

ABSTRACT

SOLIDARITY IN THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY, CALIFORNIA COTTON STRIKE OF 1933

A wave of strikes shook California during the Great Depression. Among them, the San Joaquin Valley Strike of 1933 stands out because of the number of workers who participated in it and because of the multiethnic compositions of these workers. This multiethnicity, which could have been a hindrance to their cause, turned out to be their strength. The workers were led by the self-made leader “Big Bill Hamett,” under the umbrella of the Cannery and Agriculture Workers Industrial Union. He bound them together under the brotherhood of labor.

The role that this solidarity played in the success of the strike has been downplayed or overlooked by most of the historiography of the strike. In this thesis, I assert that this uneasy multiethnic alliance turned out to be a key factor in the success of the strike, as the workers bound together against “Big Cotton,” particularly after the Pixley killings.

Alicia Judith Rivera
May 2005