



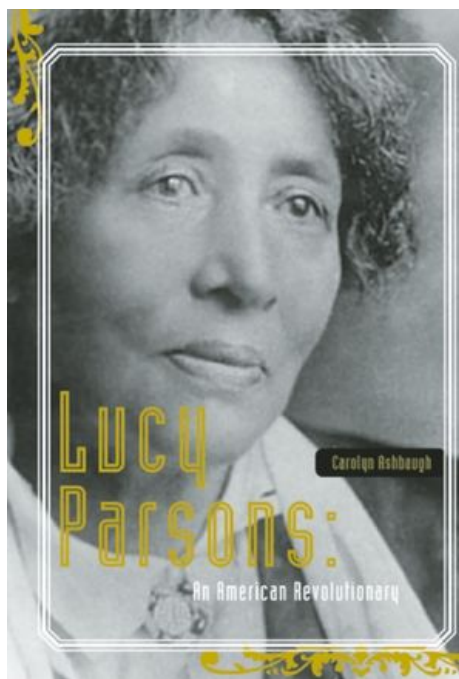
## E-Newsletter | December 2012

### Labor Leaders

Today in the United States, among the many situations that we take for granted are the minimum wage, limits on the numbers of hours we can work, and many other "labor reforms." Corporate and industrial workplaces were not always safe, the conditions were not necessarily sanitary, and the health and welfare of the workers was not a top concern of employers. This month we profile three women whose efforts led to significant labor reforms.

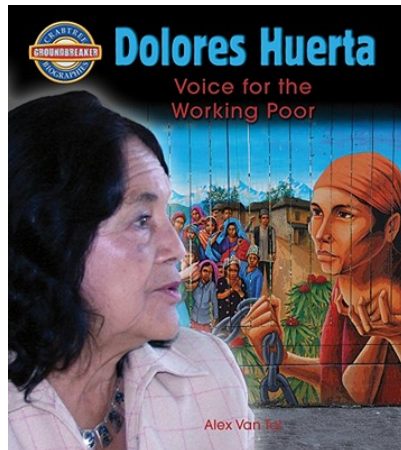
For almost 70 years, Lucy Parsons fought for the rights of the poor and disenfranchised, particularly minorities, and women. Born in Texas around 1853 (and sometimes referred to as Lucy Gonzales), she is remembered for her role in what became known as the Haymarket affair in Chicago, Illinois in 1886. This period marked the beginning of labor unions that often formed after violent actions occurred against workers, and frequently during strikes. After one strike during which workers were wounded and killed, a meeting was called to discuss the situation. The Haymarket meeting turned into a riot; this ultimately led to the arrest, conviction, and execution of her husband. For fifty years after his death, Parsons continued to fight for labor and other rights.

In 1938, Emma Tenayuca led more than 10,000 pecan shellers in a strike. It was the largest strike in San Antonio (Texas) history and the largest community-



Lucy Parsons

based strike by Mexican-Americans in the 1930s. Most of the pecan-shellers were women; they were among the city's poorest workers. The strike occurred after their wages were cut almost in half. In less than two months, the pecan-shellers successfully forced the owners to raise their pay. The Pecan-Shellers' Strike is considered by many historians to be the first significant victory in the Mexican-American struggle for political and economic equality.



Dolores Huerta

California Table Grapes. Huerta's interest in social justice originated from her years as a teacher when she had to witness her students coming to school with empty stomachs and bare feet. Huerta was successful in securing Aid for Dependent Families and disability insurance for farm workers in the State of California in 1963, an unparalleled feat at that time. She was also instrumental in the enactment of the Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975. This was the first law of its kind in the United States; it grants farm workers in California the right to collectively organize and bargain for better wages and working conditions.

Despite enormous difficulties, women such as these have made it possible for the generations after them to live in far better conditions. It is a privilege to share their many accomplishments.

### **Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America**

**Charlotte S. Waisman and Jill S. Tietjen**

**[www.herstoryatimeline.com](http://www.herstoryatimeline.com)**

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