

# KUNHARDT **FILM** FOUNDATION

DOLORES HUERTA INTERVIEW  
*MAKERS: WOMEN WHO MAKE AMERICA*  
KUNHARDT FILM FOUNDATION

**Dolores Huerta**  
**Labor Leader & Activist**  
**5/2/2007**  
**Interviewed by Betsy West**  
**Total Running Time: 40 minutes and 6 seconds**

START TC: 00:00:00:00

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Makers: Women Who Make America  
Kunhardt Film Foundation

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Dolores Huerta  
Labor Leader & Activist

**Dolores Huerta**

**Labor Leader & Activist**

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BETSY WEST:

Tell me a little about how you decided that you were going to become an activist. What motivated you?

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DOLORES HUERTA:

I think I kind of grew up being an activist. I was a Girl Scout for ten years of my life. I was actually very shy as a child and my mother was always pushing me to get out there. Growing up as a person of color, you just see so many injustices as a teenager. You saw the way that I was treated, my friends were treated, and just at some point, you just wish that things were different.

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And when I found out that you could make a difference by organizing, then I became totally committed to try to change things through getting people together through organizing. I think it was more like an evolution, from the time I was a young girl and then growing up as a teenager. And I belonged to a lot of different organizations. I was a member of my church group and sang in the choir.

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I used to dance. So I was always very much in, let's say, in dealing in the public arena. And belonged to an organization that gave out Christmas baskets to people at Christmas time, but you just felt that it was never enough, that you weren't really making any changes and that there just had to be some other way. And so, when I discovered organizing through this great gentleman I met, Fred Ross Sr., who explained how people could come and change things, then that's what I wanted to do with my life.

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BETSY WEST:

Briefly, what was the need? How bad were things?

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DOLORES HUERTA:

Oh, very bad. When I was growing up, there was very little representation, or I should say no representation of Latinos in any governmental positions. Of course, the brutality of the police was always there, especially against the young people, young men. Farm workers were only earning in those days, like, 50 cents an hour, and yet they were working very hard.

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And I think the one thing that really kind of hooked me for life was during the voter registration drive, going to the home of some workers who did not have a linoleum or wood on their floor. Only dirt. And their furniture were orange crates. And the children are running around barefooted. And yet these are people who are working. Are working very hard, and you know that this is wrong, that this is not right, and something has got to be done to change this. And I think that's when I really decided I wanted to do this forever.

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BETSY WEST:

What did the legislators make of you? You know, young woman.

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DOLORES HUERTA:

Well, there was a lot of sexism at that time. I remember going to visit this assembly person and saying to him, we wanted to pass this bill that would give people who were legal immigrants to the country their old age pensions. These are people whose children had gone to war. And so I went to see this assemblyman, and after I explained to him the bill that I wanted him to vote for, he threw his hotel key across the desk and said,

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“Come and see me at my hotel tonight if you want my vote.” So I just stood up and walked out. I didn’t even honor that with a response. I just stood up and walked out the door. But I was one of the- There were only two of us, woman lobbyists, at that time. The other woman did a lot of lobbying for animals. They called her the bird lady, because she used to wear this big hat with big flowers on it. And she was older. I was only, like what, 25 years old at the time so...

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But even one of the other- There was somebody that I really respected, invited me to have dinner. So we had dinner and then he said to me, “Has anybody ever kissed your belly button?” Or, “licked your belly button,” I think he said. And I get out, I was stunned. But again, I didn’t say anything. I just pretended like the comment had never been made. I found that that was just the best way to handle- But I think as young women, and we look back, it was the sexual harassment was something that was prevalent. You just expected it to happen.

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BETSY WEST:

What did it take to be an effective union organizer? Why do you think you were particularly good at this?

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DOLORES HUERTA:

Well, I think my situation was somewhat different because Cesar Chavez and I started the union together along with his wife Helen, but Helen would go out and work in the fields while we were doing the organizing. But since I was at the ground level doing the meetings with the workers, later on becoming the negotiator, the workers always saw me in a leadership position, and I believe I had a big advantage because of that. But at the same time, I would always try to bring other women in and bring them into positions of leadership.

