

TAPE ARC -30, TC 17:00:00

SFSU; KQED - KQN1640A, KQN373, KQN845

CESAR CHAVEZ, interviewed by TV host - against black/white pattern set
[B&W]:

17:00:07 HOST: You've gained some victories, certainly, but why have you not been firmly established, no legal protections?

17:00:16 CHAVEZ: Well, see, because, we're pretty much like unions were uh, we're in the same spot industrial workers were trying to organize themselves, say in the beginning of the turn of the century, and through the 20's you know, and even through the first part of the 30's. Uh, one of every three jobs in California is in what a 4, 5 billion dollar industry. So this is the reason. And then we're up against a, uh, an employer community, growers, that uh, is living at least 100 years behind their times.

17:01:17 CHAVEZ: ...I think psychologically, they resent that very, very much. That's why in some cases they want to look to other unions to come in.

17:01:26 HOST: Do you feel that you've reached the point where you are established, uh, and you're here to stay?

17:01:37 CHAVEZ: No it's still a day to day precarious thing. It's difficult because uh, we don't have a strike fund yet, we don't have a legal department, that is established legal department, we don't have a research department that can give

us the information we need, we don't have the money to do those things, , we still depend on contributions, effectively gone, we have accomplished some very tremendous things, we don't have a union as yet, we're struggling very hard and we think we will. But, we've been able to accomplish, probably one of the greatest things is that we've been able to break certain myths. First of all there was a great myth before, when we started organizing to enlist the, the, the, tremendous support of the farm workers. We've developed in them a spirit of solidarity and a real desire to battle for justice. And uh, a very very strong following. Then we've gone to the cities, and we've done the same thing with large numbers of our uh, friends throughout the country, from the religious community, from the labor community, from the students, from uh, the ethnic groups to support us in what we're doing, and in this way we've been successful, but without the support from the cities, they would destroy us in no time flat.

17:03:02 HOST: Why did you personally start, why were you interested in this.

17:03:06 CHAVEZ: Well, uh, that was in Arvin, I was a farm worker, and considered myself to be a farm worker for many years prior to beginning the organization for the union. I had a uh, I had a uh, a dream that the only reason the employers were so powerful was not because they in fact had that much power, in terms of uh, dealing with the lives of their workers at will, but uh, what made them truly powerful was that we were weak. And if we could somehow begin to develop some strength among ourselves, that I felt that we could begin to equal that, balancing their power in agriculture. And so we uh, started off by, with a lot of faith, with very little experience in labor organizing because we had started off in community organization, and that's, that's what I knew best. But I applied some

of the techniques that we learned in ten years prior to beginning to organize the farm workers union, and they paid off.

17:04:14 HOST: How did you learn these techniques? What did you do before you got into the farm worker movement?

17:04:18 CHAVEZ: I was a farm worker, and then uh, in early 1952, uh, I came in contact with the Community Service Organization, the CSO, which was being organized in Los Angeles, uh, which was now spreading to other parts of California. And they came into San Jose where I was working the farm, and I came into contact with them through my parish priest. And I joined them. We were doing voter registration. And I liked the idea, I could see the connection between voter registration and getting some things for us, in the barrio where I lived in San Jose. I started off with them that way. And I, I was so, I guess, so committed to the work you know that soon after that they needed another organizer, someone to train, so Fred Ross who was the, the West Coast director and working for the CSO, and used to work, he was working for Saul Alinsky at the time, hired me. And he trained me. Contrary to uh, public you know, to what the public thinks, I was not trained by Alinsky, although I worked with him. I was really trained by Fred Ross. And I paid attention to what he did, how he did things. I really wanted to learn how to organize. And I think I learned my lesson. I had uh, ten years under him. So when I came to organize farm workers, I had a lot of confidence.

17:05:43 HOST: Why did you leave the CSO?

17:05:45 CHAVEZ: [JUMP CUT] ...I learned to read and write and I learned to organize, and I learned a lot of things. Cause see when I joined the CSO I was working in an apricot orchard, getting, uh, as I recall, 48 cents an hour then. And uh, so I put myself really through school. That was my school. But Fred Ross trained me.

17:06:02 HOST: But what about the, the labor movement itself, have you learned anything from being with them?

