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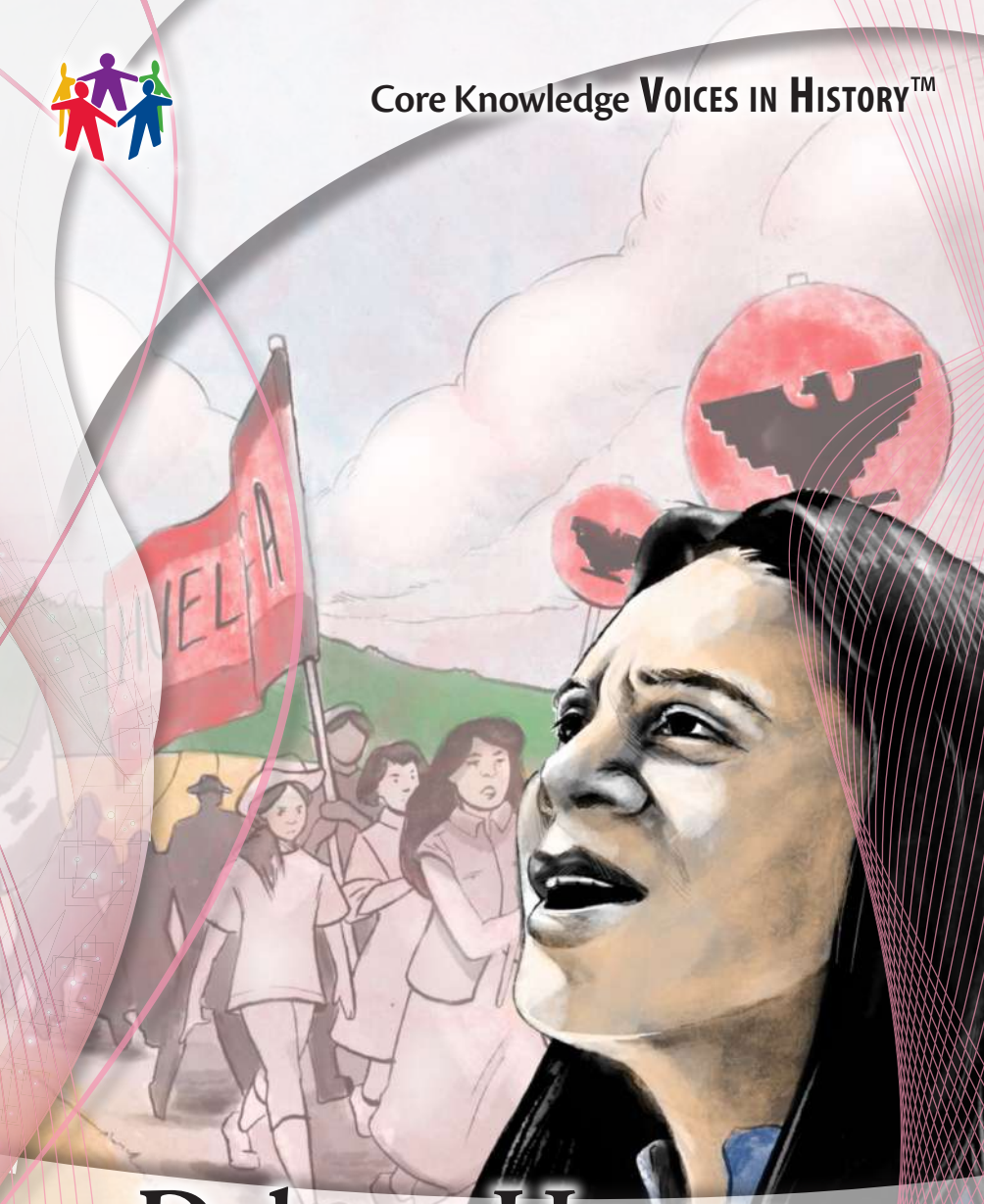

Dolores Huerta

Songs of Justice

by Beth Kephart

illustrated by Natalie Riolfi

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by

Beth Kephart

illustrated by *Natalie Riolfi*

Voices in History: Biography Series™

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1

The Sound of Her Dreams

Dolores Huerta loved to dance. Put some music on, and there she would be—tapping and twirling to the beat, sliding around with the tunes, singing along with the words.

Quick and light on her feet, Dolores would find the music wherever it was. Playing on the old radio in the little houses of her childhood. Bouncing off the walls in her tap-dance class. Filling the church during her choir practice. Striking a mood in her mother's restaurant. Lifting up from her high school band. Rising from the bugles of farmworkers. Floating across concert halls. Sizzling on a stage.

