



DIGGING UP THE PAST

Fall 2023: “Sí Se Puede!”

Welcome to the Fall issue of *Digging up the Past*. Each Fall, as students return to Washington State University, I find much to celebrate and much history to dig up. On campus, students are settling into their classes, and the staff and students of the Chicana/Latina center are gearing up for a month of heritage celebration and education. Many freshmen are getting their first taste of doing primary research in their history 105 courses—enjoying the fact that they get to pick a topic that interests them, but perhaps a bit worried about mastering the art of Chicago citations. Hopefully, they are also discovering our campus libraries, where they can find more information on the topics they find in this issue, vol. 3, no. 1 of *Digging*. Wherever you are, we encourage you to also visit your library to do more digging, and to find an event where you can join in the celebration of Latinx Heritage Month.

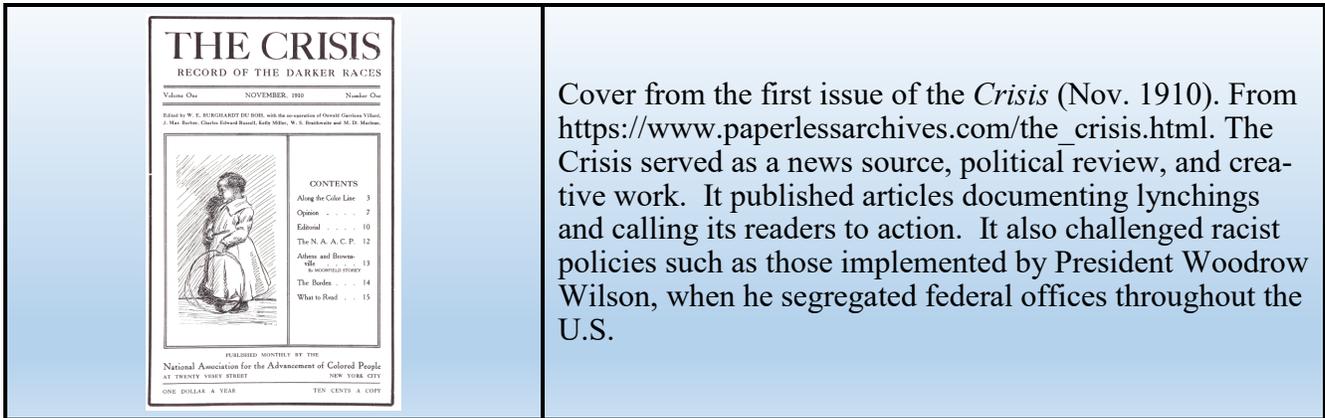
Because September 15 through October 16th is Latinx Heritage month, this issue includes an essay on Dolores Huerta, one of the cofounders of the United Farm Worker movement (and union). While history celebrations often speak of the important work of César Chávez, they often fail to mention that Dolores Huerta was also critical to the founding of the organization. In relation, they fail to note that it was Larry Itliong, a Filipino organizer, who three years after the union’s founding, bought Chávez and Huerta and Mexican American farm workers into the now famous grape strike of 1965-1970.¹ It was Dolores Huerta who came up with the slogan “Sí se puede!” –which means “Yes we can!” Keep in mind that if you forget the accent mark on “Sí,” then it just means “if we can.” Oops. Huerta went on to work for a number of critical human rights issues, and in 2012, then President Barak Obama awarded her the Presidential Medal of Freedom.² You can read more about Dolores Huerta in the closing article of this issue.

