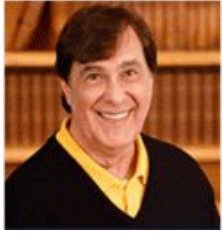


Cesar Chavez Was No Hero



By Tom DeWeese

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March 31st is celebrated annually as a holiday in ten U.S. States to honor United Farm Workers Union founder Cesar Chavez as an American hero. I beg to differ!

Cesar Chavez is portrayed to the American public as a champion of poor Hispanic migrant workers who were paid mere pennies to work in the grape and



lettuce fields of California. According to the tale, the farmers got rich off the backs of the migrant labor, selling the lettuce and making expensive wines from the grapes. Meanwhile the poor, misused migrants carried meager belongings on their backs and traveled from farm to farm, hoping to find work, perhaps a meal, and a place to sleep. Even little children were forced to work in the fields – just to keep the family alive. So goes the tale.

Into the breach of this John Steinbeck vision of misery steps one of the workers who braved the wrath of the “MAN.” Cesar Chaves, so the tale continues, stood bravely against threats of bodily harm, maybe even death, to help bring the poor migrant workers a decent wage and stable working conditions.

He organized the United Farm Workers Union (UFW), organized protests and set up picket lines, staged fasts to get the media's attention. His minions took on the battle cry "Huelga" (strike) and called on all Americans to boycott "non-union" lettuce and wines.

The 1960s and '70s was an era of unrest and college protests. That's when students across the nation took up the UFW battle cry and participated in the boycotts. It became fashionable for liberal leaders to stand with Chavez. California Governor Jerry Brown (the first term) joined Chavez and all the usual Hollywood celebrities in protest marches in Sacramento. Bobby Kennedy flew in to embrace Chavez for the cameras during one of his famous fasting protests.

Chavez was hailed a hero to the oppressed poor. Streets and schools all over the state of California are named after him. Children wear tee shirts with his name and image emblazoned across the front. There was even a movie produced to reconstruct his heroic memory. However, labeling Cesar Chavez an American hero is akin to labeling Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky as Russian heroes.

Here are facts about Cesar Chavez that you will never read in a school text book, current history book, or see in the film.

- ♦ There is no evidence that Cesar Chavez ever worked in a farm field in his life. He was a pool room thug selected and hand picket by radical communist organizer Saul Alinsky to create unrest among farm workers.
- ♦ Chavez was well trained in the Alinsky propaganda and organizing techniques that are, still today, recognized as the most effective tools to misdirect and force radical ideas into the general population.
- ♦ Cesar Chavez never tried to organize real migrant workers – those who had no real home, who carried their belongings on their backs and were basically nomads on the road.

For the most part, the workers Chavez picked on lived in nice homes, in stable neighborhoods and made a decent wage. The only migration they did was to move from farm to farm in their area to harvest the crops. It provided them steady work with farmers who regularly employed them. At night, they slept in their own beds.

♦ Chavez never organized “non-union” workers. They were already members of the Teamster’s Union. What Chavez sold to the nation as a fight against “non-union” lettuce and grapes was really a jurisdictional fight against the Teamsters. Pretty hard to call the Teamsters “non-union.”

And so, for more than ten years, Cesar Chavez used the media, politicians, Hollywood, and college students to change the buying habits of the nation and paint a picture of big business oppressing the poor.

In 1974, when I served as Ohio Chairman of Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) I was also running for a seat in the Ohio state legislature. My district was a small slice of Columbus that included the Ohio State University. My opponent was a dedicated left wing radical. Our district contained no farm land other than the agriculture department of the university. Yet, the main issue of our campaign became the debate over Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers.

In March of that year, Chavez came to the OSU campus. My opponent in the legislative race, Mike Stinziano, was seated next to Chavez on the stage. I was out front of the auditorium manning a picket line and protest. Eventually, as Chavez prepared to speak, My picketers and I marched inside the auditorium, straight down the aisle and sat on the edge of the stage to continue our protest. Stinziano and I eyed each other in this strange setting for a political campaign.

Chavez began to speak to the wide-eyed college students, teaching them organizing songs and getting them to shout

"Huelga." Then Chavez began to spin a tale of the terrible conditions of the non-union workers in the fields. Paul Bunyon would have been impressed. He told the students that to reduce payments to his union members, the farmers had developed a mechanical device to pick the grapes. He said it was a huge vacuum designed to suck the grapes off the vine. But, said Chavez in a hushed tone, the machine also sucked up spiders, snakes and rabbits, all to be processed into the wine. As the crowd began to stir and make faces at the thought of it, Chavez quickly added, "so, if you won't boycott Boonesfarm wine for our cause, at least do it for your own health." That was Cesar for you... always concerned about the well being of others!

Two months later, I was invited to Toledo University by the local YAF chapter there to provide rebuttal to a separate appearance by Delores Huerta, Vice President of the United Farm Workers Union.

She taught the students the same organizing songs, peppered with the chants of "Huelga." Then she proceeded to tell the same story of the great machine. Only this time she described it, not as a great vacuum cleaner, but as a picker with huge fingers that plucked the grapes along with the snakes, rabbits and spiders. I pointed out to the audience that if the UFW was going to fan out across the country to tell lies, they should at least be consistent lies.

Huerta proceeded to call for a boycott of all "non union" lettuce and grapes. I again pointed out that many of the farm workers picking the grapes were, in fact, members of the Teamsters Union and had been so for many years. I asked when the Teamsters became non union and the only response offered was that I was a Teamster lackey! Sigh...

Huerta went on with her well rehearsed tale of the terrible lives of the non-union farm workers, and demonstrating the success and power of the UFW by claiming that 200,000 farm

workers had now joined their union. An interesting trick, since there weren't 200,000 farm workers in the state.

What both Chavez and Hureta both failed to tell their audiences was:

- ♦ How the UFW formed "goon squads" designed to intimidate the non-UFW workers in the fields by threatening them with physical harm if they continued to work.
- ♦ How the UFW used Catholic priests to intimidate the deeply religious workers by calling them scabs.
- ♦ How the majority of those on the UFW picket lines were actually college students bussed in from across the country.
- ♦ How UFW negotiations actually resulted in less pay for farm workers.

If this is the kind of America we have become, where a pool room thug, trained by a Marxist, can be officially honored by as many as ten states, as a hero, then there truly has been a silent American revolution and truth, justice and the American way has lost.

The farm workers in California, in the 1970s, knew what a threat Chavez was to them and they hated him. They tried to tell America then, but the media, Hollywood, and liberal politicians had their own agenda to promote. Does that sound familiar? So, puffed up on their own "compassion" and in the name of their version of justice for the poor, they sacrificed the very people they claimed to help... all for the "cause."

In a truly moral and honest society, Cesar Chavez would be relegated to the trash heap where he belongs. It's time to push back.

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