

# FOOD AND JUSTICE

Published by United Farm Workers

December 1985



***Not Everyone Will Be  
Celebrating This Christmas***



At this time of the year, when our friends and supporters celebrate the Hanukkah and Christmas season, the spirit of "It is more blessed to give than to receive" prevails.

As far as receiving is concerned, nobody has been more blessed by that spirit than farm workers. To make it even more rewarding for our movement, the spirit of giving among our faithful supporters has not been limited to a single season of the year.

Day in and day out, for nearly 25 years, generous friends in every kind of organization and in every walk of life have contributed to our cause in so many ways: sending money, feeding strikers, opening homes and offices to boycotters, picketing and leafleting in every kind of weather, praying and fasting for us, boycotting products sometimes hard to give up, and wearing our buttons and T-shirts.

In this issue, we feature several friends representing the thousands now supporting our table grape boycott as well as several farm workers expressing what that support means to them.

So far, farm workers have not been in a position to be more blessed for giving than receiving. But we have a bottomless reservoir of something we will never quit giving supporters — our thanks!

Volume 3, Number 11

Food and Justice

December 1986

Magazine of the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO  
La Paz, Keene, CA 93570

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FOOD AND JUSTICE (ISSN 0885-0704) is published monthly for \$5 per year by the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO, Old Highway 58, La Paz, California 93570. Second-class postage is paid at Keene, California.  
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to FOOD AND JUSTICE, P.O. 62, La Paz, California 93570.



Cesar Chavez announces an extension of the grape boycott to include A&P Stores in New York.

## UFW Broadens Grape Boycott; New York's A&P First Target

With hundreds of supporters carrying signs reading "Don't Shop at A&P" and "Don't Buy Grapes," farm labor leader Cesar Chavez widened the UFW boycott of California table grapes to include stores when he led a picket line and rally in front of an A&P supermarket in New York on October 28.

A&P, a huge supermarket chain with more than 1,000 stores in 27 states and Canada, had refused appeals from Chavez to take the boycotted grapes off the shelf. At the rally, Chavez called on New Yorkers to send a direct message to California growers that they will no longer tolerate pesticide-contaminated grapes in their stores. "The best way to do that," Chavez said, "is to boycott grapes and A&P stores."

Referring to farm workers poisoned by pesticides in the fields and consumers by pesticide residues, Chavez said, "A&P cannot wash its pesticide-laden

hands of its responsibility to workers and consumers any more than grape growers can. Whether it's Tylenol or poisoned grapes, stores must pull the threat off the shelf when the issue is human safety!"

The rally in New York City, the nation's largest table grape market, was emceed by Enio Carrion, president of the Hispanic Labor Committee. Other leaders who spoke were:

Brian McLaughlin, New York City Central Labor Council; Jay Mazur, president, International Ladies Garment Workers Union; Bettye Roberts, president, American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), District Council 1707; Victor Gotbaum, executive director, AFSCME, DC 37; Thomas Scotland, president, Black Trade Unionists Leadership Committee; Karen Lantz, vice president, Independent Federation of Flight Attendants; Cleveland Robinson, secretary-treasurer, United Auto Workers, DC 65; Jeanette Di Lorenzo, secretary-treasurer, United Federation of Teachers; and Mel Brackett, president, Air Transport Workers, Local 504.

## Season's Greetings from Friends of Farm Workers

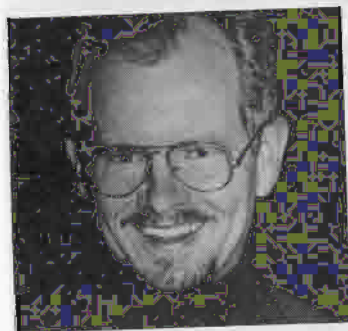
Each year during this holiday season, farm workers receive hundreds of greetings and heartwarming messages of support at the UFW headquarters in La Paz, California. This year, in the midst of the table grape boycott and the struggle to regain the rights and dignity farm workers have again been deprived of, those expressions of love and solidarity are especially touching.

Unfortunately, all those messages cannot be published, but through the few that are printed in this holiday issue, farm workers hope to acknowledge and express gratitude for all of them — yours, yes, and those from others like you: men and women of peace, justice, and good will!



“As we celebrate this holiday season, my thoughts and those of the entire United Auto Workers are with you. You have our full support in your effort to alert the consumers of America to the dangers of toxic pesticides used by growers in the grape industry. Until grape growers reach an equitable agreement with the UFW that protects farm workers, consumers and farming communities, the UAW will maintain its unwavering commitment to the boycott of table grapes. Our best wishes for happy holidays and a successful New Year.”

*(Owen Bieber, Detroit, Michigan. Bieber is the president of the International Union of the United Auto Workers and a great and long-time friend of farm workers.)*



“Peace! During this holiday season, I am moved to offer congratulations on your years of perseverance in the struggle for justice for farm workers who plant and harvest the food we eat. Until there is justice for farm workers, what we eat will be contaminated — not only with the poison of pesticides but also with the poison of unjust wages, of inhumane working conditions, and a lack of respect for the dignity of workers. You can count on my personal support and the support of our office so you can keep up the wonderful work you have begun. May the God of justice give you forbearance, perseverance, and strength now and always!” *(Fr. Joachim Lally, C.S.P., Boston, Massachusetts. Fr. Lally, a Paulist priest and the director of Catholic Youth in Action, is a long-time friend of farm workers. In Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1974, he fasted for 78 days on behalf of the UFW boycott of grapes, lettuce, and Gallo wines.)*

