Pilgrimage, Penitence, and Revolution:  
Mexican Cultural Resources for Nonviolent Resistance in the Thought of Cesar Chavez

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Abstract: In this essay, I examine Cesar Chavez’s thoughts on the effects of Mexican immigration on the United States. I argue that neo-nativist authors are wrong in thinking that a growing Latino population will develop into a distinct political bloc that will destabilize the nation. Instead, I maintain that Chavez suggests how a strong Latino presence might occasion a shift of values in the United States toward a culture of peace. I argue that Chavez develops a logic of nonviolent practice, drawing on aspects of Mexican culture and political history, that is meant to guide the struggle for social justice in the United States. I explore how Chavez structured the nonviolent campaigns of the United Farm Workers around this logic of nonviolence in hopes of being a model that would revitalize the tradition of American nonviolent protest.

In his history of American figures in nonviolence, Ira Chernus maintains that American political life has been structured throughout the twentieth century to respond to various forms of external threats: fascism, communism, and now, terrorism. (210-212) Recent neo-nativist works, such as Samuel Huntington’s Who Are We?: The Challenges to America’s National Identity and Victor Davis Hanson’s Mexifornia: A State of Becoming extend this list of dangers to include Mexican immigration. Huntington and other neo-nativists argue that Mexican immigration represents a major potential threat to the United States that is on par with the threat of terrorism posed by “religiously driven militant Islam.” (340; Barry 31-31) For Huntington, Mexican immigrants could effect a “consolidation of the Mexican dominant areas into an autonomous, culturally and linguistically distinct, economically self-reliant bloc with the United States” that would destabilize American politics. (247) Such a bloc would be particularly harmful to the U.S., he maintains, because “profound differences exist between Mexican and American values and culture.” (253). The cultures of the two societies are not only irreconcilable, according to Huntington, but Mexican cultural norms actually inhibit the educational, political, and economic success of immigrants and their descendants. Allowing Mexican norms and values to flourish within the United States would mean its eventual decay from within. This corrosion of public life is already visible, according to Hanson, as illegal Latino immigration is associated with crime, gang violence, disregard for private property, and an enormous drain on public services. (61-67) Both Huntington and Hanson argue for restrictions on Latino immigration and a focus on acculturating Latino immigrants into Anglo-American values.

Chernus worries that a focus on security and protection against external threats could easily slide toward paranoid suspicion and an authoritarian alteration of political and social institutions. To offset this trend, he encourages thinking of new ways to relate public life to the presence of perceived enemies in order to protect American democracy and maintain a commitment to social justice. He suggests the tradition of American nonviolent protest as a source for this reconsideration.

In this essay, I argue that Cesar Chavez begins this kind of reassessment of our public life by holding that the presence of Mexican immigrants in the United States is not a threat, but rather, a resource for preserving social justice. Chavez believed that the growing Latino population would herald great shifts in American politics. Latinos would eventually occupy public offices and make the state respond to their needs. With such beliefs, Chavez could be interpreted as thinking that the growing Latino population will form a distinct voting bloc. This is precisely the prospect that worries many neo-nativists who believe such changes will lead to a new separatism dividing the United States into an Anglo and Latino America. I maintain that if this is Chavez’s view, then he, along with the neo-
nativists, is wrong about the effects a growing Latino majority will have on American politics. In the first section of this essay, I explore recent election results that suggest Latinos are increasingly integrating, not separating, their political interests into the American mainstream.

However, I think we can take Chavez’s remarks about the influence of Mexican immigration in a different way. I argue that, for Chavez, the growing Mexican community represents an opportunity to reexamine the public values of American society dedicated to military strength and corporate dominance. In the second part of this essay, I demonstrate how Chavez worked to develop a broad-based social movement based Mexican folk culture and history to initiate this reexamination. I contend Chavez extracted a logic of nonviolence from these cultural practices that is meant to guide strategy, tactics, and discussion about social justice and nonviolent action. Thus, Chavez hoped that the strong presence of Latinos in the United States could help in the cultivation of a “culture of peace” and provide a nonviolent alternative for American society.

