

# HARVESTING HOPE: Larry Itliong's Farmworker Movement

**LESSON/INSTRUCTIONAL UNIT TITLE:** Harvesting Hope: Larry Itliong's Labor Movement

**GRADE LEVEL(S):** 3-5

**LESSON AUTHOR(S):** Elementary School ESOL Teacher

**AUTHOR AFFILIATION (SCHOOL):** International Community School

## SUBJECT AREAS AND STATE PERFORMANCE STANDARDS:

### Grade 3 (Social Studies)

- **SS3CG2a:** Explain the necessity of respecting the rights of others and promoting the common good
- **SS3CG2b:** Explain the necessity of obeying reasonable laws/rules voluntarily and importance of citizen participation in democratic society (staying informed, voting, volunteering, communicating with public officials)

### Grade 4 (Social Studies)

- **SS4CG2:** Explain the importance of freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution [connecting to rights of assembly and petition in labor movements]

### Grade 5 (Social Studies)

- **SS5H6b:** Explain the key events and people of the Civil Rights movement, including:
  - Key events of 1950-1975 [focusing on parallels with farm workers' rights movement]
  - Civil Rights Act and its impact on labor rights
  - Role of civil rights leaders and coalition building
  - Connection to other civil rights activities and movements

## IB FRAMEWORK CONNECTION (optional):

- *Who We Are:* Through Larry Itliong's leadership in the farm workers' movement, students examine fundamental human rights in labor contexts and individual responsibility in creating social change. The unit explores how dignity became central to the movement's demands, connecting personal identity to collective action.
- *Where We Are in Place and Time:* Itliong's journey from Philippines to America at age 15 and his work in Alaska's canneries and California's fields demonstrates how migration patterns shaped labor movements. His story illustrates how immigrant experiences influenced American labor rights development and agricultural history.
- *How We Organize Ourselves:* The formation of AWOC and later UFW shows students how organized labor responds to economic inequities and builds collective power. Itliong's strategic coalition-building between Filipino and Mexican workers demonstrates effective organizational structures for achieving

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worker protections.

*Many IB Learner profiles can be connected to Larry Itliong's Labor Movement:*

### **Inquirers**

- Study newspaper reports and photos from the Delano strike
- Connect farm worker rights to civil rights history
- Research how Filipino and Mexican workers united

### **Principled**

- Explore what makes work rules fair or unfair
- Study how peaceful protests create change
- Learn why leaders chose non-violent methods

### **Risk-Takers**

- Examine how Larry challenged unfair bosses
- Learn why joining strikes took courage
- See how different groups worked as one team

### **Communicators**

- Analyze how workers spread their message
- Study ways different groups shared ideas
- Practice explaining why fair work matters

### **Open-Minded**

- Compare different workers' experiences
- Learn how cultural groups worked together
- Discover different ways to solve problems

## **K-12 ASIAN AMERICAN FRAMEWORK EMPHASIS (optional):**

- **Power and oppression**  
Analyze systemic barriers faced by farm workers  
Examine immigration policy impacts  
Investigate labor law discrimination
- **Resistance and solidarity**  
Study multi-ethnic coalition building strategies  
Examine peaceful protest tactics

## GLOBAL CONNECTION (optional):

- International labor rights
- Immigration patterns
- Social justice movements
- Cultural exchange and identity

## INSTRUCTIONAL TIME OR CLASS SESSIONS REQUIRED:

8-10 class periods (50-60 minutes each)

## BRIEF SUMMARY OF CONTENT BACKGROUND

**Larry Itliong** (1913-1977) was a **pioneering Filipino American labor leader** whose efforts significantly transformed the landscape of **farm workers' rights** in the United States. Immigrating to the U.S. at the age of 15, Itliong faced harsh working conditions in Alaska's canneries and California's agricultural fields. These early experiences instilled in him a profound commitment to **advocating for fair wages, safe working environments, and the dignity of labor**.

In 1965, Itliong led the **Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC)** in the historic **Delano Grape Strike**, a pivotal event in the labor movement. The strike began as a response to poor wages and deplorable working conditions for farm workers. Itliong's leadership was instrumental in **uniting Filipino and Mexican workers**, fostering a sense of **solidarity across ethnic lines**. This unity was crucial in sustaining the strike, which sought to secure better pay and improved labor standards.

Recognizing the need for a more **unified approach**, Itliong **collaborated** with **Cesar Chavez**, a Mexican American labor leader, to form the **United Farm Workers (UFW)**. This **coalition** not only amplified the workers' demands but also brought greater **visibility** to the plight of farm workers nationwide. Itliong's **strategic use of peaceful protests, effective communication, and coalition building** set the foundation for successful labor negotiations and long-term improvements in **labor laws**.

Itliong's legacy extends beyond labor rights; he exemplified how dedicated leadership and collaboration can drive significant **social change**. His efforts paved the way for future generations of labor activists and underscored the importance of **advocating for marginalized communities**.

### Key Contributions:

- *Organizing the 1965 Delano Grape Strike*: Spearheaded a major labor strike that unified Filipino and Mexican farm workers.
- *Founding Member of the UFW*: Played a critical role in establishing the United Farm Workers, enhancing the movement's impact.
- *Advocacy for Filipino American Workers*: Championed the rights and welfare of Filipino farm workers, ensuring their voices were heard.
- *Building Multi-Ethnic Labor Coalitions*: Fostered cooperation among diverse ethnic groups to strengthen the labor movement.
- *Fighting for Immigrant Workers' Rights*: Advocated for fair treatment and legal protections for immigrant laborers, highlighting their essential contributions to agriculture.
- Through his unwavering dedication, Larry Itliong not only improved the lives of farm workers but also left an enduring mark on the broader civil rights movement, demonstrating the power of collective action and persistent advocacy.

## BRIEF SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES/LESSON OUTLINE

Students investigate Larry Itliong's leadership through reading, cause-effect mapping, discussions, and projects. Activities include analyzing workers' rights, exploring First Amendment uses, role-playing organizing strategies, examining communication impacts, and reflecting on his legacy. Lessons are tailored to grades 3-5 standards for engagement and understanding.

## INSTRUCTIONAL UNIT RATIONALE AND BIG IDEA

This multi-day unit explores Larry Itliong's crucial role in the farm workers' movement and civil rights history. Students will analyze primary sources, engage with biographical text, and understand how individuals can create positive social change through leadership and organizing. The unit connects civil rights history, immigration experiences, economic justice, and civic engagement.

**Big Idea:** By standing up for what's right, we can fight for equality and transform lives.

## ESSENTIAL MATERIALS

*Journey for Justice: The Life of Larry Itliong* picture book, multimedia sources, graphic organizers, annotation guides, discussion cards, worksheets, digital slides, reflection handouts, multimedia resources, role-playing cards, planning templates, research tools, presentation software, writing and art supplies, timeline materials, exit tickets, rubrics, multilingual resources.