

Paola Garcia Pacheco
Chicano Art
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The early work of Andrew Zermefio

Andrew Zermefio was born in 1935 in Salinas, California and after graduating high school he received a scholarship to study at the California College of Arts and Crafts. He later transferred to, what is now called, the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena. Zermefio is extremely important to the Chicano Civil Rights Movement because he was a strong supporter of the United Farm Workers, led by Cesar Chavez. When Cesar Chavez started the United Farm Workers (UFW) Union news-paper *El Malcriado*, he actually picked Zermefio and asked him to illustrate for the newspaper. What I find the most interesting is the way that Zermefio drew his art in a way for many of the farmworkers to be able to understand. Since many of the farmworkers were illiterate, he used allegory, symbolism, and humor to portray the struggles farmworkers, he illustrated the poor working conditions and showed the urgency to do something about it and join the movement. Zermefio also created posters in order to encourage people to join the strike and boycotts.

In the newspaper for the UFW, *El Malcriado*, Zermefio created a character called Don Socato. Don Socato was created in order to educate the farm workers about their rights and to inspire them to join the union and fight back. The political cartoons "FARMWORKER DON SOTACO" and "PATRONCITO FARMWORKER SANDWICH" are great examples of how Zermefio juxtaposed the farmworker and the greedy land owners. In "FARMWORKER DON SOTACO" we can see a very overweight "patroncito" sitting on a wagon while a very skinny, sweaty, and tired Don Socato does all the heavy lifting. We can also see a whip and a leash keeping Don Socato attached to the carriage. This image was sold in the *El Malcriado* newspaper for less than five dollars so that the average farmworker would be able to buy it, the image is portrays the mistreatment of farmworkers by their bosses in a different and more obvious way. It is meant to represent the hardships that farmworkers have to go through, especially with their poor working conditions and unjust wages. This includes long hours working in the sun, very few breaks, no access to toilets and water as well as the use of the short-handle hoe. In the poster "STOOP LABOR WITH SHORT HANDLE HOE" we can see two farmworkers using the tool. The image shows the way that the short handle makes them bend over with their stooped backs in order to use it. Zermefio did a really good job of portraying how exhausted the farmworkers were when

using the tool by the way that he drew the faces with a lot of emotional exhaustions. The farmworkers are working as hard as they can, as fast as they can and have bags under their eyes. (1) As his drawings were bought and widely seen in the *El Malcriado* newspaper, they helped encourage people to join the union and fight against the injustices of poor working conditions and better pay. People were able to visualize the pain and the injustices against the farmworkers.

Probably one of his more recognized pieces is the "Huelga!" ("Strike!") poster created during the Delano Grape Strike (1965-1970), the longest strike in U.S. history. Huelga, meaning strike, is written in all caps at the bottom of the poster with an exclamation mark. The emaciated farmworker is in the center, he is running, even leaping, while he is screaming and holds the UFW flag. All of this adds to a sense of urgency for justice. The flag with the eagle from the UFW's flag is not the only time the eagle is seen, we can also see it on his shirt and on his sombrero. I believe this indicates a sense of pride in what the UFW stand for, an opportunity for justice. Lastly, a detail about this poster is that Strike was written in Spanish instead of English, which lets us know that this poster was created for the farmworkers, it was a way to mirror their conditions and collectively resist. The farm worker's boot is running for justice, and for the Chicano Civil Rights Movement and the UFW strike. Justice for all.

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El Malcriado

IN ENGLISH

NO. 41

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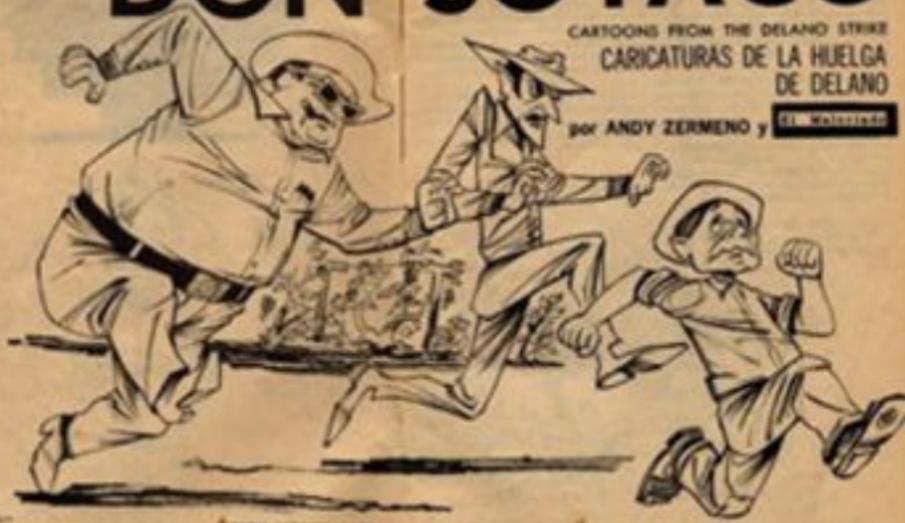


How Patroncito Got So Fat
p. 8

DON SOTACO

CARTOONS FROM THE DELANO STRIKE
CARICATURAS DE LA HUELGA
DE DELANO

por ANDY ZERMENO y **EL WALCARRI**



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