Sometimes, a particular song, like one called "Rhapsody in Blue," would come to mind while Dolores was at work early in the morning in a city. The honking cars would sound like drumbeats to her. Her hips would start to sway.

Sometimes, someone would play a Dizzy Gillespie song from long ago that would remind Dolores of her childhood, and she would hum along.

Sometimes she would hear a song called "Adelita," about a Mexican woman who had left her job as a schoolteacher so that she could join the fight for a better life. Dolores would stop and listen to the words and think back on her own story.

Dolores loved opera. She loved jazz. She loved a song of possibilities called "Imagine." She loved Latin American music known as cumbia, where drums and maracas strike up the beat, and the Mexican music called mariachi, where violins and guitars play sweet notes as the singers sing.

Music kept Dolores company. Music gave her hope. Music gave her joy and strength. Art such as music, Dolores said, "touches the heart and the mind and the soul. It gives you . . . the healing that you need and the energy that you need."

Music helped Dolores Huerta dream the biggest dreams. It was the invisible cloak she wore as, day by day, heart by heart, town by town, life by life, she brought justice and honor to the world.

2

Her Mother's Daughter

Dolores Clara Fernández was born in a town called Dawson, New Mexico, on April 10, 1930. Dawson was an old coal mining town. Dolores's parents, Juan and Alicia, had both been born in the United States. Juan's parents had immigrated from Mexico.

It was a hard time for most Americans during the years of Dolores's childhood. Many people had lost their jobs. Many were having trouble finding good food to eat and a safe place to stay. Dolores's father, a miner and farmworker who later became a local politician, struggled to find work close to home. He had to move several times to find work on farms in different states, picking different crops from season to season. Dolores, her mother, and her two brothers, Juan and Marshall, moved with him from farm to farm, living in simple shacks. The sounds of the long, hard work in the fields went on all around them.

immigrated: came to a new country to live
crops: plants grown to be used or sold

The Great Depression

Between 1929 and 1939, people around the world experienced what is known as the Great Depression, which followed the crash of the stock market on October 24, 1929. Everyday life changed dramatically as banks ran out of money, stores closed, construction stopped, people lost their jobs, and food grew scarce. In the mid-1930s, the U.S. economy began to change under the leadership of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who put into place a program called the New Deal that was designed to help struggling families. But it would be a long time before prosperity returned.

When Dolores was young, her mother and father divorced. Dolores and her brothers moved with their mother to a town called Stockton, California, for a new start. Their mother worked hard. During the day, she worked in a restaurant. At night, she worked in a factory. At home, after school, Dolores and her brothers did their chores. All the chores were divided fairly. Their mother did not believe that girls had one kind of job and boys had another. Girls and boys were equal, she said. Everybody helped. So Dolores and her brothers swept the floor and washed the dishes and made the beds and kept the house orderly and neat. Dolores's brothers became even better cooks than Dolores.

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stock market: a place where people buy and sell shares of companies
economy: all the ways people in a certain area make and spend money

It took a few years, but their mother was able to save enough money to buy a small restaurant to feed the local families and workers. These people represented a wide range of cultures, including Filipino, African American, Japanese, Chinese, Mexican, and Jewish. It was a time when such people did not enjoy the same rights as white American citizens. Dolores's mother was sensitive to the hardships these people faced. She wanted to create opportunities to take better care of her community. Then, after she married again, she bought a hotel with seventy rooms and moved her family there.

Just as they had done in their old home, Dolores and her brothers helped with the chores in the hotel. They ironed the towels and the sheets. They did all the cleaning. They greeted the guests and showed them respect. Their mother was one of the hardest workers Dolores would ever know, and she and her brothers did all they could to help her.

In the daytime, Dolores still went to school. She loved to learn and was a good student. She talked a lot. She had ideas. She wrote fine stories. But sometimes the other students would say mean things to her about her Mexican American culture. They would make fun of her

cultures: groups of people who share the same beliefs, practices, places of origin, or other traits
rights: powers or privileges that people are entitled to by law

for how she looked or the food she ate or the clothes she wore. Some of the teachers were unkind, too, and didn't believe she could be as smart as she was. Once, after a whole year of getting As for the poems and stories she had written, Dolores's teacher lowered her final grade. Someone else, the teacher said, must have written her stories for her.

What Does It Mean to Be Different?

Even though both of Dolores's parents had been born in the United States and were Americans, Dolores and others like her—people who spoke Spanish, people whose skin was darker, people who had their own music, food, and culture—were often treated differently. They were given fewer opportunities as students and as workers. They were ignored. They were not allowed to do many of the things that others took for granted.

In addition, because there were fewer jobs for everyone during the Great Depression, many people of Mexican origin were threatened with deportation—being sent back across the border, often by train. In the end, hundreds of thousands of Mexican immigrants were sent back to Mexico during this time.

