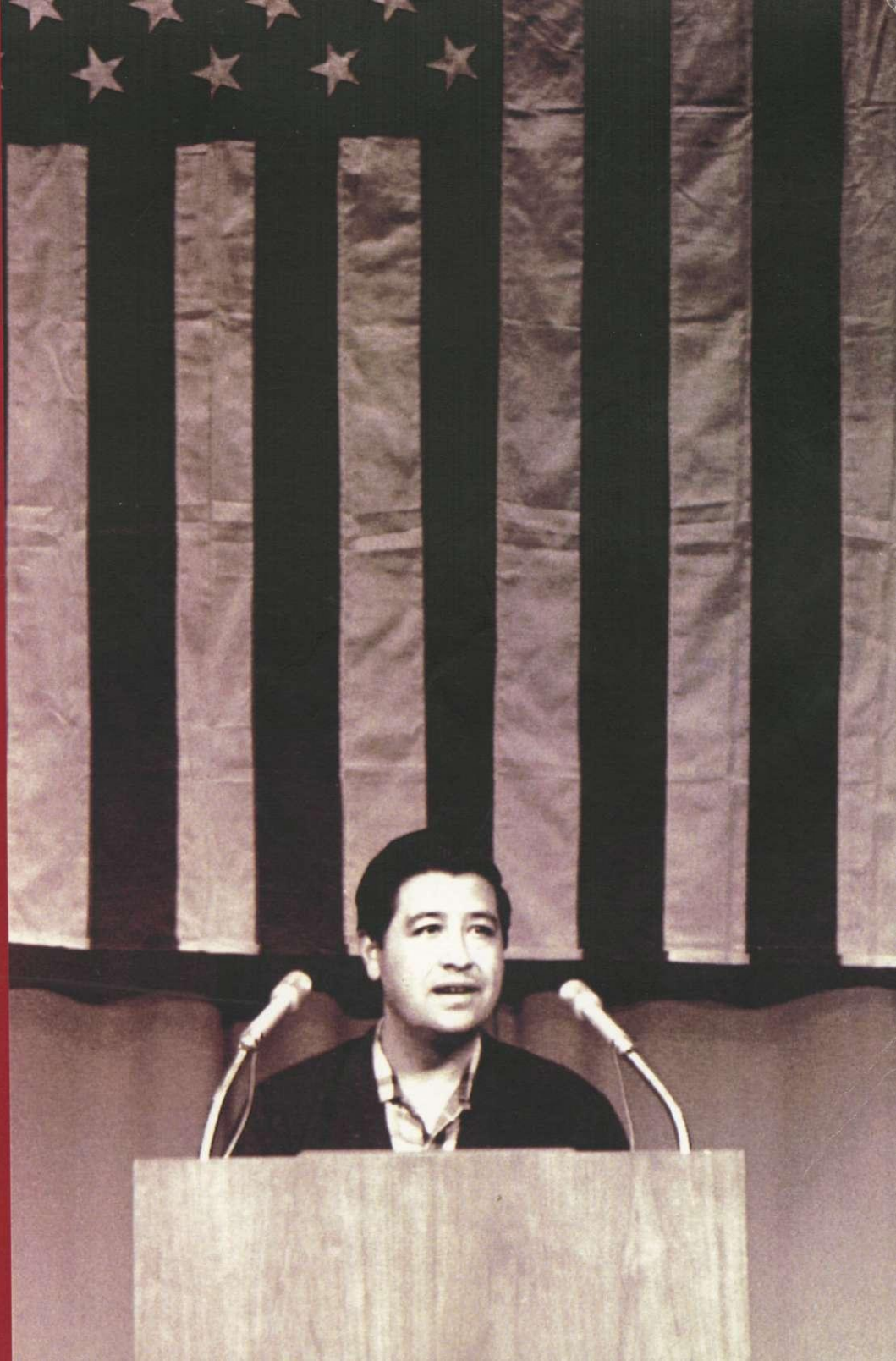
# An American Leader - Cesar E. Chavez



# AN AMERICAN LEADER – CESAR E. CHAVEZ

## March 29 to August 18, 2000

# THE LATINO MUSEUM OF HISTORY, ART AND CULTURE

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## FROM THE CHAIRMAN

**Charles M. Calderon**

The future of the Latino community will depend not merely on whether it can continue to grow its numbers but rather, whether it can make the transition from a minority to a majority - whether it can improve the quality of life not only for itself, but for all Americans.

From campesinos to Kennedys, Cesar E. Chavez inspired a nation by his dream and won its heart with his passion. Americans came from all over the country and from all walks of life. They worked for room and board plus five dollars a month so that farm workers could earn a decent wage and enjoy a decent quality of life. Cesar E. Chavez is an American leader and an example of the leadership the Latino community has to offer the country.

The Latino Museum is pleased to present **AN AMERICAN LEADER - CESAR E. CHAVEZ**. These combined works have never before been presented in any museum. We are proud to present the work of these Americans as testament to the character and strength of a community ready to lead.

## Foreword

## Organizing America

**by Denise Lugo, Director**

It gives me great pleasure to present the exhibition **"An American Leader - Cesar E. Chavez."** This seminal exhibition chronicles Cesar E. Chavez's organizing work from the 1960s to the late 1990s. Cesar E. Chavez was successful in the organization of farm workers, where for decade's earlier, organizing efforts had been foiled. The United Farm Workers (UFW) changed American history. Before unionization, farm laborers toiled in the soil, yet were denied the basic living conditions of clean water, toilets and housing facilities. This condition existed in the wealthiest country in the world, yet they were paid third world wages!

This exhibition also includes UFW co-founder Dolores Huerta's historical role in those turbulent years as well as the concurrent struggles of the Civil Rights Movement during the 1960s. The narrative images, that chronicle Huerta's contributions, inspire and provide a global mentorship and positive role model for women and children alike.

Adhering to TLM's mission, this exhibition highlights Latino contributions to American history and not only focuses on providing an aesthetic experience, but also centers on a strong educational content for teachers, students and the public. Photographers, painters and graphic artists created the content of this visual contemporary historical exhibition. Narrative visual and auditory materials and popular artifacts of this period provide historical context.

The journey through the museum underscores the harsh realities and human sacrifice of Chavez's Gandian philosophy of non-violence within the American Civil Rights Movement. The photographic area of this exhibition features six artists whose work speaks of the historical struggle for dignity by farm workers. Captured are timeless images of Cesar E. Chavez with various personalities such as Robert and Ethyl Kennedy and their children. Also included are images of Reverend Jessie Jackson, Corretta King, Dr. Reverend Abernathy, Edward James Olmos, Martin Sheen, California political leaders and many of the American people whom he met and worked with across our nation. Most of the photographers worked with Cesar E Chavez for extended periods while he was organizing. These images are imbedded in our history and have shaped our consciousness.

On one level, the photography provides a critical illuminating view of the farm workers in California that harks back to Dorothea Lang's gritty 1935 FSA (Farm Securities Administration) photographs of California's agrarian development. Within American contemporary history, these eyewitnesses provide us with a legacy to simulate change.

Included in the exhibition are other seven artists who used their painting and printing skills to create images that reflected their own mode of Figurative Expressionism. Carlos Almaraz's famous 1971 mural, Barbara Carrasco's silk screen images of Dolores Huerta and Margaret Garcia's painting functioned as historical documentary pieces for the United Farm Workers.

## CESAR E. CHAVEZ IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CLASSROOM

**by Alyce Quiñonez-Rodriguez**

My first year in High School stands out to me for two important events. One was the fact that I had two Latino teachers, Mr. Segovia and Ms. Hernandez, something that would not occur again until my first year of graduate school. Secondly, I learned about Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers for the first time. All my teachers up until this point had been Caucasian and my studies in history, literature and current events had thus far been profoundly middle class American.

Ms. Hernandez was a young Chicana with a progressive agenda and a desire to make a difference both for her students and the community. Needless to say, Ms. Hernandez lasted one school year at my high school. But her English lessons and insights about race, class and gender remain with me to this day. Mr. Segovia had far less influence on me personally, however; he introduced me to a man and a movement, which has been an inspiration in my teaching.

One warm afternoon in 1972 a young man came to our classroom as a guest speaker, he spoke to us about Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers. He described the arduous conditions in which farm workers lived and worked. He spoke of the important work of organizing workers being done in Delano. It was difficult for me to believe that people would be enduring such hardship and unjust labor conditions in 1972. When our speaker ended his talk and started the discussion, we were all eager to find out what we (students) could do to help the movement. He went on to explain about boycotts and how we could avoid shopping at certain chain markets in our neighborhood. He ended stating that help would be needed that summer on picket lines and marches. My friends and I left class that day excited about what we could do to help "El Movimiento."

That night at home, I sat in our family kitchen as my Mom made dinner, enthusiastically retelling the story of the farm workers and the difficult labor conditions which they were enduring. I spoke to my Mom about the children in the fields and the dangerous conditions that they faced. Then I asked my Mom if I could help the movement that summer. My Mom stopped cooking and told me that although she understood exactly what the farm workers were going through, I would not be able to help that summer. I was shocked that my mother, a caring and compassionate woman was saying this to me.

"I have not worked hard all my life to see you, my daughter, back in the hot fields I left behind." As she spoke these words I realized something I had never been fully aware of before. Both my mother and father had spent much of their youth in the fields themselves. That night, and for many years to follow, I learned about how my mother and her family worked in the fields until she moved to Los Angeles with her mother and worked as a seamstress. Names and places such as Yuma, Arvin and the DiGiorgios took on new meaning for me through my mother's stories. My father worked in the fields of Texas but he hated talking much about that time in his life. The knowledge based on these oral histories made the necessity of the UFW more of a reality to me.

When I entered the classroom as an educator, the lessons I first learned in 1972 played out with equal importance in the formulation of my lessons. Firstly, as a Latina, my mere presence in the classroom would have a great influence on my students. With that responsibility

noted, it was important that the lessons I taught address the Latino community. With that said, I knew this curriculum would include an educational unit, which reflected the significance of important individuals in the Latino community and their contributions to American society at large.

