

# Children of a Mexican Migrant

## By Dorothea Lange



### Emotional

I can't imagine what these kids are feeling. They might feel scared because of everything that's happening, losing their home to the dust bowl, having one of their parents work their butt off trying to make enough money that will just barely let them survive. They might feel sad or miserable because they hear their parents talking about what is happening. They might feel angry, furious at the hand they've been given, throwing them into the middle of the Dust Bowl. Or they could be feeling whatever their parents are feeling, picking up on their energy and subconsciously mirroring their behaviour because they don't know what to do and what their parents are doing must be right. While they may be feeling all of these negative emotions, there is a small possibility that they might feel a small sliver of happiness. For they have each other and they have survived through bad things. They know they have to have hope.

### Composition

The subject, two young children, are standing slightly to the left of the center, on one of the lines of the rule of thirds grid. The older of the two has her hand behind her younger brother's back, leaning into him. They are both thin and are most likely malnourished. The older of the two is wearing a dress and fixing her hair, while the younger one is wearing a shirt and shorts and looks to be waving at the camera. Their facial expressions are difficult to read, although they look neither happy nor sad. The children are standing in front of a tent in which they probably live. There also seems to be some type of structure that they are standing in front of. The children do not look dirty, although they do not have shoes and could look cleaner, they are standing on a path made of dirt. If this picture was taken with modern technology it would probably be in color and there would probably be different light set ups to get the optimal lighting.

### Subject

These two young children are standing in front of a tent in which they most likely live. They probably have a decent sized family that they squish into the tent, everyone not quite fitting comfortably, or maybe even at all. If they have siblings old enough it is very possible that they work alongside one or both of their parents, harvesting up and down the state making sure that they have at least enough to put some food on the table. Even if they work every harvest they don't have enough for much of anything. They most likely sleep on the floor, possibly with a blanket and pillow if they are lucky. Despite everything that is happening, they probably still go out and play with the other children in the labor camp or go to school during the day, and try to make light of the situation that they're in.

### Light

The natural light is coming from above with nothing blocking it, hitting the two children across the older's waist area, and the younger's side diagonally. This particular photograph is a high key shot, with a light background. Where the light hits the children's face, it is casting a round shadow upon the elder's face and a slight butterfly shadow on the younger one's face. There is a shadow cast onto the tent that the children are standing in front of. It looks like it was made by a windmill or something like that or something with that sort of shape. Most of the tent is in shadow, but there is a small part of it that is not. The path on the ground lit in the middle and has the shadow of the tent cast upon the rest. The entirety of this picture is mostly in shadow, except the children and the few spots on the tent. This shot is softer lighting and has a low contrast.

### Histoical

This photo was taken during difficult times, not only for these kids and their family but for everyone. The Great Depression hit and about a year later The Dust Bowl. These kids, located in San Luis Obispo, had it hard. They were the children of a Migrant Mexican and lived in a labor camp, in a tent. The Great Depression was a big recession in the economy that was caused by a multitude of different reasons, the most predominant being the stock market crash. People had invested money into the stock market because it was doing well but the stock prices fell. When people tried to sell their stocks and get their money back, it made the stock market fall even further and crash. Companies were failing and people were losing jobs, which meant they couldn't buy as much, and in turn the companies didn't have to make as much product, which led to more people losing jobs. To make matters worse, The Dust Bowl hit the great plains about a year later. The Dust Bowl was a series of dust storms that circulated around midwest. Farmers had land and successful crops, but they kept planting and harvesting without fertilizing the soil, resulting in the deprivation of nutrients, and it all turned to dust sitting on the ground. When winds started up, it picked up all of the dust easily and blew it around, making the air unbreathable and causing people to run for cover. It got so bad that people were hanging sheets over their doors and windows to keep their houses dust free, making so that they couldn't leave and in turn they weren't making any money. Quite a few people ended up migrating to the west to find work and to live in safety. When they reached the west they were lucky if they were able to secure a job as a migrant farmer.