While September and October are the months when Latinx people throughout the hemisphere fought for independence, we were not alone in our struggles for justice. As noted in our section, “This Day in History,” W.E.B. DuBois founded the *Crisis* in November of 1910. In charge of publications for the NAACP (of which he was a cofounder) DuBois served as editor of the *Crisis* for 23 years, using the publication to speak out against lynchings, imperialism, and economic exploitation. At the same time, he included creative work in its pages. The early twentieth century was a time when publishing houses, because of structural racism, refused to publish most

1. Matthew García, “Labor, Migration, and Social Justice in the Age of the Grape Boycott,” *Gastronomica* 7, no. 3 (2007): 70.
2. Bryonn Bain, “Rad Talk: The Radical Solidarity of Dolores Huerta and Harry Belafonte,” *National Black Law Journal* 26 (2017): 13-16. For more information on Huerta and the Medal of Freedom see United Food and Commercial Workers, “Legendary Social Justice Trailblazer Dolores Huerta Awarded Presidential Medal of Freedom,” https://www.ufcw.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2852:legendary-social-justice-trailblazer-dolores-huerta-awarded-presidential-medal-of-freedom-&Itemid=6&lang=en.

Quotable People: Fannie L. Hamer	3
Student Abstracts	4
Digging This Day	7
Article: Dolores Huerta	9
Huerta Crossword:	13
Fall History Quiz	15

creative work by Black writers, thus the *Crisis* became a critical tool for Black political activists and artists throughout the nation.³ Excerpts from early issues of the *Crisis* can be found online at: https://www.paperlessarchives.com/the_crisis.html – check them out.



Several years ago, when writing about the work of Dolores Huerta and Harry Belafonte, Byronn Bain noted that both activists were demonized for the work they did for human rights. He called on his reader to ask,

Who in our society has been dehumanized as "deviant" because of their inclination to see things differently? Who are the "paranoid" lookouts in our midst attune to the threats to the survival of our communities? How valuable is the vision of those written off as "radical" because it fundamentally challenges the way the rest of us see things.⁴

In their own time, both Dolores Huerta and W.E.B. DuBois, were characterized as too radical (to-date, Dolores Huerta still is). Yet we continue to benefit from their vision and their work. Who in your life/world is seen as too radical? Might it be time and take a second look at their vision? Our future may depend upon it.

Wishing you a productive semester, rich with vision, digging, and action. And keep you eyes open for our Spring issue, which will feature a new editor, Dr. Alan Malfavón.

L Heidenreich Zuñiga

Washington State University
Fall, 2023



3. Lenneal J. Henderson, "W. E. B. DuBois: Black Scholar and Prophet," *The Black Scholar* 1, no. 3/4 (1970): 54; Carroll, A.E. Carroll, "Protest and Affirmation: Composite Texts in the Crisis," *American Literature* 76 no. 1 (2004): 89-90.
4. Bain, 18.

QUOTABLE PEOPLE: QUOTABLE PAST

October 6, 1917

Celebrate Fannie Lou Hamer's Birthday

Fannie Lou Hamer was born in 1917 in Montgomery County, Mississippi. When she was just twelve years old, she was pushed out of school to work full-time in the fields. While she did not have access to formal education, she went on to be one of the most well-known political organizers of the late twentieth-century. In the 1960s, she was active in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and cofounded the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. It was the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party that, in 1964, directly and effectively challenged the white supremacist practices Southern Democrats at the Democrats national convention. One of her most famous quotations is "Nobody's free until everybody's free." Hamer was often arrested for her activism, at times brutally beaten by the police, but she persisted. Because of her activism, Americans have many of the voting rights we have today. Learn more at the SNCC Digital Gateway, <https://snccdigital.org/people/fannie-lou-hamer/>.



Fannie Lou Hamer, 1964,
Wikimedia Commons

Honor the work and memory of Fannie Lou Hamer by:

- ⇒ Learning about the history of voting rights.
- ⇒ Making a poster about voting rights, about the history of Civil Rights in America, or about Ms. Hamer (think about posting it in your school library).
- ⇒ Writing a haiku about Fannie Lou Hamer and submitting it to *Digging up the Past* (see details in this issue).
- ⇒ Asking your parent or guardian about the first time they voted and what voting means to them.

Learn More about this Powerful Woman:

Books:

Blain, Keisha N. *Until I Am Free : Fannie Lou Hamer's Enduring Message to America*. New York: Beacon Press, 2021.

Hamer, Fannie Lou and others. *The Speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: to Tell It Like It Is*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011.