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But it was really interesting that women would so often back off of those positions, even once- They were willing to do the work but they didn't want to be in those positions of leadership. And even myself, I have to confess that when we had our constitutional convention for our union, and Cesar was at the podium running the meeting and then he steps down from the podium and he says, "Did you get someone to nominate you for the vice presidency?"

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And I said, "No, I don't want to be an officer, I just want to serve." And I think that was the typical mentality that women had, and still have today. And so he said, "Well, you are crazy. You got to get someone to nominate you right now." So I did. I got someone to nominate me. But I think that that is a- We have been so inculcated with this idea that we are the nurturers and the servers that we don't think of ourselves as the leaders and the decision makers.

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So that was something that I had to learn, that it's okay to be in a position of leadership and in a position where you are giving orders and guidance to other people. It was a new role for me.

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BETSY WEST:

Tell me about meeting Cesar Chavez.

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DOLORES HUERTA:

Well, Cesar and I both came out of this organization called the Community Service Organization and that's where we both met. And what our main issue of interest was the condition of the farm workers.

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BETSY WEST:

And how did you two work together? Who did what?

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DOLORES HUERTA:

Well, we worked together in the Community Service Organization first, and Cesar actually didn't really pay very much attention to me. I was always following him around like a groupie because I knew he was this great organizer. And we'd have our conventions, he'd give these glowing reports about what he was doing. Very mild mannered, very soft spoken. And so I would always try to find out what his organizing methods were, and he would ignore me.

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But then at one convention that I stood up and gave my report about- we were trying to end the gift worker program at the time called the Bracero Program, and what I had done in my particular community, to get 800 jobs for some of the farm workers that had been locked out because of the Bracero Program. Well, he was there, Mr. Fred Ross was there, Saul Alinsky from Industrial Areas Foundation, they were all very impressed with my report. So after my report, the three of them walked up to me and said, "Well, that was a great report. Can we all have lunch together?"

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And I thought, wow, they were impressed with what I was doing. So later on, when we were working together in Los Angeles, and Cesar was organizing farm workers and I had organized another group of farm workers in Northern California, but both groups fell apart when we turned them over to

other unions. And so this organization was going to support us in doing a pilot project organizing farm workers. But at the convention, they voted us down, and so that, Cesar called me and said, "I want to talk to you."

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So I went over to his house and they were sitting at Helen's kitchen table, and he said to me, "Farm workers will never have a union unless you and I do it." And at first I thought he was kidding, I actually started laughing. And then he said, "No, I'm very serious." And then he said in the next breath, "But farm workers will never have a national union in our lifetime." And I said, "Why Cesar?" He said, "Because the growers are too rich, they're too powerful, and they are too racist." And of course, that prediction was true.

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BETSY WEST:

Tell me about the boycotts. How did that all happen?

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DOLORES HUERTA:

Well, we were forced to go into the boycotts because we were getting arrested when we would go out to the fields. The growers had gone to the courts and they got an injunction so that we could have only five pickets to like, a thousand acre field. And of course, they were bringing in strike breakers to break our strike. And we needed a lot of pickets so that the strike breakers could see that there was something going on, that there was a strike



going on. But then, when they got that injunction, we could only have a few people, then we knew we needed to do something else.

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And so, it actually was a casual conversation that we were having in one of our offices. And this one attorney that was working with us at that time, he was a volunteer attorney. His name was Stu Weinberg. And then he said, "Have you all tried a boycott?" He said, because at that time, civil rights movement was in effect. They had done the summer boycott. Congress of Racial Equality was having a boycott about auto dealerships because they were not hiring African American people to have these dealerships.

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And so, we thought, "Oh, that's a good idea. Why don't we try that?" And so we started our first boycott which was against a wine company called Schenley, that also had Vermouth. And so, some of our people just hitchhiked to New York, and to St. Louis, and some of the places where they sold their wines. And within a few months, sure enough the company was ready to negotiate, and we did. We got the first contract.

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The second big boycott that we had was on the grapes. And there again, we targeted one of the major grape companies that, at the time, had like, 4000 workers. But then when we started boycotting their label, all the growers started switching labels. Right. So then we had a dilemma. How do we do this? So I came to New York and called Cesar from New York City, and I said,

“Cesar, I think the only way we can do this is if we boycott all California Table Grapes.”