Despite all that Dolores Huerta went on to achieve in her life, she would sometimes say that even in the country where she had been born, she would always feel somehow different.

Dolores was furious—and sad—because she hadn't cheated! Nonetheless, she was determined to learn, determined to be part of her school community.

She joined the Girl Scouts, she became a majorette, and, of course, she sang. By then, her brothers were picking fruits and vegetables in the field with the other men. Sometimes Dolores would work in the packing sheds. No matter what, she stayed focused on her schoolwork, and after she finished studying, she'd help her mother in the hotel.

You can meet a lot of people in a hotel. People who are passing through on a long journey. People who just need a place to rest. People who have nowhere else to stay while they pick the crops in the local fields. Dolores's mother listened to her guests' stories, so Dolores did, too. Sometimes, her mother would rent rooms for just one dollar a night, or for nothing at all, to those who had no money to spare.

Dolores's mother became a respected leader in her community during the years when Dolores was growing up. She helped others in many ways, and through it all, Dolores watched and learned. "When you see that somebody needs something," her mother would say, "don't wait to be asked. If you see somebody who needs something, you do it. Second thing: you don't talk about what you did. Once you talk about what you did, you take the grace of God away from that act."

Dolores would never forget these words.

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majorette: a baton twirler in a marching band
packing sheds: buildings where fruits and vegetables are prepared and packaged for sale

3

Something Had to Be Done

Despite the hard times that Dolores faced as a student in Stockton, she loved her community. After finishing high school in 1947, she attended a local college. She tried a few jobs, including as a secretary at a nearby naval supply base and as a record keeper for the local sheriff's department. However, Dolores didn't find those jobs to be very rewarding, so eventually she went back to school to become a teacher.

It wasn't long before Dolores—dark-haired, pretty, and just over five feet tall—was standing by a chalkboard in an elementary school in Stockton before a classroom of young students. She wanted her students to learn and grow, to feel safe and respected, and to know that she believed they could do good work.

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naval supply base: a navy facility that provides supplies and other support for ships and related equipment

record keeper: someone who manages and keeps track of written information

chalkboard: a dark, smooth surface used for writing on with chalk

But school was hard for the students in Dolores's classroom. Many had parents who spent all day working in the fields—picking the seasonal crops, kneeling in the dirt, carrying sacks of grapes or asparagus on their backs. Despite all their hard work, they still arrived home at night with little money to spare and little food to eat. The children came to school in bare feet. They came to school hungry. Their clothes were thin and faded.

How could anyone learn in such conditions? Dolores wondered.

Stockton

Stockton is in Northern California. For many centuries, it belonged to Indigenous people called the Yatchicumne, until European settlers came and took it. Then, in the middle of the nineteenth century, gold was found in a nearby river, and many people arrived in the area with the hope of getting rich. Stockton became an important supply point and home base for hopeful miners.

By the time Dolores and her family moved to Stockton, it was most famous for its rich farmlands. Like much of California, a state with fine growing weather and a rich history of agricultural production, Stockton offered opportunity to those who had to leave their homes during the Great Depression in search of farmwork. Asparagus, grapes, cherries, nuts, and cotton were among the many California crops that helped feed and clothe the country.

Today, Stockton is still an important agricultural center, with much of its produce shipped throughout the United States.

seasonal: related or limited to a certain season
Indigenous: of or related to the first people to live in a place

Dolores, who now had a husband and children of her own at home, knew how important lunch and fresh milk were to growing bodies and minds. She went to the principal. She asked him to help her feed the children in her classroom. But the principal believed it was the parents' responsibility, not the school's, to feed the children.

Dolores tried to explain, but the principal wouldn't listen.

She tried to teach, but the hungry children were distracted.

Dolores wasn't the only one who was worried about the lives of migrant workers. A man named Fred Ross Sr. was also at work in Stockton, searching for volunteers to help set up a local chapter of something called a Community Service Organization. One day in 1955, he and Dolores began a conversation about helping people work together to create positive change.

Community Service Organization and Fred Ross Sr.

When many people pay attention to what is wrong, change is possible. Health clinics can be organized for those who don't have medicine. Schools can be made more equitable. Voters can be registered to support candidates who care about the needs of the poor. Organizers can go door to door and listen to the dreams of the people. If, for example, a community wants a new park or medical clinic, or paved streets instead of dirt ones, neighbors can join with neighbors and get the job done.

This was the founding idea behind the Community Service Organization. Its creator was Fred Ross Sr., a man who dedicated much of his life to helping Mexican Americans and other Latinos ask for, and gain, better living and working conditions and have access to a better life.

