THE GOLDMAR STRIKE: FORMATIVE YEARS OF THE MCOP, 1977-1979

by

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ABSTRACT

LUCINDA K. F. STROUD. The Goldmar Strike: Formative Years of the MCOP, 1977-1979. (Under the direction of DR. BENNY ANDRES)

This thesis examines the Maricopa County Organizing Project (MCOP or the Project) which was founded in 1977 in Maricopa County, Arizona. The MCOP is believed to be the first organization to hold an agricultural strike that consisted of entirely undocumented workers. The Project was founded by Mexican American activists who believed that undocumented and documented workers shared the same human rights and should unite against growers thereby increasing their bargaining power. Its work was significant because it was the first organization to actively target undocumented workers and to advocate for their concerns using human rights as the justification. This thesis uses primary sources from the Maricopa County Organizing Project's Records, held at Arizona State University, Tempe, as well as newspapers, court cases and congressional hearings to argue that the MCOP achieved some success in Arizona because of its inclusion and active recruitment of undocumented members and that it continued in a long tradition of Mexican American civil rights organizing.

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They say it takes a village to raise a child, but I assure you it takes more than that to write a thesis. I have hesitated to write my acknowledgements until the final moment of this process because I honestly do not know where to begin my thanks and appreciation. I have been very fortunate in my life to be surrounded by individuals who helped me grow and mature as a student and a human being and therefore, I think it is only fitting that my first thank you go to my parents. Though they passed prior to my enrollment in graduate school, they started me on the long journey that has taken me here for which I am forever grateful.

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Finally, I thank my partner of nearly 12 years, Jason Reynolds, for his love and support. I cannot express how empty my life would be without him in it or how difficult it would have been to do this alone. XOXO.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

My thesis studies the formational years of the Maricopa County Organizing Project (hereafter MCOP or Project), an Arizona civil rights organization active from 1977 to the early 1990s. The MCOP was founded by Guadalupe Sanchez and several others involved in Arizona farm labor organizing including former UFW members.[1] I have chosen to research the foundational years (1977-1979) in order to examine the involvement of undocumented migrants in the early efforts of the MCOP and the extent to which the MCOP advocated for them and the permissiveness of their participation in union activities. For the purpose of this thesis, I have chosen this time period because it spans from the inception of the organization until the first director, Guadalupe Sanchez, left to found and lead the Arizona Farmworkers Union (AFWU). After the foundation of the AFWU, the MCOP was no longer the primary organization educating and advocating for workers. My interest lies in the first two years of activity, during which the MCOP was functioning as a civil rights organization, but also engaged in activities more traditionally undertaken by labor unions.

The MCOP was responsible for organizing possibly the first strike in which all the participants were undocumented. It claimed to have made U.S. labor history during their initial strikes.[2] Though the historiography suggests that undocumented persons had been participants in unions since their inception, and that by the 1970s, some organizations were encouraging their membership, the MCOP was unique. It believed that undocumented persons had rights to fair treatment by employers including living

[1] Primary source documents suggest that these four men are Guadalupe Sanchez, Don Devereux, Jesus Romo and Gustavo Gutierrez.
[2] Tom Barry, "Ghosts Strike Goldwater Ranch," *In These Times*, October 19'25, 1977.

conditions of a certain quality, regardless of legal status. As an organization, it drew connections between labor rights and civil rights, demonstrating a burgeoning understanding of human rights in an era where the concept was developing.[3]

The first MCOP strike took place in Arizona at the Arrowhead Ranch, a property owned by Goldmar Inc., which employed approximately two hundred undocumented agricultural workers. These workers protested for higher wages, sanitary facilities, and better working conditions such as land with adequate shelter and notification of the planned aerial pesticide sprays which affected their camps. The strike resulted in an increase in compensation per bag of fruit picked as well as guaranteed improvements to living conditions, such as adequate toilet facilities. As a result, the MCOP organized future strikes consisting of documented, undocumented, and Mexican American workers, totaling some 3,000 individuals. In 1979, Guadalupe Sanchez, then director of the MCOP, left the organization to found and direct the Arizona Farm Workers Union (AFWU). His replacement, Don Devereux, and Sanchez worked together in the following years to further civil rights and labor rights for Mexican Americans and Mexican nationals in the United States.

[3] Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2010), 3-4.

IMAGE 1: Arizona Map, the Goldmar Strike took place slightly Northwest of Phoenix[4]

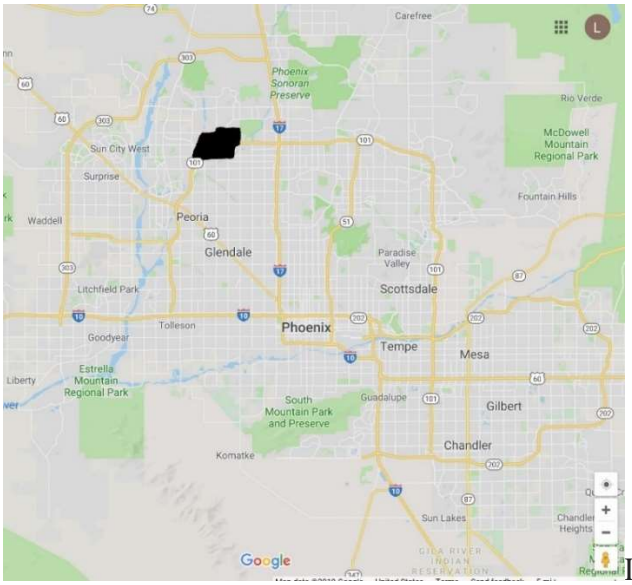


IMAGE 2: Arrowhead Ranch Map, shaded area is the approximate location of Arrowhead Ranch. The area has been developed into residential housing, but retains the name of the citrus farm once located there.[5]

[4] Destination 360, "Arizona Map," http://www.destination360.com/north-america/us/arizona/map, Accessed April 16, 2019.
[5] Google Maps, "Search: Arrowhead Ranch, Glendale, AZ" https://www.google.com/maps/place/Arrowhead+Ranch,+Glendale,+AZ/@33.669878,-112.2203638,14z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x872b687b01db454f:0x58dc11d78184d3f8!8m2!3d33.6709527!4d-112.1966734, Accessed April 16, 2019.

The Maricopa County Organizing Project was one of the early organizations to recruit undocumented farm workers into its membership. It recognized the value of unity between undocumented and documented workers against the grower, their exploiter and common enemy. Though the Project made headlines for its strikes in the late 1970s, both locally and nationally, it has been left out of the history of farm worker activism. The historiography on farm labor movements and Mexican American activism since 1960 is largely centered on the United Farm Workers Union (UFW) and not without reason.[6] Based in California, the UFW was a union of farm workers led by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, most well-known for its use of marches and boycotts.[7]

The UFW was significantly larger and accomplished more than the MCOP, but it was not successful in Arizona nor was it truly inclusive of undocumented workers who made up a significant portion of farm workers in states including California, Arizona, Texas and Florida. Scholarship on the MCOP is scarce. It makes an appearance in several works on farm worker unions and anti-pesticide activism, but is often ignored. The most significant work to my thesis is José A. Maldonado's 1995 M.A. thesis, "¡Si Se Puede!

[6] These works include: Ernesto Galarza, *Farm Workers and Agri-Business in California, 1947-1960 (*Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977); Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987); Marc Linder, *Migrant Workers and Minimum Wages: Regulating the Exploitation of Agricultural Labor in the United States* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992); Juan Gómez-Quiñones, *Mexican American Labor, 1790-1990* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994); David Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Matt Garcia, *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Lori A. Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farmworker Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).
[7] Philip L. Martin, *Promise Unfulfilled: Unions, Immigration and Farm Workers* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 66-80.

The Farm Worker Movement in Arizona, 1965-1979."[8] In this thesis, Maldonado provides a narrative of the farmworker movement in Arizona during the mid-1960s to the late 1970s. His final chapter summarizes the labor organizing activities of the MCOP and he draws ties between the two organizations. He contributes a valuable narrative to the void of Arizona labor history, but his thesis primarily argues that labor activism failed in Arizona due to the strength of agribusiness. His sources include newspaper articles and interviews with MCOP organizers which help preserve the history of organizations that have largely been left of agricultural labor history. This thesis relied on his narrative to fill in the gaps of my own archival research. He concludes by suggesting that it is possible that the MCOP forced the UFW to reconsider its position on undocumented workers, but does not provide evidence for this statement.

In addition to Maldonado, an unpublished seminar paper, "The 1977 Goldmar Strike," written by Jose. I. Torres, also relies on primary source documents including newspaper articles and interviews with MCOP organizers to relate the narrative of the 1977 Goldmar Strike. Torres focuses on the MCOP's first strike and argues that it is significant because it exposed the exploitative conditions under which undocumented workers lived at Goldmar and recognized their "rights and identity".[9] His paper was useful for my research because the interviews filled in the gaps of some of the newspaper articles published about the MCOP and specified some of the anti-immigrant actions taken by the UFW. I use parts of his narrative to enrich my own argument that the MCOP actively targeted undocumented membership and advocated for their rights in the U.S.

[8] José A. Maldonado, ¨¡Si Se Puede! The Farm Worker Movement in Arizona 1965-1979," (M.A. Thesis, Arizona State University, 1995).
[9] Jose I. Torres, "The 1977 Goldmar Strike," unpublished paper, 31, 1981, MSM-433, Arizona Small Collections, Arizona State Archives, Tempe.

Using Maldonado's and Torres's narratives, my own research, and secondary research on Mexicans in the U.S., agricultural labor organizing, and ethnic Mexican civil rights organizing, I attempt to situate the MCOP within larger trends in labor and civil rights movements. My research questions whether the MCOP was unique in its support of undocumented workers or whether it was common to include the undocumented in Mexican American activism. It asks why the MCOP was able to function in Arizona while the UFW withdrew most efforts to unionize in the late 1970s. Finally, it examines whether the MCOP was both a union and a civil rights organization during the early years by examining its civil rights activities.

My research suggests that the MCOP was successful because of its inclusive attitude toward undocumented workers. Unlike the UFW, the MCOP united workers in Arizona instead of alienating unsanctioned laborers. MCOP's organizing tactics make it significant to the historical record as an early advocate for undocumented persons and a proponent of worker's rights as human rights. Though it modeled its own organizing efforts on preceding ethnic Mexican civil rights organizations, it took their organizing methods and linked them to contemporary ideology on human rights, demonstrating a shift in the language of civil rights activism. My research contributes to the historiography on the agency of undocumented Latinx individuals in the United States as well as greater labor movements in the Southwest, hopefully drawing attention to Latinx farmworker activism beyond California and the UFW.

I have consulted three broad historiographical categories for the purpose of this research: the history of Mexicans in the United States, ethnic Mexican agricultural labor unionism in the mid to late 1900s, and the twentieth century history of Mexican

American activism. This thesis will combine primary sources with secondary research to tease out the MCOP's place in the history of ethnic Mexican labor and civil rights organizing. I situate the MCOP strikes against the background of larger trends in agricultural labor movements and ethnic Mexican civil rights movements during the 1970s. Finally, I use secondary research in agricultural unionism, specifically on the UFW, to compare and contrast the attitudes toward undocumented workers in each organization. I make clear that while Cesar Chavez may have offered some diplomatic statements with regards to the humanity and plight of the undocumented worker, his actual beliefs did not align with those statements and that the UFW consistently participated in anti-undocumented activity. The directors and organizers of the MCOP, however, firmly believed that not only should undocumented workers have been treated more humanely, but that their own activism could be beneficial for all agricultural workers.

The bulk of my research consists of primary source documents from the Maricopa County Organizing Project Records collection, currently housed at Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona. The collection consists of 119 boxes, twenty-five of which were examined for this thesis. I chose the boxes based primarily on whether they were dated between 1977 and 1980 and whether they reference subjects such as the strikes, newspapers and correspondence. The boxes include documents from several court cases involving the MCOP and various farms which employed workers that they attempted to assist. The majority of the MCOP's legal battles sought the ability of organizers to access farm workers that lived on farm property and advise them on their civil and labor rights. Other sources include press releases, propaganda advertising events, and correspondence.

The MCOP meticulously collected newspaper articles that either mentioned its efforts or concerned interests similar to those of the MCOP and these articles have been preserved in the archive. This trove of newspaper coverage is invaluable. The articles span newspapers across the Southwest, in both English and Spanish, but also include several from papers of national significance such as *The New York Times.* These articles focus on the actions of undocumented agricultural workers in the area and the strikes in which they participated. Not only do they reveal the voices of the workers, but they provide statements from employers, U.S. Border Patrol and even the Mexican president's thoughts on the treatment of migrants in the U.S. workforce.

Additionally, the MCOP collection demonstrates that the organization was concerned with more than just worker's rights and was, in fact, a civil rights organization. This assertion is supported both by claims made by its own staff and by the various types of projects in which the organization engaged. Though the MCOP was primarily engaged in labor organizing between 1977 and 1979, prior to the founding of the Arizona Farm Workers Union, the organization engaged in traditional civil rights organizing including lawsuits, correspondence and publicizing its cause. As the MCOP matured during the 1980s, it assisted in the creation of health and child care services, pesticide activism, legal aid services for undocumented persons and the creation of the Arizona Farm Workers Union, led by one of the founders of the MCOP. Though many of these organizations are outside of the temporal scope of this research, they attest to the uniqueness of the MCOP and its approach to Mexican nationals in the fields.

Following this introduction, Chapter One focuses on the MCOP relationship with undocumented individuals. It demonstrates that the UFW alienated this sector of

farmworkers while the MCOP embraced them and found success through their activism. Chapter Two explores the history of ethnic Mexican civil rights organizing and situates the MCOP within this tradition while also demonstrating the organization participated in civil rights organizing while simultaneously organizing labor protests. Following the two chapters, a short conclusion makes ties between labor exploitation of undocumented workers during the 1970s and its continuation today.

1.1 Historiography

As previously mentioned, I have consulted historiography from roughly three categories: the history of Mexicans in the United States, agricultural labor unionism, and the twentieth century history of ethnic Mexican activism. Using these areas of study, I have worked to understand the relationships between immigration, agriculture, and Mexican American activism. At times, it is difficult to separate the historiography into categories given the interwoven nature of the three topics. In order to begin this process, it was necessary to understand the movements of Mexican nationals across the U.S.-Mexico border and their history in the United States. The migrations of Mexicans into the United States fall within the category of the history of Mexicans in the United States; authors such as Mark Reiser, Philip Martin and Lori Flores have been influential in my understanding of this topic.

Mark Reisler's *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900-1940* (1976) provides excellent historical context for the movement of Mexicans across the U.S.-Mexico border by linking migrations to agriculture. He argues that though U.S. Southwest relied on Mexican labor during its development, Mexican immigrants were not welcomed in the U.S. Reiser demonstrates that starting

with World War I, agricultural labor needs led to the temporary suspension of immigration regulations in order to hire Mexican nationals for jobs in food production.[10] Anti-immigrant sentiment in the 1920s, however, led to the creation of the Border Patrol and impediments to travel across the border. At the same time, pressure from growers resulted in the creation of a worker registration program by the Associated Labor Bureau which allowed growers to retain workers without fear of deportations and raids.[11] This tension between the needs of agricultural employers and immigration policy continued to repeat itself as Americans with racist perceptions of Mexicans encouraged limitations to their entry and, simultaneously, growers expressed the necessity of Mexican labor. My own research echoes these tensions as Arizona growers in the 1970s continued to hire Mexican nationals and claim that their success depended on these employees. The growers' need for migrants created a space in which undocumented persons were able to successfully strike, even in the face of public racism and the threat of raids and deportation. The constant battle between xenophobia and the demand for workers is present in the actions of growers, migrants, the Border Patrol and popular sentiment during the MCOP strikes. Reiser is not the only scholar to recognize these patterns.

Philip L. Martin (2003) explores the relationship between immigration and agriculture in his work *Promise Unfulfilled: Unions, Immigration and the Farm Workers*. Though he specifically relates his research to workers in California, he states that "the major farm labor issue is whether immigrant newcomers will continue to be the mainstay of the seasonal farm work force for another century," implying the necessity of non-

[10] Mark Reiser, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900-1940* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1976), 25.
[11] Ibid., 61.

national workers to the production of agriculture in the United States.[12] Martin, like other historians, extols the work of the UFW in the 1970s for not only bringing farm workers' struggles to national attention, but for having wider benefits to non-union members. He claims that though "most growers were not affected directly by union activities, many were willing to match or exceed 'union wages' so their workers would not join the UFW."[13] Despite a thorough overview of the topic, Martin pays little credence to Arizona agricultural unions, devoting only one dismissive paragraph to the Arizona Farm Workers Union (AFWU), a direct offshoot of the MCOP.[14] He recognizes the success of the negotiations at Goldmar, but he simplifies the larger picture of the MCOP's civil rights and labor rights activity and gives the AFWU credit for strikes that preceded its formation. Martin's work recognizes that agricultural production depends on migrant labor and expands this to explain the power migrants have in labor negotiations.

In *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants and the California Farmworker Movement* (2016), Lori Flores argues that agricultural communities played a significant role in shaping the Mexican experience in the United States. She, however, relates the tensions of employment and immigrations back to the experience of Mexicans themselves. Agriculture, she states, has had a significant influence on the flow of immigration through its "historic and continued employment of braceros, undocumented laborers and other immigrants."[15] In these communities, relationships between Mexican Americans and Mexican have fluctuated often in response

[12] Martin, *Promise Unfulfilled,*180.
[13] Ibid.*,* 52.
[14] Ibid., 86.
[15] Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming*, 220.

to immigration policy. In the late 1940s and 1950s, Flores claims that Mexican Americans kept a social distance from undocumented workers and braceros in order to claim a position higher on the social scale.[16] She states that the termination of the Bracero Program in 1964 forced Mexican American farmworkers "to act more boldly . . . manifesting[ing] in public protests, landmark lawsuits against California agribusiness, and secretly joining Cesar Chavez's burgeoning farmworker union."[17] Finally, Flores presents the idea that while Chavez never intended to represent Mexican nationals, the strikes held by the UFW consisted of Mexican Americans, and both documented and undocumented migrants. These strikes symbolizing the coming together of groups in agricultural communities that had previously been in competition.[18] This thesis follows similar themes as *Grounds for Dreaming*, but shifts the focus to labor activism from California and the UFW to the MCOP in Arizona and extends the timeline into the late 1970s. It also demonstrates that collaboration between Mexican Americans and Mexican nationals occurred outside of the UFW and were driven by undocumented individuals in some cases. Flores's work serves as an appropriate bridge between literature on Mexican individuals in the United States and agricultural unionism.

Some of the literature on the history of agricultural unionism provides a more general examination of multiple movements and organizations, but many focus on the UFW. I have consulted works solely focused on the UFW for two reasons, the first being that it is the most significant Mexican American labor union. Secondly, this thesis

[16] Ibid., 79.
[17] Ibid., 161-2.
[18] Ibid., 204.

compares and contrasts the UFW with the MCOP. In this section, I will first consider studies on agricultural unions and then follow with works on the UFW.

Maralyn Edid's *Farm Labor Organizing: Trends and Prospects* (1994) offers a general consideration of farm labor organizing including the challenges it faces and prominent organizations that have undertaken it. Though her work is intended to contribute to contemporary conversations about agricultural workers and laws and policies related to them, it concisely identifies challenges that have historically made organizing difficult. Some of these challenges include workers who were mobile immigrants and unskilled laborers with little education. She states that though attempts to improve conditions for workers have been successful at certain points in time, specifically the 1970s, they have more often been subsumed by the strength of growers. Edid's work provides context for the difficulties of organizing faced by all organizations that attempt to organize farm workers, including many faced by the MCOP.[19] Her work, however, is general and does not consider specifically Mexican Americans or Mexican nationals.

Juan Gómez-Quiñones's work *Mexican American Labor 1790-1990* (1994) contributes to labor history through its examination of U.S. Mexican workers. He states that ethnic Mexican workers have been largely left out of the history of labor in the U.S. He argues that not only have they been present in the labor force for over a century, but that they have been actively engaged in labor unions and labor organizing. Gómez-Quiñones describes the incremental changes in the status of Mexican workers in the U.S. as their civil rights increased and discrimination in employment declined. He traces the

[19] Maralyn Edid, *Farm Labor Organizing: Trends & Prospects* (Ithaca: IRL Press, 1994).

progress of Mexican workers from early mutual aid societies providing services to a community ignored by white labor unions in the 1800s, to successful union participation and leadership in the 1970s. He concludes that though progress has been made, ethnic Mexicans are still treated as an underclass and should continue to challenge conservative ideals through solidarity among workers and their own communities.[20]

Gómez-Quiñones is significant to my work because he provides context for the history of Mexican labor organizing, but focuses on agricultural unions. He devotes a chapter to agricultural unions including a section on Arizona and a subsection on the MCOP. He concludes that in the conservative political environment of Arizona, in which agribusiness concerns were prioritized, the MCOP led strikes that resulted in "important precedents" if not huge gains.[21] Gómez-Quiñones's research supports my argument that the MCOP is relevant to both Mexican labor history and agricultural unionism. I will, however, provide a more detailed examination of the goals of the organization and its composition.