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And Cesar thought, “No, I think we should boycott potatoes,” because this particular grower also had potatoes. And so, I said, “You know what people think of potatoes? They think of Idaho, they don’t think of California.” But Cesar didn’t like to spend money, so I said to Cesar, “I think I should fly back to California so we can have this conversation in person.” And he didn’t want to spend the money. So he said, “Olay,” so he acquiesced and we went ahead and started the grape boycott.

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BETSY WEST:

In broad terms, what was the issue? What were the conditions? What were you striking- boycotting over? What was the point?

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DOLORES HUERTA:

Well, conditions in the fields were very bad. Farmer workers are not respected at all, to the point that they didn’t have toilets in the fields for workers. They didn’t have cold drinking water in the fields. Workers were earning like, maybe 75 cents an hour to 90 cents an hour. They weren’t covered by unemployment insurance. Farm workers could not even get the surplus commodities because they had to show rent receipts for a whole year.

And once the crop finished, they had to travel to the next county. And so it was just a really, really bad situation.

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So when we had that first strike, we struck for like, \$1.25 an hour, something very, very small. But the main thing is that we were trying to get recognition, trying to get the contracts of the workers so the workers could sit down and negotiate their wages. So when we got that first contract, of course, one of the first things we got in there were toilets. And if you can imagine what this was like for women out in the field. They would have to find a place to go to the bathroom. And you are talking about the fields not being maybe 10, 20 miles, 30 miles from the nearest city, and there was no place, actually no place, that they could go.

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BETSY WEST:

And what did it take for you to really make this boycott work?

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DOLORES HUERTA:

Well actually, it was the farm workers that did it. There were farm workers that came to New York City on a bus, on a school bus, and the first thing they did was they picketed the produce market here in New York. And I remember that first day, they all got arrested. And so, we had to call Robert Kennedy's office for him to send us an attorney, which he did, to get them out of jail.

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BETSY WEST:

What really did you do to make this thing-

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DOLORES HUERTA:

Well, all the farm workers went and they told their stories. They went to churches, they went to union meetings, community organizations. We passed thousands of leaflets on the street. I mean, we would have- In Grand Central Station, we were passing out like, 20,000 leaflets a day. Grand Central Station, at the bus stops, at the theater district, everywhere. We just blanketed the city with leaflets. We didn't have the money for media, so we did it all with leaflets and it was effective.

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And then, farm workers would picket in front of the stores. And part of the job of all of the organizers and the farm workers was to get people to help us. So we had like, volunteers. We had school children in Long Island that would have their Speakers Bureau of junior high school kids that would go out to other schools and tell other kids about the boycott. We'd have the teachers union that- they had a little video about boycotting the grapes.

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My young daughter Juanita was only like, 3 years old, and she made a video saying, "Boycott grapes," right. I mean, it was just reaching everybody. Gloria

Steinem was a big help 'cause everywhere that Gloria went, she would ask people to boycott grapes. And we did this all over the country, not just New York. Because from those first farm workers that came here, some went to Chicago, some went to Detroit, some went to Florida, so we scattered them all over the country.

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BETSY WEST:

It's a huge organizing effort, really.

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DOLORES HUERTA:

Organizing efforts. And then one of the tactics that we used very successfully is we got the chain stores to take grapes out of the whole chain. So we would not just say to people, "Boycott grapes," but we would say, "Don't buy at this store because it has grapes." And so when they opened up a new store, we would take that store captive, right? If there was a new store opening up in New Jersey, we would all run to New Jersey and picket that new store, and that would really hurt the chains a lot.

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BETSY WEST:

Was there a moment in your career where you said, "Hey, wait a minute, women aren't getting the credit for this?"

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DOLORES HUERTA:

What had happened is that I saw that as the union became more institutionalized, that all of a sudden- So, these women that had been out there on the front lines and the picketing and going to jail, getting arrested, going to the picket lines with their children, coming out on the boycott with their families, these women that were great leaders, that all of a sudden was now starting to become institutionalized, you saw that some of the women were not there.

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And many times it was because they, themselves, withdrew themselves from positions. And I just thought that that was wrong. And I believe when it became more institutionalized, it became more chauvinistic. So anyway, at some point, I remember being in a meeting when all of the guys were just making sexist comments, and so I just started jotting down every time somebody made a sexist comment.

