oregon as a labor. Although born in Allende, Coahuila Mexico in 1936, González’s mother was born in Pearsall, Texas to Tejano parents. During the depression, however, they “voluntarily” repatriated to Mexico and left their land behind.³⁵ His father moved the

family back to Texas as a young boy and Osvaldo adopted many of the cultural values of Tejanos, including the migratory way of life. In 1949, Osvaldo and his family, like thousands of Tejano families, were contracted to work in Eagle Pass, Texas and in the cotton fields of west Texas.

After the cotton harvest, they left Texas and continued on to Wisconsin to pick cherries and corn. For five years Osvaldo's father took them all through the Midwest working in an array of different crops until they landed in Weiser, Idaho, just across the river from Malheur County. Osvaldo remembered: "A friend of my dad's asked him if he wanted to come to this area to work, and he said yes, and the Amalgamated Sugar Company contracted us. They paid for our expenses and life insurance in case something happened."³⁶ González remembered that the company would send recruiters to south Texas: "They used to come to Eagle Pass, Laredo, McAllen, offering people jobs and offering to pay their expenses."³⁷

For the first ten years of his trips to Oregon, González worked as a laborer in the sugar beet, onions, and potato fields, eventually making the move into contracting: "At first I started to gather people in Texas to work and I would get a percentage of the work they completed, say about \$2.00 an acre for sugar beets. The state of Oregon changed their laws and they wanted farmers to pay unemployment insurance. Well, farmers didn't want to do that so they started paying me one large sum and had me find the workers. Farmers didn't want that responsibility."³⁸ González then registered with the state and paid a \$5,000 bond to become an officially licensed farm labor contractor, a job that he continues 40 years later.

The network of migrant workers became so steady and routine that eventually González did not even have to travel to Texas to recruit workers: “They would come up here on their own. People talked and heard that I was a contractor and come looking for me.”³⁹ Before becoming a contractor however, González remembers: “The first contractor I worked for was Frank Jokoda; he chose me to be a supervisor and he paid me a little more than the others, but when he got sick another Japanese man took over and when that contractor couldn’t continue, that is when they chose me to contract workers.”⁴⁰

The Nisei farmers provided González with an opportunity working for them that he would have been unable to achieve working for Anglo ranchers: “In those days only the Japanese would hire me to contract workers. I worked with a lot of Japanese farmers who heard about me but it wasn’t until much later that I finally started getting contracts from Americans [Anglos], but only about two or three.”⁴¹ González contracting continued to grow as his reputation increased, he recalled: “I started out with maybe fifteen workers and by the seventies I had around 250 people working in the onion fields. All the way through the eighties, now I only got about fifty-five.”⁴²

Typically, Tejanos worked in the onion fields as family units. The harvesting of onions began with a machine that uprooted the onions and left them lying on the ground. The next step was the “*tapeo*” (topping). Crews would work in teams of two, one topping the onion while the other followed behind bagging the onions. The filled bags are left on the ground for a few more days to cure. Once cured, a team of men would come into the field and load the sacks onto the flatbed truck and driven to the packing shed. At the shed another team of men would unload the bags and empty them onto a conveyor belt that led

into the shed. In the shed, a team of women would sort the onions by size and quality and repack them into burlap bags, palletized and shipped to buyers, wholesalers, processors, and retailers. The Nisei paid better wages, offered year-round employment, and the opportunity for better housing.

For many, families escaping the labor camps became a priority. Upon their arrival, González and his family did not find the labor camp to their liking. They quickly left the labor camps to begin working with the Frank Jokoda and rented a house from him. González recalled: “We lived on the Eastside, back then it was a Japanese neighborhood and a few Mexican families, we paid about \$20 a month.”⁴³

Although there was no legal racial segregation, the Tejanos depended on the willingness of the Nisei to rent to them. From González’ recollection, all the Tejanos had Japanese landlords. Although Ontario had earned a reputation among the Nisei as a welcoming place for Japanese, the reception that Mexicans received was mixed. Adela Menchaca recalled her initial impression of Ontario and nearby Nyssa: “There was a lot of discrimination you know, they didn’t want you in the nightclubs, they used to have signs up. It wasn’t as bad as Texas but you could feel it. It was worse in Nyssa than in Ontario.”⁴⁴ The same openness and tolerance that welcomed the Japanese apparently did not carry over to ethnic Mexicans. Local Anglos saw Mexicans as shiftless, violent prone, gamblers, and drunks, while praising the Japanese as industrious, clean, and sober.

Yet the treatment of Mexicans paled in comparison to their experiences in Texas. At the Polar Bear, a local drive-in, in Nyssa, Benito Menchaca witnessed an occurrence that shook his previous conception of the racial order. A friend, Marcos Ayala, was leaning on a ’57 Ford, when Ron Ruckstall, a local police officer walked up. “He [Ron]

was a mean guy, he said to Marcos hey don't put any grease on my car!' Him [Ron] and Marcos got into it. Marcos used to kick pretty hard. They exchanged punches and Ron got beat."⁴⁵ The ability to physically confront a local law enforcement officer for a racist slight was a far cry from the often-deadly violence Benito and other Tejanos faced from law enforcement officials in south Texas.

Benito and Adela Menchaca are typical example of what many Tejanos faced in their hometown. Both born in San Benito, Texas, the Menchaca's both came from land-holding families. Benito's father owned a ranch outside of San Benito, Texas but passed away when Benito was only two years old. His mother could no longer afford to maintain the ranch and sold it for what she believed was well below market value. After selling the ranch the family moved into town and struggled to make a living. Benito's older brothers went to work on the cotton circuit throughout Texas, and when Benito was in seventh grade he dropped out and joined them. Adela's path to Oregon sprouted from a sense of liberation and not economic necessity. For Adela Menchaca, Oregon became a way to escape the gendered surveillance of her father.⁴⁶

Growing up, Adela's grandmother owned a substantial amount of land, but like so many Tejanos in that era, lost it to Anglos in a land grab. Adela remembered: "Back in those years they would intimidate you and make you sell for very cheap...my dad used to tell us stories about men that would offer to buy your land. If you said no they would threaten to kill your family."⁴⁷ Adela's grandmother relented, and they were left with only the lot they lived on. Yet Adela's family still managed to maintain a privileged position in San Benito. Adela's father contracted braceros in south Texas and traveled with them throughout Texas and California. He made good money as a contractor and

sent his children to a segregated school. Adela recalled: “There was a Mexican side of town and a white side of town, a Mexican school and a white school.”⁴⁸

Adela however did not like school and rebelled by dropping out and going to work in a blue jeans factory. For Adela, work was a way to earn her own money and escape the vigilant eye of her father. Although he was not an abusive man, Adela still felt trapped by the confines of a traditional family: she recalled: “I had to cook and clean for my brothers, you know the typical stuff. I had to get away from it.”⁴⁹ As Vicki Ruiz and Mary Odem have demonstrated, employment provided Mexican American women the means to alleviate or escape the surveillance of their families.⁵⁰

Her marriage to Benito offered an escape from her father; she met her husband at seventeen and married him shortly after. She followed him to Oregon to work in the fields, ill-prepared to handle the difficulties of migrant life: “I thought it was such an adventure, I thought ‘oh my God what did I get into’...the work and everything. I didn’t know how to do a lot of the work that they were doing. I had to learn the hard way...it was a rude awakening.”⁵¹ In many ways Adela still felt confined by family life, but her contributions economically made her feel like she was an equal partner in the relationship. Although economics was clearly a strong motivator for many Tejanos, for Adela migrant life was a chance to escape south Texas, and to see and experience new things.

Benito’s family traveled to the Midwest contracted by the Amalgamated Sugar Company to work in the sugar beets, but the family’s experience with a tornado discouraged them from returning to work in the Midwest: “She [Benito’s mother] didn’t like those tornados!”⁵² As a result they started coming to Oregon in 1958, contracted by a

man named Ambrosio Juárez from Pharr, Texas. They came to the Nyssa labor camp and continued to work in the sugar beets. After seven years, Benito was able to get a job at the refinery plant across the street from the labor camps. He made much better money and was able to stay in Nyssa year round: “The sugar factory paid better than anyone else at the time.”⁵³ Yet, like many settled Tejanos, he still looked to supplement his income with agricultural work: “When I had my vacation I would go work in the fields. We used to buck onions [throw bags of onions onto a loading truck]. We would get paid two and a half cents a bag.”⁵⁴

Benito and other Tejanos worked in all aspects of the agricultural industry in Malheur County, attempting to stay in Oregon year-round. Many Tejanos even stayed to work for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) fighting fires. Adela remained in the fields and took the kids to the fields in the summer. After settling, many Tejanos experience this transition, for the children of Tejanos working in the fields no longer became a crucial part of subsistence but instead became a way to earn money for other expenditures, “we use to take the kids to top onions in the summer, they hated it but they wanted stuff.”⁵⁵

For the Menchaca’s fieldwork did not carry the stigma of poverty “almost everybody worked in the fields at that time. No one said ‘oh you were poor so you work in the fields’. No, everyone worked in the fields. It was a way of life.”⁵⁶ Settled Tejanos still conceived of themselves primarily as farmworkers even if the majority of their income no longer came from seasonal agricultural work.⁵⁷

“No one knew. Or no one would say”: Mexican Immigrants among Tejanos

As David Gutiérrez explains in his book, *Walls and Mirrors*, the overlap of Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants was not uncommon. Malheur County reflected the diverse work force present in the borderlands. While the majority of the migrant farm workers in Malheur County were Tejanos, there were a substantial about of Mexican immigrants. Mexican immigrants did their best to fit in and go unnoticed. According to reports by the Oregon Bureau of Labor, thirty percent of the migrant stream in Oregon came from Mexico. Estimates placed about half of them in the United States without proper documentation.⁵⁸ Some, like Micaela Rodríguez Guijarro and Aurora Rodríguez Banda, had family ties to Oregon before the Tejano migration. “Back then no one talked about it. If you did not have papers no one knew. My older brothers and sisters did not have papers. I always did.”⁵⁹

Mica Guijarro’s experience is a reminder that immigration status varies within families. Mica and Aurora were both born in Fresnillo, Zacatecas, the largest city in the state. Fresnillo is home to one of the most important silver mines in Mexico and also has a rich agricultural economy. Despite its riches, it is also a well-known sender of braceros to the United States, Feliciano Rodríguez, Mica and Aurora’s father, among them. Her father came to Oregon to work as a bracero in the 1940s for the Nagaki brothers. Feliciano sent back fifty dollars a month to Zacatecas and his wife used the money to open up a corner store.

After the regulatory adjustments in the bracero program, the Nagaki brothers helped Feliciano arrange for temporary resident cards for himself and his family. Every October the Rodríguezes would return to Zacatecas and then back to Oregon by March.

At age fifteen, Aurora remembered that the Nagaki brothers, along with other farmers, seemed grateful: “When we first got here [1950], there were very few Mexicans here, you could count them on one hand, the farmers were so grateful that we were here that they use to bring us sodas and doughnuts in the fields!”⁶⁰

When one of the Nagaki brothers saw that Feliciano came with his entire family, he offered the family a house on the farm with a wood stove. “They [the Japanese] were very good people, very good bosses. They often ate with us in our little house, they started to like *chile*.” But as friendly and helpful as they were, there was still a certain paternalism that affected the relationship between the Japanese and her family: “We never ate with them. They never invited us. They never brought anything with them either, they were like an *azadon* (hoe), everything in and nothing out.”⁶¹ The Rodríguez’ arrival before the flood of Tejanos meant they were often the lone family among the many single campesinos: “In California we always lived in the camps, we never had a house or an apartment to speak of,”⁶² lamented Aurora.

Being the only family in the camps presented other difficulties. The house provided many comforts for the Rodríguezes but in the end neither the house nor her father could protect her. Aurora’s father was a very overprotective man and met his daughter’s suitors with violence. He did not allow the girls to look up from the ground when they were working and scolded them for making eye contact. He generally did whatever he could to keep the girls in line, particularly the fifteen year-old Aurora: “I remember one time he smashed up my boyfriend’s bicycle so that he would not ride out to see me.”⁶³

Her father liked to gamble and often left on Friday evenings to play cards with the other workers in town and would return Sunday. One weekend while her father left to play cards, another worker snuck into the house and raped her: “I was so ignorant...my stomach began to grow and I did not know why. Until one day my mom noticed. She began to ask me questions and I was so afraid...in those days people didn’t talk about sex I had no idea what had happened to me.”⁶⁴ No one reported the rape and Aurora could not recall what happened to the man. Aurora had her child and the family went on as if nothing had happened.

Unfortunately, Aurora’s assault was not an isolated incident. Young women attached to families often performed household duties for groups of single men. They washed clothes, cooked meals, and cleaned dormitories. These duties took them away from the watchful eyes of their families. The Oregon Bureau of Labor reported one such incident as typical in the labor camps. The sixteen year-old daughter of one of the men in the camp performed housekeeping duties for five single men, and her father received twenty-five dollars a week for the daughter’s labor. Over the course of time, it became apparent that various sexual encounters had taken place. The report does not specify whether the encounters were consensual or a sexual assault. Her father soon heard rumors of the encounters in the camp and confronted the men and ultimately resolving the situation by raising the fee from twenty-five dollars a week to fifty dollars a week.⁶⁵

The sexism in the family extended to decision-making and head of household responsibilities. In 1959 Aurora and Mica’s mother and youngest sister died in a bus accident in Mexico and her father remarried. The children did not get along well with their new stepmother and decided to carry on their migratory route without their father.

Despite being the oldest child, Aurora had to concede the head of the household to her oldest brother, Feliciano Jr. The shift in duties provided some relief to the younger siblings.

Aurora's father never valued education for the family and especially not for girls. Once her brother was the head of the family, Aurora was too old to go school and had a child, but her younger siblings were encouraged to attend school. Eventually, Aurora's father convinced many of the children to return to Fresno with the family. Aurora's relationship with her stepmother and father was so soured that she refused to return to Mexico and instead chose to remain in Oregon with her child: "Why would I go back? To what? The yelling and abuse? No I won't go back,"⁶⁶ she told her brothers, and said she preferred to stay in Oregon independently than to return to a family structure she found abusive.

Historian Vicki Ruiz demonstrates that Mexican American women often found work liberating. Through their earned wages Mexican American and Mexican immigrant women could break away from oppressive family conditions. Similarly Matt Garcia has argued that work provided women the opportunity to contribute to family income but also gave greater autonomy romantically. The decision to leave an abusive husband or father thus became easier.⁶⁷

For Aurora Banda, the breaking off of traditional kin networks represented a bold liberation and presented a new set of challenges. As a single mother with no family in Oregon, Aurora needed to find year-round employment and found it at Ontario Produce: "The Nagaki's also owned Ontario Produce and I worked year round for them."⁶⁸ Aurora worked as a sorter, where women made up all of the workers. Aurora found the

experience refreshing: “It was nice, and there was so much respect from your boss and your co-workers.”⁶⁹ The work place while at times liberating could also be a site of sexual harassment and exploitation.

During the winter, Adela Menchaca also made the transition to cannery work. In an effort to supplement the family income; she would work the night shift at a corn cannery and took care of the kids while her husband worked the day shift at the refinery and took care of the children at night. By this time Adela was working in two environments that were primarily dominated by women: “It was kind of fun being out in the fields without the men. We could talk about them and there would be no one to shush us!”⁷⁰ For Adela, work became more enjoyable as she was able to form a bond with other women in the fields and in the canneries.⁷¹ There was not a lot talking in the shed because the noise made it difficult to speak to one another, but the lunch hour was a chance to gossip and get caught up on the latest movies and music and for Graciela Machuca a chance to make money.

Graciela Olvera Machuca and her husband José arrived in Ontario as undocumented immigrants from Jalisco. In Mexico José drove a beer delivery truck and Graciela worked at her aunt’s corner store. Like the Guijarro’s, the Machuca’s also had family ties to Oregon through the bracero program. Graciela’s older brother came to the United States as a bracero first to California and then to Oregon while maintaining his family in Jalisco. When the Machuca’s crossed into the United States, Graciela’s brothers already lived in Oregon and encouraged the couple to come to Oregon. Upon arriving in Ontario the Machuca’s adapted quickly to farmwork finding jobs in the fields for Joe Nagano and at Ontario Produce for Joe Komoto.

For Graciela the lunch room at Ontario Produce provided the opportunity to supplement her income: “In the lunch we would offer each other food, after awhile they [co-workers] would tell me ‘Oye Chela why don’t you bring tacos and tortas to sell during break?’ I did it. I started and it sold! Then a later they started again, ‘Oye Chela why don’t you start selling dinner at your house?’”⁷² At first Graciela was skeptical but eventually started to sell food out of her house on Sundays: “I started making tacos, pozole, tamales, I made everything and people started showing up!”⁷³

When a flood ruined their house, Graciela stopped selling out of her home. Discouraged and afraid that river water had contaminated the house, the Machuca’s began to think about opening a restaurant. Graciela and José pulled their money together and borrowed money from their relatives and even from Joe Komoto and opened up their own restaurant: “There was only one other [Mexican] restaurant in Ontario, that was Jaramillo’s, but the food was very different. Their food was very American. We cooked food from Mexico.”⁷⁴ The Machuca’s specifically aimed at producing a more authentic Mexican cuisine betting on the belief that the Tejanos would not only appreciate it but buy it, an insight that Graciela gained from her Tejana co-workers. Their bet paid off: Machuca’s is still in operation today.

Like the Machuca’s, Ernesto Guijarro also came from urban Mexico and had no experience in farmwork. Born in Fresnillo, Zacatecas, his father was a taxi driver and earned a substantial living. At age seventeen, one of Ernesto’s uncles taught him how to weld and had a successful shop in Fresnillo. For ten years, Ernesto operated his own shop and had no plans to leave. But every winter Mica and her family would return to Fresnillo and eventually the two fell in love and married. After two years of marriage Ernesto

followed Mica to Oregon and began working in the fields. He was able to migrate legally thanks to the help from Joe Komoto who helped him arrange for a work visa and hired him at Ontario Produce as a favor to the Rodríguez family.

After six months of working in the fields and in the shed, Joe Komoto encouraged Ernesto to look for work elsewhere as a welder. Ernesto found work at the Rotary Corrugated Company as a welder with a Tejano supervisor: “He spoke Spanish, which is the only reason I got the job. I didn’t speak any English and it was hard for me to learn.”⁷⁵ When Ernesto first arrived he struggled making the adjustment and having to work in the fields discouraged him: “I was really sad. In Mexico I had a profession and I was competent, I had my own shop and here I was just an onion picker.”⁷⁶ Ernesto fell in love with the countryside but grew frustrated with the work and returned the family to Mexico. While in Mexico Mica grew increasingly ill during her pregnancy and the doctors in Mexico could not provide any answers. She left to rejoin her brother in Oregon. Upon arrival she immediately got better and had her first son, Ernesto ‘Netito’ Guijarro Jr. Shortly afterwards that Ernesto joined her with sponsorship from the Komoto’s.

Most Tejanos did not know the immigration status of Mexicans and did not ask, Mica recalled: “I didn’t know any [undocumented immigrants]. Or at least they didn’t say.”⁷⁷ However, newspaper reports in the *Argus Observer* revealed that immigration raids stretched into the Pacific Northwest. In 1948, shortly after the bracero program ceased, the INS deported sixty-five undocumented Mexicans in the Ontario area.⁷⁸ In fact, consistently from 1948-1954 once a year during the harvest season immigration

raids took place in the area.⁷⁹ On average the Border Patrol deported about 100 per year, a relatively small number of the total number of ethnic Mexicans working in the fields.

José Machuca recalls one raid in particular at the Ontario Produce packing shed: “Immigration showed up and started asking everyone for their papers. My brother was working with me at the time and they got him. I got really nervous but I was driving the forklift. So I just kept driving past them and pretending like I didn’t hear them!”⁸⁰

Ontario Produce at the time employed nearly 100 people and the INS arrested two men that day, an indication of the relative rareness of undocumented workers in Ontario. A few weeks later José’s brother and their friend were back at work.

Dance Halls and Ball Games: Recreation and Public Space in Ontario

The Japanese also provided ethnic Mexicans with a place for recreation. Similar to the housing situation, strict segregation did not exist in renting a location for dances, but the familiarity with the Japanese made them the logical choice. The Japanese Dance Hall, as it was known, was built by the collective effort of the Nisei. The multi-purpose building on the outskirts of Ontario, heading towards the Oregon Slope was used for Judo tournaments, Christmas bazaars, dances, and even had a baseball field.

On the weekends the hall would play host to Saturday night Tejano dances and Sunday afternoon baseball games, “we used to have a team that would travel around and play other labor camps,” Jesus Garcia recalled, “there was a black team and a Japanese team as well.”⁸¹ The ball games were free of charge but hats were passed around to help defray the cost of traveling and equipment.⁸² Although women were not allowed to play

on the teams, for Josefa Rivera the games were important diversions from the workweek, “the Mexicans from Ontario would go play against the Mexicans in Payette or Weiser. The contractor would take us in buses to go watch our players.”⁸³ The games were an intense affair and with a lot of pride at stake “sometimes when teams would lose they would pelt the other teams’ bus with rocks!”⁸⁴ Despite the occasional outbursts of violence, Josefa enjoyed the games a great deal and valued the break from work.

Although baseball games were a popular pastime for workers it paled in comparison to the popularity of the dances. Mercedes described: “everyone used to go there. People would come from as far as Weiser for those dances.”⁸⁵ Individuals like Donacio González, a wealthy businessman from Texas that owned a *tortilleria* (tortilla factory) and *carneceria* (meat market) on Highway 26 between Ontario and Nyssa, promoted the dances. González and others would bring in popular bands from Texas as well as feature local artists, but one thing remained constant: it was always *conjunto* (an accordion driven ensemble music, strongly associated with the Tejano working class) music.

The majority of ethnic Mexicans at the time were Tejano, but for those that were Mexican immigrants the dances were still an attraction despite the music. Ernesto Guijarro for one, found the music straining: “The first time I went to a dance here, man, I thought it was a carnival from Brazil. It was like a stampede, people running around in circles.”⁸⁶ In Fresnillo, they were accustomed to more modern dances and more variety: “It was the first time I had ever seen an accordion, at home it was orchestra music. Huge beautiful orchestras and they played *piezas*, all kinds of music. And they were elegant,

you had to come dressed up, long dresses and sometimes you even needed an invitation.”⁸⁷

Mica on the other hand was not as critical; instead for her the dances were a way to escape from the daily stresses of work: “I was fine with it, and to me it was just a way to relax after working out in the fields. It was about having something to do on the weekends.”⁸⁸ The Guijarro’s experience demonstrates a distinct regional difference between Mexicans from the interior and the Tejanos that made up a substantial portion of the ethnic Mexican population.⁸⁹ Despite Ernesto’s distaste of the music he never had any personal altercations with Tejanos but he also consciously avoided them.

With the small numbers of Mexican nationals at the dance, the tension between the two communities remained minimal. Instances of tension did flare up, usually around women. Mica Guijarro recalled: “It is one of the reasons we [Mica and Ernesto] did not like to go to dances as newlyweds. We would rather wait for *quinceañeras* or weddings where the crowd was more selective.”⁹⁰ As Matt Garcia demonstrates, the dance hall experience for Mexican American youth in Los Angeles became a site for intercultural conflict and exchange.⁹¹ In Oregon the dancehalls functioned much in the same way, only the conflict and exchange was among Mexicans and Tejanos. The Mexican immigrants tended to come as bachelors while the Tejanos usually traveled in families, meaning the only single women in the community were the daughters in Tejano migrant families. The competition for companionship often escalated to violence. In addition the exclusive focus on *conjunto* music forced Mexican immigrants to acquiesce to the taste of Tejano patrons. For the Guijarro’s, rather than challenge the established pattern, they found an

alternative outlet in the more controlled environment of birthday celebrations and weddings.

Although many of the residents downplayed the tension between Tejanos and Mexican nationals, various instances of animosity appeared in the public record. The Oregon Bureau of Labor reported on the conflicts in a subsection entitled “Other Important Problems”: “The imported labor and the Spanish-speaking laborer working in the same area frequently create a general feeling of antagonism and jealousy.”⁹² The few number of braceros in the state coupled with the fact that most braceros in this era worked in the relative isolation of southern Oregon indicates that the reference is most likely in relation to Mexican nationals. The bureau gave various reasons for this animosity: differences in wages, living conditions, and romantic competition. The bureau also reported “there is frequent criticism of the Spanish spoken by the imported to domestic laborer.”⁹³ Laborers called each other “pochos” (Americanized) and “surumatos” (Southerners), and the teasing occasionally escalated into violence.

Tension also existed between Tejanos from Eagle Pass and Tejanos from the Rio Grande Valley, or “El Valle.” Violent episodes appeared to be more common amongst Tejanos than between Mexicans and Tejanos: “There were a lot of fights,” Benito Menchaca reported; he described the tension as “the Tejanos got into it. The Eagle Pass guys didn’t like the guys from el Valle. One time I was in the bar and people started yelling ‘we don’t like people from el Valle’, and I just pretended I was from Eagle Pass!”⁹⁴

Despite the displays of masculinity, the dances also became a place for women to express their growing freedom. The Rivera sisters frequented the dances often despite

their father's disapproval: "At first my dad did not like us going to the dances, we were already fifteen or sixteen years old and he still wouldn't let us go but we would convince our brother to ask for us. But even then he would take us for an hour and then we had to leave."⁹⁵ Juanita remembers being envious of some of the other women at the dances, "we often had to go walking to the dances because neither my dad or my brother would take us, but some of the women had their own cars! They went in groups and drove themselves! I did not even learn to drive until I was married."⁹⁶ Juanita's memory demonstrates that Tejanas in Oregon found work could be liberating.

In *From Out of the Shadows*, Vicki Ruiz establishes the long tradition of chaperonage of young Mexican and Mexican American women. Familial reputation and the reputation of a young woman were intertwined and thus fiercely guarded. Young Mexican American women could expect to see their mothers or older brothers closely monitoring their actions at dances, church activities, and in the streets. Over time young women challenged the practice through an array of tactics and in the case of the Rivera sisters, work proved to be the liberating factor.⁹⁷

They attended dances on their own without chaperone and even drove themselves in cars they presumably bought for work. Having a vehicle opened up a whole new world of possibilities for young working women. Although they did not have vehicles, the Rivera sisters eventually made friends with other women who did. The two oldest sisters, Mercedes and Josefa, would join their friends for an adventurous day; Mercedes described the scene: "Every Sunday was ours. In the morning we would go to church, after we got out of church we would go eat at Bluebird, it was right across the street.

After we ate we would go to the movie in Payette. After the movie we would go to the park.”⁹⁸

Beck-Kiwanis Park in Ontario served as a meeting place for many of the Tejano youth; on Sundays the park would be filled with Tejanos and their cars playing conjunto music and drinking beer. The park provided a sense of community for the young Tejanos, Mercedes recalled: “We felt like we had a place. We belonged there. It was a nice place to gossip!”⁹⁹ Despite the drudgery of work the sisters looked forward to Sunday and went out no matter how tired. The weekend became a crucial component of building a Tejano culture in Oregon.

Conclusion

The administrative changes in the Bracero Program created circumstances that made it difficult and expensive to continue importing Mexican nationals to Oregon. Although some instances of importing braceros proceeded well past 1947, the majority of farmers could not bear the cost. Large companies like the Amalgamated Sugar Company continued importing workers but eventually turned to south Texas. The rise of industrial agriculture, undocumented immigration, the bracero program and the white supremacist ideology in south Texas forced the dispersal of hundreds of thousands of ethnic Mexicans across the country.

Attempting to escape the peonage and racism of south Texas, Tejanos came to Oregon as migrants and built a new life as settled members of the community. Malheur County provided them an opportunity to establish themselves as more than just farmworkers. It offered them steady employment and a chance for upward mobility. The

Nisei, created an environment conducive to the settlement of Tejanos, providing year-round work and space for play. As the Nisei retired and mechanization dominated the onion fields in the 1980s, Malheur County experienced another transformation. The Tejanos stopped coming and undocumented immigrants began to rush in and work in eastern Oregon's burgeoning service sector economy. The rest of the Pacific Northwest experienced an analogous situation. In the Willamette Valley undocumented immigration dominated the headlines and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) unleashed an unprecedented number of raids in the region. The immigrant community was under siege and activists in the area felt the call to defend them.

¹ Oregon Bureau of Labor, *Vamanos Pal Norte (Let's Go North): A Social Profile of the Spanish Speaking Migratory Farm Laborer* 1958 and Bianco, Joe *Oregonian* "Impending halt of bracero labor poses knotty problems for farmers" May 14, 1964.

² Gamboa, Erasmo. *Mexican Labor and World War II*, p.189.

³ *Northwest Farm News* September 5, 1946.

⁴ Oregon State College Extension Service Annual Report of Harry R. Sundquist, Malheur County Extension Agent, December 1st, 1945 – November 30th 1946.

⁵ The area is sometimes called the Snake River Valley and the Treasure Valley when including the Idaho communities just across the Snake River. To the residents all three terms are essentially interchangeable.

⁶ Peterson del Mar, David. *Oregon's Promise*, p.123.

⁷ Fiset, Louis and Gail Nokomura. "Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest" in *Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest: Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians in the Twentieth Century* ed. Louis Fiset and Gail M. Nomura. Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000, p.3-19.

⁸ The first generation of Japanese immigrants or "Issei" that came to Oregon worked in a variety of occupations, including railroad work, lumber mills, and cannery work. The second generation made the transition to truck farming and farm working.

⁹ 50th Anniversary of Snake River Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League, Four Rivers Cultural Center, Ontario, Oregon. Interviewer Anonymous 1992.

¹⁰ 50th Anniversary of Snake River Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League, Four Rivers Cultural Center, Ontario, Oregon. Interviewer Anonymous 1992.

¹¹ Oral interview with Robert Komoto, conducted by the author August 13th, 2009 in Ontario Oregon.

¹² 50th Anniversary of Snake River Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League, Four Rivers Cultural Center, Ontario, Oregon. Interviewer Anonymous 1992.

¹³ Sims, Robert C. "The 'Free Zone' Nikkei: Japanese-Americans in Idaho and Eastern Oregon in World War II" in *Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest: Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians in the Twentieth Century* ed. Louis Fiset and Gail M. Nomura. Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000, p.236-255.

¹⁴ 50th Anniversary of Snake River Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League, Four Rivers Cultural Center, Ontario, Oregon. Interviewer Anonymous 1992.

¹⁵ Bob Komoto, Interview

¹⁶ Sidney Mintz. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York: Penguin Books, 1985.

¹⁷ Valdes, Dennis. "Betabeleros: The Formation of An Agricultural Proletariat in the Midwest, 1897-1930" in *Labor History* 30 Fall 1989 pp. 532-562; Dennis Valdes *Al Norte: Agricultural Workers in the Great Lakes Region, 1917-1930*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991, and Oral Interview with Jesus Garcia conducted by Mario Sifuentez August 1, 2009 in Ontario, Oregon. Translated by the author

¹⁸ *Ontario Argus* Thursday May 5th, 1949.

¹⁹ Oral Interview with Josefa Rivera, conducted by Mario Sifuentez, August 8th 2009 in Ontario, Oregon. Translated by the author.

²⁰ Current, Tom and Mark Martínez Infante *Final Report of the 1958-1959 Migrant Farm Labor Studies in Oregon Including material from the Preliminary Report of the Bureau of Labor: "We Talked to the Migrants...and Migrant Problems Demand Attention"* Oregon Bureau of Labor. Migrant Labor Division 1959.

²¹ Oregon Bureau of Labor, *Vamos Pal Norte (Let's Go North): A Social Profile of the Spanish Speaking Migratory Farm Laborer* 1958.

²² *Oregonian* July 7, 1972.

²³ Oregon Bureau of Labor *"Vamos pal Norte" (Let's Go North): A Social Profile of the Spanish Speaking Migratory Farm Labor* 1958.

²⁴ Josefa Rivera, Interview

²⁵ Josefa Rivera, Interview

²⁶ Josefa Rivera, Interview

²⁷ Oral Interview with Juanita Rivera, conducted by Mario Sifuentez, August 8th 2009 in Ontario, Oregon. Translated by the author.

²⁸ Slatta, Richard "Chicanos in the Pacific Northwest: A Demographic and Socioeconomic Portrait" *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 54:70-71, 1979.

²⁹ Oregon Governor's Task Force *OSU Report on Seasonal Agricultural Labor in Oregon* Office of the Governor 1969.

³⁰ Oregon State College Extension Service Annual Report of Harry R. Sandquist, Malheur County extension Agent December 1, 1948- November 30, 1949, December 1, 1949 – November 30, 1950, December 1, 1953 – November 30th 1954, December 1, 1956 – November 30th 1957.

³¹ Oregon State College Extension Service Annual Report of Harry R. Sandquist, Malheur County extension Agent December 1, 1956 – November 30th 1957.

