This bibliography deals with books, theses and dissertations, and articles about Mexican and Mexican American (Chicano) workers and labor unions in the United States, that is, it deals with both migrants and residents. Listed here are books dealing with many aspects of the workers’ experience: histories, sociological studies, autobiographies and biographies, and even novels.


While not specifically about workers and unions, Rudy Acuña’s excellent textbook history of the Mexican American people has many sections dealing with labor issues.


An account of the situation of the Midwestern farm laborer, and the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) founded and headed by Baldemar Velásquez written by two social scientists. The book provides a good overview of the industry, employers, union and workers’ conditions, and gives in passing a biography of Velásquez and a history of FLOC and its activities.


A collection of the most important speeches of Cesar Chávez, which, together with the editors notes, constitutes an account of the United Farm Workers union movement, its rhetoric and ideology. This is a very important resource for the study of Chávez and the UFW.

Several essays in this collection deal with Mexican or Mexican American workers and their unions. Douglas Monroy has an essay on Indians working in the Franciscan Missions, Tomás Almaguer writes about the Oxnard Strike of 1903; Devra Wheeler discusses oral history of Mexican farm worker women; Vicki Ruiz covers the Mexican cannery worker; and Cletus E. Daniel’s essay deals with César Chávez and the United Farm Workers. All the essays have notes and excellent bibliographies.


Based on a study of San Diego County in the 1990s, the author analyzes the employment of Mexican immigrants with an eye to public policy regarding immigration. He is interested in how certain industries and firms become dependent on immigrant labor, and how immigrant labor becomes embedded in the economy. He looks at how immigrant policies have affected these patterns of employment of Mexican workers in the United States.


This political scientist’s study of the bracero program focuses on the role of interest groups in the United States and Mexico on attempting to shape the program from its inception to its termination. The author argues that this is an example of the need for the simultaneous study of domestic and foreign policy at the micro and macro level. Much useful information conveyed in a useful framework.


A study of California agriculture, the ideologies of agriculture, farmworkers, and the various labor unions that organized farm workers. Based on a meticulous examination of employer and union publications, government documents, and contemporary newspaper accounts, this book chronicles and interprets all of the major worker movements of the period, with an emphasis on the upheavals of the 1930s with detailed accounts of all the important workers’ movements.


A short biographical article on Chavez from a critical perspective. The article is followed by an excellent, short bibliographical essay. (This same article can also be


While this book does not deal with Mexican or Mexican American workers, and only mentions them in passing, I have included it because of the important role of Filipino farmworkers, a role which then and later had an impact on Mexican and Mexican American labor organizing efforts. This book deals with Filipino organizing efforts, the Watsonville Anti-Filipino Riot of 1930, the Communist Cannery and Agricultural workers Industrial Union in the Imperial Valley from 1933-1934, and the Filipino Labor Union and the Salinas Lettuce Strike of 1934.


Originally a doctoral dissertation done at Notre Dame University with the title “Mexican Railroad Workers in the United States During World War II,” this book is a study of the bracero program for railroad workers. The author, coordinator of studies of the United States at the North American Research Center at UNAM, argues that that particular bracero program was a success for Mexico, the United States, and the workers, and might serve as a model for current labor immigration projects.


A fine short biography of Chávez with some excellent supplemental material, including a number of short pieces by his wife Helen Chávez, his co-worker Dolores Huerta, and Rev. Jim Drake. Also Frank Bardacke’s important piece, “César’s Ghost: Decline and Fall of the UFW,” originally published in The Nation in 1993. An excellent bibliography as well.


An extremely sophisticated and complex examination of the history of agriculture, farmers, and farm labor in Texas from the 1820s to the 1940s, looking at the intersection of classes and races in the context of ideologies of race and masculinity. Foley discusses the history of both farmer organization, farm labor organization, and socialism in Texas in the late He also gives attention to the condition of the woman
farmer or farm laborer and her conditions. This book won virtually every possible academic award.


*Barrio Boy* is a classic story of a Mexican immigrant to the United States during the period of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). This autobiography of the distinguished sociologist and historian of Mexican immigrant labor, tells of his family’s migration from Nayarit, up the West Coast of Mexico, and then to the Mexican *barrio* of Sacramento, California. All the while the Mexican Revolution hovers on the horizon. This is an utterly charming book that gives great insight into the experience of Mexican immigrants at the beginning of the last century, though readers will be struck by the continuity with the experience of today.


