

# 60th SALT OF THE EARTH



Saturday, March 15, 2014

Today we mark the 60th Anniversary of the benchmark film *Salt of the Earth* in the birthplace of incidents which inspired the story.

## Recognition, Celebration, and the Continued Struggle for Justice

Historic events, the Empire Zinc Strike and *Salt of the Earth* Film, are keystones of the proud heritage of Grant County, and all of New Mexico's working families.

We gather to honor the elders who sacrificed so much in the fight for dignity, equity, and justice.

We gather, and commit to memory, the lessons of *Salt of the Earth*, in hope that events of the historic struggle need never be repeated.

We gather to both celebrate how far we have come down the road of justice, and unify our community to meet the challenges of today.

The film's plot centers on the long and difficult 1951 strike against the Empire Zinc Company in Grant County, New Mexico.

The victorious Empire Zinc Strike brought numerous positive changes for the Grant County Community. Beyond the equitable pay and treatment which Chicano Miners won through the strike, the Women who fought in the strike sparked advances in the movement for gender equality, area schools began hiring Chicana teachers, a credit union helping the community was born, and the roots of justice took hold.

*Salt of the Earth* was blacklisted for many years as being too inflammatory in exposing issues the Federal Government wanted suppressed. Thankfully, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice," [MLK jr.] and the Film *Salt of the Earth* has only grown in popularity and earned a place in America's story.

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## **"From Women's Auxiliary to Women of Steel"**

### *Panel Discussion*

**Ericka Wills** (Moderator) - Labor educator for United Steelworkers and PhD candidate at Illinois State University. Ms. Wills uses *Salt of the Earth* in union and university classrooms to teach about Southwest mining history, women in the labor movement, and struggles for ethnic equality.

**Rachel Valencia** - Educator - A life long activist and strong advocate for the preservation of *Salt of the Earth* era history. Ms Valencia was on the picket line in 1951, she was run down and dragged by a car on the day Empire's Zinc tried to break the line.

**Anita Torrez**, A veteran of both the film and the 1950 strike, Ms. Torrez dedicated her life to the continuing struggle for working people's rights. Together with her late husband, Lorenzo Torrez, she began the Salt of the Earth Labor School in Tucson, Arizona

**Sonia Montoya** - Educator (Grand Niece of Juan Chacon) - Ms. Montoya has dedicated her career to the social justice movement, to the studies of American and Labor History, Chicana Feminist thought, and will discuss her written work and research about her grandparents contribution to the strike, in particular, the role of her grandmother.

**Dr. Luis Quiñones** - Educator, Writer, Activist, He teaches Chicano/a Studies, bilingual poetry, Mariachi, Ballet Folklórico, and more. He has dedicated his career to the betterment of education. He is a researcher regarding the Empire Zinc Strike and movie *Salt of the Earth*.

**Robert LaVenture** - Director of the United Steel Workers, District 12, has a storied career in the labor movement. Tracing his roots back to his home state of Wisconsin, he has championed employee training and education and helped to establish many employee education centers. He will speak about the growth of Women's Auxiliary into Women of Steel, current southwest mining negotiations.

### SPONSORS

United Steelworkers [USW]; American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees [AFSCME]; International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees [IATSE]; New Mexico Federation of Labor; Western New Mexico University [WNMU]; KURU 89.1-Gila Mimbres Community Radio; Murray Hotel-Silver City; Silver City & Cobre Education Associations; Suntreat Beverages; Southwestern New Mexico Green Chamber of Commerce; Silver City Private Citizens; and YOU! MUSIC SPONSORS: Mimbres Region Arts Council; Judith Helzner; Holiday Inn Express;

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