

2023-2024 César E. Chávez Memorial Education Awards Program
Written Essay Recipients

Grade Level: 1-2 Region: 3 Student: Angel Aranda Rojas Teacher: Teresa L. McNeer Chapter: Santa Maria Elementary EA	Grade Level: 3-4 Region: 3 Student: Emmanuel Davila Teacher: Josephine Noyola Chapter: Oxnard EA
Grade Level: 5-6 Region: 3 Student: Fatima Gonzalez Teacher: Claudia Andrade Chapter: Oxnard EA	Grade Level: 5-6 Region: 3 Student: Abany Lopez Teacher: Claudia Andrade Chapter: Oxnard EA
Grade Level: 5-6 Region: 3 Student: Eloise Maeder Teacher: Samantha Weiss Chapter: Palos Verdes Faculty Assn.	Grade Level: 7-8 Region: 4 Student: Keighly Harrington Teacher: Jose Melo Chapter: Valley Center-Pauma TA
Grade Level: 7-8 Region: 3 Student: Keegan Holbrook Teacher: David Cuestas Chapter: Palmdale Elementary TA	Grade Level: 7-8 Region: 3 Student: Isaac Akanji Teacher: Sonya Garcia Morris Chapter: Santa Maria Elementary EA
Grade Level: 9-12 Region: 1 Student: Danna Banuelos Garcia Teacher: Christina Molfino Chapter: East Side TA	Grade Level: 9-12 Region: 1 Student: Pia Ferus-Comelo Teacher: Pamela Lim-McAlister Chapter: Albany TA
Grade Level: 9-12 Region: 3 Student: Naim Juarez Teacher: Charlene Fried Chapter: Baldwin Park EA	Grade Level: 9-12 Region: 3 Student: Christian Paredes Teacher: Charlene Fried Chapter: Baldwin Park EA
Grade Level: 9-12 Region: 3 Student: Jinhui Liu Teacher: Charlene Fried Chapter: Baldwin Park EA	

César Chavez was born on
march 31 1927. He never
gave up. My dad works
in fields and he never
gives up. He works hard
every day. He works in
the hot sun. I think he
should get paid more.

When I was in first grade
I wanted to count to 200
but kids kept saying
that I will never count to
200 but I didn't give up. I
kept on trying and trying and

I learned how to count to
200 just like Cesar Chavez.
My sister goes to school
she had a quiz she didn't
know the answers, but she
didn't give up. She tried
her best and she got a
prize. If my dad needs
help on something I'll
help him. In our family
we never give up.

Angel Aranda Rodriguez.

Emmanuel Davila

Harrington School

Teacher: Noyola

My Heroes without a Cape

Do you know a hero? You might think of Superman or Batman for their superpowers. Consider the everyday heroes without capes, tirelessly working from dawn to dusk in our fields. These individuals, like the laborers ensuring we have fresh vegetables, plants, and fruits on our tables, embody the legacy of Cesar Chavez. Chavez championed farmworkers' rights through principles of perseverance and teamwork, teaching us that collective action and solidarity can lead to monumental changes.

Jose Carmen and Gloria Paniagua, my grandparents, migrants who arrived in Oxnard, California seeking the American Dream, and my father, Francisco Javier Dávila, exemplify these principles. Through hard work and dedication, they supported their families and instilled values of respect, love for work, and kindness. Their stories highlight the power of perseverance, the importance of teamwork, and the impact of supporting one another.

Moreover, Francisco's commitment, my dear father, despite exhaustion, to nurture not just plants but also family bonds and community spirit reflects Chavez's vision. The resilience and unity of workers like my family members who work in agriculture and countless others, who face adversity with the mantra "I can!" and "Yes, it's possible!", continue Chavez's legacy of fighting for justice and dignity for all workers.

In honoring these unsung heroes, we connect their daily struggles and triumphs to Cesar Chavez's enduring legacy. Their dedication, overcoming challenges through collective effort, and passing on values of hard work and solidarity, are truly inspiring. Let us recognize and value the hard work of these field workers, crucial to our society, embodying perseverance and teamwork's transformative power.

Emmanuel Davila

Escuela Harrington

Maestra Noyola

Heroes sin Capa

¿Conoces a un héroe? Podrías pensar en Superman o Batman por sus superpoderes.

Considera a los héroes cotidianos sin capas, trabajando incansablemente desde el amanecer hasta el anochecer en nuestros campos. Estos individuos, como los trabajadores que aseguran que tengamos verduras frescas, plantas y frutas en nuestras mesas, encarnan el legado de César Chávez. Chávez abogó por los derechos de los trabajadores agrícolas a través de principios de perseverancia y trabajo en equipo, enseñándonos que la acción colectiva y la solidaridad pueden llevar a cambios monumentales.

José Carmen y Gloria Paniagua, mis abuelos, migrantes que llegaron a Oxnard, California en busca del Sueño Americano, y mi padre, Francisco Javier Dávila, ejemplifican estos principios. A través del trabajo duro, sostuvieron a sus familias e inculcaron valores de respeto, amor por el trabajo y amabilidad. Sus historias destacan el poder de la perseverancia, la importancia del trabajo en equipo y el impacto de apoyarse mutuamente.

