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## Dolores Huerta: A Groundbreaking Activist of Today

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**Dolores Huerta:**  
**A Groundbreaking Activist of Today**

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines the development and transformation of human rights activism and labor relations that can be attributed to the efforts of several groups and individuals in society through the United Farm Workers Union. Understanding the strategies employed by the groundbreaking activism of Dolores Huerta is critical to comprehending the effectiveness and development of union action and labor relations in addressing the problem of labor exploitation in American society. This paper examines three major texts that have been critical in evaluating the efforts of different individuals and their contribution to the labor and human rights movement of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. The texts, albeit written from different perspectives, highlight the challenges, efforts, and strategies faced by labor activists in their push for the corporate world to address and provide reasonable wages for the workers. This paper will provide an overarching comprehensive understanding of the labor movements through the different leaders of the United Farm Workers Union. Furthermore, the paper will focus on primary sources which will increase the validity of the information presented, which is critical to current labor relations. In conclusion, this paper will show the need to further study the concerning government policies and contribution of labor relations despite the effectiveness of the texts in evaluating the labor issues.

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## Introduction

The development and transformation of human rights activists and labor relations can be attributed to the efforts of several groups and individuals in society, namely Dolores Huerta. Understanding the strategies employed by Huerta is critical to comprehending the effectiveness and development of union action and labor relations in addressing the problem of labor exploitation in America. There are three major texts and various secondary sources that have been critical in evaluating her efforts and contribution to the labor and human rights movement of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. The texts, albeit written from different perspectives, highlight the challenges, efforts, and strategies faced by Dolores Huerta in her push for the corporate world to address and to provide reasonable wages for the workers.

Dolores Huerta, co-founder together with César E. Chávez, of the United Farm Workers' Union had an immense passion for justice. This alone has been the motivating force behind her successful career. For over 40 years she has devoted herself to lifting the lives of farm laborers, Mexican Americans, and women. Huerta's resolved dedication to social modification has been seen "commemorated in murals, in songs, in newspaper articles and magazines, and at intervals the hearts and minds of overlapping generations of tens of thousands of union members and supporters."<sup>1</sup> Her determination and loyal support of the rights of the poor and thus the disenfranchised have earned her numerous awards and recognition from labor, community service, Hispanic, religious, political, and women's groups. Still active at age eighty-nine, Dolores Huerta is acknowledged as one of the

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<sup>1</sup>Margaret E. Rose, 2020. "*Dolores Huerta: Passionate Defender Of La Causa.*"

foremost women within the U.S. Labor Union and has proven to be an inspiring model for the youth of today.

Although Huerta is wanted as a speaker, her formative years, her upbringing, her rising as a social activist, the relationship she created with César Chávez, her career struggles as a woman, and her contribution to the UFW are not well-known outside of labor and Mexican American circles.<sup>2</sup> Dolores Huerta, along with César Chávez, founded the United Farmworkers Union. This union was established to enhance and augment the civil rights for the farmers who are working in extremely poor conditions and for incredibly low wages. The incredible work of Dolores Huerta and César Chávez was aimed to provide civil rights and social justice to farmworkers and laborers. While César Chávez is the more well known civil rights advocate, Dolores Huerta's influence on civil rights and social justice for farmers and laborers is far more groundbreaking due to her efforts to speak for those who may not have a voice and her continual impact and longevity in California to this day.

### **Early Life & Activism**

Lynne Ford's biography, *Huerta Dolores* elaborates on the life, efforts, strategies, and achievements of Dolores Huerta in the labor movements of the 1960s and 70s. Ford provides a chronological evaluation of Huerta's life and goes into great detail on her personal life, the challenges that pushed her to become a labor relations activist, and her contribution to the course. Dolores Fernández Huerta was born in the modest mining town of Dawson, New

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<sup>2</sup> Rose, "Dolores Huerta: Passionate Defender Of La Causa."

Mexico, on April 30, 1930. Huerta was the second child to parents, Juan and Alicia (Chávez) Fernández. Ford goes on to explain that Huerta's father was a "migrant farmworker, coal worker, and union activist."<sup>3</sup> These experiences provided a basis for the union rights movements and contributed to the successful implementation of the different strategies. The experiences are emblematic of the issues that affected workers in the 1970s American society.

