

Letter from Cesar Chavez to Friends regarding Peregrinacion. 1966

Peregrinacion
P.O. Box 1060
Delano, Calif.
March 14, 1966

Friends,

Your generosity has made it possible for us to continue the struggle for the rights of farm workers. The struggle is a long and hard one. We ask again for your assistance and support.

On March 17, 1966, the National Farm Workers Association will begin a 300 mile "Peregrinacion" from Delano to Sacramento. It is a march of farm workers. It will begin in Delano and will involve workers from all parts of the state. Enclosed is a statement, "Peregrinacion, Penitencia, Revolucion," which will explain the background and purpose of our march. This will be a pilgrimage by members of all races and religions.

In order to be successful, we will need the help of our friends around the state and the nation. We ask you to help us in three ways:

First, issue a statement supporting the Peregrinacion.

Second, join us for a day on the march and especially for the last day in Sacramento. Although this is primarily a march of farm workers, it is important that all who have a concern for social justice and human dignity demonstrate their unity with us. We hope you will be able to organize delegation to walk with us. Enclosed is a registration form which must be filled out and returned if you can be with us.

Third, the expense of the peregrinacion will greatly increase the costs of the strike. It is essential that we have three trucks, shoes for the marchers, sleeping bags, raincoats, cars, medicines and food. We need your help. Checks should be made payable to "NFWA-March".

We hope to hear from you by return mail or phone: time is running out. Our address is: Peregrinacion, P.O. Box 1060, Delano, California; Phone: 725-0490 or 725-8661 area code 805.

You have been generous in the past. Perhaps, when the strike is won, we may be able to return the kindness which has made possible our fight.

Viva la Huelga!

Cesar E. Chavez
Peregrinacion, Penitencia, Revolucioin

In the “march from Delano to Sacramento” there is a meeting of cultures and traditions; the centuries-old religious tradition of Spanish culture conjoins with the very contemporary cultural syndrome of “demonstration” springing from the spontaneity of the poor, the down-trodden, the rejected, the discriminated-against baring visibly their need and demand for equality and freedom.

In every religious oriented culture “the pilgrimage” has had a place, 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. Pilgrimage has not passed from Mexican culture. Daily at any of the major shrines of the country, and in particular at the Basilica of the Lady of Guadalupe, there arrive pilgrims from all points—some of whom may have lofty since walked-out the pieces of rubber tire that once served them as soles, and many of whom will walk on their knees the last mile or so of the pilgrimage. Many of the “pilgrims” of Delano will have walked such pilgrimages themselves in their lives—perhaps as very small children even; and cling to the memory of the day-long marches, the camps at night, streams forded, hills climbed, the sacral aura of the sanctuary, and the “fiesta” that followed.

But throughout the Spanish-speaking world there is another tradition that touches the present march, that of the Lenten penitential processions, where the penitantes 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 plan for the mercy of God. The penitential procession is also in the blood of the Mexican-American, and the Delano march will therefore be one of penance—public penance for the sins of the strikers, their own personal sins as well as their yielding perhaps to feelings of hatred and revenge in the strike itself. They hope by the march to set themselves at peace with the Lord, so that the justice of their cause will be purified of all lesser motivation.

These two great traditions of a great people meet in the Mexican-American with the belief that Delano is his “cause,” his great demand for justice, freedom, and respect from a predominantly foreign cultural community in a land where he was first. The revolutions of Mexico were primarily uprisings of the poor, fighting for bread and for dignity. The Mexican-American is also a child of the revolution.

Pilgrimage, penance and revolution. The pilgrimage from Delano to Sacramento has strong religion-cultural overtones. But is also the pilgrimage of a cultural minority who have suffered from a hostile environment, and a minority who mean business.

Cesar E. Chavez
General Director, NFWA

Perigrinacion Route

Day of March	Location of Stop	Date	Pass Through
1			Pass Through
2	Ducor		
3	Porterville	3/17	
4	Lindsey	3/18	Richgrove
5	Farmersville	3/19	Terra Bella
6	Visalia	3/20	Strathmore
7	Colter	3/21	Exeter
	Parlor	3/22	
8		3/23	
9	Malaga		Dinaba
10	Highway City	3/24	Reedly
11	Madera	3/25	Fowler
12	Chowchilla	3/26	Calwa, Fresno
13	Merced	3/27	Harndon
14	Livingston	3/28	
15-16	Turlock	3/29	
	Modesto	3/30	Atwater
17		3/31-4/1	Delhi
18-19	Manteca		Keyes
20	Stockton	4/2	Ceres
21-24	Lodi	4/3-4/4	Ripon, Salida
25	Lodi-Sacramento	4/5	
	Sacramento	4/6-4/9	
		4/10	

Registration For Perigrinacion

Note: No delegation or individual will be permitted to join the march if not registered with NFWA, except on the last day of the march.

Name of Group/Organization_____

Address_____ Phone_____

Who to contact_____ Phone_____

At what city do you plan to join?_____

Date you will join_____ Number of delegates_____

Can we call collect if necessary?_____

(Cut and mail the above to N.F.W.A., P.O. Box 1060, Delano, California)

1. Only registered groups may join the Perigrinacion.
2. N.F.W.A. cannot assume responsibility for overnight housing and meals for delegates. If your group plans to stay for several days you must make your own arrangements.
3. The March Captain and monitors will be in charge at all times along the route. Monitors will be well identified. Utmost cooperation will be necessary by everyone to insure success.
4. This is a religious march. We ask that all participants conduct themselves with the decorum befitting the occasion at all times.
5. All delegates must plan to join the march in the morning at a city or town and march the full day's march to the next regular march stop. Arrangements are not being made to shuttle people back and forth during the day. This will be done only in emergencies.
6. The drinking of alcoholic beverages is forbidden during the march. This will apply both during the day and in the evenings.
7. Delegates are asked to bring a sign identifying their group. N.F.W.A. will furnish all other signs.
8. Upon arrival report to the march captain. He will inform you of parking facilities for the day.
9. There will be an orientation each day for the new arrivals. Please make every attempt to attend the meeting before your march.
10. On the last day of the march, Sunday, April 10 (Easter Sunday), as we march into Sacramento, we ask that any and all persons with a concern in the areas of farm labor and human dignity join us in this pilgrimage. No registration will be required on that day. A mass will be held at the end of the march.