

BY ALEXIS DAVID

# DOLORES HUERTA

LABOR LEADER



# CHAPTER 1

## Who Is Dolores Huerta?

Workdays began at sunrise. People gathered in a field. They started picking tomatoes. Soon the hot sun was beating down on them. In the field, there was no water to drink. There were no bathrooms either. But they kept working until sunset. Their boss, the grower, demanded it. Ripe fruit had to be picked.

Life for these farm workers was hard. They were paid little. Many people found it unfair. Some tried to help them. Dolores Huerta was one of those people.

Huerta is a **civil rights activist**. When she was a child, the people in power were rarely **Latinx**. They were seldom women. Huerta is both. But that didn't stop her. She was not afraid to be a leader. Her drive encouraged other women of color to speak out. People were inspired by her.

In 1962, Huerta started a **union** with César Chávez. Through the union, they aimed to improve the lives of farm workers. These workers harvest many of the fruits and vegetables we eat. Often, they must bend down to pick the produce. It's hard work. But it is necessary.



A mural in Albuquerque, New Mexico, by artist Jodie Herrera features Dolores Huerta.



In 1975, Huerta (far right) met with the executive board of the United Farm Workers, the union she started with César Chávez.



During the 1970s, Dolores Huerta spoke at many rallies in California to organize farm workers.



In the first half of the 20th century, conditions for farm workers were poor. Growers treated them badly. Huerta often met workers in the fields. Sometimes she held meetings in their homes. They told her they wanted water, toilets, and better wages. Huerta said they needed to work together. She convinced them to protest unfair and unsafe conditions.

The union gave workers a voice. It enabled them to stand up to the growers. Farm **labor** practices changed. This made life better for workers.

Huerta believed things could improve. Because of her hard work, they did. Today, farm workers are still benefiting from her efforts.

A group of Mexican farm workers arrived in California in 1943 as part of the Bracero Program.