For two generations, her mother's side of the family had resided in New Mexico. Huerta's father was born in Dawson, New Mexico soon after they had immigrated from Mexico. Juan Fernández worked within the area's mines and as a laborer. The young couple's marriage was troubled early on and the strains of the Great Depression did not help. Eventually, her parents divorced and her mother quickly moved her three children John, Dolores, and Marshall to Stockton, California, to create a fresh start for her family.

Huerta's mother had a difficult time making ends meet throughout the Depression decade. Fortunately, she had the help of her father to provide child care for her three young kids. The relationship that Huerta formed with her maternal grandfather, Herculano Chávez, provided her with a foundation, built on wise counsel and stories of the family working tirelessly as laborers. He recognized the intelligence and cleverness of his granddaughter. "My grandfather," Huerta recalled in an interview, "used to call me seven tongues ... because

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<sup>3</sup>Lynne E. Ford, *Huerta, Dolores.* " In *Encyclopedia of Women and American Politics* (2nd ed. Facts On File, 2014), 246.

I always talked the most."<sup>4</sup> Her quick wit and sharp tongue would be an important asset in her adult life. Despite all the economic hardships of the 1930s, Huerta holds fond memories of her childhood.

With the move to California came an improvement in her mother's economic circumstances. Before and after World War II, her mother managed a restaurant. She eventually saved enough money to purchase a hotel within the run-down part of town with her second husband, James Richards. Huerta and her brothers soon joined by a younger stepsister, working within the establishments after school and during the summers. They thrived within the poor but diverse community that was home to Mexican, Filipino, African American, Jewish, Japanese and Chinese families.<sup>5</sup>

Ambitious for her children, Huerta's mother continually pushed them to require music lessons and dance classes, to join school clubs and church organizations, and to participate in community life. During this time is when Huerta began to truly devote her life to the workers union and assist the farm workers and laborers in getting their civil rights.<sup>6</sup> The reason Huerta devotes her life as a union activist is pure because of her connection to the issue. Belonging to a family of laborers, she knew how important it was to stand up and speak for those who may not have a voice.

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<sup>4</sup> Margaret Rose, "Dolores Huerta: Labor Leader, Social Activist," in Diane Telgen and Jim Kemp, eds., *Notable Hispanic Women*, Detroit: Gale Publishing, 1993, 211

<sup>5</sup> Rose, "Dolores Huerta: Passionate Defender Of La Causa."

<sup>6</sup> Ford, *Huerta, Dolores.* " In *Encyclopedia of Women and American Politics*



By the twentieth century, America was seeing a rise in activism. Fred Ross was on the rise growing to become an important leader in the world of activism but what was more significant was his contribution to select and train Dolores Huerta.<sup>7</sup> He was searching for volunteers to identify the class division in citizenship status and to fill the registration portfolio within the barrios.<sup>8</sup> It was an effort to let the residents participate fully in the democratic system. It was, more importantly, an effort to present the cumulative “Mexican American voters strength” so that the public offices held responsible for services including health and sanitation, street lightings, parks maintenance, responsible police, etc. would be under forceful discretion from the politicians.<sup>9</sup> The selection of Dolores Huerta began with an identification in her to participate, activate and lead the CSO chapter in Stockton with her blunt, full of vigor and passion and detrimental qualities.<sup>10</sup> These were the talents that were recognized in Dolores Huerta. Huerta showed suspicion and skepticism towards Ross in the beginning but soon she realized that Ross is there to help the barrio residents improve their living conditions.

The participation of Huerta spanned from running the civic programs and educational activities, to get her hands on with fundraising and further to arrange meetings at the local and regional level. These were the portfolio of the CSO activities in which she took a leading position. The efforts of Huerta were soon realized and she was dedicated to the people of the

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Jean Murphy, “*Unsung Heroine of La Causa*,” *Regeneración*, volume 1, no 11, 1971, 20

<sup>9</sup> Murphy, “*Unsung Heroine of La Causa*,” *Regeneración*, volume 1, no 11, 1971, 20

<sup>10</sup> Stacey K. Sowards, “*¡ Sí, ella puede!: The rhetorical legacy of Dolores Huerta and the United Farm Workers.*” University of Texas Press, 2019. 15.

barrio and motivated the local government to take initiatives.<sup>11</sup> The CSO legislative branch found a strong voice in Huerta to further its lobbying in Sacramento. She also asked for the allowance for “elderly security benefits” to the people who are registered as first-generation Mexican Americans even if they are not deemed the natural citizens. Apart from that on the state level, she asked for the extension and expansion in the Disability Program to framers and skilled agriculturalists. It was an effort on her part to enroll the social and political cause in legislation and it was a prolonged and laborious process.

