

The Story of PCUN and the Farmworker Movement in Oregon

Revised edition



UNIVERSITY
OF OREGON

by Lynn Stephen

in collaboration with PCUN staff members

Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies (CLLAS)



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Revised and Expanded

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*in collaboration with PCUN staff
and members*

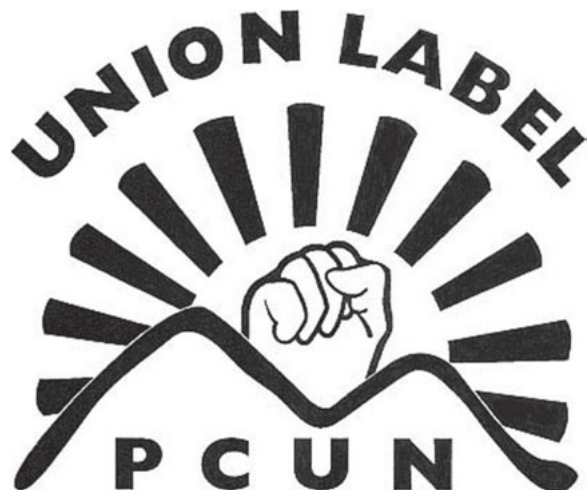
Center for Latino/a and Latin
American Studies (CLLAS)

Eugene, Oregon

July 2012



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON



Front cover photograph: *Mural in the meeting hall of PCUN's Risberg Hall headquarters, Woodburn, Oregon.*

Title page photograph: *Tenth Anniversary Organizing Campaign, Brooks, Oregon, June 1995.*

Back cover: *Mural on back wall of the meeting hall of PCUN's Risberg Hall headquarters, Woodburn, Oregon.*

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July 2012

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Child in the field, 1995.

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Acknowledgements

Histories provide recognition and legitimation of past events, experiences, and interpretations for those living in the present. The history that follows was born out of a need to document an important part of Mexican/a, Chicano/a, Latino/a, and labor history in the state of Oregon. Latino students at the University of Oregon spoke with me about the lack of educational materials that reflected some of the experiences of their families as migrants to the state. Others wanted recognition for those who have labored and continue to labor as farmworkers. Staff and members from Pineros y Campesinos Unidos (Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United, or PCUN) expressed a need to document their own history. As activists who are continually caught up in the dynamics of their work, they had little time to devote to such a project. Hence the idea for an initial collaboration between an anthropologist, student researchers from the University of Oregon, PCUN, the Wayne Morse Chair for Law and Politics, and later with the Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies (CLLAS) and Special Collections and University Archives, UO Libraries. It is my hope that this history of the farmworker movement in Oregon in general and the story of PCUN in particular will provide a starting point for other collaborative efforts to uncover the rich history of farmworkers and Latino history in our state, and will serve as a resource to a wide range of people interested in the topic.

Collaborations involve participatory processes that take more time than solo creations. Here, PCUN staff and University of Oregon students worked together to begin to organize the PCUN archives in 1999, to copy relevant material for the history, and to identify key actors—both past and present—who could help us to build a picture of farmworker organizing in Oregon and the role of PCUN in that process. We initially identified a group of fourteen people who were interviewed in 1999 and then added five more interviews in 2010 for this current updated version of PCUN history. The interviews often lasted for two to three hours at a time. The tapes were transcribed (often in Spanish) and the transcripts returned to those who were interviewed, and these texts became part of the data base for building the history. In addition, audiotapes, videotapes, and photographs from PCUN archives were reviewed. I wrote a preliminary draft that was then reviewed by PCUN and was redrafted several times based on input from PCUN staff and members, both for the initial and updated version. This final product is the result of the work of many.

I would like first to thank those people who shared their experiences with us in interviews in 1999 and in 2010, including: Jaime Arredondo, Demetria Avila, Leonides Avila, Cristina Bautista, Javier Ceja (twice), Sara Luz Cuesta Hernández, Lucía Zuriaga, Susan Dobkins, Larry Kleinman (twice), Lorena Manzo, Ramón Ramírez, Fransisca López, Marion Malcolm, Macedonio Mejía, Efraín Peña, Guadalupe Quinn, Marlene Torres, and Abel Valladares.

The undergraduate researchers in this project include Mayra Gómez, Sarah Jacobson, and Julie Meyers. They all did a terrific job, and I enjoyed working with them tremendously. Marcy Miranda Janes, a University of Oregon graduate student in 1999-2000, was a valuable research assistant while working in the PCUN archives and in constructing a timeline of PCUN. Dr. Kristina Tiedje, a former University of Oregon graduate

student in anthropology, provided invaluable research assistance in transcribing interviews, participating in conferences on this topic, and coordinating student activities during all phases of this project. Her ongoing commitment to this project is admirable. Dr. Tami Hill, also a former graduate student in anthropology, provided crucial editorial and organizational assistance in the final phases of preparing this history for publication in its original version. In 2011, Anna Cruz and Ivan Sandoval-Cervantes, both graduate students in the Department of Anthropology, provided important assistance in the transcription of additional interviews.

My colleagues in the Department of Anthropology, in particular former chairs Bill Ayres, Aletta Biersack, Carol Silverman and Frances White, provided support for this project in 2000, 2001, 2010, and 2011—not only granting me the time to carry it out, but also by endorsing several new courses that came out of the project, titled “Immigration and the Farmworker Experience,” “Latino Roots I,” and “Latino Roots II.” I thank them for recognizing the value of student participation in research and for having a broad-based vision of anthropology.

I would also like to thank Margaret Hallock, whose enthusiasm and support for this project have meant a great deal to me. In addition, I thank the Labor Education and Research Center at the University of Oregon for their support of the original version of this publication. Finally, I gratefully acknowledge the grant we received from the Wayne Morse Chair of Law and Politics that funded the original research project.

The Oregon Council for the Humanities has generously granted permission for reprinting the map showing the border that separated the Oregon territory from the country of Mexico in 1845. The map is reprinted from page twelve of *Nosotros: The Hispanic People of Oregon*, edited by Erasmo Gamboa and Carolyn M. Braun, Portland: The Oregon Council for the Humanities.

The new version of this history, published in 2012, would not have been possible without the support of the staff of the Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies (CLLAS) and the generous support of the Office of the Vice President for Research at the University of Oregon. Special thanks to Alice Evans, who oversaw the production of the new version of this history in 2011-2012, and to Feather Crawford for assistance with photographs. Special thanks to Gabriela Martinez, associate professor in the School of Journalism and Communication (SOJC) at the University of Oregon and Sonia de la Cruz, SOJC graduate student, for their assistance in videotaping two of the interviews included here. A big thank you to Larry Kleinman for wonderful help in the conceptualization, editing, and updating of this history.

Finally I would like to thank the staff of Special Collections and University Archives, UO Libraries, for their collaboration and sponsorship of the archiving of the PCUN papers at the University of Oregon. It is our hope that this history of PCUN will inspire others to use this rich archive and expand on the material discussed here. ■

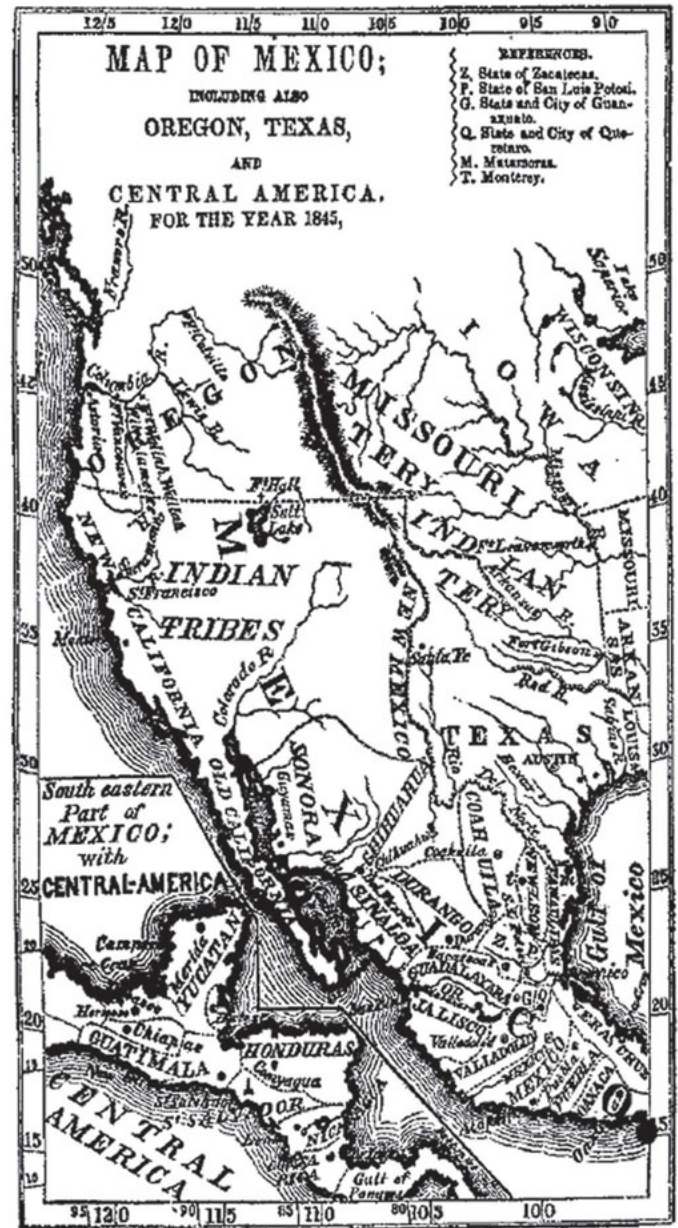
Introduction

While most of us tend to think of Mexico as another country, somewhere south of the border, or a vacation destination, Mexico has, in fact, always been intimately connected to the United States—culturally, politically, and economically. Until 1848, what are now the states of California, Arizona, and New Mexico—as well as parts of Texas, Oklahoma, Colorado, and Nevada—belonged to Mexico. In Oregon, the Mexican border extended to just south of Ashland until 1846, when a treaty signed between England and the United States confirmed U.S. title to what was known as the Territory of Oregon (which also included what are now the states of Washington and Idaho). Independent Mexico lost more than half of its territory to the United States after the United States initiated the Mexican-American War. Thus, Oregon has a history of sharing a border with Mexico and being connected to it.

Today, Mexican workers living in the United States with a variety of legal statuses are a key part of our labor force. In Oregon, the leading industry is agriculture. The Willamette Valley alone produces 170 different crops, and Marion county—located in this valley—is Oregon's leading agricultural producing county. Mexican farmworkers form the backbone of this agricultural production: Oregon has more than 100,000 farmworkers, 98 percent of which are Latino, primarily of Mexican origin.¹ Many of these farmworkers live permanently in the state.² Others work temporarily in the state and move on to other areas of the United States and Canada as well.

While farmworkers are key to Oregon's agricultural production, they do not enjoy many of the basic protections provided for other workers. Federal laws that govern wages and hours, overtime, and many benefits do not apply to farmworkers, and states can create their own statutes for farmworkers. For example, while Oregon farmworkers can now join a labor union, growers are not required to recognize it. Until 1990, farmworkers were prohibited from picketing during a harvest.³ In addition, farmworker housing is often substandard and farmworkers may be overcharged for housing, food, and transportation by labor contractors, ending up with very little in their paychecks. In sum, farmworkers are treated as a second-class group of workers who do not deserve the same rights and protections that others do.

How did this situation come to be and what can be done about it? One clear solution is for farmworkers to seek collective bargaining agreements with growers. Collective bargaining



Map of the original Territory of Mexico.

¹ Latino refers to persons who live in the United States and trace their ancestry to Latin America or, in some cases, the Caribbean or Spain. The term "Latino" was included for the first time in the 2000 census. In that census, people of Spanish/Hispanic/Latino origin could identify as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban or "other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino." The Mexican-American population, sometimes also referred to as "Chicano" (a more politicized term for people of Mexican origin linked to activist movements of Mexican-Americans in the 1960s and 1970s), reached 20.6 million or 7.3 percent of the total U.S. population of 281.4 million in 2001. (Information from Guzmán 2001:1-2). In the 2010 census it was noted that, "for this census, Hispanic origins are not races." Additionally, the Hispanic terms are modified from "Hispanic or Latino" to "Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin." The 2010 census counted 50.5 million "Hispanics" composing 16 percent of the U.S. population (Humes, Jones, and Ramirez 2010).

² The number of farmworkers varies by source cited. PCUN organizers state that there are approximately 100,000 farmworkers. The 1997 Census of Agriculture puts the number at 124,400 and the Oregon Employment Department puts the numbers between 40,100 and 86,400 in 1999, depending on the month. Many farmworkers who stay in the state for long periods of time not only work in the fields from June to September, but also work in canneries, frozen food plants, restaurants, childcare, and construction at other times of the year when they are not in the fields (See League of Women Voters of Oregon 2000).

³ PCUN lawsuit in federal court, *PCUN v. Goldschmidt* 790 F. Supp. 216 (D-OR, 1990) overturned this.

refers to the rights of workers to be represented collectively by a union representative who negotiates with employers to reach agreement on the terms of employment. Such agreements focus on fair treatment on the job, obtaining a living wage, the creation of a seniority system, provision of basic benefits, and the rights of workers to have decision-making power regarding workplace issues.

This document tells the history of the farmworker movement in Oregon by focusing on the first farmworker union in the state of Oregon: Pinos y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United), commonly referred to and abbreviated as PCUN. The story is told from the perspective of those who were active in founding and participating in PCUN—including farmworkers, field organizers, staff, and those who worked closely with the organization. This history serves to document their experiences and insights. The research is based on nineteen lengthy interviews, observations of meetings, visits to the fields and many informal conversations, as well as a study of PCUN's extensive archives, which include newspaper clippings, correspondence, videos, and photographs. Through an understanding of the history of PCUN's struggle for farmworker rights in the state of Oregon, we can learn a great deal about the historical obstacles that have existed for farmworkers everywhere, as well as seeing what kinds of strategies are necessary for creating a cultural and political climate that will be more receptive to union organizing.

As the history of PCUN suggests, the struggle for farmworker rights encompasses a wide range of issues including immigration, racism, health, housing, gender inequality, and more. Oregon represents one of the toughest political climates for organizing a farmworker union, but the track record of PCUN shows, “*Si, se puede*” (Yes, it can be done). While the struggle for farmworker rights is long from over, considerable gains have been won over three decades, and it is no longer a question of *if* farmworkers will be able to collectively bargain on a significant scale, but *when* and *how*.



Map of western Oregon prepared using ESRI Data & Maps, 2006 and ArcGIS Desktop.

Part 1

Mexican Labor Becomes Dominant in Oregon Agriculture (1942–76)

In the 1940s, the face of Oregon's agricultural labor force was permanently transformed as Mexican workers became the majority. By the early 1970s, individuals from Mexico or of Mexican descent made up over 95 percent of farmworkers. Starting in the late 1950s, sizeable Mexican communities began to emerge in Willamette Valley towns like Woodburn, St. Paul, Independence, and Gervais. These trends raised the need for social services, increased frictions with local authorities, and sparked organizing and activism—much of it fueled by the examples of the United Farm Worker union's escalating struggles in California and the national civil rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s.

EARLY MEXICAN FARMWORKERS, THE BRACERO PROGRAM, AND THE BEGINNING OF INS RAIDS IN OREGON⁴

Growth of the Mexican population in Oregon was spurred in the 1940s by three related factors: continuing growth in agriculture, the onset of World War II, and the existence of the Bracero Program (designed to recruit Mexican laborers to replace those who had either entered the U.S. Armed Forces or who had left farm labor to work in industry). The demand for food production plus expansion of irrigation and electrification boosted commercial acreage, while the war pulled much of the existing labor force into war production. In order to bridge the gap between the increasing demand for agricultural workers and their decreasing numbers among the U.S. population, Public Law 45 was created to appropriate the necessary funds to implement an executive agreement with Mexico to import thousands, and eventually millions, of guest workers, or *braceros*. Although the Bracero Program was created to alleviate wartime labor shortages, it lasted until 1965. Many more workers were contracted in the period after the end of World War II (4,000,000) than during the war itself (168,000).

The Bracero Program allowed the importation of Mexican workers for annual harvests with the stipulation that they were to return to Mexico after their work was finished. *Braceros* were contract workers who were supposed to have certain guarantees met in terms of housing, transportation, wages, recruitment, health care, food, and the number of hours they worked. The contracts—initially negotiated directly between the United States and Mexican governments—even stipulated that there should be no discrimination against the *braceros*. However, compliance officers, including Mexican consular officials, were few and far between. Contracts were switched from governmental management to private U.S. contractors later in the program. Most growers and the U.S. government ignored the terms of the contracts but the *braceros* had no recourse. The Bracero Program blocked farmworker unionization and has been called legalized slavery by some, including the last director of the program, Lee Williams. Although the Bracero Program ended on the national level in 1947, it was renegotiated and started again in many states in 1949. It finally ended in 1964.

The Bracero Program existed formally in the state of Oregon from 1942–1947 (see Gamboa 1990). Unlike other states, it was not formally continued after 1947, although Oregon growers continued to use Mexican–origin workers to harvest their crops. Approximately 15,136 *braceros* were contracted as farm laborers in the state of Oregon from Mexico during this time (Gamboa 1995a:41). Additional *bracero* workers were also employed on Oregon railroads from 1943–1946.

Erlinda González-Berry and Marcela Mendoza provide evidence that although Oregon did not participate in the formal Bracero Program after 1947, Oregon did continue to bring *braceros* into the state in the 1950s. In 1952, more than one thousand *braceros* were brought to Umatilla and Jackson counties as well as to Hood River and Medford. And in 1958, *braceros* were brought to Medford to harvest pears (González-Berry and Mendoza 2010: 47). The continued use of Mexican workers in Oregon in the 1950s is an important part of how the early generation of Mexicanos settled in Oregon. González-Berry and Mendoza also suggest ways that Oregon women created bridges between Mexican workers and the communities they lived in (2010: 43–44).

Bracero workers were welcome as long as they were obedient and did not question the terms of their labor contracts. The treatment of Mexican *bracero* laborers between 1942 and 1947 provides us with a clue to future expectations for Mexican farmworkers in Oregon: they should be docile and content with what they were offered; if they tried to protest, they would be dismissed. At the end of the Bracero Program in Oregon in 1947, the labor camps were closed, and all contracted laborers were supposed to return to Mexico. Those that did not could be deported as “illegal aliens”—a practice that increased at the end of World War II and continues to this day.⁵

By the 1950s, a Mexican-American migratory and resident seasonal labor force was becoming more commonplace, particularly in the Willamette and Treasure valleys in Oregon. In general, the conditions for farmworkers were abysmal, and in 1950 the average income of farmworkers was reported as being between one and two thousand dollars per year. The Mexican government became increasingly concerned with the greater flow of Mexican workers north, both as *braceros* and undocumented workers. Mexican agribusinessmen,

⁴ “The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) had a name change in 2003 when the Department of Homeland Security was created. At that time the INS ceased to exist and most of its functions were transferred to three new offices. These are described on p. 55 in Appendix One. For the purposes of this text, we will use the term INS for events occurring until 2003. We will then use the appropriate office under the Department of Homeland Security after that date. In almost all cases this will be U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).”

⁵ While “illegal alien” is the technical, legal term used by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), many people consider this term inappropriate and offensive. More neutral terms such as “undocumented worker” are preferable.



Laborers ready for harvesting. Date ca. 1942-1947 [Description/Notes Mexican nationals loaded into a truck ready to begin a day's work at harvesting, Hood River. Extension Bulletin Illustrations Photograph Collection (P20:953), Oregon Multicultural Archives, Corvallis Oregon.]

particularly from the cotton industry, pressured the Mexican government to end unsanctioned migration to the United States (Lytle-Hernández 2010: 114-117). In 1943, the Mexican Embassy in Washington D.C. “warned the U.S. Department of State that if control was not established over the flow of illegal immigration into the United States, Mexico would ‘effect a complete revision of the [Bracero] program agreements’” (Lytle-Hernández 2010:117). The result was that by 1944, the chief supervisor of the border patrol, W. Kelly, began an “intensive drive on Mexican aliens” by deploying what were called “Special Mexican Deportation Parties” (Lytle-Hernández 2010:117). Kelley increased border patrol personnel and by November 1944, 42,928 Mexican nationals had been deported out of California (Lytle-Hernández 2010: 117). The numbers continued to increase and were formalized in the 1950s as “Operation Wetback.”⁶ Importantly, the contradictory policy of both inviting Mexicans in as legally contracted workers under the Bracero Program and deporting those who came to work without documentation as “ille-

gals” involved Mexican policy makers as well as those in the United States.

In Oregon, use of the label “illegal” for Mexican workers can be traced most recently to changes in the ways that contracted workers were categorized while working under the Bracero Program from 1943-1947 and then afterwards. There, *bracero* workers went from being written about as heroes when they arrived in the state in 1943 and 1944 in headlines such as “Wheat Saved by Mexicans,” “Mexican Harvesters Doing a Great Job in Fields and Orchards...” to being called “wetbacks” and “illegals” by the late 1940s and early 1950s in the same newspapers. The racialized discourse of illegality, criminality, and Mexicanness that solidified on the southern border in 1924 with the formation of the U.S. Border Patrol, became generalized throughout the United States in the 1940s and 1950s. The border patrol’s project of policing unsanctioned Mexican immigration clearly intensified, “resulting in 474,720 interrogations reported by the U.S. Border Patrol in 1940 to 9,389,551 in 1944” (Lytle-Hernández 2010:120). The total number of Mexicans deported and departing voluntarily to Mexico was 16,154 in 1943. By 1953, that number was 905,236 (Lytle-Hernández 2010: 122).

The 1950s were also marked by “Operation Wetback,” a program focused on preventing undocumented people from

⁶ While “Operation Wetback” was the official name of a border defense and deportation program, the name incorporates the racially and ethnically offensive term “wetback” to refer to undocumented Mexicans who crossed the Rio Grande river to enter the United States. This racial slur was generalized to refer to all undocumented Mexicans and was standard vocabulary in past government documents and in the press until well into the 1970s.

entering the United States and on rounding up and deporting undocumented people already here. While this was its tactical packaging, according to historian Lytle-Hernandez, “mass deportation, or at least the threat of mass deportation” was seen by border patrol commissioner Swing and others as a means for confronting the interrelated crises of control along the U.S. border and consent among influential growers who “refused to concede to a new era of migration control” (2010:169).

In Oregon and other states, the newspaper headlines from Operation Wetback helped to cement the racialization of people of Mexican origin as “illegals” in regional political narratives. A newspaper article in *The Oregonian* on May 15, 1953, ran with the headline, “Agents Sweep Rising Tide of Mexican Illegals South to Border.” The paper reported, “Most of Portland’s deportees are flown to Los Angeles. The immigration service flies them from there to Guadalajara, about 1,500 miles south of this border, just to discourage them from returning so quickly. Now the flood of wetbacks is so great they are being swept back just to the border” (Richards 1953). The culture of immigration raids and the right of INS agents to detain “foreign-looking” workers in any location became entrenched and continues to this day.

Operation Wetback set up an ongoing contradiction which still exists: while official U.S. immigration policy states that its purpose is to discourage and remove “illegal workers,” growers and ranchers continue to depend upon and desire their labor. This fundamental contradiction has left farmworkers in a very vulnerable position—particularly those who are undocumented. In combination with the discriminatory practices of U.S. labor law, farmworkers have continued to exist as a captive labor force—desired on the one hand by growers for their hard work and low wages, but vulnerable because of few or no labor protections and threats of detention and deportation by the INS, often for simply “looking illegal.”

INITIAL ORGANIZATIONAL EFFORTS TO SERVE FARMWORKERS IN OREGON: CHURCHES IN THE 1950s

During the 1950s, the farm labor force in Oregon continued to be composed of four groups: local laborers (especially students), migrant workers from California and Texas (almost all Chicanos), undocumented Mexican workers, and a small number of *bracero* workers (Kleinman n.d., see González-Berry and Mendoza 2010: 52-73). In most cases, members of these groups lived in badly deteriorated housing and endured dismal working conditions.

Religious organizations were some of the first to attempt to reach out to the farmworker population in the state of Oregon. The Portland Catholic Archdiocese established a Migrant Ministry in 1955 to serve the Mexican migrant population. The ministry provided mass, sacraments, and other services to the Catholic Mexican community. In 1955, the Oregon Council of Churches took on the problems of the growing number of migrant workers and formed its own Migrant Ministry Committee.