Another prominent figure in agricultural union history is Ernesto Galarza. Like Gómez-Quiñones, Galarza was an active participant in labor activism and a contributor to scholarship on the subject. In *Farm Workers and Agri-business in California, 1947-1960* (1977), Galarza describes the work of the National Farm Labor Union (NFLU) and the National Agricultural Workers Union (NAWU) during the late 1940s and 50s. He argues that the Bracero Program was the greatest impediment to unionizing in California and the Southwest. Galarza explains that powerful growers fought for their own interests in business and blames the failure of the NAWU on growers who were able to hire braceros

[20] Juan Gómez-Quiñones, *Mexican American Labor,* 331-40.
[21] Ibid., 261.

and avoid workers that could unionize. He does not, however, address the possibility that the NAWU might have been more successful by uniting domestic and foreign workers instead. His work is valuable in describing challenges faced by labor organizations wherever foreign workers resided, especially in California and the Southwest.

Like Galarza and the NAWU, Cesar Chavez and the UFW found foreign workers problematic when organizing. Because they were both predecessors and contemporaries of the MCOP, in farm worker activism and Arizona, I have included several works on the UFW in my historiography. Susan Ferriss and Ricardo Sandoval provide a forgiving history of Cesar Chavez and the UFW in their work: *The Fight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farmworkers Movement* (1997). The examines the history of the UFW, focusing on its successes and concluding with an epilogue suggesting Chavez's valuable and positive legacy continues to inspire farm workers today. Though their work is not concerned with the relationships between documented and undocumented workers or members, Ferriss and Sandoval mention that the union "had [historically] embraced anyone, regardless of residency, who wanted to join the organizing process," but simultaneously admit that Chavez "instructed union members to call the INS if they suspected undocumented workers had been brought into struck fields."[22]

While the UFW had undocumented members, it was not because of its sympathies to Mexican nationals. In fact, this work addresses the problematic nature of union activities in Arizona, which I will cite as one of the reasons that the UFW left the state and the MCOP was formed. Susan Ferris and Ricardo Sandoval explain that the UFW

[22] Susan Ferriss and Ricardo Sandoval, *The Fight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farmworkers Movement*, edited by Diana Hembree (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1997), 243.

assisted in a 1973 citrus dispute in Yuma, AZ. During this dispute, organizers tried to prevent undocumented laborers from crossing the border through a series of outposts in the desert. Though the goal was to prevent Mexican nationals from working as scabs, the violent tactics used by some of the volunteers resulted in the alienation of many farm laborers in the area.[23] This thesis argues that this incident was one of the reasons the UFW withdrew from Arizona. With the Arizona agricultural work force so heavily staffed by undocumented individuals, the UFW could not hope to gain momentum. By actively recruiting these individuals, however, the MCOP held several successful strikes. The solidarity of the workers forced growers to negotiate instead of using undocumented persons to break the strike. It is necessary to consult other works, however, on the contradictory nature of the UFW's approach to undocumented persons.

In *Beyond the Fields: Cesar Chavez, The UFW, and the Struggle for Justice in the 21st Century* (2008), Randy Shaw expands on the UFW position on undocumented individuals. Not only does he cite the Yuma incident, but provides other examples of the UFW taking discriminatory action against undocumented workers that it suspected would act as strikebreakers. In 1974, for instance, the UFW complained that the INS failed to stop the flow of people of the U.S.-Mexico border during one of their strikes against grape growers. Unlike the MCOP, which believed that gains for undocumented persons were gains for all workers, Chavez adamantly believed that "empowering [U.S.] Latino workers [was] their top priority.[24] Like other historians, Shaw acknowledges that the

[23] Ibid., 243-4.
[24] Randy Shaw, *Beyond the Fields: Cesar Chavez, the UFW, and the Struggle for Justice in the 21st Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 196-7.

UFW allowed undocumented people to be union members, but continued to view the undocumented not as a source of strength for the union.[25]

In *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement* (2012), Matt Garcia presents a critical evaluation of the UFW and Cesar Chavez. Originally attempting to writing a history of the UFW from the rank and file perspective, Garcia finds that the narrative cannot escape Chavez and his legendary control of the union.[26] Garcia demonstrates that rarely was a decision made that did not align with the desires and beliefs of Chavez himself. Though the composition of the UFW membership falls outside of Garcia's scope, he does relay some of the positions held by organizers on the subject. Chavez's cousin, Manuel Chavez, for example, held that undocumented persons were capable of being organized and could participate in strikes. Counsel for the UFW, Jerry Cohen, suggested that legally it would be problematic to exclude the undocumented from ranch elections. Chavez, however, was firmly in favor of their exclusion.[27] Based on Garcia's assertion that the UFW was not a democratic institution, it stands to reason that its policy toward undocumented persons was reflective of Chavez's beliefs. This is significant to my research because it supports the MCOP claims that it made labor history by having undocumented members and strikes composed of undocumented individuals and is evidence of the distance between the MCOP and UFW.

[25] Ibid., 198.
[26] Matt Garcia, *From the Jaws*, 294.
[27] Ibid., 149-51.

In addition to Matt Garcia, Miriam Pawel's work, *The Crusades of Cesar Chavez: A Biography* offers a critical evaluation of Cesar Chavez and the UFW.[28] A detailed biography of Cesar Chavez, it is valuable to my research in two capacities: an examination of anti-undocumented sentiment and actions undertaken by Chavez and his cousin, Manuel Chavez, during organizing activities in Yuma, AZ and an examination of efforts by Chavez to undermine the MCOP even after withdrawing from the state. This information cements my assertion that the UFW was not an organization that was inclusive of undocumented workers whether they were members or not. It also demonstrates that the MCOP was an independent organization and not a subsidiary of the UFW.

At the time when the MCOP was founded, the UFW had recently halted most of its efforts in Arizona. Chavez's union faced internal conflict and complicated legal battles in California at the time. *Farmers' and Farmworkers' Movements: Social Protest in American Agriculture* by Patrick H. Mooney and Theo J. Majka contains several chapters on the UFW, describing the mid to late 1960s and the 1970s as the "United Farm Workers Era."[29] While this work is mainly concerned with the narrative of the UFW during this period, it makes keen observations about the decline of UFW organizing during the late 1970s and 1980s. The work cites internal conflict leading to the departure of many staff members, the shift to an unsympathetic Republican governor in California

[28] Miriam Pawel, *The Crusades of Cesar Chavez: A Biography* (New York, Bloomsbury Press, 2014).
[29] Patrick H. Mooney and Theo J. Majka, *Farmers' and Farmworkers' Movements: Social Protest in American Agriculture* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995), 156. For simplicity's sake, I have used UFW in this instance to reference both the period during which Chavez's organization was known as the National Farmworkers Association and the following years when it was known as the UFW.

and an increase in effectiveness of grower's anti-union efforts, specifically crippling lawsuits as the main forces leading to the weakening of the UFW. It also suggests that growers increasingly used undocumented individuals in order to avoid hiring union members.[30] My research will dialogue with this work to suggest that it is inaccurate to paint the 1970s as the decade of the UFW because similar labor activism was occurring outside of the California-based organization.

This thesis also considers how the MCOP advocated for both labor rights and civil rights. Linda C. Majka's article "Labor Militancy among Farm Workers and the Strategy of Protest: 1900-1979" (1981) sheds light on why workers would be inherently interested in more than just labor rights. She argues that California farm workers have historically defied "the traditional paradigm of labor relations in America" due to their tendency to protest over a mix of concerns and not specifically against wages.[31] She reasons that the unstable nature of agricultural production makes control issues more important to farm workers than other sectors. By protesting concerns such as the regulation of hours worked, pesticide restriction, and regulation of hiring and termination, farm workers challenged "employer arbitrariness and the prevailing norms of exploitation in agriculture" and "represented attempts to gain a necessary qualitative improvement … in the balance of power with the growers."[32] Her theory is relevant to my research because it helps to explain why the MCOP was founded as a civil rights organization. The MCOP was not simply concerned with wages, though they were included in the demands during many strikes. More importantly, however, workers wanted better living

[30] Ibid., 185-6.
[31] Linda C. Majka, "Labor Militancy Among Farm Workers and the Strategy of Protest: 1900-1979," *Social Problems* 28 no. 5 (June 1981), 532.
[32] Ibid., 535.

conditions including protection from pesticides. My research adds to Majka's conclusions about farm laborers in California by extending the theory to MCOP strikes and Arizona. Not only does it refute traditional labor theory that wage issues prompt most protest, but it also demonstrates why a civil rights organization could effectively mobilize labor protest.[33]

Though Linda Majka calls non-wage demands "issues," they can also be viewed as demands for civil rights. Zaragoas Vargas's research in *Labor Right Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth Century America* (2005) addresses the link between labor and civil rights activism and Mexican Americans. Vargas claims that "the labor movement made an enormous contribution. It laid the groundwork and continued to have a profound lasting impact as the emphasis of social action shifted from civil rights to jobs."[34] Vargas credits the effect of racism on Mexican Americans for urging them to organize and take action, through farm labor unions or political activism starting in the 1930s. Like Vargas, my research suggests that labor concerns provide an access point for civil rights activism.

The MCOP represented an intersection of labor and civil rights because of its mixed goals of wage increases and improved treatment of farm workers. In order to understand the dual nature of the organization during its formation years, the history of Mexicans and civil rights organizing in the United States must be considered. The following studies are focused on Mexican American civil rights activism since the 1930s.

[33] Refer to John R. Commons, editor, *A Documentary History of American Industrial Society* (Cleveland, A.H. Clark Company, 1911).
[34] Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America* (New Haven: Princeton University Press, 2005), 289.

In Mario T. García's *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, & Identity, 1930-1960* (1989), the author explores what he calls "the Mexican American Generation."[35] He states that between the 1930s and 1950s, "a new generation of community leaders emerged out of the expanding Mexican-American barrios of the Southwest."[36] During this time, García finds that Mexican Americans attempted to define their own identity and acquire greater civil rights, laying the foundation for the Chicano movement in the 1960s. García divides his study into sections on the contributions of the middle class including the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), a section on engagement with labor and leftist politics including the Spanish-Speaking Congress and the *Asociación Nacional México-Americana* (ANMA) and a third section on Mexican American intellectuals. He concludes that while some gains were made during the period, the political culture of the time was not conducive to large gains. Instead, the Mexican American Generation paved the way for the Chicano movement. García's work reinforces the idea that small gains are significant and that activism builds on itself. His Mexican America generation laid the groundwork for the Chicano movement which then laid the groundwork for Mexican American agricultural unions, and eventually, organizations which included undocumented people.

In *Chicano Politics: Reality and Promise, 1940-1990* (1990) Juan Gómez-Quiñones also states that Mexican American organizations, leaders and intellectuals had failed to achieve major gains for their community prior to the 1960s, but had made it possible to expand the Mexican middle class. In the 1960s, he finds that political shifts

[35] Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, & Identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 1.
[36] Ibid., 1.

caused by both the black civil rights movement and the Kennedy and Johnson administrations created an environment more willing to entertain Mexican American demands for civil rights. He claims that the Chicano movement was based on a sense of "disenchantment over the Mexican's political, economic, and social status in an Anglo-dominated capitalist society," and that because of this, workers were key supporters of the movement.[37] Gómez-Quiñones focuses on political participation in the 1970s and the role of middle-class Mexican Americans in leading organization. He concludes, however, that with the 1980s, conservative politicians caused progress to stagnate and inequalities increased.[38] *Chicano Politics* contributes to the timeline of Mexican American activism, but does not convey an understanding of the movement as a whole and how it progressed during the 70s. It also does not consider relationships between Mexican Americans and Mexican nationals during the campaign for civil rights.

David G. Gutiérrez article, ""Sin Fronteras?": Chicanos, Mexican Americans, and the Emergence of the Contemporary Mexican Immigration Debate, 1968-1978" explores the shift in relations between Mexican Americans and Mexican nationals during the 1970s through debates on immigration. He argues that starting in the mid-1970s, activists began to advocate for the protection of immigrant's civil rights as a result of the Chicano movement. Gutiérrez claims that Chicano activists emphasized their Mexican heritage as a way to reclaim their identity, and through this reclamation, they began to consider whether they had more in common with immigrant than previously recognized. He credits *El Centro de Acción Social Autonoma, Hermandad General de Trabajadores,*

[37] Juan Gómez-Quiñones, *Chicano Politics: Reality and Promise, 1940-1990* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990), 103.
[38] Gómez-Quiñones, *Chicano Politics*, 1.

established in Los Angeles, California by Bert Corona and Soledad "Chole" Alatorre in 1968, as the first organization to aid undocumented persons. Gutiérrez finds that throughout the 1970s, more organizations including the League of United Latin American Citizens (founded in 1929) had become more sympathetic to Mexican nationals.[39] His article shows that civil rights organizations were more likely to recognize the rights of Mexican nationals, both documented and undocumented. The MCOP can be included in this new viewpoint.

As a whole, these studies paint a larger picture of the interplay between themes of immigration, labor activism, Latinx persons in the United States, labor rights and civil rights. Though many of them touch on of the actions of undocumented people, their actual agency and place in these movements is abstract. Taken as a whole, this historiography provides the context for the position of Mexican Americans and undocumented Mexican migrants in society at the time of the MCOP as well as the various movements and organizations most influential to their progress in both labor and civil rights. My research adds to the greater historiography by giving undocumented persons agency in discussions of these greater themes, using the MCOP as an example of a Mexican American organization at the forefront of current activist trends. To do this, I examine primary source documents from the MCOP records and journalism related to their activities.

[39] David G. Gutiérrez, "'Sin Fronteras?': Chicanos, Mexican Americans, and the Emergence of the Contemporary Mexican Immigration Debate, 1968-1978," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 10 no 4 (Summer 1991), 5-37.

1.2 Historical Context

This thesis rests on the idea that undocumented people existed in the work force, specifically in the Southwest, because of agricultural labor needs. In order to understand why they became so controversial, it is necessary to explain how workers that had traditionally performed seasonal field labor came to be viewed as a problem or a threat to the American citizen, specifically those of Mexican descent. Though workers had been traveling across the border for decades, the concept of "undocumented" in the media and government dates back to the Bracero Program, a binational temporary worker program between the U.S. and Mexico.

As a result of a clause in the Immigration Act of 1917 act, which allowed for immigration exceptions on an as-needed basis for temporary workers, the Bracero Program was initiated in 1942. The program fell outside of U.S. immigration law and contracted workers were not classified as immigrants.[40] The program was intended to help the agricultural and railroad industries to maintain production during World War II. Congress officially approved of the program in Public Law 78 in 1951, making the U.S. Department of Labor responsible for contracting braceros for U.S. employers.[41] Though growers claimed that they were unable to find sufficient domestic workers to fill available jobs, domestic workers, especially Mexican Americans, were not supportive of the program. The biggest complaint from U.S. workers was that braceros lowered wages.[42] Additionally, the Bracero Program caused a "parallel stream of undocumented

[40] David M. Heer, *Undocumented Mexicans in the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 14.
[41] Ernesto Galarza, *Farm Workers and Agri-business,* 31-2.
[42] Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans,* 97.

immigration," workers that were not able to receive contract labor, but found employment in the U.S. regardless of its legality.[43] The program was terminated in 1964, in a large part because of the disapproval of labor unions.[44] Shortly afterward, Congress passed the Immigration Reform Act of 1965 which capped Western Hemispheric immigration at 120,000 persons annually. This cap was lower than the volume of Mexican migration alone.[45] In concert with a declining Mexican economy, the termination of the Bracero Program and the Immigration Act of 1965 created an environment in which migrant workers, who had spent the majority of the past two decades relying on U.S. agricultural employment, struggled to find legal methods of entry.

Simultaneous to the advent and duration of the Bracero Program, Mexican Americans participated in vibrant civil rights activism. Though it would be inaccurate t to say that the Bracero Program caused Mexican Americans to become politically active, the rise in anti-immigrant sentiment related to the program was a contributing factor. Mexican Americans found their own social status deteriorating as public opinion identified them more closely with "foreigners" than American citizens.[46] In the 1950s, organizations such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the Community Service Organization (CSO) campaigned for the civil rights of Mexican Americans and the end of abuses such as discrimination, police brutality, and segregated schools. Building on these actions, civil rights activism continued and strengthened in the

[43] Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming*, 76.
[44] Heer, *Undocumented Mexicans,* 14.
[45] Kelly Lytle Hernández, *Migra! A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 214.
[46] Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights*, 287.

1960s with new organizations growing Chicano movement, one branch of these being primarily concerned with farm laborers.[47]

Though these organizations began with Mexican American founders and members devoted to advancing their place in U.S. society, small changes occurred in the relationship between some Mexican Americans and the undocumented, in large part due to farm worker organizations. Years of animosity gave way the realization "that it was only by acting together that they could effect change in their laboring lives."[48] During the 1970s, many unions tolerated the presence of undocumented members and some even went as far as to encourage undocumented persons to unionize. Unions such as the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, the United Farm Workers of America, the International Ladies' Garments' Workers' Union, the United Auto Workers and more began to express their support for the undocumented in the seventies, and by the eighties, claimed "a significant number of undocumented members."[49] In Arizona, the Maricopa County Organizing Project (MCOP) was at the forefront of efforts to directly organize and unionize undocumented Mexicans, specifically targeting undocumented field workers in 1977.

The MCOP also faced challenges due to its location. Labor organizing in Arizona was not as active due to the way agriculture had developed in the state in the 1930s. Arizona's geography made the production of agricultural expensive, requiring investment in irrigation and machinery. This meant that instead of individual farmers, businesses lobbied for growers, making them more powerful politically. Laborers worked seasonally

[47] Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights*, 287.
[48] Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming*, 166-7.
[49] Juan Gómez-Quiñones, *Mexican American Labor,* 224-5.

due to the type of crops grown; primarily cotton, citrus, lettuce and melons, all of which required large numbers of laborers to harvest them in a relatively short period. Many of the migratory workers at the time travelled from areas decimated by the Dust Bowl and worked in Arizona on their way to California. Because of these conditions, though there was continual conflict between labor and employer, workers "were considerably more difficult to unionize than migratory workers in California" at the time.[50] This foundation, however, continued to be problematic for organizers later in the century.

Due to the power of agribusiness, Arizona gained a reputation for being extremely conservative and anti-union. UFW activity in the early 1970s exacerbated the problem. Boycotts in California prompted the Arizona governor to sign a repressive farm-labor law that placed restrictions on boycotts and strikes. In response to this, the UFW led a citrus strike in Yuma in 1975 that was unsuccessful, in part because there were no organizations in place in Arizona to help support it.[51] In addition, many of the laborers were Mexican nationals, both documented and undocumented who did not participate in the strike.[52] The conditions in Arizona persuaded the MCOP to recruit Mexican nationals to its membership and claim to represent civil rights, two qualities that have historical significance.

For my project, it is important to note the negative connotations associated with the term undocumented as well as the negative attitude held toward labor organizing in Arizona. In a state where growers had unusual political power, labor activism had its own negative connotations. This is what makes MCOP activism so impressive. This

[50] Stuart Jamieson, *Labor Unionism in American Agriculture* (New York: Arno Press, 1976), 193-4.
[51] Gómez-Quiñones, *Mexican American Labor*, 257-8.
[52] Ibid., 257-8.

organization pushed back against two strong prejudices in the name of the labor and civil rights of workers. To explore how they did this, I consider their records.

1.3 Primary Sources

> It is time to stop using the undocumented workers as scapegoats, and it is time to begin to work together. The undocumented workers are still the most oppressed workers in this country and are in great need of support from us all. We must urge you to stop all actions that would create a greater division among workers (undocumented and documented. To ask the Border Patrol to be more active is to sanction the oppression and killing of our brothers and sisters.
>
> If the United Farmworkers Union has problems with undocumented workers begin brought in as scabs, the answer is to organize these scabs, like we do with any other scab that comes in to break our strike. We know that these people suffer too and that we have a common enemy.[53]

The Maricopa County Organizing Project did not mince words about its support of undocumented persons and the fight to end their exploitation. At a time when there was little support for undocumented migrants, the MCOP demanded that they be treated humanely, that persecution should end and that documented persons unite with them against employers. My research explores the statements and actions of the MCOP and how they inform on the undocumented/documented relationship, the dichotomy of labor vs. human rights and how these relate with the experiences of the UFW. In order to explore this, I consulted a variety of materials housed in the Maricopa County Organizing Project Records at Arizona State, including a large collection of newspaper clippings as well as print articles from online sources. Of the collection, I selected twenty-five boxes most relevant to this study (1977-1979), touching on subjects such as workers, migrants, undocumented persons, strikes and legal cases during these years.

The MCOP Records Collection contains a variety of material collected by MCOP staff. There is a multitude of legal documents related to cases in which the MCOP was

[53]Guadalupe Sanchez letter to Cesar Chavez, April 24, 1979, folder 18, box 59, Maricopa County Organizing Project Records 1970-1994, Arizona State University, Tempe.

both a plaintiff and defendant. Handwritten notes on these materials have been included as well as correspondence between the legal team and their clients. These files include affidavits from workers attesting to poor working conditions, withheld or inaccurate pay, and shortened hours, as well as letters asking for help or agreeing to allow the MCOP to represent them. The collection also contains promotional material related to MCOP events such as strikes, community meetings and celebrations. There are legal documents related to labor agreements brokered by both the MCOP and the Arizona Farm Workers Union. There are also boxes of documents related to its pesticide investigations in the 1980s.The MCOP also collected many newspaper articles related to its activities, opinions on undocumented workers, agricultural working conditions and national current events. In the following pages, I break down certain categories of sources to define MCOP goals and to provide narratives of their activities to demonstrate that it actively supported undocumented rights and functioned as a civil rights organization.