Awakening the Dragon

In the last decade of his life, Chavez campaigned around California for a variety of issues that were not directly related to farm worker labor issues. For instance, in 1984, he spoke out against Proposition 39, a ballot initiative that would have redrawn state legislative districts. In 1991, he tried to rally supporters to defeat another proposal, Proposition 98, that would have cut budgets for public education and state services. (Jensen, 114-116) In both cases, Chavez argued that conservative politicians and corporate leaders were attempting to consolidate their power against an historical inevitability. Each initiative was an effort to diminish the political and educational power of the growing Latino population in California, either by fragmenting their communities into many different representative districts, or by impoverishing the public schools where so many Latino children where being educated. He reminded his listeners that these proposals for budget cuts in public education came at the same time as the state prisons flourished: “What message do these priorities send? Does this mean that the only way our sons and daughters can get recognition from the state of California is by using drugs and committing crimes?” (Chavez 1991, 151)

Chavez spoke out prophetically against these conservative trends: “The farm workers and their children—and the Hispanics and their children—are the future of California…Those politicians who ally themselves with the corporate growers and against the farm workers and the Hispanics are in for a big surprise.” (Chavez 1984, 128) Within twenty or thirty years, Chavez warned, central Californian communities would undergo a dramatic demographic shift. Latino farm workers and their families would be in the ethnic majority. Politicians and business leaders would have to learn to cater to the needs and interests of these people, their new constituents. These leaders would also have to compete with the descendants of farm workers who would become the new doctors, lawyers, and political elites. In order to delay these future contests and preserve their hegemony, conservative white politicians and business leaders were now trying to short circuit public support for Latinos and other people of color in efforts that could only be described as racist:

[W]hy do they want to cut funds for schools and other vital services—now? Why do Governor Wilson and his allies seek to reduce the commitment to public education—now? If the majority of children in school were white and if they lived in affluent suburban communities, we wouldn’t even be debating how much money to spend on public education…But it is our children—the children of farm workers and Hispanics and other minorities—who are seeking a better life. (Chavez 1991, 151)

However, these sorts of measures could only go on for so long, Chavez maintained, before there would come a reckoning: “Like other immigrant groups, the day will come when we win the economic and
political rewards which are in keeping with our numbers in society. The day will come when the politicians do the right thing by our people out of political necessity and not of charity or idealism.” (Chavez 1984, 129)

The 1990s saw the awakening of what political observers term “the sleeping dragon”—the Latino electorate that Chavez predicted. The anti-immigrant fervor initiated in California by the infamous Proposition 187 in 1994 led to an unprecedented surge in single-nation naturalization rates; in 1997 alone, some 255,000 Mexicans became citizens and many registered to vote. (Davis, 152) In the 2000 presidential election, all major candidates courted Latinos. They realized that Latinos tend to be concentrated in the states of Texas, California, Florida, and New York—all of which are key to winning the Electoral College. By 2004, it was clear that Latinos could play a decisive role in prominent races. Two Latinos were elected to the US Senate and, shortly afterward, Antonio Villariagosa became the first Latino mayor of America’s second largest city, Los Angeles, in almost 150 years.

Chavez expected drastic changes as a result of these political developments. He hoped that the growing Latino electorate would develop its own political will and resist conservative Republican politicians and corporate leaders. Yet, it is clear that, in this assumption, Chavez, and the neo-nativists, are mistaken. Latinos are not becoming a monolithic liberal power bloc that threatens to break away from mainstream American society. Studies indicate that Latino voters mirror the divisions on issues and candidates found within mainstream American voters. (Chavez Marquez, 98) More importantly, returns from the 2004 elections indicate that Latinos, as a whole, can no longer be taken for granted as a Democratic Party constituency. Instead, they now form a crucial swing bloc that might easily tip a race from one party to another. (Campo-Flores, 29; Franke-Ruta, 39-43) Latinos are developing political clout, but they are not necessarily developing political and economic priorities that are distinct from the rest of American voters. Despite the anxieties of neo-nativists and the apparent hopes of Chavez, Latinos are becoming more and more like other Americans in the mainstream.