³² Bob Komoto, Interview

³³ Bob Komoto, Interview

-
- ³⁴ Oregon Bureau of Labor “*Vamos pal Norte*” (*Let’s Go North*): *A Social Profile of the Spanish Speaking Migratory Farm Labor* 1958.
- ³⁵ Balderrama, Francisco A. *A Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930’s* Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press 1994.
- ³⁶ Oral interview with Osvaldo González, conducted by Mario Sifuentez, July 19th 2009 in Ontario, Oregon. Translated by the author.
- ³⁷ Osvaldo González, Interview
- ³⁸ Osvaldo González, Interview
- ³⁹ Osvaldo González, Interview
- ⁴⁰ Osvaldo González, Interview
- ⁴¹ Osvaldo González, Interview
- ⁴² Osvaldo González, Interview
- ⁴³ Osvaldo González, Interview
- ⁴⁴ Oral Interview with Adela Menchaca, conducted by Mario Sifuentez, August 15th 2009 in Ontario, Oregon.
- ⁴⁵ Oral Interview with Benito Menchaca, conducted by Mario Sifuentez, August 15th 2009 in Ontario, Oregon.
- ⁴⁶ Adela Menchaca, Interview
- ⁴⁷ Adela Menchaca, Interview
- ⁴⁸ Adela Menchaca, Interview
- ⁴⁹ Adela Menchaca, Interview
- ⁵⁰ Odem, Mary. *Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States, 1885-1920*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995; Ruiz, Vicki. *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican American Women, Unionization, and the Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987.
- ⁵¹ Adela Menchaca, Interview
- ⁵² Benito Menchaca, Interview
- ⁵³ Benito Menchaca, Interview
- ⁵⁴ Benito Menchaca, Interview
- ⁵⁵ Adela Menchaca, Interview
- ⁵⁶ Adela Menchaca, Interview
- ⁵⁷ Gecas, Viktor “Self-Conceptions of Migrant and Settled Mexican Americans” *Social Science Quarterly* 54: 589-592 1973.
- ⁵⁸ Oregon Bureau of Labor “*Vamos pal Norte*” (*Let’s Go North*): *A Social Profile of the Spanish Speaking Migratory Farm Labor* 1958.
- ⁵⁹ Oral Interview with Micaela Rodriguez Guijarro, conducted by author, July 30th 2009 in Ontario, Oregon.
- ⁶⁰ Oral interview with Aurora Rodriguez Banda, conducted by Mario Sifuentez, August 9th 2009 in Ontario, Oregon.
- ⁶¹ Aurora Banda, Interview
- ⁶² Aurora Banda, Interview
- ⁶³ Aurora Banda, Interview
- ⁶⁴ Aurora Banda, Interview

-
- ⁶⁵ Oregon Bureau of Labor “*Vamos pal Norte*” (*Let’s Go North*): *A Social Profile of the Spanish Speaking Migratory Farm Labor* 1958.
- ⁶⁶ Aurora Banda, Interview
- ⁶⁷ Garcia, Matt *A World of its Own: Race, Labor and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles: 1900-1970*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2001 and Ruiz, Vicki *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press 1987.
- ⁶⁸ Aurora Banda, Interview
- ⁶⁹ Aurora Banda, Interview
- ⁷⁰ Adela Menchaca, Interview
- ⁷¹ Garcia, Matt. *A World of its Own*, p.161.
- ⁷² Oral Interview with Graciela Olvera Machuca, conducted by Mario Sifuentes, August 28th 2009 in Ontario, Oregon. Translated by the author.
- ⁷³ Graciela Menchaca, Interview
- ⁷⁴ Graciela Menchaca, Interview
- ⁷⁵ Oral interview with Ernesto Guijarro, conducted by Mario Sifuentes, July 30th 2009 in Ontario, Oregon. Translated by the author.
- ⁷⁶ Ernesto Guijarro, Interview
- ⁷⁷ Micaela Guijarro, Interview
- ⁷⁸ Ontario Argus, June 2nd 1948.
- ⁷⁹ Ontario Argus July 19th, 1949, Ontario Argus June 29th, 1950, June 14th, 1951.
- ⁸⁰ Oral Interview with Jose Machuca, conducted by Mario Sifuentes, August 28th 2009 in Ontario, Oregon. Translated by the author.
- ⁸¹ Oral Interview with Jesus Garcia, conducted by Mario Sifuentes July 23rd 2009 in Ontario, Oregon. Translated by the author.
- ⁸² *Ontario Argus* July 13, 1950.
- ⁸³ Josefa Rivera, Interview
- ⁸⁴ Josefa Rivera, Interview
- ⁸⁵ Oral interview with Mercedes Rivera Gomez, conducted by the author, August 8th 2009 in Ontario, Oregon
- ⁸⁶ Ernesto Guijarro, Interview
- ⁸⁷ Ernesto Guijarro, Interview
- ⁸⁸ Micaela Guijarro, Interview
- ⁸⁹ Pena, Manuel *The Texas-Mexican Conjunto: History of a Working-Class Music* Austin: University of Texas Press 1985.
- ⁹⁰ Micaela Guijarro, Interview
- ⁹¹ Garcia, Matt. *A World of Its Own*, p.192
- ⁹² Oregon Bureau of Labor “*Vamos pal Norte*” (*Let’s Go North*): *A Social Profile of the Spanish Speaking Migratory Farm Labor* 1958.
- ⁹³ Oregon Bureau of Labor “*Vamos pal Norte*” (*Let’s Go North*): *A Social Profile of the Spanish Speaking Migratory Farm Labor* 1958.
- ⁹⁴ Benito Menchaca, Interview
- ⁹⁵ Mercedes Rivera Gomez, Interview
- ⁹⁶ Josefa Rivera, Interview

⁹⁷ Vick Ruiz. *From Out of the Shadows* p.51-70.

⁹⁸ Mercedes Rivera Gomez, Interview

⁹⁹ Mercedes Rivera Gomez, Interview

Chapter 3

The Genesis of the Willamette Valley Immigration Project

In mid-September 1976, Larry Kleinman drove through the damp roads of Mt. Angel, Oregon on his way to Colegio César Chávez to meet a student leader named Cipriano Ferrell. The formation and governance of Colegio César Chávez, a four-year college in Mt. Angel, Oregon and the only one of its kind in the nation produced conflict among the community of Mexicanos living in the Northwest. Originally established in 1888 as a female academy of higher education, Mt. Angel Academy was re-organized into a Normal School (teacher training) in 1897. In 1954 it received accreditation from the Northwest Accrediting Association and became Mt. Angel College. After taking out various federal loans to expand the campus, Mt Angel College suffered a financial crisis.¹ College officials worried that they could not enroll a sufficient number of students to be able to pay back the loan, and eventually filed for bankruptcy in 1982.

In December of 1973, two Chicano administrators took over the operation of the college and renamed it Colegio César Chávez, after the famed civil rights leader of the farm worker movement in California.² Chávez himself however had no direct connection to the school and was unaware of this development until much later.³ Through amendment to the articles of incorporation they redesigned the mission of the school and sought a probationary accreditation that they received from the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges. They envisioned a radical commitment to higher education for Chicanos. The “college without walls” sought to give college credit for life experience and required all graduates to have working knowledge of both Spanish and English.

The Colegio was determined to integrate aspects of academia with the needs and objectives particular to the Mexican community in Oregon. The Colegio counted Raza Unida Party founder José Angel Gutiérrez⁴, celebrated Chicano artist Alurista, and even Portland Trailblazer Bill Walton among its notable faculty.⁵ Despite its lofty goals and well-intentioned mission, the stated objectives quickly became little more than rhetoric as the college's administrators spent most of their time figuring out how to keep the school afloat. The Colegio began to suffer from credibility and financial problems.



Figure 4: Colegio César Chávez Poster

Financially the Colegio inherited a debt from Mt Angel College and expected to receive the same sort of leniency the Benedictine Order received from the federal government. Unfortunately, they did not and creditors consistently put pressure on the

college to produce the one million dollars it owed.⁶ The physical plant broke down and went unrepaired for years; faculty often went months without receiving a paycheck, suffered through accreditation problems and eventually collapsed.

Regardless of its institutional failures, the Colegio proved to be a launching pad for numerous activists and grassroots organizations. One of those leaders, Cipriano Ferrel, had made his way to Colegio César Chávez from California. Born in Delano, California, in 1949, Cipriano labored in the table grape harvest with his parents and ten siblings. He grew up with the Chávez family and grew close to them and the union. He attended high school with César's daughters, Linda and Sylvia, and worked closely with them for many years.

His activist spirit manifested itself early on. At sixteen he started his own newsletter called *La Fuerza* (The Power) and founded a chapter of the Brown Berets at his high school. A Chicano nationalist organization founded in Los Angeles, the Brown Berets drew inspiration from the Black Nationalist movements of the 1960s such as the Black Panther Party (BPP) and adopted many of the Panther's tactics, platforms and even attire. The Young Chicanos for Community Action (YCCA) adorned khaki attire and the brown beret they eventually became known for. The Brown Berets first gained national attention for their involvement in the East Los Angeles high school "blowouts." The East L.A. blowouts stemmed from student frustration with the high "drop-out" rate, overcrowding, and dilapidated buildings. Most of the berets were no longer high school age and instead served as security for the young protestors.⁷ The militant stance of the Brown Berets fit Cipriano well. Although never violent, Cipriano rarely backed down from a confrontation.

After high school, Ferrel joined Chávez' United Farm Workers and got to work on the impending grape boycott. In customary fashion, Chávez sent Ferrel and daughters Linda and Sylvia to Detroit with some buttons and a list of phone numbers to initiate the boycott.⁸ After returning from Detroit, Ferrel served for a short time as César's bodyguard, and as an organizer. The always adventurous Ferrel could not sit still for long and decided to go to college. Ferrell arrived in Eugene, Oregon, and intended to enroll at the University of Oregon. After a few days, however, he heard about the radical mission of Colegio César Chávez. Ferrel immediately enrolled and began taking courses.

The Colegio's outreach efforts to migrant farm workers succeeded in enrolling a substantial number of farm workers and Ferrel's background prompted him to set up solidarity committees with farm workers. But the Colegio also attracted other radical activists. Ferrel became involved in a number of causes such as- A.I.M. (American Indian Movement), Puerto Rican nationalists (he would later go on to marry a Puerto Rican woman and move to Puerto Rico), and the Black Panther Party.⁹

While attending the Colegio, a mutual friend and future state legislator, Rocky Barilla, arranged for Cipriano to meet Larry. Larry Kleinman was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1953 to working-class Russian Jewish immigrants. Larry's father, a World War II veteran, went to college and eventually law school on the G.I. Bill. The Kleinman's eventually moved out of Chicago and into the suburbs. The move mirrored the same move thousands of white families made from the city to the suburbs, through the assistance of the G.I. Bill and low-interest loans from the Federal Housing Administration. The policies of the FHA not only served to limit the opportunities for

African Americans to own homes, it was also effective in breaking up urban ethnic enclaves like the one Kleinman's family lived in.¹⁰

Kleinman attended Highland Park High School, a predominately Jewish high school in a Chicago suburb. Although Kleinman lived in an affluent neighborhood, he had always maintained a close affinity to the neighborhood his parents were raised in. Kleinman's grandparents lived in the Jane Addams housing Projects on the west side of Chicago and had been active community organizers. He felt deeply connected to the civil rights and anti-war movements at a young age. After hearing of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Kleinman sat on the floor of his English class as an expression of his own personal grief. He later was selected as the co-chair of the Solel Youth Group Social Action Committee his junior year. Under Kleinman's guidance, the group led anti-war demonstrations and counseled young Jewish men seeking conscientious objector status.¹¹

Kleinman went on to attend Oberlin College and continued his anti-war activism. A few weeks after graduation he signed up with Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) and sent off to Spokane, Washington. VISTA was a federal anti-poverty program created by Lyndon B. Johnson, under the auspices of the War on Poverty. Kleinman's first task as a paralegal was to aid low-income clients fight eviction notices. A year later he was transferred to Vancouver, Washington's public defender office, where he assisted lawyers as a criminal defense paralegal.¹² While living in Spokane, Rocky Barilla came to Spokane for a legal services training and stayed with Kleinman. The two became friends and when Kleinman moved to Vancouver, he looked up his

friend Rocky. After some catching up Barilla insisted he had a friend that Kleinman had to meet.

Rocky believed Larry, a freelance journalist, could write a story about the Colegio's brewing troubles. At the behest of Rocky Barilla, Cipriano showed Larry around the campus and explained the college's predicament and encouraged Larry to write about the story. Kleinman did eventually write a story about the college in *The Portland Scribe* but the results of their meeting had far greater ramifications. After a short tour of the campus the conversation between the men turned away from the college and to the Mexican community in Oregon.

The descriptions of raids in labor camps, apartments, laundromats, and checkpoints disturbed Larry. Cipriano added: "We've got to do something...and a few of us here in Salem are talking about exactly that."¹³ Cipriano's description of "La Migra" forced Larry to think about his own immigrant grandparents and their experiences fleeing anti-Semitic persecution in Russia, as well as his experiences with checkpoints in Israel. Moved by the correlation, Larry joined Cipriano and the other volunteers in the following months and founded a new organization, the Willamette Valley Immigration Project (WVIP).

The Willamette Valley extends 120 miles from the Portland metropolitan area, down the Interstate-5 corridor to Eugene and is home to the majority of Oregon's population as well as ethnic Mexicans. The valley is the state's most diversified agricultural region, contributing nearly fifty percent of the state's total agricultural output. The region is among the nation's leading producers of hops, grass seed, hazelnuts, berries, and vegetables. Its large nurseries, Christmas tree farms, and timber harvests

contribute to the agricultural diversity of the region. By the 1970's the region's labor needs were filled mostly by Mexican immigrants, some with papers, some without.

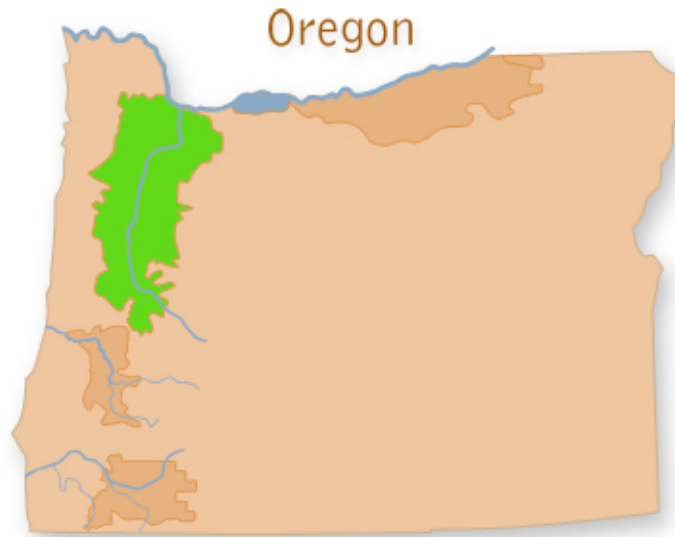


Figure 6: Willamette Valley

Less than a year later on May 2, 1977, the WVIP opened its doors in Portland's downtown Dekum Building. In a press release the WVIP announced its goals "to conduct community education on immigration law and policy and provide legal representation on immigration matters, particularly deportation."¹⁴ WVIP co-founder and volunteer staff attorney Anne Witte spoke to the *Oregonian*, and offered a message to undocumented workers: "We want to let undocumented aliens know that they do not have to incriminate themselves if they are approached by immigration officers. They do not have to answer questions...we will provide legal services to them."¹⁵

Unofficially, the WVIP sought to slow down the deportation process and thereby raise its costs, resulting in fewer arrests. The Project immediately stepped into the debate surrounding the question of 'illegals' taking jobs away from American citizens. The

rhetoric time and again from the INS voiced the belief that the raids “freed up” jobs. Yet rarely did citizens show up to fill those jobs. The Tejanos that previously held these jobs moved on to other forms of employment, mainly canneries, packing sheds, construction, and other forms of manual labor. The early meetings of the Project focused on spreading this message along with the belief that “US Empire”, economic exploitation, and foreign policy created undocumented immigration to the United States.

All of the Project volunteers had input in the direction that the WVIP would take. The Project formed around two loosely organized working groups that set out to organize an immigrant rights and defense Project. Three main factors influenced the decision to create an immigrant rights movement and not a farm workers union; the Centro de Acción Social Autónoma, members ties to the National Lawyers Guild, and the expanding presence of the Immigration and Naturalization Service in Oregon. Out of all the members of the Project, two had a heavy influence in shaping the Project’s politics: Ferrel and Ramón Ramírez.

Ramón Ramírez was born in East Los Angeles and like Cipriano became politically active at an early age. Ramírez heard César Chávez speak at his high school and became motivated to get involved, “people used to tell us all the time; go to school, get an education, and come back and help your community. César told us we could help now. That really resonated with me.”¹⁶ Like Kleinman, Ramírez became involved in the anti-war movement joining the Chicano Moratorium against the Vietnam War.

The National Chicano Moratorium Committee was a group of Chicano/a anti-Vietnam war activists. The “Chicano Moratorium,” as it came to be known, held anti-war rallies across the country with the largest culminating in Laguna Park in East Los

Angeles. An estimated 30,000 peaceful protestors filled the park on August 29, 1970. The police, however, broke up the protest, after they chased a supposed armed robber into the park. The police attempted to break up the demonstration by firing tear gas canisters and sending in riot police. Video from that day's events show the police brutalizing defenseless protestors. Thousands were injured and four were killed, including *Los Angeles Times* writer Rubén Salazar.¹⁷

The police continued to harass the residents long after the activists had left. "The police stepped up the repression after everything died down...I got harassed and beat up by the police. I grew up in a place where police violated people's rights. Police brutality ran rampant. I wanted to get out of East L.A."¹⁸ As Ian Haney López demonstrates in his book *Racism on Trial*, Ramírez' experience with the police was typical. In fact López argues that the maltreatment at the hands of the police forced Mexican Americans to see themselves as a distinct racial minority that had more in common with African Americans than with whites.¹⁹

Previously, Mexican American Civil Rights groups, such as League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the American G.I. Forum, held a belief that through assimilation Mexican Americans (mainly middle and upper class) would soon be regarded on equal footing as their Anglo counterparts.²⁰ For working class Mexican Americans this vision appeared increasingly naïve as their encounters with repression heightened during the civil rights era. Like many residents in East Los Angeles, Ramírez identity as a Chicano was forged through encounters with the police.

In 1972 Ramírez received a scholarship to St. Martin's College, a small liberal arts college in Olympia, Washington. After a year Ramírez transferred to the University

of Washington and became president of el Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (M.E.Ch.A.), a Chicano/a student organization, and helped organize the grape boycott in Seattle. He soon heard about the United Farm Workers actions against undocumented immigrant during the Coachella Valley strikes; disgusted with the UFW's position, he quit working on the boycott.²¹

Ramírez' stance developed from his experience with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). Despite being a citizen, he was constantly harassed as a youth and witnessed first hand the destruction the INS wrought on communities: "My sister's husband was deported when she was six months pregnant...that feeling of frustration...that feeling of hopelessness. That is where [my stance on immigration] comes from."²² Motivated by his brother-in-law's deportation, Ramírez participated in an immigration march in downtown Los Angeles sponsored by the Centro de Acción Social Autónoma or CASA.

Founded by Bert Corona in 1969, CASA originally functioned as a mutual aid society, but soon expanded its efforts to defending the rights of all workers, regardless of immigration status. After the march Ramírez met Bert Corona and became an active member. Ramírez recalled: "At first I was just picking up around the office, distribute leaflets, things like that."²³ In CASA's view, undocumented workers faced the greatest exploitation because of their vulnerability, and needed to be defended. For CASA the plight of the Mexican people could only be improved through workplace organizing.

Largely influenced by Marxist-Leninist philosophies, CASA members often clashed with Chicano nationalists. CASA believed that Chicano Nationalism acted as a divisive force between Mexican immigrants and Chicanos. By the late 1970's, CASA

chapters had spread as far as Seattle and Northern California. Ramón founded a CASA chapter in Seattle, bringing with him the CASA mantra “Con o Sin Documentos: Creamos la Riqueza y Tenemos Derechos” (With or Without Documents: We Create Wealth and We Have Rights). Even though the WVIP did not get involved with workplace organizing until years later, the WVIP clearly believed the rights of all immigrants needed to be defended. The WVIP considered themselves allies of CASA. They organized community forums in correlation with CASA’s national campaigns and distributed CASA’s monthly bi-lingual newspaper *Sin Fronteras* (Without Borders).²⁴

The WVIP’s early foundation in the immigrant rights movement put them at odds with many of the mainstream Mexican American organizations. Since War World II, LULAC had supported deportation efforts by the INS such as Operation Wetback and the implementation of fines for employers who knowingly hired undocumented workers. Similarly the National Agricultural Workers Union and the United Farm Workers often supported stricter enforcement of immigration laws and thought of undocumented workers as strike breakers.²⁵

In 1975, Ramón had heard about the struggles of Colegio César Chávez and took a delegation of nearly 100 people to Mt. Angel, Oregon, to attend a protest, where he met Cipriano. Impressed with the number of farm workers on campus and the size of the farm worker population, Ramírez decided to make the move to Oregon and enroll at the Colegio. Ramírez and a friend of his from Seattle, Juan Mendoza, began taking classes at the Colegio and engaging in spirited debates with his classmates over various strands of the Chicano movement. Ramírez recalled: “At that time politically we were more aligned with CASA and the Hermandad General de Trabajadores; we wanted more than what the

movement could offer.” Specifically, Ramírez and his friends wanted to look beyond the narrow confines of Chicano nationalism and developed an internationalist critique of militarism, imperialism, and capitalism.



Figure 7: Ramón Ramírez

Influenced by both César Chávez and Bert Corona, Ramón and Cipriano hashed out the plans for a movement in Oregon. Cipriano maintained that the United Farm Workers were doing good work and refused to abandon the strategies and tactics of the union. After several heated discussions, Cipriano convinced Ramón that the UFW offered a model for organizing workers. Ramírez and Ferrel stayed in constant contact with Corona, Chávez and a host of other activists across the country and developed a strategy for building a movement. It was during their time together at the Colegio that the seeds of the Willamette Valley Immigration Project were sown.

The Early Days: Strategy and Tactic

Despite the impressive analysis, the WVIP tried to develop a practical legal strategy to slow down the deportations. Kleinman’s previous connection to the National

Lawyers Guild proved invaluable. Kleinman had joined the Guild, long known for their commitment to civil rights and progressive politics, in Spokane during his days as a paralegal, and had recruited several of its members in Eugene, Salem, and Portland to help the Project develop a legal strategy. Their first meeting resulted in formally incorporating the Willamette Valley Immigration Project and a separate organization, the Willamette Valley Law Project, the former as an “activist organization” and the latter as a research and educational arm.

The Law Project qualified as a non-profit eligible to receive foundation grants, a move that later helped sustain the movement. Despite their legal backgrounds, few if any of the volunteers knew much about practicing immigration law. The meetings, therefore, took on a “study group” feel. Members would assign each other a section of law and legal treatises and then present their summaries to the group. Their efforts led them to conclude that an immigrant invoking their right against self-incrimination *might* be the key to hampering the INS’s efforts.

Since the Supreme Court held that deportation cases are a civil and not criminal matter, and that deportation, no matter how drastic its effects, did not constitute a punishment, the Project could not invoke the fourth amendment against illegal search and seizure, or the sixth amendment, which sets forth rights related to criminal prosecution, such as a speedy trial or trial by jury. Defining immigration cases as outside the realm of criminal law meant that the “respondent” (as opposed to defendant) had no right to a court-provided lawyer or any protection against illegal search and seizure, or the right to a trial.

The court's stance forced the Law Project to look for other solutions. The answer came in the form of the Fifth Amendment, which provides defendants the right to "due process" in all criminal and civil proceedings. Due process places the burden of proof on the INS to prove that the accused is in fact not a U.S. citizen. Since few people carry around a birth certificate or a passport, often time the only proof the INS could furnish is the undocumented worker's own admission. Therefore, what workers say, or do not say, becomes crucial. Kleinman recalled: "Without that evidence, INS would have no admissible proof...and the immigrant respondent would walk free. Or so we theorized."²⁶ The key to this strategy required a populous that understood those rights, and so the Project embarked on its first educational campaign.

The campaign created a small, tri-fold, wallet sized, bi-lingual "Know Your Rights Card." The card was simple; the right hand corner featured a woman, holding a child in her left arm and her right fist raised in the air. Opposite her a man also held his right fist in the air clutching strands of barbed wire, with the words "Ya Basta" (Enough) above them and "Con La Migra" (With the INS) below them. The powerful visual representation surrounded the following advice: "Even if you don't have papers: (1) you don't have to answer any questions asked by immigration. Talk to a lawyer first. (2) Don't let officials into your house without a warrant. (3) Don't sign anything, especially a document for 'voluntary departure.'" The second panel continued: "Don't give in to threats or promises. Talk to a lawyer about a locally held hearing before deportation. Release from jail with or without bail. Help getting your papers." And finally: "For FREE legal help, call Willamette Valley Immigration Project."²⁷ Later that summer WVIP staff,

interns, and volunteers distributed the first 5,000 cards at about 100 labor camps in the Willamette Valley. The Project sat back and waited for the phone to ring.

In late June, the Project learned of a raid sixty miles east of Portland, in The Dalles, Oregon. Just as the cherry harvest was getting started, a team of INS agents arrested and deported forty-six workers. The raid caused many more to flee and not return to the camps. Larry Kleinman went to the camp to investigate the raid and found only one worker remaining. A chance stop at a local supermarket proved to be a fortunate one for Larry. He encountered a local supermarket manager who ordered INS agents off store property for harassing Mexican-looking customers. Kleinman recounted the managers words: “He told us ‘they even pissed off the DA. That’s Bernie Smith, Wasco County District Attorney. He’s a grower too you know.’ We just nodded our heads; of course we had no idea who he was.”²⁸ Kleinman headed straight to the county courthouse to investigate further.

To their surprise Smith welcomed them into his office without as much as asking who they were or what they wanted. He immediately launched into his version of the events, Larry recalled: “he told us that he told the agents to halt the warrantless searches or that he would have them arrested for criminal trespassing. The INS responded to him by threatening him for interfering with federal authorities.”²⁹ The agents went on to tell Smith that he should call Sid Lezak, the U.S. Attorney General. Smith promptly did so and Lezak responded by denying that he gave the agents any such leeway and only had a limited right to search private property.

After returning to Portland, Larry decided that the opportunity to tell this story was too good to pass up. He contacted the editor of the *Oregonian*, who in turn responded

by telling Larry that the story could not be run unless Smith went on record. Figuring he had nothing to lose, Larry called the Smith back: “To my astonishment, he not only repeated his statements, but encouraged me to quote him. And he added a new twist; he recommended to the sheriff that any continuation of the informal agreement they had with the INS covering federal use of local jails be predicated on an end to warrantless searches. And he added that they should triple their charges for use of the jails. The feds paid them ten dollars a day to house federal prisoners, something else I didn’t know.”³⁰ The *Oregonian* encouraged Larry to write the story, which appeared in print on July 13, 1977, with many of the quotes from Smith removed by the editor.³¹

Two months later, the INS raided Joe Cereghino’s truck farm in Gresham, Oregon, just fifteen miles east of Portland. That raid set off the first legal showdown between the WVIP and the INS. On August 16, 1977, INS agents arrested ten Mexican farmworkers, including eighteen-year-old Alfonso García-Domínguez, his cousin Torbio and his Uncle Pedro. Alfonso and Torbio had come to the U.S. in 1975 from Alvaro Obregón, Michoacán. His Uncle Pedro, in his forties, had come to the United States various times, including a stint as a bracero in the 1950’s.

Agents placed the three in handcuffs and took them home to gather their possessions. The three men lived on property owned by their employer, Joe Cereghino. Able to approach Joe, Alfonso showed him a number he had written on his arm and told Joe to “contact Anne.” Before Joe could write the number down, INS agent Travis Martin grabbed Alfonso’s arm and rubbed the number off his arm. Martin took Alfonso and his family to INS headquarters. Over the next twenty hours Alfonso demanded numerous times to be allowed to call his lawyer. By the next morning all three of the men had given

up hope and signed voluntary departure forms. Only then was Alfonso allowed to call Ann.³²

After receiving Alfonso's call, Ann, a WVIP staff attorney, immediately went to the detention office just eight blocks away from the Project office. Agent Casey allowed her to see Alfonso "to say goodbye," informed her that they had already signed voluntary departure forms. In an office statement, Anne reported the events:

After ten minutes or so, I went back out and told Casey they'd (sic) repudiated and demanded a hearing. He puffed up and grew red and stomped downed to the detention facility, checking in his gun at the locker by the door. He said they would have to tell him themselves. He wouldn't 'take my word for it or let me put words in their mouth,' because I must have 'filled them full of bull'

When we got into the glass-walled room, he ranted for a minute or two, but sort of ran down because his Spanish didn't cover what he wanted to say. He left when he was shaking his fist at men and then came back after calling the Marshall and the U.S. Attorney. I interrupted him and he let me, to my surprise. I spoke to my clients, explained that they had the rights I had told them about earlier and that if they wanted me to work for them, to try and get bail for them and tell the judge their side of the story, they should just turn their heads over to Mr. Casey and say 'Si.' So they did.³³

On August 19th, Joe Cereghino put up \$4,000 in bond money guaranteeing the court appearances of Alfonso and Pedro. Alfonso later recalled that after Ann left, the guards proceeded to insult and verbally harass them, dubbing them "los tres locos." The indignities proved too much for Torbio to withstand. Unfortunately he accepted voluntary departure and faced immediate deportation.³⁴

Alfonso's case taught the WVIP a few important lessons. First, they needed to figure out a better way of informing the farm worker community of their presence. The one worker who acted on the advice of the WVIP did not even have one of their cards.

Second, they needed to adjust their tactics so that they did not have to depend on the benevolence of INS agents to grant workers their right to legal counsel. The WVIP had no way of telling if other workers had been detained and denied legal representation.

Ten weeks after the Project's formation, they had their first test case of its resistance strategy. Three weeks before the hearing the Project decided that Larry would try his hand at the case. During their research the Project discovered that the immigration regulations allowed non-profits to seek "recognition." Recognized organizations could nominate individuals for a three-year renewable term of "accreditation, meaning, essentially that they could practice at the administrative level before the INS immigration court and the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA)."³⁵ The WVIP foresaw that they would be in various legal battles, and viewed this as a great opportunity to bring in more non-lawyers into their fold. Just one week before Alfonso's trial began, Kleinman received his accreditation. Nervous and feeling woefully unprepared, Larry Kleinman and the Willamette Valley Immigration Project stood at the edge of history.

At the INS offices a cloud of fear and apprehension floated in the air. Larry continued to assure Alfonso that everything would turn out fine, still unsure of it himself. Larry remembers the cramped, crowded room, made even more crowded by the throng of supporters the Project brought with them. Larry mused: "Nothing about it resembled a court room. There was no elevated dais, no bailiff, and no gated area in front of the tables...none of that would have fit."³⁶

Taken aback as he entered the room, Judge Jones immediately ordered all observers to leave. Kleinman attempted a rebuttal, arguing that it was a public hearing. Before he could finish his argument, Judge Jones fired back that the proceeding was not

public. Scrambling and nervous, Kleinman deftly argued that his client waived all rights to privacy. Either Kleinman had gotten extremely lucky or Judge Jones simply did not want to press the matter, the judge allowed all observers to remain in the room.

The hearing progressed, and the INS offered Alfonso's admission of illegal status as evidence, the only piece of evidence the INS entered into record. The Project called Alfonso to the witness stand, and he recounted the story of his arrest and his treatment during detention. As Kleinman moved to call Ann as one of his corroborating witnesses, Judge Jones interrupted: "Well until such time as the Government contests that, I'm going to accept the fact."³⁷ The courtroom remained silent for several moments before it became clear that the Judge had accepted Alfonso's testimony. Neither Agent Martin nor Casey would testify in the proceeding.

Judge Jones then ruled to dismiss the case on the grounds of a violation of the Fourth Amendment. Kleinman and the Project reserved their joy. They knew that a Fourth Amendment argument would not hold up on appeal. In fact, the INS did appeal the case and twenty-eight months later the Board of Immigration Appeals did indeed reverse Judge Jones' decision. The Board ruled that Judge Jones had improperly admitted Alfonso's testimony because it violated the Fifth Amendment and improperly ruled on the Fourth Amendment. The Board of Immigration Appeals terminated the proceedings against Alfonso.³⁸

The board published the January 1980 ruling as *Matter of García*, setting a legal precedent for all immigration courts. The ruling stated: "If coercion or interference with the right to attorney can be shown in the case against an immigrant charged with illegal

entry, the resulting evidence can be suppressed”³⁹ The ruling remains in use today; the WVIP had directly changed national immigration law in its first case.

Staffed by mostly volunteers, the Project experienced a hefty turnover at end of the summer. Many of the volunteers attended law school and went back to school after summer break, and several of the attorneys went into private practice. The Project re-staffed with funding from several sources. All of them had day jobs, and over a course of seven months developed an infrastructure for the organization. The major funding came from CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act). Enacted in 1973, the law provided local governments and non-profit organizations money to create jobs within low-income communities.

The CETA money provided the Project the stable funding that they never had before. “It was a lot of money based on our standards...suddenly all these great organizations, women’s shelters, substance abuse programs, and our organization had staff! By the fall of 1977 we had seven fulltime positions.” Kleinman continued: “The office we rented was \$60 dollars a month and we were each making \$800 dollars a month.”⁴⁰ Foreseeing that the money would not last forever, they decided to take the extra take pay and invest in an expansion.