Además, el compromiso de Francisco, mi querido padre, a pesar del agotamiento, para nutrir no solo plantas sino también lazos familiares y el espíritu comunitario refleja la visión de Chávez. La unidad de trabajadores como los miembros de mi familia que trabajan en la agricultura y muchos otros, que enfrentan la adversidad con el mantra "¡Yo puedo!" y "¡Sí, se puede!", continúan el legado de Chávez de luchar por la justicia y la dignidad para todos los trabajadores.

Al honrar a estos héroes no reconocidos, conectamos sus luchas y triunfos diarios con el legado perdurable de César Chávez. Su dedicación, superar desafíos a través del esfuerzo

colectivo y transmitir valores de trabajo duro y solidaridad. Reconozcamos y valoremos el arduo trabajo de estos trabajadores del campo, cruciales para nuestra sociedad, que encarnan el poder transformador de la perseverancia y el trabajo en equipo.

Hands that Speak: The Legacy of a Migrant Worker

Hands reflect an individual's life journey. My father's hands show hard work and resilience from years as a migrant worker in Oxnard, California's celery fields. He encourages me to seize opportunities I have in school and accomplish my dreams of me becoming a dentist. Education was not accessible to my father in Mexico, as he had to prioritize supporting his family at a younger age than I am now. He deeply values education as a crucial tool in providing me with opportunities for a brighter future.

My parents gifted my sister and I with a desk. This simple piece of furniture was a sign of a promising future for us. It was a bridge to a future they dared to dream for us, a future they never had. My father often says, “Work hard, I do not wish for you the life I have led.” His withered and calloused hands are a testament of his hard work. He has braved through the storms and under the scorching sun, all for the sake to provide me with a different life. As I sit down at this desk and type this very essay, his determination inspires me. It's not just homework, it's the legacy of a man that believes in the power of dreams. A man that has endured so much so that his children can one day reach for the stars.

Just as a desk is a symbol of personal growth and learning Dolores Huerta saw education as a tool to help empower farm workers. In fact, Dolores Huerta was a teacher. It has been said that knowledge is power and power is knowledge. She used education as a way of providing knowledge to the farmworkers and in turn empowering them.

Dolores Huerta shows us how important education is by the big changes she made.

Imagine a teacher who didn't just stay in the classroom but went out to help farmworkers and their families have better lives. Huerta saw kids from these families coming to school without shoes, cold, and so hungry that they couldn't focus on learning. She understood that for kids to do well in school, they need to be healthy and not worried about other things. So, she used what she knew from teaching to fight for their rights and make sure they had what they needed. Huerta teaches us that education is not just about books and homework; it's also a powerful way to help others and make the world a fairer place.

Let's think of education as a magic key that can open doors to amazing places. Picture my dad's hands, rough and worn from hard work, showing all he's given up because he couldn't go to school. These hands tell a story of hope and dreams for me. Dolores Huerta's story is a powerful example of how education can change the world. She was a teacher who didn't just stay inside her classroom; she went out and made a big difference for farmworkers and their families. Then, there's this simple desk, a special gift my dad got for me, because he dreams of me becoming a dentist one day. He wants me to use my education to spread happiness in my community by helping everyone have a beautiful smile. So, education isn't just about learning from books; it's a tool that can help us make our lives and the lives of others around us better.

Abany López
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2/25/24

Sowing a Healer

Every year, we joyfully celebrate the Strawberry Festival in Ventura County. It's all thanks to the agricultural workers who dedicate themselves to preserving this beautiful land. We've come a long way since the time of César Chávez. In fact, César Chávez himself lived and worked in the same city where I live, Oxnard, California. His legacy endures, inspiring us to continue making a positive impact.

Yet does anyone consider where our food comes from? It's important to acknowledge and appreciate the hard work and dedication of those who work in the fields to provide food for us. Since their labor is essential to our daily lives, and recognizing the challenges they face or have faced can help us develop empathy and understanding towards their experiences.

In my family it is common for us to visit the strawberry fields where my father works. Whether it is on the weekend or when we have days off from school. During these visits, I witness first hand the backbreaking labor of people bent over, tirelessly picking fruit under the relentless sun. It makes me feel bad that people still work under these kinds of harsh conditions everyday, especially a loved one like my dad. I know that Cesar Chavez championed through providing social justice for farm workers who were exposed to dangerous chemicals. Additionally, many owners made people work in terrible conditions. So terrible that in some cases there was no place to use the toilet!

My parents think that nowadays the field workers have better pay than when they arrived in the 1990s they earned four dollars an hour. My mother told me that in those years they worked up to fourteen hours a day, they didn't give them rest and they didn't pay them extra time either.

My parents have also told me that the work in the field is still very heavy. The image of our agricultural farmland in Oxnard is striking. It's an array of lines dotted with people bending

over. A testament of the continued hard labor of “campesinos.” While most people sleep, before the sun rises, farmworkers are already up working. Then as the morning progresses by the time most people go to work, the fields have become sprinkled with people bent over already working.

César Chávez, whose life's work unfolded in the very soils of Oxnard, has left a mark in our community. He has inspired generations to fight for the cause of social justice, particularly for the farmworkers upon whose backs our agriculture is built on. The fight for injustice is still far from over. That is why I would like to work hard to give back to my community of Oxnard. “We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community,” are Cesar Chavez words that resonate with me because they inspire me to pursue my dream to make a difference in my community.