Dolores was interested in what Fred had to say. After learning more about him and what he stood for, she began to travel with him, in and out of the homes of farmworkers.

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volunteers: people who perform a service without being paid
health clinics: places where people go to receive medical treatment
registered: enrolled

She heard their stories about working the fields without so much as a glass of cold water. She met with those who had been injured by a farm machine or fainted in the heat. She listened as workers talked about being forced to work so fast that they couldn't keep up with the employer's demands. She heard about wages so low that it was impossible to live on them, no matter how hard anyone tried, and about how hard it is to speak up for yourself when you don't yet speak the local language.

Dolores didn't just hear stories about the lives of farmworkers. She saw how they lived for herself. She understood that these workers needed to organize. They needed to speak with one voice. They needed, in fact, to find their own voices and to believe that what they wanted mattered.

organize: come together to act for a common purpose

She looked around at the rooms where the farmworkers—and those of her students whose parents were farmworkers—lived. The floors were made of dirt, the walls were thin, and there was little food and no running water.

It was becoming clearer and clearer: something had to be done, and Dolores was the right person to do it. At twenty-five years old—a teacher, a wife, and a mother—she decided to commit her life to others.

4

So Much Work to Do

It was still 1955. At a fundraising dinner held in Oakland, California, Fred Ross introduced Dolores to a friend of his named Cesar Chavez. Like Dolores, Cesar had ideas about justice and a passion for achieving it. Together, Dolores and Cesar began to plan for a new kind of organization in which farmworkers would have a say in the work they did and how they would be paid and protected. They talked to friends and neighbors and strangers. They shared their vision for a better world. They asked the farmworkers to trust them.

In 1960, five years after the two met, Dolores, Cesar, and the people working with them helped register 150,000 new voters, giving more people a choice in the politicians who represented them.

fundraising: the act of raising money
politicians: people who take part in government

Two years later, in 1962, their labor union for farmworkers was born. Originally called the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA), it would soon join with another organization to become the United Farm Workers of America (UFW).

Dolores was thirty-two years old, with even more children at home and even more faith that hard work could build a better future.

union: a group of people who act together to protect their rights and interests

Cesar Chavez

Cesar Chavez was a Mexican American labor leader and civil rights activist. Already a farmworker as a young man, he left school after eighth grade to work full-time in the fields. He was working in a lumberyard to support his family when he met Fred Ross Sr.

Fred talked to Cesar about the power of speaking up, of pursuing what is fair and right. With the help of Fred, Cesar learned how to organize a social movement. He traveled across California, speaking to Mexicans and Mexican Americans and representing their rights.

He worked alongside Dolores Huerta for decades. He dedicated himself to what he called la causa, *which means "the cause" in Spanish: the struggle of farmworkers in the United States to earn the respect of their employers and to ask for, and receive, better working conditions. Sometimes, to get attention for his cause, he would go on hunger strikes—much like one of his heroes, the Indian leader Mohandas Gandhi, who believed in nonviolent protests.*

And there was just so much work to do!

Small but mighty, Dolores went from home to home, earning the trust of farmworkers.

She went to meetings with politicians and businesspeople, asking for—and getting—aid for families

lumberyard: a place where cut wood is kept for sale
social movement: a loosely organized effort to achieve a social goal
cause: a goal worthy of support

as well as something called disability insurance, a fund that helps injured workers during the times when they can't work.

She argued not just for economic improvements for workers but for social improvements, too—more respect for those who picked the crops that fed Americans.

Dolores understood that speaking up is hard. That sometimes one can be punished for asking for what is right. More often, one can be ignored. But there is more power in groups, more power in many voices speaking the same truth, and so Dolores encouraged workers to organize so that they might have some control over their lives and jobs. She taught them how to collectively advocate for themselves. She told them they should be able to ask for better working conditions—like shorter hours, rest periods, toilets, and fresh, cool water in the fields—without having to worry about losing their jobs.

Dolores also insisted that workers should not be forced to work on farms where poisons called insecticides were sprayed down on the fields and onto the workers themselves. People were getting very sick. People were losing their lives. Safety was important, Dolores believed. Everyone had a right to good health. Americans depended on these farmworkers, and so did their families.

advocate: speak in support of

All the while, the UFW was growing. More and more people were joining. More and more politicians were listening. Plans were in place to build a bank for the farmworkers, as well as a retirement village. At times, Dolores barely had enough money to live on herself. But she was not interested in making money or having fancy things. In fact, once, when a reporter asked Dolores what she would do if someone gave her a lot of money, she said, "I'd turn around and contribute it to the union."