Every spring I would take the opportunity to study Cesar Chavez and the UFW. Regardless of grade or age, students were always intrigued to learn about families and children like themselves who worked to bring food to their tables. What better way to illustrate to my students that we all have a voice, regardless of race, wealth or education.

Cesar E. Chavez was a model that they could relate to, someone that looked like their dad or tio (uncle). A man who didn't go to work in a business suit or BMW, yet met with politicians and movie stars. More importantly, a man who saw a great injustice and spoke up even if it wasn't the popular thing to do. He illustrated all the lessons that we educators long to instill in our students. Cesar Chavez was a man of principles and values and he worked hard to achieve his goals. Sometimes, many times, he was defeated, but he always picked himself up and journeyed forward.

Chavez represents the face of many others, like my parents, who toiled in the fields and remain faceless. Today our students' parents work in similar situations enduring long hours in sweatshops for meager wages. It is this common person, the everyday worker that really makes a difference in our society. The men and women of the UFW, who did without for months and sometimes years, in order to make a difference in working conditions for those to follow. These are the lessons that we all choose to teach our children, the work ethic that transcends borders; a work ethic that speaks to the fact that all men and women are paid a just wage and enjoy humane working conditions. Through these images and examples our students will become the citizens we wish them to be.

For this reason, it is imperative that today's youth be presented with figures in the classroom, both in the curriculum, as well as in front of the classroom, as educators, community leaders and guest speakers that reflect the reality of America in the year 2000. Cesar E. Chavez, Dolores Huerta and activists such as, Juana Gutierrez and the Mothers of East L.A., who reside in our communities, guide our students to a place of greater self-worth. If we value each other and the lessons we have to share, how much richer our classrooms will be.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

## Curator's Statement

**by Kent Kirkton**

Documentary style photography, for it is a style, raises a plethora of questions. What is of the photographer? What does the subject contribute? What about the functioning of the camera, the choice of film? Color or black and white? But, these are the wrong questions because they are about the medium rather than the narrative. It is the narrative, the story being told that is important here.

Over the years, a number of great photographers have adopted different styles to advance their stories. Walker Evans' work is marked by simplicity, precision, and a penetrating, even piercing clarity of vision. His method of working was so determinedly realist that at first glance his images may seem unremarkable. Yet they are anything but. Even the title of his book, *American Photographs*, suggest the ambiguity inherent in categorizing his work. Dorothea Lange, a colleague of Evans, produced images that were far less ambiguous. They revealed the extent of her empathy for her subjects by showing us the humanity, the sturdiness, and the inner strengths of her subjects even in the midst of great poverty and strife. "Migrant Mother," one of her better known images is imbued with these qualities.

When Swiss photographer Robert Frank turned his attention to the United States, he produced a very different set of photographs. While these photographs were none-the-less truthful, they were dramatically different in subject and approach. Frank traveled across the States on a Guggenheim Foundation grant in a Plymouth sedan, staying in motels, and eating in diners. He made himself available to all of his experiences on that trip, whether he stumbled onto a baptism in Mississippi or a parade in New York. It was an existential journey for him. He was not in search of subjects to help him tell his story. He produced his story by engaging whatever subjects presented themselves to him. He was touring, not searching and his rough edged, responsive approach to the medium was a dramatic change from the stylistics we were used to seeing. He invoked a harshness through a lack of concern for technique that upset the critics and influenced a generation of photographers.

In recent years, Sabastian Salgado has engaged the documentary tradition in dramatic fashion. His powerful images of laborers around the world awaken us to what those who are not a part of the economic well-being of first world countries are enduring. And he has done this in some of the most dramatic and compositionally powerful images one can imagine. There is no lack of aesthetic sensibility in his work. Yet, it is always somehow subjugated to the unfolding drama which is taking place in front of his camera.

These photographers have told their stories in different ways. They have employed different stylistics to approach their subjects, yet they are all documentarians. What they have in common is their trust in the narrative and their commitment to their subjects. As in literature, there are different ways to shape the non-fiction narrative, so too are there in photography. It is the commitment to the subject and the truth that are essential.

The photographers whose work makes up "An American Hero: Cesar E. Chavez" know this very well. They were all drawn to Cesar by the message of strength and dignity that he offered. Like Cesar, they recognized the contribution that farm workers were making to

California and realized what little respect was being afforded to these families. And, like Cesar, they made the commitment to tell this story to the people of California and the world.

It was no easy job working for Chavez and the farm workers. Pay was little or non-existent. Conditions were difficult at best. Meals were whatever could be pulled together out of the occasionally limited supplies at Filipino Hall. And, the threat of arrest or attack was always there. But, these photographers were committed to doing their part in the struggle for human rights.

Their images tell the story of that struggle. They let you know how lonely and difficult that struggle is at times and how tough the opposition has been. They also show you the pride and strength of character of the people who were willing to make the sacrifices necessary for the movement to succeed.

As a group, they were there from the beginning, making the 300 mile march (peregrinacion) from Delano to Sacramento, working the picket lines and boycotts, traveling to help workers in Texas. They saw Cesar through his fasts and went on speaking tours with him. They confronted police and irate ranchers. They learned to eat new and different foods, to suffer through the heat and cold of the San Joaquin Valley, and to develop film in the insufferably hot labor camp houses in Linnell. But most of all, they developed a narrative line that keeps that struggle alive for us today. As the struggle continues under the guidance of Arturo Rodriguez and the continuing leadership of Dolores Huerta, the photographers extend their story.

These images tell us about the individuals who grew into the United Farm Workers of America. They tell us of the solidarity that they created and of the sacrifices they made and the joys they shared. We can clearly understand the heroic nature of what they accomplished. It also becomes clear that Cesar emerged from this struggle as one of the great humanitarians of this century, that he helped people discover inside themselves the dignity that was denied to them by others. What these photographers and everyone who worked with him know, better than anyone, is that he did this as the first among equals rather than a man interested in his own gain. It is around this central fact that these narratives are constructed.

The admiration of these photographers for Cesar is clearly stated here and as well as for all of the others who joined the struggle. They tell the story of hundreds of men and women who joined Cesar to see to it that those who work the fields gained the respect and consideration that is their due. Their images bring the daily events of the struggle into sharp focus for us. We are privy to the intensity of the Friday night meetings in Filipino hall, the chill of the winter picket lines, and the threat of danger. We are introduced to the inspired antics of Teatro Campesino and the long days of the march to Sacramento as well as the respites provided by supporters along the way. We take note of the many people who joined in support of the boycotts and marches.

And, in the end, the ordinary becomes extraordinary. These photographers have created a narrative about extraordinary commitment. Thousands of farm workers with Cesar Chavez in the lead, forged a space in American history which demands that we honor their commitment to claim respect and dignity for those who toil in the fields and orchards. It is left for us to read between the frames to see the same commitment on the part of these photographers.

## REFLECTIONS ON MY FATHER

**by Paul F. Chavez**

My father believed money, status or power does not measure a person's wealth. In eulogizing a young farm worker slain during a 1979 strike he said, "It is better measured by the legacy we leave behind for those we love and those we inspire."

Indeed, by strictly material standards, he was not very successful. He didn't have a college degree. His formal education ended at the eighth grade - although he was very well read. He never owned a house. He didn't own a car. He never made more than $6,000 a year. And when he died in 1993 at the age of 66, he left no money for his family.

Yet, more than 40,000 people marched behind the plain pine casket at his funeral, and in the seven years since his death millions more have drawn inspiration from his message and from how he lived his life.

Why do people continue to be drawn to him? A son can offer a few answers.

He founded, and for more than 30 years, led the first successful farm workers union in American history. But as his critics often complained, it was - and is - more than a union. n a 1984 speech to the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco, he said the United Farm Workers "attacked that historical source of shame and infamy that our people in this country lived with."

By successfully organizing farm workers for the first time, he observed, "we created confidence and pride and hope in an entire people's ability to create the future."

Moreover, "the union's survival--its very existence--sent out a signal to all Latinos that we were fighting for our dignity, that we were challenging and overcoming injustice, that we were empowering the least educated among us - the poorest among us. The message was clear: "If it could happen in the fields, it could happen anywhere - in the cities, in the courts, in the city councils, in the state legislatures."

Although for years he resisted being labeled as a national leader for Latinos, he also knew his work was having a far-reaching impact. "Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed," he declared in the same 1984 speech. "You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore."

I think another reason people were attracted to him was how unassuming and down-to-earth he was. He walked among presidents and popes, but he never thought of himself as anything but a humble farm worker.

He was not a great orator; he was soft-spoken. Unless you knew who he was, he was easy to lose in a crowd. Yet, people saw in him their own fathers and brothers, their friends and neighbors. And they said to each other - and to themselves - if someone like Cesar Chavez can make a difference, then so can I.

He liked to say that the organizer's job is to help ordinary people do extraordinary things - with the right commitment and a willingness to sacrifice. And he did. After five years of striking and boycotting, the original 1965 Delano grape strikers did the impossible by challenging - and overcoming - the awesome power of California agribusiness.

My father's life was not beyond reach and neither was his example. "It is only by giving our lives that we find life," he said at the end of his first long public fast for *non-violen*ce in 1968. That was also how he lived his life. By doing so, he inspired millions of good people from all walks of life to be their brother's keeper. And that is the measure of a truly wealthy man.

---

(Paul F. Chavez, one of Cesar Chavez's eight children, is president of the National Farm Workers Service Center Inc., the non-profit, tax-exempt organization his father founded in the 1960s. It operates Radio Campesina, a growing network of five successful Spanish-language radio stations in three states, and continues building thousands of units of high-quality affordable housing for farm workers and other needy people.)

## MEMORIES AND LESSONS

**by Miguel Contreras**

The day after Cesar Chavez's death in 1993, his son-in-law and successor as United Farm Workers president, Arturo Rodriguez, said the UFW founder's life "can be compared to the stone that gets cast into the middle of a pond. From its impact, ripples grow in ever widening circles."

Among those ripples are thousands of men and women who began their social and political activism with the UFW. Today they are leaders in labor, politics, government, the professions and in communities across the country where they live.