When I grow up, I dream of becoming a doctor, a healer of hearts and mender of wounds. My heart is full of hope and my mind is set on a journey to make the world a brighter, healthier place. My family has sowed the seeds of ambition deep within my heart. They have taught me the value of hard work. They remind me that my hands should be used for a different cause, to tend to those that suffer pain. Their hands have done enough by cultivating the earth and cultivating in me the strength to pursue a brighter future.

Sowing Seeds of Change: The Legacy of Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez

I was being pushed in a stroller the first time I attended a protest. My parents, siblings, and I converged at Pershing Square with thousands to express our anger and anguish over the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer. Of course, I was too young to understand the reasons behind the march, but it was the beginning of my education in the power of nonviolent movements and the struggle behind creating meaningful change. Trips to downtown Los Angeles became regular events for my family. National politics led to many reasons to protest, and society seemed awakened to the benefits of gathering to make our voices heard. I experienced the strength of joint action. Only later would I learn that these marches and rallies have roots in the work of early social justice activists, Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez. As the first to demand change for the migrant workers of California, Huerta and Chavez began a movement that would eventually improve the lives of tens of thousands and connect to other movements of their time, becoming a role model for peaceful, powerful actions to create change.

Both Chavez and Huerta demonstrate a life lived in service to others. Sacrificing time and energy, they worked tirelessly to give voice to and empower the neediest in California. Both chose to shine a light on issues many people were unaware of or preferred to ignore. This education of the public was the first step towards change. For me, becoming educated on the inequities and challenges of our society has been eye opening. I am fortunate to have a family that stays involved politically, but I am also part of classrooms that address difficult subjects. My sixth-grade social studies teacher, Ms. Samantha Weiss, believes her students should have honest information regarding current events. She challenges us to think about different

perspectives and to recognize when a group of people is being treated unfairly. She also demonstrates, through her own actions, the importance of taking the initiative when there is injustice. Ms. Weiss was the first person I saw when I drove up to school one morning and teachers had gathered to rally for fair compensation, better working conditions, and a better learning environment for students. My fifth-grade literature teacher, Ms. Gina Tredennick, made a point of making sure all types of people, from all parts of society, were represented in the books we read. Our class read *Too Bright to See*, by Kyle Lukoff, during which we got to know the lovable character, Bug, a transgender fifth grader. Despite attacks from the fringe of our community, Ms. Tredennick chose to model the core values of Chavez and Huerta by accepting all people and encouraging students to do the same. In so many of my classes, I see the principles of Chavez and Huerta on display. Because my teachers care about fairness and equality, I better understand these issues myself.

Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta impacted countless numbers with the work they did for California's agricultural workers, but their efforts have rippled far beyond the fields of our central valley. There are new battles to fight, but they created a path for us to follow. I intend to continue learning about issues that affect the people of California so I can act on them. I hope we make progress on fair treatment for immigrants, better income equality, and racial justice. I look to the leaders in my life to guide me, as well as the heroes of the past, including Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez.

Keighly Harrington

Word Count: 584

César E. Chávez and Dolores Huerta Education Awards Program

César Chávez and Dolores Huerta remain influential role models for people and many try to emulate their strong beliefs towards improving labor opportunities and civil rights. César Chávez and Dolores Huerta were activists who organized boycotts and protests to achieve better working conditions and rights for farm workers. With their powerful voice and brave actions, many lives have been drastically changed for the better. César Chávez and Dolores Huerta had strong principles that informed their actions. I strongly agree with their principles relating to the importance of education and doing acts of service for others. There are countless ways why education is important and I believe everyone deserves a proper education. I also value doing acts of service since I believe one small act of kindness can lead to positive change.

Since my first day of kindergarten, my mother has encouraged me to try my best in school. I am forever grateful for this since this has made me the student I am today. In school, I am a part of a dual language program. In the program I learn Spanish as a second language. The dual language program has helped me tremendously since I have the opportunity to learn about the importance of diversity and learn material in two languages. Through my studies in the dual language program I am exposed to strong role models like César Chávez and Dolores Huerta and learn to use my voice to promote change. In the future I aspire to become a nurse. Dolores Huerta once said, "We must use our lives to make the world a better place to live." As a bilingual nurse I hope to help people with their medical needs while being kind and compassionate. As a nurse, I will work with people from different backgrounds and my education has taught me the importance of respecting people who are different from me. The tools you are taught in school

help you work towards finding a career path that will eventually allow you to help others and make a change in your community. My education will help me pursue my dream of becoming a nurse.

César Chavez once said, “I am convinced that the truest act of courage, the strongest act of manliness is to sacrifice ourselves for others in a totally non-violent struggle for justice.” My dad taught me to always help those less fortunate when we can. This is why I am a member of the California Junior Scholarship Federation (CJSF), a student-led club that focuses on community service. As a CJSF member some of our community service projects I participate in include crocheting scarves and hats for the homeless, organizing cleanup events, and writing thank you letters to the military. In addition, I plan on volunteering with my dad at an organization called Interfaith. This is an organization that provides programs and services to those in need. My dad volunteers countless hours for Interfaith and donates every chance he gets. I see my dad as a role model just like how I see Chávez and Huerta as agents of change and hope to be as fearless and empathetic as they were.

In conclusion, César Chávez and Dolores Huerta remain very influential people who changed their communities with their ideas and values. I aim to use my education and acts of service to help my community and leave a lasting legacy like these two leaders.