Mills, Kay. *This Little Light of Mine : the Life of Fannie Lou Hamer*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007.

Youtube Videos:

Fannie Lou Hamer Risked Her Life for the Right to Vote, Smithsonian Channel, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J99ldHD6qeQ>.

Fannie Lou Hamer's testimony before the Senate Credential's Committee (audio only), Fanny Lou Hamer Institute, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRCuuZpfV7k>

College-level history courses enable you to explore aspects of the past that are important and interesting to you.

The field of history allows you to ... “dig up the past.”

“Fraternal Kiss” Painting on the Berlin Wall, by Shenghao Zhu, History 105

On October 7, 1979, the chairman of the presidium Soviet Union, Brezhnev, and East German president Erich Honecker kiss in East Berlin, photographer Régis Bossu takes the photo and names it “Fraternal Kiss.” The photo quickly became famous. Eleven years later, in 1990, artist Dmitri Vrubel painted the photo on the Berlin Wall, which became one of the famous paintings of the Berlin Wall. The painting suffered erosion after several years, but he repainted it in 2009. Why did Vrubel paint the “Fraternal Kiss” on the Wall? Because the Berlin Wall is one of the most important parts of German history. It tells people the importance of unity.

In 1961, the Berlin Wall was built, and the Soviet Union and East German governments tried to stop East Germans from going to the West. The Wall left many families and friends divided into two places. Some people tried to cross the Berlin Wall, and many took to the streets to protest. Although the Wall divided them for 18 years, Germans were still united. The night the Wall came down Germans cried and hugged each other. The fall of the Berlin Wall is an important historical event because one year later, East Germany and West Germany were united again. This is a perfect example of how unity can do anything. For this project I used newspapers, scholarly articles, and a memoir.



“The Ballroom Era,” By Jaz Harvey, History 369

The Ballroom was instrumental in creating a safe and inclusive queer subculture in major cities around the US. Ballroom culture was born out of a need for community and blossomed into a celebration of queer people, and self-expression. Ballroom culture started in Harlem, New York with Black fraternal organizations giving queer performers a space to be free. This grew into a subculture that housed, fed, and inspired many queer performers, activists, and journalists who worked to make America safer for queer people. This foundation inspired new generations who viewed gender expression with fresh eyes and were more open to accepting people different from them.

I found out about drag before I learned about ballroom culture; though the two are undeniably tied to one another ballroom is the umbrella through which gender expression, in queer subcultures, was made popular. I first learned about the culture watching *Pose*, and this sent me on a mission to learn about the history and the specific people who made a community safe and welcoming to those who were unwelcome in their own homes. Through my research I found a many sources from graduate students and professors of gender studies who were trying to share the history that has often been ignored by media. The history of ballroom culture is expansive and has played a role in many watershed moments in the queer rights movement. It’s important to understand the ways in which intersectionality played into queer rights and queer acceptance in America, and through the lens of ballroom it is interesting to see how race, gender, sexuality, class, and age play into the conversation surrounding queer acceptance.

Digging This Day

September 8, 1965: Larry Itliong, head of the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee, calls a strike against grape growers in California. He invites César Chavez and the United Farmer Worker Association to join the strike (Zinn).



Larry Itliong. Photo by Dick Meister, former Labor Editor of the San Francisco Chronicle. Used in accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107.

While many people know about the leadership of César Chávez and Dolores Huerta in the famous Grape Strike of 1965-1970, not as many know that it was the Filipino workers who began the strike. Larry Itliong and Philips Ver Cruz were the leaders of the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee when the workers voted to strike (at the time agricultural workers did not even have the right to form a union, and were paid far below the minimum wage). Itliong asked the United Farm Worker Association to join the strike, and together the new union marched to victory (learn more at <https://www.zinnedproject.org/news/tdih/delano-grape-strike/>).

Sep 11, 1973: A CIA-backed coup succeeds in overthrowing the democratically elected Marxist government in Chile. This marks the start of U.S.-backed Gen. Augusto Pinochet's 17-year rule, which is notoriously known for massive human rights violations (UW).