I'm one of them.

I never went to college. The most important lessons about courage and self-worth that I learned in life came from two farm workers who didn't even attend high school: Cesar Chavez and my late father, Julio Contreras. Neither thought of themselves or us as the growers did, as agricultural implements. They showed us that in life we must stand up and fight *non-violen*tly for what's right; we couldn't be docile. That spirit is still with me.

Like so many Latinos, the Contreras family's roots in America came from the fields, where both my father and his sons labored.

My father had only six years of schooling before he left Mexico. He came to this country as a bracero farm worker during World War II and settled in the small Tulare County farm town of Dinuba. He met my mother, Esther, in the fields. They married and had six sons; I'm the fourth. He labored most of his working life on the same 400-acre grape and fruit tree ranch. After we turned four or five, all of us sons worked there too. He knew the ranch and all the equipment inside and out.

Agricultural experts from Fresno State would come to test the fruit for sweetness, color or texture. My father could tell by looking. He knew how much water and sun it had received that season, and how it was pruned. He never had his name on the boxes, but my father took great pride in raising the best grapes and nectarines.

We almost moved to Los Angeles in the early 1960s. The family was growing and there wasn't enough room in the tiny one-bedroom shack with outside toilets where we lived on the farm.

The grower, Mr. Anderson, pleaded with my father not to go. He promised wood to build extra space onto our shed. Six years later it was condemned by the county. My father bought a little burned-out house in town. We tore down the shed and used the wood to rebuild our home in Dinuba.

None of us ever talked with the next owner, L.R. Hamilton, in all the years we worked on his ranch, even though we'd see him driving by the fields in his big blue Cadillac.

By 1969, our family became activists with Cesar's United Farm Workers. We traveled on weekends to the Bay Area to hand out leaflets at supermarkets for the grape boycott.

One hot day in July 1970, L.R. Hamilton gathered about 250 of his workers in a large tractor shed. He explained how he and all the grape growers were being "blackmailed" by the grape boycott into signing UFW contracts. He said railroad carloads of his grapes were returned unsold from Boston.

In the middle of his speech, my father was one of the first workers to throw his hat up in the air and yell, "Viva Chavez!" L.R. Hamilton angrily got back in his Cadillac and sped away.

For three years, my father was the elected head of the union committee at the ranch. I was a member too. We spent hours dispatching workers to jobs from our kitchen table, honoring the seniority list.

All that changed in 1973, at 4:30 in the morning our three-year UFW contract expired. The ranch supervisor and crew bosses assembled the entire Contreras family in front of our little home and with the headlights from their pickup trucks shinning in our eyes, they fired us all. "Julio," the supervisor told my father, "you're the best worker we ever had, but we can't have any more Chavistas."

All my father had to show for 24 years of hard labor on that land was his name being placed on the growers' blacklist of UFW supporters who were not to be hired. (Being Chavistas, we had to drive two and a half hours north to Lodi to find work.)

Our family was dejected. The rest of the fired workers were scared. I knew how much my father was hurting, but he didn't let it show. If he showed defeat as head of the union committee, then everyone else would be defeated too.

My father led the strike at L.R. Hamilton. I was arrested 18 times in three months for violating unconstitutional anti-picketing court injunctions. He was arrested more than that. This was still the era of the '60s; going to jail wasn't a big deal for me. It was for my father. He had never been arrested. He paid his taxes and obeyed the law. Even in the hardest of times, my father never accepted welfare.

When Cesar Chavez called on strikers to volunteer for another grape boycott, my father strongly suggested that I represent our family. I didn't even know Toronto was in another country when I left home for the first time.

My father became an American citizen at age 75, a few years before he died. It was his way of fighting back against the anti-immigrant hysteria. By voting, he wanted to send a message to his grandchildren that they too have to take a stand. It was the same message he sent his sons nearly 27 years ago on those vineyard picket lines.

Hopefully, his grandchildren will never have to take a stand that demands the sacrifices my father and his sons endured more than a quarter century ago. Those memories and the lessons we learned from Cesar Chavez and Julio Contreras will stay with us always.

--- (Miguel Contreras became Executive-Secretary Treasurer of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO in 1996. Since then, the largest central labor body in the U.S. has become a powerful force for political and labor organizing.)

## REMEMBERING MY BOSS AND FRIEND, CESAR CHAVEZ

**by Susan Samuels Drake**

What would Cesar Chavez think about this exhibit? Who knows how he'd feel deep down inside? But I like to imagine him peering at each image, calling his companions to come see something he finds particularly interesting–he loved to sop up new information. He would probably chuckle over some parts and get teary-eyed about others. And if someone wanted to credit him with starting the ball rolling on spotlighting Latinos, I think he'd have said something like, "*Tu sabes,* when I look at all these pictures, I have to say that you should give credit, send your *mil gracias,* to thousands of farm workers."

I knew Cesar for three decades. I met the shy, eyes-down, 35-year-old, just a little more than a month after he left the Community Service Organization to move to Delano and begin organizing farm workers (1962). Three years later, I joined hundreds of Filipino, African-American, Chicano and Mexicano farm workers in Delano's Filipino Hall for weekly Friday night meetings about the Grape Strike. By the time I last saw Cesar, he had led thousands of members of United Farm Workers into nearly 100 labor contracts, organized even more consumers into boycotts and more laborers into renewed interest in labor unions. He'd also learned to look everyone in the eye.

Cesar, of course, isn't the only reason that Latinos stand tall in California and around this country, but he is a big part of that celebration. Why is that? Who knows if many farm workers will attend this exhibit? Yet, all across this country, streets, parks, schools and health clinics are being renamed for this small man with grand ideas. Why?

Because he walked the talk.

- Farm workers exist on very low year-round incomes; Cesar earned the same or less.
- He worked 12 - 18 hours a day...and played well. He loved to shoot pool and dance.
- He took care of his body and spirit: hiked, practiced yoga; traded cigarettes for soybeans, Diet Rite colas for carrot juice; prayed and meditated.
- He was constantly curious, reading philosophy, labor and management texts, spiritual texts, and newspapers.
- By repeating the phrase, "Can you imagine...?" he inspired and involved people in his partnership.
- Non-violence was a tool he took seriously. Temperamental himself, he taught what he himself strove to achieve.
- Most important, he made people feel special. He attended weddings and funerals of the de la Cruz and Torrones families as well as Bobby Kennedy's family. He was no more friendly with Coretta Scott King and Andrew Young than with a farm worker from deep in Mexico whom he met for the first time, or an African-American he met in a New York elevator . This son of Mexicans, himself born in Arizona, made stars shine: Anthony Quinn, Robert Blake, Jane Fonda, Joan Baez, Mary Travers, and Kris Kristofferson raised funds, spoke on his behalf. Artists write songs and books, paint murals and illustrate books about Cesar. Well-known or not, he made a point of making individuals feel unique and radiant in his eyes.

Cesar was human. He was not without faults that frustrated, irritated and infuriated. It was hard for him to say, "I'm sorry." He spent nights on the road with the boycott staffs around the country or negotiating contracts when he might rather have been curled up reading to his eight children before they fell asleep in a house with two bedrooms, one for the kids, one for Cesar and Helen. His absences imposed a kind of single motherhood onto Helen. His mother was often lonesome for him. He and his family paid dearly for his commitment to farm workers.

This exhibit honoring farm workers leaves us with two options: We can enjoy the trip into the past, shake our heads and say, "Wasn't it fine." Or, as I imagine Cesar would urge us, we can let his example and this exhibit ignite something magic inside ourselves, that will spur us into action.

Where might you take your own leadership talents? And you have them, you know. Cesar would have made sure you believed that.

## Poems by Susan Samuels Drake

### Unskilled?

Anyone
who has maintained a successful garden
knows
anyone
who says farm workers are unskilled
lies.

### Give Me Your Hungry

From across the Mexican border he comes
in a cast-off school bus
or broken-down truck
that sometimes dumps him in the desert
before he ever sees work.

If he's lucky,
the labor contractor, *el coyote*, takes him
into the lush farm lands of California
of Texas, Arizona, Ohio,
New Jersey, Michigan, Washington, Idaho.
He comes with arms to
plant
pluck
he bends
bends
bends
and reaches
reaches
reaches
for food
he barely has enough money
to buy for himself.
At the end of the day
the contractor's bus takes him far from town
where no one will see
he pays to live in squalor
with the heat–or the wind--
slicing the walls of a labor camp.

Without a car to drive into town for movies,
the *campesino* plays cards,
bets on illegal cockfights,
longs for the hug of his wife
the play-filled squeals of his children.

And, if he's lucky,
the *patrón* won't keep all the money
for the bus ride
for the food
for the bunk.

## Boycott

"Boycott grapes"
heard in Berkeley classrooms
in New York produce terminals
on the docks in England
and on the floor of Hawaii's legislature.

Many grape pickers couldn't afford
to be philosophical
about justice.
They would not walk out of the vineyards
or risk being seen at union meetings
knowing they were easily
replaced.

So
as if to hold each worker's hand
the public picketed grocers
strangled demand
sent growers begging
for the union label
that courageous eagle.

## Persuasion

Farm workers
All races
Ages
Flannel-suitors
Hollywood stars
Singers internationally known
Cesar tucks them so neatly
into the pocket
of the movement.

In crowded auditoriums
he talks as if each listener is
the only one who matters
as if he's sitting on his little red desk-top,
one leg on the floor for support,
tugging with one hand on the fingers of the other
just telling us how it is.

Or pacing across the room
so we have to tennis-match watch
hanging on each word
each liveliness in his eyes
each sad screen
the determined jaw.

He doesn't talk at us.
We hunker down together
planning,
imagining,
cursing,
promising
girding with quiet resolve his casual inclusivity.

Who wouldn't do just about anything for this man?
Not because, as he hopes, he speaks for God
but more likely because he is
a piece of God.

**Morning Oasis**

High above La Paz's* purring creek
in macho splendor
rise mammoth tors
their jaggedness
stitched with rusty lichen.