“Chávez led a 250-mile march from Delano to Sacramento, California.”(Chavez Timeline). Not only did Cesar demonstrate through protests and speeches, how the world needed to change. César Chávez was a man who valued the principles of non-violence, proposed by not only Martin Luther King, Jr. but by Mahatma Gandhi. César Chávez changed the world one grape at a time using these important principles of peace.

César made a significant and clear effort to practice nonviolence in his demonstrations. During all of César's campaigns, he felt inspired by the words and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. According to “The Story of César Chávez”, “In 1968 César went on a water only, 25-day fast. He repeated the fast in 1972 for 24 days, and again in 1988, this time for 36 days.”(The Story of Cesar). Whilst Cesar fasted, he remembered how Gandhi viewed his demonstrations and imminent change and worked hard to secure a prosperous future for himself, and his people. While many times people disagreed with Ceésar and some of his ideas, his nonviolent approach to protests gained him and his movement a lot of respect and success throughout the community.

César Chávez was constantly participating in the community, making it known that he wanted to help in any way possible. César wanted his motives to be made clear within his community, which is why he fasted and was a part of the demonstrations himself, allowing him to gain a lot of respect from his followers. According to Biography of César Chávez, “Many people supported César because he believed in nonviolence. Like César, they also believed that farm workers deserved better treatment, respect, dignity, justice, and fairness.”(Biography of César). This was important to César and working hand in hand with his followers and the people he was supporting.

In conclusion, many people work hard on what they believe in. It is extremely important that like César we work hard to fight for things we feel are unjust. Just this last year protests

were heard around the world in support or in opposition to the attacks and the wars happening in the Middle East. For all of human history humans have voiced their opinions, and worked hard to change the world for what they believe in. Just like César we need to fight non-violently and express our opinions for those who are in power so that we can change the world one grape at a time. ¡HUELGA!

ESPAÑOL

“Chávez encabezó una marcha de 250 millas desde Delano a Sacramento, California.” (Chávez Timeline). César no sólo demostró a través de protestas y discursos cómo el mundo necesitaba cambiar. César Chávez fue un hombre que valoró los principios de la no violencia, propuestos no sólo por Martin Luther King, Jr. sino por Mahatma Gandhi. César Chávez cambió el mundo uva a uva utilizando estos importantes principios de paz.

César hizo un esfuerzo significativo y claro por practicar la no violencia en sus manifestaciones. Durante todas las campañas de César, se sintió inspirado por las palabras y enseñanzas de Mahatma Gandhi. Según “La Historia de César Chávez”, “En 1968 César hizo un ayuno de 25 días sólo en agua. Repitió el ayuno en 1972 durante 24 días, y nuevamente en 1988, esta vez durante 36 días.” (La Historia de César). Mientras César ayunaba, recordó cómo Gandhi veía sus manifestaciones y el cambio inminente y trabajaba duro para asegurar un futuro próspero para él y su pueblo. Si bien muchas veces la gente no estaba de acuerdo con César y algunas de sus ideas, su enfoque no violento ante las protestas le valió a él y a su movimiento mucho respeto y éxito en toda la comunidad.

César Chávez estuvo constantemente participando de la comunidad, dando a entender que quería ayudar en todo lo posible. César quería que sus motivos quedaran claros dentro de su comunidad, por lo que ayunó y fue él mismo parte de las manifestaciones, lo que le permitió ganarse mucho respeto por parte de sus seguidores. Según la biografía de César Chávez, “Mucha gente apoyó a César porque creía en la no violencia. Al igual que César, también creían que los trabajadores agrícolas merecían un mejor trato, respeto, dignidad, justicia y equidad” (Biografía de César). Esto era importante para César y trabajar de la mano con sus seguidores y la gente a la que apoyaba.

En conclusión, muchas personas trabajan duro en lo que creen. Es extremadamente importante que, como César, trabajamos duro para luchar por cosas que consideramos injustas. Precisamente este último año se escucharon protestas en todo el mundo en apoyo o en oposición a los ataques y las guerras que están ocurriendo en Medio Oriente. Durante toda la historia de la humanidad, los seres humanos han expresado sus opiniones y han trabajado duro para cambiar el mundo según lo que creen. Al igual que César, debemos luchar de forma no violenta y expresar nuestras opiniones en nombre de quienes están en el poder para que podamos cambiar la situación. mundo una uva a la vez. ¡HUELGA!

Isaac Akanji

Mr.Marquez

US History

20 February 2024

Cesar Chavez's Example for Generations

Everyone in the world has troubles. Whether big or small, people handle problems in different ways. Some people may choose not to speak up, they may let themselves go through hardship thinking that's just the way life is and there's nothing you can do about it. They could think that if they speak up nothing will change and they will just face consequences in the end. They could want to speak up, but they have no one on their side, or they could feel threatened, afraid, or simply just too shy to be a leader. But there are others who do speak up. Even if there are not many people by their side initially with their courage they gather more people around them for their cause. There are times where there are people who stand up for themselves, people who refuse to let bad odds decide their fate, and people who speak up against the strong storm of desperation like Cesar Chavez.

I don't know what it's like to truly struggle. At the very least, not to the extent Cesar Chavez went through. Seeing people like Cesar Chavez where he lived a life of poverty, little food, and backbreaking work makes me see how hard life can really be for people who are suffering. Cesar Chavez, and others like him, spent everyday clinging on to the mountain called life. While Cesar Chavez climbs, there are others on the mountain with him that help keep him up. Caesar Chavez himself has said, "The fight is never about grapes or lettuce. It is always about people."