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And so at the end of the meeting, Cesar would always say, "Does anybody else have anything they want to add to the agenda or anything to add to the meeting?" And I said, "During the course of this meeting, you-" saying to the men on the board, "-have made 58 sexist comments." And of course, they were shocked. And no one said anything, but at the next meeting, I kind of did

the same thing. And they forgot about it and we ended up like, with 23 sexist comments.

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So finally we got it down to 5, and then to 3, and then maybe- But then it was like, they would come in the room and they would just all be really careful about what they were saying. But I think it was important that we had to start from the top, so to speak. And some of our organizers that were being chauvinistic or were being womanizers, I brought this to Cesar's attention but because it was so wrong.

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BETSY WEST:

How much were you affected by the women's movement?

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DOLORES HUERTA:

Oh, very much so. I think the women's movement really gave me the inspiration, I might say. Even though I had had this wonderful childhood with seeing my mother as the dominant figure in the family, but that was kind of like, unusual. Because seeing this woman who was a businesswoman who could do so much, that was unusual. And so that was great 'cause I had that. But then when I got into this other setting with farm workers, where women were more subservient and kind of... It was different, it was very different for me.

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I almost had to, kind of, learn a role that I hadn't grown up with. So when you saw people like Gloria Steinem and Jane Fonda and people like that really getting out there in the front, it just made a tremendous amount of difference to- It gave me, like, permission to be able to go out there, and not only be a leader in what I was doing, but being able to just to take pride or not to be- How should I put it... Not to feel that I was being egotistical by being in a leadership position. To be able to put on that mantel and say I'm a leader.

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BETSY WEST:

You're often referred to as "fiery." What do you think about that word, "fiery?"

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DOLORES HUERTA:

It's probably because of, I guess, when I speak, I do get more passionate, possibly. Cesar was a very mild, kind of a soft spoken person. Of course, he had a tremendous amount of power as an individual. And I think I'm probably just more outspoken. And sometimes, I guess I will ruffle people's feathers the wrong way because I will out people in terms of what they say or what they do. And so some people don't like that.

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BETSY WEST:



You've also got an arrest record.

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DOLORES HUERTA:

Oh yes, I've got quite an arrest record and that's for civil disobedience. Civil disobedience. And actually, most of the arrests though were just because we would go to the fields to talk to workers and they would arrest us. And in fact sometimes, we got arrested before we even spoke to the workers. We'd just drive up to the fields and then the police would just get us and arrest us.

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BETSY WEST:

What was the worst of your arrest?

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DOLORES HUERTA:

Well, I think everybody should go to jail at some point in time. I think because when you are in jail, then you see people that are there that probably shouldn't be there, when you are in jail with somebody who got 6 months because they stole a loaf of bread. And I imagine now it's even worse than it was then. I don't think of my- I think it's always a humiliation when you are deprived of your freedom and you are treated like you are a zero, like you are not a human being. That is a very humiliating experience so...

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But some of the arrests have actually been very dramatic. There was one arrest where... I guess there were about 400 of us that were arrested, that was for civil disobedience, because we just sat down in a field, and the police came and rounded everybody up. But there were a lot of Arabs that were arrested with us, and of course they raised a big ruckus because they were trying to feed them pork and they threw their plates against the wall and everything.

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And one time I was arrested with these women, older women. These are women that had their braids still, using their braids, and they stripped them naked, and searched them, their bodies. That was so humiliating to what they did to these women. That time I fasted in the jail, and they were willing to let me out because of the publicity, because I said I'm not going, I'm not leaving until everybody gets out, and I stayed there in the jail until they let every single person out of that.

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BETSY WEST:

And weren't you beaten up once?

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DOLORES HUERTA:

Yeah, but that was not during an arrest, that was at a demonstration.

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BETSY WEST:

Tell me about that...

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DOLORES HUERTA:

Well, we were doing a- This is like, our third grape boycott that we did and this was about the pesticides, because so many children were being born without arms or legs, and fingers missing and pieces of their spine missing. It was just horrible. The cancer rate among the farm worker children was 1200% above the norm. And so we did this third grape boycott. Cesar did like, a 36 day fast. And so, George Bush the first had a press conference.

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Yeah, there was nothing wrong with pesticides, and that the government was taking care of us. And so during that protest in San Francisco, we had a big old boycott, great banner. And I was doing a radio interview and the police moved in on us and he beat me very badly, to the point where I almost died. They pulverized my spleen and never found it, just the pieces of it, broke my ribs, and I lost a lot of blood.