In 1956, the Oregon Council of Churches requested that the Oregon legislature investigate the “serious problems of the 40,000 migrants who come to Oregon each year” (*The Oregonian* 1956:3). At the time, Oregon was reported to be seventh in the United States in the numbers of migrants

needed each year to plant and harvest crops and work in canneries. In January 1958, the Oregon state labor commissioner established a migrant farm labor division, indicating a formal recognition by the state of the significance of the farmworker population. That same year, a legislative interim committee on migratory labor carried out an extensive study that examined recruitment, transportation, wages and earnings, housing, health, sanitation, education, and public welfare (Legislative Interim Committee on Migratory Labor 1958). Carried out by a team of 300 volunteer investigators working with the Bureau of Labor, the report revealed what *The Oregonian* called “shocking conditions” in some of the state’s migrant labor camps (Bianco 1958:9). The observations and testimony of those who worked on the report emphasized corruption and deceit on the part of labor contractors. The assistant commissioner of labor testified before the Interim Committee on Migratory Labor that contractors moved migrants from Texas to Oregon up to seven weeks before harvesting season began. Farmworkers arrived to find no work and were consequently forced to run up bills at grocery stores that were later deducted from any wages they made (Bianco 1958). Through the work of these various committees, churches were some of the first organizations to document working conditions and raise awareness of farmworker issues.

EARLY POLITICAL AND LABOR ORGANIZING FOR FARMWORKERS: 1960-1977

The conditions discussed in the 1958 report of the Interim Labor Committee finally put the living and working conditions for farmworkers on the political and cultural map in Oregon. In the mid-1960s, three other larger events came to strongly influence the Oregon farmworker community. The first was the creation of a range of health, education, and job training programs (developed by Congress at the request of President Lyndon B. Johnson), which came to be known as “The War on Poverty.” One of these programs was VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), a domestic version of the Peace Corps. The other significant events were the establishment of the National Farmworkers Association under the direction of César Chávez and Dolores Huerta in California, and a table grape strike in Delano, California.

In 1964, the Catholic church-based Migrant Ministry changed its name to Oregon Friends of Migrants and formed a coalition of clergy, legislators, farm-labor employers and Mexican-American residents, which became known as the Valley Migrant League (Gamboa 1995b:48). The organization applied for a federal grant to provide adult education, vocational training, day care, health services, and summer school for migrant workers and their families, and eventually received a \$680,000 grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity as well as eighty VISTA volunteers to carry out the programs. A critical problem of the coalition, however, was that it had no programs run by the farmworkers themselves; instead, it was dominated by service providers and farm-labor employers. In 1965, the board of directors was composed of growers, legislators, clergy, some migrants, and local citizens. Ironically, the assistant director was a labor contractor.

In 1970, Mexican farmworkers took control of the Valley Migrant League by amending the by-laws to raise board membership requirements from 51 to 100 percent migrant representation. After that date, labor contractors, crew lead-

ers, and growers had no say in the administration (Gamboa 1995b:49). Gonzalez-Berry and Mendoza provide information from an extensive interview with John Little, the director of the Valley Migrant League before Frank Martínez became the first Chicano director of the organization. Little's discussion provides insights into the changes that took place in the organization and the racialization of Mexican workers at the time by a majority Anglo board. Little reported that a social worker providing job training for Chicano and Mexican workers employed by the Valley Migrant League stated, "It's like these people are sick and we're the doctors. We're going to get them well" (González-Berry and Mendoza 2010:77).⁷ However, because the Valley Migrant League was federally funded, it was not allowed to assume a direct political role. Consequently, it was not able to serve as an advocate for unionization or the improvement of housing and working conditions. This work was left for others. However, the Valley Migrant League (later known as Oregon Rural Opportunities—ORO), played an important role in establishing farmworkers clinics, such as Salud de la Familia (Family Health) in Woodburn. Although ORO collapsed in 1979 when the federal government revoked its funding after audits uncovered many irregularities, the Salud clinic continued and the Oregon Human Development Corporation emerged to claim the job training and other government funded programs previously run by ORO (Kleinman n.d.).

In the mid-1970s, Mexicans began to work in greater numbers as treeplanters and thinners in the reforestation industry—work that was previously done primarily by Anglo workers. They worked through contractors and in the off-season looked for jobs in farmwork, nurseries, and canneries—often through the same contractor. The number of Mexican laborers in agriculture also continued to grow as the industry did. This growth in the population of laborers created the necessary conditions for the birth of the United Farm Workers (UFW) in California, and while the UFW was gaining momentum in that state organizing Filipino and Mexican workers, the United Farm Workers of Oregon emerged in 1968.

Unlike the UFW in California, however, the United Farm Workers of Oregon was not a formal union, although they did work to protest substandard conditions in farmworker housing, grower policies denying access to labor camps, and inadequate field sanitation. The membership cards stated, "The goal of the United Farm Workers of Oregon is to strive for better hours, wages, working conditions, and a better life for farm workers in Oregon." United Farm Workers of Oregon worked with other organizations to pressure the state government to investigate migrant housing conditions, even once taking a governor's aide on a housing tour. Their activities continued into the 1970s. By 1976 there was an office in Portland and support committees in various places throughout the state.

In 1970, the Chicano United Farm Workers of Oregon also emerged to struggle for farmworker rights. The initiatives of both this group and the United Farm Workers of Oregon did not fully develop, but helped to pressure other groups

such as the Valley Migrant League to support the boycott of California table grapes and lettuce promoted by the United Farm Workers. These farmworker organizations were political and also began to promote a model of worker-controlled organizations, as well as advocating for the goal of farmworkers' collective bargaining rights.

The influence of the UFW's work in California focusing on the right to collective bargaining also had repercussions in Oregon. Existing organizations supporting farmworkers became divided over whether or not to support the Delano table grape strike and to become more active in their approach to aiding farmworkers. In March 1966, a motion to support the Delano strikers divided the Migrant Ministry Committee of the Oregon Council of Churches. The committee finally approved a statement of support for "those farmworkers who are seeking for themselves the right to bargain collectively with large corporation farms, a right given to other American workers" (Kleinman n.d.). In June 1966, a split also emerged in the Valley Migrant League. The Washington county area director was forced to resign after she articulated beliefs that a more direct approach was necessary to improve conditions in farm labor, as opposed to what she saw as the more passive social welfare approach taken by the Valley Migrant League.

In 1971, the issue of collective bargaining rights for farmworkers exploded onto the public policy scene when the Oregon legislature debated and passed Senate Bill 677. Heavily promoted by the agribusiness lobby, the bill established collective bargaining procedures that strongly favored growers, such as limiting strikes and boycotts and forcing union organizers to register with the state. UFW successes in California—especially the groundbreaking contracts signed with grape growers in 1970—prompted growers in Idaho, Arizona, Kansas, and Oregon to propose and win passage of such legislation in an attempt to prevent or at least frustrate the spread of effective union organizing. In Oregon, however, the UFW mounted campaigns to defeat or overturn the bill. UFW President César Chávez, his brother Richard Chávez, and UFW co-founder Dolores Huerta all led rallies at the state capitol in Salem, denouncing SB 677 and threatening a national boycott of Oregon products if the bill became law. In July 1971, Oregon Governor Tom McCall, a Republican, vetoed SB 677 as unconstitutional, although he bristled at the boycott threat and stated in his veto message that it "very nearly persuaded me to sign the bill." In the 1973 session, the Oregon legislature passed a state collective bargaining bill with the main goal of covering public employees. Farmworkers were excluded from this bill.

⁷ Glen Anthony May's book, *Sonny Montes and Mexican American Activism in Oregon* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2011), provides additional detail about the Valley Migrant League, Colegio César Chávez, and other important parts of the Chicano movement in Oregon from 1965 until 1980.

Part 2

Immigrant Rights Organizing: Setting the Foundation for PCUN (1977–1984)

The establishment of a solid community base was an essential element in the creation, durability, and effectiveness of PCUN. The work towards forging that base was not focused solely on labor issues and conditions, but rather in an area of equal or sometimes greater and more immediate concern to the community: immigration. The Willamette Valley Immigration Project became the base-building vehicle of PCUN—and eventually the service arm of the organization—through its work leading resistance to INS raids, fighting individual deportation cases, and assisting immigrants with the legal immigration process.

COLEGIO CÉSAR CHÁVEZ AND THE CREATION OF THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY IMMIGRATION PROJECT (WVIP)

In 1973, a novel experiment in higher education began in Mt. Angel, Oregon, which brought together three leaders who became key in the struggle to establish PCUN. Colegio César Chávez was begun by a group of Chicano activists and educators who took over the failing Mt. Angel College and proceeded to develop the only independent, accredited, and degree-granting institution for Chicanos in the country. They used an approach called the “College without Walls,” which encouraged students to remain active in their communities and to realize both that they learn valuable lessons from their community experiences that can be brought to the classroom, as well as the fact that theory learned in the classroom can work towards solving community problems.

Colegio César Chávez operated a GED (high school equivalency) program, an Adult Basic Education Program, a childcare center, and a migrant summer school. In 1975 it was granted candidacy status from the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges. In 1977, Colegio granted degrees to twenty-two graduates, a number exceeding the combined number of Chicanos who graduated that same year from University of Oregon and Oregon State University (Gamboa 1995b:58). The language requirements for graduation were unique, including knowledge of the English language, knowledge of the Spanish language, and “a working knowledge of Pocho Spanish in oral and written form,” according to a recruitment brochure.⁸ The school averaged from 50–100 students per academic quarter. Its alumnae include Ramón Ramírez, Cipriano Ferrel, and Juan Mendoza, all founders of PCUN.⁹ One of the primary movers of the Colegio was a former migrant worker from south Texas named Sonny Montes who was a key figure in leading sit-ins, protest marches, rallies, and prayer vigils in support of the Colegio (see May 2011). In 1983, after a long struggle to pay an inherited debt to the Department of Urban Housing and Development and what alumnae Ramírez describes as “right-wing opposition,” the Colegio was shut down. Its former students, however, continued the spirit of the institution in their work.

The college was a community-based school with loose ties to Chicano and migrant organizations. Out of these ties grew the first meeting between farmworkers and students at the Colegio. A second meeting was torpedoed by locals who discouraged farmworkers from attending the meetings—indicative of the hostile climate to farmworker organizing that existed in the area



Demonstration to support Colegio César Chávez in SE Portland, 1975 (photo credit: unknown).

at the time. This experience informed the strategy that PCUN founders later used to build confidence in the community. Former student and current (2011) PCUN president Ramón Ramírez recalls:¹⁰

We organized our first meeting of farmworkers at the Colegio César Chávez...because we were students [at the Colegio and] a lot of those students were farmworkers. We pulled together a meeting with about thirty farmworkers. And, it was really good and people started talking about...the conditions, about the need to organize.... We left that meeting, you know, thinking... that we were getting the confidence of some of the workers. But

⁸ “Pocho Spanish” refers to a hybrid language drawing on Spanish and English developed among the Chicano population, referred to by some as “Spanglish.” It is derived from the term “Chuco,” which refers to a barrio or neighborhood language from Los Angeles that was a mixture of Spanish, English, old Spanish, and words adapted by the border Mexicans. The language may have originated around El Paso, Texas, among Chicanos who brought it to Los Angeles in the 1930s (Acuña 1998: 310).

⁹ Ferrel died suddenly in 1995.

¹⁰ Ramón Ramírez co-founded PCUN in 1985 and has been PCUN president since 1995. He has received numerous recognitions, including the Jeanette Rankin Award for lifetime activism from the Social Justice Fund Northwest in 2008, a Leadership for a Change World award from the Ford Foundation in 2003, and a Charles F. Bannerman Fellowship in 2000. Ramón co-founded CAUSA, Oregon’s immigrants rights coalition, in 1996 and has served as one of its principal leaders. Ramón has served as board president of Farmworker Housing Development Corporation since 1995 and he is a former board president of the Western States Center. He serves on the board of Farmworker Justice, the Center for Social Inclusion, the Northwest Federation of Community Organizations, and the UFW Foundation. Ramón was founding board president of the Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform, at the center of the immigration reform debate. Ramón joined the Willamette Valley Immigration Project in late 1977 and is one of its accredited representative certified to practice immigration law at the administrative level. A native of East Los Angeles, Ramón has lived in the northwest for thirty-five years. He attended St. Martins College, University of Washington, and Colegio César Chávez.

then at the next meeting nobody showed up. What we found out was that some people had actually discouraged the workers from coming back to meet with us. Because they said that these meetings were going to lead to a union and that we were going to have strikes and that people were going to get fired.

Clearly, moving directly into the unionization of farmworkers was a difficult proposition. After that meeting, organizers took a step back and decided to focus on an even more pressing problem: immigrant rights. During the late 1960s and the early 1970s, there was a marked increase in INS activity targeting farmworkers. In September 1969, INS agents arrested eighty-six farmworkers in separate raids in the Hood River and Medford areas. That year between June and October alone, arrests totaled 242 people. By 1973, INS deportations from Oregon were averaging about 1,000 per year (Kleinman n.d.). A significant number of the arrests were of reforestation workers. In October 1976, there were immigration raids at the Castle and Cook Mushroom Plant in Salem, Oregon, and in the city of Woodburn, Oregon, which resulted in the deportation of eighty Mexican workers. At this time, Cipriano Ferrel, Ramón Ramírez, Larry Kleinman, Juan Mendoza, and others began talking together about organizing an immigration project.¹¹

While focusing on the long-term goal of collective bargaining rights for farmworkers, these four later PCUN founders realized that their first step towards this goal was to build credibility in the local community. Ferrel came out of an organizing experience with the UFW in California, Kleinman had worked for two years in legal offices serving low-income clients in Washington, Ramírez was a Chicano movement activist in Los Angeles as well as at the University of Washington in Seattle, and Mendoza came to the Colegio César Chávez from San Jose, California. Together they decided that it made the most sense to found an immigration project focused on the harassment that the Mexican population faced from the Immigration and Naturalization Service, often with the collaboration and support of the local police.

Local legal services lawyers and legal workers and members of the Portland chapter of the National Lawyers Guild played key roles in the project's formation. Marion-Polk County Legal Services attorney Rocky Barilla, at the time one of the state's few Latino lawyers, hosted Colegio students (including Ferrel) as legal interns at the Salem office.

The vision of a farmworker union also remained strong, particularly for Cipriano Ferrel. Larry Kleinman recalls their initial strategizing:

¹¹ Larry Kleinman co-founded the Willamette Valley Immigration Project in 1977 and was co-founding member of *Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste* (PCUN) in 1985. Larry has served as PCUN secretary-treasurer since 1988. Since 1977, he has been an accredited representative of *Centro de Servicios para Campesinos*, authorized to provide legal representation before the Immigration Court, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the Customs and Immigration Service. The National Lawyers Guild National Immigration Project selected Larry as its 2005 Carol Weiss King Award recipient, honoring his many years of defending immigrants and their interests. Larry has served as board treasurer of Farmworker Housing Development Corporation since 1999. From 1999 to 2002, Larry served on the board of Social Justice Fund Northwest (then known as "A Territory Resource Foundation"), was board chair from August 2000 to May 2002, and served again from 2007 to 2010. He is board treasurer of the Sheridan Foundation and is the founding board chair of the Northwest Worker Justice Project in Portland. In August, 2011, he was selected as the inaugural board president for the CAPACES Leadership Institute. Originally from the Chicago area, Larry received a B.A. from Oberlin College in 1975.

.... it was clear from the lessons learned in the UFW and in the Latino community in general, the immigrant community, that anything you were going to do, any kind of labor organizing or other kind of organizing that you were going to do in an immigrant community has to build a broad base and be relevant to the whole, to the community at large.... If we...just concentrated on certain farms with certain workers, those efforts, however valiant and courageous, would ultimately be eroded and would not survive. We had to build broad, a broad base and therefore had to do things that weren't union organized per se.... We were building a broad base around issues of greatest concern in the community. And immigration and immigration raids were the issues.

In May 1977, the Willamette Valley Immigration Project (WVIP) opened its doors in Portland, Oregon, to provide confidential legal advice and representation for undocumented workers with immigration problems. By the end of 1977, the WVIP had seven bilingual staff members and a summer office at the Colegio. The WVIP served as the foundation for the later creation of PCUN in 1985.



Cauliflower worker, Gervais, Oregon, 1978.

During the Willamette Valley Immigration Project's first two years, it was supported in part through funds from the Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA), a program established by the Carter administration to deal with issues of unemployment and recession. In Oregon, CETA supported many community organizations. The WVIP also received support from the National Lawyers Guild, including sponsorship for summer internships in 1977, 1978, and 1979. After 1979, the CETA funding dried up and the four founders (Cipriano Ferrel, Ramón Ramírez, Juan Mendoza, and Larry Kleinman) funded their WVIP work through a variety of means, including Spanish interpreting for the courts, working as a high school guidance counselor, and a multitude of part-time positions. With the later formation of PCUN in 1985, the staff finally received funding to pay salaries for the first time.

During its first year of work, the WVIP challenged the coerced confession technique used during detentions by the INS. Workers arrested at a camp near Troutdale by the INS and released from jail through WVIP intervention were allowed to stay in the country indefinitely, pending appeals of their cases. In 1978 the Willamette Valley Immigration Project moved their permanent office to Woodburn where they continued to work with documented and undocumented workers. A significant

step was taken in 1980 when the WVIP purchased its own building and moved to its Young Street site in Woodburn. A special Cinco de Mayo (Fifth of May)–Primero de Mayo (International Workers’ Day) celebration that year marked the move and the inauguration of the building.¹² The Project—and later PCUN—continued the annual celebration of these two historic dates until 1992. The WVIP also sponsored other cultural and political events, including bringing Teatro Primavera from Los Angeles to perform at the annual Fiesta Mexicana in Woodburn. In 1981, the Project hosted a community meeting with Baldemar Velásquez, leader of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), which was based in the Midwest.

WVIP staff members established credibility with local farmworkers through their ongoing pressure on police and the INS to respect workers’ legal rights. In October 1978, the organization made front page news when more than 100 workers were arrested in five days around Woodburn at the height of the cauliflower harvest. Larry Kleinman recalls this and another important local victory that helped to build credibility:

.... This [the raids] even included one couple who went to the local daycare center to pick up their infant.... We were able to talk the INS out of actually deporting those people because they had this U.S. citizen child.... The reason the INS backed out is because the press showed up...and the reason the press showed up is because we got them there.... That raid was so intense that Governor Straub ended up calling the INS to tell them to back off and they either were done or they backed off. I don’t know which way it was. I think they were probably done anyway. But this [the advocacy of the WVIP] got noticed by everybody.... It got noticed in the community and got noticed in the media.

WORKING WITH REFORESTATION WORKERS

In the early 1980s, staff from the WVIP concentrated their efforts on working with reforestation workers. Between March 1981 and April 1982, they interviewed 100 reforestation workers and documented their difficult labor conditions. At the time of the survey, the reforestation workforce was about 80 percent Mexican. The survey revealed that 44 percent of workers spoke no English, that more than half worked a six-day week, that 61 percent reported that their wages did not rise with experience, that 22 percent were paid with no accounting of deductions, and that 23 percent indicated that their contractor had on some occasion threatened to call the Immigration and Naturalization Service and seek deportation of workers. Only 29 percent of those injured (among those who were interviewed) had ever filed a claim for compensation and 69 percent reported that their contractors did not have workers compensation insurance.

The goal of working with reforestation workers was to begin building a union. It took almost five years to launch the union because the staff of WVIP could not devote themselves to the task full time (as they held a variety of other jobs) and because the workers were the victims of a strong backlash by what PCUN staff have called “ex-hippie white reforestation workers” who were disgruntled with what they perceived as their displacement by Mexican farmworkers. At the time there were two categories of workers in the reforestation industry: Mexicans, employed primarily through Tejano (Mexican-Americans from Texas) and some Russian contractors, and white workers,

primarily organized into cooperatives—such as one based in Eugene called the Hoedads, which had a membership of approximately 600 workers. During the off-season, the Mexican treeplanters often worked for the same contractors in nurseries, farms, and canneries. Many of them resided in the Willamette Valley. They had originally come from places like Michoacán, Jalisco, and Guanajuato—all regions located in central Mexico.

Many workers were originally recruited by farm contractors who later went into reforestation. In the mid-1970s and increasingly in the late 1970s, contractors working with Mexican farmworkers began to bid on government contracts for treeplanting. Because they paid the Mexican laborers lower wages, they could intentionally underbid other contractors—specifically those with Anglo crews. According to Larry Kleinman, some of the bids dropped by as much as 50 percent in this process. Co-ops and other groups such as the Association of Reforestation Contractors were alarmed at this trend. Originally, WVIP organizers approached groups like the Hoedads and proposed a collaborative strategy to undercut the low bidding. PCUN president Ramón Ramírez recalls that this process had a very bad outcome for Mexican reforestation workers:

So once the Russian contractors and the Tejano contractors started seeing that there was a lot of money to be made out there, they started underbidding the co-ops...by a lot of money. These unscrupulous contractors were hiring undocumented workers and they were violating not only minimum wage laws, but all kinds of labor laws, and so what the co-ops started doing was to organize a counter-offensive to that. So they contact us to see



“Know Your Rights” poster, which reads: “With or without documents, you have rights.” Silkscreened by WVIP staff, 1977.

¹² Cinco de Mayo is marked in Mexico to celebrate the 1862 battle at Puebla, Mexico, where a handful of Mexican militiamen fought off the conquering French troops who had invaded Mexico.

how we could help them. And all we said was, “Why don’t you get Mexican workers into your crews?” Well, they didn’t want to do that. They wanted a real easy solution, right? And for them the easy solution was to call the INS. And so that’s what they started doing.

Other PCUN founders recall that there were some progressive elements within the Hoedad cooperative who tried to convince their peers that working towards unionization and solidarity with the Mexican treeplanters was a better solution than pitting one group against the other. Unfortunately, their efforts were unsuccessful.

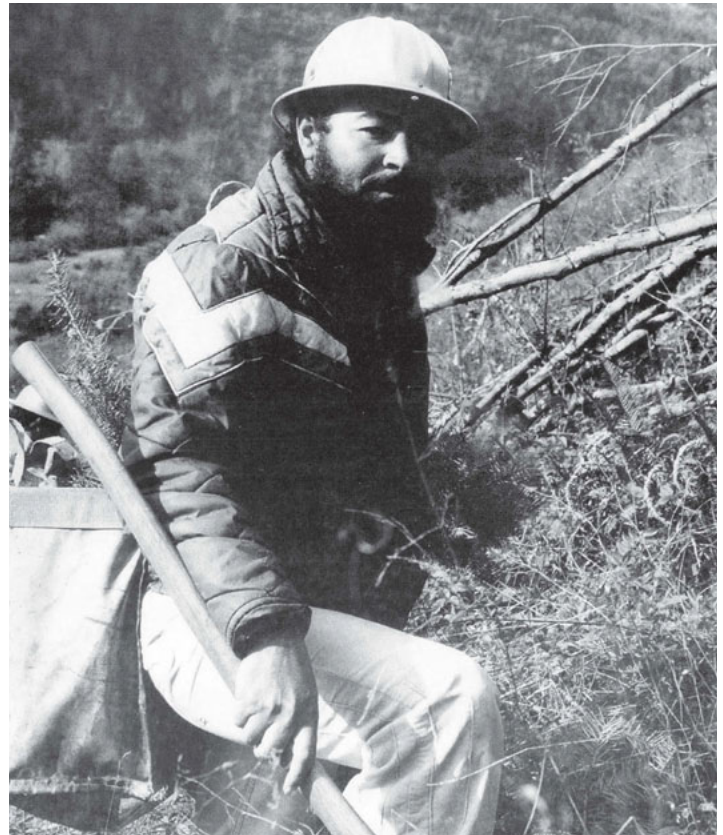
By 1982, the INS increased arrests of treeplanters in Oregon and Washington. The raids had become a focal point for inter-agency cooperation between the U.S. Forest Service Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Department of Labor, the INS, and the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries. The Northwest Forest Workers Association (NFWFA)—a coordinating body of cooperatives—also collaborated with agency efforts targeting migrant farmworkers. In May 1982, the INS arrested 350 workers in raids in Washington and Marion counties, including at roadblocks on Highway 99E near Hubbard. One hundred and twenty workers were arrested in Woodburn in eight days. In addition, INS agents raided labor camps and checked cars for undocumented people on highways. The INS even took children into custody during these raids, arresting a seventy-year-old grandmother and six of her grandchildren between the ages of two and ten as they swept through the Canby-Woodburn area (McKenzie 1982). The Willamette Valley Immigration Project obtained the release of eight of the workers, six without bail. As many as 256 people arrested were immediately bused to Tijuana, many without pay. WVIP staff and other groups protested the treatment of those arrested in a demonstration in front of the INS building in Portland.

Despite defeat of an Oregon senate bill which sought to bring employer sanctions against those who hired undocumented laborers, the INS continued its campaigns of raids in 1983 and 1984. During this period, staff from the WVIP had successfully formed an organizing committee for a future union among the treeplanters. But as Larry Kleinman recalls, “Almost all of our organizing committee was arrested and deported overnight.... So we almost had to start over and [the raids] created a tremendous chill, a real chilling effect about standing up for those kind of rights.”

