

## La Huelga

No one is born with moral courage. It is not a given but something that is thrust upon overtime with experience. Moral courage has no eyes to judge but only ears to listen; it is the most equal and unbiased characteristic of all, simply because there are no requirements to greatness. One is not required to be rich, educated, loved, well known, talented, or even have good looks. All one truly needs in order to be great is moral courage. Few elite persons will ever know the true meaning of moral courage in their lifetime. Only the greatest of our societies will have the strength and will to speak up for, not what is most popular, but for what is right. Only the person that strives to become greater than themselves, will savor the taste of moral courage in their mouths. One of these people was Cesar Chavez.

Cesar Chavez was born on March 31, 1927 into a second-generation Mexican American family in San Luis, Arizona. His parents owned a farm there, and that is the place where he, along with his brothers and sisters were raised. At the peak of the Depression's injustices, Chavez, who was only as young as ten years of age at the time, began working as a migrant worker, or someone who works on farms moving from town to town wherever they are needed. In 1938, Chavez and his family moved to California. Understanding that education was the key to his way out of poverty, he continued going to school even if he despised it. Similar to former races, Mexican Americans were discriminated against in school for their culture, skin color, and anything the Anglos could think that made them inferior. Everyday things were made twice as hard for Chavez as he knew he was different. However, that never seemed to deflate his attitude towards life. He could not go to the same public places where there were signs that read "Whites only."

In addition, he was not allowed to speak Spanish in school, Chavez's first language, with the fear of being severely punished physically. Because of this, Chavez understood the wrath of injustices from an early age.

During his later life, Chavez married Helen Fabela. They both decided to settle down in Delano, California and had eight children. At this point, his life changed from ordinary to great. He was introduced to the civil rights movements.

After returning to San Jose, California, Chavez met an influential and motivated man named Father Donald McDonnell or Fred Ross. Fred Ross encouraged Chavez to become educated on the subject in order to have more success. Chavez, therefore, read about the principles used by Martin Luther King, Gandhi, St. Francis, and other righteous people. After becoming educated, Chavez became an organizer in the Community Service Organization or CSO, Ross's organization.

In 1962, Chavez unknowingly changed his own life. He was no longer a migrant worker, but someone that represented thousands of them throughout the southwest United States. He left Ross's organization and built up his own, the United Farm Workers of America, along with Richard Chavez.

In 1966, Chavez marched from Delano to Sacramento with the hope of attracting attention to the needs of safety and increase working conditions of farm workers. More huelgas (strikes) were organized, such as the lettuce boycott in the 1980s, and people fasted for as long as thirty-six days. Influential people such as Kennedy's daughter, Kerry Kennedy also took part in this event.

“A fast is first and foremost personal. It is a fast for the purification of my own body, mind, and soul... The fast is also an act of penance for those in positions of moral authority and

for all men and women activists who know what is right and just... This solution to this deadly crisis will not be found in the arrogance of the powerful, but in solidarity with the weak and helpless.... Carried out by men and women whose hearts are focused on the suffering of the poor and who yearn, with us, for a better world. Together, all things are possible," Chavez later, preached his moving beliefs that would not be justice to say any other way than said above.

Upon learning about this noble man's journey to greatness and having moral courage, his story embedded itself into my soul. He made me realize that moral courage is a hard thing to grasp. It takes strength, and character. He was not a man of the most affluence or highest education; However, Chavez was great. He did something that was unimaginable to not only the Latino community, but also the White community, and that was stand up for what he believed in, even if he was standing alone. He stood with no fear of the difficulties tied to his actions, only the better he would create for his fellow migrant workers.

Much like Chavez, I myself am a first generation Mexican American. The society has not changed drastically from then. Racism and injustices still live on, greater than before. My ambition in life is simple. Raised to believe that education is the only way to help my community advance into a better state, my goal is to help others. I want to dedicate my life to my people, much like Cesar Chavez. I want helping others, not to be a burden on my shoulders, but instinct. Cesar Chavez has given me the courage to do what I know is right, to go beyond you and me. One man changed the world by having moral courage. I hope that one day; I too will be remembered not for glamour or fame, but for making a small dent in the world where I changed someone's life. I cannot foresee if moral courage is in my future, but as Cesar Chavez always said, "Si, se puede," (Yes, we can) and so maybe it will be.

## Bibliography

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