Originally, they had chosen to open their offices in Portland because they wanted to be close to the courts and the INS offices and local jails: “We needed to have quick response, if you couldn’t get to the detention centers within three to four hours of someone being arrested they were gone.”⁴¹ The WVIP continued producing educational materials, pamphlets and serve as a legal team. In 1978 they published the *Non-Citizens*

Assistance Manual that contained information for defense attorneys, critiques of U.S. immigration policy and information for immigrants on how to adjust their status.

The flow continued more or less uninterrupted until someone called the offices to inform them of a raid or a family member being picked up by the INS. Members would call the INS to confirm that the individual was in fact being detained there, then rush to the INS offices to file a notice of appearance and hope that the detainee had not signed a voluntary departure notice, and call family members or the employer to raise bail money. Kleinman and the Project grew increasingly frustrated by the course of events: “We lost many more races than we won. And in most cases, there was no race to run. The INS had already deported the person by the time we made contact.”⁴²

The Fight for Woodburn

In addition to the battle with the INS in Portland, the Project also felt they needed to be near the heart of the immigrant community. With the extra money, they decided to open a summer office in Woodburn, a small rural town thirty miles south of Portland, Kleinman explained: “The idea behind the Woodburn office was to be closer to the community and to be around when the INS was most active.”⁴³ In 1978, Woodburn was home to one of the largest Mexican immigrant communities in Oregon. Dubbed the “City of Unity,” Woodburn boasted a large population of retirees and Orthodox Russian immigrants. The “City of Unity” displayed a city seal on the way into town that reflected its “diversity”; a retiree with a golf club in his hand, a bearded Russian, and of a course a sombrero wearing Mexican and his trusted donkey.⁴⁴

The weekends in Woodburn, however, took on a distinctly Mexican feel. Families from as far south as Eugene⁴⁵ and as far north as Longview, Washington⁴⁶ traveled to Woodburn to buy pan dulce, clothes, tortillas, and the latest music. On the weekends, the local movie theatre, “The Pix”, played Mexican movie classics and its parking lot became the town square. Families did not just come for the entertainment either. The medical clinic, Salud de la Familia (The Health of the Family Clinic), was adjacent to the movie theatre parking lot. The clinic served low-income communities, primarily farmworkers and their families on a sliding scale basis. The neighborhood served as the perfect spot for the Project and they opened their doors in a one-room storefront across from that parking lot.

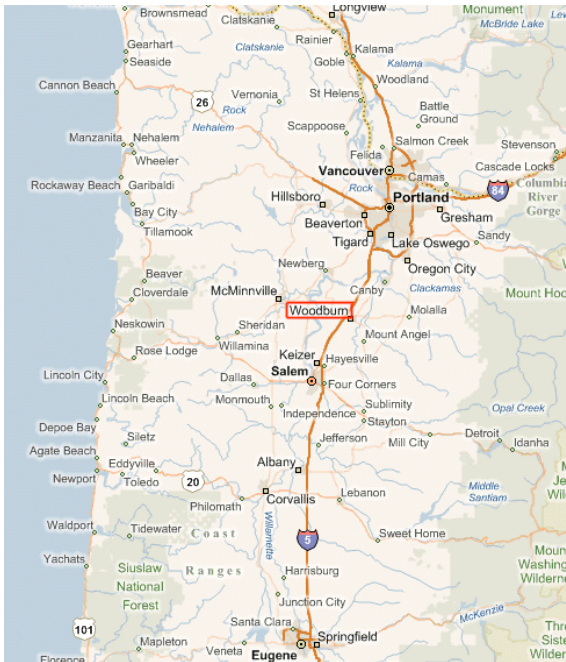


Figure 8: Map of Woodburn, Oregon

A few years after the opening of the Project, the WVIP had established itself in the Portland community and in the surrounding rural locales as an organization willing to

help immigrants. In the following years their capabilities would be tested repeatedly.⁴⁷

The INS continued to step up its efforts in the Willamette Valley; large-scale raids dominated the headlines of local newspapers, the Border Patrol from Blaine, Washington conducted monthly raids. Anywhere from thirty to one hundred and fifty immigrants were rounded up at any one time.⁴⁸

Given the environment of fear the INS had unleashed on the immigrant community, labor organizing seemed the farthest thing from the Projects mind. Kleinman recalled: “The thinking at the time was, if we couldn’t get some traction with the INS where did we think we were going to get with anything else...this is what the community is most afflicted by most viscerally, traumatically. People felt a reign of terror. It’s one thing to be abused at work: it’s another thing for your family not to know if you are coming home from work. That’s what consumed us. It seemed like other forms of organization were not going to work.”⁴⁹

In the meantime the reign of terror continued. On October 15th 1978, the INS swept through Woodburn detaining 100 people. The phones in the Woodburn office rang off the hook as agents continued the sweeps for nearly a week. By the third day, the Project had alerted its media contacts and began patrolling the streets trying to catch the INS agents in the act, hoping to find another case of blatant misconduct.

The opportunity came when the office received a call from a Woodburn day care center. On the other end a woman frantically yelled: “They are here, they are parked in our lot!” Kleinman and the staff instinctively knew who “they” were. A staff member alerted the media and they rushed off to the childcare center. They arrived to encounter

two agents arguing with a daycare director holding a baby. According to witnesses, the woman exclaimed: “He just came in here and wanted to get the baby.”⁵⁰

The agents had come to get eighteen-month old Luz Elena Magallanes, a U.S. citizen. Already in custody, her parents, Rodolfo and Cecilia, refused to sign a voluntary departure form until they took Cecilia to get her daughter. Later, agents brought Cecilia to the day care center and again demanded the release of the little girl, Larry, however, intercepted Cecilia, and explained to her that she did not have to accept immediate deportation and Cecilia broke into tears. One of the agents stormed out of the offices and headed for his car, presumably to call his supervisors. But as he arrived at his car, more media rolled in.

A Portland news crew had arrived and immediately began taping, followed quickly by another. Larry took full advantage of the moment, positioning himself in front of the cameras and declaring: “We’re asking that this woman be released on her own recognizance because she has a sick child.”⁵¹ When the camera panned over to the remaining agent, he stood frozen, mouth agape, clearly confused. When the other agent returned from his vehicle, he told Larry: “We’re going to bring her husband here and release them both into your custody...you better bring them to the INS office tomorrow.”⁵² Later that evening thousands watched the drama unfold. The local newspapers carried the story on the front page, with Cecilia tearfully holding her baby.⁵³

As the crops began to rot in the fields, angry growers demanded that Governor Bob Straub intervene. A few days later, INS director Dahlin apparently responded to the intervention by suspending the raids: “After all, my guys are entitled to a day off,” he quipped.⁵⁴ When asked by the media why they targeted Woodburn, he responded by

claiming he had received fifty complaints from people in Woodburn. Apparently the city was not as united as city officials claimed. The INS deported a total of 156 immigrants that week and the streets remained deserted for days after. The usually bustling weekend in Woodburn felt more like a ghost town. The Project had won the media battle but hardly felt like winners.

Notwithstanding the feelings of dejection, another important strategy developed out of the Woodburn raids. During the Woodburn raids, the Project noticed something peculiar: local cooperation of the police with the INS. During their study sessions the Project had found U.S. Attorney General memos that clearly delineated the extent to which local authorities can aid federal immigration officers. It was clear that local authorities had no right to initiate action. But in Woodburn officers were taking a more pro-active approach. Just a few months earlier, WVIP co-founder Rocky Barilla had brought suit against the Polk County Sheriff and Police Chief in Independence, a small community south of Salem. Barilla won a federal district court order that barred the town police officers and county deputies from stopping, questioning, or detaining individuals in order to determine their immigration status.

Apparently, Woodburn Police Chief Lyle Henderson did not get the memo. Despite Independence being a mere thirty miles away and the intense media coverage that the ruling received, Woodburn police officers continued to pro-actively assist the INS. For instance, Woodburn Police Officers escorted INS agents to various apartment complexes and housing Projects, pointing out which units were housing suspected “illegals.” Project member Ramón Ramírez lived four houses down from one of the housing Projects when he noticed Woodburn Police and INS agents outside in the

parking lot. When Ramón went to the parking lot to challenge their practices, they quickly turned around and asked him for his papers. Ramón responded by scolding the agents and refusing to leave. Instead of having another confrontation with the Project, the agents and the officers left.

As time passed, the Project not only developed its own strategies to combat “La Migra” but also became intimately aware of the “La Migra’s” strategies as well. The INS had a relatively small team of agents in the Portland area and found it difficult to plan, organize, and conduct raids. The effort was often time consuming and did not always yield satisfactory results. The presence of the WVIP also made things increasingly more difficult. The INS developed a strategy that enlisted local jailers.

Normally, when the local authorities detain individuals for minor criminal or civil violations, they are usually released on the own recognizance or on bail. But at the behest of the INS, local jailers began to question Spanish-speaking individuals about their immigration status. If it was determined that they were not legal residents, the jailer would hold them until the INS arrived. The agents had developed a circuit whereby they would pass by certain jails on certain days and pick up undocumented immigrants. The results proved to be more efficient than coordinating raids.

Once again, the research team of the Project determined that local jailers had no right to question individuals about their immigration status, if they suspected that someone was undocumented or the INS requested that they hold someone, jailers could only place a hold for twenty-four hours. If the INS agents failed to show-up before twenty-four hours the hold automatically expired and the detainee could be freed. This new information proved very valuable the next summer in the case of Trinidad De La

Cerda. The Project's ever expanding network of informants tipped them off to a case in Umatilla, Oregon, 180 miles east of Portland. In Umatilla, jailers had held Trinidad De La Cerda for three days on an INS telephone hold. When the Project got wind of this they filed a federal lawsuit against the county of Umatilla. The federal court forced the INS to send written notification to all country sheriffs, police departments, and district attorneys, informing them of the "24-hour" rule and federal policies on local cooperation. The county of Umatilla also paid De La Cerda \$1,000 for his illegal detainment.

"So I have to get arrested for you to help me?" Responding to community demands

The raids of the October 1978 had a transformative effect once again on the Project. Some community members forced the Project to reassess its image and its strategy. This time the challenge did not come from the INS, the police department, or the courts, instead it came from Juan Gonzáles. In its initial meetings the WVIP committed to its strategy of deportation defense work and dismissed the idea of doing visa casework. They had rationalized to themselves that this burdensome, slow, and tedious work would slow down their response to the INS.

Rather than refusing cases, they planned to train community volunteers to help individuals with their residency status. Two weeks after the raids in October, an encounter with a disgruntled community member altered their plans. Juan Gonzáles stormed into their office clutching a fistful of papers from the INS and handed them to Project member Juan Mendoza. Larry Kleinman had heard the commotion and witnessed the following exchange between Mendoza and Gonzáles,

Mendoza told him he had a fifth preference case, because his sister was a U.S. Citizen. Then Gonzáles asked him straight to the point if he could get a permit for his family, to which Mendoza answered yes. Gonzáles asked him desperately if we could help and Mendoza told him that we don't handle visa cases but that he could refer him to people in the community that could help him. Gonzáles pleaded with him, told him he didn't have any money, could not read or write English and didn't know what to do. In a frustrated voice he asked Mendoza "how do you help people?" Mendoza told him about our work resisting la Migra and Gonzáles with more than a hint of irony answered 'so I have to get arrested for you to help me?' Mendoza was speechless.⁵⁵

A frustrated Gonzáles could not accept that the WVIP would only help people that had already been picked up by the INS. The WVIP had spent so much time doing the exciting work of chasing down and confronting the INS and doing battle in courts and receiving an envious amount of media attention that the work of building community seemed to elude their grasp. Coupled with the history of failure of previous anti-poverty and farm worker programs an air of disillusionment already permeated the community.

Organizations in the 1960's and early 70's had ceased functioning not only because of attacks from organized opponents, such as growers and their political allies in Salem and Washington D.C., but also because one financial scandal after another destroyed confidence in the leadership of the organizations. Programs like Oregon Rural Opportunities disappeared literally overnight. From one day to the next, the offices closed and cases were left unsettled. Kleinman recalls: "Papers were left in piles, there was food in the fridge, and cups of cold coffee on the counter tops, it was as if a neutron bomb had gone off and killed all the people and left everything else undisturbed."⁵⁶

Even the work of César Chávez and the UFW in Oregon left an uneasy feeling in the farm worker community. César's first long term encounter with Oregon came in

direct response to Oregon Senate Bill 677 in 1971. The bill was proposed by Gordon McPherson (R-Waldport), and drafted in large part by William Lubersky, a long time labor lawyer for various growers. The bill banned the primary and secondary boycotts, forced union organizers to register with the state, limited picketers to employees of a farm, banned strikes, and specifically banned bargaining about pesticides.⁵⁷

César, Dolores Huerta, and César's brother Richard came to Oregon and dedicated an unusual amount of time to help Oregon farm workers defeat SB 677. César and his organizing team led a number of rallies at the state capitol between the months of June and December that year. Despite their best efforts, the bill passed.

The UFW, however, refused to concede defeat, and César sent Jerry Cohen to Oregon. When Jerry Cohen arrived he warned Governor Tom McCall that if he signed the bill into law, the UFW would lead a nation-wide boycott on all Oregon products. Cohen told McCall: "If you sign this bill, Oregon will become the Mississippi of the Northwest."⁵⁸ Cohen and Chávez both knew that the UFW did not have the resources or desire to initiate a boycott, but they both believed in the power of a threatened boycott. The threats did not endear the farm worker movement to McCall, though the unconstitutionality of the bill eventually forced him to veto it. In vetoing the bill, McCall made clear that neither pressure from the UFW or César Chávez had any bearing on his decision. In fact, McCall contended that the boycott "very nearly persuaded me to sign the bill."⁵⁹

In the wake of the bill's failure, the governor established his own team to develop a more plausible collective bargaining law for Oregon farm workers, but McPherson decided to re-open the issue in committee. McPherson then called on members of the

Valley Migrant League (VML) to testify before his committee, but Frank Rivera, board chair of the VML at the time, refused to cooperate. Rivera insisted only on working with McCall and his advisory committee, but their refusal created more tension in the community. The VML reportedly warned all farm workers not to attend any town hall meetings or appear before any congressional committee. Their refusal, however warranted as it might have been, only caused further suspicion and chaos within the community. Eventually the bill died in committee and the UFW walked away with another victory but subsequent collective bargaining bills, like the one passed in 1973 that covered state employees, excluded farm workers.

For César, the victory rang hollow because of the inconclusive ending to the struggle, and more importantly, his failure to identify with the local communities. “The Oregon story is important because we were trying to keep them from setting a precedent. The only thing was, my heart wasn’t in those fights. They slowed us down terribly.”⁶⁰ After defeating the bill in Oregon, César and the UFW turned their attention back to California.

With the grape contracts on the verge of expiration, the union had to make a concerted effort to resign contracts and ensure their foothold in the industry. In December of 1972, rumors began to surface about the Teamsters Union’s efforts to move in and sign contracts with growers; by January of 1973 the *San Francisco Chronicle* announced that the Teamsters had signed 170 contracts with major vegetable growers. The Teamsters began to approach workers in the vineyards and urged them to sign union cards well before the contract with the UFW had expired. Despite overwhelming support from workers for the UFW, growers signed contracts with the Teamsters with “no hiring hall,

no pesticide control, and no grievance procedures. In effect, that's no union."⁶¹ The growers and Teamsters refusal to hold elections led the UFW to call for a strike.

The strikes that followed proved to be the bloodiest and most severe the UFW had ever seen. Initially the growers responded by seeking injunctions against the strikers and local judges happily obliged. In total, judges issued hundreds of injunctions in the Coachella Valley. Strikers responded by gladly going to jail. Workers continued their strike in spite of the injunctions and even volunteered to be arrested. After the injunctions failed, the Teamster's turned to violence. The Teamster's goons marauded the picket lines with chains, bats, knives, and sticks and ruthlessly beat men, women, and children, all while law enforcement officials watched.⁶²

The departure of the UFW left a void that the WVIP moved to fill. The war with the Teamsters mobilized all the resources the UFW had in other parts of the country and brought them home to California.⁶³ The lack of support during the time allowed the WVIP to forge its own direction independently of the UFW. Having already been entrenched in a battle with the INS, the WVIP sought to establish a clear ideology that saw all workers as having rights. Cipriano believed that the UFW's reputation as an anti-immigrant organization was not deserved and blamed it on a few rogue organizers. Ramón recalls the explanation Cipriano provided: "When he [Cipriano] heard that some people were snitching to the Migra, Cip confronted them on the picket line. He told them to stop that shit."⁶⁴ Ferrel convinced Ramírez that the César and the UFW had been misrepresented nationally on the immigration issue.

The actions of the UFW and the words of César Chávez himself at times belied that interpretation. In Roma, Texas, for example, UFW members blockaded buses of

Mexican workers coming from Miguel Alemán, Mexico, by lying in front of the buses and even closing the international gate at the border. At the same time, some members of the UFW took advantage of this situation and attempted to build a transnational alliance with the Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos (CTM). The CTM and the UFW only encouraged Mexican workers with green cards not to cross and work as “scabs.” The issue of undocumented workers remained hidden. On other occasions, Chávez and the UFW picketed the INS for not monitoring Giumarra’s usage of green card Mexicans as strikebreakers. In fact “César consistently argued that in order to improve working conditions for all farm workers, the government needed to enforce existing laws” and even “enact more stringent regulations.”⁶⁵

David Gutiérrez argues that the UFW believed that undocumented workers severely hampered efforts to unionize American workers, and that the UFW “consistently maintained this position...going so far as to report undocumented Mexican Farm Workers to the INS.”⁶⁶ Gutiérrez further argues that Chávez’ stance was increasingly out of step with other Mexican American and Chicano organizations that he relied on for help. The coalition of groups confronted the union and issued a statement to the UFW insisting that all workers, including undocumented workers, had rights.

Chávez attempted to deflect the criticism by claiming that the authors of the statement were not workers and did not know anything about labor or workers. Despite his criticism, Gutiérrez argues, Chávez had to placate his critics. Chávez was aware how dependent he was on the urban organizations to support the UFW’s boycotts and could not risk alienating them. Hence, Chávez publicly began promising his support to undocumented workers.⁶⁷ The WVIP, however, always maintained their commitment to

organize undocumented immigrants. Although they never saw themselves in direct contradiction to the UFW, they nevertheless saw themselves as a separate organization committed to immigrant rights. Later when the WVIP transformed into a union, they did not struggle with the decision to unionize undocumented workers in the way that the UFW did.⁶⁸

The WVIP aimed at gathering a broad based coalition of people in the community through issues that mattered to them, “and immigration and immigration raids were the issues.”⁶⁹ The Project set out to build a community one visa at a time often borrowing tactics the UFW used to build the union. The Project had handled a few visa cases before that fateful afternoon Juan Gonzáles stormed into their office, so they had some idea of the increased workload. To counter that, they followed through with training community members and envisioned creating a visa clinic.

At the clinic, trained volunteers would meet with community members once a week and help immigrants fill out their applications, translate, or just answer questions. Although they were unaware of any other group using the “clinic” model for immigration purposes, they did in fact borrow the model from the UFW and anti-Vietnam organizations. The UFW service centers had organized similar clinics for the purpose of income tax preparation, and both Larry and Cipriano had volunteered as draft counselors. By the end of 1979, the clinic had accumulated over 100 visas cases. By comparison their deportation cases made up barely 20 of those cases. The strategy seemed to be working, but unfortunately not everyone in the clinic shared the Project’s vision.

The clinic helped build momentum towards the Project’s goal of reaching out and establishing itself in the community, but that momentum soon came to a screeching halt.

As a member of the volunteer clinic group, Maria Ochoa received training from the WVIP and worked for the clinic for a short amount of time. The Project had no screening process in place and generally accepted all the help they could get. In this case, Ochoa took the training she received from the Project and began her own “immigration consultant” company.

A few of these operations had sprung up around Portland but to the knowledge of the Project only Ochoa had operated out of Woodburn. Like those Portland operations, she took to calling herself a “notaria” or notary public. Seemingly innocuous, the term “notaria” holds a very different meaning in Mexico and other Latin American countries. In those countries lawyers are often referred to as “notaries” and hold a significant amount of legal power. Over time Ochoa charged exorbitant fees for minimal, incompetent or non-existent paperwork. She swindled hundreds of people out of their money and caused a general panic in the community.

On top of the severe damages she caused, Ochoa also reflected poorly on the Project. The WVIP shuddered at the idea of creating another Maria Ochoa, and in response to the damage she caused closed the clinic and returned to allowing only staff members to aid in visa cases. Over the next thirty years, the Project helped over 6,000 families and individuals adjust their status. While the number would have been significantly larger had they continued the model, the WVIP did not want to risk losing the support of the immigrant community.

The tension between Mexican immigrants and Tejanos (Mexican-Americans from Texas) always bubbled near the surface in Woodburn. Tejanos tended to have worked in the fields in the 1950s and 60s but by the 1970s many had moved out of the fields and

into cannery jobs, social service jobs and contracting. On May 16, 1979 the arrest of Raúl Ramírez and his wife Petra Ramírez, two small-scale labor contractors, exposed those tensions within the community. Both U.S. citizens, Raul and Petra's arrest, made very little sense, but shortly after the arrest the news broke that they had been charged with "harboring" undocumented immigrants.

The INS had also detained seventeen undocumented workers living in the Ramírezes basement. The Ramírezes quickly posted bail, but the workers remained in jail for 15 days despite the best efforts of the Project. The Ramírez' predicament elicited a strong wave of support from the Tejano community. They reasoned that the Ramírezes simply provided a needed service. The immigrants living in the Ramírezes basement paid \$10 a week per person for two bedrooms and a bathroom or \$170 a week. By comparison, the Project paid \$175 a month for a small three-bedroom house just down the street.

Feeling victimized, the Ramírezes, approached Father Arnold Beezer, the parish priest for St. Luke's Catholic Church in Woodburn for help. The Ramírezes attended mass at St. Luke's every weekend, as did the detained immigrants, their friends and co-workers. So when the Ramírez' asked Father Beezer for permission to use the Parish Hall for a dance to raise funds for their legal expenses, the potential for a very volatile situation existed. Perhaps aware of the possibly explosive repercussion of allowing the dance, Father Beezer retorted, "Sell the boat," referring to the Ramírez' outboard boat, parked in front of their home.⁷⁰

“The INS got smarter”: La Migra and Workplace Raids

Up until this point, all of the raids had taken place in the fields or in the streets. The team of INS agents usually numbered from four to fifteen. Although they had managed to detain and deport 150 people in one week, the operations still had a rather small scale to them. All that changed when the INS raided the Castle and Cooke mushroom plant.

When Project members arrived at the plant, the four vans and seven patrol cars in the parking lot seemed extraordinary. Forced to wait outside Project members camped out as more and more family members got wind of the raid and joined their ranks. Sealed off by a seven-foot-high chain link fence, Project members and workers' family members watched on as INS agents chased men from one shed to another on the thirty acre site, while county sheriffs blocked the plant exits. No undocumented worker in the plant that day escaped. The personnel director of the plant, Hector Hinojosa, recounted: “They raided us five years ago. We knew they would be back.”⁷¹

The year-round immigrant workforce and the fenced-in location made it a prime target. By 3pm, prison buses had rolled into the parking lot and filled with detainees. One detainee yelled frantically: “Tell them my mica [green card] is real!” as he passed by Kleinman and stuffed the card in his hand. Luckily for the Project and the detainees, the bus was not headed directly for Mexico or the airport. Instead, they headed to the National Guard Armory in Silverton just north of Salem. The Project caught a break, the stop over allowed them to secure the release of sixteen workers, but the overwhelming majority either had undocumented family members, could not afford bail, or simply did not want to put their U.S. born children at risk.

Outside of the armory, families gathered, worried, and wept. As each new wave of family members arrived, more weeping could be heard. The scared crowd continuously begged for Project members to do something. In their conversations with many of the wives, Project members ascertained that some of the men inside were married to U.S. born ethnic Mexican women. Some of them also had white wives and their behavior outside differed greatly. Spurred by their white privilege, many of those women took to berating the INS officers and securing the release of their husbands on their own, while the Project scrambled to come up with ways to release the other men. Finally, the WVIP came up with enough paper work and bail money to release some of the workers, including Armando García. As the buses rolled out carrying seventy-three other workers, one anonymous worker yelled: “I’ll be back next week”⁷² and many of them did return. Twenty years later those same workers, including Armando García, initiated a strike at Castle and Cooke.

Although the raid garnered headlines, the repercussions of the raid became even more newsworthy. On September 3, 1981 the *Statesman Journal*, the Salem area newspaper, ran a story about the jobs the immigrants had vacated. A long time cry of right-wing politicians was that undocumented workers take jobs away from “real” Americans and was seen as the justification for the jarring displacement that immigration raids cause. This mantra was put to the test in the aftermath. Almost immediately after the raid, 100 people applied for jobs at the Castle and Cooke mushroom plant. The plant hired thirty to forty people every week for over a month, but three-quarters of those workers had to be fired for incompetence or they quit within the week. Managers at the

plant complained that workers did not do what was asked of them and were lazy. The INS had no comment for the paper.

The largest single one-day arrest record set at the Castle and Cooke mushroom plant fell just six months later. Just as the WVIP learned lessons and changed tactics so too did the INS. On April 6, 1982, the INS began employing a tactic usually reserved for areas near the border: the checkpoint. Aside from the mushroom plant, the nursery industry in Oregon offered the steadiest year-round work. Nurseries are the second largest component of agriculture in Oregon. After the 1920's Oregon cultivated and shipped trees throughout the nation. The work is very tedious and meticulous. A majority of the employees work ten-hour shifts and are employed on the nursery for as long as ten months earning just above minimum wage. Glen Walter's Nursery in Forest Grove, thirty miles west of Portland, spread out over 800 acres and employed over 600 people, making it one of the largest operations in the state. Just outside of his nursery on a blind curve the INS set up a mobile checkpoint, fifteen agents arrested 153 workers in less than a few hours and devastated Glen Walter's Nursery.

Like the mushroom plant before it, Glen Walters received over two hundred applications after the raid and hired 126 U.S. citizens. But like the mushroom plant, nursery work did not suit U.S. citizens. "Within ten days, only eight were left employed...some quit within the first hour, some worked the whole day, a few worked the whole week. Some even walked out without coming up to the office for their pay." Walter went on to estimate that he lost nearly \$12 million dollars. "Four hours without water on a hot day and these plants are dead. I might have to close the operation down" a dejected Walters added.⁷³

Dan Barnhart, executive director of the Oregon Association of Nurserymen, voiced his frustration to reporters: “It’s tough, in spite of the fact that Oregon’s economy is in shambles, to find 16,000 people to work in nurseries.”⁷⁴ Once again, the rhetoric of job loss for American citizens failed to demonstrate any semblance of reality. INS officials went on the offensive by slightly altering their message. Commenting to newspaper reporters, unidentified INS officials claimed that it was actually Southeast Asian refugees who benefited from the raids. Portland had become one of the resettlement cities for refugees of the Khmer Rouge, the Vietnam War, and the carpet-bombing of Cambodia, Thailand, and Laos. By 1982, 6,000 refugees lived in the urban center of Portland. Richard Hopkins, Portland Community College’s refugee employment Project coordinator, rejected those claims: “The INS has shown practically zero interest in refugees, there was a minimal presence of refugees in the field, both before and after the raids.”⁷⁵

Not only did the INS rhetoric fail, the INS also failed to employ citizens. When the INS set up another roadblock outside of Glen Walters Nursery in May, they ended up re-arresting ninety-seven of the same men they had arrested on April 6. The Project began gathering statements of U.S. citizens of Mexican descent who were detained at the various checkpoints. Oregon Legal services filed a federal suit and secured a decree limiting the use of checkpoints. The decree forced INS agents to document “articulatable facts” beyond race to justify a vehicle stop. The INS checkpoints ended in the Willamette Valley.

Although the raids continued the WVIP adjusted their tactics to increase their efficiency. But more promising was the empowerment of the farm worker community.

Their network of immigrant allies increased and legal immigrants displayed solidarity with their undocumented brethren. The Project often kept written reports about the raids and one incident on Coleman farms illustrates the growing camaraderie of workers in the fields. As the INS vans came speeding into the fields, the workers began scrambling and running in all directions; one worker hesitated and then quickly darted off as two agents headed towards him. He headed directly to the latrine and locked himself in a stall; while locked in the latrine, the following exchange took place in Spanish:

“We know you are in there so come out now!”
“I got here first!”
“You’re coming with us”
“What did I do?”
“You’re illegal”
“No I am not!”
“What do you mean?”
“I have my mica.”
“So why did you run?”
“I thought you were trying to get to the bathroom before me and I had to go really bad”⁷⁶

After emerging from the latrine, the worker presented his resident ID card to the agents. The agents grew red in the face as both the worker and the WVIP members watching began to laugh uncontrollably. As Kleinman and the other Project members headed to the INS offices to once again attempt to win “stays of deportation” for their clients, deportation officer Oliver Stark came into the hallway and approached Larry: “You know we are getting close to indicting you for aiding and abetting illegal aliens.” Larry nodded and added, “do what you got to do” and walked off. It was clear that the Project would once again have to change its tactics, Kleinman recalled: “It’s kind of a

guerilla war that is pretty marginal and its righteous but we can see this going on ad infinitum...and it was Cip that said ‘we really need to dig into labor organizing.’”⁷⁷

Workers had been telling the Project about the horrid conditions in reforestation work and the abuses they suffered. Reforestation workers complained about the 16 hour days without breaks or rest, low wages or at times not being paid at all, fees contractors charged them for equipment, isolation and weather conditions of the mountains and most pressing, abandonment on the mountain.

Conclusion

Although Colegio César Chávez as an institution itself failed miserably, the school succeeded in bringing like-minded individuals together. Larry, Ramón, and Cipriano would have undoubtedly been activists in their own right, but the Colegio gave them an opportunity to build something great. Coupled with their political philosophies cultivated through their relationships with the UFW, Brown Berets, CASA, and the Lawyers Guild, they built an organization that was responsive to the community. Yet for all the hard work they put in, they still felt like they were drowning.

The Project made a collective decision to get involved in labor organizing. The effort that battling the INS required began to take a toll on the Project. They needed to find other forms of resistance and more effective strategies. The Project shifted its attention to the most exploited workers in Oregon, reforestation workers. Several of the immigration cases that came across the Project’s desk had one thing in common: most of them worked in reforestation.

The Project members felt an urgency to shed light on the exploitation of reforestation workers. Shedding light, however, was not enough, they needed to organize workers into a union. The shift to labor organizing presented some problems: with the exception of Cipriano, they had very little experience unionizing, their constituency consisted mainly of undocumented workers, and none of the Project members had the slightest knowledge pertaining to reforestation workers.

¹ Maldonado, Carlos S. *Colegio César Chávez, 1973-1983: A Chicano Struggle for Educational Self-Determination*. Latino Communities New York: Garland Publishing, 2000.

² *Oregonian* "New Name Given College: Colegio César Chávez," December 13, 1973

³ Chávez eventually made two visits to the school in 1974 and 1977. He spoke at the college promising to enlist his friends nationally to aid in saving the school

⁴ Gutiérrez, José Angel. *The Making of a Chicano Militant: Lessons from Cristal*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press 1998.

⁵ Oral Interview, José García, May 12, 2008 conducted by Mario Sifuentez, Hillsboro, Oregon

⁶ Kleinman, Larry "The Long Road: HUD dogs Chicano School" *The Portland Scribe*, October 13, 1976

⁷ Chávez, Ernesto. "*Mi Raza Primero!*" (*My People First!*): *Nationalism, Identity, and Insurgency in the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles, 1966-1978*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002; Haney-López, Ian. *Racism on Trial: The Chicano Fight for Justice*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003.

⁸ Ganz, Marshall. *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009; Majka, Linda and Theo Majka. *Farm Workers, Agribusiness and the State*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1982.

⁹ Oral Interview with Larry Kleinman, July 24, 2007 in Woodburn, Oregon. Conducted by Mario Sifuentez.

¹⁰ Lipsitz, George. *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006.