Building a Culture of Peace

Chavez may have been wrong about the concerns of the Latino electorate. Yet, his writings also seem to argue that what is important is not simply developing a Latino plurality, but preserving the values of the farm worker struggle—La Causa. The task is not simply to get brown faces into positions of power, he believed, but to preserve the momentum of La Causa and to make sure that future leaders understand the accomplishment of the struggle:

Regardless of what the future holds for the [United Farm Workers]—regardless of what the future holds for farm workers—our accomplishments cannot be undone! “La Causa”—our cause—doesn’t have to be experienced twice. The consciousness and pride that were raised by our union are alive and thriving inside millions of young Hispanics who will never work on farm! (Chavez 1984, 129)

Martin Luther King, Jr. also made this point early on during the Civil Rights Movement. The great accomplishment of the Montgomery bus boycott, King argued, was not merely the desegregation of interstate transportation. It was that through their organization and cooperation, thousands of African Americans had learned to trust one another and see themselves as capable of directing their own lives, becoming effective agents for change. The bus boycott changed the culture of the South by teaching African Americans that they and their children did not need be subservient to white supremacy. “This is the true meaning of the Montgomery story,” King wrote. “One can never understand the bus protest in Montgomery without understanding that there is a new Negro in the South, with a new sense of dignity and destiny.” (King, 468) Similarly, Chavez observed that La Causa had raised the awareness of Latinos as to their own social agency. That is the legacy he hoped the growing Latino community
would preserve: “Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. 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.” (Chavez 1984, 129)

According to Chavez, while La Causa attempted to improve the working conditions of farm workers, it had also developed a larger mission over time. Under Chavez’s leadership, La Causa became a social movement intent on making deep inroads into American society in order to cultivate a culture of peace. I follow UNESCO in defining a culture of peace as a “set of values, attitudes, modes of behavior and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes and solving problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations.” (UNESCO) In a speech delivered in 1971 against the Vietnam War, Chavez described La Causa as a non-violent social movement designed to counter the influence of militarism and corporate greed in the United States. He had decided to speak out against he conflict in Vietnam because it demonstrated to him how deeply American culture associated violence with power, strength, and moral authority. Young men, he wrote, had been taught that “in order to be fully men, to gain respect from other men and to have their way in the world they must take up the gun and use brute force against other men.” (Chavez 1971, 64) Chavez pointed out the numerous ways in which violence is portrayed as an acceptable way to settle disputes and implement decisions: everywhere police and security forces use guns to enforce their wills, television glorifies violence and war, and men and women batter their children and one another in the home. “Most of us honor violence in one way or another…,” Chavez explained. “We insist on our own way, grab for security and trample on other people in the process.” (Chavez 1971, 64)

The task of La Causa, as a nonviolent social movement, was to show an alternative way to conceive of self-realization and strength:

If we provide alternatives for our young people out of the way we use the energies and resources of our own lives, perhaps fewer and fewer of them will seek their manhood in affluence and war. Perhaps we can bring the day when children will learn from their earliest days that being fully man and fully woman means to give one’s life to the liberation of the brother who suffers. (Chavez 1971, 65)

For Chavez, the United Farm Workers union had become a community that prepared its members to adopt, in the words of Frederick Dalton: “a manner of life characterized by sacrificial service of others, solidarity with the poor through voluntary poverty and simplicity of life, commitment to nonviolent activism for the sake of justice, and faith in human dignity and God’s goodness.” (94) Chavez thought of the union as an example of a “nonviolent army” that could instill in young people the “hard work, discipline, and sacrifice” that attracted so many of them to the military; but instead of having to do “battle against other poor people”, the union would focus the sacrifice of young people “against the causes of their poverty”, turning their “sacrifices and their suffering into a powerful campaign for dignity and for justice.” (Chavez 1971, 94)

Chavez made it clear that La Causa drew its moral foundations from Mexican cultural and religious traditions. It is undeniable that the work of Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and labor union activism inspired Chavez’s vision. Yet, Chavez always emphasized that his formative understanding of nonviolence stemmed from Mexican folk traditions, particularly those that he learned from his mother. In his eulogy for her, he explained how Juana Estrada Chavez instructed him in nonviolence through the use of dichos, or Mexican folk sayings, that encapsulated wisdom concerning conflict resolution: “She taught her children to reject that part of a culture which too often tells its young men that you’re not a man if you don’t fight back. She would say ‘No, its best to turn the other cheek. God gave you senses like eyes and mind and tongue and you can get out of anything. It takes two to fight and one can’t do it alone’.” (Chavez 1991b, 172)

