

**Why *Campesinos* Sometimes Win:  
Leadership, Organization, Strategy and Indigeneity in the Western Washington Farm  
Worker Movement**

By:

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*“A union is not simply getting enough workers to stage a strike. A union is building a group with a spirit and an existence all its own...built around the idea that people must do things for themselves, in order to help themselves.”*

-Cesar Chavez, director, National Farm Workers Association, April 1964

*“There is no organization out there or anybody that can offer us protection, so we have to do it ourselves.”*

-Felimon Pineda, VP, Familias Unidas por la Justicia

There is a revolution against oppression occurring on this side of the Cascade Mountains. An epic struggle for farmworker justice in Seattle’s backyard. Indigenous Mexican farmworkers from Western Washington’s Whatcom and Skagit Valley have had enough maltreatment from the Sakuma Brothers and have taken it upon themselves to change the current structure. They have requested for wages that are above the current underpaid position of 30 cents per pound, better living conditions and *basic* human rights. Farm work is incomprehensible difficult to understand for many people. Personally I have seen the struggle and have lived in the situation of many people who make a living off of this decent livelihood. My parents have made it possible for me to be where I am today because of their hard work as *campesinos* (farmworkers) and being one takes a strong soul.

Agriculture work is “one of the most dangerous jobs in the United States, with a mortality rate more than eight times the average of all other industries”<sup>1</sup>. This job is truly hazardous and

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<sup>1</sup> Farquar, Stephanie, et al. *Promoting the Occupational Health of Indigenous Farmworkers*. N.p.:Springer Science + Business Media, 2007.

unwanted by many people in America but someone has to do it and trust me the risks are high. In fact, one of my friends recently chopped off her finger while working on a machine that dispensed bags of a vegetable product. Coming from a family that has always been supported by the hard work and sweat of farm work, I understand the struggle on living off of the minimum wage and taking on the hardest of jobs. My dad has supported himself and my family, along with my mother, on this type of labor, in fact he has lost teeth because of his job and suffers from terrible hearing because there is a misconception that farm work involves only field work which in fact is a wide ranging occupations. They are just different stages that lead to the final product of food everyone consumes at breakfast, lunch or dinner.

In this article I plan on examining why is it that this *campesino*, farm worker, which may be my dad, my mom, my neighbor, myself or anyone in my community, sometimes is victorious. I will briefly examine the farm worker in the Pacific Northwest as not only being the standard “face of field work” but in fact the large presence of indigenous Mexicans in the region. Furthermore, I will provide a framework using Marshall Ganz’ concept of strategic capacity that occurred during the California Farm Worker Movement. Then I will proceed with examining the farm worker labor movement occurring in Western Washington’s Whatcom and Skagit Counties to prove the impacting role of indigeneity in each section of strategic capacity that has enabled the *campesino* to win.

### **Farmworkers in the Pacific Northwest**

Washington is known as the “Evergreen state”: I’ve always thought this was a joke. Living here for the past couple of years I have begun to understand the name but as a child this was baffling. I grew up on the Eastern side of Washington and I still remember the first time I learned this was the nickname of the state. Honestly, I could not comprehend this concept. I had

seen very little trees that did not contain apples or some kind of fruit and to learn that we were the “Evergreen state” was just mind-blowing for my fourth-grade self. There had always been crops or barren land that was reserved for crops but not many trees that were not meant to produce something. Sometimes it is just shade from the 100 degree weather or nectarines from my back yard but it had never occurred to me to call this place “Evergreen”. Furthermore, it has come to my attention and recognized by others, that we as a state, are not acknowledged for the large contribution to agriculture we have for the economy in the United States. There is a large workforce of agriculture workers in the state. We in fact have migrant farm labor and with that a very substantial amount of work.

