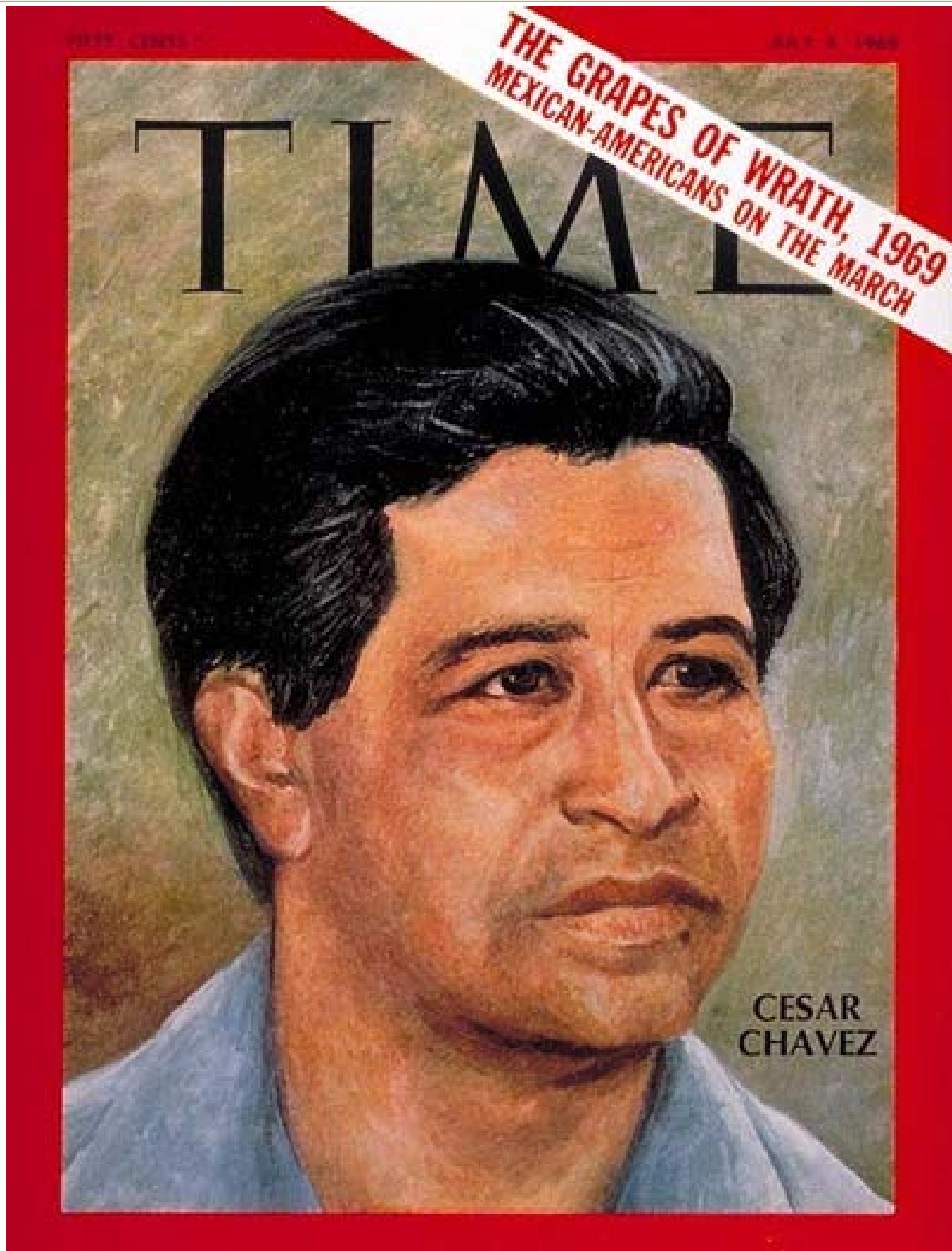


**“The Little Strike that Grew to La Causa,”** *Time Magazine* (July 4, 1969).



ITEM: At a dinner party in New York's Westchester County, the dessert includes grapes. The hostess notices that her fellow suburbanites fall to with gusto; the guests from Manhattan unanimously abstain.

