

Now What?

**Asian Americans and Social
Justice**

Solidarity Agenda

1. Reflecting on Politics and Identity
2. Lessons from the Delano Grape Strike and Boycott (1965)
3. Lessons from Oak Park Tenants

Working Definition of Solidarity

Shared political vision and struggle towards liberation.

Politics and Identity

Daniel Martinez HoSang, Associate Professor, Ethnicity Race & Migration and of American Studies, Yale University

“...do your politics come from your identity, meaning do you identify as Asian American, and therefore that prescribes a way to understand power, a way to look at the world, etc. Or does your identity come from your politics, which is that you come to understand power in a certain way, and then that gives you a sense of who you are. And I think for me, it was more the latter, which is why I was drawn to that question and formulation. So it wasn't it wasn't like an identity was established first, and then that led to a way to look at the world, if that makes sense, in part, because you know, there is no kind of like just standard identity you would just inhabit as a descendant of you know someone who's Chinese and Jamaican and white and Jewish. It was an open-ended field that I think required me to think not just about the who I was, but like what it is that I wanted to contribute to in the world politically.” (19:12:36)

Free write: How would you answer this?

...do your politics come from your identity, meaning do you identify as Asian American, and therefore that prescribes a way to understand power, a way to look at the world, etc [?] Or does your identity come from your politics, which is that you come to understand power in a certain way, and then that gives you a sense of who you are [?]

Histories and Radical Traditions: Lessons from the Delano Grape Strike

Generation Rising



Power

Dawn Mabalon, history professor at San Francisco State:

“The only way to win was with each other.” Filipinos would be used as scabs if Mexicans went on strike and vice versa. ([America's profound ignorance about the Delano Grape Strike, Filipino Americans, and Larry Itliong](#))

Liz Sunwoo, an organizer at Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance (KIWA) in LA:

“In a power building sense...there's not enough power if we just organize within our own communities... against the oppressors right, whether it's a business owner, whether it's the county, right.” (Collected Archives)

Relationships

Lorraine Agtang was in school in Delano during the strike. She provides an example of the divide and conquer approach and the hard work of relationship building.

- “‘When working, the grower would tell our crew how the Mexican crew had picked more grapes than we had,’ she recalls. ‘I was a *mestizo*, half-Filipino and half-Mexican. I always felt torn between the two cultures.’” ([The Little-Known Farmworkers Who Sparked the Biggest Labor Movement In U.S. History](#))
- “‘That grape strike and boycott would not have succeeded without genuine solidarity’ between the two groups. ‘And that lesson is as important and meaningful today as it was five decades ago,’ she explains. ‘Larry and Cesar insisted that the workers eat together and hold joint union meetings. They insisted grape strikers from both races share the same picket lines. As a result, people got to know one another and friendships grew.’” ([The Little-Known Farmworkers Who Sparked the Biggest Labor Movement In U.S. History](#))

Tension Between Groups

Based on an interview with **Gayle Romasanta**, a writer, publisher, and artist who grew up in Itliong's hometown of Stockton and co-wrote about his life. ([Solidarity Stories: Gayle Romasanta](#))

- “Many Filipinos felt they would be better served if they stayed separate.”
- Itliong also began to wonder whether the UFW belonged to everyone or whether it had become Chavez's union. One factor was that the national media coverage did not put Filipinos, or any of the other workers who were part of the campaign, in the spotlight.

“‘ [Itliong] didn't necessarily agree with everything that Cesar Chavez did, but he gritted his teeth for the sake of building a union. He made mistakes. Chavez made mistakes, too,’ says **(Dawn) Mabalon**. Some Filipinos grew frustrated when the Filipino Community Hall was named the headquarters for the strike. When people of both ethnicities started using the space, many Filipinos felt it was being taken away from them.” ([The Little-Known Farmworkers Who Sparked the Biggest Labor Movement In U.S. History](#))

Tension Within Community

Alex Edillor, a Filipino in school in Delano during the strike, recalls the tension and segregation, within the Filipino community. ([The Little-Known Farmworkers Who Sparked the Biggest Labor Movement In U.S. History](#))

“Many families returned to work after several weeks, and the town became divided. Ours was one of those who quit the strike because my parents needed to pay rent and other bills and clothe and feed my sister and me,”

“I recall tensions about whom we sat with in church, whom we played with in school.”

Thinking About/Through Solidarity Now

From the Black and Asian Feminist Solidarities, a joint project of the Asian American Feminist Collective & Black Women Radiacs:

Senti: Historically, in **Marxist theory**, solidarity was conceptualized as an expression of the shared experience and specific political needs of the working class. It was a framework that showed that **we're always stronger together and that collective action is the only way we can have real wins for our communities**.**Audre Lorde** ... famously said that none of us are free until we're all free... I think solidarity really means that we understand that **we don't necessarily have to have a personal relationship to a person or cause to take up action against what oppresses them**. And I think that solidarity also means really **thinking about the fact that we're not all equally impacted by injustice just because we're people of color...**

Jaimee: We have to remember solidarity not just as a theory but as an everyday action. If we want to decolonize and radically transform this world, that **requires reading, working together and really being invested in our histories and radical traditions in our respective communities**.