Caesar Chavez fought for his rights, with undying determination with other farmers to support him in his protest. Through his protest, he was able to better his work environment creating a better life for himself and his fellow farm workers. When you work together to speak up on a problem, with determination no matter the trials, you and everyone with you could be rewarded. Caesar Chavez's actions didn't only help him and the people around him, but it also set a precedent for future generations of farm workers. Farm workers as of now, are reaping from the benefits of Ceasar Chavez's actions that took place years ago. It's possible for something that took place years ago to affect the way we live now. You and the people around you are also able to cause changes that set a precedent that could be followed even years from now.

In the past, I have had situations where I couldn't do things alone and needed the help of others myself. Last year, I had a group project in class and we were running out of time on our assignment. But through our combined determination, we were able to finish the project on time for our presentation to the class. I probably couldn't have done it alone. With our combined efforts we could finish on time. We all reaped from the benefits too. We all got an A on the project due to our determination to finish. There were trials, because if we couldn't finish on time our grade would be at stake. But despite the stress of the bad odds, we just barely finished the project.

Speaking up isn't always easy. Doing things alone isn't easy either. Working together on your troubles with other people can help solve both of these problems. With the combined courage of a group of people it is much easier to speak up about your problems rather than alone.

Child of a Farmworker

By Danna Banuelos / February 2, 2024

Since my earliest memories, I have been shaped by the tireless efforts of two remarkable people, Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta. These trailblazers devoted their lives to advocating for the rights and social justice of farmworkers. As a child of farmworkers myself, their impact on my life has been profound.

Growing up in a low-income family exposed me to the harsh realities that farmworkers face daily. Lacking access to health benefits and safe working conditions, my mother dedicated herself to providing for my siblings and me. The dedication of Chavez and Huerta to social justice and fair treatment struck a chord with me, especially because my mother worked as a farmworker.

In the early stages of my life, I would witness her return home exhausted, coupled with the short time I spent with her during the day, emphasizing the personal significance of their fight. I vividly remember the sacrifices my mother made to ensure we had access to education. Despite her small formal education, she valued learning and encouraged us to excel in school. She would wake up before dawn to prepare breakfast for us before heading out to work, and then return home late in the evening to help us with our homework.

Early on, I witnessed the transformative power of education, thanks to the vision of Chavez and Huerta. They recognized that education was not only a tool for empowerment but also a vehicle for social change. Through their advocacy, they fought for equal access to education, recognizing that an educated community is a powerful force in dismantling systemic oppression. Their commitment to education has motivated me to pursue my understanding, delving into a lifelong journey of knowledge acquisition and critical thinking.

Caesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta recognized that social justice and fair treatment should transcend borders. Their story holds the power to inspire, urging others for inspiration and ensuring that the voices of those in vulnerable communities are not only heard but respected. Their unwavering commitment to grassroots organizing and empowerment serves as the driving force propelling the construction of a more just society for the well-being of future generations.

Their vision transcended the challenges confronted by farm workers in the United States. Their legacy underscores the significance of acknowledging and advocating for the rights of all people, regardless of their nationality or background.

The indomitable spirit of Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta in their relentless pursuit of social justice for farmworkers has profoundly shaped my life, considering my upbringing as the child of a farmworker. Their advocacy has not only taught me the importance of education but also empathy for others. It has instilled in me a sense to engage in educating younger generations or older generations that have gone through the same experience and take action to support farm workers. It underscores the imperative of ensuring fair opportunities for everyone.

Perhaps, it's as straightforward as spreading awareness or initiating conversations about the challenges farmworkers would go through. We can honor the memory of Chavez and Huerta to ensure that their impactful work continues, safeguarding the principle that everyone deserves fair treatment, regardless of their origin or the challenges they have faced during their lives.

THE LEGACY OF CÉSAR CHÁVEZ AND DOLORES HUERTA IN MY LIFE

When talking about American heroes and leaders, César Chávez and Dolores Huerta cannot be left out of the discussion. Chávez and Huerta have both played extremely influential roles in the history of labor and movements. They are well known for their fight for workers' rights, especially in the farming industry. Their strong leadership and commitment to bettering people's lives must never be forgotten. As a way of keeping their legacy alive, this essay demonstrates how their principles of service to others and equal rights are present in my life.

Like I mentioned before, César Chávez and Dolores Huerta were leading activists in the farmworkers' movement. As they were both people who recognized the poor conditions of manual labor—Chávez had been working in the fields since adolescence alongside his family, and Huerta's father worked in the fields and mines—they saw the need to bring farmers together and enable them to stand up for themselves. Movements are not started by individuals and definitely not started overnight, but Chávez and Huerta understood the struggle and used their leadership skills to empower people who were suffering. While they worked in a more rural area, I channel a similar virtue of bettering the lives of the oppressed in an urban area. There is a huge unhoused community that lacks the basics, so every Sunday, my mom and I head to Berkeley early in the morning to serve breakfast to the unhoused. Although there are some people who come on and off, there are many constants in the group we serve with as well as the group we serve to. Rain or shine, dark or bright, we're there to serve. This dependable service allows us to support our community as they learn to support themselves. We really develop relationships with the regulars—we learn what their name is, what their order is, how their family's doing, what they did that week—and that relationship we form is the foundation for positive change. One reason César

Chávez's and Dolores Huerta's leadership had such an influential impact was because they were consistent and because they were determined. Their perseverance built a community, which is needed to fuel a successful movement. Similar to how the farmer's community was, and still is in some cases, suffering, the unhoused community is suffering, so I am proud to be a part of a group that is providing service to those in need and helping raise awareness about the issue.