ITEM: At St. Paul's, a fashionable New Hampshire prep school, grapes are the only part of the meal invariably left untouched.

ITEM: In San Francisco, a Safeway official observes: "We have customers who come to the store for no other reason than to buy grapes. They'll load up their car with grapes and nothing else."

ITEM: In Oakland, a conscience-ridden housewife explains apologetically to her dinner companions: "I really wanted to have this dessert, and I just decided that one little bunch of grapes wouldn't make that much difference"

ITEM: In Honolulu, the Young Americans for Freedom organizes an "emergency grape lift" by jet from the mainland, inviting "all of those starved for the sight of a California grape to come to the airport."

WHY all the excitement about this smooth, sweet and innocent fruit?

The answer is that the table grape, *Vitis vinifera*, has become the symbol of the four-year-old strike of California's predominantly Mexican-American farm workers. For more than a year now, table grapes have been the object of a national boycott that has won the sympathy and support of many Americans—and the ire of many others. The strike is widely known as *la causa*, which has come to represent not only a protest against working conditions among California grape pickers but the wider aspirations of the nation's Mexican-American minority as well. *La causa's* magnetic champion and the country's most prominent Mexican-American leader is Cesar Estrada Chavez, 42, a onetime grape picker who combines a mystical mien with peasant earthiness. *La causa* is Chavez's whole life; for it, he has impoverished himself and endangered his health by fasting. In soft, slow speech, he urges his people—nearly 5,000,000 of them in the U.S.—to rescue themselves from society's cellar. As he sees it, the first step is to win the battle of the grapes.

### **Magnified Movement**

To enter the public consciousness, a labor conflict must ordinarily threaten the supply of essential goods and services, like steel or transportation. Politicians and the public take notice only when there is great impact on the economy, when spectacular bloodshed occurs or when well-recognized issues are at stake. The grape strike seems to meet none of these criteria. Americans could easily live without the table grape if they had to, and even that minor sacrifice has been unnecessary. The dispute has been relatively free of violence. Neither great numbers of men nor billions of dollars are involved. The welfare of agricultural workers has rarely captured U.S. attention in the past, but the grape strike—*la huelga*—and the boycott accompanying it have clearly engaged a large part of the nation.

The issue has divided husband and wife, inspired countless heated arguments at social occasions and engendered public controversy from coast to coast. As if on a holy crusade, the strikers stage marches that resemble religious pilgrimages, bearing aloft their own stylized black Aztec eagle on a red field along with images of the Virgin of Guadalupe, patroness of Mexicans and particularly of those who work the soil.

As the workers and their sympathizers march, supermarket chains, middle-class consumers, and even the grape growers are choosing sides. Some supermarkets are leaving the choice to the shopper. Others sell only grapes imported from Africa or Israel, and make a point of advertising that they do not carry the California product. On Capitol Hill, diners in the House restaurants have not seen a grape for months, while the Senate refectory has been using 15 lbs. to 20 lbs. a week. When one California Congressman sent large bags of grapes to each of his colleagues, many of the recipients returned them. Within a few hours, the corridor outside the Congressman's office was asquish with trod-upon fruit.

Governor Ronald Reagan calls the strike and boycott "immoral" and "attempted blackmail." Senator George Murphy, like Reagan an old Hollywood union man-turned-conservative, terms the movement "dishonest." The Nixon Administration has seemed ambivalent, putting forward legislation that would ostensibly give farm workers organization rights but would also limit their use of strikes and boycotts. The Pentagon has substantially increased its grape orders for mess-hall tables, a move that Chavez and his followers countered last week by preparing a lawsuit to prevent such purchases on the ground that grapes are the subject of a labor dispute. Some auto-bumper stickers read: NIXON EATS GRAPES. The growers' answering slogan: EAT CALIFORNIA GRAPES, THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT.

