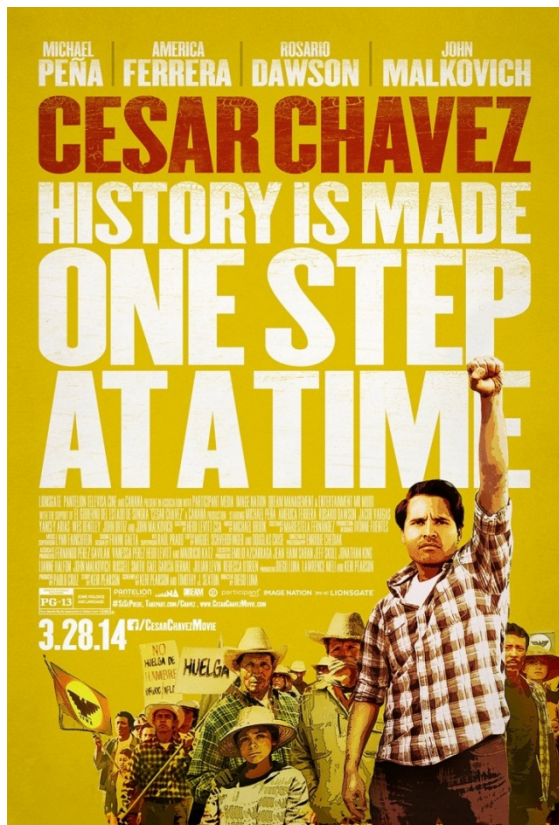


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# Cesar Chavez a Timely Reminder the Fight Continues: Full Q&A with Diego Luna and UFW President

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On March 7, 2014, there was a special advance screening of [Cesar Chavez](#), the upcoming biopic about the civil rights activist and labor leader's fight for farm workers' right in California. The movie deftly weaves the chapters of Chavez's long, hard struggle to organize immigrant farm workers, from the early 60s to the mid 70s. The movie hits all the important highlights of this often forgotten chapter in the Civil Rights era without ever feeling long-winded.



We follow Chavez, played by a boyishly idealistic and charismatic Michael Peña, taking his large brood in tow to Delano to start organizing farm workers in the early 60s. The movie did a wonderful job of showing what a great collective effort it was, with Chavez as the movement's head and a strong, determined cadre beside him, including his strong wife, Helen, played by America Ferrera, not only raising their 8 children but just as involved in making decisions, working the fields and protesting. The co-founder of their group, the United Farm Workers (UFW), Dolores Huerta, played by Rosario Dawson, is the even-keel of the group as they face as many setbacks as triumphs.



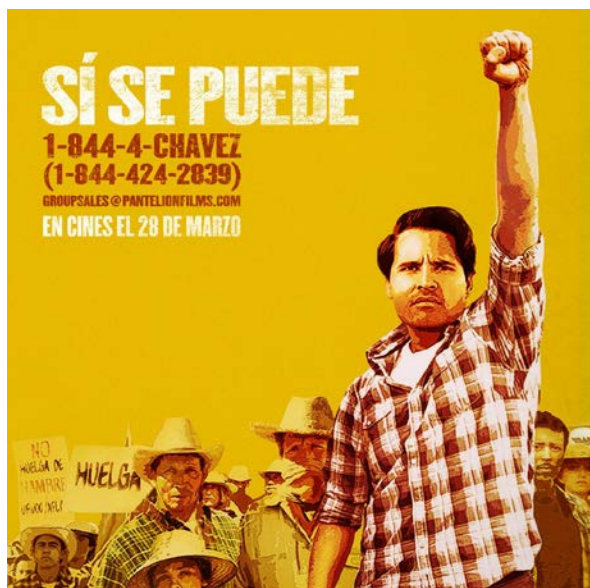
Starting with Chavez throwing the support of the UFW behind striking Filipino workers, the movie shows what a long, drawn-out fight it was between farm workers and the wealthy growers, epitomized by John Malkovitch's arrogant character. The fight escalates from police intimidation, to court injunctions against strikes, to the growers illegally trucking in Mexican laborers to try to break the strikes. Eventually reaching national awareness, Chavez and his allies urge a national boycott of grapes and attracts the support of Senator Robert F. Kennedy, excellently played by Jack Holmes. We get a true sense of the political pendulum of the times swinging in favor of the movement and then away, as conservatives President Nixon and California governor Ronald Reagan come into office and side with the growers.



We know Chavez and the UFW eventually succeeded in securing collective bargaining rights for farm workers, but the movie is a great reminder that it came at a great cost for many: at one point Chavez went on a hunger strike to keep his movement non-violent and many people made personal sacrifices and suffered greatly. There was extreme racism and violence that resulted in deaths and these strikes went on for many years.



To know that impoverished workers...tens of thousands of them...risked their livelihoods and stood together on picket lines year after year against forces who held all the cards, financially and politically, is an incredible American story. After the film, there was a Q&A moderated by Hector Calderon, UCLA Professor of Spanish and Portuguese and attended by director/producer Diego Luna, producer Pablo Cruz and Arturo S. Rodriguez, President of the [United Farm Workers of America](#). Luna admitted he initially knew nothing of Cesar Chavez and while researching, he was surprised no one had yet made a movie about the great activist. Rodriguez made a strong closing statement that this film is as relevant as ever, as we have 11 million undocumented immigrants today, many still working on fields, for meager wages and with little protection, and Americans still not knowing the plight of those who are responsible for the food on their tables. Judging by the [sidewalk responses](#) Luna got at SXSW this week asking if people knew who Cesar Chavez was, this movie is a very much-needed film to raise public awareness that the fight for immigrant and worker rights is as important as ever.



The screening was hosted by the [UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center](#), [Melnitz Movies](#) and [Canana](#), the film's production company, and sponsored by the [UCLA Cesar E. Chavez Department of Chicana/o Studies](#), the [UCLA Department of Spanish and Portuguese](#), and the [UCLA Office for Diversity & Faculty Development](#). Many community leaders and organizers attended the screening and the filmmakers hope they will help galvanize people to pack theaters as a strong statement of support when it opens nationwide on March 28, 2014. You can watch the full Q&A below.

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