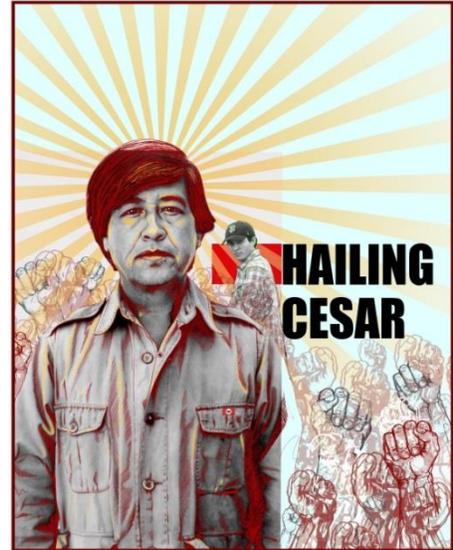


Logline:

Eduardo Chavez goes on a journey to understand the legacy of his grandfather, the civil rights leader César Chavez. In the process, he builds a new bond with his father and finds his own path to honoring César’s life and message.

Project Synopsis:

Eduardo Chavez grew up in a wealthy Bay Area suburb, disconnected from the movement of his famous grandfather, César Chavez. To better understand his roots, Eduardo decides to carry out the activities, speak to the people, and visit the places that mattered to César. The journey opens Eduardo’s eyes to the suffering of his people and changes the comfortable trajectory of his life.



This character-driven film is, on the one hand, the story of a young man in search of his roots and identity; on the other, it is an attempt to tell the story of César Chavez in a novel and impactful way that will resonate with our target audience of young adults.

Thanks to our access to the Chavez family, **we will tell stories about César Chavez have never been told on camera before.** We believe that these stories are important to American history and will be interesting to those who know about César as well as those who have never heard of him before. “Hailing César” follows the three act structure found in most conventional narrative films. The narrative arc of the film is described below.

Act 1

Eduardo Chavez was born and raised in Hillsborough, California, the son of Fernando and Miriam Chavez. Fernando is the oldest son of César Chavez and Miriam is the oldest daughter of Cuban revolutionary Max Lesnik.

Although Eduardo is descended from revolutionaries on both sides of his family, he grew up dreaming of being a professional golfer. He was encouraged by Fernando, a successful lawyer and a reticent man who didn’t talk much about his own father.

Eduardo had a charmed upbringing, playing golf in country clubs, being tutored by world-famous coaches and attending a private high school for talented athletes. He doesn’t have any memories of



Eduardo and Fernando Chavez (Fall 2016)

César, who passed away when he was two, but he is constantly reminded of his grandfather. He sees César’s name and face on street signs, museums, parks, billboards, and even t-shirts; but he can’t reconcile this portrayal of César with the man he simply knew as “Tati,” the late husband of his grandmother Helen, with whom he shares a close bond.

After graduating from college, Eduardo tries his hand at playing professional golf in Florida but eventually gives up. He then moves to Los Angeles to pursue acting. The self-absorbed life of this young millennial living in the big city is jolted by the news that his grandmother Helen has passed away. At Helen’s funeral, Eduardo watches Fernando deliver a powerful eulogy in which he talks about working in the fields at the age of 14 to support his family. It’s the first time Eduardo has ever heard his father talk about his childhood experiences. Eduardo realizes he knows very little about his own roots.

Act 2

Feeling both inspired and confused, and seeking a better sense of his own identity, Eduardo leaves Los Angeles and heads to a farm in Northern California where he picks grapes during the fall harvest. Eduardo finds the work physically and mentally exhausting, but he is eventually able to keep up with the other workers.



Experiencing the strenuousness of manual farm labor for the first time, Eduardo begins to understand why his grandfather fought for the rights of farmworkers. He is genuinely touched by their quiet tenacity and humility.

Eduardo picking grapes, just as his father and grandfather once did. (Fall 2016)

Slowly, the farmworkers begin to open up to Eduardo and share their stories with him. During one of his days off, Eduardo visits Sacramento where he watches the California Senate pass a bill to provide overtime pay for the farmworkers.

After completing his work in the fields, Eduardo desires more knowledge about his grandfather’s life. He meets his father Fernando in Delano, the “Jerusalem” of César’s movement. It is the first time Fernando has been there in decades.