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BETSY WEST:

Did that give you second thoughts on what you'd been doing?

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DOLORES HUERTA:

No. No, because this is something like, when you are in the movement, when you are on this path of justice, you know that these things are going to happen. During the strike, there were times when my home was terrorized in the middle of the night, my windows broken, when I'm there alone with my children, and we had guns and shotguns and rifles aimed at us, and people coming at us with 2x4s. And we had had a lot of violence during the strike, so this was, I think, just another chapter there.

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BETSY WEST:

Tell me about your family, and exactly when did you sleep or what did you do?

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DOLORES HUERTA:

Well, when we started the union, I had 7 children at the time and I just pretty much took my children along with me. Before we started the union, as a single parent, I would always hire someone to watch my children. In fact, most of my check when I worked went to the person that was taking care of the children. But then in the union, we didn't have anybody, and I was going through my second divorce when we started the union. But you have to just ask for help.

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I got the help from different people to help me watch the kids, the older ones helped with the younger ones, and that was pretty much the way that we made it.

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BETSY WEST:

So you gave them the gift of self reliance.

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DOLORES HUERTA:

They were self-reliant, but also they were in a movement where there were so many people, it was like a community and so it was not like anybody was ever isolated. Everybody was in this together and we watched out for each other.

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BETSY WEST:

You and Cesar Chaves accomplished so much. He really became a household name. What were your thoughts about that?

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DOLORES HUERTA:

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Well, I think whenever you have a leader of an organization, and Cesar was a leader, I mean that's the way that it is. And the other way that it is is that it's always history, right? And not her-story. And I think a lot of the things that we did in the union, I know that I accomplished those but it was part of the team.

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And then again, there were like thousands of other people that helped, like the people that didn't eat grapes, the farm workers that came out on the boycott, the farm workers that went to jail, five martyrs that we had with the union that were killed during our struggle. So it's a lot of people. But I do now realize and learned during this feminist awakening, that we as women have got to—as Gloria Steinem says in her book *Revolution from within*—that we've got to put big lights around our accomplishments, right?

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And around our ideas, and not feel that we're being egotistical when we do that because it's the way of letting the world know that, yes, we as women can accomplish great things. And so, it's still a little difficult, I have to say.

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BETSY WEST:

So again, sort of going over what we were just discussing about how the story gets written, what happens?

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DOLORES HUERTA:

Well I believe that it's almost like, natural that especially men will appropriate the work of women as theirs. And I think women often- we don't think in terms of fighting for our ideas or fighting to make sure that our work is recognized. And again when we think of the quote unquote "team effort," it's kind of natural that we just give our ideas and give our work away and don't even think about how we put our name or our stamp on that work.

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And it's something that we almost have to- I was going to use the word scheme, but you see when women do something, they're scheming. When men are doing something, they're planning, right? So that we as women have to figure out a plan to make sure that we get credit for the work that we do. And I think it's a lot of insecurity, especially with men that feel threatened by women.

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And I know in farm workers organization, I got to the point, just before I left the union, that I would not even want to say what I thought needed to be done. Because even if I put it out there, somebody, "Oh well, we'll have so and so do it," and it wouldn't happen. So when some of these things I thought were so important, well, I'm just going to out there and do it myself, and then let everybody know that it's already happening, that it's done, so it won't be taken out of my hands and then really won't be followed up on or won't be accomplished.

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But I learned how to do that. I read a book called *Games Mother Never Taught You* by Betty Jean Harragan, I think her name is, and that book was so revealing again in terms of the way that men, from the time that they're little boys, they learn these games. And even when they play marbles, so to speak, and they learn positioning, and they can walk into a room and immediately see what all of the power players are, what the games are.

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And we don't. As women, we just walk in. Well, we just want to do the work, right? We just want to see it accomplished. We don't think of it in terms of who is going to get the credit, who is going to get the blame, and that is something that men do naturally and we as women don't. And it's a very strange role for us because we're not used to working in that manner. But I think it's something- As long as we're trying to get into those decision making positions in this world,-

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-and we know that we need to have gender balance, and that we need to have women's voices, women's intuition, to reach the right decisions, that we've got to figure out how we can figure out the games also, so that we can also play those games, not in a destructive way, but in terms of making sure that we get women in positions of power.