Each morning that he's at La Paz
Cesar escapes his body guards--
except the dogs--
climbs the dawn
into nearly vertical hills,
temple of stone.

Each step lifts him
away from demands
lets his heart soar
like the gliding hawks overhead.
Here he sorts matters of the heart
messages from his Maker
drinks courage
generates strength.

* La Paz, headquarters for United Farm Workers, AFL-CIO, and the National Farm Workers Service Center, lies in a bowl of the Tehachapi Mountains above Bakersfield, California.

*Fields of Courage*: *Remembering Cesar Chavez & the People Whose Labor Feeds Us*
(Many Names Press, 1999)

# A Farm Worker Hero and his Corridos (Ballads)

**by María Herrera-Sobek**

**University of California, Santa Barbara**

| | |
|---|---|
| Gente de mi corazón | My beloved people |
| en el pecho no me cabe | My heart is not big enough |
| el regocijo y orgullo | For the joy and pride I have |
| al cantarle a César Chávez. | In singing to Cesar Chavez. |
| | |
| Inspiración de mi gente | He is an inspiration to my people |
| protector del campesino | Protector of the farm worker |
| él es un gran mexicano | He is a great Mexican |
| este sería su destino. | This must be his destiny. |

("Corrido de César Chávez" Herrera-Sobek 1993:181)

The above corrido or Mexican ballad, "Corrido de César Chávez," pays tribute to Cesar Chavez, the great farm worker who dedicated his life to union organizing. In this study I examine the corrido as a historical text which chronicles the heroic deeds of Cesar during the most active period of the farm workers' unionizing efforts in the 1960s - 1980s period. I posit that the corrido is a valid historical document which historicizes the deeds of a man, gives witness to the actions of a leader, and constructs the parameters under which a particular man achieves the status of a hero.

## THE MEXICAN/CHICANO CORRIDO

The Mexican corrido can be defined as a song that tells a story in a rapid flowing manner - thus the term corrido which is derived from the verb "correr" to run. The corrido encompasses within its lyrics all types of subject matter: any newsworthy event such as natural disasters, political events, assassinations, the exploits of bandits, sensational murders, love tragedies, the travails of the Mexican immigrant, drug-smuggling, exceptional horses, great deeds or misdeeds of presidents and so forth. It is flexible in its rhyme scheme, meter and strophe compositions; the most common being an octosyllabic meter with an abcb rhyme meter. Its lyrics are characterized by formulaic phrases and the overall structure of the classic corrido may encompass six basic components: introductory phrases initiating the singing of the song, (2) date and place of action, (3) introductory information, (4) main plot or action, (5) hero's farewell, and (6) singer's farewell.

The Mexican/Chicano corrido traces its roots to the Spanish romance (ballad) popular during the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries. The conquistadores brought the romance tradition with them to the newly conquered lands in the American continent. Such romances as "La Delgadina," "La Martina," "Los Doce Pares de Francia," "Señor Don Gato," and "Fernando el Frances" have been collected from New Mexico to Chile. However, there seems to have been a hiatus in romance production in America in the first half of the nineteenth century. It seems that other forms of musical compositions were dominating the musical scene during this period such as the décima, a ten-line poetic and musical composition.

Américo Paredes, the highly respected folklore scholar from the southeast Texas border area, posits the rise of the corrido or the crystallization of the corrido as a vigorous ballad tradition having taken place in the middle of the nineteenth century in the Texas-Mexican border area due to culture conflict resulting from the U.S. - Mexican War of 1848 (see Paredes, 1958). The war between Mexico and the United States created tensions between the two groups: Mexicans and Anglos. The clash of cultures due to language and religious differences, as well as differences in customs, traditions, economics, political systems and world views, produced tensions that often resulted in violence. This gave rise to men and women who opposed the oppressive and repressive actions taken by the new Anglo colonizers. Corridos immortalizing the deeds of men who took arms to defend themselves against atrocities committed against them or their families surfaced with regularity in the second half of the nineteenth century. Ballads such as those dedicated to Gregorio Cortez, Jacinto Treviño, and Joaquín Murrieta appeared chronicling the heroic actions of these men. The songs thematizing the deeds of Cesar Chavez falls within the parameters of this tradition.

The corrido has a long tradition of paying homage to those men and women who dedicate their lives to the service of humanity. Cesar was such a man who through his efforts to improve conditions in the agricultural fields of California and the nation became a hero to those who yearned for social and economic justice for the men and women toiling in the fields.

## THE CESAR CHAVEZ CORRIDOS

The Cesar Chavez corridos are based on Chavez's organizing efforts to form a farm workers union. Born in 1929 in Yuma Arizona, Cesar was catapulted into the migrant worker stream after the loss of the family home and farm during the 1930s Depression. His experiences with migrant work in California sensitized him to the hardships field hands suffered. At the age of nineteen, he joined his first union, the National Agricultural Workers Union, but it was not until the 1950s that he received training in organizing, under the auspices of Fred Ross. Through the work with the Community Service Organization, Cesar learned from Ross basic organizing techniques that were to prove invaluable later in the 1960s and 1970s. On September 30, 1962, Cesar founded the National Workers Association aimed specifically at organizing farm workers. The original NWA was renamed United Farm Workers of America and became the center of farm worker organizing in the United States in Delano, California.

Chavez bestows credit on a protestant church meeting for affording him the idea of using songs in his union meetings and activities. He recounts:

So in the little Madera Church, I observed everything going on about me that could be useful in organizing. Although there were no more than twelve men and women, there was more spirit there than when I went to a mass where there were two hundred. Everybody was happy. They all were singing. These people were really committed in their beliefs. And it was hard for me because I can't carry a tune (Levy 1975:115-116).

Thereafter, Cesar decided to use folksongs, particularly the corrido in his unionizing efforts. In fact, the national anthem for the farm workers became the old Spanish folksong "De Colores."

De colores, de colores se visten los campos en la primavera
De colores, de colores son los pajarillos que vienen de afuera
De colores, de colores es el arco iris que vemos lucir
y por eso los grandes amores de muchos colores me gustan a mi.

Of all colors, of all colors the fields in the springtime get dressed
Of all colors, of all colors are the little birds that come from afar.
Of all colors, of all colors is the rainbow that we see brightly shine
And that is why I happen to like my great loves of all types of colors.

(from cassette of Johnny Gi-Tar Gutiérrez, J.G. Records 6-30-55, 1993)

The songs discussed in this study refer specifically to the ballads detailing the heroic efforts of Chavez. Four corridos exemplify the tone and tenor these songs take when singing about the Cesar Chavez exploits: "El Corrido de Delano," "El Corrido de César Chavez" (The Ballad of Cesar Chavez), (No. 1), "El Corrido de César Chávez" (No. 2), and "Corrido de la Causa" (The Corrido of the Chicano Movement).

One of the earliest corridos that mentions Cesar Chavez is the "El Corrido de Delano" written in 1966 by Lalo Guerrero (see Lalo Guerero: Recuerdos - Memories CD-1916). Here the song details the march to Sacramento:

| | |
|---|---|
| Año del 65 | It was the year of 1965 |
| 66 más o menos | 1966 more or less |
| se levantó nuestra gente | Our people revolted |
| en los campos de Delano | In the fields of Delano |
| pidiendo mejores sueldos | Asking for better wages |
| por trabajar el terreno. | For toiling the earth. |
| ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... . | ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... |
| "Porque salimos en huelga | "Because we have joined a strike |
| no es pa' que el mundo se asombre." | The world shouldn't be surprised." |
| Esto lo decía un joven | This a young man said |
| César Chávez es su nombre. | Cesar Chavez was his name. |
| "Sólo pedimos lo justo | "We only ask for what is just |
| y la dignidad del hombre." | And for the dignity of man." |

In the "El Corrido de César Chávez" (The Ballad of Cesar Chavez) composed and sung by Francisco García and Pablo and Juanita Saludado the lyrics also detail the farm workers' march from Delano to Sacramento in 1966.

| | |
|---|---|
| En un día 7 de marzo | On the 7th of March |
| Jueves Santo en la mañana | Good Thursday in the morning |
| salió César de Delano | Cesar left Delano |
| componiendo una campaña. | Organizing a campaign. |
| | |
| Componiendo una campaña | Organizing a campaign |
| este va a ser un ejemplo | This is going to be an example |
| esta marcha la llevamos | This (protest) march we'll take |
| hasta mero Sacramento. | To Sacramento itself. |

Cuando llegamos a Fresno
Toda la gente gritaba
y que viva César Chávez
y la gente que llevaba.

Nos despedimos de Fresno
nos despedimos con fe
pa' llegar muy contentos
hasta el pueblo de Merced.

Ya vamos llegando a Stockton
ya mero la luz se fue
pero mi gente gritaba
sigan con bastante fe.

Cuando llegamos a Stockton
los mariachis nos cantaban
que viva César Chávez
y la Virgen que llevaba.

Contratistas y esquiroles
ésta va ser una historia
Ustedes van al infierno
y nosotros a la gloria.

Ese Señor César Chávez
él es un hombre cabal
quería verse cara a cara
con el gobernador Brown.

Oiga Señor César Chávez
su nombre que se pronuncia
en su pecho usted merece
la Virgen de Guadalupe.

When we arrived in Fresno
All the people chanted
Long live Cesar Chavez
And the people that accompany him.

We bid good-bye to Fresno
We bid good-bye with faith
So we would arrive safely
To the town of Merced.

We are almost in Stockton
Sunlight is almost gone
But the people shouted
Keep on with lots of faith.

When we arrived at Stockton
The mariachis were singing
Long live Cesar Chavez
And the Virgin of Guadalupe.

Contrators and scabs
This is going to be your story
You will all go to hell
And we will go to heaven.

That Mr. Cesar Chavez
Is a very strong man
He wanted to speak face to face
With Governor Brown.

