

Eulogy for Cesar E. Chavez
Delivered by Fernando Chavez—April 29, 1993

“On behalf of my mother, my brothers and sisters, all the grandchildren, my aunts and uncles, and all of our family, I want to say, “Thank You” for being here with us today on this very sad occasion.

All of you gathered here know that my dad dedicated his entire life to help farmworkers in their struggle for justice, for equality, for dignity. And I am proud to say that my mother and our entire family supported dad’s commitment in every way we could and sometimes, as you can imagine, at great personal sacrifice. I hope and pray that we did our best.

My father chose to live a life of voluntary poverty and yet I believe that his legacy will be rich. His legacy to our family, his legacy to all of you here and to the whole country is a legacy of nonviolence. A legacy in the tradition and spirit of Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Bobby Kennedy.

My dad’s life has proven to me that his nonviolent struggle for the rights of farmworkers was a true manifestation of his faith in God and his practice of the teachings of the Gospel.

Some people might say that my father was a “famous man” or that he was a “VIP.” Perhaps he was. But for all of us who knew him, including all of you here, I can attest to the fact that he was never, ever too busy to give his complete attention and interest to each and every person with whom he spoke. Be that person a field worker, a store clerk, a student, a grieving parent, or a complete stranger. He was that kind of man.

My mother and our family understand that dad’s life is finished. But we also understand that each one of you must carry on his spirit of nonviolence and continue his struggle for justice for farmworkers.”

(I had come full circle. Twenty years after leaving Cesar Chavez and his farmworker movement, I was asked by the family to assist with the funeral services. One of my assignments was to work with Fernando Chavez on the eulogy that he, as the oldest in the family, would deliver at the funeral. We worked hard to keep it short, to the point, and use everyday words. I was more than satisfied with the outcome, and Fernando Chavez delivered it flawlessly. I left Delano immediately after he finished speaking, my work was done).