

The National Agricultural
Law Center



University of Arkansas School of Law
NatAgLaw@uark.edu • (479) 575-7646

An Agricultural Law Research Article

**Organizing For Our Lives:
Voices From Rural Communities**

by

Rissa A. Stuart

Originally published in SAN JOAQUIN AGRICULTURAL LAW REVIEW
3 SAN JOAQUIN AGRIC. L. REV. 247 (1993)

www.NationalAgLawCenter.org

BOOK REVIEW

Organizing For Our Lives: New Voices From Rural Communities

Organizing For Our Lives: New Voices From Rural Communities, by Richard Steven Street¹ and Samuel Orozco,² (NewSage Press and California Rural Legal Assistance (1992)), portrays the efforts and accomplishments of California's rural citizens. The photo essay book serves three purposes: commemoration, celebration, and education as to issues pertinent to the rural poor.

First, the book commemorates the twenty-fifth anniversary of California Rural Legal Assistance, an agency which provides countless hours of free legal services to the rural poor. Second, the book is an acknowledgement of the struggles of California's rural citizens, as well as a celebration of their fortitude to pursue better lives and work conditions through activism. Finally, the book is a tool for education. It will enlighten the public as to the plight of the rural poor, but more importantly it will serve as a model for all grassroots organizations striving to enact social change.

The book examines six grassroots organizations, focusing on the people as well as their accomplishments. These groups changed the cultural and political schemes of their individual communities, through group organization and empowerment. The efforts of these citizens is evidenced in the schools, farms, shops, and housing projects within their communities.

¹ Richard Steven Street is a photographer and writer who specializes in California agriculture. His essays and photographs have appeared in national publications. Mr. Street has been the recipient of the World Affairs Council Award for International Journalism, the Lincoln Steffens Investigative Journalism Award, and the James D. Phelan Award for Literature.

² Samuel Orozco is the news director for Radio Bilingue in Fresno, California. Mr. Orozco has worked on several oral history projects including *TO THE PROMISED LAND*, a book about the lives of migrant farm workers in California. For the past seven years Mr. Orozco has been the executive producer of *Noticiero Latino*, an internationally distributed public radio news service.

For those with a vision of social change, following the tactics of the rural poor as depicted in *Organizing For Our Lives* may be the first step toward such change. Many of the social ills of today's society can be tackled by grassroots organizations. The book emphasizes that it is time for citizens to become empowered and dare to challenge the political landscapes of their own community. The message throughout *Organizing For Our Lives* is that we can each make a difference through activism and group organization.

Organizing For Our Lives: New Voices From Rural Communities can be ordered from NewSage Press, 825 N.E. 20th Avenue, Suite 150, Portland, Oregon 97232, (503) 232-6794.

RISSA A. STUART