Listen, Mr. Cesar Chavez
Your name is well known
On your chest you well deserve
the Virgin of Guadalupe.
(Herrera-Sobek 1993:180)

The corrido's main protagonist, Cesar Chavez, is portrayed as the leader of his people and the leader of the march taken to Sacramento to advocate for social justice and the rights of the farm worker. The lyrics trace the geographic route the men, women, and children took on their march to the California capital: from Delano to Fresno, from Fresno to Merced, from Merced to Stockton and finally arriving in Sacramento to meet with Governor Edmond G. Brown, Sr., Cesar is continuously extolled for leading the march. He is seen as a sacred figure since he is constantly associated with the Virgin of Guadalupe. There is a binary opposition between the good and the bad: representing the good are Chavez, the farm workers and of course the Virgin of Guadalupe who is perceived to be on their side. Representing the bad are the scab labor (those breaking the strike), agri-business, Governor Brown, Sr., and the contractors or middlemen.

In the second corrido studied bearing the same name "Corrido de César Chavez," (written by the famous singer-composer Lalo Guerrero) the lyrics detail the hunger strike which Chavez embarked on for twenty-five days. Because of this great sacrifice undertaken by him, Cesar is depicted as the protector of the farm worker and great admiration and love is bestowed upon him according to the song:

| | |
|---|---|
| A los 25 días | After twenty-five days |
| el ayuno terminó | The fast ended |
| y en el parque de Delano | In the Delano Park |
| una misa celebró. | A mass was celebrated. |
| | |
| Junto con 8,000 almas | Together with 8,000 folks |
| el parque de días sintió | The park for days felt |
| admiración y cariño | Admiration and love |
| nuestra gente le brindó. | Our people gave to him. |
| | (Herrera-Sobek 1993:182) |

Again a sacred aura is attributed to Chavez since he is associated with the Virgin of Guadalupe in the fifth strophe:

| | |
|---|---|
| En el estandarte que llevas | In the flag you carry [is imprinted] |
| mi Virgen de Guadalupe | My Virgin of Guadalupe |
| que veniste ante alabar | To Whom you came to praise |
| de bendiciones te cubre. | She heaps grace on thee. |
| | (Herrera-Sobek 1993:181) |

In the third corrido "Corrido de la Causa" (The Ballad of the Cause i.e Chicano Movement) composed by farm workers Francisco García and Pablo and Juanita Saludado) the song describes the injustices of being sent to jail for striking.

| | |
|---|---|
| Señores voy a cantarles | Gentlemen I am going to sing |
| lo que nos ha sucedido | What has happened to us |
| nos mandaron a la cárcel | They sent us to jail |
| esa compañía de ricos | That rich company |
| por reclamar un derecho | Because we demanded our rights |
| por el bien de nuestros hijos. | For the future welfare of our children. |
| | (Herrera-Sobek 1983:182) |

Cesar Chavez is cited as a great hero in the fourth strophe:

| | |
|---|---|
| Mi bandera roja y negra | My red and black flag |
| va flotando hacia adelante | Is floating onward |
| liberando a nuestros hijos | Freeing our children |
| campesino tú los sabes | Farm worker you well know this |
| sigue al pequeño gigante | Follow the small giant |
| nuestro lider César Chávez. | Our Leader Cesar Chavez. |
| | (Herrera-Sobek 1993:183) |

The binary opposition of between the rich and poor; the haves and have-nots is structured in the lyrics. The grievances against unjust laws that penalize the farm worker for seeking decent wages in order to feed his family with dignity is articulated:

| | |
|---|---|
| Haz vuelo aguila negra | Give flight black eagle |
| no te vayas a quedar | Do not stay behind |
| avísale al mundo entero | And tell all the world |
| que nos van a sentenciar | They are going to sentence us |
| a ochenta y un campesino | Eighty-one farm workers |
| en este Valle Imperial. | In this Imperial Valley. |
| | (Herrera-Sobek 1993:183) |

Cesar Chavez's heavy involvement in the search for social justice for the farm worker through his efforts in organizing a union culminated in his apotheosis as a hero of the Mexican/Chicano people. His dedication to the struggle undertaken to better the farm workers' working conditions and wages led to his becoming a revered leader. The corridos, following centuries old tradition, commemorate the various historical events that one by one, as the years went by, underscored the sacrifices the great Chicano leader made to further the welfare of the dispossessed and the down-trodden. The corrido chronicled important events in the struggle for social justice and Chavez's pivotal role in these events. By doing this, the corrido aided in the construction of a hero and a role model for both young and old to emulate.

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# CESAR E. CHAVEZ: A GREAT AMERICAN

**by Refugio I. Rochin**

Born: March 31, 1927, on the family's farm near Yuma, Arizona.

Died: April 23, 1993, in San Luis, Arizona at age 66.

Dean Simonton, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Davis, created a profile of "greatness" after studying the characteristics of thousands of people who made significant contributions to society. The profile focused on five essential characteristics of people who achieved great things, including: (1) intelligence, (2) energy, (3) determination/persistence, (4) originality/uniqueness and, (5) self-confidence/strength.

Cesar Estrada Chavez is the epitome of each of these five traits and much more. He was a leader of farm workers in California at a time when the state's agricultural economy was the strongest in the world, a multi-billion dollar complex of agribusiness farms with great wealth and political power. In challenging the states' largest employers of farm labor, Cesar overcame insurmountable odds to create the nation's first permanent union of farm workers, who, in turn, would have power to negotiate for respect, health benefits, better wages, and working conditions.

Cesar inspired the creators of Chicano/Latino Studies and their cause for teaching in universities and colleges the history and contributions of Latinos to society. Before the sixties, students could study Spain, Germany, England and France, but not find a course on Chicanos or Latinos. As noted by Griswold del Castillo and Garcia (1995), two pioneers of Chicano Studies: "Through Chavez we are able to better understand contemporary Chicano history. Above all, Chavez, as seen here [in their book], is the means by which we can comprehend the crossroads of culture, ethnicity, and justice in the United States." (p. xv).

Cesar was also an inspiration for many who looked for a leader with strong family values and religious conviction. As a devout Catholic, he prayed and taught by his example that faith in God would provide a powerful response to any enemy or obstacle. According to Cesar:

"It is not good enough to know why we are oppressed and by whom. We must join the struggle for what is right and just. Jesus does not promise that it will be an easy way to live life and His own life certainly points in a hard direction; but it does promise that we will be "satisfied" (not stuffed; but satisfied). He promises that by giving life we will find life - full, meaningful life as God meant it." (Cesar Chavez Foundation, 1995, quotes of Cesar Chavez).

Cesar also believed and often said of the farm worker movement: "Se puede, si se puede" - "It can be done, yes it can be done." And in this simple statement he convinced thousands of supporters that the impossible could be accomplished with hope, cooperation and determination. But he also made it clear on numerous occasions that: "My goal has always been very simple. Don't preach to people, try to involve people." (Nancy Padilla interview, Albuquerque, NM, 1981 quoted in Hammerback and Jensen, p.8).

Cesar's ability to involve people is his greatest legacy. Farm workers, national leaders, university professors and students, business people, consumers, and producers were all involved in one way or another in "la causa." With the frequent "grito" "Viva la causa!," thousands of people would join the call to support farm workers, whether in the fields or boycotting grocery shelves of non-union grapes or produce sprayed with pesticides. Cesar would often repeat that:

"Our opponents in the agricultural industry are very powerful and farm workers are still weak in money and influence. But we have another kind of power that comes from the justice of our cause. So long as we are willing to sacrifice for that cause, so long as we persist in non-violence and work to spread the message of our struggle, then millions of people around the world will respond from their heart, will support our efforts...and in the end we will overcome." (quote from Cesar Chavez Foundation collection).

Reference should be made to Cesar's consistency in both life and rhetoric. He was not an actor, politician or a performer. He did not memorize speeches prepared by others, nor did he rely on plans generated by teams of advisors. Cesar read all the time, listened to the poor and the farm workers. He had his own ideas, form and style for addressing people around him. Inside of him there was clearly a mark of genius, a gift for words and "an aura" of greatness. Cesar was (and still is) in the words of many, a visionary, an authentic hero, an inspiring fighter, "Gandhi," the Mexican "Martin Luther King," a saint, a champion of the poor, and a metaphor for justice, humanity, equality, and freedom. Sure, he had his enemies who saw him in opposite light as a phony, communist, devil and nuisance. But even his critics would admit that he had some kind of special power as a leader.

Hammerback and Jensen conducted an analysis of the rhetorical career of Chavez. They noted that Cesar could blend into crowds and often go unnoticed by many. They also added that "he did not fit into the typical mold of a charismatic orator as one who has the 'superior ability to communicate orally,' one whose fiery confident, and high-voltage style and manner stands out incandescently from that of everyday speakers. Chavez clearly did not meet that description." Yet, Hammerback and Jensen conclude that "Chavez's career lies in his unique worldview that privileged public address. If Chavez could present the themes, arguments, explanations, and facts to enough people, he was convinced that his union would be transformed into a movement that would be part of the history of social movements destined to better the world." (p. 190).

As someone who talked to Cesar on a few occasions and someone who joined "la causa" and taught some of the first courses in Chicano Studies at the University of California, Davis, I can honestly say that Cesar Estrada Chavez was more than a great man. He was for me a great orator because he spoke in English and Spanish with tremendous conviction and personal experience of what was morally right for people and, in particular, farm workers. His rise from poverty to national stature inspired Chicanos, young and old, including me. He no doubt understood our issues and our need for a leader of "raza." His insistence on justice and human rights set a standard for us to follow. He always challenged us to speak for the poor, to live humbly, to denounce hypocrisy and to put justice and human rights ahead of our personal gain or self acclaim. I admit that his challenge was firm and difficult. But, I also believe that underlining all his actions was his deep respect for hard working laborers and a strong desire to improve conditions for all humankind. This message should live on.

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About the author:

Dr. Refugio I. Rochin is Director of the Smithsonian Center for Latino Initiatives and Professor Emeritus of the University of California, Davis (1971-1994). He was also the first permanent director of the Julian Samora Research Institute at Michigan State University (1994-1998). Professor Rochin has written numerous articles on farm workers and rural Latinos, edited several books and contributed to many publications on Latinos. He was co-founder of Chicano Studies during the seventies and during the eighties also served on the Board of the California Rural Housing Corporation and the California Board of Food and Agriculture during key years of the farm worker movement. In 1997 he was appointed to the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Board of Agricultural Research, Extension, Education and Economics, representing the social sciences. He is proud to say he is a California Chicano, whose father began his career as an immigrant farm worker from Mexico.