Edward and Ethel Kennedy, following the late Robert Kennedy's example, have embraced Cesar Chavez as a brother. The so-called Beautiful People, from Peter, Paul and Mary to the Ford sisters, Anne Uzielli and Charlotte Niarchos. are helping to raise funds for the strikers. That support is one of the few issues that find Chicago Mayor Richard Daley, iconoclastic Writer Gloria Steinem, and liberal Senators Jacob Javits and George McGovern in total agreement. Ralph Abernathy lends black help to what is becoming the Brown Power movement.

The fact that it is a movement has magnified la huelga far beyond its economic and geographic confines. At stake are not only the interests of 384,100 agricultural workers in California but potentially those of more than 4,000,000 in the U.S. Such workers have never won collective bargaining rights, partially because they have not been highly motivated to organize and partially because their often itinerant lives have made them difficult to weld into a group that would have the clout of an industrial union. By trying to organize the grape pickers, Chavez hopes to inspire militancy among all farm laborers. Because most of the grape pickers are Mexican Americans, he also believes that he is fighting a battle on behalf of the entire Mexican-American community, which as a group constitutes the nation's second biggest deprived minority.

### **Unlettered and Unshod**

Like the blacks, Mexican Americans, who are known as Chicanos, are a varied and diverse people. Only recently have they emerged from a stereotype: the lazy, placid peasant lost in a centuries-long siesta under a sombrero. Unlike the blacks, who were brought to the U.S. involuntarily, the Chicanos have flocked to the U.S. over the past 30 years, legally and illegally, in an attempt to escape the poverty of their native Mexico and find a better life. Whatever their present condition may be, many obviously find it better than their former one, as evidenced by the fact that relatives have often followed families into the U.S. The Chicanos do not speak in one voice but many, follow no one leader or strategy. Their level of ambition and militance varies greatly from barrio to barrio between Texas and California.

No man, however, personifies the Chicanos' bleak past, restless present and possible future in quite the manner of Cesar Chavez. He was the unshod, unlettered child of migrant workers. He attended dozens of schools but never got to the eighth grade. He was a street-corner tough who

now claims as his models Emiliano Zapata, Gandhi, Nehru and Martin Luther King. He tells his people: "We make a solemn promise: to enjoy our rightful part of the riches of this land, to throw off the yoke of being considered as agricultural implements or slaves. We are free men and we demand justice."

The dawning of Chavez's social awareness came in a seamy San Jose, Calif., barrio called Sal Si Puedes —"Get out if you can." Through Fred Ross, a tall, quiet organizer for Saul Alinsky's Community Service Organization, Cesar began to act on Alinsky's precept that concerted action is the only means through which the poor can gain political and economic power. Chavez, a Roman Catholic, has delved deeply into the papal social encyclicals, especially *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadra-gesimo Anno*.<sup>\*</sup> "What Cesar wanted to reform was the way he was treated as a man," recalls his brother Richard. "We always talked about change, but how could we go about it?" Cesar Chavez went about it by working with the C.S.O. among Mexican Americans for ten years. Then, in 1962, he left to form a farm workers' union.

The conditions under which farm laborers toil have improved somewhat since the squalid Depression era so well evoked by John Steinbeck in *The Grapes of Wrath* and *In Dubious Battle*; yet field work remains one of the most unpleasant of human occupations. It demands long hours of back-breaking labor, often in choking dust amid insects and under a flaming sun. The harvesttime wage for grape pickers averages \$1.65 an hour, plus a 250 bonus for each box picked, while the current federal minimum wage is \$1.60.

Despite this, the seasonal and sporadic nature of the work keeps total income far below the poverty level. Average family income is less than \$1,600 a year. There is no job security, and fringe benefits are few. If they are migrants, the workers must frequently live in fetid shacks without light or plumbing (though housing, bad as it is, is frequently free or very cheap.) As a result, many have moved to the cities, where even unskilled labor can find work at decent wages.