Peter Matthiessen’s study, *Sal Si Puedes (Escape If You Can): César Chávez and the New American Revolution* provides a chronological evaluation of César Chávez, one of the most renowned labor relations activists of the 1950s to 70s, and his contribution to the labor movements. The author highlights the different strategies employed by Chávez and the effectiveness in addressing the exploitation of employees in the corporate and business world.<sup>12</sup> This text provides important background on the relationship that the two were forming. They both shared the same urge and passion for social justice and change. Huerta was less critical of Chavez because she has heard Ross talking about him in appreciation. The comments from Ross made Huerta anticipate a strong, pulsating, and violent individual but when they finally met it was the opposite that Huerta witnessed. She saw a person in front of her with a quiet, humble, and amiable nature who never competed for fame.

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<sup>11</sup> Joan London and Henry Anderson, “*So Shall Ye Reap: The Story of César Chávez & the Farm Workers*” (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1970), 91 and 144-147

<sup>12</sup> Peter Matthiessen, and Marc Grossman. 5. “*In Sal Si Puedes (Escape If You Can): César Chávez and the New American Revolution.*” University of California Press, 2014: 160.

The two were very much opposite in personalities as one was a good speaker and dynamic while the other was rebellious, full of intellect and energy. Huerta devoted her energy to speak on behalf of farmworkers, laborers, women, and the Mexican-American population. But even though the two were very different in temperament and personality they realized soon that they had much in common. During this time is when they also began to have reservations about the vision of CSO.<sup>13</sup> The party did not broaden its horizon beyond the urban classes to include the society's populace, living on meager resources and thus marginalized. After all, no one took their sides to speak on the rights of farmworkers. Although Chávez had made strides in CSO leadership and was near to the role of the General Director their commitment to CSO came to halt and Huerta supported his decision to resign "later to co-found the National Farm Workers Association with Chávez in 1962."<sup>14</sup>

In 1960, Dolores Huerta founded the Agricultural Workers Association (AWA). She introduced voters and campaigned for non-American lawmakers. Furthermore, she also focused to provide ease to homeless people to receive open help and pension payments, as well as providing a voting right and driver's license for Spanish speakers. By 1965, the AWA and the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) met to be the Organizing Committee for Combined Farm Workers. In the same year, Chávez organized a strike for all farmers, and Huerta signed contracts against the Winemakers Association in the Coachella Valley. After five subtle years, the United Farmworkers in partnership with the American Labor

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<sup>13</sup> Peter Matthiessen, and Marc Grossman. 5. "*In Sal Si Puedes (Escape If You Can): César Chávez and the New American Revolution.*" University of California Press, 2014: 160.

<sup>14</sup> Dolores Huerta, Robert Con Davis-Undiano, Cristobal Salinas Jr, and Kathleen Wong Lau. "*A Conversation with Dolores Huerta.*" *JCSCORE* 2, no. 2 (2016): 136.

Federation and the congress of Industrial Organizations agreed with 26 winemakers who improved working conditions for ranchers, including the use of destructive pesticides.<sup>15</sup>

*A Moveable Feast: The UFW Grape Boycott and the Farm Worker Justice* by Matt Garcia focuses on United Farm Workers of America, its key members, strategies employed in the fight for employee rights and collective bargaining, and achievement in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. The Union of Farmworker (UFW) was not only an exclusive association that gave agricultural workers the right to improve and enhance their way of working and living standards but also confirmed that Dolores had an important role during the early years of the association.<sup>16</sup> The reason for creating the UFW was to acquire the rights for the farmers who were working hard day and night to meet both ends but still, the wages of the farmers were so low that they are unable to spend their life with ease and manage the expenses of their families.