¹¹ Larry Kleinman, Interview

¹² Larry Kleinman, Interview

¹³ Larry Kleinman, Interview

¹⁴ *Oregonian* May 6 1977

¹⁵ *Oregonian* May 6 1977

¹⁶ Oral Interview with Ramón Ramírez, July 28, 2007 in Woodburn, Oregon. Conducted by Mario Sifuentez

-
- ¹⁷ Chávez, Ernesto. “*Mi Raza Primero!*” (*My People First!*): *Nationalism, Identity, and Insurgency in the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles, 1966-1978*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002; Mariscal, George ed. *Aztlán and Viet Nam: Chicano and Chicana Experiences of the War*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999; *Chicano! History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*. Video. NLCC Educational Media, 1996.
- ¹⁸ Ramón Ramírez, Interview
- ¹⁹ Haney-López, Ian. *Racism on Trial*, p.56-90
- ²⁰ Gutiérrez, David. *Walls and Mirrors* p. 77-79
- ²¹ Oral Interview with Ramón Ramírez, March 25, 2010. Telephone interview conducted by Mario Sifuentez.
- ²² Ramón Ramírez, Interview
- ²³ Ramón Ramírez, Interview
- ²⁴ Chávez, Ernesto. “*Mi Raza Primero!*” (*My People First!*): *Nationalism, Identity, and Insurgency in the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles, 1966-1978*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. García, Mario. *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology and Identity, 1930-1960*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991; Gutiérrez, David. *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.
- ²⁵ García, Mario. *Mexican Americans* p. 52-53, 95-98 and Gutiérrez, David. *Walls and Mirrors* p. 157-161, 197-198
- ²⁶ Oral Interview, Larry Kleinman, July 26, 2007 in Woodburn, Oregon. Conducted by Mario Sifuentez.
- ²⁷ Flyer, PCUN Archives, Woodburn, Oregon
- ²⁸ Oral Interview, Larry Kleinman, July 26, 2007 in Woodburn, Oregon. Conducted by Mario Sifuentez.
- ²⁹ Larry Kleinman, unpublished manuscript, “Resisting La Migra”. Larry Kleinman has graciously and exclusively provided me with a copy of his personal memoirs. These memoirs are unpublished and have been cited here with permission of the author.
- ³⁰ Larry Kleinman, “Resisting La Migra”
- ³¹ *Oregonian*, July 13, 1977
- ³² Interim Decision #2778 *Matter of García* In Deportation Proceedings, A-22290411, Decided by Board, January 16, 1980
- ³³ Affidavit, Anne Witte, PCUN archives, Woodburn, OR
- ³⁴ Larry Kleinman, “Resisting La Migra”
- ³⁵ Larry Kleinman, “Resisting La Migra”
- ³⁶ Larry Kleinman, Interview
- ³⁷ *Matter of García*
- ³⁸ *Matter of García*, p. 321
- ³⁹ *Matter of García*, p. 321
- ⁴⁰ Larry Kleinman, Interview
- ⁴¹ Larry Kleinman, Interview
- ⁴² Larry Kleinman, Interview
- ⁴³ Larry Kleinman, Interview

⁴⁴ Dash, Robert C., and Robert E. Hawkinson. "Mexicans and 'Business as Usual': Small Town Politics in Oregon" in *Aztlan* Vol. 26 No. 2 Fall 2001.

⁴⁵ Eugene is 70 miles south of Woodburn

⁴⁶ Longview is 80 miles north of Woodburn

⁴⁷ The WVIP also had an early vision that extended past Mexican immigration cases. In January of 1978 a 17 year-old Filipina women sought to divorce her 80 year-old husband whom she had met through a magazine specializing in acquiring over-seas "pen pals" for American men. Her coming to the United States was predicated on her marriage to this man. By seeking of a divorce, she nullified her citizenship under the existing law, and made her eligible for deportation. The WVIP took her case in an effort to get her a stay of deportation on the grounds that she had performed her duties as a wife, taken care of chores in the home, including cooking and cleaning for her husband. The husband countered that the marriage had never been consummated (though she testified to the contrary) and therefore had failed in her duties. Eventually she lost her case and was deported back to the Philippines. The *Oregonian*, January 27, 1978 and March 24, 1978

Another example came in the wake of Iran-Hostage crisis. On November 4, 1979, Iranian guerrillas stormed the United States embassy in Tehran, Iran. Militants took Approximately 70 United States citizens hostage in a siege that engulfed the American psyche for over 400 days. During this time the United State government retaliated against Iranian nationals in the United States by instructing the Immigration and Naturalization Service personnel to look into the documentation of every Iranian student in the country. The INS found that nearly 40 students at Portland State University had breached some requirement of their visas. The WVIP chose to defend these students against charges that ranged from the mundane, incorrect filing of paperwork to slightly more serious offenses of changing addresses without informing authorities. The Project secured stays of deportation for a majority of the students.

⁴⁸ *Oregonian* "Immigration raid catch 156 illegals" May 17, 1978, *Oregon Statesman* "At least 30 undocumented workers arrested here, INS director reports" April 14, 1979

⁴⁹ Larry Kleinman, Interview

⁵⁰ *Oregon Statesman* October 17,18,19,20,29 and November 16, 1978

⁵¹ Larry Kleinman, Interview

⁵² Larry Kleinman, Interview

⁵³ *Oregon Statesmen* "Child care director won't let immigration take infant, parents" October 21, 1978

⁵⁴ Larry Kleinman, "Resisting La Migra"

⁵⁵ Larry Kleinman, "Resisting La Migra"

⁵⁶ Larry Kleinman, Interview

⁵⁷ Levy, Jacques E. and César Chávez. *César Chávez: Autobiography of La Causa*, 1st ed. New York: Norton, 1975. p. 451

⁵⁸ Jacques E. Levy and César Chávez *César Chávez* p.450

⁵⁹ *Oregon Journal* "Boycott Threatened by Chávez" July 1, 1971

⁶⁰ Jacques E. Levy and César Chávez *César Chávez* p.449

⁶¹ Ganz, Marshall. *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009;

Majka, Linda and Theo Majka. *Farm Workers, Agribusiness and the State*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1982.

⁶² Majka, Linda and Theo. *Farm Workers, Agribusiness and the State* p. 200-224

⁶³ Majka, Linda and Theo. *Farm Workers, Agribusiness and the State* p. 212

⁶⁴ Ramón Ramírez, Interview

⁶⁵ Gutiérrez, David. *Walls and Mirrors*, p. 195

⁶⁶ Gutiérrez, David. *Walls and Mirrors*, p. 195

⁶⁷ Gutiérrez, David. *Walls and Mirrors*, p. 197

⁶⁸ García, Matt. "A Bitter Harvest: The ALRA and the Art of Not Governing," in *A Moveable Feast: The United Farm Workers and the Grape Boycott* (under contract with University of California Press)

⁶⁹ Larry Kleinman, Interview

⁷⁰ Larry Kleinman, "Resisting La Migra"

⁷¹ Larry Kleinman, Interview

⁷² Larry Kleinman, Interview

⁷³ *The Bulletin* August 14, 1981

⁷⁴ *Tri City Herald* August 14, 1981

⁷⁵ *The Bulletin* August 18, 1981

⁷⁶ Larry Kleinman, "Resisting La Migra"

⁷⁷ Larry Kleinman, Interview

Chapter 4

Whip that Hoedad in the Ground: Undocumented Workers in the National Forest

After their initial confrontations with the INS, the Willamette Valley Immigration Project began to transition into union organizing. The Project decided to start organizing the most vulnerable group in Oregon agriculture, undocumented reforestation workers. The winter planting season provided many undocumented immigrants yearlong employment and limited the risks of traveling back to Mexico during the winter. Reforestation, however, was extremely difficult work compounded by the exploitation of reforestation contractors and the nativist attacks of white reforestation workers.

The WVIP responded to the attacks as an immigrant rights organization, but came to see the shortcomings in their approach. The Project believed that even if they were able to adjust every worker's status, the conditions in the fields and in the forests would not change without a union. The reforestation workers agreed and voted to form the *Pineros y Campesinos Unidos Noroeste* (Northwest Treeplanters and Farm Workers United). PCUN's name reflected the fact that most of the treeplanters were also farmworkers. Although originally formed with only 200 members, PCUN bolstered their ranks through continued immigration work after the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.

As early as the 1940s, Mexican immigrants worked in Oregon's forest as planters, seeders, thinners, and even as firefighters. Braceros planted trees, thinned mountainsides and dug fire lines in the national forest and on private timber holdings. By the 1970s, environmental concerns led to massive tree replanting in logged forests. Originally much

of the work done was shoddy and amateurish at best, but a growing number of liberal activists began seeing reforestation work as politically righteous work. White environmental activist dominated the market for tree planting labor until an unexpected competitor came along: undocumented immigrants.

Often romanticized by environmental activists, tree planting is probably the most labor-intensive job in forest management. Workers trudge up the steep slopes of Oregon's mountainside for as many as fourteen to fifteen hours a day, all the while having a forty to sixty pound sack of seedlings tied to their waists. Imagine an enormous tool belt lined with trees and you get an idea of how heavy and strenuous the load can be. Replanting season is done during the winter months, typically November to May, in other words, Western Oregon's rainy season, or, depending on the altitude of the mountain, the snowy season. The seedlings the men carry in their bags average about three feet from root to tip and are planted in the ground with aid of a hoedad, a specialized tree-planting hoe.



Figure 9: Hoedad

The hoedada handle is usually 36 inches long and has a blade anywhere from 15 to 18 inches long and 4 inches wide. Workers whip the hoedad into the ground the whole length of the blade and pull up on the handle a few inches to break up the soil. If the handle is lifted more than a few inches the hole will fill with topsoil and the seedling will be “short rooted.” The seedling will fail to take root and either dies and/or cause erosion problems later on. Once the hole is created, the planter takes his free hand, rolls the seedling into the hole, and simultaneously removes the hoedad from the hole. The hoedad is again whipped into the ground a few inches behind the seedling and the soil is pushed back towards the seedling to add stability. Keeping in mind that the working conditions are usually rainy and steep, workers use their foot to firm up the soil around the seedling, being careful not to bruise or damage the seedling in any way. Spacing is also very important; seedlings cannot be too close together or too far apart depending on the tree. Douglas firs, for instance, are shade-intolerant and if planted too closely together will not grow. As a result, treeplanters, like their counterparts in the fields, work in rows but are followed from behind with a whistle-blowing foreman that keeps the crew working on a constant rhythm. At the end of the day, a good treeplanter can plant as many as 1500 trees.

Industrial Forest Management

In Oregon, the push for sustainable forests created a dramatic need to reverse the damage done by decades of clear cutting. In the late 1800’s most commentators saw the lush forests of the Pacific Northwest as inexhaustible. The attitude persisted well into the

early 1900's until the great depression forced everyone in the nation to reconsider land use practices. In addition to the great depression, numerous devastating forest fires also caused loggers and politicians alike to think seriously about the finite nature of the forests. Sustain-yield practices and legislation started to be taken seriously, but the Second World War overwhelmed any hope for sustainable forests.

The rising levels of production and the post-war housing boom intensified the need for lumber. The housing boom had a significant effect on the Northwest thanks to the Douglas fir. The Douglas fir grows plentiful in the region and particularly desirable in post-war housing construction. The lumber companies delayed any effort to reforest and shifted all their resources into production instead. In addition to ignoring reforestation efforts, private lumber companies also began trying to gain access to public lands. The overcutting that had taken place in the pre-war era was largely on privately owned lands. This resulted in a major shift in ownership. Before the war one state official estimated that in Oregon "50 percent of the merchantable timber...was owned by the Federal Government and 50 percent by private operators. By 1950 the proportion had changed to approximately 70 percent government ownership and 30 percent in private ownership."¹ The logic was clear: why spend money and resources reforesting new lands when we can simply clear-cut existing lands? Coupled with the fact that old growth made for better timber, the move made obvious business sense.

Treeplanters, Reforestation and the Rise of the Hoedads

By the late 1970's, huge backlogs of forestlands requiring re-planting had accumulated nearly three million of Western Oregon's fifteen million acres lay bare. The U.S. Forest Service had fallen behind an ambitious plan to reduce the one million federal acre backlog by 1985 through a creation of a "super" trust fund. Despite a sharp decline in logging, thirty percent less in 1981, the backlog continued to grow by 55,000 acres per year.

That backlog forced the timber industry to reevaluate its approach to tree planting. According to one former forestry worker, "treeplanters were considered the lowest of the low...contractors hired Skid Row bums to stuff, burn, and bury seedlings."² The new laws and government benchmarks required workers to be skilled, proficient, and efficient. The answer to the Department of Forestry's labor need came in the form of the Hoedads.

Named after the specialized tree-planting tool, the Eugene-based collective of white male workers began as a group of like-minded leftists. The three founders of the group, Jerry Rust, John Sundquist, and John Corbin, all graduated from college and according to writer Hal Hartzell Jr. "most of the members were well-educated. Money wasn't the attraction."³ Many of their ideas were forged in the political turmoil of the 1960s. They saw the creation of a cooperative tree planting crew as an opportunity to put those ideals into practice. Only a few of them had any experience in actually planting trees but those that did sought out other leftists and activists in the community to join them in their effort.

They trained others not only in the skills of tree planting, but also in how to conduct democratic meetings. Ex-member Roscoe Caron recalled the importance of an old Wobbly that called himself, in true Eugene fashion, Stupid: “Stupid taught us how to run meetings.”⁴ The social experiment seemed to be working for the Hoedads. They had expanded to fourteen crews and received the majority of lucrative tree planting contracts from both federal and private lands. They also produced a monthly newsletter and even diversified their cooperatives by inviting women to join their ranks. The original Hoedads crew grew so large that they created a coordinating committee, the Northwest Forest Workers Association (NFWA), to incorporate all of the new crews and to discourage competition from within their ranks.

By the late 70s and early 80s, the Hoedads faced stiff competition from contractors who were hiring undocumented workers. Contracts for reforestation work from the federal government are handled through a bidding process. Contractors, who provide the government with the lowest bid, secure a contract to reforest acres. Unscrupulous contractors submitted low-cost bids by employing undocumented workers, underpaying them or not paying them at all. In addition to cutting corners on wages, those contractors that hired undocumented workers also reduced cost because they did not pay the State Industrial Accident Insurance premiums, which at the time were as high as \$29 for every \$100 of payroll.⁵ These circumstances dealt a severe blow to the leverage that the Hoedads once held. Their weakened position was best manifested in the reduced number of contracts they received in 1979. According to one member, “last year we did three spring contracts worth about \$150,000...this year we were prepared to do up to \$200,000 worth of planting. Instead we’ve got \$36,000 in contracts.”⁶

The infringement upon “their” work provoked mixed reactions from their membership. Rick Koven, a spokesperson for the NFWA, articulated these feelings: “We are owners of our businesses and we want to get a fair price for our work...on the other hand, we are workers and we are sympathetic to Mexican workers. We feel they are in this country because they haven’t got jobs at home, and we don’t want to go around and try to get them arrested and deported. If we believed they were getting full wages and benefits, we wouldn’t feel that they are unfair competitors.”⁷

Requests from the NFWA to investigate suspiciously low bids to the Forest Service fell on deaf ears. Forest Service officials implied that low-bidders were simply making bad business decisions and there was no evidence of foul play. One official quipped: “The government does not have the right to tell a contractor he can’t lose money.”⁸ The forest management industry in Oregon was prompted to start looking for cheaper labor because of the competition from southern mills. Washington and Oregon reforestation workers averaged close to eight dollars more an hour than their counterparts in Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, and Alabama.⁹ Undocumented immigrants provided the cheap labor that the industry felt it needed to remain competitive.

Although many of its members felt conflicted about the surge of undocumented workers, NFWA president Gerry Mackie articulated a staunch protectionist ideology. Even before undocumented workers became prevalent in the reforestation industry, Mackie felt threatened by other cooperative workers. After the first meeting of NFWA Mackie voiced concerns about the group’s desire to help other cooperatives by ensuring that local cooperatives get local contracts. Mackie explained: “Again I would like to

refer to the law of supply and demand. There is only so much tree planting. The more people who want it, the less they'll each get out of it.”¹⁰

Despite his later championing of local workers versus immigrant workers, his defense of the local worker was not always so staunch. Mackie opined: “The concern for local workers is admirable, but where does our altruism end and our self-interest begin? Are we to sit idle for two months because we refuse to take work from ‘local’ people, people we in the meantime have helped to organize? And what does ‘local’ mean, someone who moved there a year ago? And what is our locality? I just don’t want to see Hoedads starve because of its noble attitude. As far as we can go to help other people is good, as long as we don’t endanger our own existence.”¹¹ Undoubtedly some of the contractors Mackie later demonized also shared in some of his concerns. Contractors, too, had sympathy for “locals” who lost their jobs, but the contractors acted in their own self-interest as well.

One member, identified simply as Laurie wrote a letter to the newsletter urging the Hoedads to begin considering how they were going to deal with the growing presence of ethnic Mexicans in the forests: “I’m hoping we can deal constructively with the fact that Mexican-American tree planters are doing, I’ll bet, a third at least of reforestation work here. Everyone seems to be avoiding the subject these days, but I think we had a good direction with Los Broncos. Unions are obviously not the answer for these folks, and if we start thinking in terms of ‘alien competition’ we are not going to help them either.”¹² Los Broncos was an experimental group of Mexican American treeplanters that flamed out when members of Los Broncos felt they were being tokenized by the NFWA.

Laurie's letter further demonstrated that the membership was genuinely torn about what to do about the prevalence of undocumented workers in reforestation. The rift within the organization prompted a three-day conference of the NFWA aimed at clarifying the organization's stance future direction. At the conference, NFWA members adopted a resolution making plain that their fight is not with the Mexican workers but with the contractors:

The Northwest Forest Workers Association affirms that undocumented workers should be accorded full Civil Rights that are guaranteed to all workers in our country. We recognize that they help produce the wealth that all of us enjoy.

We reject the underlying racism that focus on the undocumented workers as the cause of unemployment and lower reforestation prices. We understand that those problems are the direct result of unscrupulous contractors that exploit and use Mexican workers for their own gain. Corporations that knowingly contract their reforestation work to contractors that employ undocumented workers in order to keep their own labor costs down, also play a part in this exploitation.

There has been a specific history of immigration from Mexico to the United States. Mexicans workers have historically been used to undercut existing labor markets in the United States.

The NFWA opposes a national work card system or any system that attempts to curtail Civil Rights of workers in our country.

We acknowledge that several of our companies in NFWA have been economically hurt by lowered contract prices due to the use of undocumented workers. We support moves that get to the root of the problem and do not penalize undocumented workers for trying to feed themselves.

NFWA supports the right of undocumented workers to organize themselves. Workers in this country have a basic right of job protection from corrupt employers that try to undercut existing labor relations.¹³

In spite of the strong language in the resolution, the decision was not exactly unanimous.

The resolution passed by a handful of votes and caused an even greater rift among members of the Hoedads than had previously existed. The politics of idealism that had

once nurtured the organization gave way to self-interest. Some members on the losing side of the vote felt that the organization no longer represented their interest and sought the help of another ally, Representative Jim Weaver. Few within the organization made an effort to work with undocumented Mexican workers or understand their plight and living conditions.

The Life of an Undocumented Reforestation Worker

Tree planting is recognized as one of the most difficult jobs in forest management. Even citizen laborers are subject to exploitation and maltreatment. In fact, the Hoedads formed in part as a response to the labor abuses in the forests. For undocumented immigrants, however, the exploitation intensified.

Treeplanters under federal contract are supposed to be paid an hourly wage but are usually paid a piece rate. The U.S. Forest Service inspects replanted lands and if certain stipulations are not met the contractor is penalized for non-performance. Foremen inspect the seedlings at the end of the day and arbitrarily make deductions to the worker's pay. Treeplanters are also forced to buy their own equipment. The hoedads, planting sacks, plot ropes, knives, specialized boots, rain gear, snow gear, and gloves are also deducted from worker's paychecks. In addition, undocumented workers also often have to pay a smuggling fee to a coyote and a finder's fee to the contractor for a job.

The deductions do not end there. The work is almost exclusively done in very isolated areas. Far from any highway or main road, the staging areas are usually only accessible through private logging roads. Once workers reach a staging area the journey truly begins. A long hike follows, ranging anywhere from one to fifteen miles, carrying

all the working supplies. Since contracts can take anywhere from two to eight weeks, workers must also lug their housing. It is normal for all treeplanters to live in tents and sleeping bags while out in the forest, or in motels, depending on the location of the contract. But undocumented workers often face deductions for “housing” and food. Treeplanters work and live in almost complete isolation, which forces them to depend heavily on the contractor for food. The prohibitive cost of food often forced workers to go days without eating. One undocumented treeplanter recalled: “For \$25 I received a jar of peanut butter, bread, canned beans and a jar of Tang.”¹⁴

In many industries, immigration status can be a barrier for workers demanding fair pay and treatment. Reforestation is no different and in fact the consequences are potentially worse. Worker insubordination could be dealt with by simply leaving them in the mountains. On the other hand, walking off the job is not an option: “We tried to leave several times but we couldn’t find a way back,”¹⁵ recalled one worker. Even after returning, the problems continued for this treeplanter: “We tried to locate him [the contractor] and it took us weeks to find him, once we found him he gave us \$150 in cash after he had promised us \$2,000.”¹⁶

The majority of Mexican treeplanters were undocumented, but as Brígido Reyes found out, being documented does not necessarily make life any easier. Reyes made decent money in his first venture in tree planting, earning \$170 for 120 hours of work, a wage that encouraged Reyes to continue looking for work in tree planting. But his next stint in tree planting proved disheartening. After planting hundreds of acres near the Oregon-Washington border, Reyes and his co-workers received no pay.

Reyes' co-workers, believing that his immigration status would bolster their chances of getting paid, urged Reyes to take legal action. Reyes heeded their call and referred his problem to the Department of Labor. The Department of Labor did nothing. At the time the Department of Labor had only two Spanish-speaking investigators in the Northwest. For months on end, the case remained unresolved and Reyes had little option but to continue working. A few months later, Reyes would be the victim of non-payment twice more. Reyes never received payment for his work on those three jobs and left the industry all together. Reyes' immigration status offered him some options to leave the work and search out other opportunities but at the same time that legal status meant very little when dealing with the bureaucracy of the Department of Labor.

Filing for back wages has been one of the only recourses available to undocumented workers.¹⁷ In Jackson County, Circuit Court Judge Merryman ordered reforestation contractor Alfonso Gonzáles to pay back wages to three former employees. Ramón Ramos, Gabriel Gamboa and Genaro Gamboa received \$500 dollars each in addition to \$1500 in fines. Ray Smith, a legal services attorney in Jackson County, was quoted as saying that, "this is first time the court had enforced a penalty against a migrant labor contractor in the Rogue Valley."¹⁸

Smith's co-counsel, Jim Work, went on to explain the scam further to reporters: "Because the contractor has been paid by the State Forestry or by the U.S. Forest Service for work done by the whole crew, he can easily pay the back wages of the few who complain and pocket the rest" Work also added, "instances of Hispanic laborers being victimized are far more predominant in the tree planting business than in the orchard industry."¹⁹ Although an important victory, especially for the three plaintiffs, Work's

words hinted that in the larger scheme of things, these rulings had very little effect on the exploitative practices of contractors.

In addition to the non-payment, miserable living conditions, the literally backbreaking work, and the possibility of abandonment, there are a number of health concerns that reforestation workers also encounter. Like farm workers, reforestation workers are consistently exposed to pesticides and herbicides.²⁰ The Environmental Protection Agency turned a blind eye to the pesticides and herbicides being sprayed in the nation's forests. Invented by the Dow Chemical Company 2,4,5-T was an herbicide used to kill fast-growing hard wood in order to create more sunlight for the merchantable Douglas fir. Used during Vietnam, 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D were combined in a mixture to create the deadly toxin known as Agent Orange. Regardless of its deadly past, the EPA approved the use of 2,4,5-T for foresters. The EPA's William Ruckelshaus announced, "The agency would continue to prohibit the use of the chemical on food crops intended for human consumption."²¹ The Forest Service and industrial foresters, however, had no restrictions, and continued to use 2,4,5-T regularly. Despite legal challenges from several citizens groups, including the Hoedads, spraying 2,4,5-T became commonplace.

In 1980, however, several news reports about local women having an inordinate number of miscarriages in nearby lumber towns surfaced. The news added pressure and congressional hearings followed that forced the EPA and Dow to suspend the use of 2,4,5-T. Still, several pesticides and herbicides that have been prohibited or restricted for use on "food intended for human consumption" are still allowable in forestry management.²²

Pesticides and herbicides were only the beginning of health concerns for reforestation workers. Treeplanters face a variety of physical, biological, chemical, and ergonomic hazards. Insect bites or stings, especially mosquitoes, Lyme disease, rabies, allergic reactions to plants, and extreme temperatures. Chainsaws and other equipment used to thin acres for planting also pose a potential safety risk, especially without the proper training and safety precautions. If an undocumented worker fell ill or was injured, there was often little recourse as demonstrated by the case of Francisco Díaz Bernal.

This issue of undocumented workers rights and health care came to a head at St. Charles Medical center in Bend, Oregon. On April 11, 1978 Francisco Díaz Bernal, a reforestation worker fell from a flight of stairs at the Holliday Village Motel in Beaver Marsh, where he and other workers were being housed. Díaz appeared to be paralyzed; the foreman and the foreman's wife rushed him to the hospital where Dr John C. Bell refused to treat the young man. He came to the conclusion that the man was an "illegal alien" and he was under no obligation to treat him since he was in the country illegally.

A day later Bernal was admitted to Presbyterian Community Hospital where he was diagnosed with a neck level fracture of the spine. The neurosurgeon who attended to him at Presbyterian Community Hospital claimed: "When he arrived here, he was totally without function of arms or legs...he had a distended abdomen from gases that had accumulated and a full bladder."²³ After twenty-four days, hospital officials were looking to move him elsewhere for rehabilitative care, claiming that they did not have the facilities to care for Bernal. But according to one administrator, "if the patient were able to pay, there wouldn't have been a squawk. Klamath Falls (Presbyterian Intercommunity)

was perfectly able to rehabilitate.”²⁴ After no U.S. hospital would take him, he was put on board a chartered flight and sent back to Mexico, where he died six weeks later.

Nearly a year later, representatives of the Bernal family filed a wrongful death suit against Dr. Bell and the hospital for \$1.77 million. The suit claimed that John C. Bell failed to “institute treatment” and that Bernal consequently “sustained further damage to the spinal cord, which resulted in change from partial paraplegia to quadriplegia.”²⁵ The case was the first in Oregon on behalf of undocumented aliens. The suit was settled out of court and sealed, but it set an important precedent on behalf of undocumented workers.

A few days later, another suit was filed in district court against Holy Rosary Hospital in Ontario on behalf “of poor people and migrant workers” in Malheur County for failing to provide “a reasonable amount” of free care in return for federal hospital construction assistance. The suits sparked a major controversy in Oregon over undocumented workers receiving health care, a debate that would be revisited in California with the passage of proposition 187 nearly 15 years later. At the time undocumented workers in Oregon qualified for workers compensation but were ineligible for Medicaid and other state health initiatives.²⁶

As Bernal’s death demonstrated, many of the undocumented workers faced a difficult life once they arrived in Oregon. Tree planting offered better wages than their home country and a sense of adventure. Difficult and yet alluring, tree planting promised more to workers than traditional agricultural labor. They often confronted the same hardships as their counterparts in the fields, but the abuses in the field became magnified in the forest. The physical isolation alone made it difficult for anyone to voice their

grievances and even more difficult for anyone to hear them. Dreams of lucrative wages and consistent employment quickly turned into nightmares.

Agents of Change: The Willamette Valley Immigration Project and the Hoedads

The changes in the tree planting industry motivated Jim Weaver, chairman of the forest subcommittee of the House and Agricultural Committee at the time, to hold hearings concerning the hiring of undocumented workers. Lane County Commissioner and former tree planter himself Jerry Rust appeared before the Forest Subcommittee of the Agriculture committee and Congressman Jim Weaver on March 15, 1980 concerning the use of undocumented workers in the forestry industry. Rust testified, “they are often arrested and deported before they are paid- - to the benefit of the contractor. They are charged exorbitantly for their travel, for their room and board. Often times they find themselves owing their souls to the company store. They have no health or accident insurance –and no unemployment benefits.”²⁷

Rust made two other very important points. First, Rust found the importation and deportation of these workers to be systematic; in other words, he noticed that many of the same workers were continuously imported and deported. Second, and perhaps more surprising, Rust discovered that the federal government was tacitly involved as an employer of undocumented workers. Rust explained: “It appears to me that the federal government through its contracts is quite possibly the largest single employer of undocumented workers in the Northwest.”²⁸

Weaver’s feelings towards undocumented Mexicans, however, were less sympathetic. “If the recession deepens,” Weaver warned, “we’re going to have lots of

people unemployed and I want Americans right here who would otherwise be on unemployment rolls to be able to get these jobs.”²⁹ Prior to being approached by members of the NFWA, Weaver had already expressed his opinion on the issues of undocumented workers. But his vociferous appeal was not exactly in line with NFWA party line. At a treeplanter protest of government hiring practices attended by NFWA members and non-members alike, Weaver stood amongst the crowd holding a picket sign that read: “Employ a US citizen, not illegal aliens.”³⁰ His impromptu speech at the rally promising to fight until they got “their” jobs back drew the interest of some NFWA members. This small but vocal band of white reforestation workers and contractors prodded Jim Weaver to “do something about the illegals in the woods” by stepping up deportations.

Weaver’s response was to create an “interagency taskforce” comprised of the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Department of Labor, Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries. Since the taskforce operated on the premise that deporting workers could eliminate unscrupulous contractors, INS raids became the focal point for interagency cooperation. INS agents received all contract bids and award notices and “trained” Forest Service and BLM planting inspectors on “how to spot an illegal alien.”³¹

Although immigration raids had taken place in the reforestation industry in Oregon since at least 1972, the number and frequency of arrests increased sharply after the creation of the task force. Some of the rule changes that the NFWA and Weaver’s interagency task force brought about made it easier for the INS to deport undocumented workers. The rule that required the U.S. Forest Service to notify the INS of any bid that

was twenty percent below the government estimate received the most attention from the task force. The NFWA and the interagency task force reasoned that any contractor that bid so low had to be using “illegal” labor. As a result, newspaper headlines across the Pacific Northwest reflected the increase in deportations. The already exploited and abused Mexican immigrant now had to deal with the constant fear of deportation.

Shortly after Jim Weaver’s formation of the interagency task force, the NFWA became increasingly hostile towards undocumented workers. Led by NFWA president Gerry Mackie, the worker’s cooperatives developed a more intimate relationship with Jim Weaver as an organization and not as individual members. Despite claims that the Hoedads “were not about the money,” once that money stopped flowing, things changed. In response, immigrant rights activists challenged Weaver, the NFWA, the contractors and the federal government.

The rash of immigration raids in the early 1980’s and a series of investigative articles on the conditions facing undocumented workers sparked the activism of various community organizations.³² The Lawyers Guild and other legal services agencies took on a number of back claim cases on behalf of reforestation workers, Oregon Farm Workers Ministry provided affordable housing at Mt. Angel College, and other social services agencies provided aid. But one organization stood out as a staunch defender of undocumented immigrants: the Willamette Valley Immigration Project (WVIP). In fact the WVIP had tipped off reporters about the conditions in the forests.

Larry Kleinman recalled the horror stories of abuse of reforestation workers in Oregon: “We heard persistent rumors of a Mexican crew being killed on Mount Saint Helens during the eruption but could never get anywhere trying to prove it.”³³ Project

members decided that they needed more than anecdotes and the way to do that was by starting the Reforestation Workers Education Project. Before they could educate people about the working conditions, they needed to educate themselves about labor organizing and the reforestation industry as a whole.

One aspect of the Project was a survey conducted of all the immigration cases that came across their desks. The survey revealed that reforestation workers constituted the majority of the people seeking the Project's help. Workers confirmed stories of being injured in the forests with no healthcare, low wages, long hours, six-day work weeks, and at times being altogether left in the middle of the forest with no way home.

César Chávez and the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) began their organizing campaign through a farm worker survey.³⁴ Chávez and his volunteers would visit farm workers in their home and ask them about their needs. The "farm worker census" gave Chávez a sense of the needs and demands of farm workers. Similarly, the WVIP used the idea of a census to assess the most pressing demands of treeplanters.³⁵

The Project began by taking a survey of reforestation workers to highlight the working conditions and demographics of the workforce. The Project interviewed 300 reforestation workers who came into the offices seeking services. Members of the Project also went to local hangouts and passed out the surveys and asked workers to fill them out. Although not scientific, the survey gave them a general idea about the scope of the problem. They asked workers about experience, living conditions, pay, and job-related illness and injury.

They found that of Oregon and Washington's estimated population of reforestation workers of 15,000, eighty percent of them were Mexicans. The average age

of the workers was thirty years old and seventy-eight percent knew little or no English. Most had been in reforestation work for nearly three years and seventy-two percent also worked in the fields. Seventy-one percent lived on the job site, in tents and campers or out in the open, while the others commuted. Fifty-one percent worked six days a week and nineteen percent worked seven days a week. Ninety-three percent received less than half an hour for lunch and thirty percent did not receive more than one break per day. Most were severely underpaid, paid late, or not paid at all. Others received cash payments with no record of deduction and were often threatened with deportation if they complained. One-third of workers had some type of work related injury and nearly half reported unusual illnesses (i.e. any sickness more severe than the flu or the common cold). The survey confirmed the horror stories they had heard from workers and their families, and convinced the leadership of the WVIP to concentrate on addressing their needs.³⁶

Their findings inspired WVIP to address the dire situation by combating the wave of immigration raids in the forests conducted by INS. Raids in of themselves are a destructive and disruptive force in the lives of immigrants, but adding the isolation of the wilderness made them even more frightening. Being caught by the INS meant deportation to Mexico and having to repay a “coyote” to make the trek to Oregon all over again. Trying to escape the INS was potentially life threatening. Workers who managed to evade the INS faced hypothermia, starvation, dehydration, and certain death. Finding a way back to a main road or a town bordered on the impossible.