Chavez was not the first to try to organize farm workers. Ineffective efforts to found agricultural unions date back to the turn of the century. But only in Hawaii, where Harry Bridges' tough longshoremen's union used its muscle to win the first farm-labor contract for sugar-cane workers in 1945, did unionization take hold. Agriculture is outside the jurisdiction of the National Labor Relations Board, which has provided federal ground rules for industrial workers' unions since 1935; on a national level, there is no similar mechanism for farm workers. In May the Nixon Administration proposed an independent Farm Labor Relations Board, but chances for passage of such a law this year are small. Without NLRB protection, and with farm labor normally transient and seasonal, the difficulties of organizing are enormous.

### **Rose Grafts and Table Grapes**

Undeterred by these obstacles, Chavez took his \$1,200 in savings and started the National Farm Workers' Association seven years ago, setting up its headquarters in the San Joaquin Valley agricultural town of Delano. He clicked off 300,000 miles in a battered 1953 Mercury station wagon, crisscrossing the San Joaquin and talking to more than 50,000 workers in the first six months. His money was soon gone, but he found people who were willing to give him food. The N.F.W.A. had its first formal meeting in Fresno in September 1962; 287 people showed up. Chavez soon started a death-benefits plan for his members, a curious echo of the burial societies organized decades ago by Eastern European immigrants on their arrival in the U.S. He also set up a credit union with \$35 in assets (it now has more than \$50,000). By August 1964, he had 1,000 members, each paying \$3.50 a month in dues—no small sum for a farm worker's family.

Soon he began publishing a union newspaper called *El Malcriado* (The Misfit), whose circulation is 18,000.

At last the union felt strong enough to tackle the growers on a substantive issue. In 1964, the N.F.W.A. took one employer to court for paying less than the then minimum wage of \$1.25 per hour, and after months of wrangling, won the case. The amounts of money gained were small but the point was made: a boss could be beaten. Then the association sued the Tulare County housing authority over the rents and conditions at two labor camps, built in the late 1930s and intended to be used for only a few years. The camps were a hideous collection of 9-ft. by 11-ft. tin shacks, boiling in the summer sun and lacking both indoor plumbing and heat for the chill nights. Tulare officials subsequently built modern accommodations.

In May 1965, Chavez signed up a group of rose grafters and won a strike vote for higher wages. Everyone pledged not to go to work, but just to make sure that no one did, Chavez and Dolores Huerta, his tiny, tough assistant, made the rounds early on the strike's first morning. Mrs. Huerta saw a light in one house where four of the workers lived. She reminded them of their pledge, but they had changed their minds. Mrs. Huerta moved her truck so that it blocked their driveway and put the key in her purse. The incident illustrated the charge that Chavez and his aides sometimes coerce those who would rather work than strike. After only four days of the strike, the grower agreed to give the workers a 120% wage increase.

That same spring, in the Coachella Valley east of Los Angeles, the largely Filipino grape pickers of the A.F.L.-C.I.O.'s fledgling Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee won a brief strike for pay equal to that given field hands imported from Mexico. When the workers moved north to Delano at the end of the summer, grape growers there refused to make a similar agreement, and A.W.O.C. once more went on strike. On Sept. 16, which just happened to be Mexican Independence Day, Chavez's group held a tumultuous meeting and voted unanimously to join the walkout. The hall of the Roman Catholic church on Delano's west side resounded with cries of "Viva la huelga!" "Viva la causa! Viva la union!" The N.F.W.A. and the A.W.O.C. merged two years later to form the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, headed by Chavez.

