

Achievements of cesar chavez and martin luther king essay sample

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Although Martin Luther King and Cesar Chavez came from very different backgrounds, their success as leaders of the Civil Rights Movement bears many similarities in its historic development. One major similarity between King and Chavez is that they were both great orators and made a number of notable speeches, which contributed to the social advancement of the minorities. King, who was ordained as a Baptist minister at the age of 27, was often put in the position to preach about what he believed in to large numbers of people. As a result, he was quite comfortable speaking to thousands at gatherings such as the historic March on Washington. Chavez, on the other hand, came from a poor migrant family and initially worried that he wasn't a good speaker. At the meetings he organised, Chavez often ended up doing more listening than speaking. However with time, his confidence grew as he found people listening and agreeing with what he had to say and so made many great speeches as did King. Their lectures and remarks made clear their selfless devotion to their causes and gave the blacks and Chicanos a new sense of worth and dignity which made them want improvements and change even more.

They were also both very charismatic strong leaders, inspiring men and women, young and old and most vitally both coloured and whites to join their movements for equality. Each of these men also realised the importance of getting national support from vast numbers that helped them to achieve their aims. Chavez did this through appealing for a nationwide boycott of lettuce with people from all parts of the United States, who sympathised with the cause of the farm workers, refusing to buy it. Later a grape boycott was added to this, which according to a poll in 1975, led to 17 million Americans

boycotting grapes. Finally, in 1978 some of the workers conditions were met and the boycotts were lifted.

A major achievement of both King and Chavez is how they both managed to pass a number of acts through the both state and federal legislature. Chavez passed the landmark Agricultural Labour Relations Act in June 1975, which guaranteed Californian farm workers the right to organize and bargain with their employers, whilst King pushed for the passing of the Voting Rights Act.

The setting up of organisations also played a major role in both the Civil Rights Movement of Chavez and King. This provided coordinated support from a broad base of members to facilitate the ambitions and vision of their causes. One of the first notable recognitions of King's potential was during the bus boycott in 1955, which led to him being chosen as president of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), the organization that directed it. In this position, King's serious demeanour and consistent appeal to Christian brotherhood and American idealism made a positive impression on whites outside the South and increased King's attachment to the black cause. His leadership led to a lawsuit being filed and further advanced the cause when the Federal court ruled in favour of the MIA, ordering the city's buses to be desegregated. Another contribution was made in when 1957 King and other black leaders formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to coordinate and strengthen civil rights activity.

This sought to complement the work of the NAACP, of which King was also an active member. Chavez on the other hand was originally recruited by a white

man from the local Community Service Organisation who wanted his help to inform the Chicano workers of their rights. It was this that really started Chavez's movement and in 1962 led to the first meeting of Chavez's newly formed National Farm Workers Union. Without the formation of this group, through the strong leadership and perseverance of Chavez around the western states, it is unlikely that workers would have felt that they could have made a change. As soon as the Union had been formed they began to demand their rights for fair pay and better working conditions, without which no one would work in the fields.

This led to a major confrontation in 1965 when the grape growers wouldn't listen to the union's demands and the farm hands threatened a strike. This only took place as a last resort when Chavez was certain that there was no other way to proceed as negotiations had reached an impasse. The growth of these organisations promoted by King and Chavez became the significant tool for the power and voice of civil rights in the spheres of black and Chicano influence. This joint achievement united followers of the Civil Rights Movement and gave them a sense of belonging and hope.

Both Martin Luther King and Cesar Chavez also operated and believed in completely non-violent direct action to protest discrimination. This added to their standing and recognised achievement as moral leaders of the people they represented. In the case of King, the violent responses that the direct action provoked from some whites eventually forced the Federal government to confront the issues of injustice and racism in the South. The non-violent protests off Chavez included the boycotts and a 340-mile march from Delano

to Sacramento in 1966, which focused national attention on farm workers problems and forced recognition of the importance and dignity of all farm workers. Chavez also fasted a lot in protest of injustice showing his commitment to non-violent tactics.

A quote, which also demonstrates this is, ' We can win and keep our own self-respect and build a great union that will secure the spirit of all people if we do it through a rededication and recommitment to the struggle for justice through non-violence'. Chavez's fasting showed to others that the problem could be solved without violence and his willingness to sacrifice his own life to make sure the union and the cause for which he was fighting for would continue. Quite prophetically, whilst Chavez's cause did not kill him, King's did as he became a target for white intolerance. This contributed to a worldwide acknowledgement of the problem of racism faced by African Americans. Less than a week after the assassination of Martin Luther King, the ' Open Housing Act' was also passed which King had been trying to secure.

The leadership and methods employed by King and Chavez can be seen to parallel one another and highlight the significance of their achievements. Each of these leaders commanded the respect of their supporters by their personalities, ethics and powers of persuasion. They both united the country in very difficult circumstances by creating a strong organised network dedicated to the advancement of civil rights. By using non-violent protests, these men lead the nation to recognise and value the social changes that

were inevitable. It was this contribution that achieved unification for the cause of the Civil Rights Movement that signalled its success.