The Pacific Northwest holds a region that is a very important site of migrant farm labor. What may be more astonishing and not widely publicized, that is until now, is the amount of indigenous Mexican people as workers.<sup>2</sup> He says “the Department of Employment Security (DES) recently estimated that Washington State has a peak of 90,000 migrant workers over the course of the summer and fall, when pruning and harvesting take place.”<sup>3</sup> Holmes also presents the argument that “many of the migrant farmworkers in Washington and Oregon are indigenous Mexicans, especially Triqui and Mixtec people from southern Mexico. Unlike U.S.-born or mestizo Mexican farmworkers, indigenous workers tend to have less desirable jobs with less pay and live in less comfortable conditions on the farms they work.”<sup>4</sup> Thus furthering the current situation occurring with the resistance toward the treatment under the Sakuma Brothers Farms. There is something to be said about the hierarchal element within farm work that calls for further

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<sup>2</sup>Holmes, Seth M. "What We Learn From the Indigenous Farmworker Strike in Pac. Northwest." New America Media. July 25, 2013. <http://newamericamedia.org/2013/07/what-we-learn-from-the-indigenous-farmworker-strike-in-pac-northwest.php>.

<sup>3</sup> Holmes, Seth M. "What We Learn From the Indigenous".

<sup>4</sup> Holmes, Seth M. "What We Learn From the Indigenous".

progress in the labor movement. The peoples associated with the movement, especially the indigenous Mexican people, are mistreated in greater levels. Holmes adds on by saying “on the farm, one often hears indigenous farmworkers being called such things as “stupid Indian,” “donkey,” or “dog” in Spanish. These same individuals, it should be noted, plant, prune and harvest much of the prized fruit and wine from the Pacific Northwest.”<sup>5</sup> Their work is a great assets to the local gain of the economy. The issue surrounding the horrible life conditions of indigenous Mexicans can be further explored in Seth Holmes novel, *Fresh Fruit Broken Bodies*.<sup>6</sup>

Before digging further into the work being done around the issue of this movement in Washington, I believe some issues must be clarified. Let’s be clear that Washington State is not California. Holmes expresses this notion in his article<sup>7</sup>:

“But despite these contributions, the labor rights of indigenous farmworkers and farmworkers in general in the Northwest are not well established. It is important to note that the right of farmworkers to organize into unions in Washington is not as protected as it is in California under that state’s Agriculture Labor Act. In addition, many other legal protections applied to workers in general do not apply to agricultural workers (for example, agricultural workers can be younger than those in other industries and can work 7 days a week in Washington State without being paid overtime)...those labor protections that are in place are not well enforced in agriculture.”

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<sup>5</sup> Holmes, Seth M. "What We Learn From the Indigenous".

<sup>6</sup> Holmes, Seth M. *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: Regents of the University of California, 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Holmes, Seth M. "What We Learn From the Indigenous".

Furthermore, the “National Labor Relations Act still doesn’t allow farmworkers to have protections around the right to organize and bargain collectively”.<sup>8</sup> Yet there are some interviews I have performed with workers that currently work in the field and another with a worker who has worked in the different portions of farm work. And the response has been quite similar in that they have expressed an idea that we are “better off here (in Washington State)” despite the fact we are breaking backs and doing the jobs no one wants. The cost of living is far worse in California and we at least have our community to rely upon here. From the interviews I gathered and from growing up in this world of farmworkers, there is this notion that having this type of work is our place in America. Every time I go back to the Yakima Valley my family always tells me to finish my education because if I do not I will have to work in farm work “*que es muy matado, digno, pero matado*” (it is killer work, decent but nonetheless killer) and “*es todo lo que hay para nuestra gente*”(it is all that is available to our people). Every so often though, there is a story of our people, *campesinos*, who do not take this treatment anymore and stand up to the big man.

### **¡Ya no más!: Resistance**

*“Farming became industry, and the owners followed Rome. They imported slaves, although they did not call them slaves: Chinese, Japanese, Mexicans, Filipinos. They live on rice and beans, the businessmen said.*

*And all the time the farms grew larger and the owners fewer. And there were pitifully few farmers on the land any more. And the imported serfs were beaten and frightened and starved. And the farms grew larger and the owners fewer.*

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<sup>8</sup> Herz, Ansel. "Workers at a Farm Outside Seattle Demand Better Conditions and Wages." Sakuma Brothers Berry Boycott by Ansel Herz. October 2, 2013. Accessed August 14, 2014. <http://www.thestranger.com/seattle/Content?oid=17869474&mode=print>.