Table-grape growers are particularly vulnerable to strikes because their product requires continual attention through much of the year. Since the appearance of the fruit affects its value—unlike the case of wine grapes—the bunches must be carefully picked by hand. Because of their vulnerability, Chavez picked the table-grape growers as his first target. In 1966, after a strike, he got his first contract when Schenley Industries capitulated because it had a nationally known name at stake. Later that year he won the right to represent workers at the mammoth Di Giorgio ranch in an election monitored by the American Arbitration Association. Both Di Giorgio and Schenley have since sold their table-grape holdings, however, and Chavez's only contracts now are with wine producers: Gallo, Christian Brothers, Masson, Almaden, Franzia Brothers and Novitiate.

### **Boycott and Breakthrough**

Chavez has never been able to get large numbers of laborers to join the strike. Many of those who do follow him are fanatic in their loyalty, but a large segment of the shifting, transient work force continues to be indifferent to unionism. Wages have been rising even in the absence of contracts, and few farm workers can afford to go unpaid for long. Although federal regulations theoretically prohibit the hiring of aliens, or "green-carders," as strike breakers, the owners have nevertheless continued to use imported workers of Mexican citizenship.

Chavez decided to resort to the boycott to keep pressure on the table-grape growers. He applied it first in 1967 to the Giumarra Vineyards Corp., the largest U.S. table-grape producer. Giumarra started using the labels of other growers—in violation of Food and Drug Administration rules—to circumvent the boycott. In retaliation, the Chavez people began to appeal to stores and consumers not to buy any California table grapes at all. The boycott has been extended overseas to Britain and Scandinavia.

Chavez has now finally achieved a breakthrough: nationwide grape sales were off 12% in 1968, and prices for this year's first California grapes are down as much as 15%. Last month ten growers representing about 12% of the state's table-grape production announced that they would sit down with Chavez to write a contract. If negotiations with Chavez succeed, some other vineyards may also sign contracts, but a determined majority still barely acknowledge his existence and remain adamantly opposed to union recognition.

If the union does begin to win contracts with an increasing number of growers, a new difficulty could arise: How is the consumer to tell the difference between union and nonunion grapes? Boxes can be labeled easily, but not loose bunches of grapes in a market. The union claims that existing boycott machinery can be turned around to promote the produce of those who have signed; they could be marketed through the chain stores that have refused to handle the produce of struck growers. However, any such confusing procedure is bound to dilute the boycott's effectiveness.

Most of the growers bitterly dispute Chavez's contentions. His claim to represent the workers is false, they say; only 3% of California's grape pickers have joined his union. Chavez has not been able to strip the fields of workers and, they argue, even if he personally preaches nonviolence, his followers do not practice it. Packing sheds have been set afire, foremen threatened, tires slashed. Chavez also has outside help. Long-haired pickets came down from Berkeley in the early days of la huelga, and the union gets \$14,500 a month in grants from the A.F.L.-C.I.O. and Walter Reuther's United Automobile Workers. By insisting that all workers join his union, moreover, Chavez wants what amounts to a closed shop (which is illegal under the Taft-Hartley Act, but the act does not apply to agricultural workers). This means that, for now at least, Chavez's goal, however unpalatable, is a legal one. Chavez opposes placing farm workers under the National Labor Relations Board precisely because that would make the closed shop he seeks unlawful.

The growers of Delano are difficult to cast as villains. Many are self-made men, Yugoslavs and Italians who came to the valley between 1900 and 1940 with nothing and worked hard to amass enough capital to practice the grape-growing arts they learned in Europe. Most of the Delano spreads are family enterprises, and many of them have had rough going. Costs have risen sharply over the past decade, and grape prices have now begun to decline.

The California growers also pay the second highest agricultural wages in the U.S. (after Hawaii, where unionized workers average \$3 an hour).

While they generally belittle the extent of his support, however, the growers have gone to some lengths to counter Chavez's moves. The anti-U.F.W.O.C. campaign even included for a time a group called Mothers Against Chavez. The growers are using the J. Walter Thompson agency to place \$400,000 worth of ads extolling the benefits of table grapes. The California public relations firm of Whitaker & Baxter has been retained to advise the growers about how to counter the boycott. Whitaker & Baxter helped to manage Richard Nixon's unsuccessful campaign for

governor of California in 1962, and masterminded the American Medical Association's attempt to defeat Medicare.