The union was what mattered. The union was Dolores's life. She was busy, always busy, meeting and traveling and speaking in small houses, big factories, loud theaters, and quiet restaurants. She spoke to workers. She spoke to mothers. She spoke to teenagers. She spoke to politicians.

Cesar and Dolores were both passionate people, but in different ways. He was often shy and quiet, while she was usually loud and outspoken. Sometimes they would argue, driving Dolores to exclaim, "I quit!" But she was always back the next day, working beside Cesar, who appreciated how Dolores kept him honest and inspired him to broaden his ideas and vision. Despite their differences, neither Dolores nor Cesar ever lost sight of the hopes they shared for farmworkers—or their respect for one another.

retirement village: a housing community for older adults
inspired: encouraged

United Farm Workers of America

Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta co-created the National Farm Workers Association in 1962. In 1966, the National Farm Workers Association would join with the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee, a group of largely Filipino farmworkers, to form a new organization. This new organization would soon be known as the United Farm Workers of America, a U.S. labor union. It would win many victories on behalf of farmworkers while encouraging its members to remain nonviolent in their protests.

Making Sacrifices

The path to change often requires sacrifice along the way. Sometimes, Dolores had to leave her children with other people when she went on the road. She hoped they would learn from her what it means to commit one's life to a meaningful cause, and they did. Later in life, however, Dolores would wish that she had had more time with her own children.

5

Marching Forward

In September 1965, more than eight hundred Filipino and Filipino American farmworkers came together through their own union, the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC), and decided to stop picking the grapes that were growing heavy on the vines of the farms owned by big companies. These farmworkers, like the Mexican and Mexican American farmworkers, wanted better conditions and wages. They were willing to stop working and lose their pay—and possibly their homes—to make their demands known and change their lives.

If the Filipino American workers wouldn't work the farms, would the Mexican American workers that Dolores and Cesar represented step into their places? And if the Mexican American workers did that, wouldn't the Filipino American workers lose their voices?

The Filipino American workers asked the UFW to join them in the strike.

vines: plants whose stems require support because they climb and creep upward

Dolores and Cesar had to make a decision. Their organization was still young, just three years old. If their people were to strike, could the young organization hold strong? Dolores and Cesar held a vote for their members, and it was soon decided: the Mexican American workers would join the Filipino American workers, putting even more pressure on the grape growers to hear their demands.

That fall, the growers refused to listen to the farmworkers. They hired other workers, some from far away, to get their grapes off the vines and into stores. But a movement had begun, and there would be no backing down. This protest would continue until the workers had been heard.

Strikes and Picket Lines

When workers believe that their working conditions are unfair, and when, even after asking their managers for better treatment and better pay, no significant changes get made, a strike is sometimes called. Workers leave their jobs and begin to walk around their place of work, up and down and around in circles. They hold up signs. They chant. They sing. This is a picket line—a fence, some might say, between the workers and their work. Work stops. People notice. Pressure builds for change. Those who cross the picket line to work are considered disloyal to the movement. Those who join the picket line are seen as fighting for their rights and their future.

There were great hardships now for the farmworkers. There was plenty of pressure on Dolores and Cesar to get the growers to listen and to change their way of doing business. But they were not alone in their efforts. Around the same time, other groups of people, including Black Americans and women, were also rising up against the injustice they were experiencing.

Women were being inspired by people like Gloria Steinem, who was insisting that women be given the same rights and opportunities as men. Black Americans were being inspired by the teachings of Martin Luther King Jr., who was insisting that they be given the same rights and opportunities as white Americans. College students were leaving their classrooms to stand with protesters. They sang songs to make their voices heard. Their songs spread from one rally to another rally, then to another. There was a great feeling of unity among those who hoped to change their country—many friendships among those who wanted to change America.

Gloria Steinem

Our world has been changed by many people who have fought for more rights and freedoms on behalf of others. Gloria Steinem, who had traveled to India after college and studied the tactics of Gandhi, became an active voice for the rights of women, children, and many others. She and Dolores became friends and supported one another.

Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. was a Black Baptist minister and civil rights leader who believed that all people have the right to be treated equally and fairly regardless of race. After King died in 1968, his widow, Coretta Scott King, continued to share the important lessons of nonviolent protests—and Dolores continued to be inspired by her words. "I love to quote Coretta Scott King, who said, 'We will never have peace in the world until women take power,'" Dolores once told others. "I want to amend that by using the word feminist. . . . I think we can say 'when feminists take power.'"

A new idea emerged in the grape strike: Why not include everyday American people in the struggle for justice? Why not ask them not to buy the grapes that the growers sold? Remove the grapes from grocery stores! Remove the grapes from restaurants! Remove the grapes from wherever people bought grapes!

If no one was selling or buying grapes, what would the growers do?