OPPOSING EFFORTS TO REINVENT THE BRACERO PROGRAM IN THE 1980s

In addition to its work with reforestation workers, WVIP staff members also worked at the national level to try to improve the legal and political climate for Mexican workers. Throughout the early and mid-1980s, the U.S. Congress discussed various proposals regarding the relationship between the large number of undocumented workers in the United States and the dependence of U.S. growers on Mexican labor. The proposed solutions ranged from a total amnesty for all undocumented workers to reinvention of the problematic Bracero Program begun during World War II. Advocates for workers were actively networking at the national level to prevent any legislation that would make the farmworkers’ situation even worse. WVIP staff were an active part of this process.

The piece of legislation proposed to solve the “undocumented problem” was the Simpson-Mazzoli Immigration Reform and Control Act debated in Congress in 1982 and 1983 and subsequently again in 1984 and 1985. The bill was modified through



Oregon treeplanter, 1985.

out these four years of debate. Staff from the WVIP were active in the fight to defeat the Simpson-Mazzoli legislation.¹³ A major point of protest was the inclusion of employer sanctions to make employers liable for hiring undocumented workers (ultimately included in the 1986 legislation signed into law). Many felt that such sanctions would result in open discrimination against people who “appeared” Latino, whether or not they were undocumented. The bill also offered only limited amnesty to undocumented workers. In contrast, the WVIP pushed for a general amnesty for all undocumented workers. In addition, the original proposal also called for creating an experimental guestworker program that would bring in 50,000 Mexicans as contract laborers each year, similar to the Bracero Program from World War II. Opponents were against this provision because they wanted to avoid repetition of the injustices and dismal working conditions suffered by *braceros* under the earlier program, particularly in the mid-to-late 1950s when the protections that were supposed to be offered to *braceros* existed in name only with no enforcement. The project’s political position against the Simpson-Mazzoli proposals was shared by many Latino groups across the nation who vowed to “Stop Reagan’s Bracero Program” (as the proposed legislation was called). Ramón Ramírez was active in national campaigns against the Reagan immigration law. Ultimately, a revised version of the Simpson-Mazzoli bill was signed into law by Ronald Reagan in 1986 as the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). It did not include a new guestworker program, but did contain the provision regarding employer sanctions.¹⁴

¹³ During this same time period (1982-1983), WVIP staff also joined in the struggle to defeat an Oregon bill aimed at eliminating undocumented workers from the reforestation industry.

¹⁴ The content of the 1986 IRCA is further discussed in the following section.

Part 3

Establishing a Union and Broadening Its Base (1985–1988)



A farmworker picks cherries for the Farmworker Brigade, a fundraiser for PCUN, 1986.



César Chávez (third from right) with PCUN board in December 1985. Cipriano Ferrel (second from left), was PCUN's lead organizer at that time.

The first few years of life in PCUN focused primarily on the two major areas of devising and implementing internal structures, and increasing membership. PCUN's founders developed bylaws and a dues and services system, created the board of directors and committees, initiated membership meetings, and completed nonprofit incorporation and other official actions. Within weeks after PCUN members approved the dues system at PCUN's second convention, Congress passed legalization programs that would benefit thousands of undocumented immigrants in Oregon and millions on a national level. The dues system was particularly significant because it included a "services for members only" policy, causing PCUN's membership to swell from 200 in November 1986 to over 2,000 eighteen months later. It also changed the composition of membership from mostly reforestation workers to overwhelmingly farmworkers. By 1988, this change would profoundly influence PCUN's organizing priorities and strategies.

THE FOUNDING OF PCUN IN 1985

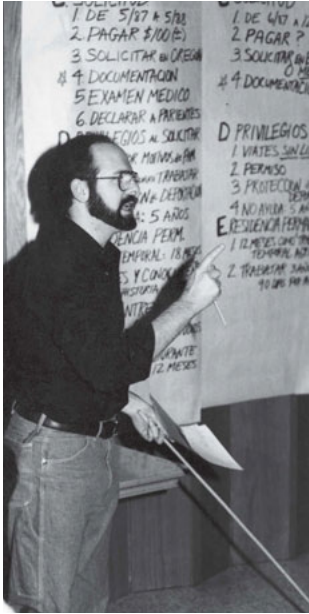
The eight-year track record of the Willamette Valley Immigration Project was key to building trust in the farmworker and treeplanter communities so that an open discussion of a farmworker union could begin. Moving from this foundation, an intense series of logistical and strategy discussions began among the staff of the WVIP, reforestation workers, and farmworkers during 1984 and early 1985. Larry Kleinman recalls:

We had serious logistical and strategy meetings with a group of twenty-five workers all together, including different committees. We decided to hold a meeting in Salem at the end of April in 1985 where we had about eighty to eighty-five people. Basically the question we were asking was, "Do we need to have an organization of reforestation and farmworkers, yes or no? And are you and yours committed to do this?" So we chose an interim leadership of four people and then we started working with them to have a founding convention in September of 1985.

The result of the meeting in April 1985 was the formation of *Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste*. The initial goal of PCUN was to unite and organize to change working conditions for treeplanters and farmworkers. The staff from the WVIP became the PCUN staff. The WVIP also continued their important immigration work through PCUN and changed their name to become the service arm of PCUN, now known as the *Centro de Servicios para Campesinos* (Service Center for Farmworkers). The board of directors was elected from among the members and included a president, two vice-presidents, a secretary-treasurer, and five general board members. There were several functioning committees including communication, services and membership, and organizing.

Finally, after five months of successful preparation and meetings about organizational structure, membership, and benefits, PCUN was ready to call its first annual convention. The first PCUN president, Agustín Valle, sent out a letter of invitation to many people for the convention, which took place on September 15, 1985. He reminded those invited, "This day has great significance for us Mexicans. 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 rights as workers."

In December 1985, César Chávez visited Woodburn at the invitation of PCUN. He told PCUN members that economic pressure is the only message to which growers listen. Consequently, he said that farmworkers must "strike and boycott and create a lot of economic pressure on growers" (McManus 1985:1). He also urged support for the reinstated grape boycott. "Farmers treat farmworkers like farm implements, rather than human beings," said Chávez. "If farmworkers don't get organized, farmworkers are going to continue to have the farmer's foot on our necks and we'll be fighting the same battle 100 years from now" (Castaneda 1985:1).



Left: Larry Kleinman speaks at the immigration forum, Woodburn, Oregon, November 7, 1986. Right: One of the first groups—accompanied by staff from the Centro de Servicios Para Campesinos (CSC)—to apply successfully for legalization, at the Portland, Oregon, INS office, July 1987.

The second annual convention of PCUN was held in September 1986 and had Dolores Huerta as the keynote speaker. Telegrams and letters of support for PCUN came in from far and near. Baldemar Velásquez, the President of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) wrote, as did other supporters. The membership of PCUN approved a system of dues established at nine dollars per quarter and included an insurance policy which paid \$3,000 in case of the death of a member.¹⁵ Another key service offered to members was representation in immigration affairs.

THE 1986 IMMIGRATION REFORM AND CONTROL ACT: HELPING FARMWORKERS APPLY FOR AMNESTY

In November 1986, President Reagan signed the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), which allowed those who had been living undocumented in the United States since January 1, 1982, to apply for amnesty and legal temporary residency, and then permanent residency. In addition, any person who worked in agriculture for ninety days between the period of May 1, 1985, through May 1, 1986, could receive temporary residence and later permanent resident status through the Special Agricultural Workers program (SAW). Because a major part of what PCUN and WVIP had been offering to farmworkers and treeplanters was legal representation in immigration affairs, the new law brought a tremendous demand for their services, particularly from those qualifying for amnesty under the agricultural provisions of SAW.

Within days of IRCA's enactment, PCUN held a number of large forums attended by more than 800 people in Woodburn, Salem, and Independence. Larry Kleinman discussed the intense work PCUN began to go through in response to IRCA and the possibilities for undocumented workers to receive amnesty and permanent residence:

Everyone was sent to us because we are the primary organization [in 1986]. We had eight years now in the community, and

legalization hits. IRCA was signed November 6th, and we did back-to-back forums on the 7th, 8th, and 9th of November.... People were hungry for amnesty. The fear was there, even more so than today in some ways, because the fear of immigration raids had just become endemic. So the idea that there would be some kind of relief from that terror really brought people out.

The first meetings focused on informing people about the different ways that undocumented people could apply for U.S. residency under the 1986 law. PCUN staff also warned people about potential discrimination against Latino workers because of the employer sanctions included in the IRCA legislation. The legislation required that employers check the residence and identity of every new employee to make sure that they had legal permission to work. As of the 1986 legislation, employers who knowingly hire, recruit, or refer for a fee undocumented workers can face fines of up to \$10,000 and criminal penalties of up to six months in jail.¹⁶ Latino workers feared additional discrimination from employers who might think that all people of Latino descent “looked undocumented” and would therefore be reluctant to hire them. Ramón Ramírez passionately remembered the concern regarding discrimination:

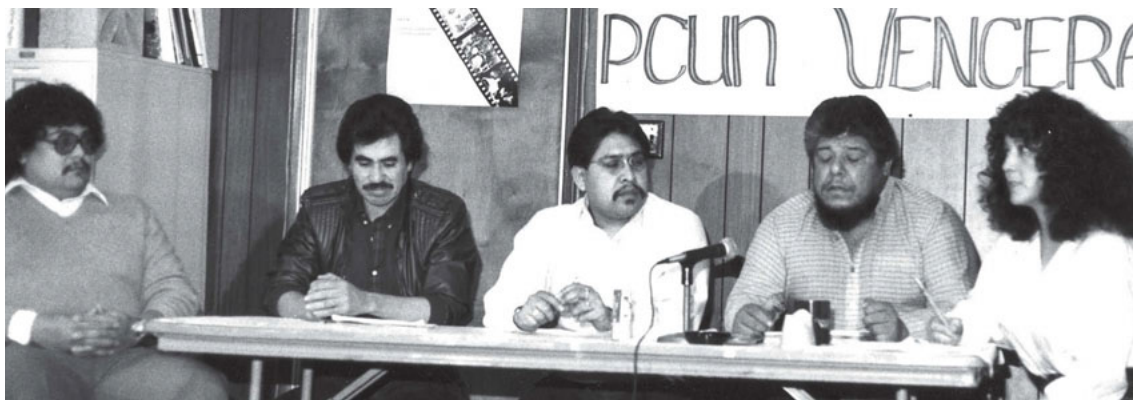
What we really were talking about was the sanctions [against employers]. These would create wholesale discrimination. There is a double standard in this country in terms of Latinos and people of color applying for jobs and white people—everyone knows it. Even the Government Accounting Office in a study said, “Yeah, we are seeing discrimination, discriminatory practices.”

¹⁵ Today (2011), dues are thirty-six dollars per quarter, twenty-one dollars per quarter for members who are retired or permanently disabled.

¹⁶ Ironically, the employer sanction provision of the IRCA legislation was very weakly enforced until the George Bush administration, which revived workplace raids and instituted I-9 audits on a massive scale, including in agriculture. INS officials had often argued that they spent most of their enforcement budget going after “big criminals” like drug smugglers and did not have the resources to enforce employer sanctions. The alternative view is that it is widely understood that growers are dependent on undocumented labor and that enforcing the employer sanctions is a politically unpopular action to take and one that could have affected the budget of the INS in Washington, because the agricultural lobby would be upset by any real enforcement of these sanctions.

Ramón Ramírez (left), Javier Ceja, Cipriano Ferrel, Agustín Valle, and Angela Morales announcing the incorporation of PCUN at PCUN's office in Woodburn, January 1987.

Below: PCUN poster, 1986



In many meetings, leader Cipriano Ferrel pointed out that while some undocumented workers would not qualify for amnesty because they arrived in the United States after 1981, many workers would qualify, but might have difficulty collecting the required documents and evidence. Ramón Ramírez pointed out the contradiction of asking people who were undocumented to suddenly document their existence: "All this time, people have been living underground, and now they have to produce these documents" (Guerrero 1986:C1).

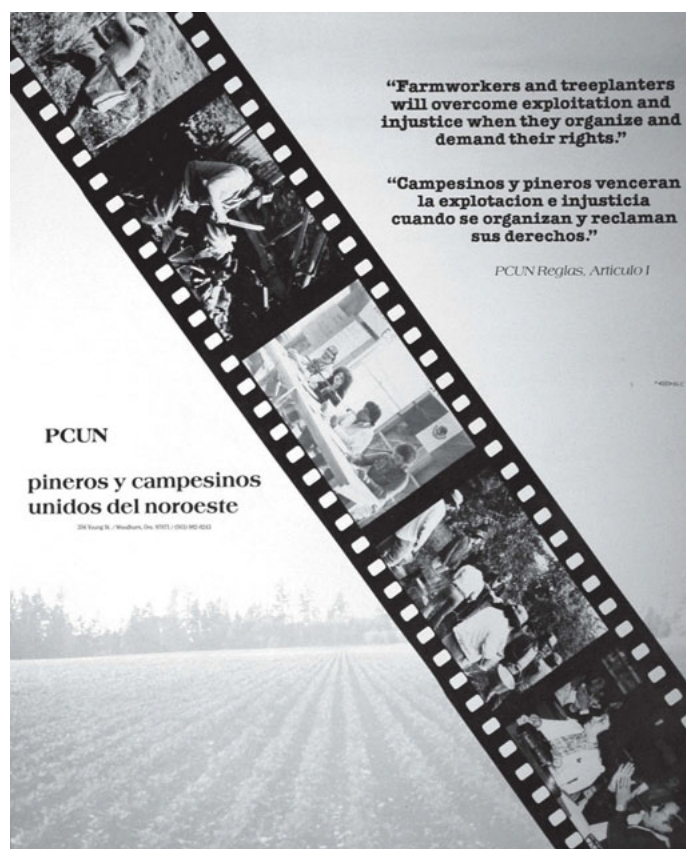
During 1987, PCUN and the Centro de Servicios Para Campesinos (CSC—Service Center for Farmworkers) staff devoted most of their time to working with those seeking amnesty through the IRCA and SAW programs. By the summer of 1987, PCUN and the CSC had a combined staff of ten. With this small staff, they managed to process 1,300 legalization cases from June 1987 to June 1988, representing at that point more than 10 percent of the total cases in the state. Their work in this area also significantly increased their membership: in the period from October 1986 to June 1988, PCUN signed up nearly 2,000 new members.

By their third annual convention in 1987, PCUN had shifted their organizing efforts from working primarily with reforestation workers to farm and nursery workers. The organization also registered with the state of Oregon as a nonprofit organization, and in 1988 with the U.S. Department of Labor as a labor organization. At the third convention, Cipriano Ferrel was elected president. The year 1987 also included an effort to expand the Worker-Right-to-Know Act of 1985, which required informing employers and employees of the dangers of hazardous chemicals found in the workplace. (The 1985 law excluded farmworkers.) PCUN and other organizations gave testimony in public hearings about farmworkers exposed to pesticides, and this issue became the centerpiece of a special PCUN project beginning in 1988.

PROJECT TO STOP PESTICIDE POISONING

Oregon's agricultural industry is dependent upon pesticides: "In 1987, the last year an industry-wide pesticide use survey was conducted, Oregon growers used an estimated 16 million pounds of pesticides" (PCUN website). Farmworkers are often required to tolerate unsafe working conditions, which may include a lack of safety equipment for administering pesticides, repeated exposure to pesticides while working, and no information about what kind of pesticides are used in the fields. Farmworker children who live on or near farms where pesticides are used are subject to pesticide drift in their yards, sandboxes, swing sets, wading pools, and other play areas. They, as well as their parents who work in the fields, face short-term acute effects of pesticide poisoning including skin rashes, systematic poisoning, and even death. Long-term chronic effects include cancer, brain and nervous system damage, birth defects, and infertility (PCUN website).

In 1988, PCUN started the Project to Stop Pesticide Poisoning in an attempt to quantify the amount, type, and effects of chemicals used on selected farms, to document pesticide exposures, and to educate farmworkers to report pesticide use and exposure to PCUN. The project has worked to enact effective "right to know" legislation, which would require a mandatory national pesticide use reporting system for all users that would include all active and inert ingredients in all products. The project has video-documented the unsafe use of pesticides on Oregon farms, has assembled a medical and legal team to pursue possible exposure cases, and has organized training sessions with nationally renowned pesticide expert Dr. Marion Moses, who directs the national Pesticide Education Center in San Francisco. PCUN has joined national farmworker and environmental organizations in judicial and administrative litigation to ban, discontinue or modify uses of a dozen chemicals widely considered most dangerous to farmworkers.



Part 4

The Struggle to Achieve Collective Bargaining Becomes Central (1988–1991)

On August 22, 1988, more than 300 farmworkers marched three miles on a hot Sunday afternoon through the streets of Woodburn. Another 300 joined them at a rally at a downtown parking lot in the heart of the Latino business district. Plummeting wages and scarce work had left workers angry and desperate, and the march and rally reflected years of pent-up frustration about low pay and unjust working conditions. Furthermore, it set in motion a crusade to change the agricultural labor system—a struggle that continues, ever stronger, to this day. Within three years of that Sunday, the campaigns for collective bargaining rights would reach the Oregon legislature, the media, the federal court, and the picket lines at the first union-organized strike in the history of Oregon farm labor.



Strawberry worker, late 1980s.

PCUN MOVES OUT OF AMNESTY WORK AND FOCUSES ON RAISING WAGES FOR FARMWORKERS

While amnesty work had been a focal point during 1987, 1988 brought a major focus on the economic conditions and poverty of farmworkers. It was a very bad year. Wages dropped an average of 30 to 50 percent, and the amount of work available to the average farmworker also dropped by more than 50 percent. The Woodburn area was flooded with people looking for work that did not exist, many of whom arrived weeks early and slept wherever they could find space. In one instance, up to fifty-five migrants were packed into a barn.

In mid-1988, PCUN announced that it would suspend its legal work helping those who applied for temporary residency under the SAW and amnesty programs. This decision was made after contractors and growers lured workers to Oregon with the false promise of a letter that would allow them to receive temporary residency. PCUN organizers no longer felt they could be associated with the legalization program when it was being used to exploit workers with false promises, false documents, and false hopes. In addition, PCUN staff believed there was clear evidence to indicate that some growers were luring an over-supply of workers to the Willamette Valley that summer in order to lower wages. While not all growers were guilty of this practice, all benefited. Larry Kleinman remembers, “In June of

1988 we pulled out of legalization. We were not doing any more of that because the growers had completely manipulated that to increase the labor supply...so it was a huge surplus of labor that year and strawberry prices went down to seven cents a pound. People were working an hour a day. There were a hundred workers on a one-acre field.”

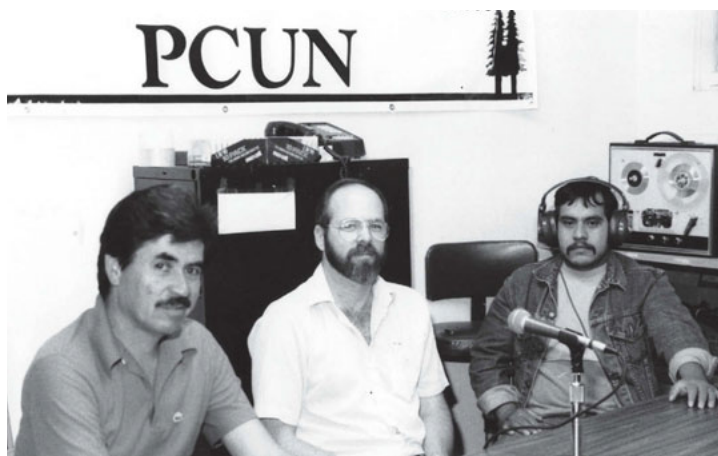
In August 1988, PCUN organized a major march of hundreds of workers through Woodburn demanding justice for farmworkers. In mid-May, presidential candidate Jesse Jackson visited Woodburn at the request of the PCUN leadership. Jackson publicly pledged his support for the right of farmworkers to unionize and have their unions recognized by growers. These public events built on the miserable conditions farmworkers faced that year. In September 1988, PCUN moved into the church building it still occupies today at 300 Young Street in Woodburn.

The unemployment and poverty that workers were dealing with also drove PCUN members forward with their plans to focus on collective bargaining and raising wages. In June 1989, the Oregon legislature passed a bill to increase Oregon’s minimum wage in three stages to \$4.75 per hour by summer 1991, resulting in pay raises for some migrant workers. However, the bill did not alter existing provisions that excluded farmworkers in planting or harvest paid by piece rate who commuted to the fields and who had worked less than thirteen weeks in farm labor during the previous year. The result left in place a confusing set of conditions with clear discrimination against those who did seasonal work, such as pruning Christmas trees and other plants.

In order to document that wages for farmworkers were below the minimum, PCUN organizers surveyed farmworkers during the summer harvest season of 1989. Ramón Ramírez talked about why they began the survey: “In 1989, we were noticing that there...was a big problem in terms of growers paying the minimum wage. Growers were paying by piece rate, so they were paying the workers what they would pick, but [would] never make up the difference if they were underpaid [by not making the minimum wage based on what they picked per hour]. We found a lot of underpayment.” Their report, released in December 1989, found that workers received an average of \$4.03 per hour for nursery work and \$3.50 per hour for field-work. However, they also found that fully 95 percent of the workers surveyed were paid less than the minimum wage of \$3.35 per hour on at least one occasion. They found that almost all berry and cucumber workers were shortchanged. Fifty percent of berry and cucumber harvesters did not receive the minimum of \$3.35 per hour on their average workday. Over the summer, wages lost possibly totaled more than two million dollars because minimum wage laws were not enforced.

THE LEGAL STRUGGLE FOR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING RIGHTS AND THE RIGHT TO PICKET

During that same year, PCUN worked hard with others to promote a legislative bill that would extend collective bargaining rights to farmworkers. This would have allowed workers similar



Javier Ceja, Larry Kleinman, and Rodolfo Matadamas during the taping of *La Hora Campesina* at the makeshift studio in PCUN headquarters, 1991.

protections as those provided by the 1975 Agricultural Labor Relations Act of California. The proposed bill called for union elections within seven days of filing to be a bargaining agent with the Employment Relations Board (an existing state agency), for elections to be held only when at least 50 percent of the employer's peak workforce was on the job, for bilingual ballots to be supplied to union members, and for prompt post-election hearings to be held to resolve any challenges to the election or the legitimacy of the union. The effort to pass the bill was focused on demonstrating both the second-class status of farmworkers as workers in the state, as well as their need for unionization. The bill gained the sponsorship of 25 percent of the legislators and of both majority leaders. The campaign brought PCUN new visibility and credibility, especially with other unions.

In the process of organizing to pass this bill, PCUN organizers discovered a 1963 law barring people who are not "regular" employees from picketing while planting or harvesting is in progress. When the collective bargaining bill proponents fell one vote short of the sixteen vote majority needed for favorable action by the full senate slate, PCUN took up another strategy. On September 1, 1989, they filed a suit against Oregon governor Neil Goldschmidt. Thirteen plaintiffs led by PCUN argued that a state law that forbid picketing by any but "regular employees" of a farm interfered with the free-speech rights of workers and supporters. They stated that Oregon is the only state that restricts the right of farm laborers to picket, and therefore also prevents workers from mounting effective strikes if necessary to obtain social and economic justice. PCUN president Cipriano Ferrel stated at the time, "We're hoping to create economic pressure.... It's the only leverage that farmworkers have" (Francis 1989). Both the proposed collective bargaining legislation and the suit against the governor marked the first time in at least sixteen years that serious discussion had been conducted in the Oregon Senate about extending collective bargaining rights to farmworkers. In September 1990, PCUN won a major victory: U.S. District Judge James Redden declared that the twenty-seven-year-old Oregon anti-picketing law that restricted worksite picketing during the planting or harvesting of perishable crops was unconstitutional. Judge Redden directed that his decision be designated and published as a legal precedent. Governor Neil Goldschmidt, the defendant in the case, opted not to appeal. This decision was a significant step in improving the conditions for collective bargaining in Oregon.

LA HORA CAMPESINA: BRINGING RADIO TO PCUN MEMBERS

In an effort to better disseminate information about the union to the public and to increase communication among union members, PCUN began a weekly one-hour radio show in March 1990 called *La Hora Campesina* (The Farmworker Hour). The show was broadcast on KWBX and had a lively format, with farmworkers calling in to freely share information with each other. Long-time PCUN member Javier Ceja, who served on the original board and worked on the radio program, recalls how this open format eventually caused problems when the growers tuned in:

People would call up and they would explain to me [on the air] everything that was going on. And then I would ask them more questions and we would keep talking. Sometimes people would name names...like who they worked for...like the so and so farm. They would talk about their living conditions, how much they were paid. They would talk about everything.... This is what caused us problems, like when they talked about the work conditions.... People would say that this grower didn't pay them well, that he paid them really cheap.... So maybe it was the contractors who heard it [the radio show] or people who understand Spanish and told the growers.

