Forgotten Filipinos

Larry Itliiong and the Fight for Labor Rights

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There has been a long history of discrimination towards Asian workers despite facing similar struggles that labor unions fought against.

MEAT vs. RICE
American Manhood against Asiatic Coolieism

Which shall survive?
Nonetheless, Asian-Americans have persisted and have fought for not only labor rights in the US, but for equal rights in general.

One of the most impactful activists was Larry Itliong, a Filipino-American involved in multiple labor strikes from the 1930s-1970s.
“White people were against us. It was very intense”
- Larry Itliiong

Itliiong came to the US at 16 with dreams of being a lawyer and fighting for equality.

His education level and race ended those dreams.
This did not stop Itliong from fighting for mistreated laborers.

Lettuce strike in Washington State (1930)

Formation of Alaska Cannery Workers Union (1933)

Asparagus Strike in Stockton, California (1948)
In May of 1965...

Grape Strike at Coachella Valley

Itliong led the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee to protest the unfair wages.
After 9 days of protest, growers changed wages from $1.20 to $1.40.

“This strike re-enforced our earlier decision to pay the rate.”
- Grower at Coachella Valley, “The Grape Strike Pamphlet” (pg 11)

The successful fight in Coachella Valley inspired the fight in Delano just months later.
Delano Grape Strike of 1965

September 8th, 1965:
Over two thousand Filipino workers from AWOC went on strike.

September 18th, 1965:
Twelve hundred Latino workers from the National Farm Workers Association joined them.
Led by union leaders Cesar Chavez and Larry Itliong, the 5-year strike had amazing impacts on the labor movement.

Not only did it unite Latino and Filipino workers through the formation of the United Farm Workers, but it led to the passage of the Agricultural Labor Relations Act (1975).

-Larry Itliong

“They say we are all equal in rights and justice. We must make sure of it. It is not simply handed to us”