

Dolores Huerta, Co-Founder of the United Farm Workers

Link: [\(1395\) National Women's Hall of Fame - Dolores Huerta - YouTube](#) (Oct 2008 [5 mins])

Link: [\(1395\) Dolores Huerta is the fearless labor activist who coined the positive protest slogan 'si se puede' - YouTube](#) (March 20, 2020 [9 mins]) GMA ABC (animation)

Link: [\(1395\) Dolores Huerta reflects on history of activism, next generation's fight: Part 1 - YouTube](#) (Sept. 18, 2021 [8 mins]) ABC News

Most Americans can name Cesar Chavez as the founder and leader of the United Farm Workers. But there were co-founders—the other was Dolores Huerta, 92, the mother of eleven, and the originator of “Sí se puede!”—or as Obama later adapted to: “Yes we can!” Huerta is highlighted here in three videos. The first, honoring her life and legacy and pointing out that most of America “met” her for the first time when she was positioned next to RFK the night he won the primary in California, and minutes before his assassination. Huerta’s philosophy—“It’s not that I can fix it, it’s that they [the disenfranchised] can fix it, but you just have to show them how to make that happen,”—is lifted in these stories through her history and pivotal role in farm workers’ rights.

Huerta became involved with farmworkers as a young teacher in the 50s learning more about her students’ lives of extreme poverty. “There were no bathrooms in the field, especially for women that was really horrible. No access to drinking water but they were actually charged for the water that they would give the workers, and of course no rest periods. And I said they were pretty much brutalized, a step up from slavery, you might say the legacy of slavery lives on.” In response, Huerta registered voters and organized strikes, and eventually a successful 1970 boycott resulting in 17 million Americans supporting workers’ rights by simply refusing to buy grapes and the wine made from them—forcing the CA wine industry to sign a collective bargaining agreement with the UFW.

A major health issue that farm workers experienced- and continue to—was exposure to pesticides. When Huerta was 58, she was beaten by police when protesting pesticides in SF and suffered broken ribs and a “pulverized spleen.” As a Chicana organizer, she experienced on-going racism, sexism and intimidation. But in the last decades, she has been recognized as one of the foremost labor leaders in our history. In 1993, she was inducted—the first Latina—into the Women’s Hall of Fame; in 2012, she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom; there are 7 elementary schools named after her in California, and the state celebrates Dolores Huerta Day on April 10th—her birthday. “Today, when... [farm workers] see me, the one thing that they [are] really always reflecting, that they always point out, the toilets in the field... When we translate that into dignity, giving farm workers that dignity that they deserve for the work that they do to feed our nation.” Examining discrimination patterns since George Floyd’s murder, Huerta sees a “real awaking.” People are now “self-identifying by their words, by their actions they are either anti-racist or racist.” She thanks the young people who took to the streets to protest—as she did, and as she still does.

Additional Resources:

[\(1395\) Dolores Huerta: Together, We Can Make a Difference - YouTube](#)

[\(1395\) Dolores Huerta – Activist & Co-Founder of United Farm Workers | Hispanic Heritage Month | Biography - YouTube](#)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dolores_Huerta