*And the crops changed. Fruit trees took the place of grain fields and vegetables to feed the world spread out on the bottoms.*

*And it came about the owners no longer worked on their farms. They farmed on papers, and they forgot the land, the smell, the feel of it, and remembered only that they owned it.*

*And the great owners, who must lose their land in an upheaval, the great owners with eyes to read history know the great fact: when property accumulates in too few hands, it is taken away.*

*And that companion fact: when a majority of the people are hungry and cold they will take by force what they need.”*

-John Steinbeck (1939)

How is it possible for the powerless to challenge the powerful? There are instances the proletariat does not overcome the bourgeoisie but every so often there is a “proletariat revolution”. As Marshall Ganz said on page vii, “how can strategic resourcefulness sometimes compensate for lack of resources?” A fine example of a critical social problem in need to be taken into consideration and resist toward the oppression is in the occupation deemed to be one of the worst in the nation. The conditions as mentioned before are truly dangerous and must be taken with the most consideration. After all, there is a point where enough is enough and there is a need to find a logic way to stand up for your rights. In this business you cannot just wake up one day, say it is all over and walk away.

With this method you’d lose *everything*. You would lose everything you have been working for and everything you know you are capable of doing to support your family, despite the fact it is agonizing and discriminating at most times, is not the right way to approach the situation. There must be some methods to the madness, some plan, some organization, some leadership and some “strategic capacity” as coined by Marshall Ganz. You cannot do it alone, going up against the bourgeoisie alone is not the way to change the institutionalized norms occurring in this type of workplace. In order to begin to be *successful*, sure you can begin a

movement but that does not guarantee you success. Success is also marked in different manners but nonetheless there is a pride associated with this win. But in order to understand why farmworker labor movements are more than just attaining better wages but in fact social movement that allow the *campesino* to win, we must first begin to understand what strategic capacity is all about.

### **Framework: Strategic Capacity**

As coined by Marshall Ganz he simply defines the term, strategic capacity, as the “ability to devise good strategy”.<sup>9</sup> Good strategy is the way we turn what we have into what we desire.<sup>10</sup> Thus achieved by employing organization, leadership and strategy itself. According to Ganz the way the United Farm Workers Association (UFW), under the leadership of Cesar Chavez, employed strategic capacity were through leadership, organization, and strategy to become successful in their endeavors to secure better lives for farmworkers. I plan on taking these concepts employed by the UFW and defined by Ganz to set a framework for my argument as to why *campesinos* sometimes win especially considering the Western Washington labor movement.

### **Strategy in Strategic Capacity**

In order to undertake anything in life especially when trying to recreate a social norm that has been institutionalized through labor there must be some strategy, a way to make some sense of the madness. There are critical elements that Ganz addresses as being components of strategy which include, the three “T’s”: targeting, tactics and timing.

#### *Targeting*

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<sup>9</sup> Ganz, Marshall. *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Ganz, Marshall. *Why David Sometimes Wins*.

This is a focused choice to commit resources to specific outcomes that have been judged likely to move one closer to one's goal.

### *Tactics*

The second aspect of strategy includes tactics which makes that most of the sources available while at the same time limiting the value of the opponent's resources. This can be illustrated as the instance when the small guy takes on the big guy. There must be some tactic that utilizes the full potential of the peoples involved while at the same time limiting the potential of the opponent.<sup>11</sup>

### *Timing*

The third important element involved with strategy that is crucial to understand the strategic capacity is timing. There is this notion that an opportunity will only occur when the right type of environment arises.<sup>12</sup> An incident may occur which may leave an increase in value but not quantity. It is vital to recognize an opportunity and then quickly act up on it and that shall increase the chance of a good strategy.<sup>13</sup>

### **Leadership in Strategic Capacity**

Leaders are the ones who take on the decision making for the organization. Though there "is great value in individual leadership, there is a greater value and result in the strategy output of a *leadership team*".<sup>14</sup> Yet somehow the people with the least resources have been able to outperform those who have enjoyed a higher amount of resource levels.

There is also another component that Ganz calls the biographical context which falls under this category. This includes "who the members are, whom they know and what they know

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<sup>11</sup> Ganz, Marshall. *Why David Sometimes Wins*.

<sup>12</sup> Ganz, Marshall. *Why David Sometimes Wins*.

