

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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(Partial Listing)

CHAVEZ ASKS SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL BOYCOTT CAMPAIGN

Cesar E. Chavez, president and founder of the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO, today asked Miami consumers to support an international boycott of Gallo wines and non-UFW table grapes and head lettuce.

Speaking at the Second Annual Benefit Fiesta for Migrant Farmworkers at Watson Island, Chavez said the boycott effort has special significance for Florida--the second largest agricultural state in the nation.

Once the boycotts are won, he explained, the UFW will be able to expand its organizing efforts in Florida's rural communities, where tens of thousands of farmworkers now live in poverty, without protections or benefits.

Chavez told the crowd gathered at the fiesta that the central issue of the boycott is democracy--whether farmworkers will have the right to choose which, if any, organization they would like to represent them.

Most working people in the United States are guaranteed that right, he said, but powerful corporate growers on the West Coast have denied farmworkers freedom of choice.

The UFW's current consumer boycott campaign began in 1973, when UFW contracts expired at hundreds of farms in California and Arizona. The workers at those farms asked the growers to re-negotiate the pacts, but the growers refused and instead signed "sweetheart" contracts with the Western Conference of Teamsters.

Unwilling to work with an organization that did not represent them, the workers went out on strike and asked

for union representation elections. The growers denied the request, however, and brought in illegal alien workers to try to break the strike and, in effect, destroy the UFW.

Opposed by both the forces of corporate agribusiness and the Teamsters union, the workers turned to the boycott--the only non-violent method they had. The farmworkers now are asking consumers to support the boycott until the growers agree to hold impartially-supervised, secret-ballot elections.

This year's fiesta came almost one year to the day after the first South Florida benefit for farmworkers, which drew more than 5000 people to the Carrollton School for Girls in Coconut Grove.

The open-air celebration at Watson Island featured six hours of live entertainment, homecooked Mexican-American and soul foods, an arts and crafts fair and an extensive educational display about the plight of farmworkers.

The night before the fiesta, Chavez was honored at a reception sponsored by a committee of South Florida civic, religious and community leaders. The reception was organized in recognition of Chavez' "historic, non-violent efforts to achieve decent living and working conditions for farmworkers."

After the reception, a new farmworker documentary entitled, "Fighting for Our Lives," was shown for the first time in Florida. The film vividly portrays recent organizing efforts among vineyard workers in California's San Joaquin and Coachella Valleys.

Sponsors of the reception and film premiere included: Congressman William Lehman (D-Fla); State Senator Jack Gordon (D-Dade); Miami Mayor Maurice Ferre; Bishop Rene Gracida; Rabbi Ralph Kingsley, head of the South Florida Rabbinical Association; Rev. August VandenBosch, director of the Florida Migrant Ministry; and 58 other South Florida community leaders.