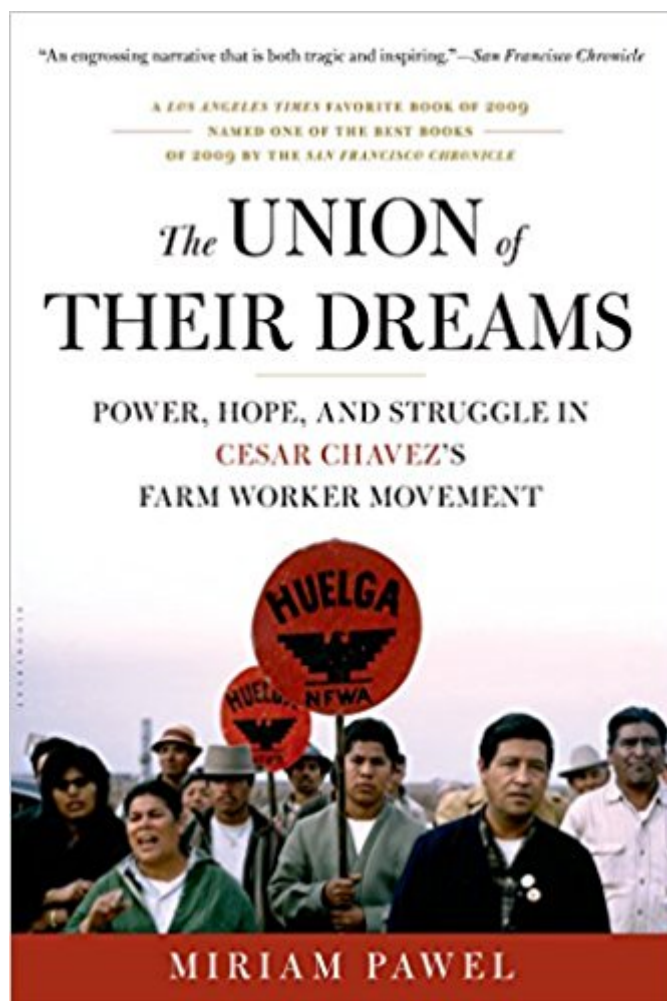


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The Union Of Their Dreams: Power, Hope, And Struggle In Cesar Chavez's Farm Worker Movement



Synopsis

A generation of Americans came of age boycotting grapes, swept up in a movement that vanquished California's most powerful industry and won dignity and contracts for impoverished farm workers. Four decades later, United Farm Workers leader Cesar Chavez's likeness graces postage stamps, and schools and streets are renamed in his honor. But the real stories behind la causa—both its historic accomplishments and tragic disintegration—have remained buried. Pulitzer-winning journalist Miriam Pawel has changed our understanding of the UFW forever, crafting a powerful, poignant account of a movement and the people who made it. A tour de force of reporting and a spellbinding narrative, *The Union of Their Dreams* is a major contribution to the history of labor, civil rights, and immigration in modern America.

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Customer Reviews

In this historical reevaluation of the Cesar ChÃ¡vez and the United Farm Workers, Pawel keeps the narrative bouncing between alternating and key figures like Eliseo Medina, an early recruit turned organizer; Chris Hartmine, a protestant activist minister ; and Ellen Egger, an intern who stayed for the long haul. This technique allows Pawel to convey the complexity of a movement often identified with a single man. Steeped in the recordings and primary source materials from these years, Pawel recreates the era—but with an awareness of the ironies and contradictions made plainer by hindsight. While noting ChÃ¡vez's instrumental charisma, she also records heretofore cloaked internal conflicts among disgruntled union leaders chafing under ChÃ¡vez's strict concept of

sacrifice, his social conservatism and his adamant hold on power, which in the 1970s led to damaging purges of leaders he accused of disloyalty. The book's unexpected scar tissue and its arc of decline present some contrast to the continuing if dispersed legacy trumpeted in Randy Shaw's recent *Beyond the Fields*, but these accounts are ultimately complementary and necessary historical revaluations of this important labor and social history. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

“One of the most important recent books on California history, Miriam Pawel has undertaken a thankless task: telling a complicated and in many ways shattering truth exhaustively researched, by turns sympathetic and deeply shocking Pawel describes the reality of the movement, not just during the well-studied and victorious period that made it famous, but during its long, painful transformation to what it is today. Her story of one man and his movement is a story of how the '60s became the '70s.” Caitlin Flanagan, *Atlantic* “Thoroughly researched and thoroughly unsentimental Pawel is writing outside the hagiography.” Wilson Quarterly “Groundbreaking and moving.” *Dissent* “A long shelf of books, many bordering on hagiography, has told the union's story just as Chavez wanted it told. The *Union of Their Dreams* is an astringent corrective to the party line. this remarkable book is an engrossing narrative that is both tragic and inspiring.” *San Francisco Chronicle* “A provocative glimpse into recent history, Pawel's exposé offers deep insight into the nature of mass movements.” *Los Angeles Times* “In many ways, by illuminating the lives of those who worked so hard for decades, Pawel's book provides a kind of blueprint for today's activists. It is a chronicle of great struggle, but also of hope. The *Union of Their Dreams* takes an important step toward reminding Americans that, three decades on, La Causa very much remains.” *San Francisco Panorama* “Pawel, drawing on and greatly expanding the research she did for the L.A. Times series, has come back for a second dipping with her engrossing and just as exquisitely assembled book. Her tack this time is quite different. Instead of a dry, almost legalistic indictment of the failings of the UFW, her approach now feels like the script of the great Costa-Gavras film *The Confession*, or like Arthur Koestler's classic anti-Stalinist memoir *Darkness at Noon*.” *TruthDig.com* “A revealing celebration of activists in the glory days of a movement for change.” *Kirkus Reviews* “Pawel combines document research with recent interviews with several former directors, legal staff, and rank and file,

allowing her to present a thorough and convincing treatment of an important chapter in American history. *School Library Journal* “Steeped in the recordings and primary source materials from these years, Pawel recreates the era—but with an awareness of the ironies and contradictions made plainer by hindsight. The book’s unexpected scar tissue and its arc of decline present some contrast to the continuing if dispersed legacy trumpeted in Randy Shaw’s recent *Beyond the Fields*, but these accounts are ultimately complementary and necessary historical revaluations of this important labor and social history.

