

Ceaser chavez



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Many people have been engaged in civil rights movements, in the United States of America. The impacts that they have made differ depending on the influence that they have had. There are those who have left a legacy because of the commitment that they put to make sure that the rights of the people be it in the work place, and every where else is respected. This research paper looks at Cesar Chavez who spent entire all his life fighting for the rights of Farm workers in America. The paper starts by looking at a brief of his life history and then looks at some of his qualities and characteristics that made him have great influence in changing the life of many farm laborers in the America. Cesar Chavez was born on March 31, 1927 near Yuma Arizona. He was named after his grandfather who occupied land of more than one hundred acres in the Gila valley. He was the second born in his family. His father worked on the family ranch and owned a store in Gila valley (Griswold 1951). Chavez started schooling when he was seven years old, but it proved difficult to him because his family only spoke Spanish. He would prefer to learn from his uncles and grand parents who would assist him because they would read in Spanish. His characters of nonviolence and unselfishness were learnt from his mother who believed that violence and selfishness were not right. She would teach this aspect to all her children. It was during the 1930's when his father lost his business as a result of the great depression. This forced the family to move back to the ranch. In 1937, there was a great drought, which forced the family to give up the ranch. The family was again forced to move to California to look for work. They lived in California as part of the migrant community where they had to travel from farm to the other to pick fruits and vegetables during the harvest time. They lived in many migrant camps and in most times they were forced to sleep in

their car. In the schools that he attended, he faced a lot of discrimination (Etulain 2-6). This is what made him determined to fight the rights of the farm workers and fight discrimination in the society because of the experiences he had in the farms. Caesar Chavez is one of the heroic figures that will be remembered in all times. He was one of the civil rights, a religious figure, a servant of the community, nonviolent social change crusader, advocate of the consumers, an environmentalist, farm worker and a social entrepreneur. Being a second generation American his family became migrant farm workers after they lost the farm they possessed during the great depression. In all his youthful years and in some of his years in his adulthood he moved across the southwest providing labor in the fields and vineyard. It is while working in these farms and vineyards that he realized the kind of injustices and hardships that the farm workers had in their lives (Etulain 2-6). He achieved eighth-grade education then left school to go and work in the fields full time in order to give support to his family. He attended more than thirty elementary and middle schools. Despite hat fact that his education ended at that levels he possessed great intellectual curiosity. He was self taught in many areas of education and well read throughout his life. He was recruited in the US navy in 1946 where he served in the western pacific in the aftermath of Second World War. In 1952, this was the moment that he started his work as a community organizer. He joined the community service organization, which was a popular civil rights group. While, in this organization, Ceaser was able to coordinate voter registration drives and conducted campaigns against the kind of political and economic discrimination especially in the urban areas. His vigor in civil rights work made him serve as the director of the organization in the late 1950's and the

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early 1960's (Hammerback & Jensen 11-16). He was a man with great dreams about his life and the welfare of the entire society. He had a vision of establishing an organization that would protect and give service to farm workers. He developed the feelings that such an organization was necessary out of the pains that he went through when he worked as a farm worker in his youthful years. The high rate of poverty that many farm workers' had, also acted as a motivating factor to him to create such an organization. His dream to start such an organization came true in 1962 when he resigned from being the director of community service organization. This shows the kind of will he had to serve those people who were being discriminated in the community. He left a job where he was being paid to create National Farm Workers Organization. This is the organization that later became the United Farm Workers of America. He led this organization for more than thirty years. This was the first ever successful union of farm workers in the American history. His courage made him lead the organization in achieving dignity, respect, pension benefits and fought for humane living conditions for the farm workers. He was also able to work tirelessly to make sure that the farm workers were given their rights and were protected. He was able to organize strikes and boycotts that led to the establishment of contracts to the industry labor in the life of agriculture in America. He was competent and courageous in his work to the extent that his fights brought about the passage of the California Agriculture labor relation act in 1975. The law that he fought and struggled to make it established is the only law in America that gives protection the farm workers to form a union (Cull & Carrasco 10-67). The impacts that he made to the farm workers society in America transcends any one cause of struggle. He showed unique characters in his

leadership. He was humble, a leader who cared about humanitarian affairs of the people and a great communicator who had a positive influence to million of people in America. He also inspired many Americans to fight social justice and civil rights for the poor and those who are exploited in the society. He was able to establish a diverse and a unique national coalition of middle class consumer, trade unionist, religious groups, students and the minority groups of people in the society. His focused attention to the welfare of farm workers ensured that many of the workers who worked under the union of farm workers contract had higher pay, pension benefits, family health and other contract protections (Cull & Carrasco 10-67). He remained to be a strong follower of the nonviolence practices of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Junior. He was able to employ tactics that did not have violence, for example, boycotts, strikes and pilgrimages. He showed great commitment to the farm labor movement when he fasted for twenty five days in 1968. He continued to show his commitment by fasting for more twenty five days in 1972. He also exposes a character for being willing to be uncomfortable when he fasted again in 1988 at the age of sixty one years. His main intention of fasting at this time was in order to make awareness of the harmful impacts that pesticides had on farm workers and their children. He was willing to sacrifice his life to make sure that the union would continue and to make sure that violence was not used in the civil right movements. He believed that through persistence, faith, hard work and will to make sacrifices the farm workers would win the battle of fighting for their rights. He believed that this was the only way that they would maintain their self respect and build a strong union, which would secure the spirit of the people if it was done through non violence means (Botz 62-66). His courage and

willingness to fight for the rights of farm workers is evidenced when he supported the Filipino American in the Delano grape strike on September 1965 when they were protesting for their wages to be increased. In not more than six months, he also led a strike of the California grape pickers in the historical march of the farm workers from Delano to California state capital. This shows that he was really a risk taker because he encouraged all people to show support of the strike. This was a major strike, which lasted for five years. This shows the kind of influence that he had to the masses because these strikes spread to Southern Texas in 1966. He was energetic and fought tirelessly fought for the disbandment of the Bracero Program that existed in America from 1942 to 1964. He had a belief that the program exploited the migrant workers, and it undermined American workers. This was because the program made sure there was a constant flow of cheap immigrant labor for growers. If the immigrants protested against denial of their rights they would be fired and replaced with other workers. The efforts that he made towards the disbandment of this program led congress to end the program in 1964. His organization was also in the forefront of fighting the establishment of proposed employer sanctions that was aimed at prohibiting hiring of undocumented immigrants in 1973 (Sorenson 103-107). His commitment in his work to the society cannot be measured in material terms. This is evidenced because it is said that by the time that he died he had left no savings to his family. He also never got more than six thousand dollars in a year; in all the work he did (Botz 62-66). All this shows his unique commitment that he had in making the life of the poor and those who were discriminated in the society better. This also shows that he was unselfish and cared more about the lives of other people more than he cared for his own

life. He had strong belief that everything is possible if there is a commitment to attain it. This is expressed by his motto of 'it can be done' (Botz 62-66). He left a great legacy to many people in America and people outside America. There are many schools, parks, streets, libraries and other public facilities that have been named after him. People allover the country and the whole world respect him as a civil rights activist who brought light to many poor and the discriminated people in the society. Ceaser Chavez was just a common man who had a great vision for human kind. All through his life, he stood for equity and respect of dignity for all Americans. His principles, which were ecumenical, have remained important and relevant for all people in the country.