Correspondence is one category of sources that I consulted. As demonstrated in the above quote, the ideals of Guadalupe Sanchez, co-founder and first director of the MCOP, and the MCOP are clearly expressed in a letter to Cesar Chavez. He and the organization he helped create and run firmly supported uniting undocumented and documented workers in protest, not only to prevent scabs, but because undocumented persons were oppressed by the same oppressor as their documented counterparts. This letter, dated April 24th 1979, however, only hints at the MCOP's attempts to humanize undocumented workers, a sentiment repeatedly found in their records. It was definitively stated in a letter dated October 14th 1977, in which Sanchez and Director Jesus R. Romo called on President Jimmy Carter to extend his concern "for human rights abroad in

foreign nations to the plight of undocumented Mexican workers who live and toil under sub-human conditions in Maricopa County and elsewhere in the state of Arizona and in our United States."[54] These letters are useful to define the objectives of the MCOP, but are not enough to demonstrate that the group was actively organizing workers for both labor and civil rights activism.

The MCOP was not simply idealistic, but also engaged in real efforts to effect change. There are a variety of documents that demonstrate its active pursuit of labor and human rights for undocumented persons and farmworkers, overall. Evidence of this can be found in newspaper articles that were from both local, regional and national papers. Starting in 1977, newspapers covered the actions of the MCOP. *The Washington Post*, for example, published an article on October 27, 1977 about the MCOP's first strike. The paper states that more than 200 workers, "all Mexican nationals illegally in the United States," began a five day strike on October 3. It includes quotes from an administrator of the MCOP about organizing the undocumented as well as the assertion that the organization did not want to be a union, but instead a civil rights organization. Other newspapers carrying articles about the MCOP and undocumented strikes/events associated with them include the *New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *New Times Weekly*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Arizona Republic*, *Scottsdale Daily Progress*, *Washington Star* and *Forbes*. There are also articles in other publications such as local Spanish language papers and other magazines such as *Nuestro: The Magazine for Latinos*, *Periódico libre e independiente al servicio de la comunidad hispana*, and *The Call*. This thesis also incorporates newspaper articles from several sources outside of the MCOP clippings.

[54] MCOP to President Jimmy Carter, October 14, 1977, folder 9, box 109, MCOP.

In addition to correspondence and newspapers, another category of sources utilized is court documents from various cases that relate to strike action. The MCOP was engaged in legal battles for access to workers at their place of employment because many lived on the ranches out of necessity. In relation to the initial Goldmar Strike, the MCOP sued for rights that included being allowed multiple representatives on the property during free hours and motor vehicle access.[55] Other documents include lawsuits against several other growers such as Fletcher Farms and Blue Goose Growers, court action against the District Director of the Immigration and Naturalization Service to prevent growers from hiring temporary workers during strikes, and a case against the local Sheriff's office for reparations to strikers that had been injured during arrest. These cases provide examples of the multi-prong attack on the exploitation of undocumented and documented farm workers in which the MCOP was engaged. Not only was the organization making grand idealistic gestures through correspondence or coordinating strikes without follow through, they were engaging legally to further their aims as well as to protect farm workers engaged in labor activism.

Miscellaneous documents from the collection were also consulted. Some of these include press releases by the organization detailing the status of the legal battles and the events leading up to and after strikes. There are flyers announcing strikes and urging workers to unity and one about a meeting to discuss elections in Mexico. There are also copious letters asking the MCOP for assistance, affidavits from witnesses to arrests of MCOP organizers and letters testifying to the treatment that laborers experienced on farms. In these, workers describe being shorted pay and hours by managers and pay they

[55] Preliminary Injunction and Stipulation No. Civ. 77-776 PHX CAM, Maricopa County Organizing Project Vs. Goldmar Inc., October 27, 1977, folder 1, box 25, MCOP.

never received following a deportation. There are flyers for conferences that organizers attended, such as the National Workers Conference for the Rights of Undocumented Workers held in Washington D.C. in 1978. All of the documents paint the portrait of an active organization in pursuit of rights for undocumented persons as well as rights for farm workers.

Together these eclectic sources demonstrate the nature of the relationship between the UFW and the MCOP. The MCOP was founded by former UFW organizers and journalists often linked it to the famous union because of this connection. It did not help that the Project rented office space from the UFW and worked closely with its local representative. Through correspondence and repeated assertions in interviews, however, it can be established that the MCOP was not a subsidiary of the UFW and that tensions existed between the two organizations. The most shocking example is seen in a letter from Jesus Romo on behalf of the MCOP to Cesar Chavez that accused the UFW of harassing local workers. Romo claimed that UFW representatives told workers that they should either "join the UFW or get the hell out of Arizona."[56] Clarifying the separation between the two organizations is necessary to prove that the MCOP was acting autonomously and not as a subsidiary of the UFW that was taking directives from the parent union.

By using a variety of sources from the MCOP collection as well as newspaper articles, I will argue that the MCOP advocated for the rights of undocumented people and functioned as a civil rights organization.

[56] Jesus Romo for MCOP Mailgram to Cesar Chavez, October 12, 1978, folder 9, box 3, MCOP.

1.4 Conclusion

The historiography on farm labor movements has for the most part left Arizona and the Maricopa County Organizing Project out of the narrative, but my thesis fills this gap. The 1970s has framed the discussion of ethnic Mexican agricultural unions around Cesar Chavez and the UFW and not without reason. The UFW had a larger membership, more visibility and more accomplishments than the MCOP, but it was not successful in Arizona, a state that was traditionally difficult for labor organizing. The MCOP, however, was able to achieve some success by purposefully including undocumented persons in their membership and advocating for both labor and civil rights.

I consult a variety of secondary research on the history of Mexicans in the United States, agricultural unionism and ethnic Mexican civil rights movements to provide context for the period and compare and contrast the work of the MCOP with other organizations. Using primary sources from the MCOP records and newspapers, I establish a narrative of the early years of the MCOP through the lens of its work for undocumented persons and its function as a civil rights organization. I argue that these two characteristics made the organization successful in Arizona as well as make it significant to the historical record as an early advocate for undocumented persons and a proponent of worker's rights as civil rights.

CHAPTER 2: THE MCOP AND UNDOCUMENTED MEXICANS

"Would you rather be chased by the Border Patrol while making $1 an hour or chased by the Border Patrol while making $3 an hour?" – Lupe Sanchez[57]

On Monday October 3, 1977, near El Mirage, Arizona, something unprecedented transpired. A group of approximately two hundred workers at the Arrowhead Ranch ceased harvesting ripe citrus from the trees and went on strike. Strikes had occurred in Arizona before, but this walkout was different: it was composed entirely of undocumented Mexican migrants, a demographic usually unlikely to engage in any action that would draw attention to their presence.[58] The workers demanded better working and living conditions, including an increased minimum wage, improved sanitary measures such as trash collection at their camps and drinkable, running water, as well as blankets, tents and medical care.[59] Normally, the government and local press ignored the presence of undocumented workers in the fields and growers pretended not to employ them, but the Arrowhead Ranch strikers compelled their visibility. In breaking the silence that surrounded their employment and lives, they forced authorities to recognize their presence.[60]

Owned and managed by Goldmar Inc., Arrowhead Ranch was the site of the walkout that became known as the 1977 Goldmar Strike. The Maricopa County Organizing Project (MCOP), an Arizona civil rights organization founded earlier that

[57] John Harrigan, "Ranch Signs Union Pact Including Illegal Aliens," undated, folder 19, box 59, MCOP.
[58] Guadalupe Sanchez and Jesus Romo, "Organizing Mexican Undocumented Workers on Both Sides of the Border," 2-3, folder 10, box 109, MCOP.
[59] Tom Barry, "Ghosts Strike Goldwater Ranch," *In These Times*, October 19-25, 1977, folder 21, box 59, MCOP.
[60] Tom Barry, "Ghosts Strike Goldwater Ranch," MCOP.

year, focused on educating farmworkers about their rights and helped organize the workers at Arrowhead. The Goldmar Strike was the first labor stoppage that had been prompted and supported by members of the MCOP. Reports at the time called it the first strike consisting entirely of undocumented workers and the first to result in negotiations between undocumented workers and growers. Though it was several years before a contract was signed between representatives of ranch workers and ranch management, the strike ended when management acceded to several of the strikers' demands. This strike was significant because historically it was common for undocumented workers to endure a variety of exploitative conditions out of fear of repercussions for any form of complaint or work stoppage.[61]

The MCOP was, itself, a unique organization. Founded following the withdrawal of the United Farm Workers, the premier Mexican American labor union in the region, from the state, the MCOP advocated for the rights of undocumented workers.[62] The MCOP argued that undocumented workers were due the same rights as any category of workers, documented and U.S. nationals alike.[63] The organization attempted to educate workers about their rights and the public about the exploitative conditions faced by Mexican migrant agricultural workers. Though attempts to include undocumented workers and their concerns had been made in the past by unions and civil rights

[61] Sanchez and Romo, "Organizing Mexican Undocumented Workers," 2-3.
[62] Discussed later in this chapter, the UFW withdrew from Arizona for a combination of reasons including conflict within the union, financially draining legal battles in California, competition and conflict with the Teamsters, and local animosity following a lettuce strike conducted in Yuma, AZ during which the UFW funded a "wet line" to keep undocumented Mexicans from breaking the strike. Participants in the wet line used violent tactics to prevent migrants from crossing the border.
[63] Elizabeth Roach, "Q and A: Illegal Aliens Get Attention at Meeting," *The Washington Star*, April 8, 1978, folder 35, box 50, MCOP.

organizations such as UCAPAWA and the National Farmworkers Labor Union, none had so openly organized undocumented workers nor made their concerns the primary focus of the union platform. The MCOP was at the forefront of a changing ideology linking the exploitation of undocumented workers with their documented and domestic counterparts.

This chapter explores the first two years of the MCOP's labor organizing in Arizona. It considers strikes and legal action that the organization took on behalf of undocumented and documented farmworkers. It also compares these activities with UFW efforts in the state and argues that the MCOP was more successful organizing workers due to its inclusive attitude toward undocumented workers. To understand the significance of these events and the MCOP, however, it is necessary to provide some historical context. The following section discusses the history of Mexican migration to the United States, the relationship between unions, civil rights organizations and undocumented Mexicans, and the political atmosphere in Arizona.

2.1 An Overview of Mexican Migrants in the U.S.

The Maricopa County Organizing Project and the significance of the Goldmar Strike demonstrate a shift in the history of Mexican workers in the United States. How did the term "undocumented" develop and why was it viewed negativley? Why was an agricultural strike consisting of entirely undocumented Mexican workers both significant and unusual? How does it relate to the greater history of farm labor organizing and Mexican migrants in the U.S.? This section answers these questions through a brief overview of Mexican migration to the United States and the role Mexican migrants played in farm labor organizing and community service organizations during the 20th century. It begins with an examination of migration history between the two countries

and concludes with a discussion of farm labor organizing, paying specific attention to conditions in Arizona.

Historically, both the U.S. and Mexican governments considered the flow of migrants between the two countries as temporary "cross border 'labor migration'" and not immigration of Mexican nationals into the United States.[64] Migration into the U.S. was not restricted until 1875 when Congress passed the first U.S. immigration law to prohibit convicts and prostitutes from entry into the U.S. Successive laws passed in 1882 and 1885 restricted "idiots, lunatics and paupers" and imposed a head tax on immigrants, the first restriction to affect all Mexicans crossing the border.[65] It was the Immigration Act of 1917, however, that solidified the importance of temporary migration to the United States. The act increased the head tax and instituted a literacy requirement for immigrants, but also included special provisions for temporary workers. It allowed the Secretary of Labor to exclude temporary workers from these regulations when necessary.[66] This exception served as the seed for several temporary worker programs in the following century and was especially pertinent to Mexican nationals. However, regardless of burgeoning impediments to Mexican migration into the United States, approximately "one million and one and a half million Mexican nationals – about one-tenth of the country's population – entered the United States more or less permanently between 1890 and 1930."[67]

[64] Neil Foley, *Mexicans in the Making of America* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014), 125.
[65] David M. Heer, *Undocumented Mexicans,* 11.
[66] Ibid.*,* 11.
[67] Paul Spickard, *Almost All Aliens: Immigration, Race, and Colonialism in American History and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 213.

Americans' relationship with ethnic Mexicans had long been contentious and was only exacerbated by the Great Depression.[68] In areas with significant Mexican populations, public rhetoric accused workers of taking jobs that should have belonged to U.S. citizens and associated them with disease and crime.[69] The period's economic austerity amplified Anglo-American fears that the presence of Mexican workers negatively affected the amount of employment opportunities available to the white working class and threatened their social and racial status.[70] Anglo-Americans, however, were not the only group advocating for deportations of Mexican nationals. In an attempt to disassociate their own identity from that of Mexican migrants, some Mexican Americans, such as members of the League of Latin American Citizens, also opposed Mexican immigration and stressed the importance of American citizenship.[71] Anti-Mexican sentiment was apparent in local Arizona politics, causing politicians, once in favor of temporary work initiatives, to echo the public call for more restrictive immigration policy.[72] As a result, during the early 1930s anti-immigrant raids caused the forced deportation of many immigrants and as well as the voluntary departure of others.[73] Some Arizona mining sites that had been primarily worked by Mexican nationals were forced to close because of the number of forced and voluntary departures.[74]

[68] Spickard, *Almost All Aliens*, 300-1.
[69] David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 72.
[70] Eric V. Meeks, "Protecting the 'White Citizen Worker': Race, Labor and Citizenship in South-Central Arizona, 1929-1945," *Journal of the Southwest* 48 no. 1 (Spring 2006), 91.
[71] Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 75.
[72] Meeks, "Protecting the 'White Citizen Worker'," 93.
[73] Juan Ramon García, *Operation Wetback: The Mass Deportation of Mexican Undocumented Workers in 1954* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980), 107.
[74] Meeks, "Protecting the 'White Citizen Worker'," 94.

Though the atmosphere in the 1930s was generally unfavorable to undocumented workers, there were some outliers. Unions that made efforts to include undocumented workers included the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers (UCAPAWA). The union was founded in California in 1937 and grew quickly. Its membership consisted of individuals of both sexes and various races.[75] However, the union found that Mexican Americans, especially women, were their most fiery organizers.[76] Working with a pecan shellers' union in San Antonio, Texas, UCAPAWA president, Donald Henderson, sent Luisa Moreno, an East coast activist, to help aid strikers. Under her guidance, workers became more organized and united, resulting in a settlement that was favorable to workers.[77] Moreno also worked outside of the union to establish a National Congress of Spanish-Speaking Peoples which she hoped would provide opportunity for Spanish speakers to unite with both Anglo-Americans, other minorities and non-citizens to promote American democracy.[78] Moreno and fellow organizer, Josefina Fierro de Bright, believed Mexican migrant workers were not "aliens," having earned their place through their labor in the Southwest.[79] UCAPAWA and the National Congress of Spanish-Speaking Peoples were early advocates for the humanity of undocumented workers during a period when public opinion was mostly unfavorable toward non-nationals. This changed, however, during the 1940s.

[75] Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth Century America*, Tenth Anniversary Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 77.
[76] Ibid., 79.
[77] Ibid., 79-80.
[78] Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans*, 147.
[79] Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows*, 96-7.

With the inception of World War II, the need for increased food production and the lack of manpower at home, compelled the U.S. government to negotiate with the Mexican government to enable agricultural employers to contract Mexican nationals for seasonal work in the fields.[80] The resulting Bracero Program was restrictive. Mexican nationals could only be employed for seasonal, manual labor, ensuring that the more well-paying, skilled positions remained available only to U.S. citizens.[81] The program lasted long past the end of war, until 1964, and over the course of it, 4.5 million agricultural workers held temporary labor contracts in the United States.[82] Prior to its termination, however, the program created an increasing fear among Americans that Mexican migrants entered and remained in the country without documents, thereby threatening employment opportunities and wages for American citizens. Mexican Americans also shared similar concerns about unsanctioned Mexican migration, fearing that their own economic and social advancements would be threatened. Both middle and working class Mexican Americans supported increased efforts by the border patrol to prevent undocumented individuals from crossing into the U.S.[83] As a result of these fears, in 1954 the U.S. Justice Department began extensive raids and deportations of undocumented Mexican migrants, calling the directive "Operation Wetback," after a

[80] David M. Heer, *Undocumented Mexicans*, 11. For additional information on the Bracero Program see Deborah Cohen, *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in the Postwar United States and Mexico* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011) and Mireya Loza, *Defiant Braceros: How Migrant Workers Fought for Racial, Sexual & Political Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).
[81] Meeks, "Protecting the 'White Citizen Worker'," 107.
[82] Foley, *Mexicans in the Making of America*, 123.
[83] Hernández, *Migra!* 174-5. For additional reading on Operation Wetback see Juan Ramon-García, *Operation Wetback: the Mass Deportation of Mexican Undocumented Workers in 1954* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980).

derogatory name used to describe them.[84] Because of this, the distinction between undocumented and documented persons became starker than in previous years.

While the government attempted to expel undocumented Mexican migrants from the United States, labor leaders also lobbied against the Bracero Program. Unions such as the National Farm Labor Union argued that temporary worker contracts allowed growers to pay workers lower wages, thereby decreasing pay for all workers while also increasing growers' profits. In addition, growers used the braceros to prevent American workers from having the power to organize or strike. Instead, employers hired braceros or undocumented workers who would accept low wages and poor working conditions.[85] Though growers were contractually obligated to provide certain services to braceros, including access to medical care, adequate clothing and housing, many either received poor accommodation or none at all.[86] At the time, Mexican Americans were reluctant to advocate for the improved treatment of braceros, especially in agricultural areas.[87] They resented being associated with Mexican nationals and being treated as though they were Mexican and not American citizens.[88]

Unlike Anglo-American and Mexican American workers, growers did not want the Bracero Program terminated nor their undocumented workers deported. Growers argued that Mexican workers were essential in agriculture, going so far as to claim that they were "particularly well suited for and fond of agricultural labor."[89] Undocumented workers were especially valuable to growers because they could be hired without

[84] Foley, *Mexicans in the Making of America*, 123.
[85] Galarza, *Farm Workers and Agri-business in California,* 151.
[86] Foley, *Mexicans in the Making of America*, 130-1.
[87] Lori Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming,* 79.
[88] Ibid., 92.
[89] Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brow,* 137.

contracts, thereby freeing growers from obligations such as established minimum wages for temporary contracted laborers and the provision of housing. Undocumented workers were also easily intimidated by threats to report them to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, which aided growers in preventing them from complaining about working conditions and unionizing.[90] That is not to say, however, that undocumented workers did not participate in labor organizing or other community organizations.

Though some Mexican Americans refused to advocate for braceros and undocumented Mexicans, there were community service organizations that both educated them about their labor rights and provided them with aid. At the forefront of this was La Hermandad Mexicana, founded in 1951. It provided support in a variety of arenas including mutual aid services, legal services, counseling and labor union activity. Its efforts, however, did not extend outside of California.[91] Centro de Acción Social Autónoma-Hermandad General de Trabajadores (CASA-HGT), another community organization, provided services to immigrant workers and assisted in organizing immigrant participation in labor activities. CASA believed that Mexican workers were essential to the U.S. workforce and as such should have a voice in unions. During the early 1970s, younger members of the organizations attempted to utilize the centers in their own organizing efforts, but were unable to maintain membership.[92] After CASA was dissolved, its organizers continued working for workers' rights along the borderlands

[90] Dennis N. Valdés, "Legal Status and the Struggles of Farmworkers in West Texas and New Mexico, 1942-1993," *Latin American Perspectives* 22 no. 1 (Winter 1995), 119.
[91] Gómez-Quiñones, *Mexican American Labor*, 224-5.
[92] Mario T. García, *Memories of Chicano History: The Life and Narrative of Bert Corona* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 310-2.

and Mexico throughout the 1980s through connections with other organizations such as the International Brotherhood of Workers and the Agricultural Workers' Union.[93]

Like community service organizations, labor unions held attitudes ranging from ambivalent to hostile toward undocumented workers.[94] This made it even more difficult for undocumented farmworkers to participate in or organize labor activities, but it did not stop them. Farmworkers found that unions reacted in different ways to their presence. Historian Juan Gómez-Quiñones classifies these practices into three types: formal exclusion, toleration of their membership and active organization of undocumented members. He states that these policies were affected by leaders within the union, public awareness of undocumented persons and whether a large portion of the workforce was made up of undocumented persons. He posits that generally speaking, more skilled craft labor unions excluded both undocumented and non-citizen workers whereas industrial unions were more likely to allow their inclusion, but did not specifically advocate for them.[95]

Originally named the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, the National Farm Labor Union began organizing in the West in 1947.[96] It reached out to braceros and undocumented workers, but the goal was not to include them in organizing efforts. Instead, organizers wanted to document the abuses committed by growers against workers and the channels through which undocumented workers attained employment. The NFLU hoped to expose the exploitative practices of agribusiness and the failings of the Bracero Program. Ernesto Galarza, director of education for the union, publicized

[93] Gómez-Quiñones, *Mexican American Labor*, 225.
[94] Ibid., 224
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ernesto Galarza, *Farm Workers and Agri-business in California,* 11-12.

their findings in several works exposing the abuses of the bracero program. He also helped workers file complaints against growers with the ultimate goal of ending the Bracero Program.[97] Though the union consulted with braceros and undocumented workers, there are accounts of its unionists participating in "citizen's arrests" of undocumented workers, making their true intentions somewhat questionable.[98]

The NFLU is important to agricultural labor organizing history because it set the stage and served as a model for successful organizing during the 1960s.[99] The NFLU organized the DiGiorgio Grape Strike which ran from 1947 until 1949. The strike consisted of over eight hundred workers of which one hundred and twenty were braceros, however, the U.S. government and employers managed to pressure the braceros into returning to work by manipulating their fear of losing their contract and being deported.[100] Additionally, growers made use of government contacts to delay recognition of the strike and to allow them to continue hiring more braceros and undocumented workers.[101] Alongside the strike, the NFLU instigated a boycott against DiGiorgio products, but was never able to get the boycott instituted nationally.[102] Ultimately, the NFLU terminated the strike as a result of costly legal expenses that it could not afford.[103]

[97] Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming*, 140. Galarza's exposés include *Strangers in Our Fields* (1956) and *Merchants of Labor* (1964).
[98] Zaragosa Vargas, *Crucible of Struggle: A History of Mexican Americans from Colonial Times to the Present Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 278.
[99] Catherine Vézina, "Labor Strategies and Agribusiness Counterstrike during the Bracero Era: The Peculiar Case of the National Farm Labor Union, 1946-1952," *Labor History* 57 no. 2 (2016), 249.
[100] Ibid., 241.
[101] Ibid., 241.
[102] Donald H. Grubbs, "Prelude to Chavez: The National Farm Labor Union in California," *Labor History* 16 no. 4 (1975), 461-2.
[103] Vézina, "Labor Strategies and Agribusiness Counterstrike," 242.

