



## P is for Philip Vera Cruz

This lesson plan is about Philip Vera Cruz and his civil rights activism.

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In partnership with the Asian American Advocacy Fund (AAAF), WQED Education took AAAF's ABC's of AAPIs coloring book project and created lesson plans for educators to use in the classroom to provide a creative activity and resource for AAPI Studies.

**Time Allotment:** 1 class period

## Learning Objectives

- Learn about Philip Vera Cruz
- Learn about civil rights of immigrant farmworkers

## Prep for Teachers

- Have video clip ready to view [Filipino American Farmworkers | Asian Americans](#)
- Print enough copies of the coloring sheet and poem
- Vocabulary list
- Background reading printout

## Media in this Lesson

- Video: [Filipino American Farmworkers | Asian Americans](#)

## Learning Activities

1. Have students watch the video: [Filipino American Farmworkers | Asian Americans](#)
2. Discussion Questions:
  - a. Why did the farmworkers decide to go on strike, and what were their major goals? Why did the Filipino and the Mexican American farmworkers go on strike together? What were the benefits to each group?
  - b. What do you think would have happened if the Mexican American farmworkers refused to join the Filipino Americans' strike? Why?
3. Have students research about Philip Vera Cruz and why he is important.
4. Distribute copies of the coloring sheet and put students into small groups to read and analyze the poem.
5. Each group should write a reflection question for classmates to consider and respond to in regards to the poem.



6. Have students write their own version of the poem based on their findings, their reflections, and on the video they watched.
7. Class reflection:
  - a. What parallels do you see from this strike and strikes we've seen in recent history?
  - b. Why do people strike?
  - c. What does it take for people to put their jobs on the line and go on strike?
  - d. What makes a strike successful?
  - e. What are the challenges of a strike?
  - f. How do you get people to join or support a strike?
  - g. Why are unions important? Why do people join or not join unions? What kind of reputation do unions have and why?
8. Create a Causes and Effects T-chart. Write as many different answers to the questions below as you can using information from the video and the background reading.
  - a. In the CAUSES column, answer the question: How were Filipino American farmworkers treated unfairly?
  - b. In the EFFECTS column, answer the questions: What did the farmworkers do about this unfair treatment? What happened as a result of their actions?



# Filipino American Farmworkers and the Delano Grape Strike

**Essential Question: Why did Filipino and Mexican American farmworkers mobilize against farm growers in central California in the mid-1960s?**

## The Philippine-American War

After the Spanish-American War ended in 1898, the United States took possession of the Philippines, making it a U.S. territory. In 1899, after fighting for independence from Spain, Filipinos waged a war for independence against the United States. The Philippine-American War ended in 1902 with the U.S. establishing a civil government in the Philippines. The 1934 Philippine Independence Act established the Philippine Commonwealth with a 10-year transitional period from 1935 to 1945, thus paving the way for the Philippines to become independent from the United States in 1946.

### Anti-miscegenation laws

Laws implemented by many U.S. states that made it illegal for whites and people of color to engage in romantic relations or interracial marriage

### Strike

An organized protest when workers refuse to work in an effort to improve working conditions

### Boycott

Protesting by refusing to purchase products or services

## Filipino Immigration

From 1900 to 1934, Filipinos began immigrating to the California Central Valley, where there was a high demand for field laborers. Filipino immigrants, known as “Pinoys,” worked in the fields of the San Joaquin Valley, Salinas, and Sacramento. Another wave of Filipino immigration occurred after the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965.

Many Filipinos found themselves isolated from the rest of American society due to anti-Filipino racial incidents, housing discrimination, and language barriers. Among male Filipino farmworkers, many remained single into old age due to U.S. **anti-miscegenation laws**, and are referred to as “manongs,” a term of respect for elderly Filipino men.

## Migrant Farmworkers & Labor Unions

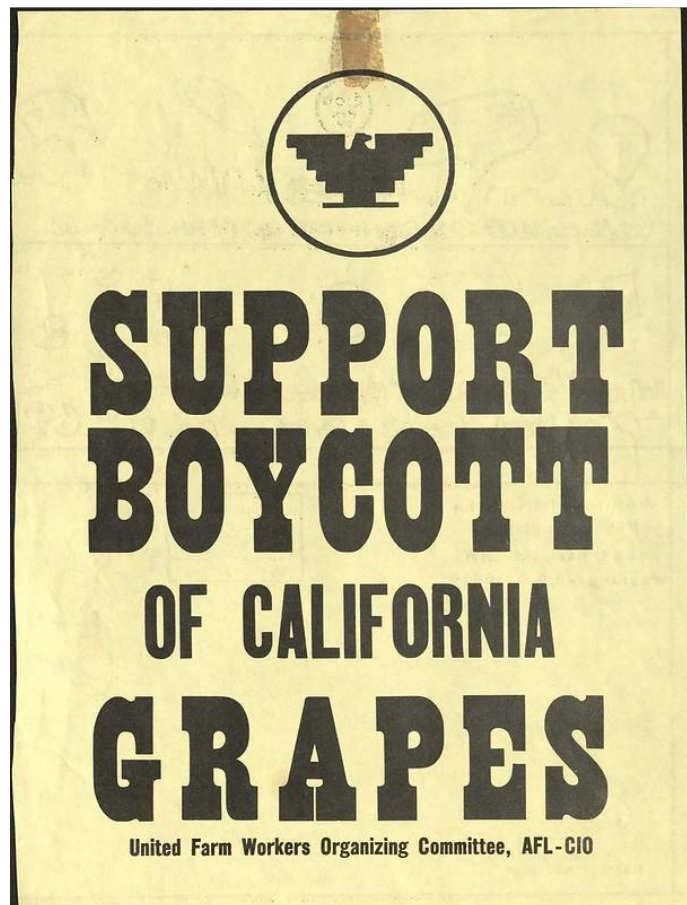
Without labor unions, migrant farmworkers were not protected under existing labor laws. Living and working conditions were harsh and exploitative, including long hours, low wages, child labor, lack of workers’ rights such as pensions and healthcare, crowded living quarters, and non-functioning toilets.



In September 1965, Larry Itliong, a manong labor leader and co-founder of the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC), inspired Filipino farmworkers in Delano, California to initiate a **strike** against the grape farm owners. After they began striking, Itliong and other Filipino leaders such as Philip Vera Cruz, urged Mexican Americans to join the Filipino farmworkers and fight for civil rights instead of being used as strikebreakers. Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez, civil rights leaders who had been organizing Mexican American farmworkers, were convinced by Filipino leaders to strike together. Thus, Filipino and Mexican Americans formed the United Farm Workers (UFW), striking as one.

The Delano Grape Strike inspired people around the nation and Europe to support the farmworkers by **boycotting** grapes. The Grape Boycott continued for five years until July 1970 when the grape growers agreed to increase wages, contribute to union health plans, and provide protection from field pesticides. The joint Filipino and Mexican American effort later led to the passage of the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975, providing collective-bargaining powers for farmworkers state-wide.

Today, farmworkers still suffer from difficult living and working conditions including job hazards and instability, and they continue to fight for labor rights.



*A United Farm Workers Organizing Committee leaflet passed out in Washington, D.C. in 1969 during the Delano Grape Strike. Original held in the Bonnie Atwood papers, 1965-2005, Collection, Special Collections and Archives, James Branch Cabell Library, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA. Creative Commons License*