<sup>13</sup> Ganz, Marshall. *Why David Sometimes Wins*.

<sup>14</sup> Ganz, Marshall. *Why David Sometimes Wins*.

in terms of their identities, social networks and tactical repertoires”.<sup>15</sup> The leader’s social networks can similarly feed to the capacity. He also argues that having strong ties to the people whose lives one affects and whose regard one wishes to earn can be powerfully motivating.

An element that both incorporates leadership and organization includes the team member’s tactical repertoires. When different team members know how to get things done in different settings by different methods, they add to the whole team’s skills and its flexibility.<sup>16</sup>

### **Organization in Strategic Capacity**

The organizational elements are the leadership team members’ “tactical skills in their knowledge of domains within which the organization acts”.<sup>17</sup> In the social movement portion of these labor movements there is a tense environment, thus having access to quick information is critical to expanding and moving forward.<sup>18</sup> These types of organizations are able to see resources that others do not see and opportunities they do not grasp. A farm worker is the underdog in the spectrum. There is no way people can imagine there being a win from “these people”; there is no threat from a mere *campesino*. The way the organizers would solve problems was the only way they knew how to work the system.

To further this concept, the only way they knew to understand the problem was to “recontextualize” it and make it fit into their scope of knowledge which was not the manner in which things were done as demonstrated by the other unions.<sup>19</sup> You take what you know and place it into a different context that helps makes sense of this world.

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<sup>15</sup> Ganz, Marshall. *Why David Sometimes Wins*.

<sup>16</sup> Ganz, Marshall. *Why David Sometimes Wins*.

<sup>17</sup> Ganz, Marshall. *Why David Sometimes Wins*.

<sup>18</sup> Ganz, Marshall. *Why David Sometimes Wins*.

<sup>19</sup> Ganz, Marshall. *Why David Sometimes Wins*.

The participation by a variety of team members is also important, especially that they're "connected to different but fluent social networks allows for feedback that enables a team to solve novel problems".<sup>20</sup> This allows for a wider scope of knowledge to be shared by the individual in the group.

Another aspect to the organization component is the resources which support the organization. If an "organization relies on member's dues then the constituents are more responsive to what is occurring in the organization".<sup>21</sup> While if your organization relies on outside sources there is less saying within the group.

### **A Battle on at Home: Western Washington *Campesinos***

*"Every time we sit at a table at night or in the morning to enjoy the fruits and grain and vegetables from our good earth, remember that they come from the work of men and women and children who have been exploited for generations."*

— César Chávez

There are times when *campesinos* sometimes win. They may not have a full fledged victory because what we learn from history is that it takes time and hard work to achieve a win and even then nothing is certain. There will be times of ups and there will be times of downs but a win is not just for the organization or the association or the union but it is for the communities that share the same fight. For the farmworkers of Western Washington the time has come to start winning.

The framework presented by Ganz of identifying and defining strategy, leadership and organization is clearly evident in the strides made by the farmworkers in the Whatcom and

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<sup>20</sup> Ganz, Marshall. *Why David Sometimes Wins*.

<sup>21</sup> Ganz, Marshall. *Why David Sometimes Wins*.

Skagit Valley. But I believe there is an additional portion which Ganz did not expand upon or consider that is applicable and *critical* for the progression of the movement and the success of campesinos: the immense role of indigeneity.

I will further the role of indigeneity in the strategy, leadership and organization of the movement taking place by Familias Unidas por la Justicia and the rest of the *campesinos*. This will lead me to identify the influential way in which indigeneity gains visibility and exerts pressure for powerful progression.

### **Strategy**

The farmworkers both in charge of the movement, Familias Unidas por la Justicia, and those directly participating and in solidarity have taken the bull by the horns when it came to timing. On July 10, 2013 when Federico Lopez was let go for “intimidating” the other pickers by talking to them in hopes of organizing the pickers to go on a strike, the farmworkers responded to this injustice.<sup>22</sup> They took this as an initial call to action, a moment to act and defend one of their own. A mere three days after the firing, a P’urhépecha writer posted an exposé on who is Federico Lopez. He begins the article by letting the reader know the indigenous identity of this Triqui picker who migrated from Oaxaca in hope of achieving a better life to only find many opportunities in which he has been cheated out of both human treatment and just wages. This article demonstrates the manner in which he and his family have been pushed to the limit with all the wrongs that have been committed. The “miscalculations” of the pounds of berries picked, the name calling and lack of respect for the people that pick the food for thousands of people.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Káráni. "Triqui and Mixteco Strawberry Pickers on Strike for Dignity ..." Káráni: Escribir O Volar. July 12, 2013. Accessed August 13, 2014. <http://karani.wordpress.com/2013/07/12/triqui-and-mixteco-strawberry-pickers-on-strike-for-dignity/>.

