Carlos Santana stated, “The most valuable possession you can own is an open heart. The most powerful weapon you can be is an instrument of peace.” This quotation means that the most important possession you have is to be a very kind and caring person. The best you can be is respectful and non-violent. A person of Hispanic descent who represents Santana’s words is César E. Chavez. Three things Chavez did to become an instrument of peace include: living through a difficult childhood that shaped his opinion on how workers are treated, organizing a large grape boycott, and continuing to strike for farm workers’ rights over many years.

First, as a child, César was a victim of racism, such as teasing, name calling, and discrimination at school. He was treated badly by his classmates because he was Hispanic. In the text, Cesar Chavez (1927-1993)¹, it explains the pain he endured for speaking in Spanish: “Children would make fun of his accent and call him a ‘dirty Mexican.’ A teacher made him wear a sign around his neck which read ‘I’m a clown, I speak Spanish!’” These comments are very hurtful and embarrassing. Just because he spoke Spanish doesn’t mean he was a clown. It just means that he knew another language that some people did not speak. I speak Spanish also, but that doesn’t mean that I am a clown. As a result, Chavez was an instrument of peace because the pain he witnessed as a child led him to care about being kind to all people as an adult. He wanted to fight against discrimination amongst races. He was influenced by his mother and grandmother who taught him about being kind to all people, especially his elders.

Later in life, César organized a boycott so people would stop buying merchandise off of the growers. What a boycott does is that it gets people to stop buying a certain product from a specific company, so it runs out of business. This continues until the boycotters get something, which in this case was rights for the farm workers César believed American people had a sense of justice and did not want farm workers to be forced to live in a life filled with poverty. Consequently, Chavez was an instrument of peace because 5,000 marchers joined César’s march in support of the boycott, which led the growers to contact César to set-up better working conditions for the farm workers. The growers had to negotiate with Cesar because in this boycott, they were losing money from no one buying their merchandise.

Finally, César Chavez continued for many years to strike for the rights of farm workers and educate people about the dangers of pesticides. He didn’t give up. He continued organizing strikes for four years. Therefore, Chavez was an instrument of peace because in the end the growers paid attention and listened to his concerns. They began to review the use of pesticides. California also revised its use of many types of pesticides because of his efforts. As a result, he also won the Aguila Azteca Award, the highest award in the Mexican government.

In conclusion, Cesar Chavez is an important person of Hispanic descent who helped create a more peaceful world. His childhood changed his view on how the farm workers were treated, so he forced growers to negotiate with farm workers through a boycott and years of strikes. By studying the life of Cesar Chavez for Hispanic Heritage Month, I have learned that even if you are a minority or poor, you can still make a big difference in the world. Cesar Chavez makes me feel proud of being Hispanic, and specifically Mexican. Because of him, people know that many Mexicans work hard for what they want and he lets people know that Mexicans deserve respect.