

Cesar Chavez will speak on the international grape boycott; sponsored by MEChA

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CESAR CHAVEZ SPEAKS AT UCSD ON GRAPE BOYCOTT

Cesar Chavez, president of the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO, will speak on the international grape boycott at 4:30 p.m., May 4, in Peterson Hall, room 108 at the University of California, San Diego.

Sponsored by MECHA, a Chicano student organization, the talk is free and open to the public. Chavez will also show a brief video on "The Wrath of Grapes." According to Chavez, this slogan has become the theme of the boycott which is trying to bring attention to the potential danger to both vineyard workers and consumers with the application of pesticides by growers. The boycott is also an attempt to pressure grape growers into supporting union certification elections.

The 60-year-old Chavez founded and heads the first successful farm workers' union in U.S. history. He served as director of the Community Service Organization, a barrio-based self-help group of California Mexican Americans, during the late 1950s and early 1960s. In 1962, after failing to convince the CSO to commit to farm worker organization, he resigned and moved his family from the San Jose barrio of "Sal Si Puedes" (Get out if you can) to Delano, Calif., where he founded the National Farm Workers Association.

During this time Chavez traveled to dozens of farm communities, building a nucleus of farm worker members. In September 1965, Chavez's NFWA, with 1,200 member families, joined the AFL-CIO's Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee in a strike of Delano area table and wine grape growers. The five-year strike/boycott rallied millions of supporters to the United Farm Workers and forged a national coalition of unions, church groups, students, minorities and consumers.

The NFWA and AWOC merged in 1966 to form the UFW and the union affiliated with the AFL-CIO. From the beginning, the UFW has advocated non-violence. Chavez conducted a 25-day fast in 1968 to reaffirm this stance. The late Sen. Robert F. Kennedy called Chavez "one of the heroic figures of our time," and flew to Delano to be with him when he ended the fast.

By 1970, the boycott had convinced most table grape growers to sign contracts with the UFW. Chavez then called for a worldwide boycott of grapes, head lettuce and Gallo wines. By 1975, a nationwide Louis Harris poll showed 17 million American adults were honoring the grape boycott. The boycott also forced growers to support former Gov. Jerry Brown's collective bargaining law for farm workers.

Chavez is currently leading the international grape boycott, which he began in 1984. He lives with his family at the union's Keene, Calif. headquarters in Kern County. Like other UFW officers and staff, Chavez receives a \$10 weekly stipend plus modest food and living benefits.

Born in 1927 on his grandfather's small farm near Yuma, Arizona, Chavez joined the ranks of migrant farm workers at age 10 when his father lost his land during the Depression. Together with thousands of other displaced

families, the Chavez's migrated throughout the Southwest, laboring in row crops, grapes and tree fruit. Chavez left school after the eighth grade to help support his family. He joined the U.S. Navy in 1945 and served in the Western Pacific.

Chavez's talk is tied in to the UCSD Cinco de Mayo celebration, May 5. This annual event features Mexican music, dancing, authentic cuisine and an art show at the Grove Gallery. For more information on Chavez or Cinco de Mayo, contact MECHA, at 534-4994.

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