<sup>23</sup> Káráni. "Who Is Federico Lopez? Initial round of Negotiations with Sakuma Brothers Farm Results in Reinstatement of Striking Strawberry Picker." Karani: Escribir O Volar. July 13, 2013. Accessed August 14, 2014.

The tactic of using the story of the initial firing of Lopez as not only a way to showcase a different viewpoint on the manner but also to give a sneak peek into the life of the farmworkers working for Sakuma Brothers Farms. He is presented with a picture of his wife (also an indigenous woman), his baby girl and himself, putting the issue in a different lens. He is no longer seen as just an indigenous man who got fired for “rallying up people” or for violating company policy by “intimidating” others<sup>24</sup> but also as a family man trying to stand up to for what is right in order to put food on the table for his young family.

The power of affect and indigeneity in strategy is one of the points which Ganz failed to consider in great depth. The affective power of the images and descriptive words presented by this indigenous writer, Kárani, (who has been a great source of information and analysis on the subject matter) and many others who have written the few literature on this indigenous labor movement, gives life to the issue. It is no longer just words on a paper or a sad picture of people working to pick the food WE eat every day but suddenly there are names to the pictures. There are stories of those pictures. Suddenly, these are real people living with horrible conditions. For you see the story of an indigenous Mexican person migrating to the North in hopes of a better life is not one often told. Then the story of what life is *actually* like for a farmworker, an indigenous farmworker, is perhaps never told. These people, these farmworkers, this new association known as Familias Unidas por la Justicia (Families United for Justice) is about revealing the truth of what life is like in hopes of changing it by using non-violent action.

For example, sharing the truth of what is occurring to the Triqui, Mixteco, and Mestizo is an example of what Ganz would call targeting and what I add to be more in depth with a layer of

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<http://karani.wordpress.com/2013/07/13/who-is-federico-lopez-initial-round-of-negotiations-with-sakuma-brothers-farm-results-in-reinstatement-of-striking-strawberry-picker/>

<sup>24</sup> Kárani. “Triqui and Mixteco Strawberry Pickers”.

affect and indigeneity. The farmworkers are choosing to commit the resource of storytelling to those that are willing to listen and share in hopes of bringing more pressure to the Sakuma Brothers. In the list of demands made by Familias Unidas por la Justicia to the Sakuma Brothers<sup>25</sup> included a very powerful message about correcting the wrongs that are violating “their human dignity and violates state anti-harassment and anti-hostility laws”.<sup>26</sup> They have revealed that workers have endured disrespectful and racist language such as “oaxaquita”, “indio” and “estupido” for being Triqui and Mixteco farmworkers.<sup>27</sup> By exposing this injustice they are calling for pressure by demonstrating that Sakuma Brothers Farms have broken the law of the land. As well as adding that they have been the victims of harassment based “upon race and indigenous identity in the workplace”.<sup>28</sup> They seek for something as simple as respect yet somehow is such a foreign concept. Through the interviews and stories being told it has become clear that the protests, the association of Familias Unidas por la Justicia, the attention, the victories and the movement itself is much more than a just wages<sup>29</sup> but a movement to acknowledge and hold respect in the workforce.

### **Leadership**

*"The name of the game is to talk to people. If you don't talk to people, you can't get started...You knock on twenty doors or so, and twenty guys tell you to go to hell, or that they haven't got time. But maybe at the fortieth or sixtieth house you find the one guy who is all you need. You're not going to organize everything; you're just going to get it started."* –Cesar Chavez

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<sup>25</sup> Pena, Devon. "Environmental and Food Justice: Sakuma Brothers: A Unique Farm Worker Struggle Emerges in Washington State." Environmental and Food Justice: Sakuma Brothers: A Unique Farm Worker Struggle Emerges in Washington State. July 16, 2013. Accessed August 10, 2014. <http://ejfood.blogspot.com/2013/07/sakuma-brothers-unique-farm-worker.html>.