In July 1990, KWBX abruptly canceled *La Hora Campesina*, saying that it unfairly charged a Mount Angel farmer with labor violations without giving the farmer a chance to respond. PCUN offered equal time to the grower, but KWBX owner Cliff Zauner refused to reconsider. PCUN took the radio station to court in order to win the right to keep airing the show. PCUN contended that KWBX violated a contractual agreement by canceling a show without fifteen days notice. At the end of July, a Marion County Circuit Court judge ordered KWBX to air at least two more installments of *La Hora Campesina*. PCUN aired two more hours of the show at KWBX and then moved the program to KBOO in Portland. The program continued airing there until June 1994. PCUN members and staff engineered the show live at KBOO studios every Tuesday afternoon and frequently included interviews taped in a makeshift studio at PCUN headquarters in Woodburn for broadcast.

THE ONGOING STRUGGLE TO RAISE FARMWORKER WAGES: MAKING CONCRETE GAINS FOR WORKERS

During the summer of 1990, PCUN activists conducted a "red card wage campaign" to help workers determine if they were short-changed on wages in harvests paid by piece rate. Workers were given red cards to record their daily earnings and hours worked. Totals were compared to pay stubs. PCUN organizers distributed more than 10,000 time cards and were able to document 250 cases of workers receiving less than the minimum wage. PCUN filed wage claims with the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industry for forty workers who were eventually awarded more than \$3,000 collectively in compensation for their lost wages. PCUN was also able to force Kraemer Farms labor contractor Pancho de la Cruz to pay back \$9,000 that he had withheld from farmworker paychecks without authorization, mostly inflated charges for housing, food, and transportation. Ramón Ramírez recalls:

We targeted five farmers...and Kraemer was the top one. All the workers would complain.... They came here all the way from Mount Angel, you know, just to complain about the Kraemers. I remember we talked to him that year. We said, "What's the



Child labor, Woodburn, Oregon, 1990.



Workers picking caneberries, 1990.

deal man?".... The Kraemers had this labor contractor.... He would bring workers up here, most of the workers he brought were Mixteco.¹⁷ He would charge them for rides, for food.... He would feed them stuff like tacos de arroz [rice tacos]. And he would charge them \$40 per week for food, for tacos de arroz.... The Kraemers would give him a check, and so what he was doing is that he would have a list of how much money you owe, then you'd sign your check and give it to him. He'd cash it for you and maybe give you back the difference of what you owe.... So that year, you know, we submitted over 100 wage claims to Kraemer. Then we won \$9,000. And we were able to develop this good relationship with probably about three or four crews.

These concrete gains made a positive impression on people like Macedonio Mejía, a farmworker from Michoacán who became active with PCUN in the late 1980s. After receiving residency through the 1986 IRCA legislation, PCUN helped him bring the rest of his family to the United States. He discusses PCUN's work on raising the minimum wage and staking wage claims:

I have seen through different experiences that they [PCUN] have helped a lot of the time and they have done a lot to help the community. I mean the farmworkers.... Here, the minimum wages were not rising and the growers just made us work.... They didn't pay hardly any salary at all, but they [PCUN] got involved and they asked about our salaries and they raised salaries for the entire community and asked that the growers respect us. Now they respect us more because of the work they did.

CONTINUED STEPS TOWARD COLLECTIVE BARGAINING: A HIRING HALL AND OREGON'S FIRST-EVER UNION- ORGANIZED FARMWORKER STRIKE

In May 1991, PCUN opened the first farmworker hiring hall ever offered in Oregon. The hiring hall was an attempt to curtail the

abuses of contractors who were charging high fees for services, as well as luring workers to the Willamette Valley with false promises of high wages and abundant work. PCUN President Cipriano Ferrel sent letters to thirteen area growers and associations inviting them to consider utilizing the hiring hall. The hiring hall would function by signing up PCUN members who were available to work and then sending them to growers who signed a basic agreement, which included the following conditions: recognizing PCUN as the workers' representative; requiring that workers only be disciplined or dismissed for just cause; respecting seniority; and establishing a procedure to be used to resolve any disputes (*PCUN Update*, May 1991). While several growers expressed interest in meeting with PCUN representatives, many growers remained strongly opposed to farmworker unionization and pressured their peers not to use the hiring hall. Consequently, the idea was prevented from becoming a reality.

In June 1991, PCUN followed up their minimum wage campaign from the previous year. While no major wage violations were found, there were instances of piece-rate earnings not reaching the \$4.75 hourly minimum. In late June, workers organized a work stoppage on Kraemer Farms and won an increase from fifteen to twenty cents per pound for the later strawberry pickings. In July, PCUN organizers began holding formal meetings in Kraemer's main labor camp and workers voted to form a committee, to elect representatives, and to demand \$6.50 per hour in the upcoming cucumber harvest. They also directed their representatives, with PCUN assistance, to begin negotiating with the Kraemers. A few days later, Dan Kraemer rejected a proposed negotiation meeting and brought in a county sheriff deputy to challenge PCUN's right to visit the camp.

On Friday, August 9, 1991, worker committee representatives asked to negotiate about wage concerns for the cucumber harvest. When the Kraemers refused to meet, the worker representatives decided to go on strike the next day. Saturday, August 10, marked the first farmworker strike in Oregon since 1971. It was also the first time ever that a union had organized a farmworker strike in the history of Oregon—there had been previous work stoppages, but never a union-organized strike action. PCUN targeted Kraemer farms for the strike because of the high level of complaints PCUN staff received about poor working conditions, particularly about workers not being paid

¹⁷ Mixtecs are an indigenous group who originate in the states of Oaxaca and Guerrero in southern Mexico. Mixtec is one of sixty-eight distinctive indigenous languages spoken in Mexico. In 1995, the National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Information (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática) reported that there were 389,957 Mixtec speakers in Mexico. In 2000 there were 444,479 Mixtec speakers according to INEGI and by 2010 this was estimated to be about 500,000 spread out in Mexico and the United States. See the website <<http://www/inegi.gob.mx/estadistica>>.



Strikers and supporters picketing Steinfeld's Pickles processing plant in North Portland during Kraemer Farm Strike, August 1991.

the minimum wage and having difficulty monitoring their earnings. On the first day of the strike, over 100 picketers assembled at field entrances. Only ten workers crossed the picket lines. Rafael Delgado, a Kraemer Farms striker from Guerrero, Mexico stated of the strike:

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 a strong tradition on to us. 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 badly. All we ask is just wages and fair treatment. We mustn't 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 (*PCUN Update*, August 1991).

During the second day of the strike, picketers returned and seventy-five of the original 100 cucumber workers continued to support and respect the strike, leaving an entire field without pickers. The Kraemers ordered sheriffs to arrest PCUN president Cipriano Ferrel, crew representative Timoteo López García, and PCUN secretary-treasurer Larry Kleinman on trespassing charges. Two Kraemer Farms supervisors who drove into the picket line and knocked down two PCUNistas were not charged.

According to PCUN staff, Ramón Ramírez negotiated with the Kraemers and reached an oral agreement on the second day of the strike. The terms of the agreement included payment of seventy cents per bucket of cucumbers and a guarantee that there would be no retaliation against strikers. A written version of this agreement was to be signed the following morning, but despite great pressure on the Kraemers, they repudiated the agreement and denied that they were going to sign a contract. However, they did raise worker wages 33 percent in response to the pressure. A fax sent by César Chávez in support of the strike read, in part:

I endorse your campaign at Kraemer Farms. Last week's strike represents an historic gain for Oregon farmworkers under the leadership of PCUN. The strike's success also underscores the importance of PCUN's court victory last fall, overturning the



Then PCUN vice-president Ramón Ramírez (holding picket sign) and intern Leone Bicchieri in a discussion with Marion County sheriffs during Kraemer strike.

state anti-picketing law. Please tell my brothers, the workers who were on strike, that our struggle in California defending the gains farmworkers have made makes it impossible to be with them in person, but I am with you all in spirit. Farmworkers have gained anything of lasting value only through personal sacrifice. Your sacrifice of these recent days will surely make the future brighter for yourselves, for farmworkers in Oregon, and for future generations of our people (*PCUN Update*, August 1991).

Leading the first union-organized farmworker strike in Oregon history put PCUN on the map. The strike received significant media coverage—not only in the area, but also in national outlets like National Public Radio and *USA Today*—and many Oregon state officials commented on the strike. Perhaps the most revealing remark in the press was made by Bruce Anders, the state agricultural department director. “It sure as hell is going to send a note of fear through a lot of growers,” he noted to reporter Grace Chimamoto of the *Salem Statesman-Journal* (Chimamoto 1991:A1). However, some local papers termed the strike a failure, and a media campaign by Kraemer Farms lawyers attempted to discredit PCUN. Despite attempts by the Kraemers to claim that the strike collapsed, the strike made it clear that the goal of collective bargaining was a real one and that PCUN would continue to seriously pursue it. At its September 1991 convention, the AFL-CIO unanimously passed a resolution in support of PCUN's work and voted to contribute \$2,000 to the organization.

The year 1991 also marked another step in PCUN's attempt to move forward with the “right to know” legislation about pesticides. During this year as well as in 1993, PCUN—in conjunction with the Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides (NCAP) and the Oregon State Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG)—supported legislative attempts to allow farmworkers and community members to obtain pesticide information without farmworkers having to identify themselves to their employers. The proposal, SB 756, passed the state senate in the 1991 session, but died in the house of representatives without a vote (*PCUN Update* #7, August 1991).

Part 5

The Collective Bargaining Struggle Widens (1992–1995)

PCCUN's organizing initiatives during this phase drew upon both the network of supporters (especially from labor and religious institutions) developed in legislative, legal, and field campaigns, as well as the network of workers developed in field organizing around issues of wages and working conditions. The boycott of products of NORPAC—the largest processor of fruits and vegetables in the Northwest and owned by 250 growers in the Willamette Valley—launched in September 1992 provided a vehicle for the active participation of farmworker supporters everywhere. It also confronted the industry's centers of power in a more direct manner. The massive 1995 PCUN organizing—honoring the organization's tenth anniversary—demonstrated farmworkers' interest in change and their willingness to take action on a broad scale toward seeking redress for their grievances.

BUILDING PRESSURE FOR NEGOTIATION: THE NORPAC AND STEINFELD BOYCOTTS

In 1992, PCUN continued to pursue negotiations with the Kraemers. In May, the Kraemers refused work to at least twenty-one of the workers who participated in the strike during 1991. At the request of the Kraemers, PCUN submitted a five-point plan in June 1992 for improving working conditions in their fields. However, the Kraemers, through their attorney, refused to negotiate the terms with PCUN. Tensions rose over the summer after thirty PCUNistas and supporters protested at the main labor camp of Kraemer Farms, demanding that Kraemer disarm foremen who were believed to be carrying concealed weapons to intimidate workers.

PCUN organizers increased pressure on the Kraemers by boycotting both Steinfeld's Pickle Company and NORPAC. Because both of these organizations do business with Kraemer Farms, PCUN members requested them to pressure the Kraemer family to negotiate. PCUN then informed NORPAC and Steinfeld's that a boycott of their products might be called. After Kraemer employees again reiterated their demands—for a salary increase, a system to be able to file complaints without being fired, respect for seniority, the prohibition of dismissal for unjustified causes, and a worker's committee to implement rules about housing—the workers endorsed the boycott, which was formally declared by PCUN members in September 1992.

In 1992 and 1993, labor, student, and religious groups in the Northwest and around the country joined in to support the boycott of NORPAC (principally Santiam and FLAV-R-PAC brands, plus other products). By March 1993, more than twenty-three organizations and 650 households had pledged to join the boycott. The Bon Appetit food service, contracting with Reed College (located in Portland, Oregon), agreed to stop using NORPAC and Steinfeld products there in October. The year 1993 was also marked by the death in April of long-time farmworker leader César Chávez. In place of PCUN's yearly Cinco de Mayo celebration, they sponsored a memorial service for Chávez, which hundreds of people attended.

In 1994, the boycott continued to build and a southeast Portland IGA grocery store agreed to stop selling NORPAC products. In 1996, PCUN called on farmworker supporters to boycott Wholesome & Hearty Foods because they refused to cease distribution of their product through NORPAC. The most popular Wholesome & Hearty Foods product was Gardenburger, served at many college campuses. The Gardenburger boycott proved to be a key tool in involving greater numbers of college students in the work of PCUN.

THE BIRTH OF THE PCUN WOMEN'S PROJECT

At the eighth annual convention of PCUN in 1992, a resolution directed the creation of a PCUN women's project that would address conditions specific to farmworker women and develop stronger female leadership within the union. With few exceptions, the public face of the union had been largely male,



May 2, 1993—César Chávez memorial service at PCUN headquarters in Woodburn, Oregon.



Mujeres Luchadoras Progresistas, with Juanita Váldez-Cox (left), representing United Farmworkers, 1998.

although women had been working for many years as part of the staff and in the Service Center. Women were elected to the PCUN board starting at the 1987 convention, with consistent representation continuing until the present. Since 1999, four or five of the nine directors on the board have been women. Early women board members included Carmen Ramírez and María Espinoza.

Nevertheless, while some leaders such as Cipriano Ferrel supported the strong participation of women since the initiation of PCUN, other leaders resisted or were unsupportive. Long-time active PCUN member and board member Javier Ceja recalled that during the early years of PCUN, some of the elected leadership was opposed to having women participate in the union:

I remember that we had a very hard discussion about whether or not the women could participate with the person who was elected president during the first convention. The president and the vice-president were opposed to it. They said, "How is it possible that my wife will come here and be with all of these men?" That is how the discussion went. Cipriano used the best reasons to try and explain to them about the struggle and the importance of having women's participation, but they always felt like a woman shouldn't speak with other men...but finally women began to participate more in 1992 and 1993. It was a slow process, but there were more women volunteers...and at the same time there was another process that happened after people had their green cards for four or five years.... They started to bring their families [from Mexico] and so a lot of members who had green cards began to petition for residence for their wives and they brought them to the office. So this began a process during

those years of more communication because there were more women there....

Susan Dobkins, the staff liaison with the Mujeres Luchadoras Progresistas (Women Fighting for Progress, MLP), also recalled 1992 and 1993 as years of transition in PCUN when women's issues first began to surface in the Service Center:

In the Service Center what we were noticing as early as '92 or '93...was that women...would come in with different problems, including domestic violence, and just needed to talk to someone about it...and they would come here because PCUN really had a wide trust in the community, had developed that relationship over many years, and people saw us as a real resource.... What we noticed in our analysis...is that it really came down to an economic point...women feeling not able to be independent and not supported. So that's why we came down on the need to have a long-term project that's going to create space for women to develop skills to become more independent.... That doesn't mean dividing up families. It means supporting families. So that's where we knew from the get-go that it was going to be an economic project, but that's not where we started....

An initial women's project was begun—with a class to help women get their learners' permits to drive. About five or six women signed up. Dobkins recalls, "Pretty soon we ran into issues of husbands being threatened by that. We had one woman who reported to us that her husband said, 'It's too dangerous for you to drive. I don't want you to learn how to drive, and besides...you might run off on me, once you learn how to drive.' So we just started grappling with these kinds of things, but also realized...this is a long-term project." This initial project was

the starting point for what later became *Mujeres Luchadoras Progresistas*, officially formed in 1997 (discussed on p. 34).

PCUN CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS: A UNION HALL AND FARMWORKER HOUSING

On the ninth anniversary of PCUN's founding (April 28, 1994), members dedicated their Union Hall to the memory of Edward and Sonia Risberg, two Jewish immigrants who were labor activists in Chicago. The ceremony capped nearly six years of effort on the part of PCUN to acquire, repair, and remodel the building as the permanent home for PCUN, the Service Center, and the Willamette Valley Law Project (a nonprofit organization that sponsors much of PCUN's research and educational work). A benefit concert at Portland's Bensen High School, featuring Pete Seeger and his grandson Tao Rodríguez Seeger, attracted a standing-room only crowd of 1,800 and raised more than \$27,000 for PCUN field organizing. The next evening during the dedication ceremony in Woodburn, Oregon governor Barbara Roberts hailed PCUN and Risberg Hall for "being about dignity, respect, equality, and contributing back" to Oregon (*PCUN Update*, May 1994). The dedication and concert brought together a wide network of support for PCUN and provided some of the momentum for the Tenth Anniversary Campaign.

Other construction projects were finished in 1994 as well. After three years of planning, fundraising, and construction, housing was offered to farmworker families through the opening of the *Nuevo Amanecer* (New Dawn) apartments, developed by the Farmworker Housing Development Corporation (an independent nonprofit organization in Woodburn co-founded by PCUN in 1990). PCUN President Cipriano Ferrel, PCUN board

member Job Pozos, and other PCUN activists were key players in the project. The initial phase was completed in March 1994 and provided homes for forty-eight families. Construction continued to ultimately provide ninety-two farmworker families with housing at that site.

"AUMENTO YA!"—PCUN'S TENTH ANNIVERSARY CAMPAIGN TO RAISE STRAWBERRY WAGES

In April 1995, PCUN held its tenth convention, where members unified behind the organizing committee's recommendation to seek a wage increase for strawberry workers. The membership endorsed the demand of seventeen cents per pound for the 1995 strawberry harvest. This would substantially raise the wage rate for the first pick above the traditional ten to twelve cents per pound, as well as provide a precedent to raise wages in other crops. After the assembly, PCUN sent letters to area growers informing them of the demand and inviting them to discuss it before the beginning of the harvest. By the end of May, PCUN had the signatures of 1,200 workers who pledged to support the demand for an increase. They also began to publicize the campaign in Oregon using trilingual radio spots in Spanish, Mixteco, and Trique. This strategy was key to reaching the increasing number of indigenous farmworkers in Oregon whose first language was not Spanish. Since the mid-1990s, indigenous Mexican farmworkers have formed an increasing part of PCUN's membership, accounting for more than one-third of all members in the late 1990s. PCUN also sent organizers to Madera, California, to alert workers who were headed for Oregon about the campaign. At the same time, PCUN organizers began to visit labor camps to talk to workers about the upcoming campaign.



Worker at a PCUN work stoppage in Silverton during the Tenth Anniversary Organizing Campaign, 1995.



Strikers at Campo Benito Juárez in 1995.

On the 29th of May, a fifty-foot long, five-foot high banner reading, "Strawberry Workers Demand a Raise," was posted above Woodburn's I-5 overpass.

The first strike action came at Moorhouse Farms in Molalla. Moorhouse refused to negotiate on June 2, the first day of harvest, so workers left the field and began picketing. The following day, picketing continued. Organizers were able to convince 200 workers at more than three labor camps to honor the strike

and refuse to board the labor contractor vans heading into Moorhouse fields. The picketing at Moorhouse Farms continued through June 20 at a lower level, but hundreds of "drive-in" workers were turned away, leaving the farm short of labor and costing tens of thousands of dollars in lost revenue.

While the Moorhouse picketing continued, a four-day strike also began at Spring Lake Farms and Zielinski Farms, both near Brooks. Workers walked out of the fields and sent representatives to Woodburn to seek PCUN's support. On the second day of picketing, Zielinski agreed to meet with the workers' council (formed by workers during the strike), but negotiations broke down when he demonstrated bad faith. In the meantime, workers increased the pressure on him by bannerizing and picketing his house. They also decided to rename their labor camp as Campo Benito Juárez, in reference to Mexico's indigenous president who drove the French out of Mexico in 1857. Bartolomé García, one of 100 migrant farmworkers who refused to pick at Spring Lake Farm's strawberry fields as part of the PCUN strawberry campaign, stated, "You can work as hard as you can and still make poor wages" (Taylor 1995:B2). García, whose hometown is Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca, continued: "they [growers] don't notice that you work hard.... Maybe as the strawberries go bad they'll notice. Maybe now that [the union] is helping us, they'll stop taking us for granted"(Taylor 1995:B2).

On a nearby farm, workers won an increase from fourteen to fifteen cents per pound on the first pick. Workers at Krahmer Farms and Norwood Farms, both in Cornelius (some fifty



Press conference at Zielinski Farms in Brooks, Oregon, June 1995. Workers renamed the Zielinski labor camp after winning the right to live there.



Above: Cipriano Ferrel memorial service at PCUN union hall in Woodburn, Oregon, September 18, 1995.
Left: Cipriano Ferrel: 1949-1995.

miles from Woodburn), staged work stoppages and also won the same increase. By the end of the strawberry campaign, two major strikes and at least a dozen other work stoppages pushed growers to increase wages in the strawberry harvest by two to three cents per pound. This was a major accomplishment after strawberry wages had remained stagnant for almost ten years. PCUN estimated that farmworkers bolstered their earnings by 20 percent that summer, or an aggregate of close to one million dollars. Larry Kleinman wrote of the campaign, “We have long advocated that the appropriate process to set wages and resolve work-related issues is at the bargaining table, rather than the picket line. This year, however, farmworkers by the thousands demonstrated that growers’ refusal to bargain will no longer be accepted and that growers who refuse to bargain risk economic loss” (Kleinman 1995). Farmworker Manuel Rivera, participant in the strawberry campaign, stated of his experience:

When I arrived in the state of Oregon, I came to a labor camp known as Campo Ramírez. During our strike we succeeded in renaming it Campo Benito Juárez. We arrived just in time for the strawberry harvest. In the strawberry fields we united all the workers from the labor camp in order to ask the contractor how much we were going to be paid per pound of strawberries. In an offensive manner, the contractor responded that we were going to be paid twelve cents a pound, and if we didn’t like it we could just get out of the camp. We made a difficult decision and decided to stay and face a fight in order to win a raise and obtain the respect which we deserved.... We spoke with PCUN in order to request help.... At the beginning, this fight at the camp was very hard to win. The rancher would always arrive at the camp with police and threaten to throw us out.... Because of deep needs, some of the *compañero* workers became discouraged and went to the rancher’s field to work under whatever misery. Those of us who remained firm won benefits. We lived without paying rent for four weeks. We were able to work at other ranches where we were paid better, and also to gain compensation for the days that we were without work. We received

the support of other unions. They helped us with food, blankets, and donations of money. And thus we won by the unity and decisions of the worker *compañeros* (Rivera 1995:4).

While no contracts were signed as a direct result of the campaign, the terrain for farmworkers underwent a significant shift as PCUN demonstrated its capacity to mobilize workers and exert pressure. The 1995 Tenth Anniversary Campaign was a critical and successful step toward the future signing of contracts. PCUN produced a fifty-minute video documenting this campaign titled “Aumento Ya!” Raise Now!¹⁸ In 1996 the video was featured in the Portland International Film and Video Festival. Free Speech-TV included “Aumento Ya!” in its programming broadcast on over sixty cable stations in two dozen cities. Some 1,200 copies of the video were sold or distributed nationwide.

THE DEATH OF PCUN FOUNDER CIPRIANO FERREL AND THE CONTINUED REALIZATION OF HIS VISION

In September 1995, PCUN founder and president Cipriano Ferrel passed away suddenly from a heart attack, leaving many in shock. Four different gatherings were organized to remember and celebrate his life. Memorials were held in Woodburn and in Delano, California, where Ferrel was born. He had worked with César Chávez in California before coming to Oregon to attend the University of Oregon and then Colegio César Chávez. Cipriano was a co-founder of the Willamette Valley Immigration Project and PCUN. Cipriano also served on the board of directors for the Farmworker Housing Development Corporation and was a major player in the construction of Woodburn’s Nuevo Amanecer farmworker apartments. Cipriano’s vision of achieving collective bargaining rights for all farmworkers and the methods to achieve this vision—often drawing on lessons learned from the United Farm Workers, where Cipriano developed his organizing skills—continue through the ongoing work of PCUN. He remains a vibrant symbol of the struggles won by PCUN.

¹⁸ The original video used in making “Aumento Ya!” is archived in the University of Oregon Libraries’ Special Collections and University Archives as a part of the Oregon Latino Heritage Collaborative.

Part 6

Broadening the Movement to Meet the Resurgence of Labor and Immigration Issues (1996–2001)

Even as organizing in the NORPAC boycott and in the fields was accelerating after the Tenth Anniversary Organizing Campaign, PCUN also undertook four major new initiatives in 1996 and 1997. The farmworker women's project contributed to the creation of a strong core of new leaders. *Voz Hispana* expressed the Latino community's discontent about disrespect and directed it into a successful campaign for recognition of César Chávez by the Woodburn School District. PCUN developed an innovative program of citizenship classes, which enrolled hundreds of immigrants who were newly eligible for naturalization. And PCUN leaders spearheaded the creation of CAUSA—a statewide immigrants' rights coalition similar to one that the Willamette Valley Immigration Project had initiated and led in opposition to the Reagan and the Simpson-Mazzoli immigration plans of the early to mid-1980s. Taken together, these efforts exemplify PCUN's main strategy of combining focused projects and campaigns in a manner that addresses immediate basic needs, while also working for long-term fundamental change.

