

El Malcriado, 1966-1967
Doug Adair, Daniel de los Reyes, Marcia Brooks, editors

By late spring of 1966, Bill Esher was moving out of the day to day management and writing of *El Malcriado* and focusing on special projects, working with George Ballis on a pictorial essay, "Basta", and a book of Zermeno cartoons. With the informal approval of the union leadership, I assumed the role of editor of the paper. But we were also distancing ourselves from the union, moving out of the union office at 102 Albany, to a new Farm Worker Press office and staff residence (130 Albany) down the street. We were not part of the daily meetings and strategy sessions of the organizers in the Di Giorgio campaign and missed some of the signals that the organizers wanted to project. We ran a beautiful cover of Carolina Franco, in a big Mexican hat, holding a candle during a mass. While the membership loved it, it provoked an enraged visit by Ross and Chavez to our office. Ross gave me a tongue lashing, that the union was trying to project a less Mexican and Catholic image, and that this cover of the paper undermined everything that they were saying. The next issue of *El Malcriado* had a cover of an Anglo boy bunching carrots!

We also had our first major law suit by the Teamsters and Bud Antle over an article *El Malcriado* did on the Teamster/Antle lettuce contract. We printed their letter demanding a retraction, and their side of the story, but did not really apologize for linking the signing of the Teamster/ Antle contract to the \$1,000,000 loan that Antle received from the Teamsters Central States Pension Fund. We also stressed again that farm workers under Teamsters contracts paid dues but got few benefits.

In late summer, 1966, Dolores Huerta introduced us to Daniel de Los Reyes, an ex-reporter for *Alarma!*" a sensationalist Spanish language tabloid printed in Mexico and widely distributed in the barrios of the U.S. De Los Reyes may have been fleeing some kind of threat or legal problem, and expressed eagerness to work with us as a volunteer. I was happy to let him assume the duties as editor, as I focused on the administrative side, sales and circulation. The layouts of the paper became much more "*Alarma!*" -ist, with pictures of beautiful huelguistas ("the feminine presence," "a woman's place is... on the picket line!"). He was a good writer, but his sexist, misogynist, anti-egalitarian attitude did not endear him to the staff. And his articles on the strike at Perelli Minetti, and especially on an incident involving back wages and firings, set off a second million-dollar law suit. The suit was eventually dropped during negotiations. But supposedly the workers got a lower wage as part of the deal. I was very sorry for this, the worst outcome during my stewardship of the paper.

I was also reprimanded by the union for a derogatory reference and picture of Jimmy Hoffa. Apparently in behind the scenes negotiations, Hoffa was open to a deal with

our union, and the problem was the Teamster leadership in California. While the union membership took delight in the paper, various AFL big wigs, Democratic politicians, and Catholic Church prelates complained to Chavez of its radical tone, and he began to question its value to the cause...

De los Reyes also translated Eugene Nelson's book, Huelga, into Spanish. But he was tiring of the volunteer ethos of Delano and wanted money for his labors. Before we could get the book set up for the printer, de los Reyes fled back to Mexico with the transcript, hoping to cash in on the book. Esher and Huerta tried futilely to stop the bus as he made his escape.

During late 1966, the paper also gained an outstanding new full time photographer, Emmon Clarke, and later his wife, Judy also joined the staff offering work in various areas. Jeanne Sujo, an elegant Latin American, and Ellie Risco also worked on various chores during this period.

In early 1967, *El Malcriado* began a delightful serial cartoon story by Zermeno, chronicling the adventures of farm worker friends coming north from Mexico, and their trials and tribulations in American agribusiness. The paper was growing financially secure and generating more and more donations and support. But there was some tension with the union over the feeling that some donations to the Farm Worker Press and *El Malcriado* should have gone directly to union coffers.

In the spring of 1967, Esher decided to open a Texas edition of the paper, and I moved to the Rio Grande Valley of Texas to organize the effort. Esher, Murphy, and Brooks continued to run the operation in Delano. Unfortunately, we became overextended. Esher was getting burned out in Delano, and left the movement in late spring of 1967. Murphy and Brooks continued putting out the paper into the summer, trying a new layout and other changes, but *El Malcriado* of California sputtered into insolvency in August of 1967. The union did not intervene to revive the paper until early 1968, when it took over the assets of the Farm Worker Press and revived the paper as an official organ of the Union and its Executive Board.

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Doug Adair, 7/12/09