

## **It Takes a Union to Build a Village**

Panel introductions and film.

Last year, the Southwest Labor Studies Association decided that the theme for this year's annual meeting would be "The Legacy of the 1960s for the U.S. Labor Movement." Shortly after that decision was reached, I called Mike Johnston, senior business agent for Teamsters, Local 890, and a lifelong labor activist, to ask him what were the most significant developments in the western states labor movement during the 1960s. Without hesitation, he responded, "The UFW, and the regularization of public employee collective bargaining rights."

In thinking about the UFW and its legacy, I realized that the published academic literature has given too little attention to farm labor housing. For example, the 1997 Ferris/Sandoval book, "The Fight in the Fields," and more recent reports provide little or no information about the initiatives of the UFW to improve the stock of farm labor housing.

In the decades before 1950, tens of thousands grower-provided housing units served migrant workers, in some instances, to attract returning laborers season after season. During the Bracero program era, which concluded at the end of 1964, employers were required by law to provide housing for their Mexican contract workers. Of course, the down side of employer-provided housing is that if the job ends, so does the housing.

More recently, government regulations intended to establish minimal standards in employer-provided units have backfired, as many employers decided to sell their labor camps or tear them down instead of meeting the additional costs required by compliance with the new regulations. Labor market experts also note that the very large surplus of willing immigrant workers has made it possible for employers to obtain adequate laborers without providing additional incentives, such as housing.

And there have been many initiatives in the public sector to provide housing, but the units in California are only open for part of the year, usually six months, and are limited to families. No housing is provided for unaccompanied workers.

Today, we're going to discuss the emergence of Cabrillo Village, a private sector, cooperative housing community of farm laborers and their families in the town of Saticoy, in Ventura County, the county located just to the east of Santa Barbara. Before introducing the panel, I thought that it would be helpful to reflect on agriculture in California and, more specifically, Ventura County. Contrary to what most think of our farm economy, today we have more irrigated land producing crops than ever before in the history of the state. Even in a county such as Ventura County, which has experienced a huge population growth and amazing urbanization, agriculture has fared quite well, as shown in the following slide.

SLIDE 1. Ventura County agriculture, 1974 and 2002

The amazing expansion of strawberry and tree fruit production has actually resulted in an increase of labor demand, particularly for seasonal workers.

With this context in mind, let's introduce the panel and turn to the subject of Cabrillo Village.

Panelists:

*Hub Segur*, Professor  
School of Business  
University of Redlands

Hub did two tours of duty on staff with the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO. In between, he earned a Ph.D. in agricultural economics from the University of California, Davis.

*Barbara Macri-Ortiz*, Attorney  
Private Practice  
Oxnard

Barbara was on staff with the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO, from 1970 to 1990. Cesar Chavez asked her to head the UFW legal department in 1980, which she did. With Cesar's encouragement, she then studied law in an apprenticeship program and passed the California Bar exam on her first try in 1987 was admitted to the California Bar. Between 1990 and 2000, she was a Legal Aid attorney with Channel Islands Legal Services, Oxnard, and subsequently started her own practice.

*Yissel Barajas*, Project Manager  
Cabrillo Economic Development Corp.

Yissel grew up in Cabrillo Village and went on to attend and obtain her Bachelor's degree at UCLA. She returned to Ventura County and has specialized in housing for Cabrillo Economic Development Corp where she has been Project Manager for the past five years.

"Mi casa es su casa"  
DuLanie Ellis, Point of View Films  
(805)640-1133

## Ventura County Agriculture, 1974 & 2002, Census of Agriculture

### *Census of Agriculture, 2002*

Harvested	2,000	103,262
Irrigated La	1,821	101,662
Vegetables	94	32,795
Land in Or	1,699	64,168
Avocados,	1,012	19,501
Citrus Fruit	1,057	43,178
Oranges, \	558	11,114
Lemons	556	28,448
Berries Ha	88	8,412
Hired Farr	1,209	26,810 Workers
Contract La	1,097	n.a.

### *Census of Agriculture, 1974*

Harvested	1,515	103,648
Irrigated La	1,279	98,998
Vegetables	152	29,186
Land in Or	1,260	52,355
Avocados,	310	5,212
Citrus Fruit, All		44,154
Oranges, \	528	15,140
Lemons	504	25,843
Berries Ha	43	2,582
Hired Farr	767	27,185 Workers
Contract La	490	n.a.