Though struggling financially, the NFLU continued to organize in 1949. The union highlighted both the poor conditions in which braceros lived and worked as well as the underemployment of American workers. It successfully pushed government officials to increase deportations of undocumented individuals.[104] The NFLU organizers also rounded up undocumented workers and turned them over to the Border Patrol until 1952, when as a result of its actions, Congress passed a bill that made citizen's arrests of undocumented workers illegal.[105] By the early 1950s, the union became virtually defunct as a result of the allied interests of agribusiness and California politicians, but its tactics served as a model for later organizations including the United Farm Workers and the MCOP.[106]

By 1963, additional Mexican American organizations, including the League of Latin American Citizens and the Community Service Organization (CSO), expressed concerns about the Bracero Program that were similar to the NFLU's. The CSO worked to improve the social standing of Mexican Americans in Los Angeles, increase their political representation, advocate for civil rights advances and defend the rights of Mexican immigrants.[107] According to historian Lorie Flores, a gruesome 1963 car accident involving fifty-six braceros traveling back from the fields, "galvanized the Mexican American activist community and enfolded farmworker concerns" into activist platforms at the time.[108] Ultimately, in 1964, the Bracero Program was terminated as a

[104] Ibid., 244.
[105] Ibid., 247.
[106] Ibid., 249.
[107] Gómez-Quiñones, *Chicano Politics*, 54-5.
[108] Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming*, 156-7.

result of criticism from Mexican Americans as well as religious groups, liberal Democrats and labor unions.[109]

After the demise of the Bracero Program, the United Farm Workers of America, directed by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, was the most well-known organization of the period. The union formed in 1966 after the Agricultural Workers' Organizing Committee (AWOC) and the National Farm Workers' Association (NFWA) merged, though it was initially referred to as the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee.[110] The merging of the two organizations created a more powerful union with an active, organized membership and leaders with experience from previous labor organizing as well as from work with the Community Service Organization (CSO).[111]

During the 1960s and 1970s, the UFW resurrected the use of boycotts, a tactic previously employed by Ernesto Galarza and the National Farm Labor Union, but expanded their reach. In the past, boycotts had been used as a means of expressing solidarity among workers and against employers that engaged in poor treatment of their employees, but Chavez expanded the boycott to a national audience. He presented the movement as one for social justice, a cause worthy of notice by all humanitarians and not merely agricultural workers or residents of California. By successfully gaining national attention, the UFW expanded its ability to recruit organizers from groups beyond farmworkers, increasing their national presence among a variety of individuals and broadening the tactics which they used to recruit membership and support. Finally, increased membership and organizing support facilitated the UFW's capacity to extend

[109] Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 182.
[110] Gómez-Quiñones, *Mexican American Labor*, 246.
[111] Garcia, *From the Jaws of Victory*, 46-7.

boycotts beyond the primary target and down to secondary product carriers. In other words, instead of boycotting simply the corporation that employed workers, the UFW organized secondary boycotts that targeted any business selling the corporation's products.[112] The union, however, did not include undocumented workers in the membership that they solicited.

By the 1970s, some civil rights organizations and unions began to take more inclusive approaches to undocumented workers.[113] The Comité Obrero en Defensa de Indocumentados/das en Lucha (CODIL), established in 1976, strove to increase awareness and generate an interest in organizing and advocating for undocumented persons. The organization circulated information about the plight of the undocumented worker to various workplaces and communities through posters and leaflets. It also worked with several unions "to promote the passage of resolutions on the rights of undocumented workers" including the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU), the United Auto Workers (UAW) and the Teamsters. In 1977, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union pursued legal action that resulted in an injunction preventing Immigration and Naturalization Services raids.[114]

Tracing the history of migrant workers in the United States reveals that public opinion on their presence in the country was generally negative from early 1900s until the 1970s. Though there are a few exceptions such as UCAPAWA and the Congress of Spanish Speaking People that were inclusive of undocumented workers in their organizing efforts during the 1930s and 1940s, it was not until the 1970s, organizations

[112] Ibid., 6-7.
[113] Gómez-Quiñones, *Mexican American Labor*, 224-5.
[114] Ibid., 225.

more commonly included undocumented people. The Maricopa County Organizing Project was not only a part of the growing trend, but at the forefront to recruit and represent unsanctioned Mexican migrants. However, they were still forced to work within the confines of the Arizona political climate. In an attempt to demonstrate that the MCOP faced both obstacles and opportunities in the state, the following section will provide brief context on previous attitudes toward labor organizing and undocumented workers in the state.

2.2 Arizona Organizing: A Little Behind the Times

Labor unions, and the UFW in particular, had a difficult time organizing workers and achieving positive results in Arizona though this had not always been the case. In the 1930s, union organizers from the Congress of Industrial Organizations and Mine-Mill orchestrated a strike against Phelps Dodge. Though Phelps Dodge responded by firing thirty-eight participants, the union filed a complaint with the National Labor Relations Board. The U.S. Supreme Court eventually reviewed the case, five years later, and decided in favor of the strikers. The Supreme Court stated that Phelps Dodge had wrongfully retaliated against workers and order it to stop "interfering with the Mine-Mill local . . . reinstate the employees who had been fired, and reimburse them for lost wages." As a result, the union expanded its membership[115]

Labor organizing continued to be successful in the state during the 1940s and early 1950s as evidenced by the increase in memberships between 1939 and 1953. Membership in unions had increased by approximately 40,000 individuals to represent

[115] Eric V. Meeks, *Border Citizens: The Making of Indians, Mexicans, and Anglos in Arizona* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 169.

approximately twenty-seven percent of the total work force.[116] In Phoenix, for example, city employees had organized into the United Public Workers and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees. Builders had negotiated contracts to ensure only locals would provide postwar construction and hospitality employees negotiated with management via the Hotel and Restaurant Employees and Bartenders Union Local 611, the latter of which participated in a vigorous strike following the passing of a 1946 referendum which prohibited "union membership as a condition of employment."[117] During the same year, 1946, Mexican American mine workers struck against Phelps Dodge for paying unequal wages to Anglos and Mexican Americans. Phelps Dodge acceded to their demanded and ended "the racially ordered wage system at least in its most blatant manifestation."[118] But despite these auspicious conditions, labor organizing ultimately declined in Arizona, in part due to the work of Barry Goldwater.

One of the most prominent anti-unionists of his era, Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater rallied against organized labor from the inception of his first term in 1952. Goldwater served five terms in the Senate with only a four-year hiatus following an unsuccessful bid for president. His anti-organized labor position greatly influenced the state until the 1980s when his health prevented him from a sixth Senate run.[119] Early in his career as a public figure, locally famous for his role at his family's luxury department store, Goldwater expressed concerns about President Roosevelt's New Deal programs in a 1938 editorial to the *Phoenix Gazette*. In addition to attacking New Deal policies, he

[116] Elizabeth Tandy Shermer, "Origins of the Conservative Ascendancy: Barry Goldwater's Early Senate Career and the De-legitimization of Organized Labor," *The Journal of American History* 95 no. 3 (December 2008), 682.
[117] Ibid., 682-3.
[118] Meeks, *Border Citizens*, 171.
[119] Bart Barnes, "Barry Goldwater, GOP Hero, Dies," *Washington Post*, May 30, 1998.

lashed out against the destruction he believed the New Deal caused to the relationship between worker and employer. This editorial struck the right tone with local business owners, who agreed with his New Deal frustrations and statements about organized labor.[120]

Anti-unionism was not solely expressed in editorials or Senator Goldwater's rhetoric. The Arizona government took strong anti-union action in 1970. In response to a UFW lettuce boycott that affected California and Arizona, then Arizona governor, Jack Williams, signed a law restricting boycotting activities and allowing court injunctions against union activity that disrupted harvesting crops.[121] Between 1970 and 1974, organizing in Arizona appears to have been sporadic, but the UFW attempted another strike in Yuma, AZ in 1974. In this instance, the 1970 decision to allow court injunctions against union activity disrupted a UFW attempted strike against employers in Yuma. The strike was mostly unsuccessful and contributed to the withdrawal of most UFW activities from the state.[122] The failed walkout alienated the UFW from undocumented workers because of the tactics used to keep employers from using them as strikebreakers.[123]

As a part of the 1974 Yuma strike, the UFW set up a line of organizers near the U.S.-Mexico border to prevent migrants from crossing into Arizona.[124] Across approximately one hundred miles, organizers stationed five or six people in tent housing and paid them a daily rate to keep undocumented persons from crossing into the state.

[120] Elizabeth Tandy Shermer, "Origins of the Conservative Ascendancy," 685.
[121] Gómez-Quiñones, *Mexican American Labor*, 257.
[122] Ibid., 256-8
[123] Adam Tompkins, *Ghostworkers and Greens: The Cooperative Campaigns of Farmworkers and Environmentalists for Pesticide Reform* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 83.
[124] Frank Bardacke, "The UFW and the Undocumented," *International Labor and Working Class History, suppl. Strikes and Social Conflicts* 83 (Spring 2013), 166.

Later, accusations surfaced that UFW organizers had beaten Mexican nationals with whips made of barbed wire. Mexican newspapers reported on the brutality of the UFW border patrollers, but the situation received little attention in the U.S. media. Cesar Chávez denied these reports and claimed that while they had set up the line, there had been no violence used to enforce it.[125]

During the same year, the UFW had attempted to organize domestic workers at the Arrowhead Ranch, but had not been successful. Growers imported two hundred undocumented workers and broke the UFW strike.[126] Instead of encouraging solidarity between workers, the UFW had planned to get undocumented workers to leave the ranch and return to Mexico.[127] The UFW withdrew much of its efforts from the state after the accusations of misconduct during the Yuma strike and the failure at Arrowhead. The vacuum created by its departure led to local organizing efforts including those of the MCOP and he Arizona Farm Workers Union.[128]

In summary, by the 1970s, many unions outside of Arizona supported the inclusion of undocumented members including the United Farm Workers of America; the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Operators of America; the Farm Labor Organizing Committee; and the Retail Clerks International Unions.[129] The difference between documented-inclusive unions and the MCOP is that though other unions had undocumented members, their rights were not central to the unions' concerns. Unions such as the IGLWU and the UAW advocated for some undocumented rights, but

[125] Robert Lindsey, "Chavez is Target of Criticism in Farm Labor Struggle," *The New York Times*, February 7, 1979, folder 20, box 59, MCOP.
[126] Tompkins, *Ghostworkers and Greens*, 83.
[127] Torres, "The 1977 Goldmar Strike," 10.
[128] José A. Maldonado, "¡Si Se Puede!", 118.
[129] Gómez-Quiñones, *Mexican American Labor*, 225.

pursuing their membership and agenda was not central to the union platforms. The MCOP, on the other hand, actively recruited undocumented workers and addressed the exploitative conditions in which they both lived and worked. It was at the forefront of a shift in ideology toward undocumented workers. The following section explores the relationship between the MCOP and undocumented workers. It examines early strikes and legal action taken by the MCOP with the participation of undocumented farmworkers and argues that the MCOP was successful in Arizona, where the UFW failed, because of its approach to undocumented workers.

2.3 The MCOP: Organizing the Undocumented

The Maricopa County Organizing Project was founded in Arizona in 1977 by a group of organizers including Guadalupe Sanchez, Gus Gutierrez and Don Devereux, the majority of whom had previous experience participating in labor organizing with the UFW. The withdrawal of the UFW from Arizona as well as its anti-undocumented migrant tendencies created the space for a new organization to represent field laborers in the state, including Mexican Americans, documented and undocumented workers. According to an unpublished paper in the Arizona State Archives, Guadalupe Sanchez, often referred to as simply “Lupe,” was a former organizer for the UFW. He, along with Gus Gutierrez, former director of the Arizona UFW branch, and Don Devereux, an investigative reporter who had been a ground contact for the UFW, founded the MCOP with the intention of organizing undocumented workers. These men believed that if undocumented workers could be organized against growers, their wages would increase. If wages increased, growers would no longer have a reason to hire undocumented workers and wages for all would increase, thereby benefitting domestic workers as

well.[130] The men assembled a board of directors that included Don Devereux, Gus Gutierrez, and several undocumented workers. They also employed Jesus Romo as the first executive director of the organization and later Lupe Sanchez as well.[131]

The MCOP's officials had good reason to believe that national opinion toward migrants might be favorable under President Carter, whose immigration plan allowed immigrants who had been living in the country for the previous seven years to receive permanent residency and to move their families to the United States. Immigrants who had been in the country for a shorter period, but prior to January 1, 1977, would be allowed to work, but would not have access to most social services or the ability to bring their families into the country. This plan legalized the status of many of the workers that the MCOP planned to organize. The Carter administration's immigration plan sought to resolve the problem of undocumented workers by allowing the majority to remain in the United States, and then impose harsher penalties on businesses that hired future undocumented migrants.[132]

The political climate in Arizona was also more liberal than in prior years, which must have been encouraging to founders of the MCOP. In November of 1974, Arizona elected Raúl Hector Castro, a Mexican American Democrat, to the governorship.[133] A naturalized citizen of the U.S., Castro, celebrated his ethnicity and claimed that his experiences as a poor child and "working man" were assets.[134] Castro resigned the

[130] Jose I. Torres, "The 1977 Goldmar Strike," 7.
[131] Ibid., 8.
[132] "Alien Amnesty Proposals Go to Congress Next Week," July 21, 1977, *The New York Times* reprinted in *The Arizona Republic*, folder 35, box 50, MCOP.
[133] Raúl H. Castro and Jack L. August, Jr., *Adversity is My Angel: The Life and Career of Raúl H. Castro* (Fort Worth: TCU Press, 2009), 91.
[134] Ibid., 84-5.

governorship in favor of an ambassadorship in 1977, but was succeeded by Democrat Wesley Bolin, who died in office on March 4th, 1978.[135] Following Bolin, Democrat Bruce Babbitt was elected to office and remained until 1987.[136] Organizing during a period in which the Democratic Party held the governorship offered a political climate for the MCOP to espouse liberal policies toward undocumented immigrants and immigration. Aware that there was a significant population of undocumented persons in Arizona, approximately 60,000, the MCOP worked to organize their voices with other workers against agribusiness.[137]

Initially, MCOP officers met with Cesar Chavez, head of the UFW, and proposed to work in connection with the California-based union, but Chavez refused to provide any financial support, unconvinced that there was any chance of successfully organizing undocumented workers.[138] Jesus Romo and Guadalupe Sanchez believed, however, that their methods would be more successful. Sanchez and Romo blamed the UFW for reinforcing divisions between undocumented, documented and Mexican American workers during a UFW organizing in Arizona. They accused the UFW of employing anti-migrant tactics, including organizing stations of individuals prepared to physically stop migrants from crossing the border. Sanchez and Romo condemned the violent behavior

[135] Ibid., 95. National Governors Association, "Gov. Wesley Bolin," https://www.nga.org/governor/wesley-bolin/, accessed March 25, 2019.
[136] National Governors Association, "Gov. Bruce Edward Babbitt," https://www.nga.org/governor/bruce-edward-babbitt/, accessed March 25, 2019.
[137] "Alien Amnesty Proposals Go to Congress Next Week," *New York Times* in *The Arizona Republic*, July 21, 1977, folder 35, box 50, MCOP.
[138] Torres, "The 1977 Goldmar Strike," 8-9.

of organizers who participated in a civilian border patrol to prevent undocumented workers from crossing and being used as strikebreakers. [139]

Though it cannot be disputed that at its origin the MCOP was influenced and tied to the UFW through its founders, its organizing efforts were independent of the California-based union. Descriptions of the MCOP's early work during the summer of 1977, prior to its first strike, present a stark difference from UFW organizing. The MCOP, from its inception, went beyond tolerating undocumented membership to actively recruiting and organizing undocumented members, elevating some from the position of member to organizer. Early on MCOP officers intended to function as a civil and human rights organization that would primarily focus on educating workers prior to UFW organizers soliciting their membership.[140] Chavez's refusal to provide financial support caused the two organizations to operate independently, although they remained inextricably linked through organizing attempts in Arizona.

As a precursor to organizing workers, the MCOP had to first learn more about them. Guadalupe Sanchez and Jesus Romo investigated workers' living and working conditions. They found that most of the undocumented farmworkers in Arizona were males employed by citrus growers. Undocumented migrants preferred working on citrus farms because orchards offered many hiding places for workers during immigration raids. The workers were not paid the minimum wage nor given compensation when injured at work. Living conditions were horrifying. Workers were subjected to sleeping and eating in areas where pesticides were sprayed, irrigation ditches ran into areas where they slept

[139] Guadalupe Sanchez and Jesus Romo, "Organizing Mexican Undocumented Workers on Both Sides of the Border," 1-2, folder 10, box 109, MCOP.
[140] Ibid., 1-2.

and the only water available to them was often contaminated. To add to their plight, workers were aware that if they were caught by the Border Patrol, they would likely not receive pay for the work they had completed during the past pay period even after spending an average of $250 dollars to make their way from Mexico to Maricopa County farms.[141]

Once Sanchez and Romo had attained a greater understanding of the plight of the undocumented worker, they trained select workers to help educate others about their legal rights in the workplace. These trained workers were sent to Mexico with a representative of the MCOP to educate others prior to their migration to the United States. The main tenets of their education included the "right to an established minimum wage, workman's compensation, work safety, decent living conditions, and the right to organize to attain a collective bargaining agreement."[142] Each organizer was supposed to predetermine strike committees that would be operational once workers arrived in the United States. In preparation for beginning of the citrus season in Arizona, this training occurred over three months during the summer of the 1977. Sanchez and Romo claimed that by its completion, twenty-three committees had been formed and were prepared to "infiltrate, organize and take direct strike action in Arizona."[143]

One group of workers associated with the MCOP and headed by Manuel Marin, one of the undocumented MCOP Board members, had traveled to Mexico in preparation to infiltrate workers headed to Arrowhead Ranch. The group made the journey into the U.S. and to the ranch on foot, walking nearly 180 miles in one week. Once there, Marin

[141] Ibid., 3-4.
[142] Ibid., 5.
[143] Ibid., 5.

and the strike committee spent the next three weeks educating and organizing the undocumented workers before reporting to Guadalupe Sanchez that they were prepared to strike.[144]

The MCOP organizer who had remained in Arizona took several precautions prior to the arrival of the organized workers. Anticipating a negative public reaction to the impending walkout by undocumented pickers, they shaped media coverage of the substandard working and living conditions on the citrus farms by using their influence to have articles published in the local newspaper exposing rough living conditions, hoping to educate the public and evoke a more sympathetic reaction to the strike. Organizers also established a support system for strikers within the state, contacting attorneys willing to donate their services and seeking politicians willing to support their actions. In addition, MCOP activists warned local coyotes, or guides, who helped transport migrants across the border, that should they help transport Mexican workers to farms during the strike, they would take legal action against them.[145]

The MCOP was aware that the foremen at Arrowhead Ranch, the site planned for its first strike, "bought" migrants from the coyotes and that if they could not stop this practice during the strike, workers would simply be replaced by new groups of migrants. The MCOP gathered information on the practice and informed coyotes that they would report their actions to local government if they persisted in transporting workers during the strike.[146]

[144] Torres, "The 1977 Goldmar Strike," 14.
[145] Sanchez and Romo, "Organizing Mexican Undocumented Workers," 5-6. Also mentioned in Jose Torres, "The 1977 Goldmar Strike," 19.
[146] Maldonado, "¡Si Se Puede!," 99-100.