September 14, 1911: El Primer Congreso Mexicanista took place in Laredo, Texas. Its goal was to discuss issues that the Mexican and Chicax communities faced in the United States, including labor, social, economic, and educational ones (HL).

September 16, 1810: Father Miguel Hidalgo y Castillo makes the cry, or “grito” of liberation from the church tower in Dolores, Guanajuato, marking the beginning of the Mexican Revolution (LOC).



Digging This Day

October 2, 1967: Thurgood Marshall sworn in as the first Black Supreme Court Justice (TBH).

October 6, 1917: Fannie Lou Hamer, freedom fighter, is born. (TBH)

November, 1910: WEB DuBois began publication of NAACP monthly magazine, *Crisis*. (TBH).

November, 1968: Shirley Chisholm becomes first Black woman elected to Congress, representing Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, NY, (TBH.)

November 9, 1980: The SF Lesbian/Gay Freedom Band performs at Davies Symphony Hall, the first time that an LGBTQ group performs in any major symphony hall in the world (SFG).

Founded by Jon Reed Sims in 1978, the Band was the first openly-gay musical group (that we know of) in the world. By the 1980s the Freedom band was playing at a breadth of local events such as the Cinco de May Parade, and the first “Dance-Along Nutcracker,” as well as national events such as the March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. For more information, go to <https://www.sflgfb.org/about/>.



The San Francisco Lesbian/Gay Freedom Band performs alongside the route of the 2019 San Francisco Trans March. Photo by Pax Ahimsa Gethan, Wikimedia Commons.

November 20, 1969: Native American activists occupy Alcatraz Island for a second time. The occupation lasts about two years, ending June 11, 1971 after some of their demands for basic rights are agreed to by the US government (SFG).

Sources: Oscar Rosales Castañeda, “Timeline: Movimiento from 1960-1985,” Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project, University of Washington. Accessed January 2, 2023, https://depts.washington.edu/civilr/mecha_timeline.htm (UW); “Today in Black History,” University of Pennsylvania African Studies Center, https://www.africa.upenn.edu/K-12/Today_B_History.html; San Francisco Gay History, “This Month in History,” <https://www.sfgayhistory.com/timeline/this-month/> (SFG); Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/today-in-history/> (LOC).

Dolores Huerta: An Activist of Her Time, and Ours

By L Heidenreich Zuñiga, PhD



Monument celebrating work of Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chávez at San José State University.

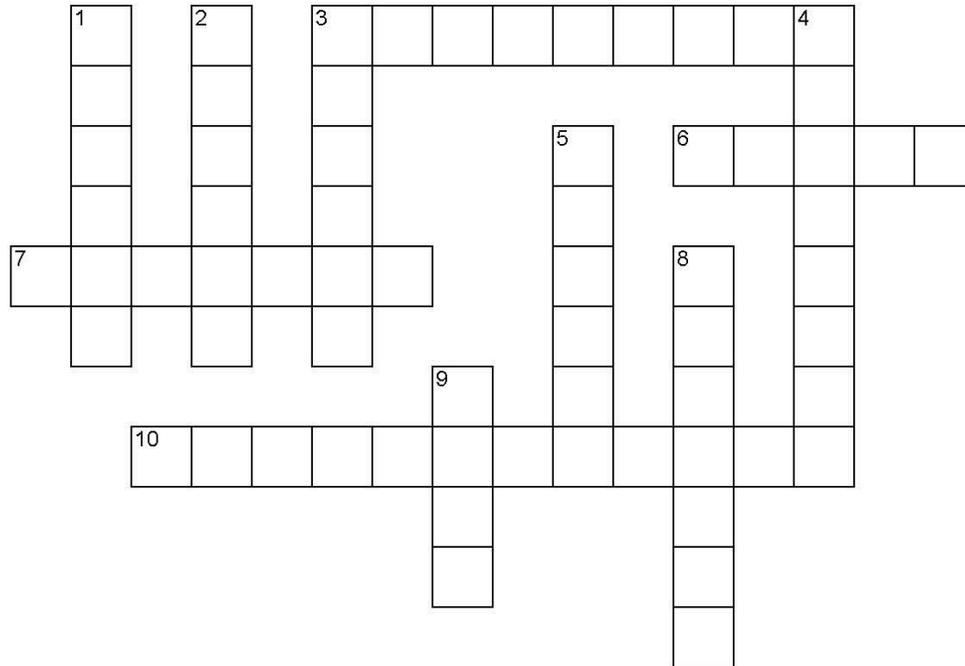
Photo by Katherine D. Harris. Wikimedia Creative Commons.