Initially, The Project pursued a partnership with NFWA in hopes of building a united front against the INS raids. The Project managers believed that the “progressive”

politics of NFWA would make them responsive to their proposals. The NFWA responded by pointing to the resolution that came out of the year's previous conference as evidence that they were not cooperating with the INS. But the WVIP insisted that they take a stronger stance. The Project believed that the NFWA and its members were actively working with the INS. They pointed to the NFWA's support of Weaver as evidence.

The NFWA insisted that they did not intend to aid in the increasing number of immigration raids. According to minutes from a NWFA meeting on February 21, 1983, it was a simple misunderstanding. After the Hoedads had placed an ad in the *Eugene Register-Guard* for Treeplanters, Pat Brennan, a member of the Hoedads, received a call from the INS. The INS asked about the number of applications that had been submitted. The INS then used the information to argue that qualified America citizens had lost jobs to undocumented workers. When the WVIP found out about the "collaboration" between the Hoedads and the INS, WVIP demanded that the Hoedads explain themselves.

The NWFA and WVIP held a meeting later that week to discuss what the NWFA saw as a simple misunderstanding and a certain naiveté. The Project was not satisfied with this response. Gerry Mackie explained the NWFA's legislative strategy and reiterated their support of full compliance with Payroll Certification. Mackie believed that requiring contractors to operate with a state issued license would deter them from hiring undocumented workers. For the WVIP it was insufficient. If a contractor "knowingly" hired undocumented workers, that license would be revoked. This stance meant that even if a contractor had his licensed revoked, he could simply re-file under a relative's name or a corporate name. It also did nothing for undocumented workers other than perhaps putting them out of work.

In response, the WVIP requested that the Hoedads and the NWFA comply with three demands. First, the NWFA and the Hoedads must decide where they stand on the illegal immigration issue and clarify their position as to cooperation with the interagency task force. Second, the NWFA must write a letter disclaiming the validity of the statistics given to the INS. Lastly, the NWFA should work closely with the WVIP in the development of legislation on a long-term fix to the “contracting” problem. The letter disclaiming the statistics passed with one vote in opposition and the second motion of non-cooperation with the INS passed as well with the same vote abstaining. The WVIP however, did not buy it; they believed that the co-ops continued their cooperation with the INS. Kleinman recalled: “Of course they knew, they snitched them off. Who else knew where these workers were. The INS sure as hell didn’t know. The Hoedads knew those mountains and where people were.”³⁷

The NFWA was not satisfied with the interagency task force. In the fall of 1984, the NFWA filed a mandamus action with the goal of forcing the Department of Labor to include reforestation workers under the Migrant Seasonal Agricultural Workers Act. Oregon Legal Services transferred the case to Mary Lewis and Michael Dale. The act protected workers by forcing employers to provide pay stubs, provide certain disclosures about the time of work to be performed and to have housing inspected. On October 1, Judge Burns in United States district court determined that reforestation work was covered under “agricultural employment” and that the protections of AWPAs should be extended to reforestation workers on the 30th of September 1985. The statute defines agricultural work as

“employment in any service or activity included within the provisions of section 3(f) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (29 U.S.C. 203 (f), or section 3121 (g) of Title 26 and the handling, planting, drying, packing, processing, freezing, or grading prior to delivery for storage of any agricultural or horticultural commodity in its unmanufactured state.”³⁸

Judge Burns determined that the Fair Labor Standards Act was intended to protect workers from unscrupulous practices and that one must necessarily include forestry for this reason. Burns wrote: “These individuals have been victimized by contractor exaggerations of conditions of employment, deceived about length of employment and wages, transported in unsafe vehicles to remote forestry camps, furnished with unsanitary and substandard housing and paid in cash, net of unexplained deductions...I conclude these are *precisely* the evils at which Congress was taking aim when it broadened the definition of agricultural employment in 1974 when it intended to include all contractors.” Burns went on to further identify forestry work with other forms of agriculture. “It is inconceivable,” he wrote, “that congress intended to protect workers planting trees in an orchard, and to disregard workers planting fir trees on a hillside, when both groups suffer from the same clearly identified harm.”³⁹

Judge Burns’ decision was seen as a positive step by both the NFWA and the WVIP. Previously, tree planters worked in a legal limbo not considered industrial or agricultural. Declaring that reforestation workers were indeed agricultural workers made it possible for advocates to challenge the treatment they received. The decision did not, however, provide reforestation workers with the right to collectively bargain or protection under the National Labor Relations Act. In the spring of 1983 the WVIP and the NFWA clashed again, this time over the proposed Senate Bill 525, which included in it a

provision to impose employer sanctions for hiring undocumented workers. The NFWA continued to maintain that employer sanctions would discourage contractors from hiring undocumented workers.

They contended that the cause of depressed wages lay in the contractors' hiring practices. Speaking to an Oregonian reporter, an NFWA spokesman argued that "most of these contractors will hire only illegal aliens...they want an exploitable work force...exploited illegal labor is displacing legally-paid resident labor."⁴⁰ Conversely, the WVIP had a long-standing policy of opposing employer sanctions. In a letter to Senator Margie Hendrickson, Ramón Ramírez reiterated the stance of WVIP: "In reality, the unscrupulous contractors exploitation and abuse of labor—U.S. citizens, documented and undocumented workers alike—is the overwhelming cause of the industry's poor condition."⁴¹ Ramírez went on to add that employer sanctions would lead to discrimination against Hispanics. He argued that to avoid prosecution and to save on record-keeping burdens, employers would simply not hire anyone who looked Hispanic or "foreign," and those workers would have no recourse.

More importantly for Ramírez, however, was the fact that in ten other states where sanctions on employers had been introduced, there seemed to be very little effect other than to further discrimination. Ramírez recounted: "A recent General Accounting Office study reviewing sanctions enacted in other countries concluded that they were unenforceable and ineffective. Yet their potential for fanning racial discrimination is immense."⁴² A coalition of organizations that served Mexican interests including the WVIP, helped defeat the bill but failed to stop raids in the area.

Mackie and the NFWA remained adamant that their actions were not motivated by race. Mackie told the local newspapers: “I want to immediately dispel the impression that our concerns are motivated by racism, that some of our people were out in the woods and saw some Mexicans and got mad.”⁴³ The NFWA newsletter, however, indicated that some members harbored ill feelings and chauvinism against Mexicans. A caricature of a mustachioed man with a serape and a sombrero indicates exactly what image the Mexican worker invoked in the Hoedads’ minds. The caption beneath the drawing indicated that the worker was somewhat acceptable to the contractors and Forest Service inspectors “marginal, minority employee scared of losing his job but can relate to worker struggle.”⁴⁴

The intentions of the NFWA and the consequences of their actions did not coincide. The NFWA continued to advocate for state and federal government raids on immigrant communities. And their public statements grew increasingly more hostile. Suddenly words like “illegal” and “wetback” started making their way into newspaper headlines. A Hoedads representative told the *Oregonian*, “while the high rate of unemployment here and tree planting already reduced to forty percent of normal, it is going to be increasingly difficult to tolerate the outlaw sort of contractor who hire illegal aliens and underpays them...from our own worker’s observations, half the state’s tree planters come from Mexico.”⁴⁵

The concern for workers faded and the concern for jobs grew. The growing “Buy American” nativist rhetoric crept into the vocabulary of the Hoedads. Signs at protest read “Keep the hoedad in American hands,” “American Citizens Si, Illegal Aliens No,” “Hire Americans to Plant Trees.” They would even go back on their successful effort to

claim reforestation work as agricultural work. The newsletter warned: “This is a different case than the farmer who hire illegal aliens; they often cannot find American workers who will work for the wages they pay. But Americans do want to plant trees. With wages running from \$8.50 to \$12.00 an hour, it’s possible to make a living planting trees.”⁴⁶

The rhetoric of the NFWA echoed growing “Buy American campaigns.” As Dana Frank illustrates in her book *Buy American*, the early 1980’s were characterized by an ever-increasing fear of the “invasion” of foreign products and the weakening of the American economy. Frank argues that “Buy American” campaigns had a long sordid history in the United States and more often than not, did little to protect the interests of American workers, while at the same time fomenting immense racial hatred and xenophobia.⁴⁷

The complaints and pressure that the NFWA raised served only to blame undocumented Mexican workers for problems in reforestation labor. No cooperative ever saw a return of the “glory” days when they received a lion’s share of the federal reforestation contracts. Rest assured that many of the former Hoedads all went on to do well for themselves despite being pushed out of “their” jobs by undocumented Mexicans. Roscoe Caron is currently a middle school teacher in Eugene, Oregon; Hal Hartzell went on to write a book about the Hoedads and his experience in the cooperative movement, and Hoedad President Gerry Mackie went on to receive his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago and currently sits on the faculty of the University of California, San Diego.⁴⁸

¡Que Viva la Unión!: The Birth of PCUN

On September 15, 1985, the Willamette Valley Immigration Project gathered its constituency and announced its plans to form a union. Project members picked the 15th of September because it coincided with “El Grito de Dolores,” the battle cry shouted by Miguel Hidalgo that signaled the onset of Mexican independence from Spain in 1810. They encouraged their members to think of the date and Mexico’s struggle for independence and justice: “It was on this day in 1819 that the Mexican people demanded their independence. In this same spirit, we will come together to also demand our legitimate right as workers.”⁴⁹ That day the *Pineros y Campesinos Unidos Noroeste* (Treeplanters and Farm Workers Northwest United, or PCUN) was born. Their commitment to organize treeplanters lasted throughout the 80’s when changes in federal law and an overall decline in the lumber economy hit Oregon. As a result, PCUN shifted its focus to nursery and cannery workers as the years went on.

For PCUN the battle was just beginning. The passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act brought about new challenges and opportunities for the fledgling union. PCUN’s history of immigrant right’s work proved to be the catalyst that launched the union into political power.

Los Indocumentados: The New Migration, IRCA and PCUN

The growing numbers of undocumented immigrants in the Pacific Northwest mirrored a larger phenomenon in the country. The presence of undocumented laborers in the reforestation industry was only one of the more dramatic examples of the conflicts that arose in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s. Efforts to organize undocumented

reforestation workers by the Willamette Valley Immigration Project ultimately waned due to changes in the industry but their commitment to immigrant rights and organizing both undocumented and documented workers did not.

With the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), an opportunity arrived to both reinforce their commitment to immigrant rights and develop the infrastructure of the fledgling union that would become the *Pineros y Campesinos Unidos Noroeste* (PCUN). Posited as the solution to undocumented immigration, IRCA also provided many of those without papers their first opportunity to step out of the shadows and claim their rights as immigrants and as laborers.

More than forty years later the effectiveness of those bills to eliminate segregation, discrimination, and disenfranchisement is still unclear. What is clear is that the often forgotten third piece of legislation that came out of the push for civil rights, the Immigration Act of 1965 has had a profound effect on the country not only culturally but politically as well. The Immigration Act of 1965 repealed the previous system of national origins quotas.⁵⁰

The national origin quotas of 1924 set the annual quota of any nationality at two percent of the number of foreign-born persons of such nationality resident in the continental United States in 1890. Given the number of immigrants from Asia and Africa residing in the United States in 1890 was minimal and the implementation of various Asian exclusion acts, the national origins quota effectively limited the number of immigrants from non-white countries. The Civil Rights movement in the context of the Cold War created an international spectacle that forced the United States to acknowledge and adjust its racist immigration policy in the eyes of the emerging third world. The

adjustment resulted in the removal of the national origins quota and replaced it with an evenly distributed global quota of 20,000 per country. In addition the Immigration Act of 1965 also made exemptions to the quotas for family members of US citizens and for Cold War refugees. These two exemptions created the circumstances for large numbers of immigrants from Asian countries, increasing by 127 percent between 1968 and 1980.⁵¹

On the other hand, the application of quotas across the board limited immigration from the western hemisphere for the first time in United States history. Mexico in particular had long been a source of labor for the industrial agricultural sector in the United States. Agricultural interests had successfully lobbied congress to exempt the western hemisphere from immigration quotas to maintain an unfettered supply of cheap labor from across the border. The desire for cheap labor was often facilitated by the enforcement agencies themselves.

The Immigration and Naturalization Services practice of “drying out wetbacks” and their ineffectiveness in policing employers who hired undocumented workers contributed to the increase in extralegal immigration during the bracero era. Congress also aided the flow of undocumented immigrants by failing to pass laws that punished employers for knowingly hiring undocumented workers while at the same time passing the Texas Proviso. The proviso exempted the hiring of unauthorized workers from the definition of “harboring” undocumented immigrants under previous immigration laws.

On the other hand increasing media coverage of the “wetback” problem forced the INS to give the appearance that they were trying to curb the problem. The answer was the notorious “Operation Wetback,” a massive quasi-military style deportation campaign that led to the deportation of one million migrants in 1954. The US government responded to

agricultural interests by increasing the number of bracero contracts available. Despite the efforts of the Border Patrol and the INS,⁵² restricting immigration from Mexico proved to be nearly impossible.

At the same time that the United States began to restrict immigration from Mexico, the guest worker program known as the bracero program was coming to an end. The program provided a crucial labor force for American agriculture during the years of 1942-1964, issuing over 4.6 million contracts. With Mexico restricted to just 20,000 visas per year agricultural interest turned to recruiting undocumented workers. Between 1965 and 1980 legal immigration from Mexico rose to a modest 36,000 per year including exemptions while at the same time undocumented immigration rose from 87,000 to an estimated 3.8 million entries per year.⁵³

Thus, the shutting off of legal means of entry into the United States coupled with the never-ending desire for cheap labor created the impetus for undocumented immigration. The growing number of undocumented immigrants in the United States became a crucial concern for the Carter administration, and President Carter attempted to tackle it at various times throughout his presidency. The nation as well as Congress accepted the need for immigration reform; however, that is where the agreement between liberals and conservatives ended. The tension that surrounded immigration reform fell essentially into two camps: legislators who believed that undocumented immigrants in the United States had developed enough equity to warrant legalization, and the legislators who believed the main component of any immigration reform should be enforcement. That tension would be present in every legalization proposal after 1975.

For example, in 1977 in an address to Congress, President Carter outlined the plan to curb illegal immigration that included the imposition of penalties on employers who hire undocumented workers (employer sanctions), increased border patrol resources and two legalization provisions known as the Alien Adjustment and Employment Act of 1977. The bill never made it out of committee, but the three major components of that bill would be carried on in the subsequent legislative debates on immigration reform.⁵⁴

In response to the failures of previous legislation, President Carter established the U.S. Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy (SCIRP) in 1978. Growing legal immigration, undocumented immigration, and the flow of refugees from Cuba and Southeast Asia put added pressure on Carter. By the 1980s, two considerations drove conversations about legalization. On the one hand some proponents advocated for legalization out of a sense of “fairness.” They believed that undocumented workers had worked hard to support the American economy and had developed equity, both social and economic, in this country and therefore should be allowed to participate fully as citizens.

On the other hand, many saw it as an economic problem; undocumented workers supposedly cost the country money through increased border patrol expenditures, taxes, and in jobs. The sixteen-member commission spent two years evaluating the immigration question and setting an agenda for reform. On March 1, 1981, SCIRP submitted its report to the President and each house of Congress. The recommendations made by SCIRP became central to the debate that would result in the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.

After two years of public hearings, congressional testimony, research, and investigations, the primary recommendation was simple: “The Select Commission

recommends that a program to legalize undocumented/illegal aliens now in the United States be adopted.”⁵⁵ First SCIRP set about trying to determine the eligibility standard. Debate raged about the cut off date for eligibility, grounds for excludability as it pertained to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, and establishing a minimum period of continuous residence.

Ultimately, the only recommendation that SCIRP made was to designate a cut off date of January 1, 1980. The commission reasoned that the date would discourage undocumented immigrants seeking legalization from entering the country after legislation had been enacted. Despite the arguments over the particulars of the legalization program, one was certain: there needed to be legalization. SCIRP came to the conclusion that any legalization program had to deal with four central questions: eligibility standards, strategies to maximize participation, new enforcement efforts, and a formal position toward undocumented immigrants that did not qualify for amnesty.⁵⁶ The SCIRP report lit a fire under Congress and President Reagan and immediately set off a wave of immigration reform bills.

During his time as the Republican Governor of California and Republican Presidential candidate, Ronald Reagan very rarely made immigration a topic of conversation. When he did make reference to immigration, it was clear that it was not a policy imperative for him: “I wonder about the illegal alien fuss. Are great numbers of our unemployed really victims of the illegal alien invasion or are those illegal tourists actually doing work our own people won’t do?”⁵⁷ A long time friend of agricultural interests, including his infamous opposition to the UFW grape boycott, Reagan’s statement indicates his desire and to allow the undocumented immigration issue to go

untouched. However, the SCIRP report, political pressure, public pressure and most importantly the inflow of Cuban and Haitian refugees, forced Reagan to establish an interagency task force to review the SCIRP report and make recommendations.

The immigration issue remained a thorny one for Reagan, who had to balance the Republican coalition which favored a stringent law and order approach to immigration, libertarians who resisted the encroachment of the federal government, and still be responsive to the demands of agricultural and business lobbies.⁵⁸ Concurrently the House and Senate held joint hearings on immigration for the first time since 1951.⁵⁹ The joint session produced the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1982, known as “Simpson-Mazzoli.” The bill included both employer sanctions and a legalization program, which effectively made the bill a target for derision from both sides. After various deaths and reincarnations, the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 passed and signed into law by President Regan on November 6, 1986.

From the beginning the debate surrounding immigration reform involved so many competing interests that the legislation that would arise, the Immigration Reform and Control Act, was so convoluted no one could have predicted the success or failure of immigration reform. PCUN considered the passage of the bill a defeat. They staunchly opposed employer sanctions, guest worker programs, and increased funding of the border patrol. Yet the opportunity to legalize scores of workers infused the union with new members and new life.

PCUN and the response to immigration reform

The prominence of the undocumented workers in the reforestation sector put PCUN and undocumented workers firmly in the spotlight. The election of President Reagan resulted in the elimination of resources previously geared for reforestation. Many of the union members that had at one time worked in reforestation year-round were suddenly without much work. The precise time that the Hoedads began to complain bitterly and organize against undocumented workers ended up coinciding with the decline of the industry in the Northwest. The Reagan administration cut back funds earmarked for reforestation on federal lands and reforestation contractors moved onto private lands in southern states.

Yet the members that PCUN had worked so hard to organize moved into the nursery sector instead and for them the struggle continued. The different proposals for immigration reform stirred PCUN to form a coalition with other Oregon groups concerned with the welfare of immigrants. The Oregon Coalition for Immigrant and Refugees Rights became the public voice for the disapproval of various aspects of IRCA. First and foremost was the provision for employer sanctions. PCUN along with other Latino organizations across the country saw employer sanctions as an excuse for wholesale discrimination against Latinos or anyone who “looked illegal.”

PCUN worried that employers would choose not to hire Latinos for fear that they would be fined for hiring undocumented workers. Four years after IRCA, the Government Accounting Office (GAO) confirmed PCUN’s suspicions. As Ramírez recalled, “these [the sanctions] would create wholesale discrimination. There is a double

standard in this country in terms of Latinos and people of color applying for jobs and white people; every one knows it. Even the Government Accounting Office!”⁶⁰ The GAO report indicated that discrimination against Hispanics and other “foreign looking” individuals had skyrocketed in the wake of IRCA.

Employers seeking to avoid employer sanctions also avoided Hispanics employees, regardless of national origin or residency status. Debate surrounded the effectiveness of employer sanctions and the numbers suggest that very little was done.⁶¹ After more than a year of employer sanctions only thirteen citations were issued in Oregon and none received a fine. One company that had 750 undocumented workers on its payroll was issued a citation but avoided paying any fines. Employer sanctions did not serve its purpose and instead gave employers a tool for wholesale discrimination.⁶²

Secondly, PCUN also felt that the amnesty program that was being proposed was too stringent. The legalization program had a number of almost absurd provisions. First, immigrants had to demonstrate evidence of unlawful entry before January 1, 1982, and then had to demonstrate that they had continued to live continuously in the United States thereafter. The other two provisions required applicants to file within a year of IRCA’s enactment and to maintain residence in the United States during the application process. Essentially, PCUN felt that asking undocumented people to document their time in the United States amounted to a slap in the face. The vagueness of the legislation and terms like “continuous residence” and “known to the government” led to a number of lawsuits that tended to rule in favor of a loose interpretation of the terms.

Evidentiary problems quickly became a greater concern for administrators of the program than definitional ones. The general legalization regulations called for three types

of documents: proof of identity, proof of residence, and proof of financial responsibility. These documents usually included a driver's license, a rent receipt, utility bills, paycheck stubs, all relatively easy documents to verify, but difficult to gather a "preponderance of evidence." The lack of definition for "preponderance of evidence" left the job of interpretation up to the individual INS inspector. That often led to very similar cases being treated very differently.

In the end, the process was highly subjective. In essence, the success of any particular application could be determined by sheer luck. As a direct result of the inconsistencies, various non-profit organizations filed class-action lawsuits on behalf of the denied applicants. Because of the INS' inability to define "preponderance of evidence," nearly all judgments ruled in favor of the denied applicants.⁶³

"Lucky for us there was SAW"

The case of Damian Alvarez-Arias demonstrates the typical example of immigrant that legislators created the Immigration Reform and Control Act for. Alvarez, who had to come to Oregon nearly seven years before IRCA, had been in hiding in Salem working at a mushroom plant for all those years. Separated from his family, his life was by no means easy. Alvarez regularly went back and forth between Mexico and the United States to visit his family, risking possible deportation or worse.⁶⁴ Using a fake social security number and maintaining his employment over the course of seven years made it relatively easy for him to prove his residence and duration of that residence. His case proved to be the exception to the rule, as the general legalization process proved too difficult to navigate for most undocumented immigrants.

The Special Agricultural Worker (SAW) provision of IRCA proved to be a blessing in disguise for many. Although a guest worker program was explicitly rejected in the SCIRP report, this did not stop the Agricultural Employers Association from trying to include one in every version of IRCA since 1980. President Reagan also tried to introduce an immigration proposal that would admit up to 50,000 Mexicans annually for two years. Senators Simpson, Mazzoli, Rodino, Wilson, and Kennedy all introduced and killed various versions of a guest worker program until the Schumer amendment in June 1986.

The United States had experimented with a guest worker program during the First World War, but the “bracero program” was the first large scale importation of foreign workers. The bracero program imported Mexican agricultural workers to alleviate shortages during the Second World War, but farmers developed an addiction for low cost labor. Growers successfully lobbied for the extension of the program repeatedly until its demise in 1964. The bracero program was over in name, but in practice the United States continued to import guest workers through the H-2 section of the Immigration and Nationality Act.⁶⁵

As part of the Immigration Reform and Control Act, the H-2 visas were split into H-2A, for agricultural workers, and H-2B for non-agricultural workers. While IRCA implemented limits on the number of H-2B visas, it placed no such limits on H-2A visas, effectively creating a never-ending supply of agricultural workers to growers. As was the case for braceros before them, guest workers were in a vulnerable position. Growers exploited that position by paying substandard wages and ultimately using the immigration status of guest workers as leverage against them. For workers without visas,

the Special Agricultural Worker provision of IRCA provided them a method of adjusting their status.⁶⁶

Introduced as a last minute amendment by Representative Chuck Schumer, many authors have credited SAW as the compromise that allowed IRCA to pass. Through SAW, undocumented immigrants that could demonstrate sixty days of seasonal agricultural work in qualifying crops between May 1985 and May 1986 were eligible to apply for immediate permanent resident status. Although this version was voted down, it was quickly revived with a few more amendments. Workers had to demonstrate ninety days of seasonal agricultural work and received temporary resident status until their legalization was completed.

The same benefits awaited the applicants of the SAW program and the general legalization programs, but the standard of proof vastly differed. General legalization applicants had twelve months to apply for temporary residence; SAW applicants had eighteen months. General legalization applicants had to demonstrate five years of continuous unlawful residence, while SAW applicants only had to demonstrate six months of residence that neither had to be “continual” nor “unlawful.” Perhaps even more significant, SAW applicants did not have to be in the United States to apply. SAW proponents argued that agricultural workers were disproportionately Mexican and working poor; they would work in the United States during the summer and return to Mexico during the off season.

Therefore, they needed the extra time to apply and should be allowed to apply outside the United States. The SAW program effectively placed a guest worker program within IRCA. The passage of the SAW provision gave rise to a whole host of problems.

One of those problems, the USDA's definition of qualifying crops as fruits, vegetables, and other perishable commodities became the subject of much litigation. For example, the National Cotton Council successfully litigated to reclassify cotton as a "fruit" under the SAW program, effectively making cotton workers eligible for legalization.⁶⁷ Somewhat arbitrarily, sugar cane was excluded from the definition just a few months later. In Oregon, reforestation made the cut as a qualifying crop.⁶⁸

The INS created an affidavit for SAW applicants, form I-705, that only needed to be signed by the applicant and an "affiant" (i.e. grower, contractor, or farm worker union official).⁶⁹ Once that form was signed, the burden of proof shifted from the applicant to the INS.⁷⁰ That burden of proof became increasingly difficult to implement, especially as the flood of SAW applications came in. Initially, the slow stream of applicants in the nation proved to also be the case in Oregon. The number of amnesty applications remained relatively low for the early part of the amnesty period. But the number of applications steadily rose in mid-summer; nearly two months after the May 5th implementation date of IRCA, the Portland offices began receiving 100 applications a day and the numbers grew steadily.⁷¹ By the end of the summer, 2,580 applications had been filed in Oregon, reflecting the national trend, the majority of those applications, sixty percent, qualified as SAW applicants.⁷² Oregon finished in the top ten of states in SAW applications with California, Florida, Texas, Washington, New York, and Arizona having more. The overwhelming number of applicants in Oregon came from Mexico, with the next closest percentages from Central America.⁷³

Only seven months later, the number of SAW applications rose dramatically. Elizabeth Godfrey, legalization adjudicator for the Portland INS office, saw as many as

300 people waiting in line looking for a temporary residence card.⁷⁴ Oregon INS records show that by March of 1988, 9,000 SAW applications had been filed in Portland, compared to only 200 for general legalization.⁷⁵ By the end of the amnesty period, undocumented workers filed 25,000 SAW applications.

None of the INS officials in Oregon expected such a huge number of SAW applicants, and wondered how the number reached so high. At a meeting of the Portland City Club, attorney Richard Ginsburg gave one plausible explanation: “SAW applicants have confidentiality, they know that information on those applications will not be used against them.” Although general amnesty did have a confidentiality clause, who exactly was eligible for legalization was not so clear-cut. Applicants felt more comfortable applying for a program they knew they would be eligible for.

Still, the high estimates of undocumented aliens in Oregon did not explain the apparently high percentage of agricultural workers. Even those not eligible for SAW knew that they could come across forged documents easily. For many workers even the hopes of attaining false documents did not guarantee amnesty. María Lourdes Hernández came to Oregon as a housekeeper and to escape the watchful eye of her mother-in-law. Her husband came to the U.S. in the early 80s, and for all intents and purposes left her. Once she arrived in Oregon, her employer refused to pay Hernández. Consequently, she and her daughter were forced literally to live in the doghouse in her employer’s backyard. Seeking to escape her conditions, she mustered up fifty dollars and bought falsified documents to attempt to gain SAW status. Her effort failed, but she still used the false documents to work in agriculture, picking strawberries.⁷⁶

The large number of SAW applicants can be connected to the efforts of growers themselves. For example, growers speculated that they would have to contend with an exodus from the fields once workers legalized.⁷⁷ Initial worries that IRCA would negatively affect their ability to recruit workers into the fields seemingly came true the summer of 1987. Growers faced a supposedly major shortage in the harvesting of bumper crops. One farmer, Peter Dinsdale, reportedly went as far as renting a school bus and driving south to Los Angeles in search of workers.⁷⁸

State Agricultural Department Director Bob Buchanan blamed the shortage of workers on IRCA, and lobbied along with other growers for the implementation of a bracero type program. Roy Malensky, a berry grower from Hillsboro, argued to Representative Les Aucoin on behalf of other growers that a return to the bracero program was the only logical solution: “That way we could transport workers (from outside the United States) here, have them work and transport them back... But nobody wants that because it's too simple.”⁷⁹ Aucoin agreed that a bracero-type program would be ideal, but that it would be “a tough sell...they [Eastern States] see a bracero program totally different than we see it in the West.”⁸⁰ For Aucoin the problem with the Bracero program was a matter of perspective and not “legalized slavery” as former Bracero Administrator L.G Williams once noted.

On the other hand, James Buck, regional commissioner for the INS, argued that the early crop in Oregon and late strawberry crop in California were actually to blame.⁸¹ Despite the claims of a worker shortage, the California strawberry crop that year weighed in at 96.3 million pounds, a forty-seven percent increase from the previous year and the third highest total in history.⁸² Regardless of the data, growers continued to push over and

over again for a guest workers program and clamored for their supposed uncertain future.⁸³

Growers warned of labor shortages or of crops drying up in the fields as thousands of acres went unpicked. These conditions, they asserted, insured rising wages and in turn rising prices for the consumer.⁸⁴ Growers threatened to leave agriculture all together or at the very least switch to less labor-intensive crops. Some even went as far as meeting with Chinagri Manpower Center of New York City in an attempt to import transient Chinese laborers.⁸⁵ The proposal called for the Chinese government to fly the workers into San Francisco and be picked up by the growers and then transported to Oregon.

The H-2A provision of IRCA allowed for the importation of foreign workers, but a few considerations made the plan implausible. Growers had to pay foreign workers a prevailing wage, which in Oregon was \$5.26 an hour, or two dollars more than the minimum wage. Other considerations included paying for transportation within the country, lodging, food, and 75% guarantee of wages expected to be earned during the contract period. Most importantly, growers needed to prove a shortage of laborers. Oregon growers repeatedly failed to prove a shortage of workers existed.

Unable to prove the shortage, growers instead turned to SAW. Contractors and growers alike used SAW as their own personal recruiting tool. Many farm contractors signed the affidavit for workers they knew, and for workers they did not know. Contractors and farmers became notorious for charging undocumented aliens fees in exchange for their signature on the affidavit.⁸⁶ The I-705 became a moneymaker for

contractors and growers, charging outrageous fees for a simple signature as well as providing a readily exploitable work force.

Certainly some farmers simply could not remember everyone who had ever worked for them, and erred on the side of caution. But more often than not, growers were attempting to inflate the number of workers in the field. In the end, the SAW provision of IRCA became a way for growers to inflate the number of workers in the area. The promising and selling of their signatures on the I-705s brought massive numbers of workers to Oregon and the Willamette Valley. David Beebe, district director of the INS, estimated that fraud in Oregon ran, “anywhere from twenty to twenty-five percent and on up.”⁸⁷ In Oregon, six months before the close of the amnesty period only eight cases of fraud were being investigated out of 7,200 applications.⁸⁸

The increasing number of people looking for work had a dramatic effect on the lives of immigrants. The living conditions of immigrants worsened as they found it difficult to find jobs, housing, and food.⁸⁹ Shortages indeed existed, just not the kind farmers predicted. The Oregon Commission of Hispanic Affairs reported shortages at local food banks, shortages in housing, and work. The harsh working and living conditions prompted some people to invoke images of the bracero program.

Things had gotten so difficult for the new arrivals that even Representative Les Aucoin, a proponent of the bracero program, called on the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to help provide aid for the flood of workers in the state. FEMA refused to send aid on the grounds that “they had not thought of criteria for evaluating emergency requests for funding.”⁹⁰ An estimated 35,000 migrants or 10,000 more than previous years arrived in Oregon.

With little to no work for migrants, state officials were forced to deal with a population that had no options. Overcrowded housing and homelessness ran rampant. Local agencies like the Centro Cultural in Cornelius, Oregon scrambled to feed the migrants and help them find their way home.⁹¹ The situation became so drastic in fact that the Mexican government sent various fact-finding missions to the United States including Oregon, after the implementation of IRCA.⁹²

Problems had only gotten worse by the time winter hit. Between 6,000 and 10,000 workers decided to stay in Oregon that winter, because they believed that leaving would have an adverse impact on their legalization proceedings. The excessive number of migrants who stayed put a severe burden on housing. Many of the migrants slept in their cars, in tents, and in parks. Unable to deal with the crisis, Oregon saw a spike in homeless migrants and migrant deaths from exposure.

State officials and non-profits were not the only ones caught off guard. The INS was also unprepared to deal with the influx of undocumented workers. Many farmworkers waited for months just to get an appointment at the INS offices in Portland. The same situation existed nationally. The rush to legalization that many predicted would follow the May 5th amnesty period did not materialize. After IRCA's passage, Congress had set aside monies to aid the INS efforts. Instead, the INS decided to fund the program with fees collected from the applicants.