Selecting the Arrowhead Ranch as the site of the first MCOP strike was a sound decision. The ranch exemplified the typical citrus grove in Arizona. It relied on the seasonal availability of Mexican nationals during periods of intensive work such as harvesting. The farm had a history of employing undocumented persons. Two years earlier, in 1975, the Ranch was sued by 926 citizens and documented workers for the practice of hiring undocumented persons. The plaintiffs claimed that the ranch knowingly hired undocumented workers and displaced citizens and documented persons. Plaintiffs alleged that as a result not only did legal workers find themselves without employment, but they were forced to accept jobs at reduced rates and in poor working conditions. The case was ultimately thrown out based on the court's opinion that plaintiffs had no claim to sue under the legislation their brief cited: the Immigration and Nationality Act (1965) and the Civil Rights Act (1965).[147] Though the case resulted in defeat for the workers, it established the claim that Arrowhead Ranch had been in the practice of employing undocumented workers in order to reap financial benefits. It also established the claim that the Ranch paid poor wages and offered harsh working conditions for its employees. In addition to the history of employing undocumented workers that the lawsuit alleged, the ranch had previously been targeted unsuccessfully by UFW organizers and so organizers had some knowledge of the property.[148]

The ranch was also known to the public by 1977. At the time, reporter filed a series of articles in response to the murder of local Arizona reporter, Don Bolles. Bolles had been investigating the presence of organized crime in Arizona at the time of his

[147] "Opinion", *Louis Lopez v. Arrowhead Ranches*, No. 73-1243, September 26, 1975, 523 F.2d 924 (United States Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit), Thomson Reuters Westlaw Database.
[148] Torres, "The 1977 Goldmar Strike," 10.

death. A fellow reporter, William Green, responded by forming the Investigative Reporters and Editors. Green and members of the group wished to demonstrate that they would not be intimidated into silence and published "a series of articles documenting" ties between political elite and organized crime. One of these articles exposed the miserable conditions at Arrowhead Ranch.[149] In addition to this article, board member and reporter, Don Devereux, successfully worked "to sway public opinion in favor of the farm workers" by encouraging others to publish almost weekly accounts of the conditions on the ranch.[150]

Finally, strikers identified the ranch for the organization's first strike because of its ties to the brother of former Senator Goldwater, Robert Goldwater, who had previously made inflammatory remarks about the ranch's practice of employing undocumented workers. Asked by a UFW organizer why his brother employed undocumented workers, Senator Goldwater had replied, "My brother is over twenty-one and he knows what he is doing. If you people would get off your butts and go to work, he wouldn't have to hire [Mexican] nationals."[151] The *Scottsdale Daily Progress* also reported that Senator Goldwater's son-in-law recalled a family discussion in which Robert Goldwater agreed that if the Border Patrol kept pressuring employers not to use undocumented workers that the ranch would have to go out of business.[152] The MCOP expected that this relationship would draw more publicity to the strikers' demands.[153]

[149] Maldonado, "¡Si Se Puede!," 95-6.
[150] Ibid., 103.
[151] Investigative Reporters and Editors, "IRE Reported on Aliens in March," October 4, 1977, *Scottsdale Daily Progress*, folder 19, box 96, MCOP.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Torres, "The 1977 Goldmar Strike," 13.

The strike officially began on October 3, 1977 when a work stoppage was put into effect by ranch laborers who ignored various threats made by ranch foremen attempting to discourage them from striking. Thanks to the efforts of MCOP organizers, local media was on the scene by 8:00 am.[154] By 9:30, INS agents arrived at the ranch and entered headquarters to confer with management. Workers who had remained in their camps were informed that if they did not return to work by the following morning, INS would return to the ranch and deport strikers.[155] The strikers, however, continued.

The following morning, workers witnessed the removal of cables from ranch gate posts. The cables had served to slow down the INS during former raids on the property, but in a clear attempt to intimidate workers, ranch managers had uninstalled them. Six INS officers descended on the property just after eight that morning, joined by twenty-five Sheriff's deputies and police dogs, while overhead, an INS airplane surveyed the property.[156] The ranch's size and the cover of the orchards helped to protect workers. The raid netted eighteen undocumented Mexicans, whom INS deported, including nearly half of the strike committee.[157]

MCOP organizers struggled to maintain contact with strikers. Irate ranch employees attempted to keep them off their property, often engaging law enforcement to help them force organizers to leave the property. In one affidavit, Jesus Romo described his attempts to contact strikers on the second day of the walkout. He claimed that for the previous two weeks, he had maintained regular access to Arrowhead Ranch employees who lived in the citrus groves. On October 4, however, while attempting a routine visit to

[154] Ibid., 17.
[155] Ibid., 18.
[156] Ibid., 19.
[157] Ibid., 20.

the farm, a representative of the Maricopa County Sheriff's Department refused the MCOP access based on a complaint by Steve Martori, a ranch manager. When Romo argued he had the right to visit laborers in their residences, the deputy reached out to Martori, who drove to the scene and stated that he would no longer allow nighttime visits to the workers because he believed the MCOP might attempt to intimidate individuals into participating in labor organizing activities. However, Martori permitted daytime visitation.[158]

The following day, Romo visited the ranch during the daytime as ordered, but at 6:00 pm, he was once again ordered to leave the property. Romo decided not to leave the ranch and instead continued to meet with strikers. A second officer arrived with a police dog and ordered workers to separate based on whether they were participating in the strike or not. The officer stated that he was planning to arrest all striking employees. The workers fled while MCOP organizers debated their next course of action. The sheriff responded by issuing a trespassing charge against Jesus Romo and Guadalupe Sanchez, which they refused to sign. As a result, the labor organizers spent a few hours in the county jail. The following day, Romo returned to the ranch and ignored an order to leave, resulting in a second arrest for trespassing.[159]

In response to an injunction preventing organizers from accessing the ranch, the Maricopa County Organizing Project legal team took action to regain access to the property of Arrowhead Ranch and to engage with its employees. Their complaint stated that the MCOP was acting on the behalf of themselves and workers residing in Arrowhead Ranch labor camps. The complaint accused Goldmar Inc. of threatening to

[158] "Jesus Romo Affidavit," October 7, 1977, folder 2, box 24, MCOP.
[159] Ibid.

evict tenants of these camps and forbidding MCOP representatives from visiting the property. The complaint stated that approximately three hundred persons, including women and children inhabited the property and that the MCOP had appeared at the bequest of some of these individuals. As a result of their subsequent visit, the MCOP alleged that Steve Martori, one of the ranch managers, had suggested that he would evict any workers that invited union representatives to the property. The MCOP argued that evictions would "constitute a taking of property without due process as guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution."[160] Additionally, the complaint alleged that Martori and Goldmar Inc. had caused the arrests of Guadalupe Sanchez and Jesus Romo for attempting to peacefully meet with workers in their camps. The MCOP argued that these actions were unlawful because they violated rights including freedom of speech, freedom of press and freedom of assembly. They requested that organizers be given access to workers and that their employers be prohibited from infringing on these rights through intimidation or harassment including physical abuse, termination of employment, eviction, and the loss/decrease of services such as electricity and water supplies.[161]

As a result of their complaint, the court issued a preliminary injunction that allowed four members of the MCOP to have access to employees during non-working hours without the express invitation of a worker, and up to ten members if requested by an inhabitant, though Ranch management required notice of their names prior to their arrival as well as requiring them to carry identification. Organizers could meet with employees in their camps, but were not allowed to interfere with operations at the ranch

[160] "Complaint for Injunctive Relief," October 6, 1977, folder 2, box 25, MCOP.
[161] Ibid.

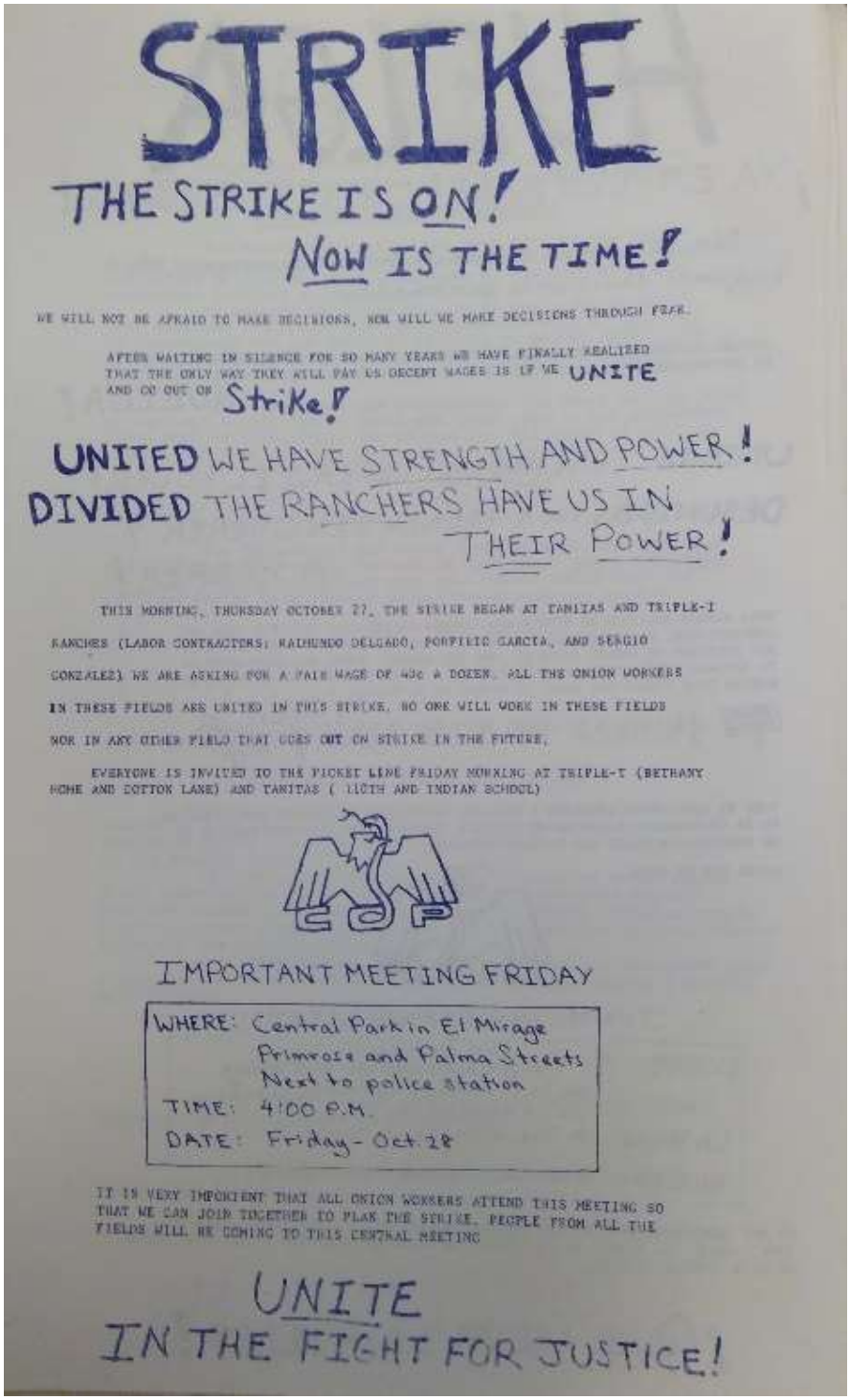
or any working employees, except in certain emergency situations. MCOP members were allowed to bring two vehicles onto the property as long as they followed ranch traffic rules and did not cause damage to property. The Ranch also agreed to dismiss trespassing charges that had been levied against Guadalupe Sanchez and Jesus Romo for a previous visit to the property. This injunction served as a placeholding agreement until the MCOP and Goldmar Inc. could go to trial.[162]

Before a month had passed, the strike ended with an agreement reached between ranch management, the MCOP and a committee of ranch workers. The ranch agreed to provide increased wages which would be paid to employees daily, improved toilet facilities, blankets, potable water, protective outerwear for their work and advance notification of irrigation schedules. In the media, the MCOP praised Goldmar Inc. for working to resolve the labor demands and improve the laborers' living and working conditions. The organization expressed hope that this agreement would provide a template for other employers, encouraging them to work with undocumented workers and recognize, accommodate and help provide for "their basic human rights." Jesus Romo was quoted in one newspaper, stating that the Goldmar Strike was the first in which undocumented workers bargained for improved pay and working conditions. He viewed this success as the first step in the process to change the experiences of all undocumented workers and believed that the true value of the strike was in the participation and vocalization of the workers themselves.[163]

[162] "Goldmar Preliminary Injunction," October 26th, 1977, folder 1, box 25, MCOP.
[163] Tom Barry, "Undocumented Workers Win Demands," *Rio Grande Weekly*, November 11-18, 1977, folder 21, box 59, MCOP.

Following the strike at Goldmar, the MCOP organized a strike of green onion growers that began on October 27, 1977. MCOP flyers containing information about the start of the strike proclaimed that "United we have strength and power! Divided the ranchers have us in their power!"[164] Like the citrus strikers at Goldmar, green onion workers demanded better pay and working conditions. One leaflet published by the MCOP encouraged support for the strikers and explained that workers were unable to keep their children out of the fields with their current wages, resulting in minors not attending school. The leaflet cited a report by the American Friends Service committee which stated that workers relying on subsistence employment were often forced to work their children in order to survive.[165] The final page of the leaflet made an appeal to readers to support the green onion strikers through donations and volunteer work.[166]

[164] "Green Onion Strike Flyer," date unknown, folder 41, box 49, MCOP.
[165] "Child Labor in the Fields," Green Onion Strike Document, date unknown, folder 22, box 96, MCOP.
[166] "An Appeal," Green Onion Strike Document, date unknown, folder 22, box 96, MCOP.



STRIKE

THE STRIKE IS ON!

NOW IS THE TIME!

WE WILL NOT BE AFRAID TO MAKE DECISIONS, NOR WILL WE MAKE DECISIONS THROUGH FEAR.

AFTER WAITING IN SILENCE FOR SO MANY YEARS WE HAVE FINALLY REALIZED THAT THE ONLY WAY THEY WILL PAY US DECENT WAGES IS IF WE UNITE AND GO OUT ON Strike!

UNITED WE HAVE STRENGTH AND POWER!

DIVIDED THE RANCHERS HAVE US IN THEIR POWER!

THIS MORNING, THURSDAY OCTOBER 27, THE STRIKE BEGAN AT TANITAS AND TRIPLE-I RANCHES (LABOR CONTRACTERS; RAIMUNDO DELGADO, PORFIRIO GARCIA, AND SERGIO GONZALEZ) WE ARE ASKING FOR A FAIR WAGE OF 40c A DOZEN. ALL THE ONION WORKERS IN THESE FIELDS ARE UNITED IN THIS STRIKE. NO ONE WILL WORK IN THESE FIELDS NOR IN ANY OTHER FIELD THAT GOES OUT ON STRIKE IN THE FUTURE.

EVERYONE IS INVITED TO THE PICKET LINE FRIDAY MORNING AT TRIPLE-I (BETHANY HOME AND COTTON LANE) AND TANITAS (115TH AND INDIAN SCHOOL)

IMPORTANT MEETING FRIDAY

WHERE: Central Park in El Mirage
Primrose and Palma Streets
Next to police station
TIME: 4:00 P.M.
DATE: Friday - Oct 28

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT ALL ONION WORKERS ATTEND THIS MEETING SO THAT WE CAN JOIN TOGETHER TO PLAN THE STRIKE. PEOPLE FROM ALL THE FIELDS WILL BE COMING TO THIS CENTRAL MEETING

UNITE
IN THE FIGHT FOR JUSTICE!

IMAGE 3: Green Onion Strike Flyer[167]

[167] "Green Onion Strike Flyers," date unknown, folder 41, box 49, MCOP.

The green onion strike eventually grew much larger than Goldmar, involving approximately 3,000 workers and garnering attention from the UFW.[168] It also provided new avenues for the MCOP to use the legal system to support strikers. During the walkout, rough treatment of the strikers by law enforcement prompted the MCOP to file a complaint against the Maricopa County Sheriff's Department, claiming that the sheriff, Jerry Hill, and several of his deputies had "entered into and engaged in a systematic pattern of harassment, intimidation, verbal abuse, violence, false and illegal arrests, and the selective and arbitrary enforcement of laws" during the period of the strike.[169] Some of the incidents cited in the MCOP complaint included unlawful arrests and detentions, refusing to take action against a man accused of shooting at strikers, excessive force used during arrests, and the use of police dogs to intimidate picketers. The complaint asked for two million dollars of damages for the plaintiffs and a permanent injunction to protect strikers' rights and prevent future such behavior by the Sheriff's Department.[170] On September 24, 1979, the judge ruled in favor of the plaintiffs and they were awarded damages.[171] Letters from Victor Aronow, the MCOP attorney, confirm that at least sixteen individuals received awards ranging ranging from ten to fifteen hundred dollars.[172]

[168] "Onion Workers Get Chavez Mailgrams," *Phoenix Gazette*, December 10, 1977, folder 18, box 59, MCOP.
[169] "Second Amended Complaint, MCOP v. Jerry Hill," file copy, folder 5, box 25, MCOP.
[170] Ibid.
[171] "Undocumented Win Suit Against Cops," *The Guardian*, October 10, 1979, folder 26, box 24, MCOP.
[172] Victor Aronow, Letters to Antonio Dominguez, Juan Ojeda, Jesus Arredondo, Enrique Alvarado, Isabel Alvarado, Pedro Rocha, Josie Hernandez, George Ojeda, Juan Soliz, Juan DeLaCruz, Jesus Romo, Michael Carey, Joe Alvarado, Debra Preusch, and Irma Vasquez, 1979, folder 3, box 25, MCOP.

Shortly after the settlement against the Sheriff's Department, the MCOP achieved another victory for workers who had been abused by law enforcement. Four undocumented men had been on the way to work when they claimed that a deputy had attacked them with his night stick while another deputy watched, but did not participate. The attack left one of the men unconscious for multiple hours and another permanently scarred. In 1979, the Project won $9,000 for the workers. The MCOP hoped that victories such as these would make law officers less likely to discriminate against undocumented persons and commit violent acts against them without fear of repercussions.[173]

In the MCOP's early years, it experienced organizing success among farmworkers in Arizona. The Goldmar Strike resulted in the first contract between undocumented workers and their employers and workers received improved wages and living conditions. The Green Onion Strike involved thousands of participants though it did not consist of entirely undocumented workers. Finally, the MCOP case against the Sheriff's Department resulted in damages for injured strikers. The MCOP had won a victory with Goldmar for the civil rights and labor rights of undocumented, documented, and domestic workers. More importantly, it had achieved success by openly advocating for undocumented workers, including them in its membership and promoting them to organizing positions within the Project, unlike the UFW. Missteps by the UFW during the same period left the MCOP as a functioning activist organization in Arizona while the UFW experienced little to no success in the state. The following section explores UFW activity in Arizona and its failures during the late 1970s. By comparing the organizing activities and ideological positions of the MCOP and UFW during the same period in

[173] "Undocumented Win Suit Against Cops," *The Guardian*, October 10, 1979, folder 26, box 24, MCOP.

Arizona, this paper argues that the MCOP was successful because of its inclusive relationship with undocumented Mexican laborers.

2.4 The Arizona Failings of the UFW

The previous section demonstrated the willingness of the MCOP to work with and support undocumented and documented agricultural workers in successful ways, including strikes and legal action. These actions are significant because they occurred at the forefront of a movement to recognize undocumented workers and their rights, but also because they differed from the predominant methods of labor organizing at the time. As this section demonstrates, these successes drew the UFW to return to the area briefly, but did not prompt it to change its tactics. UFW activity in Arizona clearly demonstrates an anti-undocumented attitude which eventually forced the organization to withdraw from the state completely and focus its efforts on California.

Historian Matt Garcia explored the anti-undocumented migrant tendencies of Cesar Chavez in his work *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement*. Garcia cites Chavez's use of the term "illegal" to describe unsanctioned workers and explains that while some members of the UFW believed that undocumented workers should be included in union activities, Cesar Chavez felt the opposite. He, for example, blamed "illegals" for problems that had occurred within the unions such as the Steel Workers and the United Auto Workers and felt that undocumented members could never be equal members of the union due to their previous use as strikebreakers. Finally, Chavez believed that undocumented laborers might be a ploy to reinstate the Bracero program.[174]

[174] Garcia, *From the Jaws*, 149-50.

Similarly, journalist Miriam Pawel's *The Crusades of Cesar Chavez*, takes the position that the famous union leader opposed unionizing Mexican nationals. Based on tapes and other documents from the UFW, Pawel states that in 1974, Chavez had initiated an "Illegals Campaign," in which the UFW reported undocumented workers to the government for deportation.[175] The campaign included supplying union offices and staff with forms that they could use to facilitate the deportations of unsanctioned individuals such as their addresses, employers, and wages. As a side effect of identifying undocumented workers, Chavez became more convinced that their presence was detrimental to union activities. He blamed undocumented workers for providing labor that created a nonunion supply of lettuce and grapes which were available during his boycotts.[176] This new revelation reinforced the anti-undocumented sentiments that he had developed during experience campaigning against braceros in the 1950s.[177] Eventually, Chavez went so far as to make allegations that the Central Intelligence Agency allowed undocumented workers to cross following Mexico's claim that a closed border would lead to a Communist Mexico.[178] Though other historians, such as Randy Shaw argue that the union's toleration of undocumented members meant that Chavez did not oppose undocumented workers, actions committed by the union in Arizona suggest otherwise.[179]

In late 1977, the MCOP organized a strike of over 2500 workers, purported to be the largest in Arizona farm labor history, which drew the attention of the UFW. Chavez

[175] Miriam Pawel, *The Crusades of Cesar Chavez*, 293.
[176] Ibid., 293-4.
[177] Ibid., 294.
[178] Ibid., 313.
[179] Shaw, *Beyond the Fields*, 197.

claimed that his organization would offer assistance to the MCOP for its efforts to organize and support the strike, but he stated that the UFW would not take it over unless the workers wished for help negotiating with their employers. When Tom Barry, a local reporter, inquired about the MCOP's affiliation with undocumented workers, Chavez stated that the UFW viewed workers equally and had its own undocumented members.[180] In December, the UFW officially stepped in to negotiate with growers, an action which some interpreted to mean that the MCOP was simply a forerunner to UFW action, regardless of the MCOP's denials.[181]

Even though the UFW had engaged in the green onion strike, the MCOP continued to be involved. It pursued civil action for workers involved in the strike, filing suits against labor contractors and farm owners for harassment. The workers sought a total of $180,000 in damages for various instances of assault. The attacks included a mother and child being threatened at gunpoint, and two men who claimed that attempts had been made to run them over with farm equipment and a truck.[182] While the MCOP engaged in non-labor organizing activities, the UFW interacted with green onion strikers and employers. The union continued to work in the state during the following year. It is unclear whether the two organizations interacted during the strike. It is possible that they attempted to realize the MCOP's early conceptualization of a relationship in which it would educate and organize locally, allowing the UFW to step in and act as the union

[180] Tom Barry, "Cesar Chavez in Arizona," *Seers Weekly*, Dec. 2-9, 1977, folder 24, box 109, MCOP.
[181] "Onion Workers Get Chavez Mailgrams," *Phoenix Gazette*, December 10, 1977, folder 18, box 59, MCOP.
[182] Frank Turco, "4 Farms Sued for Harassment in Onion Strike," *The Arizona Republic*, December 6, 1977, Newspapers.com.

during strikes. Regardless, this was the last strike in which the UFW and MCOP cooperated.