Chavez’s mother also taught her children to sacrifice their time and serve others. When the family
worked in the fields of Delano during the 1940s, Juana Estrada Chavez would have her children drive fellow farm workers on errands to the welfare office, to public officials, or to the hospital: “Mama never let us charge a penny for our troubles, not even for gas.” (Chavez 1991b, 172) Her dedication to serving the needs of others stemmed from her personal devotion to St. Eduvigis, a patroness of charity. Juana Estrada Chavez instructed her family in good works by celebrating this saint’s day each year, seeking out the needy and offering assistance to the poor, carrying out a tradition of *religion casera* “the homespun Catholic religious devotion at the heart of the lives of so many of the faithful of Mexican descent.” (Dalton, 103) Thus, Chavez’s childhood was suffused with Mexican cultural and spiritual ideals that careful consideration, reason, and dialogue are alternatives to violence, and that a good life is one devoted to serving the needs of the poor and unfortunate.

In some of the earliest documents of the farm worker movement, Chavez explained how these Mexican cultural values were to be institutionalized as essential parts of *La Causa*’s nonviolent direct action practices. In the “Sacramento March Letter”, issued before the 250-mile march from Delano, California to Sacramento during Easter Week of 1966, Chavez laid out *La Causa*’s logic of nonviolence. I follow Greg Moses in thinking of a “logic of nonviolence” as a set of concepts or values that are meant to classify, structure, and give meaning to the tactics, strategy, and goals of a nonviolent campaign with the ultimate aim of social justice. (Moses, 146-147) The Sacramento March was the first major attempt to fashion the Mexican cultural practices of pilgrimage, penitential procession, and revolutionary action into such a framework to guide the future activism of the farm worker movement.

### The Logic of Nonviolence

#### Pilgrimage

The farm worker march to Sacramento was modeled on the Freedom March from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama in 1965 that put pressure on the federal government to pass the Voting Rights Act of 1965. However, Chavez explicitly called the three hundred mile trek a religious pilgrimage, adding a different emphasis to the demonstration. A pilgrimage, Chavez explained, is “a trip made with sacrifice and hardship as an expression of penance and of commitment—and often involving a petition to the patron of the pilgrimage for some sincerely sought benefit of body or soul.” (Chavez 1966, 15) The practice of pilgrimage is something deeply rooted in Mexican culture, according to Chavez. People flock to major shrines in Mexico, especially the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City, sometimes on their hands and knees, looking for assistance and intercession from saints and the Virgin Mary. Chavez pointed out that many of the Mexican American farm workers participating in the Sacramento March would have engaged in such religious pilgrimages during their lives and would bring that spirit of sacrifice to the journey. Marchers carried with them religious symbols, including flags of the Virgin of Guadalupe, and Mass was said at the end of each day. Yet, amid all the professions of faith, there was also political education taking place. Luis Valdez’s *Teatro Campesino*, the farm worker’s theater group, put on short one act skits during the March that taught the farm workers about labor issues and activism. The March to Sacramento, therefore, combined the idea of a pilgrim’s journey to a site of power with the tradition of an American protest demonstration in such a way that encouraged Latino farm workers to feel welcome. Indeed, as Luis Valdez reported, the rich religious symbolism enticed thousands of farm workers to join the March. (Matthiessen, 128-129) By tying these traditions of pilgrimage and protest march together, Chavez intended to create a unique context that would encourage Latino participation in a political event in a way that past efforts to organize farm workers had not, and use that process to slowly train them to be activists in *La Causa*. (Chavez 1971b, 66) This idea of the pilgrimage would become an organizing principle for many future demonstrations by the farm workers. As Mark Day observed about another pilgrimage conducted in 1969 in southern California, the aim of this strategy “was to form them [the farm workers] into a community of purpose and concern.” (75)
Penitence

The Sacramento March was also designed to evoke the image of the Lenten penitential procession that takes place in many Mexican and Mexican American communities. In the Lenten procession, penitents usually re-enact the final passion of Christ, from the Last Supper to the carrying of the cross to Golgotha. In some Mexican communities, these passion plays are hundreds of years old and receive national media attention for their pageantry. (Martinez, 12-18) According to Chavez’s understanding of these rituals, “penitentes would march through the streets, often in sack cloth and ashes, some even carrying crosses as a sign of penance for their sins, and as a plea for the mercy of God.” (Chavez 1966, 15) Besides evoking the cultural symbolism of the procession, Chavez intended the Sacramento March to be a time for the farm workers and other marchers to model the penitent and suffer from fatigue, heat, and thirst in order to induce self-reflection. He wanted them to examine their motives and reasons for participating in La Causa and to purify themselves of any feelings of anger, resentment, or revenge. Both Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. considered penance and purification as essential stages in their strategies for nonviolent resistance. (Nojeim, 39-43) Their belief was that nonviolent resisters must plan, train, and discipline themselves. Protestors had to learn how to react appropriately to the institutionalized violence that their civil disobedience might unleash. Similarly, the Sacramento March was to give the farm worker activists the opportunity to reflect on and imagine how to achieve a just resolution to their plight through nonviolence and the experience of sacrificial suffering.

