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## GRAPE BOYCOTTS

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During the early 1960s, there were two main farmworker organizations in California, the AFL-CIO affiliated Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) and National Farmworkers Association (NFWA). AWOC began organizing workers in 1959 under the leadership of Norman Smith and within 6 months, the union was chartered with the AFL-CIO. The NFWA, on the other hand, was founded by César Chávez, Dolores Huerta, and Gil Padilla. *Los tres* (The Three), as they were called, envisioned the organization as a grassroots union that operated from the bottom up.

Nonetheless, when AWOC leader Larry Itliong and the predominantly Filipino AWOC membership called for a strike against local grape growers in Delano, California, the NFWA joined in solidarity. Within 2 weeks of the initial September 1965 walkout by the AWOC, the NFWA stood in *solidaridad* with cries of *huelga* (in solidarity with cries of the strike).

However, many viewed the AWOC and NFWA strike as an illegal action, as the 1935 National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) disavowed farmworkers from the right to organize. According to this federal act, agricultural laborers were not allowed the same entitlements as industrial laborers. As such, local authorities were quick to respond to the strike through intimidation, violence, injunctions, and jail time.

Initially, NFWA organizers were against the grape strike as they were attempting a joint organizing campaign of citrus workers with Teamsters. In the end, the Grape Boycott lasted for 5 years, when the newly merged United Farmworkers Union (UFW, consisting of both the AWOC and the NFWA) signed a union contract with the grower Giumarra.

During the 5 years of the strike, supporters came from multiple perspectives to show their support for the striking workers. Among the most significant supporters of the Grape Boycott was ex-attorney general and U.S. Senator Robert Kennedy. Additionally, the United Auto Workers donated \$5,000 per month to aid the workers. Without such assistance, as well as that of other civic leaders, labor unions, church groups, and the student and Chicano movements, the Grape

Boycott may not have been nearly as successful as it was. In the same year that the strike began, Chicano dramaturge Luis Valdéz founded the Teatro Campesino (Farmworker Theater). The theater troupe produced dialogical Brechtian (Bertolt Brecht) theater in conjunction with the activities of the NFWA (and later UFW).

In the end, through the extensive public support of the strike and the widespread boycotting of nonunion table grapes, union farmworkers achieved their goals of higher wages and the right to collective bargaining. As the picket-line chant goes: *¡Sí, se puede!* (Yes, we can!).

—Dylan A. T. Miner

*See also* American Federation of Labor (AFL-CIO); Boycotts and Divestment; Brecht, Bertolt; Chávez, César; Chicano Movement; Farmworkers' Movement, Filipino American Activism; Kennedy, Robert F.

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## GRAY PANTHERS

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The Gray Panthers, founded by Maggie Kuhn in 1970, began as an action-oriented group of women who, outraged at being forced to retire at age 65, began to tackle big issues facing older Americans. Joining forces with Ralph Nader in 1973, the group zeroed in on fraudulent practices in the hearing aid industry. Unafraid to take on the White House, big business, and the media, the Gray Panthers called attention to black elderly needs and ageist stereotyping and