As they visit places associated with César’s movement, Fernando tells stories about his childhood and his father to Eduardo for the first time. Eduardo learns about the trauma Fernando experienced as the oldest son of a polarizing figure whose unbending will helped propel his movement to national acclaim, but often put his family in difficult situations. It finally dawns on Eduardo as to why Fernando never talked much about his childhood or César’s work.

Act 3

Now back in Los Angeles, Eduardo wonders how he can live up to César’s example. He signs up to volunteer on César Chavez Day and visits an elementary school to talk to children about the ways in which his grandfather helped improve the lives of other farmworkers. It is the first time he has ever volunteered on César Chavez Day. This small step represents a new beginning for Eduardo.



Eduardo and Fernando Chavez in Delano (Fall 2016)

Eduardo concludes that *César’s story still matters today because the world needs moral heroes*. We need great leaders like Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and César Chavez to hold us to a higher moral standard. Eduardo begins to view his legacy not as a burden, as he did at the beginning of his journey, but rather as an opportunity. He resolves to find his own path to honoring César’s legacy.

Summary of Director’s Vision / Film’s Style and Tone

“Hailing César” includes archival footage, photographs, animation and interviews, threaded together by present-day footage and narration from Eduardo. In addition to Eduardo’s narration, Fernando’s voice and story is also featured prominently.

Although presented as a documentary, we call “Hailing César” a reality film. In many senses it is similar to documentaries like “Meet the Patels” and “Elena” because it offers a glimpse into a unique personal journey, but “Hailing César” adds elements of a historical biography by incorporating the stories of three generations of Chavezes: a prominent civil rights leader, his son, and his grandson.

While much of the film developed organically, we wrote a screenplay and filmed certain events with a view towards telling the story in the most compelling and well-organized manner. We would be happy to provide you with the full screenplay.

The film will include a diverse range of music that appeals to a younger audience, from artists who are well known as well as “underground” artists. *We have secured a theme song from Grammy-award winning musicians Macklemore and Ryan Lewis (with a gratis license).*

We have also chosen to use animation for two scenes in the film. These scenes feature intimate stories about César Chavez and his family which are narrated by Fernando Chavez. We believe that the use of animation will help the stories feel more relevant to a younger audience than the use of archival or stock footage.

We have opted not to include interviews with subject matter experts, celebrities and others who are not part of the Chavez family and would not be able to shed light on the specific experiences of Fernando

and Eduardo Chavez. Additionally, we have limited the number of “sit down” interviews in order to reduce the frequency of static moments in the film. We have paid particular attention to the pacing and flow of the film in order to make it truly feel like a journey.

We have also limited the amount of archival footage and photographs in order to avoid making our film feel like a “PBS” historical documentary. There are at least 13 documentaries and numerous books about the history of César Chavez and his movement; our goal is not to compete with or displace these, but rather to supplement them by providing an inside look at Chavez’s family and their struggles.

Relevant Background Information

“Hailing César” tells the story of a *Latino American* civil rights icon through the eyes of his own son and grandson. This film will help make history come alive for young people who will find inspiration in the life and message of César Chavez.

We believe this story is important, timely and relevant because we live in a time of increased interest in activism, organizing, and civic participation. César Chavez sacrificed his life to create better opportunities for millions of people, but young people today know very little about his life and his message. Some states have banned the inclusion of César’s story in student textbooks.

There have been numerous documentaries about César Chavez as well as other members of Eduardo’s family (including his aunt Dolores Huerta and other grandfather Max Lesnik). However, this is the first film being produced by a member of the Chavez family, and the first one to feature César’s oldest son Fernando Chavez, who was old enough to remember César’s activism from its early days.

As the only one of César’s 60+ grandchildren and great-grandchildren to ever work in the fields, Eduardo is uniquely positioned to tell this story. He also grew up separately from César’s descendants, who largely live in the Bakersfield area; this makes his journey to learn about his grandfather more authentic.

The key messages and themes explored in the film include the following:

- Anybody can fight against injustice. César lacked money, education and connections, but he had the desire and courage to change his world for the better. What is important is taking the first step, or translating intention into action.
- We all benefit from the hard work done by the “invisible people”- including our own ancestors, as well as those doing the thankless, difficult jobs that contribute to our high standard of living in this country.
- Nobody knows about the experience of another until they walk in their shoes. We must leave our own comfort zones, as Eduardo did, in order to truly understand what others go through.

We hope the film will also resonate with young people around the world, particularly in countries where social justice and civil rights for downtrodden people are pressing issues.