Dolores Huerta has been known as the ideal candidate for running the UFW because she is a humble woman, an exceptional negotiator, and a great leader whose aim was to provide civil rights to the farmer who is working hard day and night to meet the expenses of daily life.<sup>17</sup> Dolores Huerta and César Chávez set up UFW to improve working conditions for farmworkers. For a long time, farmworkers have received low wages, worked, and lived in

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<sup>15</sup> Dolores Huerta and Rachel Rosenbloom. "Ask a Feminist: Dolores Huerta and Rachel Rosenbloom Discuss Gender and Immigrant Rights," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 44, no.2 (2019): 4

<sup>16</sup> Matt Garcia, *A Moveable Feast: The UFW Grape Boycott and Farm Worker Justice* (International Labor and Working-Class History, no. 83 2013), 147

<sup>17</sup> Claire E. Wolfteich. "Motherwork, Public Leadership, and Vocational Tensions: Dorothy Day, Dolores Huerta, and Lena Frances Edwards." In *Mothering, Public Leadership, and Women's Life Writing*, pp. 70-98. Brill, 2017.

unpleasant conditions. Working together to organize community service, César Chávez saw Huerta's excellent campaign skills and gave her help to find workers with him in 1962.

In the 1960s, Huerta led the middle class to become a coordinator for the development of farmworkers and has since continued to improve the lives of undervalued people working in California's agricultural sector. The 1965 wine strike in Delano, California, led to a multi-ethnic uprising that led to a movement of farmworkers. The well-known grape strike encouraged farmers to boycott the grapes against growers who were refusing to provide farmers a living wage and better working conditions. At that time the farmers were working for 70 cents per hour and the maximum they could earn through farming was 90 cents which were not enough for the farmworker to even spend their lives as a lower middle class.<sup>18</sup>

Garcia addressed the contribution of UFW to the labor movement by suggesting that the Grape boycott of the 1960s was intended to push farm owners and corporations to increase employee wages.<sup>19</sup> Garcia focused on “state-sponsored farm justice” to improve the lives and experiences of workers in not only grape plantations but also in other sectors of the economy.<sup>20</sup> Dolores Huerta narrated that when she visited the house of farmers she saw that there was no furniture and instead there were orange crates. Furthermore, the floors of their houses were so dirty and they were living in extremely poor conditions. All of these

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<sup>18</sup> Aida Hurtado and Jessica. M. Roa. "Chicana Feminisms." In *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, edited by Maryanne Cline Horowitz, 815-817. Vol. 2. Detroit, MI: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2005. Gale eBooks (accessed October 10, 2019): 10

<sup>19</sup> Garcia, *A Moveable Feast: The UFW Grape Boycott and Farm Worker Justice* (International Labor and Working-Class History, no. 83 2013

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

conditions infuriated Huerta to encourage other farmers to participate in the grape boycott movement

As the peaceful protest was carried forward by the farmers and led by Huerta, the protestors faced violence from the grape growers because that strike was hampering the revenues and profitability of the grape growers who were not willing to increase the wages of the farmer and were not willing to provide them with their rights.<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, the grape strike was successful for the farmer. New contracts were signed by both the grape growers and farmers that stated there would be an increase in pay, benefits, and increased protection of their rights for farmers. Furthermore, in the 1970s to 1980s, several peaceful protests were conducted by UFW to fight for the rights of farmworkers and laborers who were working immensely hard at low wage rates. Huerta assisting in boycotts created a political environment to comply with the Agricultural Labor Relations Act 1975, a fundamental law respecting the privileges of domestic workers to act together and collectively.<sup>22</sup> In the 1980s, Dolores had become the Vice President of UFW and helped create UFW's radio program.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, she continued to present a variety of reasons, supporting an immigration policy for migrants and improving the well-being of agricultural workers.

Furthermore, Dolores Huerta was also requested to speak for the support of the union of workers and laborers in the year 1990, because she was considered as the ideal person for

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<sup>21</sup> Matthiessen and Grossman. "5." *In Sal Si Puedes (Escape If You Can): César Chávez and the New American Revolution.* "

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Matthiessen and Grossman. "5." *In Sal Si Puedes (Escape If You Can): César Chávez and the New American Revolution.* "

portraying the rights of the workers with fairness and justice.<sup>24</sup> Dolores Huerta appeared to be a simple woman even though her attire does not signify that she was the woman who led the team of negotiators that belonged to Chávez. Huerta is one of the prominent women that change the structure and dealing with farming almost like a corporate structure where the farmer's rights are given to the hard-working farmers. As a woman, Dolores Huerta was a symbol of motivation for women farmworkers, because of her persona created in front of the union workers as she was leading the team with example.<sup>25</sup>