When the early numbers returned so low, the INS hurried to find monies for IRCA. Many offices closed, employees were laid off and other cost cutting measures went into affect. In the Portland office, the cuts resulted in a staff of only eight. The office had to scramble just to interview sixty people a day. A last minute expansion to

eighteen people in November ramped up the number of interviews to 180 people a day.⁹³ The backlog just to schedule an appointment became so troublesome that the local INS office eliminated the requirement for an appointment. Overwhelmed by the situation, local INS officials pleaded to the state for some sort of help. Oregon's Legislative Emergency Board granted the local INS offices an additional \$500,000 to open a new office and hire more staff.⁹⁴

By the time the Immigration Reform and Control Act passed, PCUN had almost ten years of experience working in the immigrant community. Their opposition to IRCA notwithstanding, PCUN had been preparing for the possibility of the legislation since the early eighties. Having already been involved in immigration cases and having roots in the National Lawyers Guild, the PCUN staff proved to be well versed in the language of immigration law.⁹⁵

As a result, PCUN instituted an efficient process for people to apply for the legalization process.⁹⁶ The passage of IRCA led to mass confusion and skepticism in the immigrant community. PCUN foresaw the panic IRCA created, and instituted informational town hall meetings for anyone looking to apply for legalization. Every day at 5pm, PCUN member Javier Seca led the town hall meeting. The meetings had two messages: first, they laid out the requirements for legalization, and second, PCUN stressed the importance of joining the union. PCUN saw IRCA as the perfect recruitment tool for new union members. It agreed to help applicants through the legalization process in exchange for joining the union.

The maneuver paid off. Applicants made appointments with PCUN staff after the meetings and began their journey towards legalization. Kleinman recalled the process:

“We were pretty thorough. We made sure people had the proper evidence. That was one way that we avoided a lot of fraud and ensured that people who applied through us were going to receive legalization.”⁹⁷ After the initial screening, PCUN referred the applicants to various medical clinics to receive their physical exam.

After their physical, applicants would return to PCUN to have their applications typed and translated. Once that was complete, they would have one final interview with Larry Kleinman and were prepped for the INS interview. PCUN and Lilia Araujo, chief INS legalization official, reached an agreement that on Mondays and Wednesdays at 8 am, PCUN would bring in thirty interviewees every week to be interviewed. That way PCUN applicants never worried about scheduling an appointment or having to wait in line for hours on end. Kleinman remembered: “We would carpool from Woodburn and be in Portland by 7:30 in the morning and be done by 11. It was an extremely efficient process.”⁹⁸

As efficient as the process became, PCUN grew ambivalent about their immigration work. Distraught at the conditions the oversupply of labor had caused, PCUN felt it would be irresponsible to continue inflating those numbers and instead turned its attention to organizing labor. PCUN’s strategy around the growing number of fraudulent applications came as a surprise to everyone.⁹⁹ The union wrestled between its foundational work as an immigrant rights movement and its transition into labor organizing.

The union turned down potential union-members because they felt strongly that the growing pool of workers diminished their ability to be effective. Larry Kleinman recalled: “It was making it hard to organize. Wages in strawberries dropped from an

already low 9 cents per pound to 7 cents. It took us a long time to recover from that. We decided to stop doing SAW cases altogether.”¹⁰⁰ Unlike the growers predictions that the new immigration law would inflate wages, SAW had the opposite effect, pushing wages even lower than previously existed.

PCUN decided that the flood of workers to the area negatively affected their ability to organize and decided to take a stance six months before the deadline for SAW applications. That summer, conditions for workers worsened. Kleinman recalled seeing “one field with nearly one hundred workers in it. There couldn’t have been more than an acre of strawberries there. They [farm workers] finished it in a half an hour.”¹⁰¹ By the November deadline, 25,000 applicants had filed for legalization in Oregon under the Special Agricultural Worker provision of IRCA.¹⁰² Out of those applicants, PCUN’s staff of six people processed 1,300 of them in a twelve-month period with a ninety-five percent success rate.¹⁰³

The strategy of using the SAW applications to bolster their membership was a resounding success. With a pre-IRCA membership of 600 members, the post-IRCA rolls numbered over 2,000. Of the 1300 applications that PCUN processed, 900 of them were active members, meaning 400 applicants were family members not involved directly with the union. That left over 500 new members who did not qualify for amnesty, who joined the union. Larry Kleinman attributed this boost in non-amnesty applicants to the work they were doing in the community: “SAW gave us a lot of credibility. People saw the good work we were engaged in and wanted to be a part of it.”¹⁰⁴ Among farm workers that credibility translated into documented farm workers joining the union.

Conclusion

The WVIP's experience with the reforestation workers reinforced their belief that undocumented workers suffered the most exploitative conditions of any agricultural worker. Reforestation workers suffer from many of the same indignities as farm workers. The plight of the farm worker has become all too familiar to us while the plight of reforestation workers remains veiled. Although no longer a prominent occupation for Mexicans in Oregon, migrant treeplanters continue to be exploited in reforestation work, especially in the South. The struggles of the treeplanter cooperative and the efforts of the Project could serve as a valuable lesson in its failures.

The membership and staff of PCUN became emboldened and over five years later engaged in its most active and successful campaigns of the young union's life. The union bided its time for the next few years, planning and plotting their next step. They conducted more wage surveys, kicked off a minimum wage campaign, challenged legal obstacles to unionization and striking in preparation for a battle with growers in the state. The union was here and it wanted to announce its presence in the Willamette Valley.

The following chapter details the rise of PCUN onto the state level and eventually into the national spotlight. Their commitment to immigrant workers and undocumented workers in particular set them apart from other labor organizations, but their tactics borrowed heavily from the UFW. PCUN continued to build its constituency with farm workers while at the same time building a larger base with the progressive community in the valley in preparation for the strikes and a boycott.

¹ Goldy, Daniel L. “‘Big’ Versus ‘Little’ Lumber Operators in the Pacific Northwest” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol.281 May 1952 p.93-98

² Hartzell Jr., Hal. *Birth of a Cooperative: Hoedads, Inc., a Worker Owned Forest Labor Co-Op*. Hulogosi Communications, Incorporated, 1987.

³ Hartzell Jr., Hal. *Birth of a Cooperative*

⁴ Oral Interview with Roscoe Caron, July 24, 2007 in Eugene, Oregon. Conducted by the author.

⁵ *Eugene Register-Guard*, May 11th, 1980

⁶ *Eugene Register-Guard*, May 11th, 1980

⁷ *Eugene Register-Guard*, May 11th, 1980

⁸ *Eugene Daily Emerald*, January 13, 1981

⁹ *Oregonian* “High wages hamper Northwest economy” January 18, 1984

¹⁰ *Together* October 1976 Volume 3, Number 2

¹¹ *Together* October 1976 Volume 3, Number 2

¹² *Together* Summer 1977 Volume 4, Number 2

¹³ *Together* Summer 1977 Volume 4, Number 2

¹⁴ Anonymous, Oral Interview conducted by the author October 27th, 2007. The subject asked not to be indentified due to his immigration status. Subject worked as a treeplanter in various locations for a two-year period 1980-1982. In addition to his immigration status the contractor whom he worked for in 1980-1982 is still a prominent contractor in the Woodburn area.

¹⁵ Anonymous, Interview

¹⁶ Anonymous, Interview

¹⁷ Author Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo highlights the recent efforts of undocumented domestic workers in Los Angeles to reclaim their wages. This dissertation will later show the same strategy being implemented by the Willamette Valley Immigration Project (WVIP) and Pineros y Campesinos Unidos Noroeste (PCUN)

¹⁸ *Mail Tribune* “Judge orders back pay for tree planters” August 25, 1981

¹⁹ *Mail Tribune* “Judge orders back pay for tree planters” August 25, 1981

²⁰ The fight against pesticides on food crops is well chronicled. The struggle to ban pesticides and herbicides in the fields is by no means over but the movement has made considerable headway. The arguments against using pesticides and herbicides on food crops drew sympathy from organized labor and environmentalist for farm workers but it also had another very strong ally in its corner as well, the health conscious consumer. Less concerned about the laborer many consumers refusal to buy fruits and vegetables that had possibly been sprayed with DDT or other pesticides and herbicides put an unyielding pressure on the producers to at least make it appear that their foodstuffs were healthy. The health of the middle class consumer was at stake and that fact as much as any sympathy for workers was instrumental in the anti-pesticide movement.

²¹ Robbins, William G. *Landscapes of Conflict: The Oregon Story, 1940-2000*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004.

²² Robbins, William G. *Landscapes of Conflict*

²³ *Oregonian* March 13, 1979

²⁴ *Oregonian* March 13, 1979

²⁵ *Oregonian* March 13, 1979

²⁶ *Eugene Register Guard* March 18, 1979

²⁷ “Use of Illegal Aliens in Government Reforestation Contracts” *Hearing before the Subcommittee on Forests of the Committee on Agriculture* House of Representatives 96th Congress Second Session. May 15, 1980 Eugene, OR

²⁸ “Use of Illegal Aliens in Government Reforestation Contracts”

²⁹ *Oregonian* May 16, 1980

³⁰ *Oregonian* February 14, 1981

³¹ Willamette Valley Immigration Project, “Reforestation Workers Education Project”. n.d.

³² Writing for the Statesman Journal, Phil Manzano and Michael Walden published a series of investigative articles following a group of undocumented workers from crossing the border to traveling to Oregon and their experiences in reforestation. Manzano and Walden would later win the Bruce Baer award for “excellence in the profession” for their series.

³³ Larry Kleinman, Interview

³⁴ The National Farm Workers Association later became the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC). They later became known as the United Farm Workers (UFW) when they received their official charter from the AFL-CIO

³⁵ Levy, Jacques E. *Cesar Chavez* p. 157-158

³⁶ Willamette Valley Immigration Project, “Reforestation Workers Education Project”. n.d.

³⁷ Larry Kleinman, Interview

³⁸ *Bresgal v. E Brock* Nos. 86-3996, 86-4072 United States Court of Appeals Ninth Circuit

³⁹ *Bresgal v. E Brock* Nos. 86-3996, 86-4072 United States Court of Appeals Ninth Circuit

⁴⁰ *Oregonian*, February 16, 1981

⁴¹ Correspondence Ramon Ramirez to Gerry Mackie, February 21, 1981, PCUN Archives

⁴² *Oregonian*, February 21, 1981

⁴³ *Bulletin*, February 18, 1981

⁴⁴ *Together*, Winter, 1976 Volume 3 Number 3

⁴⁵ *Together*, Winter, 1976 Volume 3 Number 3

⁴⁶ *Together*, Winter, 1976 Volume 3 Number 3

⁴⁷ Frank, Dana. *Buy American: The Untold Story of Economic Nationalism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1999.

⁴⁸ Roscoe Caron was consistently a voice of dissent in the NFWA; he fondly recalls his days in the Hoedads but was ultimately disillusioned with them. He is now an anti-racism organizer and co-founded a tutoring program for Latino middle school students with Jim Garcia

⁴⁹ Correspondence, Augustine Valle to Willamette Valley Immigration Project supporters and members, August 8th, 1985

⁵⁰ Ngai, Mae. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern American*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004

-
- ⁵¹ Maddux, Thomas R. "Ronald Reagan and the Task Force on Immigration, 1981" *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 74 No. 2 pages 195-235, 2005
- ⁵² Nevins, Joseph *Operation Gatekeeper: The Rise of the "Illegal Alien" and the Making of the U.S.-Mexico Boundary*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- ⁵³ Durand, Jorge, Massey, Douglas, Parrado, Emilio A. "The New Era of Mexican Migration to the United States" *The Journal of American History* Vol. 86, No.2 Rethinking History and the Nation-State: Mexico and the United States as a Case Study: Special Issue (Sep 1999) pages 518-536
- ⁵⁴ Gonzáles, Susan Baker *The Cautious Welcome: The Legalization Program of the Immigration Reform and Control Act*. Washington DC: The Urban Institute. 1990
- ⁵⁵ *U.S. Immigration Policy and the National Interest: The Staff Report of the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy*. Washington D.C. Government Printing Office, 1981
- ⁵⁶ *U.S. Immigration Policy and the National Interest: The Staff Report of the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy*. Washington D.C. Government Printing Office, 1981
- ⁵⁷ Kiron, K. Skineer, Annelise Anderson and Martin Anderson, *Reagan In His Own Hand: The Writings of Ronald Reagan That Reveal His Revolutionary Vision for America*, New York: Free Press 2001
- ⁵⁸ Maddux, Thomas R. "Ronald Reagan and the Task Force on Immigration, 1981" *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 74 No. 2 pages 195-235, 2005
- ⁵⁹ Gonzáles, Susan Baker. *The Cautious Welcome*
- ⁶⁰ Lynn Stephens, *The Story of PCUN and the Farmworker Movement in Oregon*, Eugene: Department of Anthropology, University of Oregon, 2001.
- ⁶¹ Olmos, Robert "Attorney Sees 'Good' and 'Bad' in Immigration Law" *Oregonian* December 31, 1987
- ⁶² Koberstein, Paul "INS Probes Fraud in 8 Illegals' Applications for Residency, Time for Warnings End as Companies, Individuals Face Law" *Oregonian* November 6, 1987
- ⁶³ See *Ayuda INC v. Meese*, *Catholic Social Services v. Meese*, *Zambrano v. Meese*
- ⁶⁴ Manzano, Phil, "Years of Hiding end for Salem Man" *Oregonian* August 20, 1987
- ⁶⁵ Southern Poverty Law Center *Close to Slavery: Guest Worker Programs in the United States* Montgomery, Alabama 2007
- ⁶⁶ Southern Poverty Law Center *Close to Slavery*
- ⁶⁷ *National Cotton Council v. Lyng*, No.5-87-0200-C (N.D.Tex.1988)
- ⁶⁸ *Northwest Forest Workers Association v. Lyng*, No.87-1487,87-3303 United States District Court
- ⁶⁹ Unions who had workers under contract were allowed to sign the I-705's. For example the UFW was able to sign affidavits for workers that belonged to the union and working under contract. PCUN at the time had no union contracts and therefore did not sign any I-705's
- ⁷⁰ IRCA Sec 210(3)(B)
- ⁷¹ There was no apparent intended irony in choosing "Cinco de Mayo" as the implementation date
- ⁷² Manzano, Phil "Years of Hiding end for Salem Man" *Oregonian* August 20, 1987

⁷³ University of Oregon basketball star Greg Trapp was one of the literally handfuls of non-Mexicans to apply for amnesty in Oregon. Trapp of Belizean birth was unaware that he was undocumented until he applied for a passport to play basketball overseas. Trapp's parents had never informed him that he was born in Belize before moving to Los Angeles. Trapp qualified for Amnesty under the Registry Update provision of IRCA. Frei, Terry "Talk about Being Caught in a Trapp" *Oregonian* September 9, 1987

⁷⁴ Olmos, Robert "Laborers take toll on agencies providing food in Cornelius" *Oregonian* March 31, 1988

⁷⁵ Olmos, Robert "Forest Grove migrant housing Project deemed a success; expansion sought" *Oregonian* March 12, 1988

⁷⁶ *Oregonian* December 29, 1991

⁷⁷ The Replenishment Agricultural Worker (RAW) provision sought to fill the purported shortage caused by the mass exodus of SAW workers. Through RAW the Department of Labor was given special permission to determine in three years time after the closing of legalization if there was indeed a labor shortage

⁷⁸ Manzano, Phil, "Confusion Surrounds Immigration Rules" *Oregonian* October 5, 1987

⁷⁹ Olmos, Robert, "Aucoin calls Agency Biased Against Farm worker Program, Oregon Democrat Urges Farmers to Pinpoint the New Immigration Laws Ills." October 13, 1987

⁸⁰ Olmos, Robert "Aucoin Calls Agency Biased Against Farm worker Program, Oregon Democrat Urges Farmers to Pinpoint the New Immigration Laws Ills" *Oregonian* October 13, 1987 Olmos, Robert "Worry over lack of workers keeps strawberry growers from planting" *Oregonian* January 7, 1988

⁸¹ Manzano, Phil "Growers won't Face Slim Pickings for Labor" *Oregonian* August 29, 1987

⁸² Manzano, Phil "Confusion Surrounds Immigration Rules" *Oregonian* October 5, 1987

⁸³ Kader, Jim "Reforms trouble growers/strawberry famers face labor uncertainty over immigration law" *Oregonian* January 28, 1988; Goranson, Eric "Undocumented aliens to harvest strawberries" *Oregonian* February 23, 1988. "Forum readied for agricultural employers" *Oregonian* March 11, 1988. Barnes, C. Ellis "Oregon growers blast new immigration law" *Oregonian* March 13, 1988

⁸⁴ Goranson, Eric "Growers hear new rules on workers" *Oregonian* February 11, 1988

⁸⁵ Goranson, Eric "Chinese labor pool studied: Strawberry growers to meet with NY firm importing workers" *Oregonian* February 18, 1988

⁸⁶ Cowen, Lauren "New Legals Find Struggle Continues" *Oregonian* November 28, 1988. Ellis, Barnes "INS: Farmer selling False Papers" *Oregonian* April 29, 1989

⁸⁷ Martinis, Cheryl "Farm Worker Union Says Farmer Lured Migrants" *Oregonian* June 4, 1988

⁸⁸ Koberstein, Paul "INS Probes Fraud in 8 Illegals' Applications for Residency, Time for Warnings End as Companies, Individuals Face Law" *Oregonian* November 6, 1987. Washington State also faced large amounts of fraud that led to a few arrests. Eng, James, "Immigration fraud probe continues" *Oregonian* December 17, 1987

⁸⁹ Cowen, Lauren "New Legal's Find Struggle Continues" *Oregonian* November 28, 1988

⁹⁰ Manzano, Phil "Aucoin assails agency for not aiding migrant workers" *Oregonian* May 7, 1988. Apparently the state of Oregon had a contentious relationship with FEMA, state

officials refused to participate in civil defense drills to prepare them for a nuclear attack and subsequently FEMA threatened to withhold over a million dollars in federal funding.

⁹¹ McCarthy, Nancy "Lack of money strands many migrant workers, help may come through relief bill aimed at farmers" *Oregonian* April 23, 1988

⁹² Grency, Jeff "Mexican Fact Finders tour Migrant Farm Site" *Oregonian* September 15, 1987. Ames, Sarah "Fact Finders Take Close Look at Migrants' Life on the Job" *Oregonian* September 16, 1987

⁹³ Cowen, Lauren "New Legals Find Struggle Continues" *Oregonian* November 28, 1988

⁹⁴ Cowen, Lauren "New Legals Find Struggle Continues" *Oregonian* November 28, 1988. IRCA had set aside an additional funding program for states that required additional resources through the State Legislation Impact Assistance Grant (SLIAG). It is unclear (to the author) if the money granted through the Legislative Emergency Board came from SLIAG. Although the state did receive a federal grant in January of 1988 nearly eight months after the implementation of IRCA to educate the public about legalization, "Grant to help publicize INS changes" *Oregonian* January 23, 1988

⁹⁵ In fact Larry Kleinman was commissioned by the National Lawyers Guild to write a guide to understanding the new immigration laws. Kleinman, Lawrence, *The 1986 Immigration and Nationality Acts*. Clark Boardman Company Ltd. NY, NY 1987

⁹⁶ IRCA and the INS developed a category for community organization approved to help undocumented workers navigate the legalization process. They came to be known as QDE's or Qualified Designated Entities. In Oregon those entities were the Oregon Human Development Corporation and the Catholic Church. PCUN refused to register as a DQE because of fear that the INS would attempt to access their records.

⁹⁷ Oral Interview with Larry Kleinman, October 6th, 2008 in Woodburn, Oregon conducted by Mario Sifuentes

⁹⁸ Larry Kleinman, Interview

⁹⁹ Martinis, Cheryl "Farm workers union says farmers lured migrants" *Oregonian* June 4, 1988

¹⁰⁰ Martinis, Cheryl "Farm workers union says farmers lured migrants" *Oregonian* June 4, 1988

¹⁰¹ Larry Kleinman, Interview

¹⁰² "Portland INS Office Quiet as U.S. Amnesty Program Goes into Second Phase" *Oregonian* November 8, 1988

¹⁰³ Larry Kleinman, Interview

¹⁰⁴ Larry Kleinman, Interview

Chapter 5

“Now I Can Hold My Own With Anybody”: Immigrant Organizing and the Pineros y Campesinos Unidos Noroeste (PCUN)

With a burgeoning membership and the trust of the community, PCUN looked to capitalize on its momentum. The Immigration Reform and Control Act certainly had its flaws as a piece of legislation, but it also had a galvanizing effect on the immigrant community. In addition to the thousands of PCUN members who received amnesty, thousands more felt empowered to challenge the treatment they received at the hands of growers; others left fieldwork all together. Thanks to their adjusted status, many former farm workers found steadier, better paying work. Yet, they still continued to donate, organize, and volunteer for PCUN and remained an important part of PCUN’s base. Immigrants that stayed on as farmworkers battled area farmers and launched an organizing effort the likes of which Oregon growers had never seen.

From its inception, PCUN opened its membership to documented and undocumented migrants. They charged four dollars a month for dues that included bilingual support services, life insurance, and a right to participate and vote in the union. The union leadership consisted of a three person executive committee: President Cipriano Ferrel, Vice President Ramón Ramírez, and Secretary-Treasurer Larry Kleinman. The executive committee reported to a nine-member board of directors made up entirely of workers. Monthly meetings of the board determined the direction of the union, while sub-committees oversaw the union’s other concerns: support services, minimum wage compliance, pesticide use, documented/undocumented immigrant workers concerns, and the organizing committee.¹

The committees gave farm workers an opportunity to develop their leadership skills. Ferrell believed strongly that the union belonged to its members and not to the leadership. He also believed that the leadership of the union would eventually be farm workers themselves: “We are developing farm workers that are coming through our ranks, that are becoming leaders...the only training ground we have is our struggle.”² In contrast, the UFW consistently struggled with the issue of farm worker representation on their executive board. Eliseo Medina, one of the few farm workers on the executive board, persistently voiced his frustration over the lack of leadership development within the UFW. Eventually Medina resigned from the board.³ The structure of the union required significant participation from its members and after IRCA, PCUN finally had the bodies to function as Ferrel, Ramírez and Kleinman envisioned it.

The end of the application process of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) provided the opportunity for PCUN to reassess their strategies and create a plan of action. IRCA had bolstered their membership by nearly 4,000 members, created a flood of workers into the Willamette Valley, and brought PCUN into the spotlight. PCUN developed a multipronged approach to attacking unjust conditions in the fields. Borrowing their approach from the UFW: It included lawsuits, public pressure, strikes, pickets, and boycotts. The combination of these tactics led to monumental strides forward in the farm worker movement in Oregon.

But in order to make any of their efforts effective, PCUN had to educate the public and build a base. Again the efforts of PCUN mirrored the UFW strategy, due in large part to Ferrel’s experience with the UFW. They reached out to students, labor organizations, and the religious community. Without them, PCUN reasoned, growers

could continue to harass, intimidate, and fire workers with impunity. The feelings of PCUN members had merit.

With its newfound clout, PCUN decided to submit a collective bargaining law to the Oregon legislature in 1989 and was soundly defeated. The UFW had passed a similar law, in California the Agricultural Labor Relations Act, one of only two labor laws guaranteeing collective bargaining rights to farm workers in the United States.⁴ PCUN followed the UFW's lead knowing that they did not have the political clout to pass the law yet, but saw instead an opportunity to measure how much traction they could manage.

In addition to the lack of political will supporting a collective bargaining law for farmworkers, PCUN faced another major obstacle. Oregon's long standing anti-picketing law made it nearly impossible for supporters to be anywhere near work sites that were the targets of PCUN organizing campaigns. Enacted in 1963, the "Strangers Picketing Law" prohibited any picketer who had not worked six days at the targeted farm from picketing during harvest season. At the time no other state had such a stringent anti-picketing law, and no other industry in Oregon was protected from picketing.

On September 1st 1989, with support of the AFL-CIO and various religious organizations, PCUN filed suit in federal district court against Governor Goldschmidt seeking to invalidate the anti-picketing law as unconstitutional, arguing that it was a limit of free speech. The president of the union, Cipriano Ferrel, addressed the media at a press conference. Rhetorically, Ferrell attempted to convince people that the farm worker struggle had larger ramifications. He announced that this "lawsuit transcends farm worker's rights by asking whether our Constitution protects only harmless speech and

whether it favors the interests of the economically influential by allowing the courts' power to be placed at the grower's disposal."⁵

Oregon's Attorney General, Dave Frohenmayer, immediately sought to have the case dismissed on procedural grounds, claiming that the Governor was the incorrect defendant and that "no immediate controversy" existed because no one was actually picketing at the time. On May 4th 1990, however, U.S. District Court Judge James Redden denied the State's motion to dismiss the case and instead issued a four-page ruling. The ruling declared that the Governor was the correct defendant and that waiting for a potential situation would unnecessarily put the picketers at risk of possible litigation and criminal prosecution.⁶ Satisfied with the results of the ruling, PCUN filed for a summary judgment. Although the court allowed the case to proceed, the final hearing was not set until September 24th of 1990, nearly a year after the initial case was filed.

In late September, Judge Redden heard oral arguments from the plaintiffs for a summary judgment. PCUN lawyer Gene Mechanic opened up his arguments by getting to the heart of the matter: "This law is saying 'we, the State, wish to protect agricultural profits at the cost of free speech rights.'" ⁷ Mechanic argued that a ban on picketing would effectively eliminate protest and allow the power of the agribusiness lobby in Oregon to remain unchecked. Mechanic also turned to the lack of such law in California as evidence that protest and picketing would not ultimately lead to the catastrophic downfall of the agricultural economy the Oregon Farm Bureau predicted.

During the hearings, Assistant Attorney General Patricia Bridge Urquhart renewed the State's motion to dismiss on procedural grounds, and added that the spirit of the law should be taken into consideration. She argued the spirit of the law "was meant to

protect small growers and outlaws physically disturbing the harvest.” She added that the farmworkers and their supporters “have ample opportunity to protest elsewhere.” In addition, she also argued that the law protected farm workers by ensuring a strong and healthy economy. The judge, however, countered that, “the purpose of this law is to keep farm workers picking and not picketing.”⁸

With that statement PCUN felt confident that the law would be struck down. Finally, on the 26th of September the case of *PCUN et al v Goldschmidt* came to a conclusion. Judge Redden declared the twenty-seven-year-old anti-picketing law unconstitutional, striking a huge blow to the Oregon Farm Bureau and growers. Understandably joyful, PCUN was also cautiously optimistic. PCUN anticipated that growers and the Oregon Farm Bureau would eventually try and get new anti-picketing legislation passed.⁹

Shortly afterwards, Oregon Governor Neil Goldschmidt declined to press forward with the case, and on October 11th in a letter to Oregon AFL-CIO President Irv Fletcher, Goldschmidt wrote: “I have never had a personal stake in the PCUN case, but I believe it was appropriate for the court to resolve the serious constitutional issues involved...no purpose would be served in taking the case any further.” Although the decision cleared the way for PCUN to unleash a flurry of union activity, PCUN was hardly waiting idly by. After the ruling, Cipriano proclaimed that “we’ve been fighting on many fronts, collective bargaining, minimum wage, workplace picketing, to attain equal labor rights for farmworkers. One of the key discriminatory barriers has now fallen.”¹⁰ PCUN leadership and members were busy planning other ways to help farmworkers and alleviate the oppressive working conditions.

Strategies in the Fields: La Tarjeta Colorada

PCUN used the media with great efficiency, frequently holding press conferences. On June 9, 1989, PCUN, the Oregon Public Employees Union, and representatives of Clergy and Laity Concerned held a press conference to announce their intentions of starting a strike fund. PCUN remained intentionally vague; they did not name a target or a date for the supposed strike, but did announce their demands. PCUN President Cipriano Ferrel declared that they were seeking union recognition: a grievance procedure to resolve disputes, a seniority system for hiring, promoting and laying off workers, a closed shop, and a provision allowing workers to be dismissed only for just cause.¹¹

Announcing PCUN's presence and demands, the press conference aimed their ire directly at growers. If the union was trying to elicit a response, they got one from an unnamed source in the *Oregonian*. Apparently afraid to identify themselves for fear of retaliation by PCUN, one Marion County grower was quoted as saying "What it's going to do eventually is force us out of these highly specialized, labor-intensive crops" and added "If this union thing gets to be a pain, we'll just quit it -- they can all go on welfare."¹² But PCUN was just getting started being a pain.

The minimum wage campaign became another strategic way of winning public sentiment and making concrete changes in farmworkers' lives. PCUN decided to begin documenting minimum wage violations in the fields. At a press conference on December 29, 1989, PCUN publicly released the findings of a minimum wage survey they conducted. PCUN timed the release of the report to coincide with Oregon's new minimum wage increase, which went into effect a few days later. The "Report on Wage

Survey of Willamette Valley Farmworkers” estimated that farmworkers who harvested cucumbers and berries were underpaid nearly \$2,000,000 because of minimum wage violations.

The authors of the report interviewed over 200 farmworkers during the 1989 harvest. It found that fifty percent of berry and cucumber harvesters did not receive the minimum, \$3.35 per hour on their average workday, and ninety-five percent were underpaid at least once during the season. Although growers paid a piece rate, Oregon law required that it be at least eighty-five percent of the minimum wage. Despite the law, the PCUN survey determined that the rate of pay had not increased for cucumber and berry workers in over ten years. Always responsive to its members, PCUN chose cucumbers and berry because workers complained most heavily about abuses in those crops.

The PCUN report brought attention to the consistent underpaying of farm worker labor. The strategy became an important piece of rhetoric for launching PCUN’s minimum wage campaign. Monitoring minimum wage violations in such a huge industry was a daunting task; instead they developed a strategy for targeting a single crop in a single area. PCUN organizers argued that the minimum wage “safe zone” would motivate workers to seek compliance and force growers to voluntarily comply.

In the summer of 1990, PCUN launched their “Tarjeta Colorada de Horas” (Red Card campaign), an effort to document the minimum wage violations in the fields. PCUN Vice President Ramón Ramírez told the media, “If the minimum wage violations we are seeing in the fields this year had occurred at McDonald’s it would be a national scandal.”¹³ Given that oftentimes workers were cheated out of pay because of their

inability to see scales or provide documentation of hours worked, PCUN distributed a little red time card to track hours worked.

Even if workers were unable to see the scale and get an accurate count of the produce picked, they could at the very least document the hours they worked and compare it to the pay they received. If the resulting wage did not adhere to Oregon minimum wage laws, the red card would provide documentation for violations and wage claims. PCUN targeted twenty-five strawberry, cane berry, and cucumber farms in the area and handed out 10,000 time cards. The time cars paid immediate dividends. By August forty PCUN member had collected \$3,000 directly from growers without state intervention. In addition seventy other workers were able to force a labor contractor into returning \$9,000 he had charged them by inflating the prices of housing, transportation and food.

The influence of the red card campaign stretched beyond PCUN members to farm workers from out of state. In Eagle Pass, Texas, for example, a labor contractor named George San Miguel made several promises to a group of workers. Free rent, full kitchen facilities per four workers, forty-five hours of work a week, and good working conditions. Those promises attracted forty workers to Coleman Farms in St. Paul, Oregon. But upon their arrival to Oregon in early May, the workers realized that the reality of their living conditions failed to match up with the promises made in Eagle Pass by San Miguel.

The workers were housed in a dormitory, shared two fridges for forty workers, and cooked outdoors on a gas grill. To make matters worse, the dormitory was run by an order of Benedictine Sisters. The guarantee of forty-five hours of work also fell

considerably short; they worked under thirty hours and failed to make enough money to send home. When six of the workers complained about the hours, the lack of rain gear, and the unsanitary toilets and drinking water, they were promptly fired. Three of the workers left the fields and proceeded to walk seven miles to the PCUN offices in Woodburn.

After discussion with PCUN, they discovered that the workers had been recruited under the U.S. Labor Department's Interstate Clearance System. The Interstate Clearance System is an apparatus set up to distribute H-2A visa workers throughout the country. Recruiting through that system requires a substantial amount of paper work that PCUN organizers were able to track down. They discovered a twelve-page job order that contained the conditions of employment and the portions that San Miguel had misrepresented.¹⁴

PCUN encouraged the three men to bring in the remainder of the workers. Of the original forty-five workers, only twenty-five remained on the job; of those, twenty came to the meeting with PCUN to discuss further action. At this meeting, it came to light that Coleman, the original grower, had forced the workers to pick strawberries for his friend Joseph Lambert, a clear violation of the Interstate Clearance System. News that the workers had met with PCUN forced Lambert to "voluntarily" pay the workers \$1,500 in wages owed just two days later.

Later that week, Employment division officials met with Coleman and the workers to renegotiate the terms of the contract. Employment division officials went even further by apologizing to the workers and acknowledging that they made mistakes. Over the next few weeks, Coleman increased work hours but little else improved. Despite

invitations from the workers, the Benedictine Sisters refused to allow PCUN organizers into the dormitory, claiming that it was private property. When PCUN organizers pointed out that the contract as well as the law allows the workers to have visitors, one of the sisters replied, “Farmworkers don’t need a written contract...they can’t even read.”¹⁵ One by one the workers left Coleman farms in search of other work. While it might have been considered a set back to unionization, the union thought about it differently.