THE STRUGGLE TO DEFEAT NATIONAL ANTI-IMMIGRANT AND ANTI-FARMWORKER LEGISLATION (1996-2000)

From 1996 on, PCUN has been deeply involved in a national struggle to defeat proposals for a new *bracero* program, to push back restrictive new immigration legislation and to enact comprehensive immigration reform, which includes a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. In 1996, agribusiness lobbyists persuaded the House Agriculture Committee to add a temporary agricultural worker program to an immigration "reform" bill which became the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996. While the agribusiness amendment proposing admission of up to 250,000 agricultural guest workers per year was defeated, the larger piece of immigration legislation (IIRIRA) was passed. The defeat of the proposed new *bracero* program was only temporary. Separate legislative proposals to bring in guestworkers have continued since 1996.

IIRIRA legislation caused hardships for immigrants on several levels. First, IIRIRA imposed a three- to ten-year "bar" or disqualification from legal immigration for many prospective legal immigrants, especially those who had resided undocumented in the United States and then departed from the United States for any reason regardless of duration.¹⁹ Secondly, IIRIRA also made it more difficult for people to sponsor relatives to come to the United States by increasing income requirements from at or above 100 percent of the U.S. poverty level to at or above 125 percent of the U.S. poverty level. In 1998, this was close to \$20,000 for a family of four (\$27,500 in 2011). PCUN staff estimated that the increased financial requirements for sponsoring relatives eliminated this possibility for about half of

their Service Center clients to legalize additional family members. Finally, IIRIRA legislation also imposed a final deadline of January 14, 1998, for undocumented family members of a legal resident to file the initial petition to gain legal residency in the United States. During 1997, PCUN sponsored three forums about the IIRIRA legislation and worked overtime with families rushing to complete their legalization petitions before the January 1998 deadline.

Under this act, undocumented family members filing for residency in the United States after January 1998 were punished if they tried to file while undocumented and living in the United States. They had to leave in order to file for residency, because they could no longer apply in the United States. If they did leave, then they could trip a bar of up to ten years before they could apply to change their immigration status—if they had been in the United States illegally for more than a year since April 1997 and there was evidence of that. If they were to be lawful, families had to divide and send undocumented family members secretly back to Mexico to apply from there. If families wanted to remain united, they had to take the risk of remaining undocumented in the United States.

As he left office in late 2000, President Clinton extended a special "sunset provision" that gave another chance to all those who missed the January 1998 deadline to apply for legal residency if they already had a family member here. A small window of opportunity was created between the dates of December 21, 2000, and April 30, 2001, under the LIFE (Legal Immigration and Family Equity) Act. This window allowed people who qualified for permanent residency—but were ineligible to adjust their status in the United States because of an immigration status violation—to pay a \$1,000 penalty to continue processing in the United States. The high cost of the "fine," however, inhibited some people from applying. According to the National Agricultural Workers Survey of 1997-1998, about half of farmworkers earned less than \$7,500 per year. Given this level of income for many farmworkers, the \$1,000 fine plus legal costs for each person processed may have made the opportunity unavailable to a significant number of people.

At the same time that the IIRIRA legislation passed making it more difficult for undocumented workers who remained in the United States to petition for residency from within the United States, the U.S. Congress began a new round of discussions about the need for a new guestworker program. Ironically, while a significant undocumented population of farmworkers already existed in Oregon, Senators Ron Wyden (Democrat) and Gordon Smith (Republican), both from Oregon, were busy promoting farmworker legislation to contract additional Mexican workers. Wyden eventually withdrew his sponsorship of the proposed guestworker legislation, but Smith continued to be a sponsor of several proposals. Between 1998 and 2001, the Congress considered a variety of measures that sought to guarantee growers an ample population of agricultural workers. Most of these proposals were based on the H-2 program.

¹⁹ Those who remained illegally in the United States after April 1987 for 180 days received a three-year bar and those who remained for one year received a ten-year bar to applying for a temporary visa or permanent residence. The law specifically targeted people who entered the United States undocumented or who overstayed their visas.



Protest at Senator Gordon Smith's Portland office against the Smith-Wyden guest worker bill S2337, May 1, 1998.

The H-2 program was founded in 1943 when the U.S. Sugar Corporation received approval to contract Caribbean workers to cut cane (Goldstein 1998). During the Bracero Program of 1942-1964, Mexican workers could not be H-2 workers. When the Bracero Program ended in 1964, the H-2 program was expanded under pressure from western growers and their lobbyists. As part of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, the H-2 program became the H-2A program and labor standards for certifying labor shortages were strengthened. Under the H-2A program, employers have to document a shortage of available workers in the United States. Mexican agricultural workers have become the largest group of H-2A workers since 1993 (Health, Education, and Human Services Division 1997).

Proposals to expand the H-2A program were initiated by congressional members from western states who argued that growers had reported potential impending labor shortages. A study done by the General Accounting Office in December 1997, however, pointed out "high unemployment rates in agricultural areas, the persistent heavy unemployment of farmworkers, and declining real farm wages, both in hourly and piece rates, as evidence of a farm labor surplus" (Health, Education, and Human Services Division 1997). Grower predictions of worker shortages and lobbying for an expanded guestworker bill also came at a time when organized farm labor was winning contracts in California, Oregon, and Washington.

In 1999, Senator Gordon Smith and his cosponsor, Senator Bob Graham, Democrat from Florida, introduced legislation (Senate Bill 1814 and Senate Bill 1815), which tied the possibility of legal permanent residency through amnesty (granting legal residency to those who have been here undocumented—in other words forgiving their undocumented status and not deporting them) to the expansion of the current guest worker H-2A program. While the amnesty provision of this legislation was widely publicized, its true intent was to allow growers and the U.S. government greater control over the farm labor force.

Critics of Senate Bills 1814 and 1815, such as PCUN, pointed out that while the bills superficially appeared to favor the estimated one million undocumented farmworkers who already picked crops in the United States, all would have had to continue to work at least six months annually for five to seven years before they could earn the right to apply for legal permanent resident status. In many areas, such as the Willamette Valley, the agricultural season is only three to four months. The farm labor force is also segmented by gender so that women have fewer months of work than men. They work primarily in berry harvests in June and July and sometimes in other crops for a few weeks. Women would have difficulty accumulating the required amount of agricultural work on an annual basis that would make them eligible to apply for residency. This would also be the case for many men as well because of the shortness of the agricultural season. Even if farmworkers did manage to find the requisite amount of agricultural work for five to seven years, they would not have any guarantee that they would receive residency. Their names would have been added to a list of residency applicants who currently faced a backlog of up to fifteen years before their cases would even be considered.

PCUN and other Latino organizations worked to eliminate the guestworker parts of the bills and build momentum for a general amnesty. Forums and marches pushing for general amnesty were held in 2000 with PCUN playing a leading role. A large demonstration in Portland in support of amnesty for the undocumented occurred in conjunction with the National Association of Chicano and Chicana Studies in March 2000; PCUN and CAUSA organized a rally at the state capitol in Salem, which attracted 3,000 people on August 20. During the 106th Congress (1999-2000), coordinated opposition by hundreds of organizations supportive of farmworkers prevented the passage of Senate Bills 1814 and 1815. PCUN was an important part of this victory for farmworkers.

At the end of the 2000 legislative session (November 2000), negotiations that involved both farmworker organizations (the

United Farm Workers, PCUN and others) and growers (the National Council of Agricultural Employers, the Western Growers Association, and the American Farm Bureau) achieved a breakthrough: a proposal to create a new legalization program for undocumented farmworkers and revise the H-2A program. The compromise would have offered amnesty (legal residency) for many Mexican workers who were currently living undocumented in the United States. The compromise, dubbed “AgJOBS,” failed to win enactment in the closing days of the 106th Congress, but it would resurface various times over the succeeding decade.

THE DEFEAT OF ANTI-IMMIGRANT LEGISLATION IN OREGON (1996-1997)

The years 1996 and 1997 marked attempts to pass regressive legislation in Oregon against immigrants and to exclude farmworkers from minimum wage requirements. CAUSA, an Oregon statewide Latino-based coalition, was co-founded by PCUN in 1996 to oppose four anti-immigrant ballot initiatives, which were potentially worse than California’s Proposition 187.²⁰ The Oregon initiatives required the following: the verification of the legal status of all students by public schools, and the exclusion of those without documentation; the denial of driver’s licenses to undocumented people; the denial of public benefits and services to anyone undocumented; and that reports on “suspected undocumented immigrants” be made by all state, local, and governmental agencies. PCUN co-founder Ramón Ramírez was a key player in the founding of CAUSA and in its successful attempts to prevent the anti-immigrant initiatives from reaching the election ballot: they fell far short of the 97,000 signatures needed to qualify. The links forged through CAUSA and its connections to similar groups in California and elsewhere were key to taking on national 1996 immigration legislation, and to efforts to defeat repeated proposals for a new guestworker program.

RAISING AWARENESS: THE DEVELOPMENT OF PCUN’S EDUCATIONAL CLASSES AND THE CREATION OF VOZ HISPANA

The passage of Proposition 187 in California caused PCUN’s membership to become concerned with the development of classes and education regarding potential anti-immigrant ballot measures in Oregon. In 1995, members were also seeking English and citizenship classes due to a variety of factors: a worsening economic situation in Mexico; an increased interest in voting and permanent immunity from deportation due to fear about Proposition 187; a slow pace of immigration processing for immediate family members; and the existence of a large pool of immigrants that were citizenship-eligible. In response, PCUN developed its own curriculum, which incorporates everyday topics while also fostering an understanding of U.S. society and a discussion of how it is just or unjust. In addition to the government’s standard material, the history presented in the citizenship classes is a “people’s” history—including a class analysis and a discussion and analysis of history from the marginalized and multiple perspectives of society that are typically excluded from more mainstream texts. Between 1995 and



PCUNistas participating in the Mobilization Against HB2691 in Salem, Oregon, 1997.

2000, PCUN enrolled more than 600 students of all language levels in their English and citizenship classes. They have carried out the classes in partnership with Mano a Mano Family Center in Salem and Programa Hispano in Gresham in order to extend the classes—made possible by the financial support of the Emma Lazarus Fund of the Open Society Institute. In effect, these classes helped to create a new pool of citizen voters who are educated, concerned about political issues that affect them, and motivated to participate in the political system and push for change.

During 1997, local PCUN members, staff, and allied organizations in Woodburn rallied residents to support naming one of two new public schools for César Chávez. While the Woodburn school board refused (instead naming the schools “Heritage” and “Valor”), the refusal prompted local residents to form the citizen’s group, Voz Hispana Causa Chavista (Hispanic Voice for the Chávez Cause). During the summer and fall of 1997, Voz Hispana rallied more than eighty Latino residents to attend three consecutive school board meetings. Some of the key participants in these meetings were fifty farmworker families who reside at the Nuevo Amanecer housing project built by PCUN’s sister organization, Farmworker Housing Development Corporation. In December 1997, the school board unanimously approved a compromise plan to name the library at Valor Middle School for Chávez, to erect a permanent display about Chávez and his work, to declare his birthday, March 31, as “César Chávez Day” in all Woodburn schools, and to mandate that special school-wide and classroom activities be organized in celebration of that day. The Woodburn School Board became the first governmental body in Oregon to recognize Chávez in this manner. Since that time, special curricula and assemblies have been organized around César Chávez, which promote a sense of pride in the farmworker movement as well as provide a broader range of people with an education about the work and beliefs of this national hero. Voz Hispana continues to take an interest in local politics and has also developed an interest in Latino voting and election participation in Woodburn.

CLERGY AND OTHERS JOIN PCUN IN PRESSURING GROWERS TO SIGN CONTRACTS

Pressure on growers to negotiate and sign contracts continued in 1996, with Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) calling on growers to accept collective bargaining. EMO endorsed the NORPAC Boycott in 1996 and overwhelmingly reaffirmed

²⁰ Proposition 187 was passed by California voters in 1994, although it was rejected by nearly four out of five Latino voters. If enforced, the law would have denied public education, non-emergency healthcare, and other social services to undocumented immigrants and their children. The law also required public employees to report people they suspected of being in the United States without permission to immigration authorities. A federal judge ruled that most portions of Proposition 187 were unconstitutional, and they have not been enforced.

the endorsement in July 1997, despite a strong agribusiness campaign to persuade EMO to rescind it. Other pressure tactics used on NORPAC included a rally supporting the boycott outside the Northwest Food Processors Association's convention in Portland, a candlelight vigil at the annual Agribusiness Celebration Dinner in Salem, and a farmworker protest at NORPAC's annual meeting.

In 1996 and 1997, PCUN continued to pressure NORPAC farms, expanding field organizing from seven to fifteen farms. A summer field accompaniment program during those two summers allowed 600 supporters to see first-hand the conditions under which farmworkers labor. Two PCUNistas were assaulted by a contractor and six squad cars were called on another occasion to disband a prayer meeting at the Zielinski labor camp. In the summer of 1997, clergy continued to visit labor camps to conduct prayer meetings and bring farmworker labor and living conditions to the attention of the public. Two clergy who were arrested sued the growers and the Marion County sheriff, winning a \$44,500 settlement in May 2000.

Workers affiliated with PCUN also felt the pressure that summer, as growers increasingly tried to squeeze out anyone who supported the union. Current field organizer Efrain Peña was pushed out of Coleman Farms in St. Paul, Oregon. His first contact with PCUN occurred during the summer of 1995 when he participated in a work stoppage as part of the Tenth Anniversary Campaign. He continued his contact with the organization, participating in rallies and working on the weekends in the union office. In 1997, he was finally moved out of his farm job because of his increasingly open affiliation with PCUN. Regarding that time, he states:

At Coleman they knew that I was working with PCUN so they began to pressure me so that I would leave.... They kept giving me fewer and fewer hours. Because in 1994, 1995, and 1996 they gave me a lot of work and good jobs. That doesn't mean that the jobs were well-paying, but they gave me lighter work. I worked with the machinery, like driving a tractor. But after 1997 when I began to really work with PCUN, they began to take all of this away from me. They wouldn't even let me drive a pickup from the farm, a tractor, not anything. No, I had to go back to the work I did when I first arrived there—all working with my hands even though I had all of this experience.... That is how they punished me... they were watching me because I was



PCUN union label on boxed strawberries.

always talking with the workers.... They also saw me talking with Leone [a PCUN field organizer].... I used to walk around and see what areas were going to be harvested so that PCUN could understand what was going to happen....

Efrain continued to work with PCUN as a volunteer field organizer and later joined the paid organizing staff for several years.

Oregon farmworkers' rights to minimum wage also suffered another attempted rollback in 1997 when agribusiness, restaurants, and business federations came together to draft HB 2691, which would have exempted significant parts of the labor force from receiving minimum wage. In November 1996, Oregon voters passed an initiative to raise the hourly minimum to \$5.50 in 1997, \$6.00 in 1998, and \$6.50 in 1999. In addition to other provisions (counting tips as part of the minimum wage, providing a "training" sub-minimum wage for workers under 18, and counting a portion of medical insurance premiums against minimum wage), House Bill 2691 exempted growers from paying the minimum wage in piece-rate systems in which 50 percent of the work crew was making the minimum wage—thus excluding the other part of the crew from earning the minimum. HB 2691 did not reach the Oregon House floor and was not enacted due to pressure from PCUN, CAUSA, and other groups that mobilized.

PCUN'S HISTORIC VICTORY: OREGON'S FIRST FARMWORKER COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

The final years of the 1990s brought PCUN a historic victory through the signing of Oregon's first farmworker collective bargaining agreement. After more than twenty years of working to create a climate conducive to collective bargaining—work first pioneered by the Willamette Valley Immigration Project, PCUN, and other organizations—farmworkers in Oregon finally went to the negotiating table and emerged victorious. In 1998, PCUN signed four contracts.

The first contract was signed with Nature's Fountain Farms—a farm that produces blueberries, strawberries, and antique roses and that later received organic certification. The agreement authorized Nature's Fountain to place the PCUN union label on its products. This agreement, like the three that followed soon thereafter, provided for more than a dozen rights and protections for farmworkers not afforded by law—including seniority, grievance procedures, overtime, paid breaks, and union recognition. A PCUN editorial published shortly after the signing of the contract read, in part:

César's dream was—and ours is—collective bargaining agreements covering all farmworkers who want a union. We've come this far by applying the lessons which César and the UFW taught us: embracing the "sí, se puede" spirit, insisting on collective bargaining because it's the only lasting solution to exploitation, and working for a decade or two to achieve that fundamental change rather than resigning ourselves to accept expedient, but short-lived and shallow reforms. Continuing on that road means strengthening the NORPAC/Gardenburger Boycott, eliminating union busting (like the Smith H-2C program), and demonstrating that consumers will prefer union label produce (*PCUN Update*, May 1998).

Scott Frost, co-owner of Nature Fountain Farms, made a historic move by breaking ranks with other growers and signing with PCUN. He stated, "It is my hope that in creating an example, a working model, that Nature's Fountain Farms can be a place where labor and ownership can work together as one, to open a window to change and growth" (Ostrach 1998:2). Later that



Protest supporting the NORPAC Boycott—at NORPAC headquarters in Stayton, Oregon, September 1996.

year, PCUN signed contracts with three other farms, including Thomas Paine Farms in Kings Valley (Oregon's largest grower and packer of chestnuts), Moon Ridge Farms in Beavercreek, and a fourth small grower. The Moon Ridge Farms agreement included paid medical insurance, 401K retirement, and paid vacation; such terms are historic for farmworkers.

While the number of workers covered under PCUN's first contracts was small (approximately thirty-six), the dream of collective bargaining finally became a reality in Oregon. The contracts and the protections they provided established a precedent and provided workers with a positive model of new possibilities.

GARDENBURGER CUTS TIES WITH NORPAC AND LABOR STANDARDS ARE INTRODUCED FOR THE COUNTRY'S LARGEST ORGANIC PROCESSOR OF FROZEN FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

The year after PCUN signed its first contracts, they won a significant victory on a related front: in April 1999, Gardenburger

did not renew their contract with NORPAC Food Sales, Inc. Although Gardenburger officials stated that this decision came about independently of the boycott, PCUN organizers had a different perspective. Right before Gardenburger cut ties with NORPAC, twelve colleges and universities had joined the boycott and more than 100 stores in twenty-nine states had discontinued sales or had made pledges not to stock Gardenburger products. The victory came in the midst of an East Coast-tour to promote the boycott. The Gardenburger boycott demonstrates how boycotts and collective bargaining drives can work together to secure farmworker rights.

The Gardenburger boycott and contract-signing victories also encouraged PCUN to pursue worker rights in the organic farming sector, an area consumers often assume to be inherently progressive. However, organic farmers may have to be pushed to respect farmworker rights just like conventional growers. Cascadian Farm is the country's largest processor of frozen organic fruits and vegetables; in the late 1990s, the company

had annual sales of over \$400,000,000 and an 83 percent market share. In April 1999, Cascadian Farm required all growers who supply them with produce to abide by labor standards in their field operations. The standards include: compliance with all local, state, and federal laws; fair and reasonable treatment; termination only for just cause; breaks; no retaliation for valid complaints; freedom of association off the job; and full landlord/tenant rights in labor camps. The adoption of labor standards by Cascadian Farm also provided further indirect pressure on NORPAC by demonstrating that food processors can set labor standards for the farms that supply them.

Cascadian Farm's decision to develop labor standards arose in part from worker complaints at Willamette River Organics Farms near Dayton, a major Cascadian supplier and, at that time, the largest organic farm in Oregon. These complaints focused on substandard housing conditions and minimum wage violations. PCUN organizers began organizing about eighty workers there during the harvest season of 1997. In the winters of 2000 and 2001, PCUN field organizers also went to Mexico to follow through with workers who had left Oregon to return to their home towns in Mexico. They also continued to talk with workers who passed the winter season on the farm. In July 2000, thirty-four workers filed suit alleging wage and housing violations committed during the 1998 and 1999 harvest seasons. The farm's contractor, Victor Torres, filed a lawsuit of his own alleging that PCUN interfered with his "business relations."

PCUN also continued to pressure Kraemer farms. In June 1999, the main Kraemer labor camp was inspected by the Oregon division of OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) and found to have six violations. Besides the six violations in the main Kraemer camp, inspectors cited another twenty-five violations at a second, unregistered camp, eleven at a third camp, and five at a fourth camp. The only fine issued was \$500 for failure to register the fourth camp. Forty-two workers filed suit against Kraemer Farms, seeking tens of thousands of dollars in damages and penalties for multiple violations of worker protection standards. The workers settled their claims in 2001 for \$63,000.

NATIONAL CAMPUS TOURS AND COLLABORATION WITH THE CAMPAIGN FOR LABOR RIGHTS

During 1999 and 2000, PCUN organizers did extensive campus tours to increase student support for the NORPAC boycott. Farmworkers spoke in Canada (a major importer of NORPAC products) at the University of Guelph, King's College, Carleton University, York University, Trent University, and the University of Windsor, as well as at many U.S. campuses. Working in conjunction with the Campaign for Labor Rights, PCUN launched an educational and organizing campaign focused on the theme "Sweatshops in the Fields," drawing parallels between the conditions faced by apparel workers in sweatshops with those faced by commercial agricultural workers (specifically NORPAC workers) in the fields: in both environments, workers endure long hours in physically dangerous environments for low pay and are afraid to organize or speak up about substandard conditions for fear of being fired. The tours not only promoted the NORPAC boycott, but also worked to recruit student volunteers for activities such as the Summer 2000 Student Mobilization. During this event, dozens of student activists came to Oregon for a week to accompany organizers to the fields, to visit with workers in labor camps and in their homes, to participate in



PCUN poster from Fall 2000.

actions against unjust anti-farmworker legislation, and to discuss boycott strategies with other students. Canadian as well as U.S. students and campuses were part of this effort.

CANADIAN LABOUR CONGRESS ENDORSEMENT OF NORPAC BOYCOTT

On May 16, 2000, the Executive Council of the Canadian Labour Congress (representing 2.3 million unionized workers in Canada) voted to endorse the boycott of all NORPAC products in their country (PCUN webpage). Nine Canadian national and local unions worked to remove boycotted products, such as Soup Supreme and FLAV-R-PAC from their institutions. Going outside national U.S. boundaries to involve an international market reflected an important strategic step towards pressuring NORPAC to respect farmworker rights regarding collective bargaining. Transnational organizing is certainly a necessary step for any labor movement in today's globalized economy, or within the context of regionalized economic agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). PCUN succeeded in adding a new level of pressure to NORPAC, and in demonstrating the power of grassroots transnational cooperation.

MUJERES LUCHADORAS PROGRESISTAS: PCUN WOMEN LAUNCH A SUCCESSFUL ECONOMIC AND LEADERSHIP PROJECT

The women's project of PCUN, now called *Mujeres Luchadoras Progresistas* (MLP), launched a highly successful income-producing project in 1997 that continued to grow for many years: project members designed, assembled, marketed, and sold Christmas wreaths. The Christmas wreath project was a more successful economic endeavor than previous attempts. In 1995 and 1996, the Women's Project produced crocheted items and piñatas and sold them at a bazaar. Although both of these products sold, they were very labor intensive and the financial returns were low. With the Christmas wreath project, however, the group hit its stride. Project advisor Susan Dobkins recalls of the 1997 season:



Workers transport wreaths for Mujeres Luchadoras Progresista, 1999 (photo by Lynn Stephen).

The first season the Christmas wreath project was kind of like, we are not sure if we can do it.... The season started off with a little bit of a “no se puede” (it can’t be done) attitude. But by the end of the season the excitement had built so much, especially when people came and saw the wreaths and the women saw the reaction of people who were buying the wreaths, that I saw this whole transformation into “si se puede” (yes, it can be done). We can do this. We do have the power to make something people like and it can earn money.... The money is kind of secondary...it is more a sense of self-confidence and confidence in the compañeras.

Lucía Zuriaga joined the women's group in 1998. For her it has also been an important space for escaping the isolation of being alone at home with children and provides a chance to learn new skills and to share life experiences with other women. She also appreciates the extra income.

I realized that this is a place where we can do something for ourselves. There are women who don't have work and here we can get a little bit of work. And a lot of times when we are alone in the house we feel bored and sometimes there are problems there. Since we are here [making wreaths and coming to meetings] we are no longer shut up in the house and here we get together and resolve our problems. Here in the women's group we are doing something for ourselves, for the women.

In addition to producing and selling Christmas wreaths, the women's group provides farmworker women with an opportu-

nity to foster a sense of satisfaction, pride, and mutual support and to learn new skills in small enterprises and leadership. The group has a cooperative format—sharing decisions, work, and financial rewards.