## CHAVEZ: THE NATURAL LEADER

**by Paul Schrade**

"In the struggle for justice the only reward
is the opportunity to be in the struggle"
(Frederick Douglass, former slave and abolitionist-1850)

Cesar Chavez became the natural leader who would create "the opportunity to be in the struggle" for justice for farm workers and their families. Since the Sixties, thousands of farm workers have seized that opportunity. Through their own efforts and enormous sacrifice they are slowly and steadily winning a greater measure of justice, dignity and security through their own union.

When Cesar's family lost their ranch in Arizona in the late Thirties, they were forced to join the migrant workforce in California. In the fields Cesar learned first-hand the terrible injustices that so many farm workers suffered for so long. He rebelled against it and sought solutions.

Cesar began organizing among fellow farm workers, working with Fred Ross in the Community Services Organization (CSO). After ten years of intense organizing in the Central Valley he became very frustrated. The CSO refused to help build a farm workers union. He resigned in 1962 to follow his dream and his commitment to fight for dignity and security for farm workers.

His wife, Helen Chavez, shared his dream. Along with Dolores Huerta, they decided to strike out on their own to build a union of farm workers. All serious efforts in the past had failed. But they had faith in farm workers who knew all about poverty and injustice, who they believed could be encouraged to join the struggle. They formed the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA).

In 1962 Walter Reuther, the president of my union, the United Auto Workers (UAW), asked me to evaluate the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee's (AWOC) effort sponsored by the National AFL-CIO. Reuther had been pressuring the National AFL-CIO to make a greater effort to organize farm workers. I found that the AWOC had little National AFL-CIO support, had no plan to expand their organizing drive and might even discontinue it. They had become Cesar's severest critics because of the different strategy and methods used by the NFWA.

When the Grape Strike of AWOC began on September 8, 1965, Cesar's new National Farm Workers Association made the difficult decision to join the strike despite refusals by AWOC to cooperate.

Cesar said he recognized "the need to make the strike a public controversy" so we arranged for Reuther and a caravan of national media reporters to join us in Delano on December 16, 1965. At a large farm worker rally at Filipino Hall, Reuther pledged long-term financial support to the strike, to be shared equally by the NFWA and AWOC. He gave special recognition to Cesar who we believed was the natural leader who could eventually lead a merger of the two organizations.

The UAW's support compelled the National AFL-CIO to increase its efforts but they still had certain criticisms of Cesar. Later, the two organizations did merge and became the United Farm Workers Union (UFW) with Cesar as the elected president and Dolores Huerta as first vice president. Former AWOC organizers, Pete Velasco and Philip Vera Cruz, also became vice presidents.

We also arranged for Senator Robert Kennedy and the Senate Migratory Labor Sub-committee to hold hearings in California on the problems of farm workers, in March 1966. Kennedy had a famous confrontation with the growers and their sheriff, Leon Gaylen, who tried to defend his false arrests of farm workers and his strikebreaking activities on behalf of the growers.

The Reuther and Kennedy visits made the farm workers struggle a "public issue," as did The March to Sacramento which began the day after Kennedy's visit. The grape strike was now in the "national spotlight."

Cesar became the natural leader because the farm workers shared his dream and his vision for a better life. He was recognized throughout the nation for his efforts to win the farm workers struggle. The grape strike and boycott became national and sometimes international efforts.

Cesar rewarded us all with the "opportunity to be in the struggle" as long as we came without a hidden agenda. He has had an impact on the whole labor movement which now recognizes that his strategy and methods were sound and more advanced. His ideas about coalition building, community organizing (urban and rural), and grassroots political action have become necessary for all workers' struggles and have been adopted by the new leaders of the National AFL-CIO.

We should never forget that Cesar's studied use and teaching of non-violence is essential in all human struggles against powerful corporate interests, government opposition, and powerful political forces. Non-violence combined with direct action and the solidarity of workers is the way to win.

Since Cesar's passing, the UFW has been reborn. President Arturo Rodriguez leads a second generation of organizers that has new vision and new spirit. The membership is growing and more farm workers have won union contracts. Backing him up is that woman warrior, Dolores Huerta, a progressive force in the union since the beginning.

Twenty five years ago Cesar said, "We want sufficient power to control our own destinies. This is our struggle. It's a lifetime job. The work for social change and against social injustice is never ended."

We have all learned from Cesar... .Si, Se Puede!

In solidarity,

Paul Schrade, former Western Director of the UAW (1962-72) and a friend of Cesar Chavez and his family.

## The United Farm Workers Union and the Civil Rights Movement

**By Donzaleigh Abernathy**

It is with great honor that I take this moment to reflect over the life and work of the late Cesar E. Chavez, founder of the United Farm Workers Union of America. I am unaware of the exact date of the meeting of my father, Rev. Ralph David Abernathy, Co-Founder of the American Civil Rights Movement and Mr. Chavez. I do know that they shared an ideology and a love for humanity that brought them together. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Countless men worry themselves into nameless graves. But every now and then a great soul forgets themselves into eternity." Cesar Chavez was one such soul. It was his love for the Latino people and his love for justice and equality, based upon the American Dream, that drove him to courageously stand-up and fight for the rights of the migrant farm workers. His actions helped to enhance the quality of life for Latino people all over America.

The struggle for human dignity is as old as the sun. The Latino migrant farm workers were not the first people to be abused and used as slave labor in the fields of America, but Cesar Chavez was the first man to organize the farm workers into a union where their rights as laborers were respected and observed. His task was not an easy one, because whenever someone challenges the status quo, fear engulfs the hierarchy, leading them to think that anarchy will ensue. My father used to say, "We hate each other, because we fear each other. We fear each other because we don't know each other. We don't know each other because we won't sit down at the table together." Fear is often the motivational force behind hatred. An organized group of farm workers threatened the stability of the agricultural industry. As the agricultural industry worried over the potential loss of revenue, Mr. Chavez worried over the inhuman working conditions and a guaranteed minimum wage for the workers who were earning pennies a day. Often, workers labored from sunup to sundown and were not paid.

A young woman recently told me about her Grandfather who worked as a migrant farm worker in the fields along with Mr. Chavez. At the end of the week, when the workers were to be paid, invariably the Immigration Patrol would come around and the farm workers would scatter for fear of being arrested because many of them were not authorized to work or be in the United States. The irony here was that the farming industry depended upon this unauthorized labor to harvest its crops. The rights of the farm workers could no longer be exploited and Mr. Chavez could no longer turn a blind eye. The only solution was to organize into a United Farm Workers Union. With the threat of violence from the agricultural industry law enforcement officials, Mr. Chavez knew that the only way in which the farm workers could possibly overcome these obstacles was under the guidance of non-violent civil disobedience. The American Civil Rights Movement had taught the world that *Non-violen*ce and the power of love was the only effective weapon to crush fear, racial hatred, injustice and abuse.

Sometime in the late 1960s, following the Poor Peoples Campaign, Cesar Chavez contacted my father, Ralph David Abernathy, to teach him the secret that he had learned with Martin Luther King during the Civil Rights Movement. The Civil Rights Movement had been

incredibly violent and many people were called upon to give their lives in the greatest struggle for freedom and human dignity that America has ever known. The fact that we won the battle for freedom against what appeared to be insurmountable odds, was a motivating factor for Mr. Chavez. Another even greater factor was the example of the Poor People's Campaign that united the poor of all racial and ethnic groups across America, in a peaceful coalition for the fight against hunger. As the leader of the Poor People's Campaign, my father testified and lobbied the Senate Select Committee on nutrition and Human Needs for "adequate food programs for those in need and a food stamp program." His suggestion for a free food stamp program for the poor would and has wiped out hunger in America. My father went further to ask the senate to establish a hot breakfast and lunch program for the school children of low income parents, that these children be guaranteed at least one hot meal per day. He believed that hungry children could not concentrate and focus enough in school to learn. I am proud to say that these programs which my father envisioned and helped to establish are still in effect today, improving the lives of millions. Therefore, it was no accident that Mr. Chavez would turn to him, after his 1969 success.

The main focus of their discussions was the principle of *non-violen*ce, the common bond between them, God and their service to humanity. Today, like yesterday, millions of Latin and African Americans are smothered in poverty and despair. There is an overwhelming lack of hope among the youth as they watch their parents' struggle for survival in a society that nurtures only the affluent. Masses of people of color are trapped in sub-standard housing and impoverished communities. Children are educated in inferior, overcrowded classrooms where they are patrolled and promoted. Seldom are they inspired, taught to value their education and master academic skills so that they can continue their education in college and graduate school. The children are not taught the basic skills that will break the cycle of poverty. The majority of Latin and African Americans are poor, and the minority of the poor are white Americans. This is not an issue that divides us by racial barriers, but a problem that unites us ALL on common ground.

Realizing this fact, Cesar and Ralph came together as a united collective of people, bound together to fight the ills of our society. There was strength in their numbers and power in their unity. The immediate challenge that faced them was not what, when or where to fight, but how to fight. The message of Non-violence had to be taken to the people on behalf of the United Farm Workers Union, and thus began the revolution of Latino people in America. Good people with a social conscience of all different racial groups came together to boycott the produce of the agricultural industry that exploited the rights of the migrant farm workers. It took strength and courage to stand up and face the wrongful suffering and persecution that they were forced to endure. Through Non-violence they appealed to the human conscience and worked for social reform in the spirit of peace and goodwill. They wanted and achieved justice and equality, founded upon the greatest, most courageous and lasting social change – Non-violence.

Like these great pioneers before us, let us continue to create lasting solutions for justice with Non-violence, and let us celebrate the common ground between us. Blessed be the tie that binds our hearts in love.