### **On \$10 a Week**

One reason for the lack of comprehension between Chavez and the growers is that each has different concepts of the fundamental issue. The growers see themselves as management in a classic labor dispute, while Chavez and his followers believe that the cause of all Mexican Americans is at stake.

That is what inspires Chavez's devotion to la causa. For years he and his wife and eight children have lived jammed into a tiny two-bedroom house in Delano, subsisting on \$10 a week from the union and on food from the communal kitchen in nearby union headquarters. Chavez has grown increasingly ascetic. He has given up casual socializing as well as liquor and cigarettes; his idea of a real treat is an eclectic meal of Chinese food, matzohs and diet soda. The fight has become his life. "The days and weeks and months run together," he told TIME Correspondent Robert Anson. "I can't think back to a time when we were not on strike." Nor does he contemplate surrender to the growers. "Either the union will be destroyed," he says, "or they will sign a contract. There's no other alternative."

The use of only peaceful means has been central to his thinking since a 1953 showdown in the San Joaquin Valley between his Mexican-American C.S.O. pickets and a public official. Suddenly, he realized that if there were any violence or serious disorder it would be his responsibility. He began reading Gandhi, and he says now: "If the strike means the blood of one grower or one grower's son, or one worker or one worker's son, then it isn't worth it."

In February 1968, Chavez began a 25-day fast "as an act of penance, recalling workers to the nonviolent roots of their movement." Although he insisted that his decision was essentially a private one, the fast took on a certain circus aura and raised suspicions that its motivation was more theatrical than theological. During the fast, Chavez had to make a court appearance in Bakersfield, on charges of improper picketing, in a case that has yet to come to trial. As he did so, 2,000 farm workers knelt outside in prayer. One woman solemnly asked him if he were indeed a saint. When the fast ended, Senator Robert Kennedy knelt next to him to receive Communion. Some 8,000 others joined them in Delano's Memorial Park for a bread-breaking ceremony.

The fast, and Chavez's years of 12-to 16-hour days, took their toll. Last September he suffered a muscular breakdown in his back—he had been in pain for years before that—and found his legs nearly paralyzed. After spending more than two months in traction, he has now substantially recovered, but is still bedridden much of the time. Instead of spending long hours driving around the state, he receives a constant stream of subordinates at his bedside.

Chavez's religious conviction mingles with the exigencies of the movement. He opposes birth control for his people, but only partly out of conventional Catholicism; he argues that smaller families would diminish the numerical power of the poor. A priest brings him Communion daily. To Correspondent Anson he explained: "God prepares those who have to suffer and take punishment. Otherwise, how could we exist? How could the black man exist? There must be something special. I really think that He looks after us."

Cesar Chavez came to his mission from a background of poverty and prejudice that is a paradigm of that of many Chicanos. Like most Mexican Americans, he is of mixed Spanish and Indian

blood, with liquid brown eyes, deeply bronze skin and thick, jet-black hair. He was born on an 80-acre farm in Arizona's Gila Valley near Yuma, where his parents tried to scratch a living from the arid desert earth. Chavez met racial hostility early in daily rock fights between Anglo and Chicano kids at the village school.

The farm failed in the Depression, and when Chavez was ten, the family packed everything it owned into a decrepit automobile and headed across the Colorado River into California. In Oxnard, Chavez's father found work threshing lima beans; when all the beans were harvested, the family took off, looking for other jobs and often turning up just a few days after a crop was in.

### **Anglos on the Left**

That first winter back in Oxnard, with the little money earned in the fields already gone, was the family's worst time. Cesar's brother Richard remembers: "There was this nice lady there, and she had a vacant lot that she let us use. So we put up a tent. It was a very small tent—I guess about 8 by 10. That's all we had. All the family stayed there. And it rained that winter. Oh, it rained. Rain, rain, rain. We had to go to school barefoot. We had no shoes. I can't forget it."