Organizationally, MLP focused on expanding its sales of Christmas wreaths through a network of churches, student organizations, independent community markets, and local fair trade organizations. The women of MLP also began to circulate as speakers not only about their own project, but also as advocates for immigrants' rights. In 2002 the MLP sold 1,200 Christmas wreaths and by 2004 worked its way up to 1,500. In 2008, the group sold 1,800 wreaths all across Oregon and into the state of Washington. Sales decreased in 2009 and 2010 as the group began to focus more attention on other activities. This cooperative business venture has permitted the women involved to learn how to balance a checkbook, give financial reports, and plan projects. In addition to providing a small source of income and financial management experience, the MLP also provides farmworker women with an opportunity to gain a sense of satisfaction and pride in their endeavors, to provide each other with mutual support and to learn new skills in public speaking and leadership. In monthly meetings during the off-season and intense interactions during the wreath-making season (October to December) the group provides a refuge for women.

The importance of organizational spaces that are female-only has proven to be important throughout Latin America in fostering basic confidence and skills among women as well as preparing them for public leadership roles (see Stephen 1997). While many members of the MLP come from communities in Mexico and Guatemala where they spent long blocks of time in the company of female relatives and other women in their communities on a daily basis, once they were living in Oregon, many experienced social isolation and a lack of female support networks.

Fidelia Domínguez, Mixteca from Ixpantepec Nieves, first came to the Service Center at PCUN in 1997 in order to straighten out an auto insurance claim.²¹ She joined the women's project and eventually was elected president. She recalled how much the group means to the women who arrive and are socially isolated and lonely, and miss their extended families in Mexico. The kind of space created by a group of women provides many who arrive with a special haven for sharing their feelings and working with others to resolve common issues. Having a female-only space also gives women the confidence to speak up. Once they have gained self-confidence within the women's group and are comfortable taking positions and speaking up in public, they can translate these skills to other arenas including union leadership, participation in local political forums such as PTA meetings and city council meetings, and in renegotiating domestic roles. Fidelia explained to me how she had come into the group, how women grow in the group, and why it is important that the group be female-only.

Fidelia: “Most of them come because they are poor and don't know what to do. There are also families where they don't have work. Or the husband may be working, but he doesn't earn enough money to support the kids. There are women who can't pay the rent and single mothers who also come. They are all women who feel there is no one to help them.”

Lynn: “What do people learn in the group?”

²¹ This is a pseudonym.

Fidelia: "The first thing that happens is that it helps women to cope with all that they have been through. When someone comes to meet with us they start to talk. It is like family if you don't have a family. Women start to feel confident and then they talk. They have a good time and start to forget all of their problems."

Lynn: "What did you learn from the group specifically?"

Fidelia: "I learned so much. I learned how to speak. Not that I literally couldn't speak before, but I learned how to speak up. I lost my fear. I learned how to speak in front of a lot of other people in public. I am not afraid to do that anymore. Before, I was a very fearful person. I used to tremble if I had to speak in front of people. But now I have the courage to speak.... In Oaxaca a lot of women are afraid to speak in front of people."

In Fidelia's narrative above, she talks about the importance of "learning how to speak" in public and feeling like one has the right to hold an opinion and voice it. She notes how in Oaxaca women are very afraid to speak in front of anyone, particularly in front of men. One of the most important functions of MLP has been to serve as a training ground for upcoming women leaders in PCUN, in the community of Woodburn, and elsewhere. While the Christmas wreath project has continued to be a financial success and is an important underpinning of the group, the development of self-confidence and female leadership has been a major outcome of the women's organization.

In 2002, the MLP became independent of PCUN as a self-standing nonprofit organization, a move encouraged and fully supported by PCUN. By that time there were several seasoned women leaders in MLP, as well as many long-time members who knew how to run the wreath project and other endeavors. Both union activists and the women in the group viewed this break as a measure of their success, as an indication of the capacity of the women to be self-supporting and run their own organization. The breaking away of MLP as an autonomous organization from PCUN is consistent with a pattern found in women's rural organizing throughout Latin America, where many rural women's organizations grew out of the women's secretariats and commissions of mixed-gender peasant organizations (Deere and León 2001: 129). While many of these women's organizations became autonomous in order to pursue their own practical and strategic gender interests, which is also the case for MLP, many of the women in MLP continue to participate in PCUN and others have gone on to be leaders in other organizations such as the CAUSA, Oregon's state-wide immigrant rights coalition, or projects combating domestic violence against farmworker women.

The year they became autonomous, MLP received a grant from the Peace Development Fund to develop an organized and collective response to the racism, sexism, and economic oppression faced by Latina farmworkers. In February 2005, the board of directors of MLP announced an initiative to improve their management and business skills by integrating the use of technology into their work. In cooperation with the Cipriano Ferrel Education Center (named for the first president of PCUN and located in the Nuevo Amanecer farmworker housing development in Woodburn), members of the MLP enrolled in computer classes. They hope to be able to directly market their Christmas wreaths online and to communicate by e-mail with their customers throughout the state. Being able to function on the Internet and through e-mail can be seen as an extension of "learning to speak." In November 2006, MLP began a weekly radio program as a part of KPCN-LP, PCUN's new low-powered

FM station broadcasting from Woodburn, Oregon. Initially it had a short duration but did not last. It was revived in 2011, however, and is heard every Monday morning.

Increasingly for women in the MLP and others like them, access to the Internet and telephones allows them to maintain better communications with relatives on both the U.S. and Mexican sides. E-mail is much cheaper than the telephone, and it is particularly the younger MLP members who use e-mail to communicate with relatives in Mexico. While some MLP members have returned home for visits, most that do are those with legal residency. Increased militarization of the border and the prohibitive costs of returning to the United States inhibit many undocumented members of MLP from going back to their hometowns.

The aspiration of MLP members, besides marketing their wreaths, is to use the Internet to communicate with other social movements working on similar issues. Here, the Internet functions as a way to bypass more expensive modes of communication and potentially to link together social movements with similar concerns. Internet and telephone contact were important in disseminating information about the large-scale immigrants' rights marches that took place from March through May 2006 as well as more localized news of PCUN, MLP, and other organizational events.

PRESSING FOR IMPROVED PESTICIDE REPORTING

In 1999, PCUN opposed as inadequate a bill that was an extremely restricted version of a previous bill on the reporting of pesticide use. With the support of groups like NCAP (Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides), OSPIRG (Oregon State Public Interest Research Group, a citizens lobby) and the Oregon Environmental Council, the bill passed—although it did nothing to address the pesticide issues faced by Oregon farmworkers, according to PCUN staff. The contracts PCUN negotiated in 1998 provide one of the best avenues for regulating pesticide use. PCUN has developed "Ten Commitments to Protect Farmworkers from Toxic Pesticides," which focused on the following: prohibiting the use of any pesticide known to cause cancer, birth defects, neurological damage, or that are in the highest acute toxicity category; prohibiting all aerial application of pesticides; guaranteeing that farmworkers know what pesticides are used where and will receive training about their hazards; requiring a use-reporting system for all workers that includes all ingredients (active and inert) in all products; requiring a mandatory national reporting system for all potential pesticide-related incidents and illnesses by agricultural employers and health professionals; guaranteeing all workers the right to collective bargaining; requiring an environmental monitoring system of pesticides in farmworker communities and families; and requiring and promoting research on pesticides and health issues and the transition from toxic pesticides to biorational and sustainable pest control methods (PCUN webpage).

Part 7

The Struggle for Collective Bargaining Rights Reaches a Climax (2001–2004) and Deadlock

PPCUN organized and campaigned on a host of fronts to bring collective bargaining rights to the center of awareness and debate about farm labor conditions in Oregon and to profile the diversity among Oregon's farmworkers. PCUN was active in the fields, labor camps, streets, courts, legislature, media, churches, union halls, university campuses, and food stores, among other places.

2001 WALK FOR FARMWORKER JUSTICE

2001 proved to be a pivotal year in this quest. Religious-based activism attained new visibility thanks to a seven-day "Walk for Farm Worker Justice" and the support of the four major national food service companies. The Walk for Farmworker Justice included people from immigrant, labor, religious, human rights, community, small farmer, environmental, and youth organizations who marched to bring NORPAC to the bargaining table with PCUN. Over 100 marchers departed from the Centro Cultural Community Center in Cornelius, Oregon, to walk for six days. The walk culminated on the steps of the State Capitol in a rally with Governor John Kitzhaber, UFW President Arturo Rodriguez, PCUN President Ramón Ramírez and 1,000 workers, religious activists, and other supporters. The Oregon Farm Worker Ministry and Rural Organizing Project provided a major supporting role for the march and the effort to bring NORPAC to the bargaining table by providing tours of field conditions through Washington, Yamhill, and Marion Counties and mounting protests, including a major picket line at NORPAC corporate headquarters in Stayton.

PICTSWEET MUSHROOM ORGANIZING CAMPAIGN

A second significant campaign that gained nationwide attention for PCUN in 2001 was the PictSweet Mushroom organizing campaign. Though not directly related to the NORPAC Boycott discussed above, workers at the Salem plant, owned by Tennessee-based United Foods, also looked to PCUN for support and leadership to challenge abusive practices and retaliatory firings against those who dared to complain. PCUN and the PictSweet workers joined an ongoing campaign launched by the United Farm Workers targeting United Foods for anti-union actions at their Oxnard, California, mushroom plant. The joint campaign geared up in March 2001, and by July, 180 of the 240 production workers at the Salem plant had signed petitions calling for a boycott of PictSweet mushrooms. That same month, Fred Meyer met with worker leaders and announced that they would discontinue purchases for their 119 stores. That action, plus similar steps by Safeway, Ralph's, Von's, Costco, and other retailers cost PictSweet an estimated 40 percent of their sales.

Rather than negotiate, United Foods closed the Salem plant in mid-November and refused to consider selling the plant to a more pro-union operator. PCUN worked closely with the worker committee for more than two years following the closure as they contended with the economic and psychological effects of the closure and wended their way through worker retraining programs. Though the plant closure might have been expected



Oregon governor John Kitzhaber (second from right) meets with Ramón Ramírez (third from right) and PictSweet Mushroom workers, 2002.

to create a political and community reaction, undercutting the cause of unionization, no such backlash materialized. The workers' unity, in fact, underscored the depth of feeling about challenging workplace injustice and insisting on systemic changes.

NORPAC AGREEMENT

In 2002 after almost ten years, PCUN called an end to its boycott of NORPAC. In January 2002, NORPAC contacted the governor's office asking them to set up talks with PCUN to explore suspension of the boycott. This occurred shortly after Bon Appetit, then the fourth largest food service in the country, had publicly announced their support for the boycott. The top three food service companies, Sodexho, Aramark, and Chartwell/Compass (in that order), were all actively engaging with PCUN and NORPAC behind the scenes and clearly moving in the direction of following Bon Appetit's lead. Sodexho reportedly operated up to 750 campus cafeterias in 2002 (*Northwest Labor Press* 2002). The prospect of losing many millions of dollars in sales forced NORPAC to the negotiating table. NORPAC sales to Sodexho alone reportedly amounted to \$4,500,000 annually. The key force behind the food services' concerns was the growing campus-based support for the boycott. Students at dozens of campuses pressured university administrators to terminate relations with food service companies that did not honor the boycott. Those companies were unwilling to risk multimillion dollar losses over a change in frozen produce purchasing.

Direct and intensive negotiations between top NORPAC officials and lawyers and PCUN leaders and pro bono legal counsel produced a "framework" agreement announced on February 14, 2002. The agreement laid out a process for negotiating and implementing a collective bargaining process on a substantial



Left: Cipriano Ferrel Education Center Grand Opening, October 2003. ■ Above: Ribbon-cutting ceremony at the education center with Governor Ted Kulongoski (wearing corsage) and Oregon Senate president Peter Courtney (in parka).

number of NORPAC farms. Though the agreement represented a huge political shift for NORPAC—accepting collective bargaining and negotiating directly with PCUN—the agreement never was effectively implemented because the parties could not agree on a commissioner to oversee the process. Meanwhile, agribusiness mounted an immediate and all-out counterattack in the Oregon Legislature, one that greatly complicated the prospects for unionization on NORPAC farms.

2003 OREGON LEGISLATURE NEGOTIATIONS ON COLLECTIVE BARGAINING RIGHTS AND DEADLOCK

Within days of the beginning of the NORPAC-PCUN negotiations, the agribusiness lobby rallied hundreds of growers to the front steps of the State Capitol. Some held signs that read “Save us from PCUN.” They converged on then-Governor Kitzhaber’s office and demanded that he immediately support their proposal to repeal the agricultural exemption from the existing state collective bargaining law. This would have thrown farmworkers into a system designed for public employee unionization, including representation elections by mail ballot conducted months after a petition for unionization was filed. Most importantly from the growers’ perspective, the law would drastically curtail PCUN’s use of the “secondary” boycott, the single most effective tactic in bringing NORPAC to the negotiating table. Coincidentally, the Oregon legislature was convening in special session to consider emergency budget cuts. That session convened on February 25 and by March 1, the legislature had approved HB 4025—effecting the repeal and instituting boycott restrictions, despite a written veto threat from Governor Kitzhaber. On April 14, the governor made good on his threat and vetoed the legislation allowing boycotts to continue.

The deadlock in the NORPAC process and the veto of HB 4025 set the stage for more protracted and in-depth talks on a state agricultural collective bargaining law. The agribusiness lobby insisted on PCUN’s participation, a dramatic departure from their longstanding posture rejecting first even indirect and later any direct dealings with PCUN. Newly installed governor Ted Kulongoski sponsored the talks, and over the course of the legislative session from January to July, the agribusiness negotiators dropped their demands that a law include a ban on

strikes at harvest, a divided bargaining unit (“steady” workers in one unit, “seasonal” workers in a separate unit, designed to dilute workers’ negotiating strength), swift representation elections (adopting the California standard of seven days, or forty-eight hours in the event of a strike, no exceptions), among other provisions. The talks foundered on the growers’ refusal to include mandatory contract arbitration and majority sign-up (also known as “card check”). Governor Kulongoski had made it clear that he wanted those provisions included, a position his key labor advisor made public in June 2004.

As immigration status and immigration reform steadily rose as a core concern and priority, the deadlock on an effective and fair system for implementing collective bargaining rights in Oregon agriculture has remained elusive. In 2012, the state still lacked a fair collective bargaining framework for agriculture. The issues in contention remain the same, mirroring the national organized labor movement for contract arbitration and majority sign-up.

Despite the deadlock reached with NORPAC and state legislatures, PCUN continued to struggle for labor rights gains for farmworkers. In 2004, at the urging of PCUN and state legislators led by state senator Avel Gordly, Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries commissioner Dan Gardner issued an administrative rule guaranteeing farmworkers the right to paid rest breaks, making Oregon only the fifth state to do so. In 2004, PCUN also pushed for effective enforcement of Oregon’s minimum wage law, one of only two laws in the country to include annual cost-of-living increases (known as “indexing”). In 2009, the Oregon minimum wage stood at \$8.40/hour and had been higher than the federal minimum every year but one since 1989. The aggregate benefit to a minimum wage worker working full-time in Oregon as contrasted with a worker receiving only the federal minimum (e.g., in Idaho) amounted to more than \$40,000 over those two decades.

CO-ORGANIZED PROGRAMS FOR INDIGENOUS FARMWORKERS: WORKPLACE SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ASSAULT; PESTICIDE USE

As Oregon’s farmworker population became more diverse with increasing numbers of indigenous farmworkers from a



Mural in the meeting hall of PCUN's Risberg Hall headquarters, Woodburn, Oregon.

wide range of ethnic groups in Mexico and Guatemala, PCUN co-organized the first of several multiyear initiatives with the Oregon Law Center, Farmworker Justice, and health professionals and academics to document, train, and raise awareness among indigenous farmworkers about workplace sexual harassment and assault and pesticide use. The most significant period of indigenous immigration to Oregon appears to have happened between the early 1990s and 2005. The legalization of some workers from indigenous communities in the mid-1980s through IRCA allowed others to petition for legalization. In addition, farm labor contractors and recruiters who worked in Oregon had to reach farther into Oaxaca, Veracruz, Nayarit, and other Mexican states to recruit first-time migrants for seasonal farm labor. Communities that were networked into families who had legal status were often able to work outside of labor contractors. Those communities that did not have contact and networks that included legal individuals were more likely to be recruited directly from indigenous communities in Oaxaca, Veracruz, Chiapas, and elsewhere to labor camps in Oregon and other states. These workers, often monolingual, or understanding or speaking little Spanish at best, became part of the wave of new indigenous immigrants from Mexico to Oregon (see Stephen 2007).

By 2002, indigenous immigrants had accounted for probably 40 percent of the temporary and permanent farmworker population and had moved into other sectors as well, including canneries, nurseries, construction, home-care and childcare, and other service and food-related industries. While the U.S. Census counted 260,094 Mexicans in Oregon in 2002, Mexico's Consul General in Oregon at the time, Fernando Sánchez Ugarte, believed that with the uncounted population of migrant and seasonal workers, the population was larger (Rico 2005:16). More than 11 percent of the Mexican population in Oregon is from Oaxaca—almost all indigenous, suggesting 26,000 or more indigenous migrants just from that Mexican state. If indigenous migrants and immigrants from Michoacán, Guerrero, and from the Central American country of Guatemala are included, the

total number of indigenous migrants is likely to be up to 60,000 or more and growing.

Community outreach workers from the Oregon Law Center have documented the presence of fourteen different indigenous ethnic groups and languages in Oregon from Mexico and Guatemala including Mixteco Alto, Zapoteco, Mixteco Costa, Chinanteco, Tzotzil, Maya, Mixteco Bajo, Triqui, Nahuatl, Zoque, Chatino, Tojolabal and Kanjobal (Oregon Law Center 2007). Guatemalan indigenous immigrants are found north of Oregon as well. The PCUN joint initiative with Oregon Law Center, Farmworker Justice, and health professionals has engaged in path-breaking workshops for women and men led by indigenous organizers. Often these workshops are the first time that issues of gender and sexuality have ever been discussed in indigenous farmworker families. Outreach workers use theatre, drawing, and other tools to begin discussion and to use culturally appropriate frameworks for advancing their work.

Part 8

The Movement for Comprehensive Immigration Reform (2001–present)

The September 11, 2001, coordinated suicide attacks—which crashed into the twin towers of the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and rural Pennsylvania killing nearly 3,000 victims and nineteen hijackers—changed the U.S. cultural and political landscape. Comprehensive immigration reform looked like a sure bet in September 2001 with President George W. Bush and a newly elected president in Mexico, Vicente Fox, supporting the effort. PCUN's efforts the year before in promoting comprehensive immigration reform had seen considerable success. In August 2000, when Bush was running for president, PCUN organizers were able to mount their largest march yet to the state capital in favor of immigration reform. While the march generated great optimism, the changes generated by the 9/11 attacks required PCUN and other immigration advocates to retool their strategies and framing of the issue. PCUN secretary-treasurer Larry Kleinman reflects on that moment in 2000.

August 2000 was when George Bush was running for president, and Vicente Fox had been newly elected in Mexico as the first non-PRI president in seventy years. They seemed to be in sync about making immigration reform, including a path to citizenship, a priority. That energized the community. We helped to encourage that activism and organized a march. We've organized innumerable marches in our history, but this march was of particular significance because of its size, and the tone and dynamism of it. This was a march on August 20, 2000, in the state capital that attracted 3,000 people, way more than we expected. It was also the first time that we used Spanish language TV, doing TV spots, and spent significant money. So the great hopes of that possible collaboration were dashed. 9-11 put a big chill, of course, on immigration reform and changed the frame about immigration to terrorism and national security.

CATALYZING IMMIGRATION REFORM AFTER 9/11: THE 2003 IMMIGRANT WORKER'S FREEDOM RIDE

PCUN, like many political organizations, had to build a new campaign for comprehensive immigration reform after 2001. By 2002, PCUN and other allies were ready to begin the "One Million Voices for Legalization" campaign, conducted nationally through the summer of 2002. This campaign culminated on October 9, 2002, with 33,000 cards collected by PCUN, CAUSA, and allies in Oregon. Once this Oregon immigration campaign was successfully carried out, PCUN became an inaugural partner in a national collaboration to catalyze immigration reform in January 2003. Partners included Service Employees International Union (SEIU with 2.1 million members), National Council of La Raza, Center for Community Change, UNITE-HERE, United Food and Commercial Workers, Asian American Justice Center, Nuevavista Group, Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA), the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, and the New York Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. This constellation of organizations eventually became the core leadership of the Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform (CCIR) formed in 2003 and the Campaign "Reform Immigration For America" (RI4A) formed in 2004. Both



Protest for Immigration Reform at the state capital, with more than 3,000 people present, August 20, 2000.

have attracted hundreds of other partners and mobilized millions of immigrants and supporters.

PCUN has had a national leadership role in galvanizing national support for immigration reform since 2001. In 2003, CCIR/RI4A—with PCUN's enthusiastic participation—launched the Immigrant Worker's Freedom Ride, modeled after the freedom rides of the Civil Rights movement. PCUN and CAUSA co-led the Oregon bus, which included activists from diverse backgrounds on a ten-day trek across the country. PCUN president Ramón Ramirez went cross-country accompanied by his children on the Oregon bus. Hundreds of buses ultimately converged on Washington D.C. in early October and rallied near the Statue of Liberty in New York.

The 2003 Freedom Ride moved the debate on comprehensive immigration reform to a new place on the national agenda. Larry Kleinman believes that it was instrumental in moving the country past the security and terrorism discourse of 2001. Kleinman says of the 2003 Freedom Ride:



Above left: Map of 2003 Freedom Ride routes • Below left: Freedom riders from Oregon lined up by their bus at Portland send-off rally. • Above: Freedom riders.

That was a national mobilization to jump start and reframe the issue of immigration, as an issue of immigrants' contributions to the society economic and otherwise, to reclaim the positive narrative about immigrants. And so there were busloads of immigrants and their supporters who converged from all over the country on Washington D.C. in the beginning of October 2003. PCUN and CAUSA co-led the Portland bus of 50 people. It was a very eclectic group of folks who rode the whole way, stopping along the way and engaging local communities and supporters and so on. They must have made a dozen stops. Then all converged on D.C. for a lobby day and a big rally and then went on to a rally in Staten Island near the Statue of Liberty. 9-11 is, of course, always still with us. But it was no longer the be-all and end-all on the discussion on immigration.

SENSENBRENNER BILL, REAL ID, AND A HISTORIC RESPONSE IN THE STREETS OF THE UNITED STATES

The 2003 Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride along with CCRI created a national immigrant rights network with passionate participants. While this network was not visible to much of the nation, in 2006 a piece of national legislation passed in the U.S. House of Representatives lit a spark, which ignited the largest immigrant rights' marches in U.S. history. The Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005 (HR 4437) or the Sensenbrenner Bill (named for its sponsor, Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner, R-WI) passed in the U.S. House in December 2005. HR 4437 criminalized anyone known to be undocumented, mandated employers to verify workers' legal status through electronic means, called for 700 miles of fencing along the U.S.-Mexico border, made it harder for legal U.S. residents to become citizens, and broadened the definition of smuggling to include anyone who aids or transports an undocumented immigrant, and other provisions (see Library of Congress 2005). The particular provisions of HR 4437, which classified undocumented immigrants and anyone who aided them in entering or remaining in the United States as felons, got immediate and widespread condemnation. The Catholic Church called on its clergy and parishioners not only to denounce HR 4437, but also to take to the streets. Donald Kerwin, then execu-

tive director of the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, wrote in 2006: "...the Catholic Church has played a central role in the immigrant-led protests that have swept the country. The church has encouraged parishioners to participate in the protests, offered bishops and priests as speakers, and served as an interlocutor for its newcomer members before Congress and in other public forums" (Kerwin 2006). Another crucial element in producing the large marches was the involvement of Spanish language radio DJs who helped to spread the word in major cities such as Los Angeles and Chicago. Spanish television media, such as Univision, Telemundo, and Azteca America, also helped to publicize the marches. Los Angeles-based DJ Eddie "Piolin" (tweetybird) Sotelo, a syndicated talk show host whose show is broadcast in twenty cities, talked up the rally in Los Angeles in March 2006. "I was talking about how we need to be united to demonstrate that we're not bad guys and we're not criminals," said Sotelo (Flaccus 2006).

PCUN organized its first march against the Sensenbrenner Bill in Portland on March 4, 2006. March attendance was impressive, with about 4,000 people. What was different about this march from previous ones in Portland (as contrasted with Salem or Woodburn) was the large presence of Latinos. While PCUN marches in Portland always have a significant Latino presence, at least half of marchers there are usually progressive White allies. The Portland march foreshadowed what happened across the country. In Chicago on March 10, 2006, an estimated 100,000 people marched (Avila and Olivo 2006). On March 25, 500,000 people marched in Los Angeles (Watanabe and Becerra 2006).