## Victor Alemán

### Biography

Born in El Salvador, Victor Aleman began his career as a recording artist for ABC Records. He was leader and drummer with the Outlaw Blues Band in Los Angeles, California, releasing two albums in 1968 and 1969 before shifting to photography. In the early 1970s, from his base in San Francisco, Aleman began roaming through various countries in Latin America – Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Colombia and Ecuador – documenting the human conditions in these countries, such as poverty and the Indian peasants' living environment.

In 1976 he published *Le Gnome/El Gnomo* from the Bay area, his first alternative publication, featuring contemporary visual artists from Latin America. In 1979 he returned to Los Angeles to start *Banana Publications*, another alternative monthly publication, featuring major photographers and their work in the entertainment industry.

In early 1980, after finishing work in the salmon industry in Alaska, he began full-time employment, which lasted 10 years, with Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers, performing various assignments, starting as Managing Editor of *El Malcriado*, the UFW membership publication. He co-founded KUFW, the first farm workers radio station, where he worked as Program and Development Director. Eventually, he was given charge of the UFW Publications Department, publisher of *Food and Justice* and *El Malcriado*.

For the past nine years he has served as Editor of *Vida Nueva*, a Spanish weekly newspaper published by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. His photographic assignments have taken him to various countries in the world including Nicaragua, Honduras, Italy, Yugoslavia, Spain, France, Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Canada. He has also photographed Mother Teresa, John Paul II, Nelson Mandela, Cesar Chavez, Jacques Cousteau, Muhammad Ali, Marlon Brando, Miles Davis, Frank Sinatra, Grace Kelly, Michael Jackson and many other personalities.

### Statement

Victor Aleman is currently working on two photographic book projects, one on the people of El Salvador, the other on his ten years of working with Cesar Chavez and the farm workers' movement. He is a member of 2 MUN-DOS, a photo and news agency (www.2mun-dos.com). In the music field, he composes sound tracks for the motion picture industry.

## OSCAR CASTILLO

### Biography

While a student at CSUN, Castillo enrolled in the Chicago Studies program, then in its infancy. He studied under the now legendary Chicano Studies professor, Rodolfo Acuña, PhD. Professor Acuña's book, *Occupied America*, has become the seminal work on Chicano history. The campus was then a hotbed of Chicano activism, and professor Acuna was smack in the thick of it. It was under professor Acuña's tutelage that Castillo learned of Cesar Chavez and the farm workers struggle to organize and found the United Farm Workers Union (UFWU) in the mid-sixties.

Inspired by Cesar's courage and the *non-violent* approach he followed in organizing the farm workers to stand up to the powerful California Growers Association and demand fair wages, better working conditions, decent living quarters, and health protection, Castillo began dreaming about shooting a photo essay on Cesar. One could easily make the case that Castillo's career as a photographer gained its strongest impetus from his photographic documentation of the Movement's seminal events. Indeed, many of his photographs of the personalities and events of that major historic period have been entered into the public domain.

Now in his mid–fifties, Castillo currently teaches beginner and intermediate photography and stained glass classes at Pico Rivera's Center for the Arts. As always, his camera remains trained on people, society, and nature, as he pursues his quest to capture the magic angle, that mystical moment when his camera's eye, his subject, and his artistry meld into oneness, and his delicate finger snaps the shot.

---Ralph F. Lopez-Urbina, a. k. a. Rafas

Writer, author, poet

## Emmon Maika'aloa Clarke

### Biography

Emmon Maika'aloa Clarke was born in Honolulu in 1933, of mixed-race parents – Hawaiian/English. He grew up in Hawaii during and after World War II, serving in the Army in Korea in 1950-51. He spent part of his service career in the Air Force in Japan and later, in the U.S. Army, on the Mainland.

Emmon's college education includes three years at the University of Hawaii and completion of a one-year course at Brooks Institute of Photography at Santa Barbara. He is married and has two adult children.

Emmon's time with the United Farm Workers started in the winter of 1967, when he visited Delano for a weekend. He stayed for 7 months, becoming the photographer of *El Malcriado*, the United Farm Workers publication, as well as a supporter of the strike.

Emmon is currently retired and has donated his entire "Strike" work to the cause.

## JOHN A. KOUNS

### Biography

I was born in Alameda, California in 1929.

Having witnessed segregation in the city of Pensacola, Florida during navy training at NAS Pensacola, I wanted to photograph, what appeared to me, a surreal, unjust, inhumane system of segregation. I went to the South in 1956 where I worked and did some photography, although I needed to hone my photographic skills. I then earned enough money, by working in a furniture factory in Jacksonville, Florida, to travel by bus to New York City.

I studied at the New York Institute of Photography. While attending a workshop, I met photographers Harold Feinstein and Eugene Smith. Smith was working on his essay, "The Pittsburgh Story" and Feinstein was printing for him. They both had a great influence on my future photography. I bought my first used 35MM Leica in New York City.

This was the time when I started freelancing for food and documenting for soul. I started something that I called "Social Work Photography." And it sure was. It was mostly PR for non-profit agencies, involving lots of work for little pay. This was work that I was personally interested in, namely civil rights activities, organizing farm workers, anti-Vietnam war movement, student strikes, aging in our society, etc.

In 1966 I initiated the idea of "Guerilla Camera." I was trying to develop new ways to present my photographs of farm workers, outside the gallery. I wanted my photographs to directly help the cause. The shows were portable, permanently mounted on panels with removable stands (for the farm worker shows they were mounted on prune drying trays). The exhibit was then carted in a rental trailer to various locations such as: super markets, school yards, labor halls, colleges, churches, libraries, etc. to show the people the individuals who were involved in the strike and encourage their support for the organizing of farm workers.

### Statement

Having grown up in the Santa Clara Valley, the "Valley of Hearts Delight," in the early 1940s, I was aware of agriculture at a very early age. You could see it, smell it and feel it. If you took off in any direction you would very soon come upon an orchard.

In 1961, I moved to Tulare County and the Visalia area. I found a place to stay at the Linnel farm labor camp, which enabled me to set-up a dark room in my Quonset hut. I met Sandy Robbins, California Migrant Ministry worker and joined them in visiting farm labor camps, where I was able to do a series on cotton picking and photograph some of their activities. When summer was over, I returned to San Francisco to do "social work photography."

In January 1966, I drove my VW bug to Delano and found Filipino Hall. It all started from there for me. I stayed at the Gray House for two months, slept on the floor and had meals at Filipino Hall while doing some picket duty and some photography, sometimes topping-off the day with a few beers at People's Bar.

I walked the entire "Peregrination" from Delano to Sacramento, about 30 miles, from March 17, St. Patrick's Day to April 1, Easter Sunday, which took 25 days.

I was part of the 50 odd "originals."

The photographs from this rich experience were used as the source to start "Guerilla Camera." During the grape strike, over 20 exhibits were set-up to support the union.

I have continued to support the UFW for nearly 35 years. Over the years I have gone to Florida, Salinas, Coachella, Modesto, Watsonville, Sonoma and other places to photograph farm workers and their determination to unionize. My support will continue even when I am unable to tote a camera.

VIVA LA CAUSA!

## George Rodriguez

### Biography

I was born in South Central Los Angeles. The first 12 years of my youth were spent in Downtown, Los Angeles. My first introduction to photography was at Fremont High School. My love for this profession is as strong today as it was at the beginning. To make a living at something you enjoy is to me very fortunate. Photography has allowed me to be in the midst of exactly where I would want to be at that moment. My intention is to document images that are preserved for others to see.

### Statement

In respect to Cesar Chavez, I consider myself very fortunate to have spent time in his presence. He was a very unassuming humble man, for as Robert Kennedy said, "… ..one of the heroic figures of our time."

## JOCELYN SHERMAN

### Biography

There have been two dominant interests in Jocelyn Sherman's life: social commitment and art.

Growing up in New York, the well-known "Viva la Huelga" poster hung over her kitchen table. She saw the Vietnam Moratorium protest in Washington, D.C. from her stroller and marched, on toddler's legs, waving the United Farm Worker's flag in front of local supermarkets, during the grape boycott. Her mother introduced her to Cesar Chavez when she was just a child. They became good friends and she considered him a mentor until his death in 1993.

Born into a long line of artists, Jocelyn chose photography as her means of communication. At eleven, she had her first serious camera, an old Voigtlander, and she learned the magic of the darkroom in summer camp that year. She majored in photography at New York University, graduating in 1989.

Her work is in the documentary genre, focusing on people and telling their stories. She has done a series on an autistic child she helped "pattern," on a Greenwich Village soup kitchen, and documented the life of New York's homeless.

Jocelyn's final project at NYU involved Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers. Her photographs documented the UFW's presence in NY. This led to her current involvement with the UFW. She joined the NY staff in 1989, and after 3 months, came to California where she is the UFW's Public Affairs Manager.

### Statement

My photographs are an agreement between the people I photograph and myself. I supply the film and camera, knowledge of light and shadow and the subtleties of focus and technique. My subjects supply the stories. We tell them through my camera.

It's a good arrangement. I get to be there, to know people, share in their lives and become a part of their world. They get to tell their story. And you, you get to know something very real that you might otherwise have missed.

## CARLOS ALMARAZ

### Biography

Born in Mexico City, on October 5, 1941, his earliest memory of viewing art was when, as a child, he used to accompany his mother to the Metropolitan Cathedral, across from the Zocalo (main plaza) in Mexico City. During his early childhood his family moved to Chicago. About the age of ten, the family moved to Los Angeles, where as a teenager, he attended Garfield High School.

His teacher, David Ramirez, was his mentor at a time when art became important to him. The Walt Disney film "Fantasia" changed his life. Almaraz got a scholarship at OTIS, but, because he wanted to be an illustrator, he and his friend Danny Guerrero went to New York to try their luck. In 1970 Almaraz returned to Los Angeles thinking it would be easier to paint here than in New York.

He then suffered a great depression due to a combination of drugs and alcohol. After recovering from a life threatening illness, he felt he had been reborn, but he pulled away from the arts to contemplate the issues of life and death. Six months after his recovery, his youngest brother died. Almaraz tried to redeem his brother's life by reconstructing his reality through his work.

