

El Malcriado, Texas edition, 1967
Doug Adair, Alfredo de Avila, editors

Melon workers in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas had gone on strike in June of 1966, inspired by an eloquent (though unauthorized) speech by Eugene Nelson pointing to the example of the Delano grape pickers and the new Schenley contract. It was a traditional wild cat strike, with no preparation or prior organizing, no committed membership base, no funds to sustain a strike, and little prospect of winning anything. Leaders of the union in Delano reacted in horror at this diversion, immersed as we were at a critical point in our struggles in California. But various union organizers were dispatched to Texas, including Bill Chandler and, at various time, Jim Drake, Cathy Lynch, Tony Orendain, and Gil Padilla, hoping to save something positive from the experience. Texas was the home base for migrant streams heading for California and the West Coast; others heading to the Mid West and Wisconsin; and others heading to the East... At a minimum, we hoped to establish a presence in Texas and to begin educating and organizing this population.

When I went to Texas in the early spring of 1967, Gil Padilla was in charge of the union effort, with Chandler and a staff of a dozen Texans and a core of about 100 strikers, preparing for the coming melon harvest in June. When *El Malcriado* folded in California that summer, I continued to print a Texas edition, through the summer and fall of 1967, up until Hurricane Beulah pretty much wiped out the union effort in Rio Grande City. Alfredo de Avila assisted me on later editions, and put out a final edition of the Texas paper after I went back to Delano in December, 1967.

The Texas edition of *El Malcriado* was self-supporting. One source of income was the iconic poster of Emiliano Zapata, with his rifle and bandoliers, in red and black, with the slogan, "VIVA LA REVOLUCION!"

I went up to a union printer in Austin to produce it, and it immediately became popular with students and Chicano activists, eventually bringing in thousands of dollars to the union coffers. The Texas edition of *El Malcriado* covered the melon strike of June, 1967, the brutal attack on the strikers by the Texas Rangers, the mass arrests of strikers, and the Senate hearings investigating conditions in farm labor in Texas, led by Harrison Williams and Ted Kennedy. The Texas edition also published the first critical article on the war in Viet Nam, in the form of a letter from a Texas supporter, decrying the "Blood Tax" and analyzing the high proportion of Latino deaths in this war against Asian peasants not unlike ourselves. While the union staff was overwhelmingly opposed to the war, Chavez had urged the staff to avoid the issue for fear of alienating our pro-war supporters among the unions, Democratic Party, and the Catholic Church.

While Californians generally viewed the two-year effort in Texas as a disaster, draining funds and attention from the main struggle in Delano, its ripple effects throughout Texas and the farm worker community in the Mid-West were tremendous. A whole generation of Chicano activists were inspired, the whole Texas labor movement was reinvigorated, and farm worker law suits, including "*Medrano et al vs. A. Y. Alee and the Texas Rangers*" resulted in the overturning of a host of anti labor laws, including "criminal syndicalism" and the O'Daniel Acts. Padilla, Chandler, and I were all among the "*et al's*" in the suit, after being arrested with Pancho Medrano, the UAW Regional Representative, and the whole picket line, in Mission, Texas that June. During the 1980's, Padilla reminded me of a dozen melon strike supporters that he and Orendain had organized and mentored into joining the movement, who were now members of the Texas legislature.

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Doug Adair, 7/12/09