On April 10, 2006—a day of actions across the country in 102 cities—a group of 5,000 students walked out of their classes and converged on Pioneer Courthouse Square in downtown Portland. According to Larry Kleinman, "nobody organized the march.... This was a completely spontaneous outpouring and sort of self-actualizing.... I remember quite clearly there was no security, no organization. It was actually quite precarious in some ways and we lent a hand." On April 13, 2006, hundreds of Woodburn students walked out of their classrooms. The largest immigrant rights rally that PCUN helped to organize in 2006



Workers Day Rally, Salem, Oregon, May 1, 2006.



was on May 1, 2006, in Salem at the Oregon State Capitol. An estimated 12,000 people were there. Workers such as those at a Dairy Queen in Woodburn went on the march “without permission.” Inspired by the film *A Day without Mexicans*, many skipped work and converged on the State Capitol.

One of the grassroots leaders of the mobilizations in spring 2006 was Lorena Manzo. Lorena first had contact with PCUN as a member and leader of *Mujeres Luchadoras Progresistas* in 2001. Born in San José del Tule in Jalisco, Mexico, she migrated to California at the end of 1993 at the age of sixteen. She spent three years there working in the fields harvesting oranges, lemons, grapes, strawberries, plums, tomatoes, cucumbers, and cotton. In 1997 her family followed one of her brothers to Woodburn, Oregon. Once in Oregon, Lorena began to work outside of agriculture in factories and stores. In 2001, she received her GED and that same year began to participate with *Mujeres Luchadoras Progresistas* (MLP). She worked as a volunteer at PCUN, *Voz Hispana*, and CAUSA before becoming a CAUSA staff member in 2006, and was deeply affected by the 2006 marches in Oregon. She spent much of her time organizing the immigrant rights marches of 2006 and remembers the power people felt, many for the first time, as they marched in ever-growing numbers.

People were in the mood to fight against Sensenbrenner and defend what they felt were their rights. There were whole families out there and you would see kids participating and shouting who were as young as three years old....

In April when we marched in the capitol in Salem, the people began to react even more. There were more people. Then the people began to leave their work to participate (May 1, 2006) and the students began to walk en masse. I remember one student said to me on a march at the capitol building, “Este es el capitolio donde si se puede (This is the capitol where yes we can).” ...

... It gave me goose bumps to see so many people.... It feels so good to see all the people. You feel protected when you are in the multitude, and it gives you energy to keep on doing what you are doing and to defend what you believe is right. You feel like nothing will happen to you while you are there with all those people. I imagine that other people felt the same way because this is part of the confidence you get when you are united.

Lorena was also impressed by the actions of the students in Woodburn and the surrounding areas who came together and organized their own rally for immigrant rights.

After that march in the capitol in April is when the students started to carry out their own actions in their own towns. Like here in Woodburn the students organized and walked out of their schools. They organized their middle schools and their high schools and they went out and made their own rally. This included schools in Gervais and they came walking here to Woodburn from all directions until they all came together and rallied...It was very emotional and you could feel that motivation that everyone had to seek change....

THE STRUGGLE TO MAINTAIN THE RIGHT TO OREGON DRIVER'S LICENSES FOR IMMIGRANTS

Although immigrants felt empowered by the large marches in 2006, state legislation that was proposed and then approved in 2008—with stricter requirements on the issuance of driver licenses and identification cards in Oregon—produced a crisis in the immigrant community. PCUN and CAUSA organizers and others held large mobilizations to persuade Oregon's Governor Kitzhaber to turn back the Oregon Legislature's adoption of restrictions in February 2008, but to no avail. The governor signed into law restrictive new rules for driver's licenses and state IDs. The law codified and made permanent the governor's own executive order issued in November 2007. Many perceived that this action by him left the legislature politically boxed in, though they could have just let his order, valid for six months, expire. The law required that applicants present a valid social security number to renew or acquire new driver's licenses or state-issued IDs. For many undocumented workers, mothers, and others who drove to work, or drove their children to school, sports activities, and other places, the new law produced brutal choices: drive without a valid license and risk deportation, or don't drive and remain at home unable to work and transport children (often U.S. citizens) to school, church, and other activities. Politically, this sent a strong message to the immigrant and Latino community in Oregon that Lorena Manzo sums up well:

When we lost the battle about the driver's licenses and the governor signed that law, we felt like he and others were turning their backs on us—people who we thought were with us. That

is when people began to decrease their political participation. They saw that there really wasn't so much support for immigrant rights and that nothing happened with regard to immigration reform. Then the elections happened in 2008 with Obama and there were lots of promises then about immigration reform, but still, we have nothing.

STOPPING E-VERIFY AND IMMIGRANT WORKER RIGHTS

Instead, what the immigrant community observed after 2008 was stepped-up enforcement in Oregon and elsewhere that involved a shift in workplace enforcement from worksite raids to “desktop raids” involving the auditing of I-9 forms, the matching of social security numbers to names, and the generation of Social Security Administration no-match letters to employees when names and social security numbers did not match up. This has resulted in the displacement of hundreds of workers in Oregon. In addition, this strategy was linked to cooperation between local police and jails working with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to identify undocumented workers, lock them up, and deport them. In this process families are divided, children separated from their parents, and married couples separated.

In 2009, an investigation conducted by PCUN discovered that close to 250 workers were dismissed at a farm in Dallas, Oregon. According to their report, “workers at Meduri Farms were notified in May that they were being terminated due to ‘invalid or fraudulent social security numbers.’” The farm owner received a letter from the Social Security Administration saying there were discrepancies in the social security numbers that workers had provided. The workers were given thirty days to prove they were in the country legally in order to be able to continue working (CAUSA 2009).

Anti-immigrant groups stepped into the political opening provided by the Obama administration’s policy and filed county ballot measure petitions in Marion and Polk Counties (April 2010) seeking to make “E-Verify” mandatory for all non-governmental employers in those counties.²² E-Verify refers to an Internet-based system provided by the Department of Homeland Security which “allows an employer, using information reported on an employee’s Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification, to determine the eligibility of that employee to work in the United States” (Department of Homeland Security 2011). The E-Verify system, however, has been found to be seriously flawed. According to Immigration Impact, in 2010 alone, 80,000 people likely lost their jobs because of errors in the system (Immigration Impact 2011).

AGJOBS AND THE DREAM ACT

PCUN also worked with other national groups to pass two other significant pieces of immigrant rights legislation: AgJOBS and the DREAM Act. AgJOBS—or The Agricultural Job Opportunity, Benefits, and Security Act of 2003 (S 1645 and HR 3142)—was cosponsored by U.S. Senators Edward Kennedy (D-Mass) and Larry Craig (R-Idaho) and introduced in September 2003. This legislation provided a path for earned legalization for unauthorized agricultural workers and H-2A guestworkers by allowing them to earn a “blue card” temporary immigration status with the possibility of becoming permanent residents of the United States by continuing to work in agriculture and by meeting addi-



Lorena Manzo has worked as lead organizer of CAUSA, and is preparing to be director of an organization (photograph by E. Sorensen, CAUSA Communications, 2009).

tional requirements (see Farmworker Justice 2011).

The purpose of the Development, Relief and Education of Alien Minors Act, also called the DREAM Act, is to help give undocumented youth between the ages of twelve and thirty—who have entered the United States before the age of fifteen—an opportunity to enlist in the military or go to college and have a path to citizenship. The December 2010 version of the DREAM Act legislation further required that to be eligible young people must graduate from a U.S. high school, have a GED, or be accepted into a college or university.

PCUN and others have worked over the past several decades on a wide range of immigrant rights initiatives and legislation, but the most significant outcome of this work has been the building of an immigrant rights movement. PCUN will continue to work on a path to citizenship for undocumented workers, for AgJOBS, and DREAM Act. Regardless of the ups and downs—and the outlook is for more anti-immigrant legislation in the near term—the immigrants’ rights struggle will remain a defining one for the nation and for PCUN. The national immigrant rights movement is now inextricably intertwined with the path of labor rights and Latino political power.

²² Signatures to qualify the county ordinance initiative for the ballot were never submitted.

Part 9

Building the Movement's Capacity: Radio Movimiento and the "Capaces" Collaborative (2001–present)

In the third decade of its existence, PCUN has worked to build its organizing capacity and expand its reach. By 2000 PCUN had eight sister organizations: CAUSA (Oregon's immigrant rights coalition), the Farmworker Housing Development Corporation (farmworker housing), Latinos Unidos Siempre or LUS (youth leadership), Mano a Mano Family Center (social service), Mujeres Luchadoras Progresistas or MLP (women's economic development), the Oregon Farmworker ministry (faith-based solidarity), the Salem-Keizer Coalition for Equity (education reform), and Voz Hispana Causa Chavista (voter organizing and civic engagement). The organization and its leaders also were gaining national recognition. PCUN was widely acknowledged for organizing Latino voters in 2002 through Voz Hispana Causa Chavista and in 2003, PCUN President Ramón Ramírez was selected as one of the "Leadership for a Changing World" honorees. Funded by the Ford Foundation, the Leadership for a Changing World program sought to recognize, strengthen, and support leaders and to highlight the importance of community leadership in improving people's lives. The award gave PCUN increased national and international visibility. Ramírez's national leadership in the immigrant rights arena prior to the award had already made PCUN a national player in the ongoing immigrant rights movement.

The year 2003 also saw important physical and political expansions locally in Woodburn. That year marked the completion and dedication of the Cipriano Ferrel Education Center at Nuevo Amanecer housing development run by the Farmworker Housing Development Corporation (FHDC). PCUN also acquired the property adjacent to Risberg Hall (the PCUN union hall and office), adding to the PCUN compound the building that would become the home of Radio Movimiento in 2006. Perhaps most significant, however, was the long-term leadership building project that PCUN launched—the CAPACES Project, which would in 2011 become the core of the CAPACES Leadership Institute.

EXPANDING FARMWORKER HOUSING

In the 2000s, Oregon's economy still included a significant number of farmworkers. Oregon Housing and Community Services states that based on several reliable sources, Oregon farms employed approximately 123,000 agricultural workers annually of which 95,000 or 77 percent were seasonal. The remainder were permanent workers (Oregon Housing and Community Services 2011). In 1997-1998, the National Agricultural Worker's Study (NAWS) found that the national median income for a single farmworker was \$7,500 and between \$10,000 and \$14,000 for families (U.S. Department of Labor 2000: 39). These income levels made it very difficult for farmworker families to find affordable and reasonable quality housing. The PCUN-sister organization, FHDC, has helped to increase high quality farmworker housing in Oregon. FHDC developed Colonia Libertad in Salem, which opened in August 2005 with forty-eight one-



Former Oregon governor Barbara Roberts at the Nuevo Amanecer (New Dawn) Apartments re-dedication ceremony, 2009.

to-four bedroom units providing temporary year-round housing as well as educational and outreach programs for farmworkers and their families. Another project of FHDC, Colonia Amistad, opened in Independence in September 2007, providing thirty-eight units for farmworkers as well as services including health programs, family literacy for pre-K and elementary school-aged children, summer enrichment activities, gardening, and arts and crafts. In 2006, FHDC secured land to add forty more units at Nuevo Amanecer in Woodburn. Construction is expected to begin in 2012 and the apartments should be ready for occupancy in mid-2013. In 2008 and 2009 a major exterior rehabilitation of the ninety existing units at Nuevo Amanecer and the building housing the FHDC office was carried out. PCUN's link to FHDC and participation in resident organizing remains a core focus and an important springboard for civic engagement. FHDC projects can also impact the local economy and environment. For example, after-school programs in FHDC's housing projects enlist youth in recycling. They, in turn, enlist their parents, and reduce garbage volume and costs by more than half.

RADIO MOVIMIENTO

Both in Mexico and in the United States, low frequency, community-based radio stations have continued to grow in number since the 1990s. Strategists and observers of social movements have noted the effectiveness of radio in connecting with and mobilizing listeners, as noted above in the 2006 immigrant rights marches. PCUN, with a history of radio in the 1990s, made a strategic decision to begin its own radio station known as Radio Movimiento. PCUN applied in 2001 and obtained a construction permit in 2005 from the Federal Communications Commission. PCUN mobilized dozens of volunteers to transform the adjacent building it purchased into a low-power FM



PCUN organizer Carmen González with RM volunteer Constancio Cortez on the morning show *La Hora Campesina* on Radio Movimiento, 2007.

station, which has become the most popular Spanish-language station in Woodburn (where 62 percent of the population are Latino and most are Spanish speakers). With thousands tuning into 24/7 programming on a variety of topics in Spanish as well as in the indigenous languages Mixteco and Purépecha, KPCN-LP, nicknamed Radio Movimiento, took off. KPCN-LP aired its first broadcast on August 20, 2006, but began full-time broadcasting in mid-November 2006. Some of the featured programs have included (see Kleinman 2008:82-85).

- *Conéctate con CAUSA* (Get Connected With CAUSA) uses a discussion and call-in format to delve into CAUSA's campaigns on immigration issues and analysis of immigration politics. Lorena Manzo, CAUSA community organizer, took the show to daily broadcasts during the heights of the immigration legislative debate and community mobilizations.
- *La Lavadora* (The Washing Machine) resembles an audio weekly magazine airing a unique mix of news items followed by commentary and easily the most diverse musical selections (from Rolling Stones to opera) anywhere on Radio Movimiento, all expertly produced off-site by a very accomplished and opinionated duo, photojournalist Paulina Hermosillo and independent media producer Matias Trejo.
- *Se Busca...* (Wanted...) a listener-driven space to air appeals for support, usually grassroots fundraising for burial costs or for ill relatives lacking medical insurance, but also queries for lost relatives and even offers to barter services.
- *La Hora de los Purépecha* (The Purépecha Hour) conjures a small town feel because host and Purépecha elder Pedro Torres personally knows most of the families residing in the listening area who come from the Purépecha region of southwest Michoacán. His music collection in the indigenous Purépecha language supplies a never-ending stream of community favorites, prompting a flood of calls with announcements and dedications.
- *Sal Del Closet* (Come Out of the Closet), whose provocative title remains ever ambiguous (what's hidden?), attracted a substantial and loyal youth listenership every weeknight from 10:00 to midnight. Host Hozkar Ramos originated and sometimes still anchors the show, though an informal group



KPCN-LP, also known as Radio Movimiento, was launched by PCUN in 2006 (photograph by Alice Evans, CLLAS, 2010).

of youth rotate the on-air roles. Hozkar adroitly incorporated relevant current events, such as arranging live call-in reports from the youth leaders in the Movement delegations occasionally sent to Capitol Hill to lobby for comprehensive immigration reform.

- *La Hora Mixteca* (The Mixtec Hour), actually four hours of Radio Bilingüe-produced international simulcast, linked KPCN-LP and two dozen Bilingüe affiliates with stations in Oaxaca every Sunday, facilitating live, on-air dedications and messages originated in any listening area and heard in all the others.
- *Dinos: ¿Quién Eres?* (Tell Us Who You Are). An interview format show where host Larry Kleinman acts as PCUN's "Terry Gross" (the host of NPR's *Fresh Air*), interviewing local leaders.

Other shows have included: *Primera Clase*, which features interviews and comments about Latinos in the United States and global issues in Latin America as well as news about art, culture, economics, and politics; *La Hora de las Oportunidades*,



Radio Movimiento Programming Inauguration, November 20, 2006. Radio Campesina director Anthony Chávez (middle) came from Bakersfield, California, to represent the United Farm Workers movement at the event.



focusing on information about community services offered at Chemeketa Community College such as how to improve your English, how to obtain a GED, how to learn craft and industrial skills, how to obtain a food handlers license, and other topics; and *La Hora Campesina*, featuring political news.

Adopting the culture of commercial Spanish-radio, Radio Movimiento programmers have adopted personal nicknames. Identities have included: *El Chapulin* (grasshopper), *El Actor* (the actor), *La Voz Más Dulce* (the sweetest voice), *El Chiquillo* (the kid), *El Zorro* (the fox), *La Buelita* (grandma), and *Angelito* ('lil'angel).

Javier Ceja, who had a broadcast on the original PCUN radio program in 1990 known as *La Hora Campesina*, used that same title to create a new radio show that focuses on political topics of interest to the immigrant and farmworker community. Themes have included changes in driver's license requirements in Oregon, proposals for immigration reform, more equitable gender relations in the home, and other topics. Most importantly, *La Hora Campesina* can sometimes galvanize people into action. Javier says of the show *La Hora Campesina*,

Our program, *La Hora Campesina*, is a political program with information. We don't want to have a program that is just for entertainment so that people can listen to music and then go out and buy a CD. No, there are other stations that do this. For us the key issue is to educate people. We want to participate in education and in building consciousness and awareness about issues. The situation for us isn't going to change if people do not change. This is what we have to understand. How will we change people? By giving them information, helping them to learn what they don't know....people call in to find out the truth about the driver's license restrictions, or what is really going on with immigration legislation....

.... We think that because of our programs there are people who will get interested in things, and we will be planting a seed. Through the radio we hope that we can get people to participate, to get out of their daily routine. We know how people live. They work eight or ten hours a day, they arrive at their house tired, and what they want—especially the men—is to sit in front of the TV and have a beer. And they want the woman to serve them even though both have probably just arrived home from work. So we talk about that here sometimes as well. We say, "Don't behave like this, help out the women." We have another person here, Carmen, who has a show where she talks about sexual harassment against women. So this is another kind of

information that comes from this radio. Women learn about the question of sexual harassment.

Marlen Torres, the current station manager of KPCN-LP, was born in Mexico City and came to the United States when she was five years old. After living in Iowa, she finished high school in Oregon and went on to study at Chemeketa Community College and at Western Oregon University where she graduated with a B.S. in social science. Marlen got involved with MEChA in college and also became involved with the PCUN-sister organization, Latinos Unidos Siempre. She began working at PCUN to lead the preparation for full-time programming of Radio Movimiento. It was an amazing day for her and many others when the radio station began full-time programming on November 20, 2006. She states of that day:

It was a challenge. I mean everyone knew PCUN, but it was unbelievable for the community to know that PCUN was going to have a radio station. It was like, "there's no way! You guys are talking crazy." So once they saw it in the whole advertising and talking to the community, it was like, "oh you are actually finally doing it." We had Anthony Chávez (César Chávez's son) down here. It was an honor seeing him and hearing him talking to us about all these dreams his father had about radio stations. The community came either because they were excited or because they wanted to see if it was true. It was my first event so I was just excited, having the place; you know the room being all packed with people. Having the food, talking to one another was great. Everybody just talking and saying, "I can't believe this!"

In her current job as station manager, Marlen has seen the difference that grassroots radio can make in keeping the community informed on current issues of concern such as anti-immigration bills, the recruitment of Latino high school students into the military, the DREAM Act. Unlike commercial stations that offer entertainment, play songs, and offer people tickets to concerts or other prize opportunities, the "prize" of Radio Movimiento is information and critical perspective. Marlen reflects on the important role of radio in the Latino community and why Radio Movimiento is important.

We have seen over and over again that media is a powerful tool. You can see it in TV as well you can see it in radio. With the Latino community we have seen that radio is the main thing simply because when you're at work, or drinking or working, you can hear it. And we can pass on our political message or raise people's consciousness about what is going on in our community. A flyer or a pamphlet is good, but sometimes people will just grab it and they won't read it. Or some people don't even know how to read Spanish, or they don't even know how to read in English. But they can rely on radio because it's easy. They can just turn it on.

The large immigrant rights demonstrations of 2006 showed without a doubt that radio is a powerful tool for mobilizing the Latino community. With five years of broadcasting experience, Radio Movimiento is providing an important multilingual forum for open discussion of political, economic, and cultural news and information of concern to the Latino community in the Woodburn area. Radio Movimiento also serves as a mobilizing tool. For example in 2007, announcements on the radio station over a three-week period were an important factor in mobilizing 5,000 people to a May 1 rally in Salem. When rally co-host Abel Valladares called out to the large crowd, "Who here today heard about this rally on Radio Movimiento," his question was answered by a forest of raised hands (Kleinman 2008: 88).



Building site of the CAPACES Leadership Institute, Woodburn, Oregon, October 2010 (photograph by Alice Evans, CLLAS).

CAPACES PROJECT AND CAPACES LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE: BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

PCUN co-founded or amalgamated eight other organizations by 2000 and in the new millennium began to self-consciously reflect on both its own history and how to build a sustainable organizing model for the future. Collectively, these organizations house 1,000 farmworkers and their families, assisted 6,000 immigrants to gain legal status, have trained thousands of parents to advocate for their children in public school, have created a radio station listened to by thousands, and have trained over 100 core leaders. The leaders of the nine interrelated organizations are primarily Latino immigrants or come from Latino immigrant families. More than half are under the age of thirty-five, and 60 percent are women. Many had no formal education in the United States and less than eight years of schooling in Mexico. Betting on these 100 leaders and dozens more in the future, PCUN and its affiliate organizations are right-fully staking their claim to a Latino social movement in the Willamette Valley of Oregon



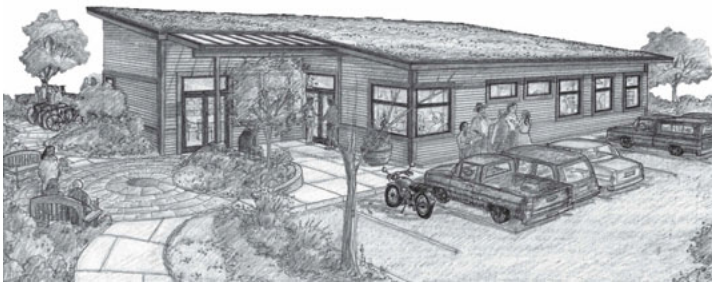
Laura Isiordia, Executive Director, CLLI.

and working to ensure the security and longevity of that movement in the future.

By 2003, PCUN realized the need for a systematic space to share experiences, train, and build strong relationships between the more than thirty-five people who staffed the eight sister organizations that PCUN had co-founded or amalgamated in the mid-Willamette Valley region. The CAPACES project began in 2003 as a regular meeting space for the staff of PCUN and its sister organizations to gather and talk about topics of general interest to all. This was particularly important for smaller organizations with only a few staff members who could feel isolated and marginalized. Four to five times a year there were “Mass Gatherings” for all staff members of PCUN and its sister organizations. Smaller, monthly gatherings were developed to focus on issues of common concern such as fundraising, grant writing, public speaking, critical thinking, communication strategies, or leadership development.

In 2005, the topic of leadership development came to be a particular focus and PCUN staff and other leaders began thinking seriously about what would be required for a generational change of leadership—one of the key ideas behind what became the CAPACES Leadership Institute (CLI), built from the CAPACES project. Larry Kleinman commented in 2011:

There was an increasing realization since about seven years ago that Ramón and I carried too much leadership responsibility, capital, institutional memory, etc., and we had fewer days ahead of us than behind us. If we were really serious about the values of the movement and the big ideas, like taking the long view,



CAPACES Leadership Institute drawing, parking lot view.

and that the struggle will not be concluded in our lifetimes, then we had better be serious about helping to prepare for our departures, or our demise, in a way appropriate to our culture and our values.

The idea of being more systematic, more methodical, about not only helping build a leadership with the folks in leadership now, but bringing more folks more systematically to leadership is at the heart of the CAPACES Leadership Institute idea.

It was the combination of realizing the need for a generational change in leadership, and a need to systematize the content of the roundtables of the CAPACES project, that was behind the CAPACES Leadership Institute. By 2008, the combined staff of PCUN and its eight sister organizations had also grown to sixty people. Led by PCUN with the support of the other organizations, a large-scale campaign was begun to raise the capital to build a new building. Strengthened by a major private donation, which made it possible to build a significant capital campaign, PCUN organizers put together a team of leaders each charged with overseeing specific pieces of the effort to build the CAPACES Institute. In addition to fundraising, there was the need to build the building and to develop the program and curriculum for the institute.

The CAPACES Leadership Institute was designed to ensure continuity and a future for PCUN and its sister organizations as well as to bring in new leaders. The broad goals of the Institute are:

- Increase knowledge and appreciation of movement history through documenting and teaching the history of PCUN and the other organizations as well as the history of other struggles that shaped these organizations.
- Boost the capacity and quantity of movement leaders committed to serve the struggles of workers in agriculture and allied industries, the struggle for farmworker collective bargaining in particular, and the Latino immigrant community in general.
- To foster unity with the organizations and movement created by PCUN and other allied organizations.