In 1978, the UFW organized a strike along the California-Arizona border, including Blythe, AZ and the Imperial Valley, CA. Though technically some of the strike occurred in Arizona, it was speculated that the main motivation for it was to persuade growers represented by the Teamsters to choose the UFW as their employee negotiator once the UFW's current contracts lapsed.[183] While there, Chávez violated a court injunction against picketing and was arrested along with his wife. He claimed that he violated the order on the principle of the strictness of the court's ruling, but others felt that it was all a part of his plan to draw attention to the UFW and attempt to regain contracts taken over by the Teamsters.[184]

` It seems however, that UFW tactics were neither appreciated by the growers nor workers in the area. Reports of violence during the picketing including rock throwing, vehicle damage and threats made during the walkout. Growers claimed scabs were anxious while working on the fringes of the fields where UFW organizers were stationed. Workers who interviewed stated that they either did not approve of the tactics used by the UFW, or did not understand the strike, or simply wanted to work and be left alone.[185] During this period, the anti-union *The Arizona Republic* published an editorial on the "sullied image" of Chávez which restated the accusations of violent tactics including intimidation, rock throwing, and burning vehicles and argued that his motivation was

[183] Rosalie Crowe, "Growers Ask for Permanent Picketing Limit," *The Arizona Republic*, June 7, 1978, Newspapers.com.
[184] Rosalie Crowe, "Chavez Held for Violating Picket Order," *The Arizona Republic*, June 7, 1978, Newspapers.com.
[185] Ibid.

only to recruit new members regardless of the means in which he had to do it.[186] Journalist Miriam Pawel supports these allegations in her work, *The Crusades of Cesar Chavez.* Pawel notes that Chavez "set out to undercut the [MCOP] Arizona upstarts," using tactics such attempting to discredit founders, prevent the MCOP from receiving financial grants and bribing Mexican police to detain migrants.[187]

Members of the Arizona Farmworkers Union, the union founded by former MCOP director, Guadalupe Sanchez, also claimed that the UFW was using inappropriate tactics to recruit members. These members claimed the UFW was attempting to disrupt organizing efforts by other groups. They stated that the organization was trying to drive a wedge between local and migrant workers as well as working with the Border Patrol to deport undocumented workers.[188]

By 1979, criticism of Chavez had intensified. Though the UFW was still striking in parts of the Imperial Valley and Arizona, the organization was struggling under the weight of internal conflict and the departure of many top advisors. Local organizers in Texas and Arizona grew impatient waiting for the UFW to organize in their state and moved forward to create their own organizations, but with a significant departure in ideology from the UFW. They believed in the unionization of undocumented workers and chose to create their own independent organizations to represent workers.[189] Chavez was

[186] Frederic S. Marquardt, "Cesar's Sullied Image," *The Arizona Republic*, June 18, 1978, Newspapers.com.
[187] Pawel, *The Crusades*, 420.
[188] Jack Anderson, "Cesar Chavez Only Out for Power?," *Scottsdale (Az.) Daily Progress*, March 13, 1980, folder 24, box 96, MCOP.
[189] Pawel, *The Crusades*, 419.

remained convinced that the UFW should be the only national farmworkers union and took action to try and dismantle the new organizations.[190]

In Texas, Chavez attempted to dismantle the Texas Farm Workers Union by evicting them from their offices. He labeled organizers as "dangerous renegades" and attempted to interfere with financial donations. Chavez also held convention with the motto "A Single Union" in an attempt to reinforce his belief that the UFW should be a national union that represented all farm workers.[191] Chavez also targeted the MCOP in Arizona, initially sending his cousin to order the organizers to stop trying to organize independent unions. Then following several successful strikes by the MCOP, Chavez increased his efforts to dissolve the Arizona union. UFW organizers threatened to report undocumented members for deportation, accused founder, Gustavo Gutierrez of communist sympathies, used ties to reverse the award of a $100,000 grant from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development to the MCOP, and worked to have MCOP contracts dissolved.[192] Gutierrez responded to the attacks, stating that the UFW did not recognize local autonomy due to Chávez's dictatorial mindset.[193]

Though Chavez stated in multiple interviews that the UFW included undocumented members and that his union was not prejudiced against them, some of his political comments and actions suggest otherwise. In 1978, speaking out against the

[190] Ibid., 410.
[191] Ibid., 419.
[192] Ibid., 420. Pawel describes the MCOP as a union and refers to ¨contracts,¨ based on primary source documents defining the organization as a civil rights organization, I am reluctant to use this term. It is possible that Chavez targeted Arizona Farmworkers Union contracts, however. The two organizations were often used synonymously in newspaper articles.
[193] Robert Lindsey, "Chavez Is Target of Criticism in Farm Struggle," *The New York Times*, February 7, 1979, folder 20, box 59, MCOP.

possibility of reviving the Bracero Program, Chavez claimed that this move would "deprive Americans of agricultural jobs" and that in the case of Arizona specifically, growers were in collusion with the government "to create an artificial shortage of American farm workers to justify the use of foreign labor."[194] The line set in Yuma to prevent undocumented people from breaking the strike was clearly hostile toward undocumented persons regardless of whether the accused brutality occurred or not.

In addition, Chávez and others under his command supported drives to round up and deport undocumented workers who were potential strike breakers. Guadalupe Sanchez wrote a letter to Chavez in 1979, on behalf of the MCOP, condemning the comments made at the National Press Club in Washington. Chavez had called for the I.N.S. to be more "active in deporting undocumented workers." The MCOP responded that Chavez should consider its own position that the best way to handle undocumented workers was to organize them and recognize that they share a common enemy, not urge the Border Patrol to take repressive action against "our brothers and sisters."[195]

Though the MCOP and UFW had broken ties, during the late 1970s in Arizona, they could not escape one another. As Mexican American organizations, they both advocated for the rights of farmworkers. Their actions regarding undocumented workers, however, were different. The UFW tolerated undocumented membership, but the head of the union, Cesar Chavez, regardless of public statements to the contrary, did not advocate for their rights. In fact, when the union felt threatened by them, it took despicable actions such as reporting workers to INS and setting up border lines patrolled by violent

[194] Dan McGowan, "U.S. Plan to Revive 'Bracero Program' Assailed by Chavez," *The Arizona Republic*, September 24, 1978, folder 22, box 96, MCOP.
[195] Guadalupe Sanchez, Letter to César Chávez, April 24, 1979, folder 9, box 3, MCOP.

individuals. Their actions cost them success in Arizona. As a result, the MCOP was founded to advocate for farm workers in the state and achieved successes through its advocacy for undocumented, documented and domestic workers.

2.5 Conclusion

By the late 1970s, undocumented Mexicans were viewed negatively by most Americans. They were described as being "illegals" and associated with crime and disease. It was unlikely that the average American considered them deserving of any labor rights or concerned themselves with the exploitative conditions in which they worked. Some unions and community service organizations, especially those primarily organized by Mexican American workers, however, held different opinions on the matter. Unions such as the NFLU, UPACAWA, and the UFW claimed undocumented membership and advocated for the rights of farmworkers. Community service organizations such as CASA offered them aid and advocated for their improved treatment. The MCOP, however, was the first organization to organize a strike completely comprised of undocumented workers. In addition to this historic action, the organization worked to improve living conditions for workers by exposing them to the public. They helped file legal suits against authority figures who practiced discriminatory tactics against Mexican nationals, such as the Sheriff's Department. And, as chapter two demonstrates, they engaged in numerous attempts to advocate for civil and human rights for undocumented workers.

Though the MCOP's work follows in the longer tradition of labor and civil rights organizing, its contribution is significant for three reasons. First, though other organizations advocated for undocumented workers, the MCOP made this platform its

central concern, believing that benefits to undocumented workers naturally translated to benefits for all workers. Secondly, the MCOP successfully organized in a state where conditions were hostile to unions, both politically and in the sheer logistics of organizing seasonal workers, many of whom did not wish to draw the attention of the local Border Patrol. Thirdly, the MCOP succeeded where the UFW did not. Though the Arizona organization used tactics handed down by generations of labor leaders including strikes and court action, it recruited enough undocumented members to prevent strike-breaking. Instead of treating undocumented persons as the enemy and using tactics meant to keep them from physically reaching the fields, the MCOP persuaded them to join and strike with their Mexican American and documented counterparts.

CHAPTER 3: THE MCOP: TRANSITIONING CIVIL RIGHTS TO HUMAN RIGHTS

"We urge you to direct the same concern you have shown for human rights abroad in foreign nations to the plight of undocumented Mexican workers who live and toil under sub-human conditions in Maricopa County and elsewhere in the State of Arizona and in our United States . . . Those with eyes to see or ears to hear cannot ignore the problem that exists. So let us deliver here in our own country that which we demand of other nations abroad. In short, let us bring human rights back home." – Letter to President Jimmy Carter from the Maricopa County Organizing Project, October 14, 1977[196]

From its inception, the Maricopa County Organizing Project self-identified as a civil rights organization. To be sure, as the previous chapter suggests, much of its early work was concentrated in activities more commonly associated with labor unions. The organization argued that its interactions with workers were predicated on the belief that all farmworkers possessed the civil right to organize, especially in an attempt to secure acceptable wages. Because of this, the Project responded to the needs of workers in ways atypical of civil rights organizations including educating, organizing, and empowering workers. In addition, the Project did not differentiate between undocumented workers and their documented counterparts. Instead, the organization believed that all workers had "equal value as human beings" and should therefore be united.[197]

This chapter examines the first two years of MCOP activity in Arizona, 1977-1979, and the duality of its labor and civil rights activism. This time period was chosen because toward the end of 1979, the Arizona Farmworkers Union (AFWU) officially incorporated. AFWU took over most of the labor organizing in the area, led by

[196] "Letter to Jimmy Carter from the Maricopa County Organizing Project," October 14, 1977, folder 2, box 25, MCOP Records.
[197] "Letter to Robert Carvajal of the Campaign for Human Development from Don Devereux," April 26, 1978, folder 7, box 20, MCOP Records.

Guadalupe Sanchez, and the MCOP no longer engaged in as many labor organizing activities.[198] Advocating for both the labor and civil rights of farmworkers, the MCOP was one of the early organizations to equate labor rights with human rights, regardless of citizenship. Human rights, at the time, was a burgeoning concept, made popular by Jimmy Carter's administration.[199] In contrast to the United Farm Workers in California, the MCOP was at the forefront of a movement to advocate for workers' rights as human rights and to advocate for the civil rights of undocumented workers. This chapter argues that the MCOP follows in a long tradition of Mexican American civil rights activism, but that it targeted undocumented workers more directly than its predecessors.

In order to understand the MCOP's place in the greater context of ethnic Mexican civil rights activism, it is necessary to provide an overview of significant Latinx civil rights organizations in the twentieth-century United States. The following section will examine the major organizations and their relationship with undocumented Mexicans. It will also examine the primary focus of their organizing activities.

3.1 Latinx Civil Rights Organizations in the Twentieth Century U.S.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, mutual aid societies supported community members by addressing various concerns including "health, employment, legal issues, immigration, education, property rights, and civil rights."[200] They condemned American discrimination against ethnic Mexicans and did not encourage their members to assimilate into American culture and politics. Older Mexicans identified more closely

[198] "Articles of Incorporation of Arizona Farm Workers Union Inc.," Received November 15, 1979, folder 23, box 54, MCOP.
[199] Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 3-4.
[200] Cynthia E. Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 67.

with Mexico than the United States.[201] Therefore, mutual aid societies highlighted the Mexican identity of their members through celebrations for Mexican holidays, the use of Spanish in both meetings and printed material, and did not discriminate between Mexican nationals and citizens of the U.S. Though they advocated for the rights of their members, they were limited by language skills and their ability to navigate "mainstream institutions like schools and courts."[202] Though mutual aid societies advocated for the civil rights of their members, it was not until the 1920s that Mexican American identity became an important factor in civil rights organizations.

Early Mexican American civil rights activism began in Texas, in the 1920s, with the formation of organizations such as the Order of the Sons of America (OSA) and the Order of the Knights of America (OKA).[203] These organizations differed from traditional mutual aid societies because some of them "pointedly excluded non-American citizens from membership.[204] The OSA goal's was to improve social standing for Spanish speakers in the United States. It is unclear whether the organization had strict citizenship requirements from its inception in 1921, but the 1922 membership form required the applicant to indicate whether they were a citizen by birth, a naturalized citizen, or intended to become a citizen.[205] The 1927 constitution, however, specifically stated that the organization worked for American citizens.[206] That same year, however, several

[201] Craig A. Kaplowitz, *LULAC, Mexican Americans and National Policy* (College State: Texas A&M University Press, 2005), 19.
[202] Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women or Dogs Allowed*, 67.
[203] Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors,* 75.
[204] Ibid., 75.
[205] Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women or Dogs Allowed*, 76.
[206] Ibid., 74-5.

disgruntled members departed the organization and formed the Order of the Knights of America (OKA).[207]

The OKA constitution did not exclude non-citizens from its membership, but rather included all male U.S. citizens and residents.[208] It appears that the organization received criticism for this stance based on a piece published in the third OKA newsletter entitled "An Answer to Our Critics." In this statement, the OKA claimed to work for the advancement of Mexican American citizens and to encourage citizenship. Though the paragraph concluded by advocating for mutual assistance among members of the community, it also prioritized the Mexican American nature of the organization.[209] The OKA continued to organize in South Texas until 1929 when it decided to join the OSA, the League of Latin American Citizens (LLAC), and the Order of the Sons of Texas merged to form the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC).[210]

The four organizations merged under the new title, the League of United Latin American Citizens, to prevent any one group from subordinating to another and to consolidate organizing power in Texas.[211] In addition to promoting the assimilation of Mexican Americans into American culture, LULAC differed from mutual aid societies in an important way. It pointedly excluded non-citizens from its membership.[212] Its constitution stated that the priority of the organization was Mexican Americans, not the greater Mexican community.[213] LULAC's primary ideology stressed two points: the

[207] Ibid., 86-7.
[208] Ibid., 87.
[209] Ibid., 88-9.
[210] Ibid., 151.
[211] Ibid., 152-3.
[212] Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 75.
[213] Orozoco, *No Mexicans, Women or Dogs Allowed*, 180.

inability to be full citizens in the face of discrimination and the need for Mexican Americans to adhere to the American notion of a good citizen.[214] The organization believed that it was the responsibility of Mexican Americans to disprove negative stereotypes through personal achievement. Because of this, the three main goals of the organization were the improvement of their children's education, the improvement of the community's education and the end of segregation in public facilities.[215] In order to accomplish these goals, the organization took a two-pronged approach. First, it worked within Mexican communities to decrease the cultural and political divide between themselves and Anglo Americans. Activities that LULAC hoped would encourage the participation of Mexicans and Mexican Americans included citizenship drives and English classes. Secondly, it worked to increase Mexican American participation in politics through increased voting.[216] Though LULAC experienced some organization disturbances during the Great Depression, it was still remarkably successful at spreading its membership into California, New Mexico, Kansas, and Arizona by the early 1940s and the start of World War II.[217] In Arizona, the local chapter of LULAC exemplified the organization's policy of assimilation. It promoted integration and emphasized Mexican Americans' "patriotism and loyalty to the United States."[218] As a result of this strategy, however, LULAC alienated thousands of Mexican immigrants who resided in the U.S. and problematically, were often parents of citizens.[219]

[214] Kaplowitz, *LULAC*, 27.
[215] Ibid., 29.
[216] Ibid., 29.
[217] Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 78.
[218] Eric V. Meeks, *Border Citizens*, 173.
[219] Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 79.

The period between 1930 and 1960 has been described, previously in chapter one, by historian Mario García as the "Mexican American Generation." García argues that during this period community leaders organized "the first significant civil rights movement by Mexican Americans in the United States."[220] During the 1930s and 1940s, Mexican Americans developed a sense of rights of citizenship due to the development of a middle class and military service during WWII. Composed of middle class citizens, working class individuals, liberals and radicals, a new group of Mexican American leaders rose to fight for Mexican American rights.[221] Historian Cynthia E. Orozco, however, criticizes García, for not including Order of the Sons of America and the League of United Latin American Citizens in his examination of the growth of Mexican American civil rights activism.[222] Orozco points out that Mexican American civil rights organization began with LULAC in 1929 and argues that LULAC was among the earliest to claim Mexican Americans citizenship rights as set forth in the Constitution and to formulate an identity based on life in the United States as opposed to Mexico.[223] Historian David Gutiérrez provides a simple explanation to these differing statements, noting that LULAC served as the foundation for a "a political coming of age of a new generation of Mexican Americans."[224]

Like LULAC, the Mexican American Movement (MAM), founded in 1934 in California, defined itself through its Mexican American identity. MAM was a college student organization that valued citizenship and higher education. It argued that Mexican

[220] Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans*, 1.
[221] Ibid., 2.
[222] Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed, 4*-5.
[223] Ibid., 1-2.
[224] Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 87.

Americans had the power to change public perception of their ethnicity by improving themselves through academic achievement.[225] For both LULAC and MAM, emphasizing citizenship allowed them to negotiate negative public perceptions of ethnic Mexicans as well as "ethnic pride and internalized racism among members."[226]

LULAC and MAM's promotion of Americanization and citizenship, however, met with some opposition. Mexican nationals did not necessarily aspire to be citizens. In research interviews conducting during the 1930s, Mexican residents in one California community responded negatively to the idea of becoming citizens. They stated that discrimination existed regardless of citizenship because skin color determined their fate. Therefore, citizenship had little impact on their status in the U.S. They would still face discrimination in employment and segregation in public areas.[227] By the late 1930s, labor concerns bridged the gap between citizens and non-citizens as both faced discrimination in the workplace.

In 1937, the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of American (UCAPAWA) was founded in an attempt to unite nationwide agricultural laborers over workplace concerns.[228] The union's "envisioned [itself] . . . the champion of the underdog – supplying marginal members of the working class with the tools and strategies for their own empowerment."[229] In its constitution the UCAPAWA stated that the union did not discriminate based on nationality or other classifications such as sex or

[225] Lorena Oropeza, *¡Raza Sí! ¡Guerra No! Chicano Protest and Patriotism during the Viet Nam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 21.
[226] Ibid., 21.
[227] Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 89.
[228] Ibid., 110.
[229] Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 41.

race. Instead, it sought to unite all workers in the canning, packing, agricultural and allied workers sectors. To demonstrate this ideology, "union officers deliberately enlisted black, Mexican, Asian and female labor organizers."[230] The organization maintained a loose, decentralized structure with local chapters maintaining significant amounts of autonomy.[231] By 1938, the union represented multiple regions and groups of workers including "southern black sharecroppers, Filipino lettuce packers, *Tejana* pecan shellers and Mexican fieldhands."[232]

Though it was not a civil rights organization, the UCAPAWA's inclusive attitude toward immigrant workers influenced civil rights organizations such as the Congress of Spanish-Speaking Peoples (El Congreso de Pueblos de Habla Española or El Congreso), founded in 1938, in large part due to the work of Luisa Moreno, a former UCAPAWA organizer. [233] Moreno traveled across the country, visiting many Hispanic communities and establishing clubs in support of her goal: "a broad civil rights organization for all of the Spanish-speaking in the United States."[234] She tapped contacts in mutual aid societies, Mexican American labor unions, and other activists groups to achieve a truly national quality to El Congreso's first conference.[235] Many notable activists during the Mexican Civil Rights Movement participated in El Congreso, including George Sánchez, Bert

[230] Ibid., 44-5.
[231] Ibid., 44.
[232] Ibid., 45.
[233] Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors, 110.*
[234] Mario T. García, *Memories of Chicano History,*109.
[235] Vicki L. Ruiz, "Luisa Moreno and Latina Labor Activism," in *Latina Legacies: Identity, Biography, and Community*, edited by Vicki L. Ruiz and Virginia Sánchez Korrol (New York, Oxford University Press, 2005), 182.

Corona and Josefina Fierro de Bright.[236] The Congress of Spanish-Speaking Peoples, however, practiced significantly different policies than LULAC.

Unlike LULAC, the El Congreso advocated for the unity of all Spanish-speakers to work toward better conditions for residents, citizens and migrants in the U.S.[237] In other words, it did not prioritize Mexican American assimilation or require members be citizens, though it did encourage the pursuit of citizenship.[238] Instead, El Congreso urged Anglo Americans to rise to "the nation's democratic ideals."[239] In addition, the Congress did not promote assimilation of ethnic Mexican communities into American culture, believing instead that Mexicans had earned their right to equality. Though it encouraged citizenship, on the basis of the legal protection it afforded to residents, El Congreso espoused the belief the Mexican nationals were already a part of American society, having earned their place through their labor and investments in America.[240] These assertions were revolutionary for the struggle for civil rights.[241] El Congreso advocated for the end of segregation and discrimination as well as the "rights of immigrants to live and work in the United States without fear of deportation."[242] Though El Congreso formed nearly forty years prior to the MCOP, its ideology was similar. El Congreso emphasized that Mexican nationals had earned their place in society while the MCOP took the idea of rights one step further, claiming that all workers had rights regardless of nationality.