17:06:07 CHAVEZ: Yes, I have uh, I learned you know what uh, I learned just by being a Chicano you know, I learned that when the...[CUT] ... big problem, but we're scheduled very heavily, we have a lot of friends helping us, and we think we're going to win. ...[CUT]

17:06:24 CHAVEZ: ...committed. That it's it's, well, that it's wrong you know. So I learned that in the labor movement there's an awful lot of people in the labor movement, in the lower ranks, dedicated men who don't get any, any uh, uh, public credit for what they do, but they are very dedicated and that's what keeps the, the wheels of labor moving. And we also learned by meeting many of them that they're really dedicated. And that a lot of the criticism at labor, that is fashionable today is not really deserved, it may be deserved in some instances, but, right down at the local union level, there's tremendous uh, human beings that don't have a lot, and we learned from them tremendously.

17:07:09 CHAVEZ: ...and every labor union guy knows that uh, when we're talking about recognition, we're really talking about the guts of the union. We're not striking for, really for a wage increase, or for a pension fund, we're striking for

the very fundamental things of labor. And that they understand really well, and we get tremendous support from them. [ECU HANDS] Also I might mention that the...

17:07:28 HOST: ...has always been a main tenet of the movement, correct? I mean how do you struggle in a world where there are very few non-violent movements left?

17:07:36 CHAVEZ: Because you see, non-violence is more powerful than violence, and once we are able to understand that and accept it, and experiment it and be successful with it, uh, it's not difficult to keep. Uh, in the beginning we had some difficulty because we were in a world where we'd been struggling for, well, just before we won the contract was 58 1/2 months, and most of our friends told us that it couldn't work, that we had to commit violence in order to make it work. And at that time, at that point, there was still so much hope and faith that it would work, you know. But since July, last day of July, 1970, we know it works. And we were able to uh, to beat the grape industry, and we're doing the same thing with the lettuce industry, and we're going to beat them too. Get them to understand that the workers have a right to sign a contract. So, non-violence is very powerful. And, and also, it doesn't put a time limit on you. and it doesn't take you away from your main objective. You know, we've seen in our own day, in the last few years, where very good groups with very, with very uh, uh, high ideals, somehow got detracted from the course of non-violence and became involved in violent action and all that happened was that the focus was taken away from the problems of the people, and then they were focused on people in jail, and all of the other things that come as a consequence. And society is not set up in this country, especially in this

country with its uh, heavy Anglo-Saxon uh, you know traditions, they're not equipped to ...[CUT]

17:09:28 CHAVEZ: ...the boycott. The part of non-violence really rests on the, on the uh, reservoir that you have to create in yourself of patience, not of being patient with the problems, but being patient with yourself to do the hard work. Also non-violence, non-violence assumes that the organizer has tremendous resources in terms of confidence and know-how and is able to shift the...[CUT] ...Scandinavian countries, especially, so we've had our share of support....

JUANITA BROWN at picket line in S.F. financial district [B&W]:

17:12:08 REPORTER: How is the national boycott coming along?

17:12:10 BROWN: We feel very encouraged. As you know uh, ten workers have recently agreed to talk with their workers, and that is a direct result of both the strike and the national boycott of grapes. They have admitted publicly that the reason for this beginning is the fact that the national boycott has seriously affected the market. [CAMERA JERKY POSITION CHANGE] And we feel that the boycott must continue, it must intensify throughout this season to bring the total grape industry to the bargaining table and to negotiate a decent contract with their workers.

17:12:43 BROWN: The boycott is going to continue and intensify throughout the season, until the grape growers negotiate a decent contract with their workers for very basic living conditions and uh, and decent wages.

17:12:55 REPORTER: The growers have been adamant, what do you hope to gain by a vigil at the stock exchange?

17:13:01 BROWN: Well as you know Safeway is on the stock exchange, and they are very deeply linked with agri-business and the large corporations against whom the farm workers are striking. One of the board of directors of Safeway is J.G. Boswell, against whom the farm workers are now striking in Arizona. He is a grape grower. And we are hopeful that the business community in San Francisco will become aware of what the issues are, and will be able to make their moral decisions in this area based on a full knowledge of the issues in this dispute.

17:13:32 REPORTER: If this tactic doesn't work, what are you going to do, are you going to escalate your, your protest?

17:13:39 BROWN: Well, we will use every legal, non-violent means to bring our story to the nation and to gain the very basic rights that every other American enjoys.

17:14:54 REPORTER: You've selected Safeways stores as your target, why not the other supermarkets?

17:14:59 BROWN: Well, as you may know, Safeway is the largest buyer of California table grapes, and Arizona table grapes in the West, they are one of the

largest buyers in the nation. In addition to that, Safeway is very directly linked to agri-business concerns. On their board of directors sits J.G. Boswell, a grape grower, and a cotton grower, but primarily a grape grower against whom we're striking in Arizona. On their board of directors also sits people from the Southern Pacific Railroad, which is one of the largest land-owners in California, people from the Kern County Land Company, and other large agriculturally oriented concerns. So that Safeway is not neutral. Safeway is directly linked to the agricultural industry and to the large agricultural corporations against whom the farm workers are fighting and trying to gain decent wages and working conditions.