Chavez later used the idea of penitential suffering to explain the meaning of the fasts for which he became so well known. Almost two years after the Sacramento March in 1966, the grape strike was still going on without any resolution in sight. Many farm workers had become frustrated with the lack of progress toward negotiating contracts with the growers. Some had taken steps to speed up the process by intimidating the growers with property damage. When Chavez heard about the plans for violence, he became furious. In February 1968, he announced he had begun a fast that would eventually last twenty-five days. In his statement at the end of the fast, Chavez made it clear that his action was not a hunger strike meant to pressure the growers into signing a contract. (Chavez 1966b, 166) The fast, first of all, was a personal act of penance with which he hoped to clear his mind and gain better focus on how to better manage the organizing campaign. (Matthiessen, 187) Yet, he also intended it as a symbol to remind the farm workers that the essence of La Causa lay in the virtue of self-sacrifice for a greater good. Violent means could possibly expedite a contract. But Chavez held that achieving the contract through property damage or threats of violence to the growers would simply contradict the ethical and cultural underpinnings of La Causa.

As Chavez repeatedly explained, the farm worker struggle was an attempt to alleviate the suffering of farm workers under a system of exploitation perpetuated by agribusiness. As he put it in the 1969 Good Friday letter to E.L. Bar, president of a California agribusiness consortium: “[W]e are men locked in a death struggle against man’s inhumanity to man in the industry you represent.” (Chavez 1969, 35) Using violence, however, would simply involve trying to inflict suffering on the growers in order to force them to negotiate. Chavez did not see how the suffering of the farm workers justified inflicting pain on the growers. In his view, the point of the struggle was to create a more ethical situation where the unjust conditions producing human suffering were all together removed. He explained to Barr: “I repeat to you the principle enunciated to the membership at the start of the fast; if to build our union required the deliberate taking of life, either the life of a grower or his child, or the life of a farm worker or his child, then I choose not to see the union built.” (Chavez 1969, 36)

By intimidating the growers, the farm workers would also go against the cultural foundations of La Causa. According to Chavez, the idea of enduring suffering in order to achieve a greater good is a deeply rooted Mexican cultural practice. Dolores Huerta confirmed this point: “I know it’s hard for people who are not Mexican to understand, but this is part of the Mexican culture—the penance, the
whole idea of suffering for something, of self-inflicted punishment. It’s a tradition of very long standing.” (Levy, 277) The purpose of Chavez’s penitential suffering was not to coerce others to act. There was no demand attached to it. In fact, he made it clear that the audience for his three famous fasts was not the growers with which the union was seeking negotiation nor the supermarkets that sold nonunion produce. Instead, the self-inflicted suffering was meant to be a symbol to accentuate the injustice experienced by the farm workers and prick the conscience of others. As Chavez said in the statement ending his second major fast in 1972: “So long as we are willing to sacrifice for that cause, so long as we persist in nonviolence and work to spread the message of our struggle, then millions of people around the world will respond from their hearts, will support our efforts, and in the end we will overcome.” (Chavez 1972, 168) Whereas property damage or hunger striking attempt to knock the powerful off balance and cause them to change their position though intimidation, fear, or moral suasion, penitential suffering is focused away from the powerful. It removes the powerful from the center of attention and, instead, aims to build a community of solidarity around the faster. Chavez observed: “When somebody stops eating for a week or ten days, people want to be part of that experience. Someone goes to jail and people want to help him.” (Chavez 1971b, 71) This community of support that can then respond to the pain of the faster through organizing and mobilization which includes pressuring the powerful to change. Chavez’s strategy of penitential suffering affirmed the value of sacrificing for a greater good and created a way for people to join in solidarity with farm workers. Thus, Chavez argued not only that these practices were deeply in accordance with the cultural self-understandings of Mexicans and, therefore, would make them more likely to become involved; penitential suffering was also more likely to work as an effective political strategy than property damage and hunger striking in creating a base of widespread public support and solidarity among non-Latinos for the farm worker movement.