In addition to their initiative in the farmworkers' movement, César Chávez and Dolores Huerta also advocated for equal rights for all. Chávez was an early and outspoken supporter of gay rights, and Huerta was a feminist and an active supporter of the LGBTQ+ community. As a queer, transgender, disabled, and neurodivergent immigrant of color myself, I am aware of the need for human and civil rights and am thankful for their contributions to the movements. Especially today, in a time when it seems like our small advancements are being reversed, I am personally impacted by the disparity in fundamental rights. As well as being a member of multiple minorities, I am a student worker. Chávez and Huerta endeavored to make workers' lives more equitable, and I see their impact at work. I was educated about my rights, but many aren't. Children are put to work illegally, and workers are exploited because they don't know the minimum wage or the maximum number of work hours per week. Education about worker's rights is increasing and César Chávez and Dolores Huerta were pioneers in that area. Without their determined activism, workers would not have the protection or education that they need today. All around me, I see our freedom of living as ourselves being threatened, and these threats impact all of us. We have a lot of work to do, but I do my part by speaking out, attending rallies and protests, and educating others. All people deserve social justice and dignity, and I will always fight for us to have them.

I cannot end this essay without an acknowledgement. Just like people look up to Chávez and Huerta, I also look up to my mom. For everything I talked about in this essay, I have my mom to thank. Not only did she give me her genes, but she passed down her honorable values, and I am forever grateful. My mom also greatly admires Chávez and Huerta and is a professor of labor studies and public policy, so she is well-versed in their advocacy. She raised me to be the best version of myself and instilled in me the values of leadership and activism, no matter how small they might seem. She cultivates and nurtures all my strengths. Coming from generations of community organizers, we both recognize the importance of being involved in socio-political issues. My mother is one of my biggest role models and I am honored to have learned from her.

César Chávez and Dolores Huerta have improved the lives of many people, and America is indebted to them. They were not only great and disciplined leaders but humble and down-to-earth people, all qualities I want to emulate. Unfortunately, the problems that César Chávez and Dolores Huerta fought against are still prevalent today and it is up to us to continue the fight. Because of this, I am proud to have their principles recurrent in my life. Little by little, I have hope that we can continue Chávez's and Huerta's legacy. Like César Chávez's famous motto, "Sí se puede," reminds us, it can be done.

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Cesar E. Chavez and Dolores Huerta Education Awards Program

Written Essay

My Dream That Came from the Heart of Cesar Chavez

by

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My Dream That Came from the Heart of Cesar Chavez

When I was a child, my mother asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up; I said that my dream was to help others. My mother's dream was to give me a better life. She knew this would not be possible under our circumstances in Mexico. So, we came to California, running away from the realities of our own lives. Living in this country was not what I thought it would be. I, the immigrant, feared being me. I imprisoned my voice, my culture, and my soul. I was no longer who I was. I was a bird who had broken his wings and put himself into a prison made of fear. My songs came out of my eyes as tears. I was running in circles in my tiny prison, seeking the thread of my identity that I had killed. I closed my eyes and dreamed about those yesterdays and how I felt the joy, the warm touch of my family and friends, the soft music everyone listened to at home, and my culture in every bite of the food my mother made. Is this the American Dream? My mind turned into a gray sky, and my thoughts became an angry storm of mixed emotions.

I started school. A soft breeze started flowing between my heart and soul. My wings spread to follow this breeze. I opened my eyes. I saw music coming from all over the world. Tears came out of my eyes, but these tears came from a new land in my heart, where I left a burden made of fear, where I freed my voice and soul into multiple cultures.

Cesar Chavez entered my life, and he changed my life. I learned in my history class all about this brave man who fought for the tireless farm workers, and I wanted to be like him and help my people. So, I started talking to all the ELD students. I asked them how they felt, and we all felt the same; we felt less than others even though we were doing incredibly well in school. We were courageous to take risks, enter contests, just like this one, join service clubs and sports,

and plan our future university goals, “There’s no turning back... We will win. We are winning because ours is a revolution of mind and heart...” (“United Farm Workers”, n.d.). When we are together, we are strong. We are no longer alone. We are no longer afraid. We are proudly Latin Americans. This is what Cesar Chavez has taught me from his powerful words.

I was walking with my mother when we saw an old man selling mops and brooms, carrying them on his back. Hunched over and bending down, he reached out to sell his products. My mother called him, "Sir, sir!" but he did not seem to hear us. Finally, he stopped, and we walked up to him. We bought a mop and handed him a ten-dollar bill, but he humbly asked, "How much did you give me?" At that moment, we realized the man was not only deaf but also blind. He started to give us change, and my mother told him to keep the ten dollars. He cried, and my mother gently wiped away his eyes. This situation opened my mind, and I began to see that, just like him, other people are suffering on the streets; it was what Cesar Chavez saw: I felt the impotence, the oppression, and the pain of the people. That is when I knew that I wanted to become a doctor.