With Dolores Huerta's longevity in activism, she was able to receive countless awards and recognitions. It is no secret that she is known for her work as a ferocious supporter for farmworkers, migrants, and women. She received the Liberty Medal on Ellis Island and joined the Women's National Hall of Fame in 1993. In that particular year, she found herself confused after the death of her beloved companion César Chávez. In 1998, she received an Eleanor Roosevelt Award, the year before leaving United Farm Workers. In 2002, she received a Puffin Award for Creative Citizenship.<sup>26</sup> A grant of \$100,000 allowed Dolores Huerta to initiate the foundation for helping farmers and laborers, which was focused on the organization and training of work skills in communities that faced low income. During the 2018 Oscars, Dolores Huerta walked the honorable way with many influential personalities before making this beautiful image with nine different activists during the Oscar song namely

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<sup>24</sup> Garcia, *A Moveable Feast: The UFW Grape Boycott and Farm Worker Justice* (International Labor and Working-Class History

<sup>25</sup> Matthiessen and Grossman. "5." *In Sal Si Puedes (Escape If You Can): César Chávez and the New American Revolution.*"

<sup>26</sup> Margaret Rose. Traditional and Nontraditional Patterns of Female Activism in the United Farm Workers of America, 1962 to 1980. *"Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies"* 11, no. 1 (1990): 29.

"Stand up for something." Dolores Huerta faced and speaks out for various social issues, including movements, unequal pay, and the privileges of women and Latinos.

Dolores Huerta remains a living icon of civil rights at the age of eighty-seven. She spent most of her life as a political activist, fighting for better working conditions for farmworkers and the rights of the oppressed, a fervent proponent of the power of a political organization to bring about change. Additionally, her role in the agricultural labor movement was overshadowed by César Chávez. Her most notable recognition was presented by President Barack Obama in 2012 where she was recognized and awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Peter Bratt's recent documentary, *Dolores*, shows how scholars and filmmakers are still examining the life of Dolores Huerta.<sup>27</sup> The film tells the story of Huerta's development of an outspoken teenager, disappointed with the racist and economic injustices she experienced in the central agricultural valley of California. This was all on the background of a major national architect of the boycott of grapes. Throughout all of this, Huerta remained open to working tirelessly to found Dolores Huerta Foundation, continue to work with agricultural communities, organize candidates for public services, and support health, education, and economic development.

Huerta's strong gendered perspective is what truly makes her a groundbreaking activist. Huerta is known for basing her decisions on her strong inner sense. She talks about

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<sup>27</sup> B. Ruby Rich, "Sundance 2017: Of Snow and Anguish," Festival Reports, 2017, pp. 99-100)



cultivating working women and Mexican urban women, regardless of their age that they should work hard and perform their duties honestly. Huerta also began involving her outreach with the ever-growing feminist movement, through interactions with Gloria Steinem and other women's activists who had rallied behind the farmworkers' cause.<sup>28</sup> Through the 1960s, Huerta dismissed the women's rights movement. As someone whose focus was on low-income laborers, she viewed the movement as a "middle-class phenomenon."<sup>29</sup> For years she had ignored the inappropriate remarks and comments made by her male colleagues and viewed them as an inevitable part of working as a female in a male-dominated industry.

As she began to travel across the country, she increasingly became more sensitized to the sexism she, and other women, faced in her organization. As her awareness grew, she began to directly challenge offensive remarks and stereotypes. Consequently, she began to voice her concerns regarding the absence of females in leadership positions. She further asserted that women's opinions and issues, like childcare and molestation, should be serious consideration by the union. Other women along with Steinem influenced her.<sup>30</sup> “[I really admire] Eleanor Smeal, head of the Feminist Majority, whom I consider the César Chávez of the cause,” she noted in an interview. “She’s a visionary, a very innovative person.”<sup>31</sup> She was inspired by countless women to the point where she was able to incorporate a feminist perspective into her human rights initiative.