For PCUN the definition of success varied widely, while winning contracts became the measure of success for the UFW. The equation was simple, the more workers the UFW had under contract, the more clout they held. For Ramón Ramírez the developing consciousness of the workers was just as important: “We wanted to make farm workers lives better. Sometimes with contracts, other times in less traditional ways.”¹⁶ PCUN made its presence in the state and in the fields known. Cipriano Ferrel voiced his belief that PCUN played a crucial part in the wage hikes: “It’s obvious to the workers that it’s a buy off and the workers understand completely that without the organization...this would have never happened.”¹⁷ Farm workers no longer saw growers as invincible and prepared to take the fight to the growers. The sense of empowerment farm workers felt become tangible one year later as PCUN members attempted the first strike in agriculture in over twenty years.

Huelga! The Kraemer Farm Strike

Cipriano and the PCUN leadership had contemplated a strike since the early days of the union, but a number of obstacles stood in their way. PCUN successfully overturned the anti-picketing law, but still lacked a sufficient strike fund and a target. Ferrel wanted

to ensure that PCUN prepared for consistent action and not simply sound and fury. “We don’t want to go out on strike, make a big bang and not be able to follow it up,” he told supporters.¹⁸ The union also wanted to protect its workers in case of a failed strike. Ferrel told an interviewer that they wanted the strike to be focused on a single target so that only a portion of the union would be out of work. Ferrel also wanted to insure that if something went wrong with the strike, farm workers could seek work somewhere else in the valley.¹⁹ One year after the Red Card Campaign, PCUN had amassed a sufficient strike fund and picked a target for its first strike.

During the early days of the UFW (then known as National Farm Workers Association), leaders believed the union did not have the resources it needed to conduct a successful strike. At the same time, their rival union, the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC), led strikes and succeeded in raising the wages of farm workers. Those strikes culminated in the Delano grape strikes that the UFW ultimately became involved with despite the reservations of Chávez. After farm workers voted to support the AMOC strike the UFW felt that it had to become involved or else lose the support of it’s members. Fortunately for PCUN no rival union existed in Oregon, hence they could take their time building the resources they needed before the Kraemer strike.²⁰

Harold Kraemer’s farm began as a small 80-acre berry farm in the 1950s and over the years it developed into one of the largest in the Willamette Valley. By 1990 the farm had grown to 2,000 acres growing strawberries, caneberries, rhubarb, cucumbers, broccoli, cauliflower, wine grapes, zucchini, wheat, beans, grass seeds, Christmas trees; it even had a nursery. Kraemer boasted thirty-five pick-up trucks, six semi-trucks, and at

eight labor camps. In Oregon, the average farm size was 442 acres in 1992 and only four percent of farms were bigger than 2,000 acres.²¹

His success was acknowledged by Oregon State University as “1991 Family Business of the Year” for “one of the most innovative and successful multigenerational family farms in the Pacific Northwest.”²² His son, Dan, had taken over the daily operations, but all members of his family were involved in one way or another, making it appear to be the quintessential family farm. Yet despite the accolades and reputation, Kraemer farm was not a pleasant place to work.

The Kraemer’s employed the area’s most notorious labor contractor, ran a “company store,” and maintained abysmal living quarters for their workers. The largest housing unit, an enlarged trailer, housed nearly sixty workers in mattress-less bunks. The trailer brought in an estimated \$3,000 per week in rent. In a nearby house, the Kraemer’s charged \$50 per week per occupant, many of whom had to sleep on the floor. Kraemer farms had been targeted in the previous “red card campaign” and as a result, Kramer himself made various changes, including firing his long time labor contractor.

Dan Kraemer, who was notorious for hiring more workers than he needed, nevertheless continued the practice in the summer of 1990. Hiring over 300 workers, Kraemer intended to drive down the cost of labor. Constantly flooded with farm worker complaints about Kraemer farms, PCUN organizers decided to exert more pressure on them and continue monitoring minimum wage rates on the farms. The pressure worked; Kraemer complied and paid the workers their full wages. Emboldened by the minimum wage compliance, thirty workers, all non-PCUN members, staged an impromptu work stoppage, demanding an increase from fifteen cents to twenty cents per pound of

strawberries picked. Fearing PCUN interference, Kraemer immediately conceded and the workers went back to work.

Only two weeks later, however, workers in the cucumber harvest invited PCUN organizers into the camps to begin holding formal meetings to discuss immigration rights, unionization, and wage demands. Over the course of those meeting, workers unanimously voted to form a committee, elected representatives, and decided to demand a \$6.50 hourly minimum wage. The fact that Oregon's minimum wage at the time was only \$4.75 is evidence that farmworkers felt confident and empowered by PCUN's tactics and by their own victories.

Previously, Kraemer employed what he described as a "profit-sharing" system that PCUN labeled "sharecropping." Teams of ten workers pick cucumbers that were graded by size, the smallest of them being the most valuable; those cucumbers were sold and the crew split thirty percent of the profit. Workers objected to this system for three reasons. First, splitting crews forced faster workers to subsidize slower ones. Second, workers had no way of verifying or counting their own production. Finally, workers had no guarantee they could earn adequate wages. Workers believed that if they could negotiate a minimum wage, then they could alleviate the harshest part of their work environment.

Elected representatives from the labor camp traveled to other Kraemer camps to seek endorsement from the workers. After securing endorsements, the representatives looked to PCUN to represent them in negotiations. Even though these particular workers did not belong to the union, PCUN decided to represent them anyway. On Friday, August 9th, 1990 PCUN approached Kraemer Farm's chief of operations, Dan Kraemer, to

negotiate a contract with farmworkers. Dan Kraemer categorically rejected PCUN's call to negotiate. Dan's father, Harold, was more disparaging: "The workers don't deserve more money because they will just spend it on booze and whores."²³ On that note, PCUN knew they were in for a tough battle.

That night PCUN organizers met their first resistance. During a visit to the labor camps, the Kraemer's suddenly appeared with a county deputy sheriff and attempted to force PCUN organizers to leave the premises. But PCUN organizers were not so easily dissuaded. A few years earlier the Oregon legislature passed a law guaranteeing farm workers the right to invite anyone onto farm labor housing. Armed with a copy of the law, organizers defended their right to be on the property. The sheriff's deputy and the Kraemer's left visibly angry.

Meanwhile back at PCUN headquarters, staff members worked busily into the night, mobilizing supporters, notifying the press, and assembling strike banners, signs, and flags. At 6 a.m. Saturday morning, over 100 workers and their supporters lined the fields of Kraemer farms. PCUN had initiated the first strike in Oregon agriculture since 1971.²⁴ Initially, Kraemer attempted to bring in carload after carload of replacement workers, but the striking workers dissuaded each car of strikebreakers from staying. Some even joined in the protest. After at least eight carloads of "scabs" had attempted to break the strike, only eight workers managed to get past the picket line. Tension rose when one of the strikebreakers, Poli Guerrero, apparently a family member of the contractor, fired a pistol into an empty bucket in an attempt to intimidate the strikers. When the State Police arrived, they half-heartedly interviewed the suspect and merely confiscated his gun, but declined to arrest him or cite him for any violation.

Later that day elected crew representatives spontaneously began walking into the fields to speak with the remaining replacement workers. Unnerved by this site, the Kramers immediately moved to intercept Timoteo López-García and began negotiating with him. Timoteo López-García, a Zapotec Indian from Sola de Vega, Oaxaca, a leader of his hometown association, served as a representative for the workers. The majority of the workers in the Kraemer fields were Zapotecos from Oaxaca, hence López-García wielded influence among the group decision-making process. Throughout the strike, López-García was arrested several times for trespassing and demonstrated a militant streak. Although he was not a paid organizer, PCUN would come to see López-García as an important ally. They also took notice of the power of the hometown associations.

According to López-García, Kraemer was ready to settle until the arrival of Kraemer crew boss Juan Diego Sánchez. Sánchez reportedly told Dan Kraemer not to settle and that he would have the strike broken by noon. Sánchez or “El Ruso” (The Russian), known as a violent man and considered by many to be a goon, made his presence felt immediately. He failed to break the strike that day, but the next day managed to slip fifteen strike breakers into the fields and intimidated fifteen more by the end of the day.

Fearing loss of momentum, Cipriano and fifteen strikers entered the field in an attempt to speak with the remaining strikebreakers. At the sight of Cipriano entering his fields, Dan Kraemer exploded. He stomped on the ground, yelled obscenities at Cipriano and the strikers and in somewhat comic fashion began throwing cucumbers at them. At the behest of Kraemer, Sheriff’s deputies arrested Cipriano, Larry, and Timoteo. The trio were released without bail and promptly returned to the fields the next day. Later, in a

clear display of law enforcement bias, two different henchmen at two different times drove their trucks through the picket line, knocking down several picketers who barely escaped serious injury. Even though both incidents were caught on tape, law enforcement officials refused to arrest the drivers. Still seventy-five of the original 100 workers remained on strike, despite the presence of “El Ruso,” his henchman, and the entire contingent of Marion County sheriff deputies.²⁵

As the pressure mounted, Kraemer capitulated and decided to negotiate with PCUN Vice President Ramón Ramírez. After three hours of negotiation, Kraemer and Ramírez settled on seventy cents per bucket of cucumbers and a promise of no retaliation against strikers. They both agreed to meet the next morning after Ramírez had a chance to meet with the strike committee.

As dawn broke Monday morning, the strikers met and unanimously ratified the agreement. When the strikers arrived at the fields at six in the morning, strikebreakers already occupied the fields under police escort. After the escort left, strikers staged an impromptu sit-in “occupying” the section of field that the scabs were assigned to work, effectively running them off the farm. Nearly two hours passed before strikers gave up hope that Kraemer was going to sign the contract, and some workers left the picket line altogether. Publicly Kraemer and his attorney even went as far as to claim that no strike had taken place. In a surprising turn of events, Kraemer returned to fields around noon and negotiated another pay raise with strikers, but refused to sign any contract. Strike leader Timoteo López-García negotiated a settlement, agreed to the raise and the workers returned to the harvest that day.

Kraemer and his attorney attempted to discredit the strike and the union. Dan McGrath, a Marion County extension agent and long time friend of the Kraemers, told the *Oregonian* that the Kraemers “really do everything they can to take care of their workers... It was tremendously ironic that the group would choose the Kraemer farm to do the strike... PCUN totally blew it, and the Kramer’s have been totally exonerated.”²⁶

McGrath went on to defend Kraemers’ pay system as “innovative” and “brilliant,” and contended that the few workers who were complaining simply were having a hard time understanding the concept. McGrath also weighed in by claiming that “Hispanics” would now be hesitant to join the union after PCUN’s “lies and betrayal.”²⁷ Douglas Brown, Kraemers’ attorney, echoed the sentiments of McGrath and went even further by claiming that PCUN had exploited the farmworkers: “My personal opinion is that the union actions were one more form of field worker abuse.”²⁸

Kleinman answered by pointing out that Kraemers’ employees came to PCUN and sought the aid of the union after the “red card campaign.” Workers had a specific grievance with that farm and PCUN merely responded to that grievance. Although the end result was not a union contract, PCUN hardly saw the strike as a failure. In light of the circumstances and the long history of oppression in Oregon agriculture, PCUN members saw the strike as a resounding success. Despite not getting a contract, PCUN was able to mobilize workers, union members, and supporters. One striking worker, Rafael Delgado, offered his perspective:

We will continue our struggle to maintain our families who await us in Mexico: our children, our brothers and sisters, our parents, and even our grandparents. We fight to win for our elders everything they deserve because they have passed on to us a strong tradition. Others may put us down because we’re short and brown-skinned, but we have a strong spirit.

Kraemer Farms has exploited us and treated us bad. All we ask is just wages and fair treatment. We must not lose heart because we will win this struggle so that tomorrow, our children and our countrymen who come to work at Kraemer Farms will be treated more justly.²⁹

Although the strike failed to result in a union contract, Delgado acknowledges that the struggle would pay dividends later on. Delgado belonged to a larger imagined community, one that not only included his family and his ancestors, but future generations of family and countrymen.

In official statements, PCUN announced that after the strike “organizers will continue to work closely with strikers and help win over others at the farm who now benefit from the hard-fought raises, even though they gave into threats of firing and eviction and crossed the picket line. The morale at Kraemer Farms remains high: the workers know—better than anyone else—that we won the strike.”³⁰ The attitude towards strikebreakers indicated a major departure from the UFW party line. The UFW derided, chastised, and even reported “scabs” to the INS. PCUN responded to strikebreakers with sympathy and pity. They acknowledge the difficult position any of the workers were in and continued to encourage them to join the union.

The failure to win a contract did not dampen the spirits of the strikers. The Kraemers charged farm workers up to fifty dollars a week for deplorable housing. When the strike ended the strikers along with the strikebreakers unilaterally decided to stop paying rent. Their newfound sense of accomplishment and empowerment led to a decision to protest the living conditions and illustrates the cooperation between the strikers and strikebreakers. Publicly Kraemer denied that a strike had taken place. But in

reality workers felt emboldened enough to challenge him. The result was truly an outstanding example of a power shift.

When the harvest came back around the following spring, PCUN worried that Kraemer would retaliate against striking workers from the previous year. Their worries were confirmed on the first day when labor contractor Juan Diego Sánchez told a group of workers not to even bother applying because they were “troublemakers.” Sánchez warned new workers not to communicate with PCUN members under threat of eviction and firing. Sánchez even went as far as telling the workers that PCUN would report them to immigration. Organizers countered by maintaining a presence in the adjacent fields and by leafleting Kraemer farms. Taking a page out of the UFW handbook, one of the leaflets was a comic book narrating the struggle, complete with an unflattering depiction of “El Ruso.”

The Kraemer’s once again responded by calling Marion County Sheriffs and instructing them to arrest PCUN organizers for “harassing” workers. This time however, perhaps recalling their inability to prosecute PCUN members, Sheriff Lieutenant Raul Ramírez, the son of Tejano contractors, did not arrest PCUN organizers but instead instructed workers that they had the right *not* to talk to union organizers. PCUN went on to write Kraemer and offer to reopen negotiations.

The Kraemer’s responded by referring PCUN to attorney Doug Brown, as an authorized representative to review, negotiate, and solicit proposals from the union. It seemed that once again Kraemer was ready to talk. On June 24th, 1992, PCUN submitted their proposal to Brown. The proposal consisted of five main points: increased wages; establishment of a grievance procedure; firing and discipline based only on just cause;

respect for seniority, and creation of a worker's council to help administer company-owned housing. Brown summarily rejected the plan. The rejection came as no surprise to PCUN members. Organizers already had a back-up plan in mind.

Expanding the Base: PCUN and the Boycott

Developing the support committee and building partnerships with other progressive organizations and in a presence in the community became instrumental in the implementation of PCUN's next step, the boycott. Among PCUN's leadership, Cipriano Ferrel believed it was essential to build a broad base of support in order to win a strike. Although Ferrel believed in building worker power, he also believed in building a base. Ferrel knew that "they [farm workers] are never going to win a strike by themselves."³¹ The farmworkers needed help. Once more PCUN utilized a UFW tactic, the boycott.

A few weeks after Brown rejected the worker's proposal, PCUN wrote to Steinfeld's Pickles and NORPAC foods. Kraemer farms sold cucumbers, cabbage, berries, corn, broccoli, and other vegetables directly and exclusively to Steinfeld and NORPAC. PCUN saw the potential to leverage that relationship to force Kraemer to the bargaining table. Both NORPAC and Steinfeld's were highly visible operations in Oregon. Steinfeld's had contracts with twenty-five suppliers in the Northwest and dominated the Oregon pickle market. At the time it produced 40 million pounds of pickles annually and operated two plants in Oregon. NORPAC was a giant in its own right, a cooperative owned by 250 growers with national and international distribution, and generated over 210 million dollars in annual revenues. They operated six plants in Oregon and distributed under the major labels of Flav-R-Pac, Santiam, and Stone Mill

Foods. PCUN asked NORPAC and Steinfeld's to sever ties with Kraemer farms if Kraemer failed to negotiate within thirty days.

NORPAC and Steinfeld's rejected the proposal and NORPAC threatened a lawsuit, while Steinfeld's simply claimed they had no responsibility over the conditions in the fields. In a letter to PCUN, NORPAC attorney John Zenor wrote "As a matter of good business practice, NORPAC is unwilling to interfere in the independent affairs of its suppliers" while Steinfeld's pled ignorance: "We really don't understand this attempt to involve Steinfeld's in a third party labor dispute."³² PCUN argued that if Kraemer, NORPAC, and Steinfeld had agreements containing the standards for quality in produce then they should have similar agreements concerning the quality of labor conditions. The next step became increasingly obvious to PCUN: if they could not force Kraemer Farms to the negotiating table, the only recourse left was the boycott.³³

The UFW used the boycott during its organizing campaigns to great effectiveness. Originally the UFW envisioned the boycott as a way to augment the pressure of strikers. Strikes only remained effective as long as work on farms needed to be done. Once the work was done, strikers had nothing left to strike. Inspired by Montgomery Bus Boycott, Chávez and the UFW borrowed the tactic and began boycotting grapes as way to pressure growers into signing collective bargaining agreements.³⁴ PCUN decided to follow that model and called for a boycott.

On September 13th, 1992, PCUN held a rally and press conference to formally announce the call for a nationwide boycott of Steinfeld's and NORPAC products. At the rally, crew representative Timoteo López-García expressed the sentiments of many Kraemer employees and endorsed the call for a boycott: "We have returned year after

year to Kraemer Farms and worked hard, but we're paid wages which don't support our families and we're fired if we speak up. The boycott is the only way we will win respect and better working conditions we deserve."³⁵

Almost immediately after the announcement, the boycott received endorsements from the National Farm Worker Ministry and the Fellowship of Reconciliation.³⁶ PCUN once again borrowed from UFW strategies and began setting up boycott committees in the urban centers across the country. The committees began to target neighborhood stores that ostensibly had a commitment to the environment and local food products. The strategy immediately paid dividends when Nature's Fresh Northwest closed out its stock of Flav-R-Pac products and pledge not to stock anymore.

Students also played a major role in the boycott effort. The first campus to make its presence felt was a small liberal arts college in Portland, Oregon, Reed College. On March 10, 1993 sixty students from Reed marched into the President's office to deliver a signed petition from over half the student body, demanding that the school cease buying the boycotted products. Reed President Steven Koblik denied the request, citing the College's policy of "avoiding political stands on anything not directly relating to the University or higher education."³⁷ But just seven short months later Reed College's food service Bon Appétit signed an agreement with the Reed Boycott committee to cease purchases of NORPAC and Steinfeld's products.³⁸ Over the ten-year course of the boycott, universities and colleges across the country and abroad severed their contracts with NORPAC.

Kraemer Farms quickly went on the offensive, sending letters to public supporters of the boycott claiming once again that there had been no strike and that workers on the

farm loved it there. The letter also included an article from the *Capital Press*, a Salem-based weekly, claiming that workers were treated well, had decent housing, were well-paid and anti-PCUN. The main source, Poli Guerrero, claimed that the workers were treated as equals and that workers who sided with PCUN were lazy. The *Capital Press* article failed to mention that Poli Guerrero was the same worker that had his .357 magnum confiscated by the state police after firing into an empty bucket near strikers the year before. The article also heavily quoted Linda Moreno Beard, the Kraemer's bilingual consultant. The article failed to mention that Beard was an employee of Farm Labor Employment Services.

Workers responded to the letter by sending a letter of their own to the Kraemer's addressing their assertions. The letter claimed that workers averaged more than seven dollars an hour on average and over sixteen dollars an hour in cucumber and zucchini harvest: "We often work ten to twelve hours a week in cucumber harvest...none of us have ever earned sixteen dollars per hour...we average five to seven dollars per hour...and we don't get time and a half for hours over forty...most of us barely made...\$2,000 to \$4,000 in four months." The Kraemer letter also claimed that Beard was a bilingual assistant who educated and assisted workers, but none of the workers knew her or had ever met with her. Kraemer also made the outrageous claim that housing was free.

By March of 1993, twenty-three organizations and 650 households had endorsed and honored the boycott nationally. In September, the UFW had unanimously endorsed the boycott, sending a letter from Secretary-Treasurer David Martínez, which read: "We are convinced that you will win the NORPAC and Steinfeld's boycott because we see the

same determination and spirit in PCUN that it has taken the UFW to win in the past.” The boycott even attracted legendary folk singer Pete Seeger and his grandson, Tao Rodríguez Seeger, to hold a benefit concert for PCUN.³⁹

While the boycott was gaining momentum and garnering national attention, workers on other farms began to organize as well. In early July of 1993, two years after the Kraemer strike, over 100 workers approached PCUN for help. Workers at Haines Farms in Salem, Oregon, harvested cherries for twelve straight days, up to twelve hours a day, and received on average only thirty dollars per worker. Led by Alfredo Morales, they demanded to be paid by the hour. Haines also withheld twenty-five cents per bucket of cherries and paid it out as a bonus at the end of the harvest season to ensure workers stayed the entire time. Workers demanded that Haines stop this practice.⁴⁰ Morales took his complaint to foreman Wilfredo Hernández, who then in turn informed Haines of the demands. Haines responded by shutting off the water to the camps, firing all the workers, informing them that they would receive the twenty-five cents per bucket owed to them and be evicted from the camp. At the time of the eviction, the garage-like dormitory was housing eighty workers and ten children, most of whom slept on the floor.⁴¹

After meeting with PCUN organizers, the workers decided to go to the press and began legal actions for wage claims and other violations. Although PCUN organizers believed that another strike was in order, the Haines workers, fearing deportation, did not feel comfortable pursuing this strategy. The moment demonstrated the flexibility of PCUN and its commitment to a democratic union. The press conference prompted Haines to back off his eviction order and restore water to the labor camps. It also prompted him to hire Kramer Farm’s attorney Doug Brown.

Part-lawyer, part-public relations man, Brown immediately began asserting that Haines pickers earned \$6.22 per hour. "The longest working days in this two-week period were nine hours," Brown said: "Mrs. Haines said that the average picker -- not the best but the average -- picks thirty to thirty-two buckets a day. In a nine-hour day, the pay for 32 buckets would amount to \$6.22 an hour."⁴² Brown asserted that Alfredo was lying about the hours worked and about the twenty-five cents that was withheld. Brown claimed that the workers agreed to work for a \$1.75 a bucket and that the twenty-five cents a bucket was a bonus. Such bonuses are required by state law to be posted at the work site; conveniently Brown claimed that it was posted until that weekend.

Oregon Legal Services, which had a long-standing relationship with PCUN, took the case. Attorney Michael Dale pressed the wage claims against Haines Farms. Haines paid out nearly \$3,000 to the roughly 100 workers in a matter of weeks to settle the claims. Attorney Doug Brown claimed that the payment was a "matter of expediency,"⁴³ but refuse to elaborate. Brown was not the only connection to Kraemer farms; some of the workers had worked for Kraemer farms in previous years. In fact, they had left Kraemer in search of higher pay. In contrast to Brown's assertion, that PCUN did not represent the will of the workers, they sought out PCUN without hesitation.

Meanwhile, new workers at Kraemer Farms were creating dissent and challenging Kraemer on numerous occasions. In the strawberry harvest, Kraemer had set the piece rate at twelve cents per pound, a full two cents less than most area farms. This prompted three different work stoppages from pickers until Kraemer finally decided to raise the piece rate for workers. But that was not the end of Kraemer's troubles. On August 6, 1994, nearly half of the 100 cucumber workers halted the harvest when they received

checks averaging \$80 to \$150. After refusing to return to the fields Kraemer, surely with the specter of PCUN on his mind, conceded to pay the workers \$200 a week. Finally, on August 22, Kraemer was cited by the Oregon Department of Agriculture for covering the scales used to weigh blackberries. The Kraemer's paid workers thirty-eight pounds per crate regardless of its actual weight.

¡Aumento Ya! PCUN and the Tenth Anniversary Organizing Campaign

The flurry of worker activity, both organized and spontaneous in the early 1990s, inspired PCUN to harness that energy into another substantial and strategic campaign. On November 6, 1994 the PCUN membership met at the union hall to develop a campaign for the upcoming strawberry harvest. Union members targeted the strawberry harvest for two reasons: a substantial number of PCUN members worked in the strawberry harvest and wages had remained stagnant since the 1980's. Retail strawberry prices rose over forty percent in the ten years since PCUN's founding; generating 40 million dollars in profits though farmworkers had not shared in any of the wealth. PCUN estimated that "even if calculated only according to cost of living, this ten-year wage freeze has cost farmworkers at least 15 million dollars."⁴⁴ Coinciding with the tenth anniversary of PCUN, the members announced their plans for the "Tenth Anniversary Organizing Campaign," to be "the biggest farm worker organizing drive ever attempted in the Northwest."⁴⁵

The campaign consisted of five phases: workers demanded that PCUN hire more organizers and keep them in the field throughout the harvest, conduct door to door visits of farm worker households to bring awareness of the campaign to the community, hold a

major pre-harvest rally, and fundraise. PCUN estimated that it would have to fundraise over \$30,000 to hire twenty-four organizers for the June harvest alone. Over the course of the next couple months, the base that PCUN had been building via the boycott met the fundraising demands easily.

PCUN appealed to donors by widening the organizing campaign. The PCUN leadership was committed to social justice on many different levels: “Beyond redressing a specific economic injustice, the campaign aims to broaden the Movement, strengthen the dignity, self-worth and class identification of the individuals who comprise it, and develop new leadership for the struggles that lie ahead.” PCUN recognized an opportunity to develop a large coalition of progressives; they began to project an image of themselves as a “Movement” and acted accordingly to build alliances.

For many years, the United Farm Workers struggled between the decision to be a union and be a movement. According to Marshall Ganz, the UFW’s embrace of the Civil Rights Movements’ rhetoric and tactics gave the UFW an organizing advantage. Mexican American and white liberal supporters in urban areas could more easily identify with the struggles of farm workers if the conversation was framed as one of racial oppression as opposed to a labor conflict. In addition, the sit-ins, pray-ins, civil disobedience, and boycotts used in the civil rights movement gave the UFW effective tactics to use against the employers. This narrative made the growers analogous to southern segregationist.⁴⁶ The orientation had its drawbacks: the management of contracts, workers committees, and medical plans were not given top priority. The “meat and potatoes” of union work faltered and left many members dissatisfied.⁴⁷

PCUN avoided this pitfall by developing leaders in the community and creating sister organizations that dealt specifically with other issues. For instance, the Oregon legislature introduced House Bill 2933, described as an “Oregon Prop-187,” along with a host of other anti-worker bills. In California, Proposition 187 was an initiative to bar undocumented immigrants from using social services, health care and public education. Instead of diverting attention from their organizing drives, PCUN, in conjunction with other community members and civil rights groups, formed a separate immigrant rights coalition, CAUSA. Due to political pressure from CAUSA activists, the bill stalled in the house.

PCUN believed that the campaign was instrumental in reframing “the class-dividing premises underlying the right wing’s many ballot initiatives.” Utilizing the image of the farm worker battling against all odds, PCUN tried to bring working people under the same banner in Oregon. Their newsletter told readers, “if immigrant farmworkers can organize and take on the state’s most powerful industry, what’s stopping the rest of us from doing likewise in our workplaces?” Yet the rhetoric of the movement also retained a decidedly immigrant tint by echoing the credo “con o sin papeles, tenemos derechos porque hacemos la riqueza” (With or without documents, we have rights because we create the wealth).

On January 8th 1992, the union decided to expand its organizing beyond the fields and launch a PCUN Support Committee in Portland. A few years earlier, PCUN had helped to establish the Oregon Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (OCIRR) in Portland and saw this new committee as a logical extension of their work. Taking a lesson the UFW, PCUN understood that it needed to build a political base in the city. In

their call for organizers, PCUN described the function of the support committee. The committee responsibilities included fundraising, research, improving PCUN's mobilization capacity and promoting unionization in the fields.⁴⁸

One of the more surprising coalition partners that PCUN sought out were gay and lesbian rights organizations in Portland, specifically with Basic Rights Oregon (BRO). Given the tradition of the farmworkers movement and its connection to the Catholic Church and religious iconography, especially that of César Chávez and the UFW, reaching out to the gay and lesbian community seemed counterintuitive. Despite the perceived homophobia that existed in the farm worker community, PCUN's commitment was to fairness and equality, not just to farmworkers. Even within its own leadership the alliance proved decisive, Ramírez recalled: "Cipriano saw the growth of an anti-gay alliance and it had overtones of racism and anti-immigrant rhetoric. Even though his position at the time was very homophobic...he was able to overcome that."⁴⁹ Ferrel did not let his own homophobia hamper the efforts of the union to build partnerships with other progressive organizations.

The force that brought Basic Rights Oregon and PCUN together was the Oregon Citizens Alliance (OCA). The OCA was a conservative Christian political activist organization founded in 1986 by Lou Mabon. In the late 80s and early 90s, the OCA placed numerous initiative on the state ballot ranging from parental notification for teen abortion, elimination of protections for gay and lesbian government employees and including language in the state's constitution that equated homosexuality with pedophilia.

The opportunity to build that alliance came when organizers of "For Love and Justice: A Walk Against Hate" approached PCUN about helping with the event. The

walk, a 150-mile, two-week walk, from Eugene to Portland, was aimed to counter an effort by the Oregon Citizens Alliance to place an anti-gay rights initiative on the ballot later that year. The walkers needed hosts along the route and PCUN's union hall seemed an obvious place to stop. Ramírez stated: "In most places Church leaders would give them a place to stay, hand them the keys and leave. Not us! We got farm workers waving the "Huelga" (Strike) flags and we met them outside of town and marched together to the union! It was an emotional moment!"⁵⁰

Walkers would rest and eat and sleep at the union but organizers also saw it as a chance to meet with other supporters and build coalitions. Ramírez recalled: "We had some hard conversations that night. We challenged them to get more involved in our movement and we promised to help them defeat Measure 9." Measure 9 would have amended Oregon's constitution to include the phrase "the state recognizes homosexuality, pedophilia, sadism and masochism as abnormal, wrong, unnatural, and perverse."⁵¹ The measure failed. PCUN saw this as an opportunity to educate the gay and lesbian community about their struggles and an opportunity to educate their membership about homophobia.⁵² The relationship was further solidified when BRO aided PCUN in stopping anti-immigrant initiatives put on the ballot by the OCA.

For the next several years, Oregonians For Immigration Reform (OFIR), an offshoot of the OCA, placed numerous anti-immigrant initiatives on the ballot, including a reincarnation of the Proposition 187 bill. Initially CAUSA board members wanted to travel to California for training to defeat the bill. But Ramírez had a different idea: "California lost man! They did not have a winging strategy. I was against going down there. We had the gay and lesbian community right here. They have already fought they

measures here and won.”⁵³ Ramírez convinced the board to work with BRO and the strategy paid off. CAUSA launched a thirty-five city tour of Oregon and met with gay and lesbian communities members in each city. The grassroots efforts of immigrant, gay, and lesbian communities proved effective; The initiative failed to garner sufficient signatures. Since that time, the OFIR has failed every attempt to gather enough signatures to place an initiative on the ballot.

The decision to build broad-based coalitions depended largely on the vision of Ferrel. Throughout his education, Ferrel saw similarities between the farm worker struggle and the struggles of oppressed people all over the world. Ferrel had spent time in Puerto Rico and became familiar with the nationalist independence movement on the island; he traveled to Nicaragua to observe the Sandinistas electoral victories, and as a Brown Beret he actively opposed the war in Vietnam. Ferrel argued that farm workers

start understanding that their whole situation...is connected to a larger picture. It's a system that survives and breeds on the exploitation of oppressed peoples...they start realizing they are not any different than a lot of other people in the black community, Mexico, Latin America, we can even relate to what's happening in South Africa.⁵⁴

Ferrel foresaw a larger struggle looming on the horizon and he tried to impart that message to the membership as best as he could. The coalition building sought to construct a wider base and expand the political consciousness of its members. But while the unions sister organization committed most of their efforts on legislative fights, PCUN maintained their focus on organizing.

With the publicity push and the winter coming to an end, PCUN held their annual convention to determine the specific demands its members would set. More than 330

farmworkers gathered together at the tenth annual convention on April 30th, 1995 to set a crop-wide wage demand for strawberries. After three hours of intense discussion, the workers returned with a demand of seventeen cents per pound, up from an average of ten to twelve cents per pound growers had paid for the previous ten years. In attendance, UFW President Arturo Rodríguez urged the workers to fight for the raise and offered UFW's support: "Each of you here today is like a match that will ignite a movement throughout Oregon."⁵⁵

As mandated by the assembly, PCUN sent a letter to area strawberry growers, informing them of PCUN's demand and inviting them to discuss it before the harvests began in late May. The assembly also mandated an interesting strategy: it demanded that PCUN organizers travel to California's San Joaquin Valley and distribute information about the wage demand. PCUN members felt that organizers needed to get a jump-start on organizing workers by going directly to where many of the strawberry pickers worked before migrating to Oregon for the harvest. Their efforts proved successful, as they were able to gather support cards from 2,500 workers in the San Joaquin Valley before the campaign had even started. By the time the dust settled, the campaign would result in two major strikes and over a dozen work stoppages and a raise in wages.