We are all people; we all feel pain, we all cry, we all feel isolated, and we all want someone to help us. I have found my dream in what I learned about Cesar Chavez and what I have gone through personally living here. I want to help all the people in need. The man my mother and I met should not have to struggle with blindness and deafness while having to live on the streets. I can help him, and others like him. Imagine that our lives could change drastically. We could be the ones living on the streets. We must live with gratitude for who we are and what we have and then extend kindness, care, and love to those less fortunate than we are, “Only when we have become nonviolent toward all life will we have learned to live well ourselves” (“United

Farm Workers”, n.d.).

Cesar Chavez also encouraged all the farmworkers to feel proud of their language, culture, and traditions, while also embracing the diversity that surrounded them. By doing this, they would begin to accept their assets and free themselves from the chains that tried to bind them. As a doctor, I will welcome all people, and I will share with them their unique beauty as I guide them into wellness. I will be able to help them with their physical illnesses, and perhaps even more importantly, I will be able to share with them the importance of honoring their languages, cultures, and traditions, as well as honoring those of other people. In this way, I will be able to assist them with their emotional health, as well. I thank Cesar Chavez for this awareness, too.

If I had lived here during the time Cesar Chavez lived, I would have been one of the farmworkers he helped; I would have been standing beside him, supporting him to fight for our people while we continued to work in the fields. Now, thanks to Cesar Chavez, I will be one Latino who becomes a doctor who sincerely helps others. We must be kind. We must be humble. We must extend our hands to everyone. We must join hands and feel the power of unity because it will make us stronger. This is what Cesar Chavez did and how he changed so many people's lives, “We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community...Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and our own” (“United Farm Workers”, n.d.). This is what I aspire to achieve.

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Cesar E. Chavez and Dolores Huerta Education Awards Program

Written Essay

How Cesar Chavez' Principles Live with Me Today

by

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How Cesar Chavez' Principles Live with Me Today

I come from another country. The country is Mexico. I live in one of the thirty-two states of Mexico, Michoacan. I was born in the United States, but shortly after I was born, I went to Michoacan, and that is where I grew up. I am thankful that I was born in California, raised in Mexico, and now, I am back in California. I was raised on a little ranch located in the mountains of Michoacan. Although I grew up in a place far from a city, I learned many things. I received an excellent education, and I learned a lot about the countryside; where I lived there was a lot of activity in agriculture and farming. Most important, I learned how to be respectful, humble, and treat others kindly. Like Cesar Chavez, we both grew up in rural areas with parents who taught us how important it is to love and respect others.

When I came back to the United States from Mexico, it was very difficult for me to establish myself in this country. It was very different from what I was used to in Mexico, but I was able to establish myself thanks to what I learned growing up on our ranch. When I studied US History in California, I learned about the life and work of Cesar Chavez. I learned how he lived to serve others and how he fought for the rights of the farmworkers. I learned that he had several principles that have guided me in my own life journey. One of them was teamwork with cooperation, collaboration, and service to others. One of the things I learned while growing up on the ranch was to work as a team and to work honestly and lovingly. I learned to be loyal to my team. I learned that Cesar Chavez was surprised at how farmworkers were treated rudely and disrespectfully, and especially the undocumented farm workers who work in this country. "There's no turning back... We will win... We are winning because ours is a revolution of mind and heart" (Chavez 3). That is why he created his movement to fight for the rights of the farmers and support the undocumented people who were not treated well.

Now that I am living in California again, I notice that people do not treat each other well. I notice that there are people who are poorly educated and do not respect others. I am not saying that everyone is bad or poorly educated; but, I do see more disrespectful people than I saw growing up on my little ranch. It makes me sometimes think I must return to my little ranch where values, culture, and people are important, and where people treat each other with kindness and respect. These are the main principles Cesar Chavez followed as he worked to liberate the farm workers in this country. He didn't fight with punches to help the farm workers. He didn't use violence and he did not bully, intimidate, or threaten people. Instead, he fought with his words and with his heart. He created a movement that didn't hurt those not involved; he was just trying to make it known that the voices of immigrant farm workers needed to be heard.

I come from a place where agriculture is the focus of our lives. I know what it is like to work under the sun. I know what it is like to be thirsty. I know what it is like to endure the sun in order to finish the work of the day. I know what it is like to share my water with another person. I know what it is like to wipe the perspiration off another person's forehead. Cesar Chavez understood this, too, and that is why he fought for his people. But, he fought peacefully because he wanted his movement to teach others how to work well together and respect and truly care for each other. Just like him, I believe in fighting with my words and not with my fists. I have always tried to solve my problems in a peaceful way and avoid making the problem bigger.

Today, I am trying to honor all people, their languages, cultures, and traditions; through our diversity, we can learn to love and respect each other. I try to listen to others with an open mind and heart, just like Cesar Chavez did. "We need to... cherish and preserve the ethnic and cultural diversity that nourishes and strengthens this community and this nation" (Chavez 12). There are people who might want to call me names, correct me, or just find a reason to fight

with me. But, just like Cesar Chavez, I remain peaceful. I maintain my position and fight for my people. There were people who did not approve of Cesar Chavez' movement, but this did not stop him or provoke him to react with cruel words, actions, or aggressiveness. I have always tried to solve my problems in a peaceful way and avoid making the problem bigger than it is.