The family lived that winter on beans, tortillas and an occasional potato. Chavez's father sometimes picked peas for 50¢ a day, half of which went to the contractor who drove the workers to the fields in the back of a flatbed truck. There was nothing else to do. By the next spring, the family had learned more of the harvest schedule, and it set off for the first of many years on the circuit familiar to every migrant worker in California. Starting in the Imperial and Coachella valleys of the south, through the state's bulging middle, the San Joaquin Valley, on up north of San Francisco and into the Napa Valley, they worked each crop in its turn: asparagus, grapes, beets, potatoes, beans, plums, apricots—anything that needed picking, hoeing, thinning, leafing, tipping, girdling, digging or pruning.

In 1941, the family moved to Delano, where Chavez met his future wife, Helen Fabela. At the movies with her one night, he had a jarring brush with discrimination. He refused to stay on the right side of the theater, which was reserved for Mexicans, and sat instead with the Anglos on the left. "The assistant manager came," Chavez recalls. "The girl who sold the popcorn came. And the girl with the tickets came. Then the manager came. They tried to pull me up, and I said, 'No, you have to break my arms before I get up.'" Chavez, then 16, was hustled off to the station house for a lecture from the chief of police, but he would not promise not to do the same thing again.

Like many other teen-age Mexican Americans, Chavez became a pachuco, affecting a zoot suit with pegged pants, a broad flat hat and a ducktail haircut. Some sociologists now see the pachuco movement as the first example of militant separatism among Chicanos, an assertion of a distinct identity hostile to Anglo culture. The Anglos took it that way, in any case, and reacted violently: during a series of riots in the Southwest during the summer of 1943, several thousand soldiers, sailors and Marines beat up hundreds of Chicano youths. Police promptly arrested some of the victims.

Because of his own experience of poverty and acquaintance with prejudice, Cesar Chavez has made *la causa* more than a labor movement. He is determined to better the lot of all Mexican Americans. There is much room for improvement. There have never been Jim Crow laws against them, like those against blacks, but overt discrimination undeniably exists. Chicanos still find it hard to get into the barbershops and public swimming pools of south Texas. Still, though the

Chicano is set apart by language, assimilation is often easier for him than for the Negro. For this reason, and because most of the Chicano population lives in relative obscurity in the barrios or rural areas, the Mexican-American community has been slow to develop aggressive leadership.

Now, because they have seen that organized black action gets results, the Chicanos have begun to stir with a new militancy. They have formed the Brown Berets, modeled on the Black Panthers, and set up a \$2,200,000 Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, financed by the Ford Foundation. "We are about ten years behind the Negroes, and we must catch up," says Dr. Daniel Valdes, a Denver behavioral scientist. "But I think we will do it without extreme violence." Lawyer Donald Pacheco puts the plight of the Mexican American more bluntly: "We're the 'nigger' of ten years ago."

If he is a migrant farm worker, the Mexican American has a life expectancy of about 48 years v. 70 for the average U.S. resident. The Chicano birth rate is double the U.S. average—but so is the rate of infant mortality. More than one-third live below the \$3,000-a-year level of family income that federal statisticians define as poverty. Eighty percent of the Mexican-American population is now urban, and most live in the barrio.

### **Forbidden Language**

The overwhelming majority work as unskilled or semiskilled labor in factories and packing plants, or in service jobs as maids, waitresses, yard boys and deliverymen. Particularly in Texas, Mexican Americans sometimes get less pay than others for the same work. Even the few who have some education do not escape discrimination. Chicano women find that jobs as public contacts at airline ticket counters are rarely open; they are welcome as switchboard operators out of the public eye. Mexican-American men who work in banks are assigned to the less fashionable branches. Promotions come slowly, responsibility hardly ever.