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BETSY WEST:



Do you think that people understand what life was like for women in the not-so-distant past?

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DOLORES HUERTA:

No, I don't think that even young women today realize like, this whole fight in terms of trying to keep Roe v. Wade, for women to be able to still keep on to their rights to have an abortion if they feel that they need it. And when you talk to them, they don't realize that this is the right that they've had ever since they were born. And yet it is something that is, right now, a major threat of being taken away from them.

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Even having access to birth control, and to have birth control that is not so expensive that they can afford it, while we know that in today's world right now, they are jacking up those prices to make it difficult. And this whole notion that... And here we are, after having Roe v. Wade, that there are still legislators and there are clergy and religion that they can dictate what's going to happen to a woman's body.

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And I say this as a Catholic mother of 11 children. And when I speak to especially Latino audiences, I say to them, "I have 11 children. That was my choice. But that doesn't mean that every woman wants to have 11 children, and that is a choice women have to make for themselves and that nobody

should dictate to a woman what she can do with her body. That is a privacy, that is an issue of constitutionality.”

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And I love to quote Benito Juárez, who was the first indigenous president of the Americas in Mexico, and he had this wonderful saying that said, “Respecting other people’s rights is peace.” Respecting other people’s rights is peace, right? And I use that quote when I talk not only about women’s right to choose, women’s right to abortion, but also when it comes to anybody’s right, about who they want to marry, who they want to live with, in terms of gay rights, and lesbian rights. Respecting other people’s rights is peace.

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BETSY WEST:

What made you leave the union?

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DOLORES HUERTA:

Well, I felt that in a way, I had done everything. I had been a political director, I had been a negotiator, I had been an organizer. And I also felt that because of my age, that it would be better for younger people to go forward with the union. I think, had I taken over the presidency, I’d definitely have the support of all of the members. But then again, I think leadership is something that you can’t pass on through osmosis.

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It's something that's got to be lived. It's something that- You've got to be, again, in the fire to be honed as a leader. And so, that I felt that in order for the union to continue for another 20 or 40 years, we needed to have somebody in the leadership that was younger. But there was another reason. I knew also that taking over the presidency of the union, I would not be able to work on the feminist issues 'cause it would be too all consuming.

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I could have been maybe a spokesperson, but to do the type of work that we need to do, especially in the Latino community, to fight sexism, to fight homophobia, to fight for reproductive rights and to make a woman understand that they have these rights. Especially when we have such an influx of new migrants that come in from Latin America, they come from a totally different culture, that it would have been very difficult. In fact, just before Cesar passed away, I had taken a leave of absence and had been working.

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We were trying to form a new feminist party called the 21st Century Party and we were going to try to do this with the immigrants and women. So it was a very difficult decision for me. And what I've done now is I've gone back to community organizing. Going back to the kind of the grassroots movement, tactics from Cesar I learned, to build the movement from the bottom, and also bringing in some of the things I learned from the union.

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And the great thing is that it's working, that we are able to organize people at the ground level, and also for men to see women in roles of leadership. So right now, in the one area where we have been working, we've got probably 35 identified leaders—self identified. These are people that are out there doing the work. And of those 35, 31 are women. So it is just showing women that they can do things. It's very awesome.

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BETSY WEST:

When you see the women that you're working with, the young women, what do you think the biggest challenges are for them today?

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DOLORES HUERTA:

Well, one of the challenges, of course, is always time, especially if they are working women. But it's interesting because we have some women that work in the fields, and then they come to the meetings right after coming out of work. And you can see that they are tired, but this is so important for them that they are there because they really want to participate and they want to learn. It's making women strong. And the other great thing is for the men in the group to see the women as leaders. They run the meetings, right? They are the ones that make the decisions.

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And it's just- you'd be able to kind of create this gender balance in terms of power, but also of respect, from the men to the women. We have monthly meetings every month so we have done work on domestic violence. We do work on reproductive issues. Women will call us where they have a situation where they are being abused so we can go in there and help them.

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Being able to create situations like- we have just been passing out food and clothes to victims of the freeze in California. Over a thousand families are being taken care of. But they are being taken care of by their own peers. That's the important part.

