

THE NATIONAL FARM WORKERS ASSOCIATION COLLECTION

Papers, 1960-1967
(Predominantly 1962-1966)

7 Linear Feet

Accession Number 221
L. C. Number MS

The papers of the National Farm Workers Association were placed in the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs beginning in 1967. Deposits of documents from this and other entities of the Union have been made at regular intervals.

The founder and still leader of the National farm Workers Association, Cesario Estrada Chavez, was born in 1927 on a family farm which had been homesteaded by his grandfather in Arizona three years before that territory achieved statehood.

Growing up during the depression, Desar Chavez left school after the eighth grade to work full time in the fields. In 1938, his father and the family left Arizona to seek work in California. Along with his father and siblings, Chavez joined the migrant farm worker stream topping sugar beets, picking cotton, thinning lettuce with a short-handled hoe and picking grapes. They followed the crops from the Imperial valley in the south to Sacramento in the north.

A turning point in Chavez' life came with his meeting in 1952 with Fred Ross who was working in the Mexican-American barrio for the Community Services Organization (CSO). Cesar accepted a job as organizer for them. It was here that his organizing skills were honed under the tutelage of Ross and Saul Alinsky.

In 1958, Dolores Huerta, who was also working with CSO, along with several others formed the Agricultural Workers Association (AWA) which then melded with the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) set up by the AFL-CIO the following year. In 1961, despite the urgings of Alinsky, the CSO voted not to support AWOC. Cesar Chaves resigned from CSO and set out to form his own union.

The National Farm Workers Associatin (NFWA) was founded in 1962 (14 Dec) at a convention called by Chavez. In 1965, AWOC struck the grape growers and Chavez joined with his NFWA. That December marked the beginning of the first grape boycott.

In August of 1966, AWOC and NFWA merged to form the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC), AFL-CIO and the next three years were

marked by membership drives, grape and lettuce strikes, and boycotts.

The years since that humble beginning have been marked by successes and failures, growth and decline, good times and bad. Despite controversies about his political beliefs, his philosophy of life and his leadership tactics, Cesar Chavez remains at the head of the union he has struggled to establish and maintain for so many years.

The papers of the National Farm Workers Association cover the formative years of NFWA. As would be expected from an organization that was formed to deal with the problems of Spanish speaking migrant workers much of the correspondence and literature in the collection is in Spanish.

Important subjects covered in this collection include:

AFL-CIO
AWOC
California Migrant Ministry
DiGiorgio Company
Foreign Contract Labor
Immigration
MAPA
Mexican-American Organizations
NLRB
OEO
Pilgrimage to Sacramento
Schenley Company
Strikes
Teamsters
Union Agreements
US Senate Migratory Labor Committee

An index to subjects and correspondence will be found on page 11.

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Series I, General Correspondence files, 1962-1966, Boxes 1-2:

Correspondence and telegrams regarding injuries, strikes, government aid, education, civil rights, immigration, boycotts, lawsuits, wages, organizing, collective bargaining, and fund raising. Includes a sub-series of correspondence between Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez. Arranged chronologically.

Series II, Correspondence with NFWA Members files, 1962-1966, Boxes 3-4:

Correspondence with members of NFWA, mostly in California. Most of the correspondence from the members is handwritten and in Spanish. Arranged alphabetically by location.

Series III, General topic files, 1960-1967, Boxes 5-14:

Includes organizational records, union agreements, telegrams, boycott information, ballots, with sub-series for DiGiorgio strike and election, Schenley, Senate Hearings, and the Teamsters. Arranged alphabetically and chronologically.

Series I

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1962-1966

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Correspondence regarding injuries, strikes, government aid, education, civil rights, immigration, boycotts, lawsuits, wages, organizing, collective bargaining, and fund raising. Files are arranged chronologically.

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Correspondence with NFWA Members

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