This book is an account of the National Farm Labor Union and its successor, the National Agricultural Workers Union as they faced the challenge of the bracero program, and eventually succumbed to it. The book is focused on workers and unions, and among other developments, covers the NFLU 1947 strike against DiGiorgio. It is also a critique of the AFL-CIO labor bureaucracy for its unwillingness to organize workers if it would not soon produce collective bargaining agreements.


Galarza’s focuses on the bracero program in California between 1942 and 1960. His own experience as Mexican immigrant, agricultural day laborer and cannery worker, as well as his academic training and experience in international organizations and labor unions made him particularly well prepared to analyze the experience of the Mexican bracero in the United States.


A history of the National Agricultural Workers Union from 1947 to 1960, the book chronicles union organizing efforts, strikes, legislative activities and legal cases involving the union. The book also describes the role of growers like DiGorgio and politicians like Richard Nixon. As Carey McWilliams writes in the foreword, “In a sense, it is the pre-chavez, pre-Delano phase of the story with which this work deals.”

Manuel Gamio, the famous Mexican anthropologist and sociologist conducted interviews in the late 1920s with scores of Mexican immigrants to the United States in various cities. The interviews and his text provide a wonderful window on the Mexican immigrant world of that era, one so important in establishing the major trends of Mexican immigration through the rest of the twentieth century. The interviews deal with their migration, social and work history, and sometimes give accounts of labor and labor unions issues. This book is a great primary resources on migration and labor.


This collection contains several excellent essays Mexican Americans and their immigrant experience, among them several on Mexican workers. Mark Reisler writes on the Anglo perception of Mexican workers in the 1920s; Manuel García y Griego discusses the bracero program; Vicki L. Ruis writes on the acculturation of adolescent Mexican American women from 1920-1950 (most of those women of the working class); and Martio T. García writes on the border (and among other things what it meant for workers).


This study of César Chávez as public speaker also serves as a biography of the farmworker leader as it explains the contexts and occasions of his orations. The authors argue that Chávez’s speaking was central to building his movement, and that those speeches and their style gave expression to his ideals. The book contains a superb bibliography of Chávez’s speeches, interviews, and writings, as well as of secondary sources.


The author attempts to bridge the gap between agricultural and labor history, in this very thorough study of Atlantic Coast farmworkers, looking at them in relationship to capital and the state. The author argues the centrality of the state, with its racial policies and attitudes, in creating and maintaining the poverty of farm workers. The author discusses major strikes and union organizing efforts. Some of these workers were Mexicans and Mexican Americans.

Marta López-Garza and David R. Diaz, eds. *Asian and Latino Immigrants in a*

This collection of social science essays on immigrant workers in the Los Angeles region contains several dealing with Latin Americans and Asians, comparing them to each other, to other immigrant workers and native-born Americans. Several of the essays deal with Mexican workers, or Mexican, Central American and other Latinos in a variety of industries. Marta López-Garza writes on the Latino/a informal economy; Grace A Rosale on domestic workers; and Clair M Weber on Latino street vendors. Each essay has notes and bibliography.


This book deals with braceros in Washington, Oregon and Idaho during and shortly after World War II. The author looks at agribusiness and Mexican migration, World War II and the farm labor crisis, the bracero worker, strikes and union organizing efforts, and social life. Finally he traces the change from braceros to Chicano migrant farm workers. He argues that bracero workers’ strikes led growers to turn from contract labor to migrant workers.


This dissertation deals with the work and community lives of Mexican “traqueros,” the workers who built and maintained railroad tracks, one of the most important occupations of Mexican immigrant and Mexican American workers for decades. Garcilazo deals with hiring and employment practices, working and living conditions, and other social issues as well as strikes and union organization.


Organized chronologically and then by industry, this huge book—quarto-sized, double column on each page—is a virtual encyclopedia of Mexican American labor by one of the leading experts in the field. The footnotes and bibliography contain a wealth of information for scholars. This book is a good starting point for almost any investigation in the field.