PCUN also proved responsive to the changing demographics of its constituency. By the 1990s, indigenous Mexicans accounted for the majority of seasonal migrant labor in Oregon. During the campaign the union hired organizers who spoke, Spanish, Mixtec, and Triqui. They used tri-lingual informational material, including radio spots. After the campaign, organizers continued to build solidarity with indigenous communities by regularly sending organizers to indigenous communities in Mexico.⁵⁶

Only one hour into the first harvest at Moorehouse Farms, the campaign's first strike began. Moorehouse farms, a medium size operation of about sixty acres, about two miles northwest of Mollala, Oregon, were paying only thirteen cents a pound. Coupled with a poor crop, workers would have no chance of making a decent wage in the harvest and noticed it immediately. By 6:30 am on June 2, PCUN organizers had found out about the trouble brewing on Moorehouse Farms and dispatched fifteen organizers to the fields.

Strikers urged PCUN organizers to represent them in talks with Moorehouse, but Moorehouse adamantly refused to participate and ignored the organizers. When he attempted to speak directly to the workers, the workers returned the favor. One hundred and seventy workers promptly walked out of the field with cries of “¡Huelga, Huelga!” (Strike! Strike!) Only the crew bosses and the contractor's family were left in the fields to continue the picking. Within minutes, six Clackamas County Sheriff's cruisers had appeared on the scene. Claiming that they had received a call of armed protestors, the sheriffs rushed to the scene and just as quickly left when they found no evidence of conflict. This was a major departure from the way law enforcement had behaved with strikers just four years earlier. As the strike wore on, the police response dwindled, apparently tired of having to come out to the fields over and over again in response to grower's hysterical calls.

Once again, the presence of “El Ruso” could be felt. Called in from Kraemer farms as an apparent expert on breaking strikes, Juan Diego Sánchez appeared as a “consultant” to Moorehouse. Sánchez had been notorious for intimidating workers during the Kraemer farms strike. This time “El Ruso” had a partner in “El Diablo” (The Devil). Jorge Vásquez, a Morehouse farms labor contractor. “El Diablo” also owned and

operated three labor camps in the area. His labor camps housed close to 150 workers and charged them eighty dollars a month plus three dollars a day for transportation to the fields.⁵⁷

As if that were not enough for “El Diablo,” Moorehouse also paid him a 2.5-cent commission on every pound picked. On any given day, 200 workers could pick 40,000 pounds of strawberries, meaning “El Diablo” stood to make nearly \$1,200 a day without lifting a finger. On the other hand, the workers who picked strawberries could on average pick around 200 to 250 pounds per day; at thirteen cents per pound, the average worker earned between thirty to thirty-five dollars per day for a ten to twelve hour workday. In other words, “El Diablo” and other contractors like him made a fortune while the farmworkers made a pittance.⁵⁸

At 4:00 am the next morning, PCUN organizers and supporters traveled to the labor camps owned by Vásquez, plus that of Lázaro Ruíz, another labor contractor employed by Moorehouse. They arrived to encounter “El Ruso,” “El Diablo,” and their henchman with clubs in hand attempting to intimidate workers and threatening to evict and fire them if they refused to go to work. Despite the henchman’s best efforts, many of the workers held steadfast. At Diablo’s main camp in Monitor, Oregon, ten workers out of seventy climbed into the van and at Lázaro Ruíz’s camp only three workers crossed the picket line. “El Diablo” resorted to hiring scabs but his efforts only produced twenty new workers.

At the end of day two, “El Diablo” had thirty-three workers in the field, out of the 200 original pickers. El Diablo, however, continued to pressure the workers and the morning of the third day of the strike, he had assembled nearly a whole crew. Coerced

under great duress, the workers demonstrated their discontent by issuing a work slow-down, taking an inordinate amount of breaks and picking overripe berries. Although “El Diablo” make them return to work, he could not make them work efficiently. The slow-down and the picking of overripe berries economically devastated the harvest. In fact Vásquez became so nervous about the crop failing that he actually began to pick himself. With the crop nearly in total ruin many workers simply left after the first week. The first pick of the harvest is usually a short pick and last no more than two weeks. As it was winding down, workers on another farm were gearing up for an even more intense battle.⁵⁹

On Monday June 5th, at 6:00 am, three workers walked into the PCUN offices to inform them that sixty-five workers had refused to enter the fields on Zielinski Farms near Brooks, Oregon. Just days earlier PCUN had met with many of the workers at the labor camps to discuss the wage rates and the organizing campaign. The camp, like most camps in the area, was hardly adequate. Workers paid \$2.50 a day to sleep on wooden planks in unheated plywood cabins. These squalid conditions set the backdrop for a meeting at which the workers decided that they would not work for less than seventeen cents per pound. The next morning, workers elected a fifteen member camp council to approach Zielinski with their demands for a raise. But just as Moorehouse and Kraemer before him, Glenn Zielinski refused to meet with them. The council sent the three workers to PCUN offices to inform them of the situation.⁶⁰

As PCUN had done before, members mobilized their base and soon had hundreds of picketers lining the major artery, River Road, into Zielinski’s fields. Strikers and supporters carried red PCUN strike flags and adorned PCUN jackets with the symbol of a

fist over the silhouette of mountains emblazoned on the back. Along with their supporters, workers proceeded to hang a banner over the nearby I-5 overpass that read “Zielinski; Strawberry Workers Demand a Raise,” plastered posters over a three mile stretch of River Road, and even picketed Glenn Zielinski’s home. “This time,” PCUN members voiced, “they wouldn’t be able to say there was no strike.”

Still, Zielinski drove up and down River Road and personally removed all the posters and refused to deal with the union. PCUN organizers questioned Zielinski on video tape, asking: “Your workers demonstrate that they want PCUN to represent them, so how can you presume to dictate otherwise?” To which Zielinski responded, “if my workers want a union, I’ll bulldoze the camp and plow under all my strawberry fields.”⁶¹ Workers responded to the threat with boos and chant of “aumento de precio o aumento de presion” (Raise wages or we raise the pressure). Zielinski agreed to meet with the council, but the workers felt that he was negotiating in bad faith when he set the wage at thirteen cents per pound. When the negotiations broke off, it was clear that Zielinski did not intend to give in. Instead he brought in eighty scabs and proceeded to finish picking the fields, but the three-day strike had caused the cannery to give him a low grade for the strawberries, costing Zielinski money.

In the wake of the failure to get a raise, workers needed to deal with eviction notices. PCUN’s network of lawyers came to the worker’s aid, representing them in eviction cases and eventually won free rent and fifty dollars in damages for each worker, as well as numerous camp repairs. Triumphant in the face of Zielinski’s threats to evict them, PCUN members renamed the camp “Campo Benito Juárez,” after the first Indigenous president of Mexico, in a demonstration of their unity and resolve.

Despite their failure on Zielinski farms, many of the members of Campo Benito Juárez went on to lead wage strikes on other farms in Oregon. Addressing the Oregon Public Employee Union in Salem, strike leader Manuel Rivera summed up the effectiveness of their struggle: “What we did at Camp Benito Juárez made possible victories at many other farms because it showed workers, that, when we unite and have support, we can defy grower power.”⁶² Rivera’s testimony was not mere rhetoric.

In fact, over the course of the summer, numerous work stoppages and wildcat strikes erupted. Krahmer Farms (not to be confused with Kraemer), Norwood Farms, Meneyev Farms, Kutsev Farms, Lucht Farms, KG Farms, Haener Farms, Eder Farms, Wuringer Farms, Bryant Farms, and Kalugin Farms were all affected by either a work stoppage or strike. All the workers on these farms won a direct increase in wages. In a preventative measure, even Kraemer farms raised their wages from fourteen to twenty cents per pound without any indication of a strike.

Although the workers were in contact with PCUN members and organizers, most of them were not active members of the union. Yet PCUN assisted them in every way possible, mainly informing them of their rights and sharing strategies with them. PCUN never directly negotiated with any of the growers listed above, yet came to see themselves as a “wedge in workers’ hands,” a wedge that drove up the piece rate and gave farm workers a sense of empowerment that they carried with them wherever they went. PCUN regarded the campaign as a victory for farmworkers and for the union, but the joy of the victory was dampened a few months later with the death of founder and ex-President Cipriano Ferrel.⁶³

Conclusion

The death of Cipriano Ferrel left the union in shock. Cipriano passed away suddenly and without warning from a heart attack at 56 years old. “Cip” was beloved by many in Oregon and in Delano. His memorial services were packed with people paying their last respects and the PCUN office was flooded with cards and donations in his memory. In many respects “Cip” was the soul of the union. It was his previous connections to the UFW that facilitated the shift into labor organizing. It was his militant style that he brought from the Brown Berets that emboldened many union members. It was his unrelentless commitment to social justice for all peoples that opened the movement up to everyone. It was also his commitment to leadership development that enabled the union to live on after his death.

Beyond the fields of Oregon, PCUN and its organizing campaign left an indelible mark on the workers themselves. Although the campaign failed to negotiate a contract with its main target, the union walked away with five collective bargaining agreements with other area farms. Perhaps the most telling effect of the organizing campaign is the empowerment workers felt. Fifteen years after the strike, Ramón Ramírez recalled an encounter he had with workers from the Kraemer strike: “They were four brothers, and they told me they had been looking for me and wanted to tell me thank you. They said we taught them how to organize. How to stand up for themselves.”⁶⁴ It turned out that the four brothers had consistently organized walkouts in the strawberry harvest in California. They did not have the backing of any union, picketers, or boycotters, all they had was an old worn out business card. “Whenever anyone tried to take advantage of them they would pullout this card I had gave them with my name on it. They would show it to

contractors and say ‘Hey you better not mess with us. We are from PCUN. We will strike you.’”⁶⁵ The brothers continued to tell Ramírez of the numerous times they had used the tactic and got a good laugh out of it. In traditional measures the union’s success could be considered minimal. Yet the change in farm workers attitude finally made the project feel like winners.

¹ Powell, Jean Cecilia. *Entre Dos Mundos (Between Two Worlds): Empowering Oregon’s Hispanics*. Unpublished Master’s Thesis. University of Oregon, 1990.

² Powell, Jean Cecilia. *Entre Dos Mundos* p.60

³ Pawel, Miriam. *The Union of Their Dreams: Power, Hope, and Struggle in César Chavez’s Farm Worker Movement* Bloomsbury Press, 2009.

⁴ , Ganz, Marshall. *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

⁵ *PCUN Update* Issue 1 February, 1990

⁶ *Oregonian* May 5, 1990 “Judge Refuses to Dismiss Suit By Farm Workers”

⁷ *Oregonian* September 25, 1990 “Judge mulls farm-picketing suit”

⁸ *Oregonian* September 25, 1990 “Judge mulls farm-picketing suit”

⁹ *PCUN Update* Issue 2, May 1990

¹⁰ *PCUN Update* Issue 4, October 1990

¹¹ *Oregonian*, June 10, 1989 “Union starts strike fun to support farm workers, member plan to picket undisclosed farms to get growers to discuss pacts.”

¹² *Oregonian*, June 10, 1989 “Union starts strike fun to support farm workers, member plan to picket undisclosed farms to get growers to discuss pacts.”

¹³ *Oregonian*, June 17, 1989

¹⁴ *PCUN Update* Issue 3, August 1990

¹⁵ *Oregonian*, June 21, 1989

¹⁶ Oral Interview with Ramon Ramirez, March 25, 2010 conducted by Mario Sifuentez

¹⁷ Jean Cecilia Powell, *Entre Dos Mundos* p.60

¹⁸ Jean Cecilia Powell, *Entre Dos Mundos* p.59

¹⁹ Jean Cecilia Powell, *Entre Dos Mundos* p.58

²⁰ Marshall Ganz *Why David Sometimes Wins*

²¹ United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Data Sets, Oregon

²² *Oregonian* December 23, 1991”Is Farmworkers Union taking root in Oregon?”

²³ whores

²⁴ *PCUN Update* Issue 7, August 1991

²⁵ *PCUN Update* Issue 11, October 1992

²⁶ *Oregonian* December 23, 1991”Is Farmworkers Union taking root in Oregon?”

²⁷ *Oregonian* December 23, 1991”Is Farmworkers Union taking root in Oregon?”

²⁸ *Oregonian* December 23, 1991”Is Farmworkers Union taking root in Oregon?”

²⁹ *PCUN Update* Issue 7, August 1991

-
- ³⁰ *Oregonian*, September 14, 1992
- ³¹ Jean Cecilia Powell, *Entre Dos Mundos* p.58
- ³² *Salem Capital Press*, August 13, 1992
- ³³ *PCUN Update* Issue 11, October 1992
- ³⁴ Jacques Levy, *Cesar Chavez*.
- ³⁵ *Oregonian*, August 11, 1992
- ³⁶ *PCUN Update* Issue 14, June 1993
- ³⁷ *PCUN Update* Issue 12, December 1992
- ³⁸ *PCUN Update* Issue 13 March 1993, *PCUN Update* Issue 15 October 1993
- ³⁹ *PCUN Update* Issue 15 October 1993
- ⁴⁰ *Oregonian* July 7, 1993 "Pickers, Orchardist in conflict"
- ⁴¹ *PCUN Update* Issue 15 October 1993
- ⁴² *Oregonian* July 7, 1993 "Pickers, Orchardist in conflict"
- ⁴³ *Oregonian* July 7, 1993 "Pickers, Orchardist in conflict"
- ⁴⁴ United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Data Sets, Oregon
- ⁴⁵ *PCUN Update* Issue 19, 1994
- ⁴⁶ García, Matt. "A Bitter Harvest: The ALRA and the Art of Not Governing," in *A Moveable Feast: The United Farm Workers and the Grape Boycott* (under contract with University of California Press); Marshall Ganz, *Why David Sometimes Wins*
- ⁴⁷ Miriam Pawel, *The Union of Their Dreams*
- ⁴⁸ *PCUN Update* Issue 8, November 1991
- ⁴⁹ Ramón Ramírez, Interview
- ⁵⁰ Ramón Ramírez, Interview
- ⁵¹ *Oregonian* September 2, 1992
- ⁵² *PCUN Update* Issue 18, August 1994
- ⁵³ Ramón Ramírez, Interview
- ⁵⁴ Jean Cecilia Powell, *Entre Dos Mundos* p.61
- ⁵⁵ *PCUN Update* Issue 21, May 1995
- ⁵⁶ Lynn Stephen, *Transborder Lives* p. 246-249
- ⁵⁷ Ramon Ramirez, Interview
- ⁵⁸ *PCUN Update* Issue 22, July 1995
- ⁵⁹ Ramon Ramirez, Interview
- ⁶⁰ *PCUN Update* Issue 22, July 1995
- ⁶¹ *PCUN Update* Issue 22, July 1995
- ⁶² *PCUN Update* Issue 22, July 1995
- ⁶³ *PCUN Update* Issue 23, December 1995
- ⁶⁴ Ramon Ramirez, Interview
- ⁶⁵ Ramon Ramirez, Interview

Epilogue

On a sunny day in June of 2005 my sister and I, along with a couple of friends pulled into the parking lot of Colonia Libertad. The grand opening of the farm worker housing project was a joyous affair with supporters, farm workers, and politicians in attendance. After decades of dealing with squalid conditions, farm workers could now look to the Farmworker Housing Development Corporation as a shining example of what is possible. The FHDC in cooperation with PCUN and other organizations have opened five separate farm worker housing units in Oregon. Nuevo Amanecer (New Dawn), Colonia Libertad (Liberty Colony), Colonia Amistad (Friendship Colony), Villa de Sol (Village of the Sun) and Esperanza Courts (Hope Courts), all modern apartment complexes with amenities, community programs, childcare, and most importantly dignity. On the grounds of Nuevo Amanecer stands the Cipriano Ferrel Education Center, a multi-use space intended to provide services and after school activities for farm worker youth.

In the years since Cipriano's death the union has grown bigger and stronger. As Danny Santos, senior political advisor for the Governor of Oregon told me: "We don't do one thing without first thinking about how PCUN is going to react."¹ PCUN took on the issues of police brutality in Woodburn, sub-standard education for the ethnic Mexican community, voter registration drives, and farm worker housing. They have built their union as part of a movement, and not the movement itself. They now work in conjunction with eight other sister organizations known as CAPACES (Abilities). CAPACES acts as an umbrella organization for FHDC; Voz Hispana, a Latino voter education project; Mujeres Luchadoras Progresistas (MLP), which promotes economic and leadership

development for farm worker women; Latinos Unidos Siempre (LUS), a Latino youth leadership project; Mano a Mano, a provider of social services and Salem-Keizer coalition for equality, which empowers Latino families to take an active role in their children's education and in advocating for equity in the public education system. PCUN has succeeded in creating and maintaining a progressive movement in Oregon.

In March of 2007, with the aid of the Prometheus project, PCUN launched Radio Movimiento, a 24-hour low power FM station. The radio station has tri lingual radio programming including cultural shows, organizing shows, and music. PCUN continues to attack labor problems on the legislative front, organize workers, sign collective bargaining agreements and organize for immigrant rights. The current development of a Leadership Institute will formalize the on the job training organizer previously received with PCUN. The union's membership holds steady at just over 5,000 due paying members and is a leading example of what organizing in the immigrant community can look like.

Bracero, Mexican American, and Mexican immigrant labor played a major role in the development of agriculture in the Northwest. In this dissertation I have tried to demonstrate the different ways that ethnic Mexican labor has tried to resist exploitation. At various moments in history different avenues were available and the methods changed. One thing remained constant: braceros, Mexican Americans, and Mexicans all tried to improve their lives. They skipped out on contracts, loaded down bags, naturalized, went on strike, marched, boycotted, and even danced. They did everything within their power to carve out a space for themselves in the Pacific Northwest.

I hope that this dissertation has done justice to their struggle.

¹ Oral Interview Danny Santos, February 19, 2009 in Salem, Oregon interviewed by Mario Sifuentes

Bibliography

Archives and Collections

Farm Security Administration
Four Rivers Cultural Center
Idaho Historical Society
Malheur County Historical Society
Oregon Extension Service
Oregon Historical Society
PCUN Archives
Smithsonian Institute, Bracero Oral History Project
University of Texas at El Paso, Oral History Project

Government Publications

Current, Tom and Mark Martinez Infante *Final Report of the 1958-1959 Migrant Farm Labor Studies in Oregon Including material from the Preliminary Report of the Bureau of Labor: "We Talked to the Migrants...and Migrant Problems Demand Attention"* Oregon Bureau of Labor. Migrant Labor Division 1959.

Oregon Bureau of Labor. *Vamos Pal Norte (Let's Go North): A Social Profile of the Spanish Speaking Migratory Farm Laborer* 1958.

Oregon Governor's Task Force. *OSU Report on Seasonal Agricultural Labor in Oregon* Office of the Governor 1969.

Sundquist, Harry. *Oregon State College Extension Service Annual Report*. Malheur County Extension Agent.

"Use of Illegal Aliens in Government Reforestation Contracts" *Hearing before the Subcommittee on Forests of the Committee on Agriculture* House of Representatives 96th Congress Second Session. May 15, 1980 Eugene, OR.

United States Department of Agriculture. Economic Research Service, Data Sets, Oregon

U.S. Immigration Policy and the National Interest: The Staff Report of the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy. Washington D.C. Government Printing Office, 1981.

Interviews

Augustin Bautista. Interviewed by the author, May 20, 2006.

Aurora Banda Rodriguez. Interviewed by the author, August 9, 2009.

Juan Contreras. Interviewed by the author, May 26, 2006.

Jorge Flores y Nava. Interviewed by the author, May 23, 2006.

Jesus Garcia. Interviewed by the author, July 23, 2009.

Jose Garcia. Interviewed by the author, May 12, 2008.

Mercedes Gomez Rivera. Interviewed by the author, August 8, 2009.

Osvaldo Gonzalez, Interviews by the author, July 19, 2009.

Micaela Guijarro Rodriguez. Interviewed by the author, July 30, 2009.

Ernesto Guijarro. Interviewed by the author, July 30, 2009.

Larry Kleinman. Interviewed by the author, July 24, 2007; July 26, 2007; October 6, 2008.

Robert Komoto. Interviewed by the author, August 13, 2009.

Atanacio Jimenez Lopez. Interviewed by the author, May 24, 2006.

Graciela Machuca Olvera. Interviewed by the author, August 28, 2009.

Jose Machuca. Interviewed by the author, August 28, 2009.

Adela Menchaca. Interviewed by the author, August 15, 2009.

Benito Menchaca. Interviewed by the author, August 15, 2009.

Francisco Murillo Almaraz. Interviewed by author, May 22, 2006.

Ramon Ramirez. Interviewed by the author, July 28, 2007; March 25, 2010.

Danny Santos. Interviewed by the author, February 19, 2009.

Josefa Rivera. Interviewed by author, August 8, 2009.

Juanita River. Interviewed by author, August 8, 2009.

Film

¡Aumento Ya! (A Raise Now!). Video. Tom Chamberlin/PCUN (Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste), 1996.

Chicano! History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement. Video. NLCC Educational Media, 1996.

Newspapers

Bulletin
Eugene Daily Emerald
Eugene Register Guard
Idaho Statesman
Mail Tribune
North West Farm News
Ontario Argus
Oregon Journal
Oregon Statesman
Oregonian
Portland Scribe
Salem Capital Press
Tri-City Herald
Yakima Daily Republic

Books and Articles

Acuña, Rudy. *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*. 3rd Edition, Harper Collins College Division, 1988.

Balderrama, Francisco A. *A Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930's*. Albuquerque, New México: University of New México Press 1994.

_____. *In Defense of La Raza: The Los Angeles Mexican Consulate and the Mexican Community, 1929-1936*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982.

Bardacke, Frank. "Cesar's Ghost: The Decline and Fall of the U.F.W." in *The Nation* July 26, 1993.

Barrera, Mario. *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980.

- Barger, W.K. and Ernesto M. Reza. *The Farm Labor Movement in the Midwest: Social Change and Adaptation Among Migrant Farm Workers*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994.
- Camarillo, Albert. *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to America Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979.
- Chacón, Ramón D. "Cesar Chavez Boulevard: Efforts to Suppress a Commemoration and Chicano Political Empowerment in Fresno, Ca.," *Latino Studies Journal* 6.2, 1995.
- Chávez, Ernesto. *"Mi Raza Primero!" (My People First!): Nationalism, Identity, and Insurgency in the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles, 1966-1978*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
- Cronon, William. "Modes of Prophecy and Production: Placing Nature in History" *Journal of American History* Vol. 77 Winter 1990.
- Dalton, Frederick John. *The Moral Vision of César Chávez*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2003.
- Daniel, Clete. *Chicano Workers and the Politics of Fairness: The FEPC in the Southwest, 1941-1945* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991.
- Dash, Robert C., and Robert E. Hawkinson. "Mexicans and 'Business as Usual': Small Town Politics in Oregon" in *Aztlan* Vol. 26 No. 2 Fall 2001.
- Davis, Mike. *Prisoners of the American Dream: Politics and Economy in the History of the US Working Class*. London: Verso, 1986.
- Durand, Jorge, Massey, Douglas, and Parrado, Emilio A. "The New Era of Mexican Migration to the United States" *The Journal of American History* Vol. 86, No.2 Rethinking History and the Nation-State: Mexico and the United States as a Case Study: Special Issue (Sep 1999) pg. 518-536.
- Ferriss, Susan, Ricardo Sandoval and Diana Hembree. *The Fight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farm workers Movement*. 1st ed. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1997.
- Fink, Leon. *The Maya of Morganton: Work and Community in the Nuevo New South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.
- Fiset, Louis and Gail Nomura. "Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest" in *Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest: Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians in the Twentieth*

- Century* ed. Louis Fiset and Gail M. Nomura. Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000.
- Frank, Dana. *Buy American: The Untold Story of Economic Nationalism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1999.
- Friaz, Guadalupe. "A Demographic Profile of Chicanos in the Pacific Northwest" in *The Chicano Experience in the Northwest* ed. Gilberto Garcia and Carlos S. Maldonado. Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co. Dubuque, Iowa.
- Fujita-Rony, Dorothy-Rony. *American Workers, Colonial Power: Philippine Seattle and the Transpacific West, 1919-1941* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- _____. "Coalitions, Race, and Labor: Rereading Philip Vera Cruz". *Journal of Asian American Studies* 3.2, 2000.
- Ganz, Marshall. *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Galarza, Ernesto. *Merchants of Labor: The Mexican Bracero Story: An Account of the Managed Migration of Mexican Farm Workers in California, 1942-1960*. San Jose: Rosicrucian Press, 1964.
- _____. *Strangers in our Fields: Based on a Report Regarding Compliance with the Contractual, Legal, and Civil Rights of Mexican Agricultural Contract Labor in the United States* Washington DC, 1957.
- Gamboa, Erasmo. *Mexican Labor and World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest 1942-1947* Austin: University of Texas Press 1990.
- Gamio, Manuel. *The Life Story of the Mexican Immigrant: Autobiographical Documents*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1931.
- Garcia, Mario. *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.
- _____. *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology and Identity, 1930-1960*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991.
- _____. *Memories of Chicano History: The Life and Narrative of Bert Corona*. Berkeley: University of California, 1994.
- Garcia, Matt. *A World of its Own: Race Labor and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 2001.

_____. *A Moveable Feast: The United Farm Workers and the Grape Boycott* (under contract with University of California Press)

Garcia y Griego, Manuel. "The Importation of Mexican Contract Labor to the United States 1942, 1964." In *Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigrants in the United States* ed. David G. Gutierrez. Jaguar Series on Latin America. Scholarly Resources Inc. Wilmington Delaware.

Gecas, Viktor. "Self-Conceptions of Migrant and Settled Mexican Americans." *Social Science Quarterly* 54: 589-592 1973.

Goldy, Daniel L. "'Big' Versus 'Little' Lumber Operators in the Pacific Northwest" *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol.281 May 1952 p.93-98.

Gomez-Quinones, Juan. *Mexican American labor, 1790-1990*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994.

Gonzales, Susan Baker. *The Cautious Welcome: The Legalization Program of the Immigration Reform and Control Act*. Washington DC: The Urban Institute. 1990.

Gonzalez, Gilberto. *Mexican Consuls and Labor Organizing: Imperial Politics in the American Southwest*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999.

Gordon, Jennifer. *Suburban Sweatshops: The Fight for Immigrant Rights* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005.

Griswold del Castillo, Richard and Richard A. Garcia. *Caesar Chavez: A Triumph of Spirit*, The Oklahoma Western Biographies; V. 2 Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995.

Guerin-Gonzales, Camile. *Mexican Workers and America Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor 1900-1939*. New Jersey. Rutgers University Press, 1994.

Gutierrez, David. *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

Gutierrez, Jose Angel. *The Making of a Chicano Militant: Lessons from Cristal*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press 1998.

Hammerback, John C. and Richard J. Jensen. *The Rhetorical Career of Caesar Chavez*, 1st ed. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1998.

Haney-Lopez, Ian. *Racism on Trial: The Chicano Fight for Justice*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003.

- Hartzell Jr., Hal. *Birth of a Cooperative: Hoedads, Inc., a Worker Owned Forest Labor Co-Op*. Hulogosi Communications, Incorporated, 1987.
- Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette. *Doméstica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.
- Hurley, Andre. *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1990*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1995.
- Jensen, Richard J. and Jose Angel Gutierrez. *A War of Words: Chicano Protest in the 1960s and 1970s*, Contributions in Ethnic Studies, No. 12 Westport, Connecticut.: Greenwood Press, 1985.
- Jones, Errol D., and Kathleen R. Hodges. "A Long Struggle: Mexican Farmworkers in Idaho, 1918-1935" in *Memory, Community, and Activism: Mexican Migration and Labor in the Pacific Northwest* ed. Jerry Garcia and Gilberto Garcia. Julian Zamora Research Institute. Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 2005.
- Kelley, Robin. *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*. New York: The Free Press, 1994.
- Kiron, K. Skineer, Annelise Anderson and Martin Anderson. *Reagan In His Own Hand: The Writings of Ronald Reagan That Reveal His Revolutionary Vision for America*. New York: Free Press, 2001.
- Kleinman, Lawrence. *The 1986 Immigration and Nationality Acts*. New York: Clark Boardman Company Ltd, 1987
- _____. "Resisting La Migra" Unpublished Memoirs.
- Levy, Jacques E. and César Chávez. *César Chávez: Autobiography of La Causa*, 1st ed. Norton: New York, 1975.
- Lipsitz, George. *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism and the Poetics of Place*. London: Verso, 1995.
- _____. *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006.
- Maddux, Thomas R. "Ronald Reagan and the Task Force on Immigration, 1981" *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 74 No. 2 2005 pg. 195-235.
- Majka, Linda and Theo Majka. *Farm Workers, Agribusiness and the State*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1982.

- Maldonado, Carlos S. *Colegio César Chávez, 1973-1983: A Chicano Struggle for Educational Self-Determination*. Latino Communities New York: Garland Publishing, 2000.
- Mariscal, George ed. *Aztlán and Viet Nam: Chicano and Chicana Experiences of the War*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
- _____. "Negotiating Cesar: Cesar Chavez in the Chicano Movement." *Aztlán* 29.1 2004.
- Matthiessen, Peter. *Sal Si Puedes (Escape If You Can): Cesar Chavez and the New American Revolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.
- Mintz, Sidney. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* Penguin Books. New York, 1985.
- Nevins, Joseph. *Operation Gatekeeper: The Rise of the "Illegal Alien" and the Making of the U.S.-Mexico Boundary*. New York and London: Routledge 2002.
- Ngai, Mae M. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America, Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Odem, Mary. *Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States, 1885-1920*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995.
- Okihiro, Gary. "Oral History and the Writing of Ethnic History: A Reconnaissance into Method and Theory" in *Oral History Review*, Vol. 9 1981 pg. 27-46.
- Ourada, Patricia K. *Migrant Workers in Idaho* Boise State University, 1980.
- Pawel, Miriam. *The Union of Their Dreams: Power, Hope, and Struggle in César Chavez's Farm Worker Movement* Bloomsbury Press, 2009.
- Peck, Gunther. *Reinventing Free Labor: Padrone and Immigrant Workers in the North American West: 1880-1930* New York: Cambridge University Press 2000.
- _____. "The Nature of Labor: Fault Lines and Common Ground in Environmental and Labor History" in *Environmental History* 11 April 2006 pp. 212-238.
- Pena, Manuel. *The Texas-Mexican Conjunto: History of a Working-Class Music*. Austin: University of Texas Press 1985.

- Peterson del Mar, David. *Oregon's Promise: An Interpretive History* Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2003.
- Pitti, Stephen. *The Devil in Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race, and Mexican Americans*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.
- Powell, Jean Cecilia. *Entre Dos Mundos (Between Two Worlds): Empowering Oregon's Hispanics*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. University of Oregon, 1990.
- Robbins, William G. *Landscapes of Conflict: The Oregon Story, 1940-2000*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004.
- Ross, Fred. *Conquering Goliath: Cesar Chavez at the Beginning*. 1st ed. Keene, California: United Farm Workers: Distributed by El Taller Grafico, 1989.
- Ruiz, Vicki. *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican American Women, Unionization, and the Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950*. Albuquerque: University of New México Press, 1987.
- _____. *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth Century America* Oxford University Press, New York, 1998.
- Sanchez, George. *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Sims, Robert C. "The 'Free Zone' Nikkei: Japanese-Americans in Idaho and Eastern Oregon in World War II" in *Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest: Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians in the Twentieth Century* ed. Louis Fiset and Gail M. Nomura. Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000.
- Scott, James. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.
- Slatta, Richard. "Chicanos in the Pacific Northwest: A Demographic and Socioeconomic Portrait" *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 54:70-71, 1979.
- Stephen, Lynn. *Transborder Lives: Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
- _____. *The Story of PCUN and the Farmworker Movement in Oregon*. Eugene: Department of Anthropology, University of Oregon, 2001.
- Taylor, Paul S. *Mexican Labor in the United States: Migration Statistics Vol.4* Berkley: University of California Press, 1933.

_____. "Hand Laborers in the Western Sugar Beet Industry" *Agricultural History*, Vol. 41 No. 1 p. 19-26.

_____. "Migratory Agricultural Workers on the Pacific Coast" Presented at a joint meeting of American Association for Labor Legislation, Atlantic City, New Jersey, 1937.

Valdes, Dennis. *Al Norte: Agricultural Workers in the Great Lakes Region, 1917-1930*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991.

_____. *Barrios Norteños: St. Paul and Midwestern Mexican Communities in the Twentieth Century*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000.

_____. "Betabeleros: The Formation of An Agricultural Proletariat in the Midwest, 1897-1930" in *Labor History* 30 Fall 1989 pp. 532-562.

Vargas, Zaragosa. *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

_____. *Labor Rights are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth Century America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Weber, Devra. *Dark Sweat, White Gold: California Farm Workers, Cotton, and the New Deal*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

White, Richard. *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1995.

_____. "Are you and Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living" in *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* ed. William Cronon. New York: W.W. Norton, 1995.

_____. "American Environmental History: The Development of a New Historical Field" in *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 54 No. 3 1985 pp. 297-335.

Worster, Daniel. "Seeing Beyond Culture" *Journal of American History* Vol. 77 Winter 1990.

Zamora, Emilio. *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas: Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II*. College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2009.

Zavella, Patricia. *Women's Work and Chicano Families: Cannery Workers of the Santa Clara Valley*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987.