Encouraged by the civil rights movement, labor organizer César Chávez began in the early 1960s to protest the unfair treatment of farm workers in California and the Southwest, the majority of whom were Mexican or Mexican American. In 1963 he and Dolores Huerta founded the United Farm Workers of America (UFW), which launched a boycott of California table grapes in 1965 as part of a movement to improve working conditions for field laborers. This eventually resulted in a national boycott of grapes by many sympathetic Americans.

This painting links modern-era activists Chávez and Huerta to historic figures Miguel Hidalgo and José María Morelos (leaders in Mexico’s War of Independence) and Emiliano Zapata (Mexican revolutionary and champion of agrarian reform), who shared their Mexican heritage and a commitment to justice. The painting’s title refers both to the mythical homeland of the Aztec people and to the cultural realm of greater Mexico.

Alfredo Arreguín (born 1935)
Oil on canvas, 2005
Gift of Felix Arreguín Velez and Catalina Toledo de Arreguín
NPG.2007.214