This useful collection of seven essays by about ten different authors comprises an overview of the most important elements of Mexican American or Chicano labor history. The opening essay gives an historical overview, followed by two essays on the history of unionization among Chicanos, and then other essays on agricultural workers, steel workers, and the CIO unionization experience.


A short, useful, basic biographical essay on César Chávez and his role as leader of the United Farm Workers Union, followed by a short bibliography.


This laudatory biography of César Chávez locates him in the context of his time particularly through the use of contemporary sources that interpreted his life from different angles. The author’s ultimately situate him as a bridge between the Chicano and liberal movements. “We do not seem him as a labor leader, a reformer, a spiritual teacher, a Chicano activist, or a tragic hero. We see him as all of these things combined—an indefinable essence.” (179).


As the subtitle indicates, a study of immigration and repatriation, looking at the Mexican American farm workers’ experience with employers and government. At the center of the book is the social construction of the Mexican and Mexican American workers sojourners as “birds of passage,” whose temporary stay in the United States would not threaten Americans, but would also put them at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Faced with American racism, they became subject to discrimination and mistreatment, and to the campaign for their repatriation. The struggle to organize agricultural workers labor unions in the 1930s also constituted part of their identity.


The well told coming of age story of a migrant farm worker child growing up in the 1950s and 60s who went on to study mathematics, computer science and engineering. Her young life exemplified many of the experience of the migrant farm worker and makes vivid the social issues involved in such a life.

**D.C.: United States Department of Labor, 1945.**

An exhaustive study in some 450 pages of every aspect of agricultural labor organizing. An essential book for anyone interested in the topic.


An extended oral history interview of Cesar Chávez by Jacques E. Levy. This book is based on Chávez’s interviews, speeches, lectures, reports, and conversations overheard and recorded by the author. The author concedes he has taken some liberties with the farm worker leader’s words, and the author asserts “This, then, is not Cesar Chávez’s autobiography. It is the story of his life, in his own words, but it lacks the key ingredient of an autobiography—the decision of what to include and what to emphasize.” But it is the closet thing to an autobiography we have and essential reading for anyone studying Chavez.

**Joan London and Harry Anderson. *So Shall Ye Reap: The Story of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Workers' Movement.***

A study of the farm workers’ movement based in large part on biographies of some of the principal figures involved in organizing in California. The authors discuss Father Thomas McCullough (mentor of Chavez), Ernesto Galarza, and Cesar Chavez. Much useful information, interesting insights.


A wonderfully told journalistic account of the experience of villagers of the town of Cherán, Michoacan and their migrations to towns and cities in the United States. Half the book is spent looking at life in Mexico, and the other half looking at the immigrant experience in the United States. This is certainly one of the most informative books about contemporary migration of Mexicans to the Midwest, because it deals with so many aspects of this migrant experience, and raises so many of the economic, social, political, and ethical issues involved in this vast migration.


A sympathetic, journalistic portrait of Chávez and account of the United Farm Workers union movement in its early days of the late 1960s, written with the hope and idealism of 1968. While Matthiessen is clearly a supporter of Chávez and the UFW, he is not simply a publicist, and his account reveals many of the complexities and contradictions both of the character of Chávez and of the farm workers union.

A brilliant study of California and its agriculture—land, labor, and irrigation. A follower of Henry George, McWilliams puts the issue of monopolization of land and the exploitation of labor at the center of his book, but also use that political economic foundation to develop a theory of the California character. Though first published in 1949, this remains an important book for understanding the nature of California agribusiness and its need for enormous numbers of low paid workers, of whom the Mexican Americans constitute the last wave.


This essential study of the history and sociology of California migratory farm labor, though first published in 1940 remains a classic. Driven by Henry George’s thesis of the monopolization of land and the need for cheap wage labor, McWilliams trace the history of Indian, Chinese, Japanese, East Indian, Filipino, African American and white labor in the fields of California. He gives accounts of all the important strikes and union organizing drives, and of the severe repression that they met from the growers and the government. This book remains essential reading for those concerned with the issue.


A comprehensive account of the migratory labor force of American agriculture on the eve of World War II. McWilliams writes about the Southwest, the Midwest, and the Far West. Much of the book deals with the dramatic changes wrought by the New Deal upon agriculture. The bibliography list a remarkable number of periodical articles of that period.


