



Belmont Human Rights Commission Statement on César Chávez's Day

March 31st, César Chávez's birthday, marks the day in 1962 when he co-founded the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA), ushering the movement for Latinx, immigrant and farm workers rights. He believed that all human beings deserve to be treated with dignity. He fought for basic workplace rights such as bathroom and lunch breaks, clean water, living wages, and death benefits. His own experience working the fields fueled his determination. He understood that communities working together could be most effective in pushing against powerful interests. Inspired by those goals, he led the effort to create a farm workers' union, a goal that had proven elusive to worker groups for generations. He understood that powerful interests often pitted marginalized groups against each other and in 09/16/1965, his association (a majority Latinx union) joined the Filipino workers in their walk-out from Delano Grape.

Their efforts gained wide-spread support from other organizations such as labor unions and civil rights organizations. This included the support of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. He led a 300-mile march from Delano to Sacramento to highlight the ideals of non-violence and unity to achieve parity. In February of 1968, he started a water-only fast that lasted 25 days, to reassert his commitment to non-violence and to highlight the plight of marginalized workers. By 1970, his appeal for American consumers to boycott unethically grown crops had proven effective. Table grape crop growers agreed to sign union contracts, granting workers better pay, benefits, and protections.

In the present climate, workers are losing protections across the nation. The gig economy has created challenges to holding big corporations accountable for violations of worker rights. The importance of farm workers to American life has never been so brutally clear. The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the essential nature of farm work. If farm workers are not healthy and cared for, many of the goods we are accustomed to will not be available. The produce and meat products we consume would not be in our homes if these skilled workers were not available for those jobs. However, it is their humanity rather than their productivity which should be the primary consideration. Still in contemporary times, human rights abuses occur daily in farms and meat packing plants across the nation ([see this article/podcast for details on the recent plight of meat packing workers, primarily Latinx immigrants](#)). The Belmont Human Rights Commission is supportive of the plight and organizing of farm and essential workers across the nation in their quest to improve working and living conditions.

The legacy of César Chávez has inspired generations of workers to organize for their rights. The [César Chávez Foundation](#) focuses on activism to improve the lives of Latinx, immigrants, and workers across the nation. On César Chávez Day, the Belmont Human Rights Commission celebrates his legacy and supports his call to improve worker and immigrant rights. Listed here are some resources for how to get involved or find more information: [The United Farm Workers](#), [The Legal Aid Justice Center](#), and [The Dolores Huerta Foundation for Community Organizing](#). For education on issues relevant to immigrant and farm worker's

quality of life the following resources may be helpful: [The Life of a Seasonal Farm Worker in the Age of Coronavirus](#) by Latino Rebels, and [The Migrant Student Club by Latino USA](#).

The Belmont Human Rights Commission is dedicated to fighting discrimination in all forms and increasing visibility and awareness of issues regarding diversity and discrimination in our community. If you have experienced discrimination in Belmont, please contact us at belmont.hrc@gmail.com or call 617-993-2795.