

Introduction: Eleven Published Farmworker Articles 1971 - 1989

A WORD FROM PAT HOFFMAN

These eleven articles were published by denominational and ecumenical magazines over an eighteen year period, from 1971 through 1989. Taken together, they show the changing foci of the United Farm Workers Union (UFW) through those years.

I was on the staff of the National Farm Worker Ministry (NFWM) from 1970-1975 with the responsibility to educate and involve church women on behalf of the United Farm Workers. Women across the country were already educated about conditions and problems facing farmworkers. In fact, church women had started the first specialized ministry to farmworkers in 1920. Women in hundreds of churches around the country sewed baby layettes, funded summer children's programs, and were the backbone of support for state migrant ministries.

My job was to help interpret that farmworkers needed something different from supporters. Church women needed to transition from service to advocacy for farmworker union organizing. That was a big leap. And it was a leap that many women of faith made.

The publication of articles on these highly charged union organizing fight reflect the courage of church women's organizations to make that switch. The earliest articles were in denominational and ecumenical women's magazines. The first, "Hear the Rally Cry," was requested by Margaret Shannon, National Director of Church Women United for their magazine, *The Church Woman*. Shannon flew out from New York City and along with several other leadership women went with me on a trip from Los Angeles to meet with UFW members in Delano and La Paz, in the central valley of California. It's a long trip so we had a lot of hours together. Driving back to L.A., Shannon asked me how I had gotten involved with the farmworkers' movement. Before the end of our trip, she asked me to write that story for their magazine. I had it in the mail to her within days.

Margaret Shannon request gave me the idea that I could reach more women with articles in women's denominational magazines. In October of that year a feature article called, "Women In the Huelga," was simultaneously published in the United Methodist Women's magazine, *Response*, United Presbyterian Women's *Concern*, and *Lutheran Women*. This article featured Maria Salgado's moving story of going out on strike and later joining the UFW boycott staff. Getting the stories of farmworker women told became my special interest. I don't think I saw it strategically as a way to connect with church women. More, it reflected how farmworker women had connected with me, had shown me the risks they were taking.

In 1977, Chris Hartmire, Director of the NFWM, asked if I would take an assignment from *Sojourners*, a socially conscious, evangelical magazine out of Washington, D.C., to do an interview with Cesar Chavez and I think I offered them an accompanying background article, "Gaining Justice Ground." The interview and

article were published in October, 1977.

I was commissioned by the NFWM in 1985 to write a book on the church and the farmworker movement. Ministry of the Dispossessed: Learning from the Farm Worker Movement came out in 1987. (The book and most of the interview tapes for it are available on this website. The original book includes a comprehensive index.) In 1988/89, because of the book, I had the opportunity to write articles for several magazines including the venerable *Christian Century*.

The interest of denominational and ecumenical magazines in the UFW's strike and boycotts through those years is remarkable. It reflects the groundbreaking leadership of Chris Hartmire as Director of the NFWM and the close association he built with the fledgling and struggling UFW. Hartmire, and those folks he attracted in the denominations, got the strike and the boycotts on virtually every denomination's agenda. Eventually, his leadership resulted in almost all the denominations passing some kind of supportive resolution either for the UFW's consumer boycotts or, more cautiously, for the NFWM itself as an agent for change. It was my good fortune to be along for some of that.