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<sup>28</sup> Rose, "*Dolores Huerta: Passionate Defender Of La Causa.*"

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Rose, "*Dolores Huerta: Passionate Defender Of La Causa.*"

<sup>31</sup> Susan Samuels Drake, *Progressive*, September 2000, 5

Huerta's decisions were seemingly always based on her strong inner sense. She talks about cultivating working women and Mexican urban women, regardless of their age that they should work hard and perform their duties honestly. Moreover, Huerta is not ethnocentric, she asks women to maintain quality, strength, and freedom through working in unions side by side with the men. In short, Huerta does not use a female personality.<sup>32</sup> It was her key to individual quality and a key character. Huerta embraced having a perspective on culture, class, and gender making her more powerful compared to Chavez who still embodied traditional, male-dominated ways.

### **Her Second Wind**

Huerta's later activism focused on women's rights issues in the 60s and 70s. Many people continued to fight alongside her giving their energy and devotion, but she insisted that people should be doing more for women. Again she spoke about the issues of harassment, sexual assault and gave time to lobbying for the passing of state and federal legislation. She also worked along with anti-discrimination campaigns. For several years she devoted her energy to feminist campaigns and traveled across the country to hire, encourage and inspire Latinas to participate in her party/group.

In 1993, Chávez's premature death incited a response from the union workers and supporters who were actively becoming part of the union campaigns and boycotts.<sup>33</sup> It was realized by Huerta that his death signaled another phase for the farmworkers' movement and

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<sup>32</sup> Wolfteich "*Motherwork, Public Leadership, and Vocational Tensions: Dorothy Day, Dolores Huerta, and Lena Frances Edwards.*" pp. 70-98.

<sup>33</sup> Susan Samuels Drake, *Progressive*, September 2000, 5

that is of speeding up the transition to the new era of leadership within the UFW.<sup>34</sup> The organization of the labor movement asked her role at the front line and she said, it is disappointing that employers are still consistent with the old mindset and do not recognize that the issues of racism and sexism are stronger today in the field.<sup>35</sup> She decided to take a rest at age seventy and did not seek reelection to the union's "Executive Board as Secretary-Treasurer" but her retirement from the union did not mean her retirement from the commitment.<sup>36</sup>

Her physical health faced decline after she resigned and was diagnosed with the rare disease "aortic duodenal fistula." And she passed through surgery and remained quite critical in ICU for many weeks.<sup>37</sup> The medical crisis in which she fell saw the response of her children who surrounded her and remarked that she has the fighting spirit and which gave her the strength to endure her "life-threatening condition."<sup>38</sup> She worked after her recovery from the condition at a slower pace but continued to live with optimism, ideal commitment, and her passion for social integrity and change. In her last speech before she resigned from the UFW Executive Board, she said, "We must not be afraid and oblivious to sacrifices and

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<sup>34</sup> Matthiessen and Grossman. "5." *In Sal Si Puedes (Escape If You Can): César Chávez and the New American Revolution.*

<sup>35</sup> S.T. Vanairdale. "Dolores Huerta". 2020. *Sactownmag.Com*. Accessed March 17, 2020. <http://www.sactownmag.com/February-March-2019/Dolores-Huerta/>.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Wolfeich "Motherwork, Public Leadership, and Vocational Tensions: Dorothy Day, Dolores Huerta, and Lena Frances Edwards." pp. 70-98.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

struggles."<sup>39</sup> Her life and struggle are an inspiration for millions of people across the country and even the globe.

Huerta's lack of acknowledgment is undeniably not due to a lack of proximity to power. Huerta, who preceded Chávez in the battle for farmworkers' rights, developed the organization that grew into the United Farm Workers. This was more than three years before she and Chávez co-founded the UFW together. Due to her gender, Huerta was often overlooked and seen as a nationally recognized pretty "face" of the farmworkers.<sup>40</sup> It was Huerta whose contribution to their struggle took second place to no man.

As a woman, she stood alongside some of the most powerful people in American history. Today, Dolores Huerta remains a tireless advocate for workers, women, and those who may not have a voice of their own. Her groundbreaking activism richly deserves to be honored. Since 1955, Huerta has been a committed coordinator who focuses on the way she thinks about the administration that has guaranteed her integrity. Most importantly, she focused on who she thought was a perfect person, her mother. She had taught Dolores not to lose hope and never give up struggling for what is right for the people.