<sup>26</sup> Pena, Devon. "Environmental and Food Justice".

<sup>27</sup> Pena, Devon. "Environmental and Food Justice".

<sup>28</sup> Pena, Devon. "Environmental and Food Justice".

<sup>29</sup> Dunn, Brendan. "Brendan Maslauskas Dunn, "Viva La Huelga! The Agricultural Strike at Sakuma Brothers Farms and the Tradition of Oaxacan Resistance"" RSS. July 24, 2013. Accessed August 12, 2014. <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2013/dunn250713.html>.

Ganz makes the point clear that reasons behind winning the movement had to do with effective leadership. This, like Cesar Chavez said, does not mean to organize everything by yourself but in fact use the capabilities of each member. A leadership team takes on the decision making for an organization according to Ganz but it is very important to acknowledge who the leaders are and what they will bring to the table that will allow for the advancement of the movement.

Although his definition of leadership in strategic capacity is correct for this movement it is also helpful to acknowledge that this particular organization surrounding Familias Unidas por la Justicia employs a non-conventional tactic since the majority of the peoples affected are indigenous.

Káráni speaks of this concept of “workplace democracy” that has been seen as well by Rosalinda Guillen who has been a great ally to the progression. Workplace democracy brings this tradition from the Mixteco and Triqui people of Oaxaca and Guerrero of “usos y costumbres” (cultural practices)<sup>30</sup>. The president of Familias Unidas was chosen in a community delegation to be “Non-Mixteco or Triqui speaking Mestizo from Guadalajara” named Ramon Torres.<sup>31</sup> He was chosen for his social networks in coherence with having strong ties to the peoples whose lives they were trying to change, being trustworthy to his fellow farmworkers and his ability to speak and communicate clearly in Spanish.<sup>32</sup> He was going to be the face of the organization, he was going to be in the public eye and communicate the demands of the peoples such as Subcomandante Marcos does for the Zapatistas. The reason behind having a non-

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<sup>30</sup> Káráni. "On the Protocol, Traditions and Hospitality of Familias Unidas Por La Justicia." *Krni Escribir O Volar*. July 28, 2013. Accessed August 16, 2014. <http://karani.wordpress.com/2013/07/31/on-the-protocol-traditions-and-hospitality-of-familias-unidas-por-la-justicia/>.

<sup>31</sup> Káráni. “On the Protocol”.

<sup>32</sup> Káráni. “On the Protocol”.

indigenous farmworker lead indigenous peoples was not because they could not speak for themselves but because they are fully aware “how deeply anti-indigenous racism permeates the public perception”.<sup>33</sup>

It is important to acknowledge that although Torres maybe at the front of the organization as the mediator of the demands of the people to both the public and the Sakuma Brothers, I have encountered various articles that acknowledge greatly the collaborative and very important part of the indigenous peoples in moving forth with the farmworker movement. The identity of the people fighting for justice is not just Mestizos as most people tend to think of us, but in fact it is displaced indigenous peoples who are taking a stand against oppression. They are using whom they know being Torres and as Ganz points out and what they now; in terms of who the Sakuma Brothers will listen to in respect to being non-indigenous. They know who will get their message across in the language the populous understands since the language barrier is such an important aspect to what has led to harassment and taunting of people. Even as a child knowing only Spanish, I could tell who would make fun of me for not understanding the dominant language. There is this conception that if you cannot communicate in the way the dominant peoples do then you are somehow below them and with indigenous peoples from Mexico the tension is far worse. I had to learn English but many of them have to learn Spanish and then English causing a bigger problematic. In the video Familias Unidas posted with the members, there was a line where they said “all of us indigenous peoples who don’t speak Spanish are scared because we do not have the ability to defend ourselves”.<sup>34</sup> Although through a resourceful leadership team they are able to figure out a way to get things done using the strengths of others.

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<sup>33</sup> Káráni. “On the Protocol”.