17:15:48 REPORTER: I've talked with some Montgomery Street business men, stockbrokers, or I should try to say, I have tried to talk to some of them. They seem to be rather callous about all this, really don't care, they have made no comment. If this is true, what are you going to do, are you going to escalate your demands?

17:16:06 BROWN: Well, as I've said, there will be a series of events directed at Safeway particularly, throughout the coming weeks, and coming months... [Q: what is your next step?] ... Well, we will be advising as those next steps come up, I don't want to tell them right now. [Q: you don't want to give away your strategy?] ...No.... But we feel that here, the reason why the vigil is going to continue here at the Stock Exchange during the daytime, and at Union Square during the evening, is that we are hopeful that the businessmen who deal directly or indirectly in these large corporations. We are hopeful that they will become aware of the issues that are involved. Because we feel that they have a responsibility to make a decision in the same way that every American consumer has a responsibility to make a

decision over whether they are going to buy grapes or not. And we're hopeful that they will make the moral choice in favor of justice.

17:16:57 REPORTER: Well, apparently, they don't care, they won't talk with me about it.

17:17:01 BROWN: Well, we are hopeful that as the days pass on this vigil they will start talking with the workers and talking with the vigilers about the issues.

CESAR CHAVEZ speaking in support of the Printers strike in 1970 [COLOR]:

17:21:39 CHAVEZ: ...worked for 14 months without a contract, and they, Local 21 has asked repeatedly to have the matter arbitrated. And they've done everything that they can and they could to get the employer of the newspaper to bring this issue to a settlement and the employer has refused. You know, several years ago went to Delano, and they found out that we did not have any fresh milk at the strike kitchen. And do you know that up until two months ago, they have been supplying fresh milk for our kids in Delano for almost three years.

17:22:23 CHAVEZ: ...appeal to the clergymen. To get together and to weigh all of the issues. Everything that's been done, and's been said, they need to weigh it. And then to make a decision. And I know what the decision's going to be, to make the decision that the strikers are on the right, and the strikers should be supported. Then we want them to lead and to support a boycott of all of those businesses that are still buying scab ads from that scab newspaper.

17:23:07 CHAVEZ: ...many, many months ago, that the boycott was a dream, that we were speaking of a boycott because we were inexperienced, that the boycott was an act of desperation. It might have been at that point. That the boycott was a bottomless pit, and above everything else, that the boycott would not work. And we said, whether it works or not, we're going to go to the American public...[PIC ROLL OFF]

CESAR CHAVEZ speaks at grape contract signing [COLOR]:

17:24:51 CHAVEZ: The struggle has been a difficult struggle. It would have been five years in September. The strikers and the people involved in the struggle sacrificed a lot. Sacrificed all of their worldly possessions. Five percent, ninety-five percent of the strikers lost their homes and their cars. But I think that in losing those worldly possessions, they found themselves, and they found that...

17:25:27 CHAVEZ: [SHAKY, OUT OF FOCUS] The boycott is not over yet. We have a certain percentage of growers that have not signed and the boycott is going to continue until all of them sign. We hope that this will happen very soon. And we are pledged to the grape growers, that as soon as the last grape grower signs the contract that we will endeavor to turn around the boycott machinery all over the world and try to make the grapes, all of the grapes, sweet grapes again. [THIS SPEECH IS WORD FOR WORD REPEAT OF ONE ON TAPE 29]

17:26:00 PRIEST: ...acutely aware of the fact that the industry is faced with a number of serious economic problems, but we also have been conscious of the basic moral issues involved in the dispute, and it is to these issues that the committee has directed its most urgent attention.

17:26:21 PRIEST: ...we pray God's blessing on those who brought these negotiations and all the previous ones between the union and the table grape growers to a fruitful settlement. We see a happy future for this segment of our agricultural community...

17:26:46 KIRCHER: ...convey to brother Chavez, his associates, and to all of the members, his very sincere congratulations on these accomplishments and to tell you that the firmness of the support in your right to be the union in farm labor, to be the union that continues to build a collective bargaining base for progress for the workers, is going to be the continued program of the AFL - CIO in its support for your endeavors.

17:27:29 YOUNG ORGANIZER (DRAKE?): ...one last point. A proverb: a trip of a thousand miles begins with a single step. You've taken that single step. I wish you luck on the balance of the trip, and I hope that with this foundation you can move on to greater things, and will ...