A young Dolores, always the talker, had once earned the nickname Seven Tongues. This gift for speech would come in handy now as she stepped up to take the lead in the grape strike and boycott. Now Dolores talked more than she ever had—in Spanish and in English. She encouraged farmworkers who could not read well to share their stories with young people and activists. She

boycott: refusal to take part in something

encouraged people to talk to local grocery stores about the conditions of farmworkers and to march with their signs high and their voices higher.

One grower, a company called Schenley Industries, saw that it was losing money thanks to the boycott. It saw that other organizations, like the one created for auto workers, were standing up for the farmworkers. It saw politicians like Senator Robert F. Kennedy talking about the crisis to other leaders in Washington, D.C.

It saw that change was coming, thanks in large part to Dolores.

Then, in the spring of 1966, the managers of Schenley saw something else, something that Dolores and Cesar had helped organize. It all began with just seventy farmworkers leaving the fields in a place called Delano. They were Mexican American and Filipino. They were young and old. They were adults and children. And they were marching.

They were headed to the California state capital of Sacramento, which was hundreds of miles away. They sang along the way to music played on the instruments they carried, singing songs of their cultures and songs of the movement, like a song called "El Picket Sign," written by a man named Luis Valdez. And at the front, beside them, Dolores marched too, singing:

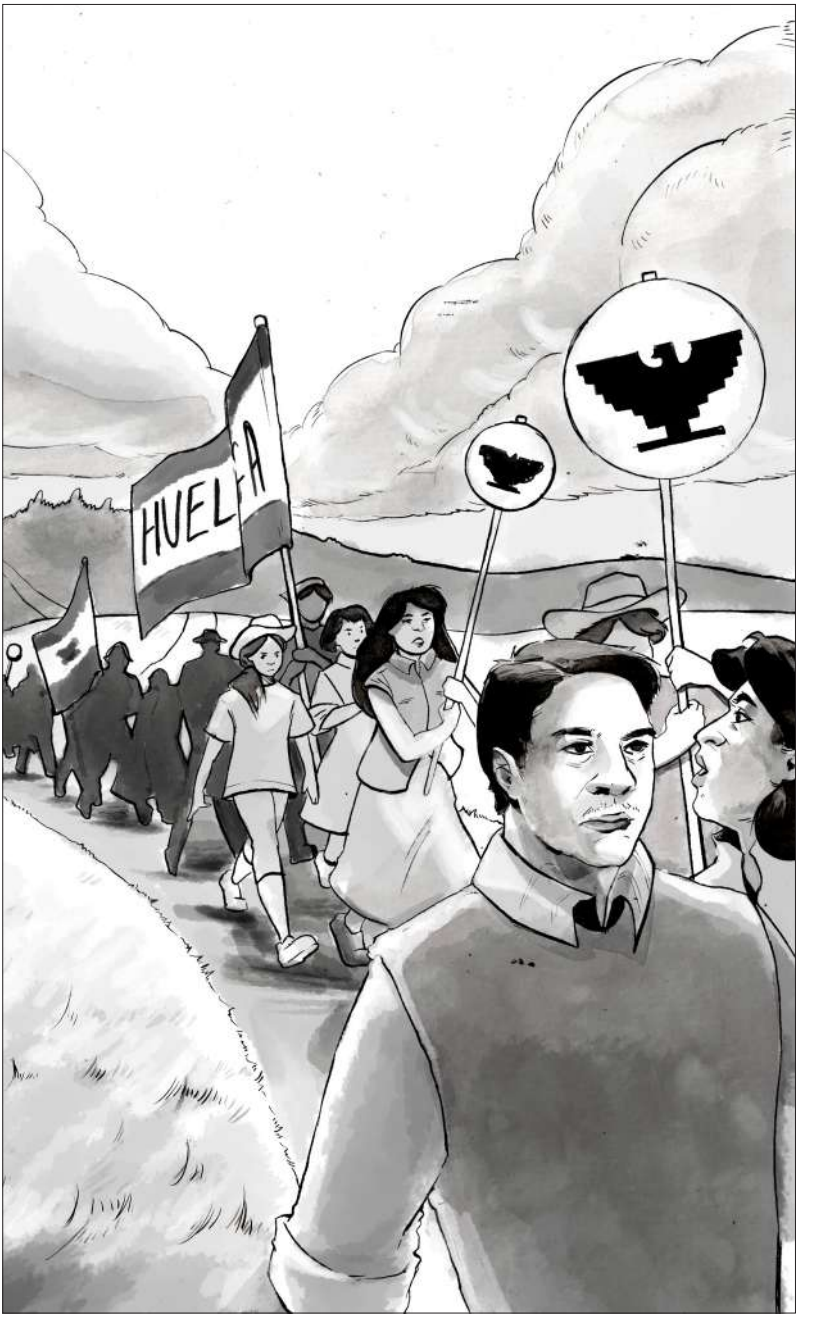
Desde Tejas a California
Campesinos están luchando
¡Los rancheros a llore y llore
De huelga ya están bien pandos!