One major impediment to the Mexican American is his Spanish language, because it holds him back in U.S. schools. Mexican Americans average eight years of schooling, two years less than Negroes and a full four years less than whites. Often they are forced to learn English from scratch in the first grade, and the frequent result is that they become not bilingual but nearly nonlingual. In Texas, 40% of Chicanos are considered functionally illiterate. In Los Angeles, only an estimated 25% can speak English fluently. Chicano children in some rural areas are still punished for speaking Spanish in school. Only this year, Chicano students at Bowie High School in El Paso—in a predominantly Mexican-American section—managed to get a rule abolished that forbade the speaking of Spanish on the school grounds.

The Chicano is as vulnerable to mistreatment at the hands of the law as the black. Seven Mexicans were beaten by drunken policemen at a Los Angeles police station on Christmas Eve, 1952; six of the officers were eventually given jail terms. During an 18-month period ending last April, the American Civil Liberties Union received 174 complaints of police abuses from Los Angeles Mexican Americans. Two of the recent landmark Supreme Court decisions limiting police questioning of suspects involved Mexican Americans—Escobedo v. Illinois and Miranda v. Arizona. Many Mexicans still look on the Texas Rangers and U.S. border patrols with terror.

### **Pluralism v. the Melting Pot**

That Chavez has dramatized the problems of Mexican Americans in the city as well as on the farm seems beyond dispute. Father Bernardo Kenny, a Sacramento priest with a sizable Mexican-American congregation, believes that even if Chavez never wins his strike he will have

made a "tremendous contribution." Says Kenny: "He focused attention on the problem of the farm workers, and he made the Mexican Americans proud to be Mexican Americans. Chavez must be given credit, I think, for really starting the Mexican-American civil rights movement." Ironically, mechanization hastened by unionization may eventually diminish Chavez's farm-labor base—but it will not slow the momentum of la causa.

The new Mexican-American militancy has turned up a mixed pinata of leaders, some of them significantly more strident than Chavez. In Los Angeles, 20-year-old David Sanchez is "prime minister" of the well-disciplined Brown Berets, who help keep intramural peace in the barrio and are setting up a free medical clinic. Some of them also carry machetes and talk tough about the Anglo. Reies Lopez Tijerina, 45, is trying to establish a "Free City State of San Joaquin" for Chicanos on historic Spanish land grants in New Mexico; at the moment, while his appeal on an assault conviction is being adjudicated, he is in jail for burning a sign in the Carson National Forest. Denver's Rudolfo ("Corky") Gonzales, 40, an ex-prizefighter, has started a "Crusade for Justice" to make the city's 85,000 Mexican Americans la causa-conscious.

As with the blacks, the question for those who lead the Chicanos is whether progress means separatism or assimilation. Cal State Professor Rafael

Guzman, who helped carry out a four-year Ford Foundation study of Mexican Americans, warns that the barrio is potentially as explosive as the black ghetto. He argues for a new pluralism in the U.S. that means something other than forcing minorities into the established Anglo-Saxon mold; each group should be free to develop its own culture while contributing to the whole.

Yet there is no real consensus in the barrio. The forces for assimilation are powerful. A young Tucson militant, Salomon Baldenegro, contends: "Our values are just like any Manhattan executive's, but we have a ceiling on our social mobility." While federal programs for bilingual instruction in Mexican-American areas are still inadequate, that kind of approach—if made readily available to all who want it—leaves the choice between separatism and assimilation ultimately to the individual Chicano himself. He learns in his father's tongue, but he also learns in English well enough so that language is no longer a barrier; he retains his own culture, but he also knows enough of the majority's rules and ways to compete successfully if he chooses to.

Cesar Chavez has made the Chicano's cause well enough known to make that goal possible. While la huelga is in some respects a limited battle, it is also symbolic of the Mexican-American's quest for a full role in U.S. society. What happens to Chavez's farm workers will be an omen, for good or ill, of the Mexican-American's future. For the short term, Chavez's most tangible aspiration is to win the fight with the grape growers. If he can succeed in that difficult and uncertain battle, he will doubtless try to expand the movement beyond the vineyards into the entire Mexican-American community.