[236] Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors,* 110-1.
[237] Ibid., 112.
[238] Ruiz, "Luisa Moreno," 183.
[239] Oropeza, *¡Raza Sí! ¡Guerra No!,* 22.
[240] Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 113.
[241] Ibid.*,* 115.
[242] Ruiz, "Luisa Moreno," 183.

Activists that had worked with El Congreso carried its stance on Mexican nationals to other organizations. One of these individuals was Bert Corona. Corona's work with Moreno and the Congress influenced his work with a variety of Mexican American organizations. Corona had attended the majority of El Congreso's first conference and later participated in a committee meant to publicize police brutality directed at young Mexican Americans, but his participation was limited due to military service.[243] Following his experience with the Congress of Spanish-Speaking Peoples, Corona continued his work as an activist both for Mexican American citizens and Mexican nationals in the U.S. During the 1950s, Corona worked for both the Associación Nacional México-Americana (ANMA) and the Community Service Organization (CSO).[244] The two organizations held differing opinions on the importance of citizenship. Founded by Fred Ross in 1947, the CSO exhibited similar tendencies as LULAC and MAM, promoting the image of the patriotic American through activities such as voter registration.[245] The ANMA was founded by leaders of local chapters of the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers in Texas, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona and California. The organization was founded "to defend the civil rights and culture" of Southwestern ethnic Mexicans, not specifically citizens.[246] Bert Corona joined ANMA and worked in Northern California, organizing local chapters. ANMA chapters were not limited to Mexican American membership. In San Francisco, for example, Corona claimed

[243] Mario T. García, *Memories of Chicano History,* 111-115.
[244] Ibid.*,* 169.
[245] Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming*, 111; See Humberto Garza's *Organizing the Chicano Movement: The Story of the CSO* and Gabriel Thompson's *America's Social Arsonist: Fred Ross and Grassroots Organizing in the Twentieth Century* for additional information on the CSO.
[246] Mario T. García, *Memories of Chicano History*, 169-70.

members including Mexican nationals, Central American immigrants, and undocumented workers.[247]

One of the ANMA's goals was to encourage Mexican workers to unionize. Similarly to the future MCOP, the association distributed leaflets, talked to workers, filed complaints against exploitative employers, and supported strikers.[248] As a testament to its lack of bias regarding the nationality of workers, the ANMA also supported braceros during strikes protesting poor working conditions. During the Bracero Program, 1942-1964, the U.S. government allowed agricultural employers to contract with temporary Mexican workers for unskilled farm labor.[249] It was unusual for a Mexican American organization to treat braceros favorably as many believed that Mexican nationals were taking jobs that belonged to U.S. citizens and driving down wages.[250] In ANMA, however, the San Jose chapter helped organize braceros by holding a dance as a cover for them to meet and plan a strike the following day.[251] The organization also supported strikers by providing food, clothing and assistance with temporary housing during the strikes. Bert Corona claimed that as a result of bracero strikes, growers who practiced exploitative tactics found it more difficult to hire workers as word circulated about

[247] Ibid., 171-2.
[248] Ibid., 174-5.
[249] Deborah Cohen, *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in the Postwar United States and Mexico* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 21.
[250] Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2004), 158.
[251] Mario T. García, *Memories of Chicano History*, 179-80.

working conditions on the farms.[252] By the late 1950s, FBI harassment and tensions within the group forced the ANMA to dissolve.[253]

Bert Corona's work with ethnic Mexican American organizations, however, continued in the early 1960s with the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA).[254] Although the organization focused on affecting electoral and political outcomes, it also engaged in civil rights issues.[255] In California, MAPA raised concerns over poor public education, employment discrimination, and police brutality. And like LULAC, MAPA encouraged Mexican nationals to apply for citizenship so that they could vote in elections.[256] MAPA also worked with the UFW to support strikers in the mid-late 1960s.[257] During the late 1960s, however, Corona noticed stark differences between his views on undocumented workers and those of the UFW's leader, Cesar Chavez and chose to stop organizing with the UFW. Instead he took a different course through his work with La Hermandad Mexicana, like the MCOP did nearly a decade later.[258] La Hermandad had been founded in 1951 by trade unionists, Phil and Albert Usquiano, and responded to attempts by the Immigration and Naturalization Service to terminate the visas of Mexican workers over their choice to reside with their families in Mexico while working in San Diego.

[252] Ibid., 181.
[253] The FBI's interest in the ANMA came as a result of McCarthyism and the association of progressive groups with communist ideology. Additionally, groups viewed as "un-American" due to a prioritizing of ethnicity were also investigated. Mario T. García, *Memories of Chicano History,* 189-91.
[254] Mario T. García, *Memories of Chicano History*,,195.
[255] Ibid., 204.
[256] Ibid., 205-6.
[257] Ibid., 245-7.
[258] Ibid., 249.

Bert Corona had associated with the organization during his work with MAPA and chose to return to it following his decision to focus on the undocumented.[259] La Hermandad, a civil rights organization, tried to support the Mexican immigrant community by offering them counsel on immigration issues including their own rights during interrogations by INS and along the deportation process.[260] Bert Corona claimed that La Hermandad's work assisting immigrants in avoiding deportation led to the growth of the organization.[261] In addition, it filled a void created by the UFW's anti-undocumented positions and served a community that had largely been ignored.

By the 1970s, La Hermandad performed the same duties as the mutual aid societies of the 1920s and 1930s. Members volunteered to maintain local branches. Social events were an important part of the organization and all members of the family were included in general meetings.[262] La Hermandad continuing working with immigrants, often assisting them with finding and retaining suitable housing and helping them unionize. As Hermandad's work with undocumented individuals grew, the organization chose to set up separate locations that were specifically responsible for immigrant services. The immigrant service centers were known as Centros de Acción Social Autónoma (CASA).[263] They continued to function until the late 1970s, after a failed

[259] Ibid., 291.
[260] Ibid., 291-2.
[261] Ibid., 293.
[262] Ibid., 294-95.
[263] Ibid., 295-7.

takeover by younger members of the movement.[264] La Hermandad continues to serve Mexican Americans and the immigrant community.[265]

Arizona activism paralleled the larger movement in California from the 1940s to the 1970s. Early organizations such as Arizona's LULAC chapter and the Alianza Hispano-Americana were assimilationist in nature. The Alianza encouraged its members to "prove that they were worthy to be equal citizens."[266] During the 1950s, a Phoenix organization called "Vesta" also promoted the idea that by bettering oneself, Mexican Americans could earn recognition as citizens. Vesta harbored elitist tendencies and only accepted individuals who were either currently enrolled in college or graduates into its membership.[267] At the same time, Alianza encouraged members to improve their own standing and thereby "dismantl[e] the most egregious legal obstacles to equal citizenship."[268] In the 1960s, Arizona organizing practiced the assimilationist approach, but less enthusiastically. Organizations like the Arizona chapter of the Political Association of Spanish-Speaking Organizations (PASO), celebrated Spanish speakers and acknowledge the injustices suffered by ethnic Mexicans.[269] This PASO chapter spawned the American Coordinating Council on Political Education (ACCPE) in Arizona which helped elected several Mexican American candidates to office. Finally, by the 1970s, student organizations in Arizona, including the Mexican American Student Organization (MASPO), Chicanos por La Causa, and the local chapter of California's

[264] Ibid., 313-4.
[265] "La Original Hermandad Mexicana," Home Page, https://hermandadmexicana.org/, Accessed February 25, 2019.
[266] Meeks, *Border Citizens*, 173.
[267] Ibid., 175.
[268] Ibid., 175-6.
[269] Ibid., 184.

Movimimiento Estudiantil de Chicanos de Aztlán, pushed back against assimilationist ideals and demanded an end to the injustices endured by ethnic Mexicans at Anglo American hands just as organizations outside of the state had done.[270] Arizona had taken a slower route, but had caught up with the trend in Mexican American civil rights organizing.

This brief overview of ethnic Mexican civil rights organizing during the twentieth century demonstrates that by the 1970s, many activists provided support for labor organizing and strikes, and welcomed Mexican nationals and ethnic Mexican U.S. citizens. ANMA, MAPA and La Hermandad all supported labor strikes. They assisted in organizing workers, planning the events and supporting the participants. They also included undocumented members and specific services catered to these individuals, primarily assistance with immigration. As seen in the previous chapter, this same trend was occurring in labor unions as they increased support of undocumented members and advocated for them. Additionally, this overview demonstrates that Arizona civil rights organizing fits into the overarching movement. The MCOP was a product of these two intertwined legacies of organizations, conceived of with the most forward thinking of the time. From its inception, the organization declared its purpose was the "promotion of civil and human rights for migrant farmworkers."[271] But in what way did the Project do this? In the following section, the civil rights organizing activities of the MCOP will be discussed.

[270] Ibid., 192-9.
[271] "Annual Report ARS 1—125 & Certificate of Disclosure ARS 10-128 to the Arizona Corporation Commission," Year Ending July 31, 1979, Report Due November 15, 1979, folder 7, box 20, MCOP.

3.2 The MCOP and Civil Rights Organizing

On June 28th, 1977, Guadalupe Sanchez and Daniel Morales visited a public notary to officially witness and sign the first articles of incorporation for the Maricopa County Organizing Project. Just over three months later, the MCOP hosted the first strike to consist of entirely undocumented Arizona farmworkers. In its articles of incorporation, the MCOP laid out the goals and purpose of the organization. The MCOP was founded in order to educate farmworkers about their "legal, social and civil rights . . . including, but not limited to raising wages, improving field safety, fringe benefits and housing conditions."[272] In addition, the organization intended to work with migrant farmworkers and assist them in labor organizing intended to improve working conditions. The document also suggested that the MCOP could perform some of the traditional roles of a labor union as needed.[273] It stated that the MCOP would "negotiate with agricultural owners," "educate farm work families with the goal of ending child labor in farm work," and "act as representatives of field laborers at their request."[274] From this document, one can infer that the earliest conception of the MCOP was somewhat muddied. Though the organization claimed to be a civil rights organization, the majority of its stated objectives were related to the labor rights of farmworkers. Although the MCOP participated in largely labor-related activities, it believed that labor rights were civil rights.[275] In order to

[272] "Articles of Incorporation for the Maricopa County Organizing Project," Notarized June 28, 1977, folder, 7, box 20, MCOP.
[273] Ibid.
[274] Ibid.
[275] In Zaragosa Varga's *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America* (New Haven: Princeton University Press, 2005), he argues that labor rights were universally appealing to Mexican Americans who suffered higher unemployment that Anglo Americans. Vargas states that civil rights organizations took note of growing farmworker movements and used their groundwork to mobilize members around labor issues.

advocate for labor rights and civil rights, the MCOP made use of tactics similar to those used by previous and contemporary unions and civil rights organizations. Some of the methods that the MCOP used included taking exploitative or discriminatory growers and government institutions to court to attain rights for workers, damages for abusive action and back pay. The organization also worked to gain publicity for its cause by holding national events, writing letters to prominent organizations and officials, appearing in newspaper articles and affecting politics through participation in congressional hearings. Though its primary focus during the first two years of its existence was labor issues, the MCOP functioned as a civil rights organization through many of its activities.

Like other civil rights organizations, the MCOP made use of the legal system to pursue monetary compensation for individuals whose rights had been abused. The most lucrative of the suits filed during the organization's initial efforts was a suit against the Maricopa County Sheriffs Department for the "violation of civil rights and physical injuries" against individuals during the green onion strike. The suit also named growers, their legal counsel and the Arizona Agricultural Employment Relations Board as defendants in the case, claiming that the defendants had conspired to limit their freedoms of speech, assembly, and fair judicial process.[276] The suit included allegations of various assaults and abuses that occurred during the strike in late autumn 1977. In one instance, the sheriff's department allegedly arrested picketer Enrique Alvarado as he attempted to leave the area. When his wife, Isabel, and her two children Enrique and Augustine, approached deputies in an attempt to speak with her husband so that she could receive the keys to their vehicle, Isabel claimed that the deputies grabbed her and threated to break

[276] "Press Release: MCOP Files $10 Million Civil Rights Suit," January 14, 1978, folder 33, box 59, MCOP Records.

her arm. She also stated that one deputy pushed her son aggressively with his night stick and another kicked her daughter. Deputies then arrested Isabel for "obstruction of justice."[277] Another plaintiff claimed that a worker on one of the farms affected by the walkout had attempted to run him over with a tractor while in the presence of sheriff's deputies, who refused to acknowledge the occurrence or allow him to file a complaint.[278] Guadalupe Sanchez alleged that during one of his arrests during the strike, he had heard deputies planning to pull over a car of students associated with the strike and find a reason "to cite or arrest" them.[279] Finally, the complaint filed by the MCOP accused the sheriff's department of holding daily meetings in which deputies formulated a conspiracy to harass, intimidate and threaten strikers using tactics such as unlawful citations, detentions, and arrests.[280] According to MCOP records, the case eventually settled for a total of $18, 250.[281]

The MCOP and its affiliate, the Arizona Farm Workers Union, continued to use the courts as one prong in their strategy to further the civil rights of farmworkers. Between 1980 and 1986, the MCOP successfully settled suits against the Border Patrol and Chandler, AZ for assaulting an undocumented worker during a raid, against a restaurant on behalf of undocumented workers demanding unpaid wages, against a grower for "unlawful activities" during a labor strike, against one grower for assaulting a worker, and a second case against the Maricopa County Sheriff's Department for the assault of three undocumented workers. In all of these cases, the MCOP received

[277] "Hill Second Amended Complaint," folder 5, box 25, 6-7, MCOP.
[278] "Hill Second Amended Complaint," folder 5, box, 25, 7-8, MCOP.
[279] "Hill Second Amended Complaint," folder 5, box 25, 11-12, MCOP
[280] "Hill Second Amended Complaint," folder 5, box 25, 19-20, MCOP
[281] "MCOP Closed Cases," undated, folder 20, box 67, MCOP Records.

monetary compensation for the abuses suffered by its members and distributed the awards among plaintiffs.[282]

Though it experienced some legal successes, the MCOP also worked on various other strategies to further its cause. The organization sought to influence national perceptions of farmworkers and advocate for their civil rights. In October of 1977, the fledgling MCOP sent a letter to President Jimmy Carter asking that he consider the plight of farmworkers. The MCOP lobbied President Carter due to his administration's advocacy for human rights considerations.[283] The MCOP urged the President to extend his concern for human rights in foreign countries to undocumented Mexican workers in the United States. The letter detailed the conditions in which farmworkers were subjugated. Forced to leave their homes and families due to extremely high unemployment and the devaluation of the peso, Mexican workers undertook the risky journey across the desert to the U.S. Once employed by growers, workers lived in the groves, protected only by makeshift plastic awnings and forced to bathe and consume water from irrigation canals. Lacking sanitary facilities and at the mercy of thieves, workers lived in "sub-human conditions."[284]

[282] "MCOP Closed Cases," undated, folder 20, box 67. MCOP Records.
[283] President Jimmy Carter is often credited with bringing the concept of human rights into U.S. foreign and national policy in the 1970s. Though some scholars debate whether his administration concretely enacted policies to protect human rights or whether they paid lip service to the idea without accomplishing much, it is clear that the Carter administration was responsible for making human rights a concern among American citizens. For a clear analysis of these debates and conclusions, reference Mary E. Stuckey's *Jimmy Carter, Human Rights and the National Agenda* (College Station: Texas &M University Press, 2008). For a more complete history of human rights, reference Samuel Moyn's *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).
[284] "Letter to President Carter," October 14, 1977, folder 9, box 109, MCOP Records.

In the letter, the MCOP cited the Helsinki Agreement (1975) which offered protections to migrant workers and had been signed by the U.S.[285] The MCOP argued that undocumented Mexican workers should have the same protections, including the equality of rights between foreign and domestic workers, the protection of their welfare, and the implementation of universal human rights regardless of nationality or immigration status.[286]

In order for this to occur, the MCOP made five recommendations:

- the application of these tenets to undocumented workers within the U.S.
- cancellation of subsidies for growers that exploited undocumented workers
- government recognition of labor disputes between undocumented workers and employers
- the cessation of INS and Border Patrol intervention in labor disputes, particularly in Arizona
- the inclusion of human rights in a new policy toward undocumented workers[287]

It is unclear whether the Carter administration took the letter into consideration and given the size and reach of the MCOP, it is unlikely. The letter, however, demonstrates that the organization made a link between human rights, civil rights, and the rights of undocumented farmworkers. It shows its commitment to spreading these beliefs and to the improvement of the lives of undocumented workers in the U.S.

[285] The Helsinki Agreement had multiple objectives. The most relevant to this research and the part to which the MCOP refers was the section detailing human rights and protections for residents of the Soviet Union and its satellite nations. For a brief overview see the "Office of the Historian: Milestones: 1969-1975: The Helsinki Final Act, 1975," https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/helsinki.
[286] "Letter to President Carter," October 14, 1977, folder 9, box 109, MCOP Records.
[287] Ibid.

Other letters written by the MCOP demonstrated its knowledge of civil rights activism at the national and international level and while it may have been unable to participate directly, it could at least voice its support through correspondence. They also show that the MCOP was aware of national and international civil rights injustices and engaged in letter-writing as a tactic to promote its own purposes. In 1978, for example, the MCOP wrote to the Immigration Project at Georgetown University to express its general concern for the civil rights of farmworkers in Arizona and to specifically denounce the outcome of the Hanigan Case.[288] In 1976, three migrants crossed the border and were captured and taken to the Hanigan ranch where they were tortured by various methods for several hours before being released. The Hanigans were tried for multiple counts of kidnapping, assault and robbery, but cleared of all charges by an all-white jury. Guadalupe Sanchez expressed disappointment for the lack of justice and number of civil and human rights abuses in Arizona.[289]

[288] "Letter to the National Coalition on the Hanigan Case from Guadalupe Sanchez," June 22, 1978, folder 22, box 24, MCOP Records.;Al Senia, "U.S. Grand Jury in Arizona Probes Alleged '76 Torture of Aliens," July 23, 1979, *The Washington Post*, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1979/07/23/us-grand-jury-in-ariz-probes-alleged-76-torture-of-aliens/ff714dfb-36fd-4ace-b05f-b1a3c3724c7e/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.939a6364dc18, accessed March 17, 2019.
[289] "Letter to the National Coalition on the Hanigan Case from Guadalupe Sanchez," June 22, 1978, folder 22, box 24, MCOP Records.

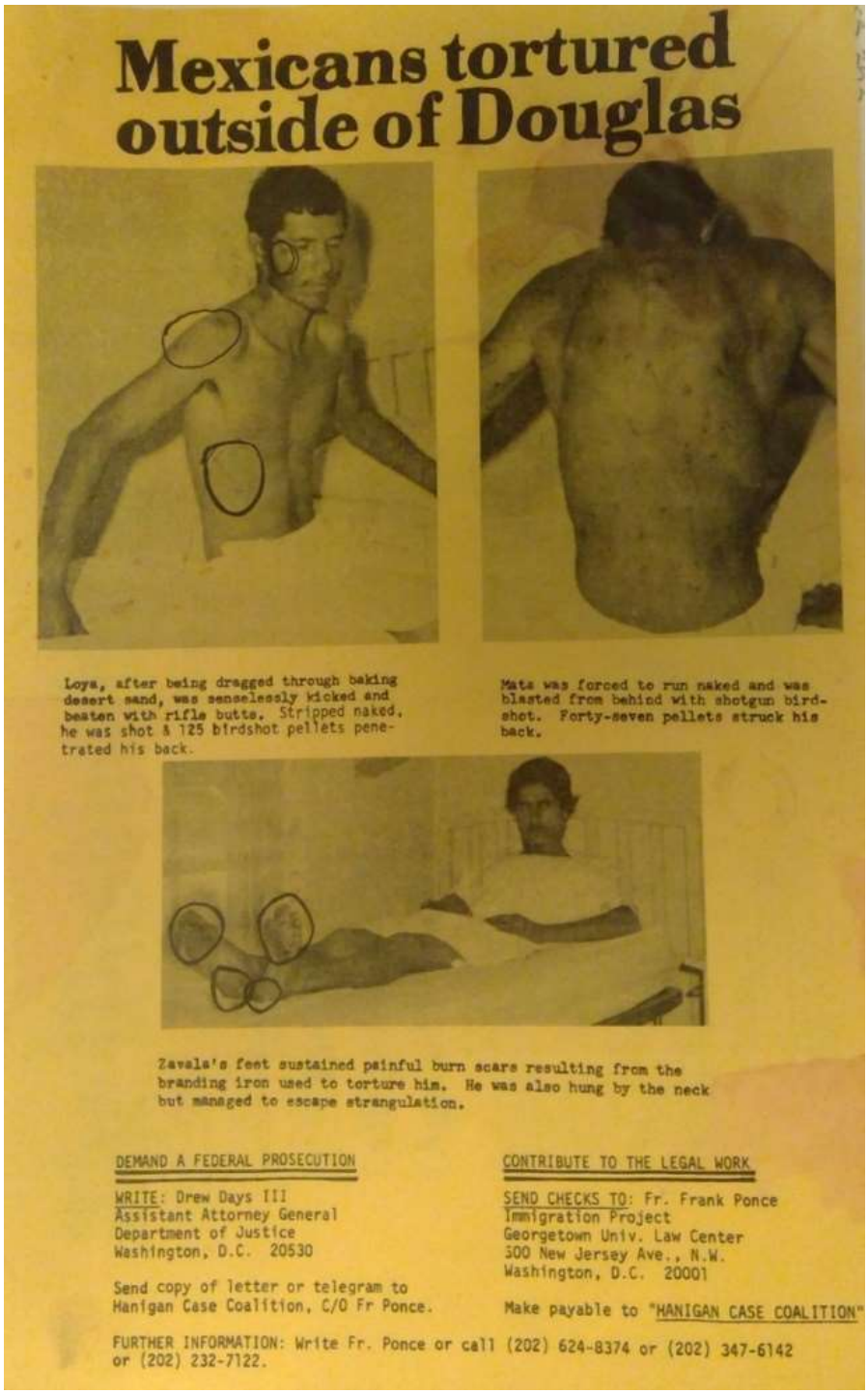


IMAGE 4: Hanigan Case Flyer[290]

[290] "Flyer for the Hanigan Case," date unknown, folder 22, box 24, MCOP Records.