What makes a girl or woman decide to become an activist? Does she decide? Or does history decide for her? Focusing on the history of one activist, Dolores Huerta, can teach us about the many critical issues Chicanas faced in the late twentieth century. The late twentieth century was a time of liberation movements because the needs of the people of the United States were so great. Racism structured public education, farm workers were not allowed to demand contracts, and race and gender discrimination was taken for granted in many workplaces. Thus Dolores Huerta came of age in a time, much like ours, where people were eager to fight for justice. Facing the many challenges of her life, instead of turning away from them, helped make her one of the fiercest activists of the late twentieth century.

The challenges Huerta faced as a young girl fueled her commitment to justice. She was born into a working-class family in Dawson, New Mexico, in 1930. Her parents divorced when she was just five, and so she moved with her mother to Stockton, California, a place of wide-open fields, and hard-working people (and very *very* hot summers).¹ Her mother often worked two jobs to support her family, but made sure Dolores was able to be active in Church groups and in Girl Scouts. Huerta was an active Girl Scout for ten years. As an adult she looked back and noted “Being a Girl Scout from the time I was eight to eighteen taught me many things. It built my self-confidence and taught me not to be shy about speaking in public.”²

1. Beagle García, *Siete Lenguas: The Rhetorical History of Dolores Huerta and The Rise of Chicana Rhetoric* (PhD diss., University of New Mexico, 2015), 41-44; [Richard Griswold del Castillo and Richard A. Garcia, *César Chávez: A Triumph of Spirit* \(Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995\), 62-64.](#)
2. California Museum Activity Guide, “Dolores Huerta Girl Scout Patch,” 3. https://www.californiamuseum.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/camuseum_girlscouts_doloreshuertapatch_activitysheet_0.pdf.

Dolores Huerta: Warrior for Justice



www.CrosswordWeaver.com

ACROSS

- 3** Throughout the 1970s, Huerta negotiated _____ for the union.
- 6** When she was a girl, Huerta was an active Girl _____.
- 7** The young Huerta dreamed of becoming one of these:
- 10** In 1955, she worked for the Community Service _____.

DOWN

- 1** In UFW, what does the W stand for?
- 2** _____ beat her and broke her ribs when she spoke at a protest.
- 3** The last name of the organizer with whom she founded the UFW:
- 4** In what town did Dolores Huerta grow up?
- 5** This word means "Strike."
- 8** The leader of the Filipino workers was named Larry _____.
- 9** This is number of years the grape strike and boycott lasted.

Fall History Quiz (all answers can be found in this edition of *Digging up the Past*)

Founded by W.E.B. Dubois and the NAACP in 1910, this journal published political articles and creative work.



Quotable Past

This activist was born in 1917. One of her famous quotations is ““Nobody’s free until everybody’s free.”

Dolores Huerta worked with this organization from 1955 until 1962. It was there that she met César Chávez.



In 1965, he asked the National Farm Workers Association to join their strike:

How many syllables are in a History Haiku?

(hint)

With pride she marches
Reminds us “Sí se puede!”
Onward to justice

Bring your answers to the
Department of History
Wilson-Short 301 for your
LOADED HISTORY
MUG!

NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETIES



Department of History
Washington State University
Wilson-Short 301
Pullman, WA 99164-4030

STAY CONNECTED!



@HistoryWsu



@WSUDepartmentofHistory



@wsudepartmentofhistory