



# The Crusades of Cesar Chavez: A Biography

*Miriam Pawel*

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## **The Crusades of Cesar Chavez: A Biography** Miriam Pawel

Cesar Chavez founded a labor union, launched a movement, and inspired a generation. He rose from migrant worker to icon, becoming one of the great leaders of the twentieth century. Two decades after his death, Chavez remains the most significant Latino figure in U.S. history. Yet his life story has been told only in hagiography--until now.

In the first comprehensive biography of Chavez, Miriam Pawel offers a searching yet empathetic portrayal. Chavez emerges here as a visionary whose eyes were fixed on a horizon others often could not even see. He was a brilliant strategist who sometimes stumbled, and a streetwise organizer whose pragmatism was often at odds with his soaring dreams. Drawing on thousands of documents, hundreds of hours of audiotape, and scores of interviews, this superbly written life deepens our understanding of one of Chavez's most salient qualities: his profound humanity.

Pawel traces Chavez's rise as he empowered the poor and disenfranchised and led farmworkers to historic victories over the agriculture industry. With compassion and compelling detail, she narrates the equally dramatic later years when Chavez's charismatic leadership devolved into a cult of personality, with heartbreaking consequences for his union. *The Crusades of Cesar Chavez* reveals how this unlikely American hero ignited one of the great social movements of our time--and left a legacy that resonates today, from California to the White House.

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