In another example in 1979, the MCOP wrote to the Chilean Minister of the Interior condemning the repressive tactics of the Chilean military junta and expressing support for relatives of individuals who had vanished under the regime.[291] Though these letters did not result in any action, they demonstrated that the MCOP was concerned with civil and human rights for both agricultural workers in Arizona, the U.S. and Latinx abroad. The MCOP likely wrote the letters as a way of expressing its belief that labor rights and civil rights belonged to the greater category of human rights. By addressing rights violations within Arizona, the U.S. and internationally, the MCOP continued to emphasize the universality of human rights regardless of nationality.

In addition to writing letters, the MCOP prompted others to condemn the exploitation of undocumented farmworkers. During one battle with Blue Goose Growers, the MCOP chose to expose links between the grower's parent company, Pacific Lighting, and the Mexican government. It highlighted the irony that Blue Goose Growers blatantly mistreated Mexican workers while its parent company simultaneously hoped to receive a share of natural gas that Mexico was selling to the U.S. The MCOP chose to reveal this information to the media several weeks prior to a meeting between the U.S. and Mexican president, Jóse López Portillo. The Project admitted to using the connection to draw "an international aura to what would other be a local labor dispute."[292] Don Devereux, the MCOP's second director, stated that the Project had targeted Pacific Lighting at a time when negative press about its treatment of Mexican workers would be especially

[291] "Letter to Sergio Fernandes, Minister of Interior, from Lupe Sanchez," October 1, 1979, folder 1, box 95, MCOP Records.
[292] Frank Del Olmo, "New Tactics Being Used in Behalf of Aliens: Activists View Mexico's Gas as Lever in Fight for Farm Workers," February 8, 1979, *Los Angeles Times*, folder 3, box 23, MCOP Records.

embarrassing.[293] As a result, other organizations and individuals sent condemnatory mailgrams to the company. Tom Jones, the national representative to the National Association of Farm Worker Organizations (NAFO) sent a mailgram that urged the company to stop the mistreatment of its Mexican workers.[294] Another mailgram criticized the Pacific Lighting for wanting to purchase Mexican natural gas while treating undocumented Mexicans that worked for it so poorly.[295] Two other letters also noted the irony of the company's desire to use Mexican natural gas while also exploiting its Mexican workers.[296] Due to the keen strategy of publicizing these ties at a time with the relationship between Mexico and the U.S. was already in the news, the MCOP gained more attention for the civil rights issues that affected undocumented workers.

In another attempt to increase public awareness of its organization and the issues it promoted, in the spring of 1978 the MCOP co-sponsored the National Workers Conference for the Rights of Undocumented Workers held in Washington, D.C. The conference aimed to promote solidarity among workers, promote undocumented workers' rights. and to prevent laws that were not favorable to workers.[297] The conference was also meant to draw national attention to the plight of undocumented workers by educating the public about the poor conditions in which unsanctioned persons lived and worked. In

[293] Del Olmo, "New Tactics," *Los Angeles Times*, February 8, 1979, *Los Angeles Times,* folder 3, box 23, MCOP Records.
[294] "Tom Jones Mailgram to Paul A. Miller, Chief Executive Director of Pacific Lighting," January 29, 1979, folder 3, box 24, MCOP.
[295] "John Schlosser Mailgram to Paul A. Miller, Chief Executive Director of Pacific Lighting," January 29, 1979, folder 3, box 24, MCOP.
[296] "Jane Kay Mailgram to Paul A. Miller, Chief Executive Director of Pacific Lighting," January 29, 1979, folder 3, box 24, MCOP.;"Thomas Rapp Mailgram to Paul A. Miller, Chief Executive Director of Pacific Lighting," January 29, 1979, folder 3, box 24, MCOP.
[297] "Flyer for the National Workers Conference for the Rights of Undocumented Workers," held April 8-10, 1978, folder 9, box 109, MCOP Records.

order to do this, the conference planned to hold a press conference during which they showed video footage of the destruction caused by a Border Patrol raid of a labor camp in Arizona as well as an interview with an Arizona Police Chief in which he stated that "his department collud[ed] with the Border Patrol in harassing and arresting undocumented workers."[298] Though some participants in the conference attended a reception at the White House and were able to give views on the discrimination and exploitation faced by undocumented workers, the MCOP achieved little from a political standpoint and resorted to other methods to increase its influence and spread knowledge about the plight of Mexican farmworkers.[299] Though the conference accomplished little, the MCOP had other opportunities to publicize its cause as the UFW struggled in Arizona and California.

During the late 1970s, the UFW was in decline due to several causes including the collapse of the grape boycott and internal strife within the union.[300] The union had alienated supporters including the Catholic Church, a religious community that Cesar Chavez had once credited for boosting the farmworker movement.[301] Finally and perhaps the most devastating blow, UFW attorneys who had been credited "as the union's not-so-secret-weapon" requested a pay raise amidst increasingly time consuming lawsuits, but were denied and condemned for "their greed" by Chavez, himself. As a result, they resigned.[302] Losing support, valuable volunteers and legal services crippled the UFW and made it possible for the MCOP to emerge not only in Arizona, but in the national

[298] "Press Release by the National Workers Project," date unknown, folder 9, box 109, MCOP Records.
[299] Christopher Dickey, "Illegal Aliens Received on Visit to White House," *Washington Post*, April 11, 1978, folder 9, box 109, MCOP Records.
[300] Garcia, *From the Jaws of Victory*, 289.
[301] Shaw, *Beyond the Fields*, 254.
[302] Ibid., 258.

discourse on farmworker rights. MCOP participation in the national debate on immigration is apparent in Congressional transcripts.[303]

MCOP Director Guadalupe Sanchez lobbied Congress to appear during immigration legislation hearings and give his organization's perspective on undocumented workers.[304] In September 1978, he was given the opportunity to speak at a public hearing in Tucson, Arizona. In his testimony to the committee, Sanchez explained the work of the MCOP and expressed some of the changes that it would like to see in immigration policy. Similarly to the letter sent to President Carter in 1977, Sanchez expressed the need for the recognition of human rights for undocumented workers and the need to promote economic development in the U.S. and Mexico. He stated that the MCOP would like to see the cessation of deportations, "movement in the direction of unconditional amnesty," and an increased quota for Western hemispheric immigration.[305]

Sanchez expressed specific concerns regarding the plight of migrant workers. Due to the seasonal nature of the agricultural work available to them, laborers often spent a quarter to a half of the year living in Mexico. If the requirements for temporary workers or amnesty required that individuals remain continuously within the country, migrant workers would still be unsanctioned because they only worked in the U.S. during certain

[303] "Testimony of Guadalupe Sanchez, Maricopa Organizing Project at Public Hearings in Tucson, Arizona," September 1, 1978, 272, James Facis III Bailey. Immigration and Nationality Acts. Legislative Histories and Related Documents 1977-1986 First Series, HeinOnline.; Confirmation Hearing on William French Smith, Nominee, to be Attorney General, January 15, 1981, Serial No. J-97-1, 97th Congress, First Session, folder 28, box 96, MCOP Records.
[304] "Letter to Joshua Eilberg, Chairman to the Sub Committee on Immigration, Citizenship and International Law from Jesus R. Romo, National Coordinator of the MCOP," March 22, 1978, folder 9, box 109, MCOP Records.
[305] "Testimony of Guadalupe Sanchez, Maricopa Organizing Project at Public Hearings in Tucson, Arizona," September 1, 1978, 272, James Facis III Bailey. Immigration and Nationality Acts. Legislative Histories and Related Documents 1977-1986 First Series, HeinOnline.

parts of the year. Sanchez stated that migrant workers were an important part of the U.S. workforce and should therefore be afforded the same rights as domestic and documented workers.[306] His language echoed labor and civil rights organizations which stated that Mexican Americans had earned their position in society due to their labor.[307]

Sanchez's testimony was not the only time that he appeared in congressional proceedings. In 1981, Arizona Senator Dennis DeConcini questioned U.S. Attorney General nominee William French Smith during his confirmation hearing. One of his questions came directly from a letter sent from the MCOP, though it is impossible to determine how Deconcini came into contact with the letter. The letter alleged that Smith was a member of the Pacific Lighting's board of directors. Pacific Lighting was the parent company of Blue Goose Growers, one of the growers the MCOP had accused of exploiting undocumented workers. DeConcini asked Smith to explain if he was on the Board of Directors of Blue Goose Growers. Smith replied that he was on the Board, but stated that he was not aware of the daily functions of business held by Pacific Lighting.[308] It is unclear whether this letter had any effect on the Senate's perception of William French Smith; however, it demonstrates that the MCOP had caught the attention of an Arizona Senator and his concern.

In addition to working to change U.S. perceptions of farmworkers through both public opinion and political influence, the MCOP attempted to improve workers' living conditions in Mexico. The Project cited the lack of economic development in Mexico as

[306] Ibid., 273-4.
[307] Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 108-113. During the 1930s and 1940s, UCAPAWA and El Congreso advocated for this position as well as activists Emma Tenayuca, her husband Homer Brooks and Luisa Moreno.
[308] Confirmation Hearing on William French Smith, Nominee, to be Attorney General, January 15, 1981, Serial No. J-97-1, 97th Congress, First Session, folder 28, box 96, MCOP Records.

the main reason for undocumented workers to seek employment in the U.S. It argued that if there were more employment opportunities available at home, workers would remain in Mexico. This in return would help Mexicans avoid working in the distressing conditions they faced as undocumented workers in the U.S. The MCOP determined that one way to improve conditions in Mexico was to solicit a small contribution from growers who employed Mexican nationals. For each hour they worked, the grower would contribute a small donation, approximately ten cents an hour, to the MCOP's economic development fund. The MCOP would then send the money to Mexico where it would be used to improve agricultural communities. For example, it would allow local workers to purchase land or improved machinery.[309] The MCOP did not document its economic development program so it is unclear if it was successful. There are records, however, from the Arizona Farm Worker Union, its partner association, that log the ten cents per hour allotted to each worker during the 1979-1980 season.[310] There is also a letter dated January of 1980 in which the AFW requested the assistance of the Mexican consulate in Arizona with the distribution of the money for the purchase of equipment such as tractors.[311] Though the fund was managed by the AFW, the idea originated at the MCOP.

[309] Alex Drehsler, "MCOP Looks Out Farm Workers, Illegal Aliens," *The San Diego Union*, January 21, 1979, folder 19, box 59, MCOP Records.
[310] "Economic Development Fund Tracking Log for Sunny Valley Citrus," 1979-1980 season, folder 8, box 50, MCOP Records.
[311] Letter to the Consulado de Mexico from Guadalupe Sanchez," January 29, 1980, folder 8, box 50, MCOP Records.

It remains unclear, however, whether the fund targeted improving living conditions for Mexicans or whether the MCOP hoped that it would appease critics of undocumented migration by making it seem that the MCOP ultimately wanted undocumented workers to return to their home country.

During the years of 1977 to 1979, the MCOP functioned as a civil rights organization that targeted labor concerns. Though it predominantly worked with labor rights issues during the preliminary two years of its existence, it also participated in and instigated civil rights organizing. The MCOP modelled its ideology on organizations like El Congreso, the Associación Nacional México-Americana, and La Hermandad Mexicana Nacional and the ideology of individuals such as Luisa Moreno and Bert Corona. Its tactics were not revolutionary. It followed in the tradition of Mexican American civil rights organizations by using legal recourses, engaging in letter-writing, attempting to influence politics and drawing attention to its cause. However, it extended the purview of these prior organizations to burgeoning ideas about human rights and their universality. Because of this, the MCOP demonstrates a shift in Mexican American labor and civil rights organizing.

3.3 Conclusion

An examination of the major Mexican American civil rights organizations during the twentieth century reveals that over the course of the century their positions concerning undocumented workers evolved. One of the earliest and most prominent civil rights organizations to advocate for the rights of Mexican Americans, LULAC, in 1929, excluded non-citizens from its membership, emphasized assimilation into American culture and strongly championed the cause of the Mexican American citizen. In the 1930s, due to the influence of labor unions such as the UCAPAWA, organizations like The Congress of Spanish-Speaking Peoples, Associación Nacional México-Americana and the Mexican American Political Association grew more welcoming to non-citizen Mexican members. Individuals like Luisa Moreno and Bert Corona promoted this attitude and worked for organizations that increasing provided services that specifically targeted the needs of their undocumented members. By 1977, the formation of the MCOP shows that incorporating undocumented workers had become more commonplace.

As a civil rights organization, the MCOP was heavily focused on the abuses suffered by farmworkers, particularly the undocumented. It argued that labor rights were civil and human rights and that all individuals regardless of legal status were due certain protections. Between 1977 and 1979, the MCOP functions had a dual nature as both a union and civil rights organization. Its strikes received more media attention, but there is evidence of more traditional civil rights organizing. Like its predecessors and contemporaries, the MCOP used a variety of strategies to promote the civil rights of its members and spread awareness of its cause. Included in its methods were lawsuits, letter writing, participation in publicity events, engaging in politics and even attempting to

provide economic aid to Mexican communities. In 1979, in order to better focus organizing, the MCOP spun off and formed the Arizona Farm Workers Union, allowing the MCOP to focus its attention more intently on other civil rights concerns.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

During the twentieth century, labor organizing trended from being anti-immigration to tolerant and/or inclusive of non-citizen members. In the late 1930s, some labor unions included non-national workers in their membership though they did not specifically target the concerns of undocumented workers. Among these unions, UCAPAWA was extremely influential to changing attitudes regarding the unsanctioned. UCAPAWA organizer, Luisa Moreno not only espoused this ideology through her union work, but also in her work with civil rights organizations. Fellow organizer, Bert Corona both participated in civil rights organizing with Moreno and with various other organizations that promoted both labor, political and civil activism within ethnic Mexican communities.

During the 1940s, growers and railroad employers needed foreign workers to assist in food and rail production in the United States. The dearth of available agricultural workers led to the development of the Bracero Program. The Bracero Program allowed growers to contract temporary workers from Mexico to assist in unskilled farm labor. The program lasted for over twenty years and established a pattern of circular, seasonal migratory workers between the U.S. and Mexico. As a result, a new distinction was made between workers who were legally certified to work in the United States and those who were working without sanction. During the 1950s and early 1960s, unions were critical of the Bracero Program and unlikely to advocate for braceros. Though some unions had included members that were not U.S. citizens, the overwhelming sentiment regarding undocumented workers was negative. Unions viewed these individuals as potential strike breakers who growers could use to dismantle any labor resistance by their members. Though the Bracero Program ended as a result of pressure from labor unions, not all

individuals who had been contracted through it returned to Mexico. This exacerbated the divide between workers that were documented and those who were not. By the 1970s, this attitude was slowly changing, as evidenced by public rhetoric from the UFW which strove to convince the public that it was not anti-undocumented, but inclusive of non-national workers. By the late 1970s, including undocumented workers was slowly becoming commonplace and the MCOP was at the forefront of not only be inclusive, but actively seeking and advocating for undocumented workers.

Like labor unions, ethnic Mexican civil rights organizations traveled a similar arc from excluding undocumented members to recognizing them as members of the community that suffered even harsher discrimination than Mexican Americans did. During the 1920s, ethnic Mexican civil rights organizing focused on the assimilation of ethnic Mexicans into U.S. society. Associations, such as LULAC, urged their members to better themselves and demonstrate their patriotism for the United States. But like labor unions, in the late 1930s, civil rights organizations were influenced by the work of UCAPAWA and Luisa Moreno. Shortly after working with UCAPAWA, Moreno established El Congreso de Pueblos de Habla Español. She worked with other organizers, such as Bert Corona and Josefina Fierro de Bright, to unite Spanish-speakers. Moreno argued that ethnic Mexicans had already earned their citizenship through their labor and as such deserved their place in the U.S. During the 1940s and 1950s, Corona worked with several organizations that assisted undocumented workers including ANMA, MAPA, La Hermandad and CASA. By the 1960s and 1970s, it was commonplace for civil rights organizations to hold more inclusive positions toward undocumented migrants and the MCOP exemplified this attitude, but used a new language to describe it.

The 1970s are also important to the history of human rights. Though the concept had appeared in U.S. policy prior to the Jimmy Carter presidency, it was his administration which made the term commonplace to American households. Though scholars debate whether the administration enacted meaningful changes in foreign and national policy that reflected its advocacy for the universal rights of human rights, it is undeniable that Carter's use of the concept during his campaign and presidency set a precedent for following presidents and politicians. The MCOP used human rights as a new way to explain why undocumented persons deserved fair treatment in the workplace. It positioned workplace rights as universal human rights which were due to each individual regardless of the legality of their status within the U.S.

The MCOP, therefore, was on one hand a product of the 1970s. Its ideology regarding undocumented workers was the next logical step in the progression of labor and civil rights organizing. Over the course of the century, more unions and civil rights activists had grown sympathetic and inclusive of undocumented members and the MCOP represents a shift in this history. It is significant because while a part of the progression, it took contemporary ideology a step further. The MCOP actively organized and united undocumented workers with their documented counterparts under the banner of civil and human rights, using a new language brought to national attention by the Carter administration.

In taking the next step, the MCOP's burgeoning ideology experienced successes where its predecessor the UFW had failed. By uniting workers, undocumented migrants were unable to be used as strikers. And by using human rights as a means to defend migrants, the MCOP validated its defense of undocumented workers and the exploitative

conditions in which they worked and lived. Understanding the significance of the MCOP and its place in larger historical trends requires context on labor organizing, civil rights organizing, Mexican Americans, ethnic Mexicans, agricultural unions, immigration, human rights, and the undocumented, but together they explain how and why the MCOP came into being when it did; why it was both the natural next step in the progression as well as an outlier.

The MCOP hailed from a long tradition of labor and civil rights organizing among ethnic Mexicans. It used labor union strategies to resist exploitation by employers, including walkouts and using publicity to pressure employers to improve their treatment of workers. In its civil rights activism, the MCOP also participated in traditional strategies including correspondence and legal aid. But the MCOP used a different approach to non-national workers and a different language to justify their concerns. The MCOP actively recruited undocumented workers and advocated for them. It described their abuses using the newly coined language of human rights to elevate them beyond distinctions of citizenship. Because of this, the MCOP was successful in Arizona where other organizations had failed, most importantly the UFW. But what does this mean outside of this small local organization?

This thesis is a case study of a local civil rights organization in Arizona, but its significance expands beyond the state. The MCOP realized a unique obstacle to labor organizing that existed in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands: the availability of undocumented workers. Due to the proximity with the border and previously established patterns of circular, seasonal agricultural labor, growers were able to break strikes quickly by importing workers from Mexico. Prior to the 1977 Goldmar Strike, the UFW had tried to

organize on the same ranch and failed when growers brought in Mexican nationals to replace striking employees. The MCOP, however, engaged undocumented workers thereby preventing growers from employing undocumented workers and breaking the strike. This case can be applied to labor organizing throughout the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. In areas where undocumented labor is readily available, labor organizing needs to engage with these workers in order to increase their ability to negotiate with growers and to prevent strikebreaking. It is possible, that union activity in any industry that employs significant numbers of undocumented workers, such as agriculture, hospitality and construction, would be strengthened by the incorporation of undocumented workers in their membership. In order to make this case, however, it would require further study across both border and non-border states as well as in multiple industries.

The next step for this research is to review more of the MCOP records and determine whether its approach to undocumented workers continued to strengthen organizing activity in both labor and civil rights. There are hundreds of files on plaintiffs that had been represented by the MCOP that may enrich the legal history of civil rights activism and have the potential to establish legal precedence. I did not review them during my initial archival research because they are undated and in order to maximize my time, I choose materials that I could ascertain fell within my period of study. In addition to MCOP records, UFW records have the potential to enrich the comparison between the two organizations and to inform in more detail its function in Arizona and its position on undocumented workers. Finally, for the sake of brevity, the concept of human rights is only briefly alluded to within this study, but a more detailed examination of the evolution of

human rights ideology as well as the Carter administration's human rights platform would demonstrate that the MCOP responded to political movements of the period.

To conclude, this case study has far-reaching potential to labor and human rights history, but it could go farther and grow stronger through continued research in archival records as well as historiography. The next questions to answer are whether similar organizations operated successfully in other states such as Texas, New Mexico and Florida? Were there other organizations using human rights terminology? What was the national conversation on human rights and undocumented workers? Research that could tie more organizations together would not only add to the history of labor, civil rights and human rights organizing in the 1970s, but allow us to make larger generalizations about labor and activism as a whole.

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