At our school right now, there are a lot of fights. There is a lot of misunderstanding. When I watch the news, I see a lot of name-calling and bullying. I do not want to live like this. I want to live as Cesar Chavez lived. When I see two people treating each other unkindly, not really listening to each other, or not respecting people's different languages, cultures, and traditions, I think of Cesar Chavez. I will stand my ground like he did with the people who did not respect his movement, and I will fight in this way, as a role model, respecting all people, and fighting for equal rights for everyone strongly but peacefully. I feel that this principle is very much related to my life and how I both perceive and treat others. because it is very interesting how this principle can be present in many of us.

Each time I go to Mexico to spend time on our little ranch, I always carry Cesar Chavez' principles with me. I see that teamwork, cooperation, and collaboration are important values and are what hold the people together, as a family. "You are never strong enough that you don't need help" (Chavez 17). When I return to California, Cesar Chavez' principles return with me, and together, we will find obstacles, but we will stand firm with what we believe and Cesar Chavez' legacy will remain a big part of what motivates us to make our world a better place for everyone.

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Cesar E. Chavez and Dolores Huerta Education Awards Program

Written Essay

Embracing Differences Creates Empowerment

by

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Embracing Differences Creates Empowerment

I came to the United States from China five years ago. While going to school in China, I studied and learned about many different subjects. But perhaps most important, I learned to love and embrace my own language, Mandarin, and the history, culture, and traditions that formed my rich heritage. Then, my mother brought me to the United States. This was an enormous decision that she made, and I was uncertain why she made it. After first coming here, I hated this place because I did not understand English, and my weird Chinese-style English made some people laugh at me. I felt angry with my mom for bringing me to this new country. One day, my mother asked me to translate for her. I felt embarrassed, but then, the burden of that situation made me feel superior to her. I lost patience and left her there alone. I wondered why she did not learn English well; after all, I did.

Then, my whole world changed. In my history class, I learned about Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta. I learned that they co-founded the United FarmWorkers Union in 1962. I learned that Cesar Chavez was a humble leader who sought social justice and civil rights for the farm workers and other disenfranchised people in our society. I learned that Dolores Huerta was a beautiful leader who spoke out for the farm workers and other working class impoverished people, as well as women and children. Their stories, and how they spent their lives serving others, motivated me to want to live my life in the same way. This also made me understand my mother's dream, and love and honor her for who she is. It made me feel so proud and honored to carry that dream with me as I face the future.

I am the President of the IDEAS Club at my school. I can honestly say that I am succeeding in this role because I carry the principles of Cesar Chavez with me each time we meet. In November of 2023, our club participated in the Day of the Dead event. I did not know

anything about this holiday, but since the majority of our members wanted to participate, I agreed. We all worked together as a team to make the event a beautiful one. Our members are from Mexico, Central and South America, China, Vietnam, Srilanka, and Armenia. As Cesar Chavez so eloquently expressed, “When you have people together who believe in something very strongly...things happen” (Chavez 7). That’s what we all accomplished, together.

We decided to make and sell a typical Mexican dish, *tostilocos*, and use the money we earned to give scholarships to our seniors. During the event, we started to decorate our altar and provide our *tostilocos* to our guests. I was involved in the production of the dish; it was my first time making another culture’s food. What was so strange to me was that everyone who came to the event seemed to be very happy, and there did not seem to be such sad emotion for the loss of their loved ones.

In Chinese culture, there is a similar festival, the *Qingming* festival. People sweep, burn incense, and paper money, and make loud offerings for the deceased. The air is depressing and sad compared to the Day of the Dead where the people are happy to welcome the spirit of their deceased loved ones back to their side. When I saw the people at our festival dancing and singing, I seemed to see those deceased dancing with them. I was also struck by this joyful emotion, forgetting the pain of losing a loved one, and instead, acknowledging their passing.

This could have been confusing to me, but thanks to what I learned about Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, I realized that if you truly want to understand a culture, you must experience the soul and emotional communication brought about by the culture. When you feel the frequency the culture brought you, then you are embracing the cultural diversity. This is what Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta taught me, and so many other people. Cesar Chavez bravely said, “We need to help students and parents cherish and preserve the ethnic and cultural diversity

that nourishes and strengthens this community, and this nation” (Chavez 2) Now, I understand and respect my mother. I understand and respect my own culture, as well as other cultures. I enjoy the richness that the diversity of languages, cultures, and traditions the people of this country have to offer each other.

I am a Senior now, and the words of Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta still resonate with me. I want to become a software developer, but I have a lot of concerns. Since we have all come back together after the Pandemic separated us, I feel that many of us have fallen into the trap of constant connectivity, losing touch with the tangible world around us. I see many people less connected to those they love. I see families eating at restaurants and instead of talking and laughing with each other, they are all on their cell phones. I see a lot of silence and misunderstanding among people. After coming back from the Pandemic, it has been difficult for me, too, to break away from my over-dependence on technology. This could be a very dangerous sign for all of us. Technology is like a double-edged sword that can both connect and isolate us from each other.

My goal is to blend the beauties of technology and human communication and take away the dangers of too much online communication with the principles that Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta fought so hard to instill into the hearts and souls of the American people. “There is no turning back...We are winning because ours is a revolution of the mind and heart” (Chavez 17). I will help to make more *tostilocos*, knowing that with each bite a person takes, that person will become closer to carrying out the vision that Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta created with their fight for dignity for the farmworkers and others. As Cesar Chavez said, “What better books can there be than the book of humanity” (Chavez 5). I want to continue to follow their legacy and serve the people.

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