Run on the model of the CAPACES project, the Institute will develop a wide range of courses and also conduct an assessment with every participant for their own plan of leadership development. Each person who participates in the Institute will also contribute to writing movement history through telling their own personal history and stories of the events or influences which brought them into the movement or to political

consciousness. Initial courses include “CAPACES 101,” which will start with people’s individual stories and be shared with others. “Movement 101” will involve who is in the movement shared by PCUN and other organizations, how they define it, what kind of work is done, what are the accomplishments. The course will also emphasize values that have developed as part of movement political culture. Another proposed course, “Political Consciousness 101,” will emphasize the importance of a long-term political vision and political history, the instability of the immigrant work force and how immigrants build stability in this context, the political economy of wealth and poverty, and a section on racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and how they are defined, how they affect people and what the differences are between personal prejudice and institutional discrimination. Other topics will include conflict resolution, supervision, work and learning styles, communications, and strategic planning.

The CAPACES Leadership Institute building involves other innovations including a “green” design and a community construction process. Titled, “CAPACES de Verde”—literally “Green CAPACES” and “Green-Capable,” the building and construction process brings together the innovations and intersections of communities in adjacent geographies but, for the most part, different worlds. Portland is rapidly becoming an internationally recognized center for green design and construction. With a very few exceptions, Latinos generally and Latino construction workers have no role in this trend. Though Latinos make up a sizeable portion of the residential and commercial construction workforces, they are already being left behind as the “green” wave sweeps in.



CLI construction, Women's Brigade, September 2011.

By employing “PassivHaus” techniques to build the CAPACES Leadership Institute and by recruiting labor and participation from the ranks of both “green” and “brown,” this project offers unique opportunities to:²³

- Demonstrate that the energy super-efficient features of “PassivHaus” are suitable for a meeting facility and can slash heating and cooling energy usage to the point that it is pos-

²³ PassivHaus techniques refer to practices such as combining tight building envelope (sealed joints, triple-pane windows, and special doors), with “thermal bridging” (separating inside and outside surfaces to dramatically reduce conduction—such as the concrete slab floor, set on top of eight-inch rigid foam) and “heat recovery ventilation” (extracting heat from exhaust air to heat incoming fresh air).



Above left: Speakers at the CAPACES Leadership Institute Council of Advisors (CLICA) at PCUN's Risberg Hall, October 2010 (left to right): Lynn Stephen, Ramón Ramírez, Mario Sifuentez, Larry Kleinman, and Kelley Weigel (photograph by Alice Evans, CLLAS). ▪ Bottom left: Abel Valladares is one of the leaders of the new Capaces Leadership Institute. ▪ Above right: Jaime Arrendondo became active in the CAPACES project beginning in 2005, when he joined the staff of FHDC.

- sible to almost heat the building with self-generated hot air.
- Train immigrant workers, and others who step forward as volunteers, in green-building techniques such as decoupling outer and inner walls, and “living roof” installation and planting.
- Foster candid dialogue on the commonalities and contrasts that “sustainability” connotes for green activists, for Latino immigrants and for the organizations who serve and organize them.

The Institute will be a “go to” site for green design and will likely attract local, national, and international visitors. Students of green design will encounter the farmworker and Latino immigrant community in one integrated space. Local workers who participate in the construction will acquire green building skills to share with their peers and will make contacts with green builders.

Several young Latino leaders have taken on major responsibilities in the campaign leading up to the opening of the CAPACES Leadership Institute. Their responsibility in making the fundraising, site construction, and curriculum building aspects of the Institute a success is an important model for how a new generation of leaders will function.

Lorena Manzo is co-leading curriculum design and programs of the CAPACES Leadership Institute. She is currently the lead organizer with CAUSA and is preparing to be a director of an organization. At the May 2, 2010, groundbreaking ceremony for the building of the Institute, Lorena announced her intention to someday become president of PCUN. As a regular at CAPACES events, she encountered a wide array of leaders and learned from them. She also gained very concrete skills that helped her in her work with CAUSA and later on. She says of her experiences in the CAPACES program since 2004:

I started participating in 2004, and we would have about two meetings per month. I remember we touched on important themes like sexism, and we learned a lot about how to develop as a better leader, how to take care of money in our organizations, how to run our finances. I learned a lot of important information such as how to develop an event, how to hold house meetings in order to raise money, where to apply for grants, and how to write grants. They taught us very specific things like how to see which kind of organization could qualify for funding for grants.

Lorena has been a part of the team behind the building of the Institute and it has become central in her life. “For me, CAPACES is a school. It was a part of my development. It gave me the opportunity to encounter and learn with other compa-

ñeros who were in charge of the other organizations we work with. I was able to see them, listen to them, and see how they ran things. They helped me to figure how to organize and run an organization.” Lorena equates the future CAPACES Leadership Institute with family—a mother in particular—drawing on an important concept in the Latino community she lives in.

CAPACES is the basis for all of our movement. All of our organizations have come from PCUN, which is like our mother and our father. We are like children who have been born, are grown up, and have begun to make our way in the world. But the idea for CAPACES now is that it will continue to be like a mother forever. You always have ties to your mother. Wherever your mother is, you are going to return to her. When there is no mother, however, the kids don’t return. So CAPACES is like having our permanent mother, not only for us, but for future children as well.

Lorena is clearly thinking not only about her own growth in the CAPACES program, but in the importance of the construction of a permanent home where future generations will also have a chance to learn.

Jaime Arrendondo, currently director of fund development of the Farmworker Housing Development Corporation (FHDC), was also a participant in the CAPACES project, beginning in 2005. Jaime was born in 1982 in the small town of Las Ranas, Michoacán, in rural Mexico. His father began to come to Oregon in the late 1970s to work in the fields. In the mid-1980s, Jaime’s mother came to the United States with his youngest brother and he stayed behind with his older brother and sister. Jaime’s father received legal residency through the 1986 IRCA program and then petitioned for the rest of his family. PCUN’s Service Center for Farmworkers processed his father’s amnesty case. Jaime arrived in 1991 as a third grader and went to school in Salem. He became involved in Voz Hispana in high school and also with Latinos Unidos Siempre and Mano a Mano. He finished high school in 2001.

Jaime attended Willamette University as an undergraduate, worked in the cafeteria there, and completed his degree in 2005. After finishing college, he began to work with the Farmworker Housing Development Corporation and to participate in the CAPACES meetings. He credits the CAPACES meetings with educating him about the history of the movements PCUN has been involved with, teaching him concrete skills, and also helping him to feel that the work he was doing at the FHDC was part of a larger social movement.

I got to learn about each organization a little bit more. More about PCUN, more about Mano a Mano, the Salem-Keizer Coalition for Equality, the Farm Worker Ministry, and Mujeres Luchadoras Progresistas, which I didn’t even know existed until I worked at Colonia Libertad. I learned about LUS and Voz Hispana. I learned quite a bit, I met all these people and I felt I was part of a larger movement. It wasn’t just FHDC. We are a movement here in the Willamette Valley and we are really trying to integrate immigrant families into the broader community. All that we do is part of this integration, whether it is getting people registered to vote, having homes for people, trying to get them involved in education, or getting the women involved. I felt that I was part of something bigger.

Jaime has come to place great importance on learning history and in having history taught to others. He sees this as an important aspect of what the future CAPACES Leadership Institute will be able to do. Both for himself and others, he feels that

knowing not only personal histories, but the history of the struggles that immigrant and farmworker communities have been through, is extremely important in expanding leadership and organizing in the future.

The first thing is educating the leadership of our struggle. I think it starts with that. Just like my story and other stories of farmworkers.... After learning the history of the work we have done here, how much it has taken, how we started with less than zero, we have opportunities to do great things in our communities.... I see leadership development as the vehicle for defending what it has taken us thirty years to build. To expand the work we do—to make more people homeowners, to make more people voters, to be represented at the table when decisions are made, to have the resources to make economic and electoral change—we need the Leadership Institute.

Another key leader in the CAPACES Leadership Institute development process is Abel Valladares. Abel is the head of the donor committee for the Institute, which has achieved a fund-raising goal of \$750,000 (including \$250,000 from individuals and community-based organizations). Abel was born in 1986 in Queretaro, Mexico. When he was fourteen years old, he came directly to Oregon to where his father had been living for many years. Abel had a difficult time in North Salem High School and found it hard to adapt to the U.S. high school system. He began to work with students from MEChA in high school and from there got involved with LUS (Latinos Unidos Siempre). After hearing a presentation about the DREAM Act, he went to work for the national campaign to promote the DREAM Act and met young activists from across the country.

From there he went on to a paid internship in CAUSA and to work for Voz Hispana where he organized Latino voters. In 2009, Abel worked closely with PCUN President Ramón Ramírez on issues of collective bargaining and then took up coordinating the activities of the CAPACES project. He coordinated meetings, took notes, notified people of meeting times, and also put together materials for the gatherings. That same year Abel began to work on the donor campaign for the CAPACES Leadership Institute. This work, he says, has been a transforming experience.

Fundraising has been one of the most fortunate experiences of my life. I always tried to think positively and this has always helped my self confidence. But this work has done a lot for me.



A sign at PCUN’s Risberg Hall headquarters in Woodburn, Oregon, announces a gathering to talk about the new CAPACES Leadership Institute, October 2010 (photograph by Alice Evans, CLLAS).



Ramón Ramírez meets with the PCUNCitos Club, July 2011.

Because asking people for money can be intimidating. But once you ask for money successfully several times, it gives you more confidence. After that you start to say, yes. This really is possible.... I also learned how much affection and respect people have for PCUN. When I call people and say that I am from PCUN, they have a warm response and tell me they appreciate the work I am doing.

Abel is excited about the Institute and its potential to transform the work that he and others are doing in the Latino immigrant community.

The Institute is going to help us to see what we are able to do together. When we all meet and share with one another and bring in other people, you say, "Wow. I didn't know that all of this was going on at the same time." It makes us feel part of a broader movement. This will help to make us all feel more self-confident and effective.

With its doors opened in August 2012 with thousands of hours of volunteer labor embedded in its walls, the CAPACES Leadership Institute preserves the history of the organization and larger social movement built out of PCUN's legacy and provides a grassroots university for training new generations of leaders committed to a host of related struggles including farmworker rights, immigrant rights, Latino political participation, and more. The Institute serves not only those preparing to take on leadership roles, but is an important resource for the wider Latino community of Oregon as it brings in people to serve as educators and also sends out generations of future Latino leaders.

PCUNCITOS CLUB

While the CAPACES Leadership Institute focuses on promoting leadership among young adults, the need for mentorship for Latino youth also exists. The Woodburn School District in PCUN's hometown is 82 percent Latino (2011). This is equal to 4,000 Latino school-aged children. Despite Voz Hispana's success instituting César Chávez Day in Woodburn schools, Latino students have too few positive role models and organized outlets for public service, and insufficiently rigorous academic challenges. Most Mexican youth are miseducated about their identities and history and know little about the powerful social change movements that Mexican people have led in Mexico and in the United States.



PCUNCitos play, 2009.

Another leadership project launched from the PCUN-linked organizations focuses on Latino children, ages ten to thirteen. Voz Hispana Causa Chavista (VHCC) launched the PCUNCitos Club in 2008 to engage Latino children in learning and practicing the values of the farmworker movement, to think critically, to speak out, and to prepare to be leaders. Specifically, the PCUNCitos Club focuses on movement values (service to others, personal responsibility, respect for human rights, nonviolence, worker empowerment, gender equality) and leadership for the community and common good. The PCUNCitos club has a core membership of sixteen children.

In 2010, the club produced two weekly *Radio Movimiento* shows, *La Hora Infantil* and *La Hora de los Adolescentes*, both on Saturday afternoons. PCUNCitos also completed a thirteen-week course on voting history and politics, organized a Día de los Muertos community gathering, and developed a course on workers' rights and collective bargaining, among many other activities. In addition to sustaining the weekly radio shows, the PCUNCitos created, produced, and performed a fifteen-minute play titled *Organizándonos para la Lucha* (Organizing Ourselves for the Struggle), which required character and script development, two months of twice-weekly rehearsals, and set, costume, and props design and production. PCUNCitos are a fixture at immigrants' rights marches and gatherings. They researched the origins and customs of Día de los Muertos and presented a detailed explanation on November 1, 2009, to a full-house at PCUN's union hall about the altar they had helped to assemble. They also learned to make piñatas and understand their cultural origins.

PCUNCitos Saturday morning courses actively involve Latino children in documenting histories of their own and other communities as well as engaging with the wider community. For example, in the course on leadership, PCUNCitos members formulated questions and recorded interviews with movement leaders. They synthesized their own description of leadership and presented it at the groundbreaking celebration for the CAPACES Leadership Institute building, adjacent to PCUN headquarters.

Conclusions

This history of farmworker organizing in the state of Oregon suggests that the right to collective bargaining is not easily won: more than twenty years of sustained organizing at the state, local, and national level all contributed to the signing of the first collective bargaining agreement in 1998—beginning with the work of the Willamette Valley Immigration Project. PCUN succeeded in achieving this historic goal through a combination of the patience and tenacity involved in building a long-term relationship with the farmworker community, constructing viable regional, national, and international coalitions, and combining yearly field organizing efforts with boycotts and the constant watchdogging of state and national legislative processes. A commitment to build leadership within its 5,500 plus membership also resulted in the creation of new leaders who are given more responsibility as they become ready. The growing number of women in the agricultural labor force means that their leadership will be crucial to future PCUN campaigns, a fact that is recognized and actualized through special PCUN projects focusing on women's concerns and abilities. Another key legacy of PCUN's efforts is the organization of a well-prepared and committed group of activists who dedicate themselves to work on a long-term basis, thus contributing to the reality of collective bargaining for farmworkers in the state of Oregon.

In June 2011, PCUN signed a deed of gift promising its historic papers to the University of Oregon Libraries' Special Collections and University Archives, which will preserve, organize, and make the papers available for research projects conducted by students, faculty, and others. PCUN's gift of its historic papers is



June 6, 2011—Former University of Oregon president Richard Lariviere (right) and PCUN president Ramón Ramírez sign documents deeding historic papers of *Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste* to the UO Libraries' Special Collections and University Archives. ▪ Below left: Members of the audience at the celebration of the PCUN-UO Partnership look at historic farmworker photos by John Bauguess in the lobby of the UO Knight Library, June 2011. ▪ Below right: The Jimmie G. Revue performs in the Browsing Room at the celebration (photographs by Jack Liu).

another indication of the importance of PCUN's place in Oregon history.

Since the Willamette Valley Immigration Project began in 1977, Oregon's population has changed dramatically. In 1980, Oregon had a Latino population of 2.5 percent. By 1980 that figure was 4 percent and by 2000, 8 percent. The 2010 census revealed that Oregon's Latino population was nearly 12 percent. In Marion County, where PCUN is based, the Latino population was 25 percent by 2010. PCUN has been

a crucial part of Latino history in Oregon over the past three decades. From a small office providing legal services for immigrant workers to being a national leader in defending the rights of farmworkers and immigrants, PCUN has become a role model for the positive integration of Latino immigrants in the United States. The PCUN motto of "Si se puede" (yes we can) has inspired a remarkable thirty-year history of accomplishments, and it promises to be the inspiration behind many more to come.



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Appendix 1

POWER RELATIONS IN FARM LABOR

Farmwork takes place in a system of labor relations that also represent a hierarchy of power, authority, and control. These are fundamental class relations, and referred to as relations of production.

Farmworkers: According to the National Farm Labor Survey of 2010, the annual average number of people employed as hired farmworkers, including agricultural service workers, decreased from 1,142,000 in 1990 to 1,053,000 in 2010 (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2011).

Individual farmworkers earnings average out to only about \$11,000 a year. In 2000-2001, the average individual income of crop workers was between \$10,000 and \$12,499. Total family income averaged between \$15,000 and \$17,499. At that time 30 percent of all farmworkers had total family incomes that were below the poverty guidelines. Twenty-two percent said that they or someone in their household had used at least one type of public assistance program in the previous two years (National Agricultural Workers Survey 2001).

According to the National Agricultural Workers Survey, the share of hired crop farmworkers who were not legally authorized to work in the United States grew from roughly 15 percent in 1989-91 to almost 55 percent in 1999-2001. Since then it has fluctuated around 50 percent (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2011). In the West and Northwest that percentage is probably much higher. In Oregon, some people estimate that 50 to 80 percent of the farm labor force is undocumented, although most workers in Oregon reside in the state year-round. In the 1990s, an increasing percentage of farmworkers brought their families to Oregon to reside permanently. Farmworkers in Oregon work under extremely harsh conditions, for low pay, and have been struggling for decades to gain the right to collective bargaining. While four contracts have been signed in the state by PCUN, the majority of farmworkers are still not unionized.

Immigration from Mexico and Central America to the United States continued through 2005 but began to decrease after 2005. From the 2000s on, many families settled into Oregon and other states. The increase in settled Latino immigration population is best reflected in the demographics of school-age children in Oregon. In 2009, 23 percent of children younger than five in Oregon were Latino, suggesting that they will represent a very significant part of the school-age population during the next fifteen years (Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs 2010: 18). In 2009, approximately 20 percent of school-age children in Oregon were Latino.

Farmworker Unions: Organize workers to obtain the right to bargain collectively (as a group) with their employers to ensure basic rights including reasonable working conditions (ability to take breaks, work safely, have good equipment), just compensation for their work (decent wages, overtime), benefits (health insurance, vacation leave, sick leave), freedom from sexual harassment, and provision of childcare. Examples include PCUN (Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste), UFW (United Farm Workers), and FLOC (Farm Labor Organizing Committee).

Corporations: The top of the power hierarchy in farming is found in large corporations that buy produce from farmers such as Campbell, Inc. Often farmers have direct contracts with corporations, particularly beginning in the 1970s and later. Targeting

corporations that buy grower produce is thus an important part of farmworker union strategizing.

Grower Owned Cooperatives: NORPAC: Over the past several decades, growers have pooled their profits and bought up major processing facilities from multinational corporations like General Foods. Today, one of these grower-owned “cooperatives,” NORPAC Foods, has 240 farmer/grower members and produces “over 600,000,000 pounds of product annually” according to its website (NORPAC 2011). NORPAC has an estimated 1,500-2,500 workers and annual revenue of \$250 to \$500 million, according to a 2009 article in the *Portland Business Journal* (Geigerich 2009). It is one of the West’s largest food processing companies. They use their profits to expand into distribution and other segments of the food industry. For example, in Oregon growers use institutions like NORPAC to own canneries as well. They also set the harvesting calendar and affect labor conditions in the field.

Growers: The number of farms has steadily decreased in this century. The last agricultural census of 2007 showed that there were 2.2 million farms in the United States. In the late 1990s, the largest 1.5 percent of the nation’s farms produced 38 percent of the country’s agricultural products. Production has increased as farms substitute technology for human labor. During harvest seasons of perishable hand-harvested crops, growers often try to get the most possible out of farmworkers. They can either create incentives (collective bargaining, decent wages, reasonable working conditions) to ensure workers will accept their temporary jobs, or they can go for the most desperate workers and keep wages low. In most cases it has been the latter strategy. As federal laws increased to provide some worker rights and required growers to keep accurate records and allowed enforcement agents to investigate farms and living and working conditions, many have become dependent on labor contractors and try to avoid responsibility for many aspects of employing farmworkers. Other laws regulating working conditions are also frequently ignored and poorly enforced.

Contractors: Intermediaries who connect growers looking for workers with workers looking for jobs. They may take on many managerial aspects of work as well—particularly those for which the growers do not want responsibility. The likelihood of abuse increases in direct relation to the amount of control contractors have over a farm laborer’s daily existence. Some may pay farm laborers for fewer hours than they work, loan money at high interest rates, and require workers to pay for food, rent, tools, and transportation—often charging exorbitant prices. They may pocket wage deductions that are supposed to go to state and federal governments, such as social security. Most contractors are from the same ethnic group as laborers and speak the same language. Many labor contractors are not registered, and although growers are obligated by law to use registered contractors, many do not.

Riteros: Usually work with or for contractors. They provide rides to and from the fields and can also recruit laborers. Like contractors, many charge fees and even require workers to take rides to the fields even if they have or can arrange their own transportation.

Mayordomos: Supervisors who assign workers to rows and walk the rows monitoring the workers. They also discourage contact with union organizers and are usually allied with farm contractors.

Camperos: Individuals in charge of labor camps who are often close relatives of the labor contractors or the farm supervisor. Camp operators are required to register with BOLI (see below).

Coyotes, polleros, pateros: People who smuggle undocumented migrants over the U.S. border for a payment. Some operate between border cities, staying with migrants only until they have crossed the border, while others will transport migrants from their homes in Mexico directly to job sites in California, Oregon, Texas, or elsewhere. Some work alone, others are a part of complex networks involving crossing guides, drivers, and houses where workers are hidden until their smuggling fee is paid off. Some coyotes work directly with contractors delivering laborers from within Mexico to work sites in the United States.

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

A variety of government agencies are supposed to regulate the labor conditions for farmworkers, enforce existing legislation, and enforce U.S. immigration policy. They include:

Bureau of Labor and Industry (BOLI): Oregon state agency charged by law with encouraging and enforcing compliance with state laws regulating wages, hours, terms, and conditions of employment, as well as dealing with general issues of employment discrimination. For example, BOLI enforces the minimum wage law since Oregon's minimum wage (\$8.80/hour in 2012) is higher than the federal minimum wage (\$7.25/hour in 2012). BOLI is specifically responsible for registering and policing farm labor and reforestation contractors and camp operators.

Department of Labor (DOL): Responsible for enforcement of federal labor and wage laws. Since key federal laws such as the National Labor Relations Act (regulating collective bargaining) exempt farmworkers, DOL's role is limited to enforcing provisions such as child labor, recruitment of seasonal farmworkers, certain wage claims, and standards for vehicles used by contractors to transport workers. Like BOLI, DOL has very few staff dedicated to enforcement, and consequently, compliance with laws intended to protect farmworkers is spotty at best and non-existent at worst.

Oregon Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OR-OSHA): Responsible for enforcement of workplace safety laws, including inspection of labor camps, enforcement of labor camp standards, and enforcement of worker protection standards regarding the use of pesticides. Like BOLI and DOL, OR-OSHA has very limited staff. PCUN has documented numerous instances of non-enforcement or flawed methods, such as failing to interview workers when inspecting labor camps, failing to report related conditions (such as drinking water quality) to appropriate public health agencies, and the imposition of only token fines, even for repeat violations.

Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP): In 2003, what was formerly called the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), ceased to exist and most of its functions were transferred to three new offices under the Department of Homeland Security. Historically, the INS was responsible for enforcing laws regulating the admission of foreign-born persons to the United States and for administering various immigration benefits including work authorization and other permits, residency, immigrant and nonimmigrant sponsorship, naturalization of qualified applicants for U.S. citizenship, refugees, and asylum. Additionally, INS agents patrolled U.S. borders and arrested hundreds of thousands of people attempting to enter the country.

The three departments currently handling what was formerly the work of the INS are the following:

- 1) United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) processes immigrant visa petitions, naturalization petitions, and asylum and refugee applications. USCIS administers immigration services and benefits. It also adjudicates asylum claims, issues employment authorization documents, adjudicates petitions for non-immigration temporary workers such as H-1B workers, and has the power to grant lawful permanent residence and U.S. citizenship.
- 2) U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). According to its website, "ICE's primary mission is to promote homeland security and public safety through the criminal and civil enforcement of federal laws governing border control, customs, trade, and immigration. The agency has an annual budget of more than \$5.7 billion dollars, primarily devoted to its two principal operating components—Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO)" (ICE, 2011). ICE has more than 20,000 employees throughout the United States. Of chief concern for farmworkers and others is the role of ICE in identifying, detaining, and deporting undocumented workers. Recently, this is often done in cooperation with local police in states that have adopted the "Secure Communities Program." As of September 27, 2011, Secure Communities was available in 1,595 jurisdictions in forty-four states and territories. According to the Immigration Policy Center, ICE "plans to implement Secure Communities in each of the 3,100 state and local jails across the country by 2013. As a result of Secure Communities, ICE had removed more than 142,000 persons through the fall of 2011" (Immigration Policy Center, 2011).
- 3) U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CPB) is charged with keeping terrorists and their weapons out of the United States, according to their website, and also with securing trade and travel and enforcing hundreds of U.S. regulations, particularly those pertaining to immigration and drugs (CPB 2011). CPB is primarily familiar to farmworkers through their apprehensions of those who are attempting to cross the U.S.-Mexico border while undocumented. While CPB argues that dramatically reduced numbers of apprehensions is a reflection of the increasing effectiveness of border enforcement, others have pointed to the U.S. economic recession as the reason why CPB apprehensions fell to 340,252 in FY 2011 from 1,189,000 in FY 2005, a decrease of 71 percent (Office of Immigration Statistics, 2011).

LEGAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Nonprofit organizations that receive government, corporate, and/or foundation funding to provide services such as health care, job training, emergency food and shelter, information and referral, housing, legal, and education related services. Among organizations of this type with which PCUN works most closely are: Oregon Law Center, Oregon Legal Service Farmworker Unit, Farmworker Housing Development Corporation, Mano a Mano, Unete, Programa Hispano, Centro Cultural, and Centro Latinoamericano.

