

TEACHER'S GUIDE
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MISSION 5: "Up from the Dust"

Oklahoma Tenant Farmers' Union

Founded in Arkansas in 1934, the interracial Southern Tenant Farmers' Union (STFU) had two goals: to protect sharecroppers and tenant farmers from eviction by planters and to ensure that they received their share of the money due from Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) payments to landowners. By 1935, the Oklahoma Tenant Farmers' Union had seventy-five hundred members in numerous Oklahoma communities. It argued for decent living wages for field workers, an extension of a wage-and hour law to include agricultural labor, lower interest rates on loans for farmers, federal protection of migratory workers' civil liberties, and stable market prices. This photograph, taken in 1939, reflects the interracial membership of the Oklahoma Tenant Farmers Union, unusual for its time and place.



Source: Russell Lee, "Meeting of some members of the Oklahoma tenant farmers' union. Muskogee, Oklahoma," photograph; from Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division Washington, D.C., <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/fsa.8b22435>