He then met Gilbert Lujan who was working on a magazine called *Con Safos.* They began to have a great dialogue on the identity of "Chicanismo" when even his name became an issue. For eight years he tried to organize people in the community to unite behind the Chicano movement. He soon began to paint murals that were political or, at least, didactic.

In 1968, he took his first big Mexican trip as an adult, where he was greatly influenced by Siqueiros, Orozco and Rivera. Carlos Almaraz immersed himself in Chicano and Mexican history. He went to the San Joaquin valley in order to access the source of this philosophy. This led him to Luis Valdez, and his Teatro Campesino.

It was Luis Valdez who introduced Almaraz to Cesar Chavez. After a meeting at La Paz for the 1972 convention, Mr. Almaraz began to work for *El Malcriado.* While working with the farm workers that year, he painted an enormous 64 x 32-foot political cartoon on canvas.

Out of his friendship with Gilbert Lujan and Frank Romero and later, with Beto de la Rocha, they formed the "Los Four" collaborative artist group. In 1978, Almaraz returned to New York with John Valadez, but once again he discovered that LA had much more to offer him. On his return, he shared a studio on Figueroa Street where he worked with Duardo, Delgado, Hernandez, and Limon. When he moved to another space in the downtown area, he met his wife Elsa Flores.

*"Los Angeles is a big city where we are all going to mix one day and start exchanging our viewpoints and ultimately, our images, whether they be music or murals or whatever. It is a metropolis still romantic, with elements of nature creeping through it. That's why my urban vision has this relationship between the industrial city and nature with certain softness... "*

Carlos Almaraz died in Los Angeles in ... 1986

## Barbara Carrasco

### Biography

Barbara Carrasco is an artist/muralist who has created numerous works, which have been exhibited throughout the U.S., Europe and Latin America. Her work has been featured in numerous publications among which are Los Angeles Times, New York Times, Artforum and the New England Journal. She received her B.A. in Painting/Sculpture Graphic Arts from UCLA (1978) and her M.F.A. in Art from California Institute of the Arts (1991). Carrasco created numerous banners and murals for the United Farm Workers (1976-1991). She was invited to travel to the former USSR to paint murals in Leningrad as well as in Armenia (1985 and 1987). She created the computer animation PESTICIDES! which was broadcast at Times Square in New York (1989). Carrasco has been the recipient of several grants among which are LACE/Rockefeller Foundation/Andy Warhol Foundation/NEA and J.Paul Getty Trust Fund for the Visual Arts.

Her original mural sketches and drawings are reposited in the Permanent Collection of Works on Paper at the Library of Congress. Documentation of her mural work is archived in the California Murals collection at the Smithsonian Institution. A special collection of her papers was established and is archived at Stanford University. Most recently, in 1999, her oral history was archived at the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

### Statement

Since 1976, I have created large-scale art works such as murals as well as my smaller paintings and drawings, that examine human relationships within the context of various social and psychological settings reflective of the Chicano/a experience.

I was a member of Public Art Center in Highland Park in 1979 where I worked as an assistant to artist Carlos Almaraz, who encouraged me to work with the UFW and Cesar Chavez as he had done years before, and John Valadez on public art projects. Many of the public art projects that we created involved working with disadvantaged youth in the community. These experiences inspired me to continue to involve youth in my own art projects.

During 1976-1991, I created large-scale mural banners and graphics for Cesar Chavez' United Farm Workers Union. I worked directly with Chavez in developing concepts and images that reflected the direction of the organization. Cesar Chavez attended the initial broadcast of my computer-generated animation entitled PESTICIDES! on the Lightboard in New York's Times Square in July of 1989. Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the UFW, is my role model and dear friend, who has inspired me with her selfless dedication to improving the lives of farm workers and women worldwide.

Joining the many hard-working men and women on picket lines, campaigns, and other UFW activities, enabled me to build life-long friendships that are based on respect. During this period of working with the union, I also realized the importance of art as an effective means of documentation, communication and inspiration.

Presently my work is more introspective, reflecting on my personal experiences as a woman, mother and cancer survivor. I am working on smaller-scale works integrating computer-generated images and mixed media which has added another dimension to the texture of my paintings and is an integral element along with color and composition.

## MARGARET GARCIA

### Biography

I was born and raised in East Los Angeles, California at General Hospital, where my Grandmother worked as a nurse. My grandmother passed on to me her love of ART. She had art books which she told me I had to take care of because they were her friends. My father told me I was talented and would become an Artist. I remember drawing my first portrait at the age of 8.

### Statement

People have always been the main focus of my work and though many people do not see my work as political or even contemporary, it is what I am inevitably compelled to do. By following my instinct, I find it is the most political of statements, because portraits document my community, my culture, they affirm the power, beauty, intelligence and humanity that exists in this day and age. Cesar Chavez understood this. That is why he has had such an enormous impact on the Chicano and immigrant community, especially the artistic community. In 1969 I picketed for the United Farm Workers and made a trip to Delano. It was through the farm workers that I was politicized. Cesar united many Chicanos with their Mexican heritage and encouraged us to take pride in who we are. In so doing, he allowed us to honor our parents. It is important for us to record, document, videotape and especially remember as much as we can about our lives, because is in the things that we do that we leave a legacy for those who come after us. I painted Cesar Chavez's portrait after he had passed away.

## IGNACIO GOMEZ

### Biography

Ignacio Gomez, Artist, Muralist, Designer, was born and raised in Los Angeles, California and is a graduate from Roosevelt High School. He earned a B.A. degree from the Art Center College of Design after receiving an Honorable Discharge as a Specialist Five from the U.S. Army.

His works have been shown in New York, Europe, Japan, and Mexico. He has won several gold medals and awards such as the Lifetime Achievement by the Salesian Boys and Girls Club and a Resolution from the City of Los Angeles.

He is well known for his painting of Edward James Olmos as the pachuco in the Luis Valdez play "Zoot Suit" as well as several murals throughout the Los Angeles area.

He will be included in a California Department of Education book as a Latino role model. A documentary is now in production on his life and work, which has always been to emphasize education for the children of the community.

Ignacio Gomez and his wife Imelda have four children; Greg, a Harvard University graduate, Deanna, a Cal State Northridge graduate, Dario, a University of Colorado graduate and Elysa, a UCLA graduate.

### Statement

I live in two worlds. In one I create art to support a family, in the other I create art to give support to my community – the Latino community.

In 1966 while in the Army, I painted my first mural. The mural displayed Alta California and its Mexican pioneers. Soon after, I painted a mural of George Washington on his horse. At night, I painted the Virgen de Guadalupe on helmets worn by Latino soldiers going to Vietnam. On weekends, I painted pin-ups on butcher paper for the Anglo officers also going to Vietnam.

In 1968, while in art school, I painted a Latino in a contest for the Salvation Army. Instructors told me: "You shouldn't paint Latinos, they don't sell." Two of my paintings were chosen, Latinos and all.

I still live in two worlds: one where I illustrate Steven Spielberg, another where I paint Edward James Olmos; one where I illustrate John Paul Jones, another where I paint Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Eugene Obregon; one where I illustrate Steve Jobs, another where I paint Cesar Chavez.

In my two worlds, one puts food on the table while the other offers a greater nourishment to my life, where I can proudly create proud and powerful images of Latinos becoming professionals, struggling for an education, and accomplishing great things. In this world is where my satisfaction has always been.

## Eloy Torrez

### Biography

Eloy Torrez has executed murals in Los Angeles and Southern California such as (Anthony Quinn) – "The Pope of Broadway" at the Victor Clothing Company Building in downtown Los Angeles. As an artist in residence, he has also painted a mural in St. Denis, France.

His oil paintings and works on paper have been exhibited in galleries and art museums throughout the United States, Mexico and Europe.

He teaches drawing to youth-at-risk, at the Covenant House in Hollywood, California.

He has taught art and mural painting to children, youth and adults at various sites.

The investigations and explorations of the human figure, psychological circumstance, physical surroundings and irony continue to hold a particular interest for him.

He is currently recording a compact disc of original music in collaboration with other musicians.

### Statement

Title of the piece: "Cesar Chavez: An American Hero"

Cesar Chavez symbolizes the achievements won by the hard work, sacrifice and perseverance of the working class. His belief that every human being has the right to be regarded with dignity should become the model for fair treatment in the work place. Chavez has earned the right to be recognized as a link in the chain of great American heroes.

## J. MICHAEL WALKER

### Biography:

For the past 25 years, J. Michael Walker has been creating artworks, which reflect his spiritual and cultural transformation, born from his immersion in the cultures of the Sierra Tarahumara, of Chihuahua, Mexico. Much of his recent work centers on the Virgin of Guadalupe, who Michael depicts as a poor rural mother, living among the adobe *casas* of the Sierra. His influences include the painters of Virreinal Mexico (such as Cabrera and Paéz) and the Flemish Primitives (such as Memling and Christus). J. Michael Walker has participated in over 75 group shows in the United States and Mexico. He has enjoyed solo exhibitions at institutions such as el Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares, in Mexico City, and the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies at Harvard University. Upcoming solo shows are planned for Fall 2000 at the Arkansas Arts Center, in Little Rock and Spring 2001 at the Godwin-Terbach Museum of Queens College, New York. His work is the subject of an essay in Voices of Mexico and an extended interview in Tribuna de la Cultura. J. Michael Walker is recipient of more than a dozen fellowships, public commissions, awards, and residencies.

### Statement:

"Sacra Conversazione: Guadalupe con César"

I conceived this piece to honor Cesar Chavez's life of sacrifice. The title refers to a tradition of painting, in which the Virgin is depicted enthroned among the Saints. as more intimate. Here she embraces Cesar during one of his many fasts, bestowing her strength and support. The grapevine design alludes both to the farm workers and the Eucharistic nature of Cesar's public life.

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---TLM Board of Trustees and Staff

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We also want to thank all of the artists, who deserve national acclaim for their aesthetic and historical contribution to American culture. Without them, this exhibition would not be possible - we congratulate them.

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# THE LATINO MUSEUM OF HISTORY, ART AND CULTURE