<sup>34</sup>Familias Unidas Por La Justicia. "About Familias Unidas Por La Justicia." Boycott Sakuma Berries. Accessed August 6, 2014. <http://boycottsakumaberries.com/how-you-can-walk-with-familias-unidas-por-la-justicia/>.

By acknowledging the capacity of the team members there is, according to Ganz opportunities that can only be captured by the association which may not be present to others. This is a movement by the people, the *campesinos*, for the *campesinos*. This is a movement from the “ground up”. They have “lived, worked, suffered, services and organized”<sup>35</sup> to achieve what was once farmworkers seeking justice to a full fledged association that one day hopes to become a union. This is much more complex than just some underdogs getting tired of oppression but a “multi-generation, multi-dimensional and multicultural movement that is currently being *led* by indigenous farm workers.”<sup>36</sup>

### **Organization**

As with leadership, organization relies on the capabilities of the team members but most importantly on the way they work the system. In this case, and with other movements made by the people for the people, *campesinos* look at the system in a different lens than most organizations. They play the system by recontextualizing it. Familias Unidas por la Justicia works in a manner which Ganz had failed to consider more in depth especially with identities in association with organization.

A manner in which the organization of the indigenous peoples of this movement work, is by a cultural practice known as the Tequio. This is a community collaboration of all the members in hopes to accomplish a task that would be a good to the public. This concept is still used by many indigenous peoples from Mexico including the Mixteco and Triqui. The tequio has been “traditionally used to erect schools, or hospitals, in communities for the entire community to

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<sup>35</sup> Kárání. "A Farm Worker Union Emerging in Whatcom and Skagit Counties." Kárání Escribir O Volar. June 26, 2014. Accessed August 11, 2014. <http://karani.wordpress.com/2014/06/27/a-farm-worker-union-emerging-in-whatcom-and-skagit-counties/>.

<sup>36</sup> Kárání. "A Farm Worker Union".

use”.<sup>37</sup> This is evident in the distribution of goods given by those in solidarity with the cause, to those who have gone on strike and have been affected by the stoppage of work. As a daughter of farm workers and a past farm worker myself, I understand the intense risk of giving up the only income you get to support your family and put food on the table. During the seasons where there was not much work we would struggle with everything including bills, a way to pay for gas, and food so I understand the agony it must be to stop work and know you will not have the money for the necessities of *life*. Even in times of harshness the people are there for each other.

Ganz also proposes that inside resources supporting the organization make it more successful than a dependence of outside resources. Here is where this concept has been adjusted to fit the identities of the farm workers and the time. He suggests that the sourcing from the outside of the association will bring about a question of the power structure, who controls who? But I argue that this concept has shifted but not far for this particular movement. The association has made it clear from the beginning that they do not want third parties to meddle in the negotiations<sup>38</sup> but it has become clear that to take on the “big boss” of Sakuma Brothers Farms there will be some help needed. They have turned to Community for Community Development which has been helpful in spreading the word of their movement. The workers sought out Rosalinda Guillen to assist them with their movement. They have been interviewed by many and have used media as a source to pass their message.

In order to spread that message they have asked for solidarity from many peoples who will be able to get them closer to their goals. A very important supporter of their indigenous roots is the Frente Indígena de Organizaciones Binacionales (FIOB). The FIOB was “created in 1987 to connect indigenous Oaxacans all along the migratory labor route from Oaxaca to the Pacific

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<sup>37</sup> Káráni. “On the Protocol”.

<sup>38</sup> Káráni. “On the Protocol”.

Northwest".<sup>39</sup> They wrote a letter to the Sakuma Brothers petitioning them to meet the demands that were suggested by Familias Unidas and to also recognize the Triqui and Mixteco who are indigenous migrants who are looking for a decent way to live as well as to stop the exploitation of workers.<sup>40</sup> After obtaining their support, FIOB's binational director, Bernardo Ramirez went to visit the workers and spoke up against the discrimination that they faced because of their indigenous roots. He made this very powerful statement, "when you compare people to animals, this is racism...we're human beings. Low wages are a form of racism too, because they minimize the work of indigenous migrants".<sup>41</sup> This is very powerful because as an association the organization managed to get support from a transnational organization coming from their origins, to help receive recognition and resources that are available to those in solidarity with the movement.