While written with a great grasp of economic and political forces, as well as with a fine sense of social history, Carey McWilliams history of the Mexican American people, has been superseded by contemporary studies. Nevertheless, McWilliams sensitive and sympathetic account of the migrant and his experiences, contains fascinating information about the Mexican American experience, racism, violence and the fight for dignity still worth reading.

While this book is not as essential to the study of Mexican American farm labor as the author’s other several books on land and labor in California, Chapter XI, “The Citrus Belt,” deals with an important part of agribusiness and its workforce.


While this excellent book deals primarily with the United Farm Workers union, it places the long struggle to organize farm workers in a broader geographical context, with chapter on Hawaii and the South.


This collection of essays by a dozen different authors arose out of a conference held at UCLA in 1998, and reflects the experience of organizing immigrant workers, particularly Mexican and other Latino workers in California in the 1990s. After a useful introductory essay on demographics and employment, the book turns to look at the experience of hotel, garment, construction, janitorial, and manufacturing workers. Written from a point of view sympathetic to workers’ organizing efforts, the book attempts to explain the origins of and draw the lessons of successful organizing among immigrant workers.


A short book on the factors affecting the organization of farm workers, analyzing different agricultural sectors and regions.


This quite thorough study of agricultural workers in the Great Lakes region, many of the Mexican and Mexican American, “focuses primarily on the class struggle between capitalist employers and seasonal employers,” writes the author. “It is a social history of work,, the labor process, and the world of farmworkers.” The author gives accounts of the major strikes and union organizing activities.


This journalistic study of the current situation of migrant farmworkers, most of them Mexican and Mexican American, deals with the workers, growers, contractors, the process of crossing the border, the “slavery in the fields,” family life, unions and politics,
and the Mexican farmworker back in Mexico. This is the most complete overview of the migrant farmworker today.


This family memoir and photo essay deals with “Okies” working in agriculture in the West, mostly in period form the 1930s to the 1970s. I have included this in this bibliography because of the continuity of experience between Okies and Mexican and Mexican American workers in California.


While this book is not about Mexican or Mexican American workers, and only mentions them in passing in a few pages, I have included it here because anyone studying such workers in California will want to know about the “Okies” who also worked in the state’s fields in the 1930s and 1940s. The agricultural and labor developments of those decades laid the basis for developments experienced by Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the 1950s and after.


Clark Kerr writes of Paul Taylor that, “He belonged to a very unusual breed of what might be called economic anthropologists with an interest in labor problems.” This book contains Taylor’s writings on California agriculture in the 1930s and on agricultural and labor in other areas. Many of the workers’ movements he wrote about were Mexican and Mexican American. At the center of the book and making up most if it stands his “Documentary History of the Strike of the Cotton Pickers in California in 1993.” At the time an important interpretation of unfolding events, today this is an important primary document of the time.


As the title suggests, this essay looks at the relationship between the Latino workforce and the organized labor movement, principally the unions of the AFL-CIO, noting that Latino workers constitute one of the most dynamic sectors of the contemporary American working class. The authors provide a useful overview of many of the key issues facing labor unions and Latino workers in the United States today, in particular point to Latinos as in the vanguard of “social unionism,” “community organizing,” and “Internationalism and North/South solidarity.”

An account of Mexican American and Mexican workers in Descanso, California in the 1940s. The book has much useful information and many interesting insights. Supposedly it was Tuck and López who convinced Fred Ross to take up organizing Mexicans in California. Ross, of course, became the mentor of Cesar Chavez of the United Farm Workers Union.


This memoir, written with the assistance of Craig Scharlin and Lilia V. Villanueva, tells the story of Vera Cruz who was a long-time union activist and served as Vice President of the United Farm Workers union during the era of Cesar Chavez. The book discusses his experience as a worker and activist, as well as his differences with and criticisms of Chavez.

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Files on Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers Union, from 1965 to 1973, compiling a total of 2,021 pages of documents. The documents are available both on-line and on microfilm from SRA. The on-line address is: http://foia.fbi.gov/chavez.htm

These documents provide a valuable account of union activities for the eight years involved.