People generally forget that the 1960s were a boring chauvinistic era, even in the development of what we call Chicano, but then Dolores was a Mexican woman who was the

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<sup>39</sup> Wolfeich "Motherwork, Public Leadership, and Vocational Tensions: Dorothy Day, Dolores Huerta, and Lena Frances Edwards." pp. 70-98.

<sup>40</sup> Rose, Traditional and Nontraditional Patterns of Female Activism in the United Farm Workers of America, 1962 to 1980. "Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies"

leader of the community.<sup>41</sup> "The miracle of Dolores Huerta," is that she has never stopped pretending to be fighting for her people because she is a good human on the planet and will never do it.<sup>42</sup> Huerta's strong will and confidence, especially his knowledge of populism, which was a reason to maintain and build up a sense of authority as a fascinating leader.

On the contrary, the moral basis and the educational background of Dolores Huerta provided her self-actualization and made her an open and sought after speaker of the public because of her association with the unions. Countless business meetings were held in which she discussed the problem of students, religious matters, labor problems, consumer problems, environmental problems, and political issues. Through the written press, radio, and television, she collected genuinely necessary resources and open awareness of UFW battles.<sup>43</sup>

Huerta was also a competent lobbyist and sponsor in the interests of employees in the central government of the state. During visits to congress institutions, she maintained the position of the association on a variety of issues, with emphasis on labor law, and even medical issues for field workers and migration strategies, due to Huerta's constant proximity to the UFW agent and the ease with which she has connected with well-known constituencies such as, ethnic groups, students, labors, and women.

Dolores Huerta was aimed to play a role of an activist for the laborers right since playing a role of an activist for farmer's rights and labor rights are the same because both of

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<sup>41</sup> Wolfeich, *"Motherwork, Public Leadership, and Vocational Tensions: Dorothy Day, Dolores Huerta, and Lena Frances Edwards."* pp. 70-98.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Matt García. *"From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of César Chávez and the Farm Worker Movement."* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012. 21

these classes are approximately the same. The farmers and laborers were working very hard all day, and the inappropriate policies of the government concerning their rights and wages are impacting their life negatively.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, the purpose of creating UFW by Dolores Huerta and César Chávez is to support the farmers and laborers through talking about their problems and their rights.

Furthermore, laborers also fall under the categories of lower-class workers who were working hard and earning money to meet both ends, and still, they were unable to meet their both ends from the low wages that were provided to them by the companies.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, Dolores Huerta and César Chávez also worked for the rights of the women in the male-dominant work environment. The activism of Dolores Huerta also encouraged many women to participate in political activities and farming activities. The participation of women in these activities has resulted in impacting the male dominance in farming and labor sectors.

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## Conclusion

The three main texts examined are keen on informing readers of the nature and efforts of different groups within the labor movements and the contribution of different groups in addressing the issues. The texts also address the labor movement underpinnings to make

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<sup>44</sup> Matt García. *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of César Chávez and the Farm Worker Movement.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012. 21

<sup>45</sup> Wolfeich, "Motherwork, Public Leadership, and Vocational Tensions: Dorothy Day, Dolores Huerta, and Lena Frances Edwards." pp. 70-98.

<sup>46</sup> Rose, Traditional and Nontraditional Patterns of Female Activism in the United Farm Workers of America, 1962 to 1980. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*

known the issues that contributed to the movement. The authors' effectiveness in presenting their arguments stems from their focus on the challenges and problems the different groups, especially the leaders and focal members, faced in their personal, social, and economic life. All of which pushed them to engage in widespread industrial actions. In one instance, Matthiessen acknowledges that "the most serious obstacle that Chávez's strike effort" after moving to the United States was the "century-old effort of California farmers to depress wages and undercut resistance" from employees.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, Ford highlights the experiences of Dolores Huerta since childhood.

Furthermore, the texts employ different information sources, the majority of which are primary sources, and methodologies to provide valid arguments concerning the 1960s and 70s labor issues in America. Adopting this strategy appeals to the reader on the achievability and effectiveness of working together to address social challenges. For instance, Matthiessen provides detailed accounts of the life and contributions of César Chávez based on personal experiences and observation.<sup>48</sup> As a close friend and associate to the labor union activists, Matthiessen witnessed a majority of the issues and problems faced by Chávez, the UFW, and other leaders. He employs a narrative style of presenting his thoughts and observations. Employing a personal experience helps the reader to understand the issues in question.