Being in a tense environment such as having a labor movement that is much more than higher wages but one of principle and basic human treatment having access to quick information pertinent to moving forward is key.<sup>42</sup> When the big guy fights back without putting full attention to his actions such as the Sakuma Brothers there needs to be a way to combat from within the context of the farmworker. This is clearly demonstrated with the petition to seek H-2A guest workers to "break the back of the indigenous farm worker resistance".<sup>43</sup> This is when the

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<sup>39</sup> Dunn, Brendan. "Brendan Maslauskas Dunn, "Viva La Huelga!"

<sup>40</sup> Kárani. "Apoyo a Los Hermanos Y Hermanas Triquis Y Mixtecos En Burlington, WA, EE.UU. -FIOB." Kárani Escribir O Volar. July 23, 2013. Accessed August 12, 2014. <http://karani.wordpress.com/2013/07/24/frente-indigena-de-organizaciones-binacionales-fiob-apoyo-a-los-hermanos-y-hermanas-triquis-y-mixtecos-en-burlington-wa-ee-uu/>

<sup>41</sup> Bacon, David. "Why Is This Farm Using Guest Workers as Strike Breakers?" The Nation. May 2, 2014. Accessed August 8, 2014. <http://www.thenation.com/article/179651/why-farm-using-guest-workers-strike-breakers>.

<sup>42</sup> Ganz, Marshall. *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

<sup>43</sup> Pena, Devon. "Mexmigration: History and Politics of Mexican Immigration: When Food Workers Rebel | Sakuma Berry Farm Seeks Strikebreakers." Mexmigration: History and Politics of Mexican Immigration: When Food Workers Rebel | Sakuma Berry Farm Seeks Strikebreakers. April 27, 2014. Accessed August 11, 2014. <http://mexmigration.blogspot.com/2014/04/when-food-workers-rebel-sakuma-berry.html>.

farmworkers gathered this information and sought out to stop the H-2A workers by showing proof that local workers were available to get the jobs done which is a requirement in order to import workers; a lack of workers.<sup>44</sup> As an organization they play the game the only way they know how and with that they are slowly making their way to becoming an organization that will change the standard of who gets to speak out and make a change for those in trouble. They are making the tracks to becoming a union of their own.

### **Why *Campesinos* Sometimes Win:**

EL MALCRIADO

*What is a movement? It is when there are enough people with one idea so that their actions are together like the huge wave of water, which nothing can stop. It is when a group of people begins to care enough so that they are willing to make sacrifices. The movement of the Negro began in the hot summer of Alabama ten years ago when a Negro woman refused to be pushed to the back of the bus. Thus began a gigantic wave of protest throughout the South. The Negro is willing to fight for what is his, an equal place under the sun. Sometime in the future they will say that in the hot summer of California in 1965 the movement of farm workers began. It began with a small series of strikes. It started slowly that at first it was only one man, then five, then one hundred. This is how a movement begins. This is why the Farm Workers Association is a movement more than a union.*

There is more to gain than just a union formation or a document that states fair treatment and higher wages. The strides made by the indigenous peoples through their unique blend of strategy, leadership and organization will not be forgotten. What is occurring here is a social movement toward better treatment for my people. I may not be Triqui or Mixteco or Indigenous, I am just Mestizo but farmworkers *are* my people and I will never forget that fact. There is far more that goes beyond the scope of the original problem. There is more at stake, not only for the

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<sup>44</sup> Pena, Devon. "Mexmigration: History and Politics.

indigenous marginalized community in Skagit Valley but for the rest of the state. The victories though “slowly at first” as the poem goes, gives the rest of the farm working communities all over the state one thing: hope. There is hope that things will get better. There is hope that one day, wages will be higher and people will be able to live instead of surviving. A hope has been passed, since our fellow farmworkers have done it, so one day maybe there will be a group of us that will demand better treatment. But for now the sense of pride that comes along with a victory by our peoples is what we carry. There are some things that mean so much more to your community than they seem to mean to you. Just like a 1<sup>st</sup> generation Latino or person of color’s education is bigger than themselves. It is a sense of pride for the community. *La comunidad campesina* (community of farmworkers) of all different scopes that are somehow interweaved and make sense.

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