PublishersWeekly.com “In this sympathetic yet courageously honest narrative, a seasoned reporter presents the history behind the legend of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Workers Movement. At the same time, Miriam Pawel pays tribute to the dreams of a generation of young Americans dedicated to social justice and the dignity of labor. *Kevin Starr*, University of Southern California, author of *Golden Dreams* and *California: A History* “This incisive and sensitive study makes a major contribution to our understanding of Cesar Chavez and the poor people’s movement he led. Moving beyond hagiography and mythology, Miriam Pawel gives new insight into the heroic struggles of some of the ordinary people who committed themselves, against unimaginable odds, to an extraordinary cause. *David G. Guti rrez*, University of California, San Diego “The *Union of Their Dreams* captures in fascinating detail the human stories of diverse people and how they committed themselves to the movement. It also reveals the tensions and dissensions that were a part of the union and its leadership after the early years of its formation. This is an interesting and provocative book that expands our understanding of the union from inside out. *Albert M. Camarillo*, Stanford University “Avoiding polemic or sensationalism, *The Union of Their Dreams* recounts for the first time how a cult of personality around Cesar Chavez (influenced by the practices of the sinister Synanon organization) ultimately betrayed the courage of the workers in the fields and the trust of a veteran organizing staff. The stories of lost campaigns and internal purges are painful, but they also transmit hugely important lessons about the necessary dialectic of militancy and democracy in labor struggles. *Mike Davis*, author of *City of Quartz* “Miriam Pawel combines the skills of an historian and an investigative reporter to tell the story of the remarkable people upon whose dreams the farm worker movement was established, moved forward, and forever changed the nation. *William Deverell*, Director, Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West “Anyone interested in political idealism, trade unions, leadership, mass movements, and even the Barack Obama phenomenon will have much to think about after reading this enthralling account of great accomplishment gained

and lost. — Nicholas von Hoffman, author of Hoax and Citizen Cohn

Mr. Chavez will forever remain an iconic leader. From his activism timeline of 1952-1993 the struggle was on to raise the living standards for so many. United Farm workers have a strong foundation today because Cesar and his leadership teams built the movement. Nothing good is ever done without adversity and reading this book you will find out about the barriers UFW had to deal with inside and outside the Union as the rising tide lifted all boats. "Keep the children stupid and we will always have our cheap labor supply. Keep them stupid, and we will always have them for our needs." Find out about the Mexican and Filipino merger on the prized commodity. And the battles between the Teamsters and the UFW. Mr Chavez believed that the Union has a responsibility to the membership to change the quality of life. Find out about the two Germans, Boycott and Huelga. "It is our sweat, our backs, our muscle that have made the farmers of the Imperial Valley the rich men they are today." There is so much more in this well written book about the conditions in the fields with none of the basic protections and rights afforded almost all other workers in the USA. We are all reaping the benefits today of the UFW in the food we eat and the struggle will forever continue.

With the humanity and rigor of Studs Terkel and Lincoln Steffens, *The Union of Their Dreams* tells a more revealing and nuanced story than any more traditional history of this important 20th century movement could have done. The author has perfect pitch in her choice and treatment of the characters through whose remarkable experiences the story is told. Though sad in some ways, it actually inspires and affirms hope for the future of farm worker organizing while at the same time giving an exciting behind-the-scenes accounts of past successes and failures, and the lessons both taught.

I worked with Chavez in the early years -- around '62 and '63 and was no longer there when the events described in this book took place. The book is well-written and engaging, perhaps more so for me, as I knew many of these people. I appreciate having this information, but it makes me terribly sad that our idealistic movement went so far wrong, that our efforts to improve the lives of farm workers were becoming so successful when they were so badly undermined by the man who had been responsible for so much good

After recently visiting the National Cesar E. Chavez Memorial I learned about this book through a fellow sister. It was very enlightening in that it paralleled my life as a community organizer and

supporter of the UFW. Ms. Pawel did her homework chronicling how the UFW grew from a movement to a Union. I learned that Worship is the fanatical side of love as hate is its sinister counterpart. As it always has been, PEOPLE ARE THE MAKERS OF HISTORY. Cesar E. Chavez sparked the flame of peonage in the fields of America and most importantly inspired many of us to DARE TO STRUGGLE...DARE TO WIN!

For all of us baby boomers who remember the grape and lettuce boycotts, this was a fascinating behind-the-scenes story about what was going on during those times. I was hooked on the characters and finding out what happened to them and how the story ended. I recommend this book for people interested in social change and community organizing. It's a fast read, poignant, inspiring and sad all at once.

The all too common story of those who come to believe that they are larger than the events that made them and suffocate their dreams in the process.

A very candid chronicle of how a great social movement happens, fueled by people who are incredibly passionate and complex.

Excellent writing about an extremely important movement.

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