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BETSY WEST:

What do you want people, especially young people, to know about the women's movement, as the legacy of the women's movement?

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DOLORES HUERTA:

Well, I think the women's movement has brought so much- So much of the benefits of the women's movement that we have, and I'm not just talking about women as leaders, women in the congress et cetera, but there are so many other benefits that the women's movement has brought to our world that young women need to know about so that they can see that many of the things that they take for granted-

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BETSY WEST:  
Like what?

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DOLORES HUERTA:  
Well, we were talking a little while just about birth control. What Margaret Sanger had to go through to be able to even bring the pill to the world. RU-486, which is the morning after pill. The kind of the big fight that the feminist majority had to do to get that pill produced and make it available to people. The women's right to vote. I mean, women that were jailed and that were force fed, to be able to get women the right to vote.

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And the whole- I mean, when we think of the numbers of women who are now in medical school and are doctors, women who are attorneys, right? At one time, not too long ago, women couldn't get into law school. Women couldn't get into medical school. Women in the trades. Women who have been able to get into some of the union trades and do work like carpenter's work, electricians, that was closed to them before.

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And of course, women as politicians. And Nancy Pelosi. Here we have a woman who has been elected to be Speaker of the United States House of Representatives. She is the third person in line for the presidency of the

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United States of America. How many people know this? And we know that her picture was not on the cover of Time magazine. It was not on the cover of Newsweek. The only magazine that had Nancy Pelosi on the cover was Ms. Magazine which was started by Gloria Steinem.

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BETSY WEST:

Why do you think that is?

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DOLORES HUERTA:

That is a constant devaluation of women. When you have someone like Nancy Pelosi who is not given that little honor of being on the cover of two of the major magazines of this country, that is like an insult. It's a put down. And it's always- And we see this in the media, where women are constantly devalued. Pelosi passed more legislation in 85 hours than the previous congress did in 6 years.

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And when they say that a woman cannot be president, that women are trusted to protect and to nurture our children, women can certainly be trusted to protect and nurture the country. So it's just, we have to constantly fight. We know that going back to women not being able to defend themselves- that even as we sit here speaking, a woman is getting raped, a

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woman is getting beaten, a woman is getting murdered, Because women are still seen as property.

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We might say, "Okay, well, that's not in this country," but in this country also! Because women are killed because someone thought they owned that woman's body. So we now have, of course, laws on domestic violence. We have laws that will protect clinics from people that would kill doctors and receptionists in those abortion clinics. But we know that we're still not there.

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We still do not have an equal rights amendment. The United Nations covenant for women, the convention, that has not been approved by our senate of the United States of America. So we have some major battles ahead of us.

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BETSY WEST:

And what about your own legacy?

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DOLORES HUERTA:

Well, I hope that my legacy will be one of an organizer that organized to fight injustice. That's what I would like my own legacy to be. And the most important thing is to give your children values and to teach them how to do things for others from the time that they are growing up, so that is again



inculcated in them as children. And never ask your children, “Do you want to go to a march? Do you want to go to a demonstration or a picket line?”

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Say to them, “We’re going.” Don’t give them the chance to say no, because even though they might complain, when they grow older, they’ll be so thankful. We want to give our children an inheritance of justice, right? Not jewels or property or money because they’ll just fight over it, right? So the main thing to do is to give them this love for justice and so that they can feel, early on when they are young, that they are part of a movement.

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I was in Los Angeles when we were working on one of these campaigns against these [inaudible], and so I called one of my daughters to see—I guess it was 7:00 in the morning—and I said, “I’m calling you to see if you’re still interested-” “What do you mean? We’re up here on the street corner right now. We’re out here with our banners. We’re out here on the street corner doing human billboarding to make sure that we win.” So once they know that they have that conscience, it’s great.

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My great granddaughter, who was only 2 years old- we had a demonstration in front of one of the prisons. They were building all these prisons everywhere. And so, my 2 year old great granddaughter was on the shoulders of my granddaughter, and then my daughter, the four of us were out there, and my great granddaughter had a sign that said, “Schools Not Jails,” and it made the front page of 2 different newspapers, right. And I thought- I was so

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proud, because I know that even my great grandchildren are going to know about marching and about fighting for justice. And that is the greatest gift I think that any of us can have.

END TC: 00:40:06:00