From Texas to California
Farm workers are fighting
The ranchers are crying and crying.
They are already on strike!

It seemed small enough at first. Maybe no one, Schenley hoped, would notice. But as the Delano marchers marched, they were joined by many others. Students. Ministers. Other leaders who cared about justice. Farmworkers who left their picking to join them. There were the marchers, walking on the highway and through cities. There were the marchers, on TV. It was hard not to notice that something brave and bold was happening as, beneath the feet of so many marchers, the dust rose and the promise of change kept rising.

And there was Dolores, singing.

Those seventy marchers became 10,000—enough to make Schenley decide to change the way it operated. With Dolores herself sitting across the table from the


HUELGA

Schenley managers, new rules for working in the Schenley fields were put into place. Better working conditions. Medical care. Retirement plans. And, very importantly, an agreement to end the practice of spraying the fields and farmworkers with those dangerous insecticides.

So many farmworkers had taken a huge risk to strike and march under the leadership of Dolores and Cesar. And in the end, some fourteen million Americans across the country had stopped eating grapes because they believed in the cause. But there was so much more to do—more growers who had to be convinced to treat farmworkers better, more years of protests, more meetings with businesspeople to try to change their minds.

The great grape strike would go on for several years. More growers finally gave the workers what they needed. And more new laws were put into place to keep farmworkers safer. It would become known as one of the largest and most successful strikes in the history of the United States.

6

Hard Losses, Good Gains

Dolores was getting a reputation as an effective organizer and powerful speaker. She was bringing farmworkers together and helping politicians see the power in the movement.

Three small words that Dolores first said in 1972, then began to say louder and louder, made the movement even more famous. Those three words were "Sí se puede." They mean "Yes, we can."

Always Fighting to Be Seen

For many years, Dolores's friend Cesar was given credit for the slogan that became so famous, "Yes, we can." This fact was not lost on Dolores. Even as she was fighting for the rights of others, she still had to fight for her own right to be given credit for everything she had accomplished. Many history books, for example, tell the story of the farmworkers' movement by telling the story of Cesar Chavez, even though Dolores and Cesar worked together from the start and Dolores took the lead in many instances.

One of Dolores's most important accomplishments was her friendship with Senator Robert F. Kennedy. Even though Kennedy was a man from Boston who had grown up wealthy, he cared about the farmworkers and the lives they lived. He wanted to change laws to help them. The Latino community trusted Senator Kennedy. They were

glad to see him join their picket lines and speak about their lives. They thought of Senator Kennedy as being part of their future. When he ran for president in 1968, Dolores supported his campaign, and so did the members of her organization. Dolores was with Kennedy on the night he died, while he was in California campaigning.

The death of Robert F. Kennedy was one of the greatest losses of Dolores's life. He had been her friend and her ally. As president, he would have made many changes to help the workers. Still, brokenhearted as she was, Dolores refused to give up. She kept organizing for change, kept traveling across the country, kept singing her songs, kept saying, "Sí se puede."

But speaking up is never easy. Dolores, who believed in peaceful protests, lost friends to violent people. And once, Dolores even found herself in sudden danger. It happened on September 14, 1988, when then vice president George H. W. Bush was speaking inside a big room at a San Francisco hotel. Dolores was outside on the street, trying to talk to the press about a new grape boycott against growers who were still using dangerous insecticides. Earlier that day, Vice President Bush had said he did not agree with the boycott, so Dolores and others had gathered at the hotel to protest.

ally: someone who gives support for a shared goal

The police were upset about the size of the crowd that had gathered in the street. They asked Dolores and the other protesters to leave, and Dolores said she would.

The police did not give Dolores enough time to leave. Instead, they began to beat her. She was fifty-eight years old, the mother of eleven children and the grandmother of more. She was five feet, two inches tall and weighed 110 pounds. She was rushed to the hospital, where she would stay for several days.

It would take months for Dolores to heal. But it was also the first time in more than thirty years that she was surrounded every day by her children. They had grown up to be just the kind of people she had hoped they would. People who cared about others. People who were committed to social justice. People who danced and sang with her when the music played.