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<sup>47</sup> García, "*From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of César Chávez and the Farm Worker Movement.*"

<sup>48</sup> Matthiessen, "*Sal Si Puedes (Escape If You Can): César Chávez and the New American Revolution.*"

Similarly, Garcia uses two major primary sources, which encompass recorded interviews with members of UFW.<sup>49</sup> A comprehensive and all-inclusive evaluation of the interviews, with Gilbert Padilla and Marshall Ganz, helps the reader to develop a vivid picture of the situation in Gilbert Padilla and Marshall Ganz helps the reader to develop a vivid picture of the situation in 1970s America. Unlike other authors, Ford does not specify the primary sources employed in developing and presenting the experiences of Dolores Huerta.

The primary sources provided do not necessarily resonate with the issues addressed in Huerta's case.<sup>50</sup> This poses challenges in authenticating the validity of the information provided, and therefore, increasing the reader's skepticism of the persona's contribution to the labor movements of the 1970s. Another issue pertinent to the three sources concerns the similarities and differences in the issues addressed. A majority of the issues addressed in the texts overlap, especially in regards to UFW, the contribution of César Chávez, and the Grape boycott, it is paramount for the author to address the key issues evident in both texts and how they are emblematic of the larger issues that affected – and still affect – workers in the economy. Notably, United Farm Workers of American is common in the three texts. For instance, Matthiessen dedicates a great deal of his time to address the contribution of César Chávez to the UFW and the grape strike. Matthiessen acknowledges that efforts from

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<sup>49</sup> Garcia, "*A Moveable Feast: The UFW Grape Boycott and Farm Worker Justice*" (International Labor and Working-Class History.)

<sup>50</sup> Ford, *Huerta, Dolores.* "In *Encyclopedia of Women and American Politics.*"



hundreds of grape strikers in the major cities pushed the grape producers to sign the first union contracts in the 1970s.<sup>51</sup>

In addition, Garcia also provides an overview of strategies and activities employed by the UFW in the grape boycott and the resulting impacts on employee welfare. Similar to other texts, Ford also addresses the issue of the labor union and the grape strike. Ford asserts that Huerta and Chávez founded the UFW and spearheaded the countrywide grape picker's strike, which contributed to the union contracts.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, the authors elaborate on the significant efforts employed in addressing the farmworker's issues from diverse perspectives. By agreeing on the nature and contribution of the UFW and the grape strike on the labor movement, the text helps the reader to decipher and improve their understanding of the issues.

Though the texts are comprehensive in presenting labor issues in the 1970s, further research was required. For instance, evaluating the contribution of other factors, especially government policies at the time, feminist movements, and labor relations in other countries is crucial. Furthermore, future research should also focus on the contribution of the grape strike and the UFW in the industrial actions and labor conflicts in present society.

The contribution of Matthiessen, Garcia, and Ford to the understanding of the 1960s and 1970s labor issues and movements in the U.S. is evident. The authors provide an overarching and comprehensive understanding of the labor movements through the different

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<sup>51</sup>Ford, Huerta, Dolores. "In *Encyclopedia of Women and American Politics*."

<sup>52</sup>Matthiessen, "Sal Si Puedes (*Escape If You Can*): César Chávez and the New American Revolution."

leaders of the United Farm Workers, including César Chávez and Dolores Huerta, among others. Furthermore, the focus on primary sources by Garcia and Matthiessen increases the validity of the information presented, which is critical to current labor relations.

In conclusion understanding, the strategies employed by the groundbreaking activism of Dolores Huerta is critical to comprehending the effectiveness and development of union action and labor relations in addressing the problem of labor exploitation in American society. It is quite amazing that an activist of her status has lived such a long and successful life. Her feminist ideals and her more democratic perspective allowed her to embrace this double or even triple consciousness. While César Chávez is seen as the more well known civil rights advocate, Dolores Huerta's influence on civil rights and social justice for farmers and laborers is far more groundbreaking. Her ideas on culture, class, and gender allowed her to stand up and speak for those who may not have a voice and her continual focus on farmworkers, laborers, women, and the Mexican-American population to this day.

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