Revolution

Of course, Chavez did not deny that there was also a more radical edge to La Causa. In the Sacramento March Letter, he makes reference to the tradition of Mexican revolutionary organizing and connects it to the farm worker struggle: “The revolutions of Mexico were primarily uprisings of the poor, fighting for bread and for dignity. The Mexican American is also a child of revolution.” (Chavez 1966, 15) El Plan de Delano, the manifesto issued by Chavez and Luis Valdez, and read along the way at each stop of the March, argues that La Causa is a continuation of the ideals of the 1910 Mexican Revolution. However, it made clear that the weapon now is nonviolence: “Our revolution will not be armed, but we want the existing social order to dissolve; we want a new social order.” (Chavez 1966c, 18) The manifesto itself evoked the El Plan de Ayala, the program put forth in 1910 by one of the heroes of the Mexican Revolution, Emiliano Zapata. El Plan de Ayala called for radical land reform in favor of indigenous peasants and the abolishment of the indentured servitude to rich ranchers that had existed throughout Mexico for centuries. Similarly, the Plan de Delano beckoned “all political groups and the protection of the government” to put an end to an “unjust system” that existed in California for at least a century and subjected farm workers to “starvation wages, contractors, day hauls, forced migration, sickness, illiteracy, camps and sub-human living conditions.” (Chavez 1966c, 17)

Perhaps most revolutionary, however, is how the Plan de Delano connected the situation of the farm workers to the oppression of other marginalized groups:

We know that the poverty of the Mexican or Filipino worker in California is the same as that of all farm workers across the country, the Negroes and poor whites, the Puerto Ricans, Japanese and Arabians, in short all of the races that comprise the oppressed minorities of the United States. (Chavez 19966c, 18-19)

The subjugation of the farm workers was not a special circumstance, therefore, but one that extended throughout society to other ethnic groups, the result of a systematic imbalance of power in American
society created to satisfy the greed of a few elites. Just a few years later, Chavez expanded this critique, pointing out that the exploitation of farm workers was a worldwide phenomenon. He admitted to dreaming of building a global union to resist an international capitalist system predicated on cheap labor. (Chavez 1971b, 65-72) In fact, toward the end of his life, Chavez moved the UFW toward developing ties with Mexican labor unions and social service providers, recognizing that globalization was a factor in determining the quality of life of farm workers and agricultural labor, and that transnational organizing would have to be the future of social justice work. (Griswold Del Castillo, 167-171)

Conclusion

Chavez’s political strategy may be reformist. He did not call for the overthrow of the American government or the abolition of capitalism. However, he did have hopes that La Causa would instigate a revolutionary cultural change that would have enormous political effects. First, the training in nonviolent resistance and direct action would transform the farm workers themselves into democratic agents who would have the skills and abilities to participate, deliberate, and make American liberal democracy more responsive to the needs and interests of the public and not just wealthy, corporate interests. By training its members in democratic participation, La Causa would help the Latino community to enrich, rather than diminish, the political values Huntington and Hanson associate with the American Creed.

More importantly, however, Chavez hoped that the militant nonviolence of the farm workers, built on a foundation of Mexican values and traditions, would model alternatives for an American society saturated with images of violence and greed. The grandest legacy of La Causa might be a contribution toward the development of a culture of peace in the United States. Chavez knew this would be difficult work. After all, most Americans associate Mexico, particularly the border regions, with crime, random violence, drug trafficking, political corruption, and sexual vice. Many of these stereotypes have only been heightened since September 11, 2001, with many neo-nativist voices warning that the U.S. border with Mexico ought to be the first front for the war on terror. (Barry, 31-32; Lovato, 27) Of course, Chavez did not posit Mexican culture as completely nonviolent. However, he did think that there were rich resources within the Mexican traditions of pilgrimage, penitence, and revolutionary organizing that could be distilled into organizing principles in a logic of nonviolence, useful for all Americans to energize and guide the tradition of nonviolent civil disobedience into the new challenges facing the security and stability of the United States.

Works Cited