Dolores Continues to Speak

Later in life, Dolores continued to bring her voice and her power to many other politicians, including Jerry Brown, who became the governor of California and passed an important law to protect farmworkers. She gave speeches for Hillary Clinton when she ran for president and publicly endorsed Karen Bass, who became the mayor of Los Angeles.

endorsed: showed support for

7

Dolores Huerta Is Honored

As the years went by, more and more people noticed the work that Dolores Huerta had done to change the lives of farmworkers for the better. They recognized the deep commitment she had made to the cause and her wisdom in bringing many people together.

In 1993, Dolores became the first Latina to be named to the National Women's Hall of Fame. Five years later, *Ladies' Home Journal* named her one of the one hundred most important women of the twentieth century.

Then, in 2002, after Dolores had retired from the UFW, she received the Puffin/Nation Prize for Creative Citizenship, which came with an award of $100,000. That money made it possible for Dolores to create a foundation to help people from across the country learn to peacefully organize for good.

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foundation: an organization that gives money to support a cause

Dolores Huerta Foundation

The Dolores Huerta Foundation (DHF) was founded in 2003 to teach people how to become community activists and organizers just like Dolores. Its grassroots organizing focuses on equality for all in the form of civic engagement, education, health, and safety. It has empowered marginalized communities to peacefully advocate for positive change such as pools, paved roads, and community parks.

But maybe the biggest honor of all came on May 29, 2012, when President Barack Obama invited Dolores to a very special White House ceremony. He spoke about Dolores's long life of making a difference. He thanked her for letting him use her famous slogan, "Yes, we can," to help him become president. And then the president of the United States hung the Presidential Medal of Freedom around Dolores's neck.

The Presidential Medal of Freedom

The Presidential Medal of Freedom is the highest civilian honor in the United States. It is awarded to those who have changed the country for the better and who inspire others to do the same.

grassroots: focused on local or individual action
marginalized: pushed aside

Discussion Questions

1. Music was always important to Dolores Huerta. Even as a child, she loved to dance and sing, and as she grew up, music became both her comfort and her inspiration. Why was music so essential to Dolores? What are your favorite songs? Describe how each is important in your life.

2. Dolores was born in 1930, a difficult time in the United States. Why did her family have to move so much when Dolores was just a child? Can you imagine leaving a home you love? Make a list of all the things you might miss if you had to set off for a new town and home (or a list of all the things you do miss if you have already left a home behind).

3. Dolores's mother was named Alicia. She worked hard and taught her children important lessons. What are some of the most important things Dolores learned from her mother? What are some of the most important things that you have learned from the grown-ups in your life?

4. How did working as a schoolteacher impact Dolores? What did she see in the lives of her students that helped shape the life of activism she began to live? What do you see as you look around at your school and your community that you would like to change?

5. What did Dolores believe needed to be changed on behalf of the migrant workers who spent long hours in the fields picking crops?

6. Who was Cesar Chavez, and what role did he play in the creation of the United Farm Workers of America?

7. How did the Filipino and Mexican American farmworkers join together, and why did they decide to stop picking grapes? What was the result of their grape boycott?

8. How did everyday Americans help the farmworkers protest? What power do you think every individual person, like you, can have?

9. In 1988, Dolores was badly injured during what began as a peaceful protest. During the year it took for her to recover, she spent time with her many children. Why was that healing time so important in her life?

10. What are the famous three words that Dolores is best known for? Create a slogan of your own.

Meet the Author

National Book Award finalist **Beth Kephart** is the award-winning author of more than three dozen books in multiple genres, an award-winning teacher of memoir at the University of Pennsylvania, a widely published essayist, and a paper artist. Her new book for adults is *My Life in Paper: Adventures in Ephemera*. Her new book for children is *Good Books for Bad Children: The Genius of Ursula Nordstrom*. You can find out more about Beth at *bethkephartbooks.com* and *bind-arts.com*.

Meet the Illustrator

Natalie Riolfi is an Argentinian-American artist, born and raised in Miami, Florida. Brought up by Argentinian parents in Miami constantly exposed her to colorful art and music and an eccentric community. She enrolled in Design and Architecture Senior High, where she focused on industrial design. While practicing a very academic genre of illustration, she also fell into portraiture through traditional painting and drawing. After some time, her focus shifted toward creating comics and illustrations. Shortly after graduating high school, Natalie moved to New York City and received

a BFA in Cartooning from the School of Visual Arts. At SVA, she solidified an interest and practice in book arts and book design. Her current stories focus on cultural identity and culture shock, inspired by the change experienced when she moved from Miami to New York City. She explores the conflict between confidence and insecurity of representing her experience growing up in a Latin household, in a Latin city. She aims to reconcile the cultural and generational gap between herself, her family, and the people around her.

Credits

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Title Page Illustration by
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Text Illustrations by
In Courtesy of Beth Kephart / 39
In Courtesy of Natalie Riolfi / 40
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