“‘Feliz Navidad y Prospero Año!’ It would be good if that greeting to you, the farm workers of America, could be a reality — that you could have a blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year. But that day will come only when people in power — agribusiness, governors, and lawmakers — are as much concerned about your rights as they are their own. Be assured that I will continue to support your table grape boycott and do whatever I can to establish effective laws in Texas and the nation to guarantee your rights.” *(Juan Jesus Hinojosa, McAllen, Texas. Hinojosa, once a migrant farm worker himself, is a Texas State Representative. Strongly committed to farm worker rights, Hinojosa is responsible for the passage of a workers compensation law for farm workers in Texas.)*



“Holiday greetings to you, Cesar, and to all our brothers and sisters in the farm worker movement! Our best gift to you during this season of giving and receiving is our promise to stick with you always, but especially now when you are asking for help to win another grape boycott. We are glad to do this because it has been our experience that we gain more than we give when helping farm workers. You have taught us never to surrender — you never give up! For that example of perseverance in the face of such huge odds, we are grateful!” *(Hazen Griffin, Chicago, Illinois. Griffin is the president of Local 372, Service Employees International Union, and a loyal friend of UFW boycotters in Chicago. For more than 20 years, he and his local have supported the farm worker movement by picketing, providing office space and materials, and making financial contributions.)*



“During this season of joy and peace, I want to extend my best wishes to you — the farm workers of Texas, California, and other states — who work so hard to make all our national and religious holidays so festive because of the delicious food you put on your tables. Even though this Christmas still finds you deprived of your human and democratic rights, please be assured that I will support your table grape boycott and do whatever else is necessary to hasten the day when you are given what you deserve *because* you deserve it instead of having to fight every inch of the way to get it!” *(Ann Richards, Austin, Texas. Richards is the Texas State Treasurer and is regarded as a potential candidate for Texas governor. She has marched for farm worker rights and has attended farm worker conventions.)*



“Feliz Navidad,’ Campesinos! We know this is not your happiest hour, considering how agribusiness, pesticide producers, and Gov. Deukmejian and his unscrupulous appointees are trampling all over you again. But keep in mind that people in all walks of life are pledging themselves to help you win your table grape boycott. We’ll stick with you until you get your rights back and you can again celebrate Christmas and New Year with your families and friends the way you have a right to!” (Jimmy Rodriguez, Los Angeles, California. Rodriguez, whose parents were migrant farm workers, is the business representative for the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 770.)

“We, the students at Cal State Northridge, send our best wishes to farm workers during this joyful time of the year. Because it still is not a very happy life for you in this state and country, we also send along the best possible gift we could give you: our promise to boycott table grapes and to work to have them removed from our campus as soon as possible. We will work for and with you until the table grape boycott is won and your Christmases will be as joyful for you and your families as they should be!” (Janelle Rodriguez, Los Angeles, California. Rodriguez is the chairperson of MECHA, a student organization at Cal State Northridge.)

“Cesar Chavez and UFW leaders, the staff, and especially union members and families — to you we send our best wishes for a very happy holiday season! We can identify so much with you because over the years your sufferings and hardships have been almost identical to those of our own, your brothers and sisters in Asian minorities in California and the rest of the nation. So we gladly stand at your side to help you — and we always will! (George Wong, San Francisco, California. Wong is the president of the Asian-American Federation of Union Members and a well-known activist in the San Francisco labor community.)

“We send you, our farm worker brothers and sisters, our best season’s greetings! May this season of peace see the world become a more just society for all. We continue to work for your cause because, until all our brothers and sisters see the day of justice, we will all continue to suffer.” (Donald and Jay Ann Crawford, Detroit, Michigan. Don is a member of Local 600, United Auto Workers. Jay Ann worked for La Causa as a volunteer during the first grape boycott. They practically raised their children on picket lines in Detroit during the 1960s.)

“Christmas greetings to Cesar Chavez and farm worker leaders, the staff, and all farm workers and their families! In spite of the exploitation, racism, and terrible living and working conditions that you are again boycotting to change, we know that your perseverance and dedication will bring you victory. We are with you in the struggle!” (Ignacio De La Fuente, San Francisco, California. De La Fuente is the business manager of the International Molders and Allied Workers Union, Local 164. He is also on the board of directors of both the Meikle John Civil Liberties Institute and the San Francisco General Occupational Health Clinic.)

“From Canada, your freezing northern neighbor, we send our warmest greetings during this blessed season and during your boycott struggle. A thirst for justice transcends our borders. We will stand by you in your struggle as long as it takes to win!” (Shirley G.E. Carr, Ontario, Canada. Carr is the president of the Canadian Labour Congress and the first woman elected to that position. She was elected unanimously in May 1986. She has been an active farm worker supporter for more than 20 years.)

“Season’s Greetings! We only wish that message of holiday joy would find you free of the abuses which still keep you fighting for your lives. But until that day of triumph comes for you and farm workers everywhere, we hope our promise of support will help provide the inspiration you need to keep struggling. We’re with you. After all, justice for the UFW is justice for all working people — and we want to be a part of that struggle!” (Arthur R. Osborn, Lexington, Massachusetts. Osborn is the president of the nine-state Northeast AFL-CIO Council. He also serves as director on several boards and is a member of many civic and community committees.)

“During these holidays, Cesar, we hope you will accept our best wishes and our promise of continuing support of your grape boycott. We are proud to extend that support because the boycott will restore the rights of farm workers and will insure protection from toxic chemicals for both farm workers and consumers. And we can never forget that we are all diminished as a society if some are denied even the most minimal right to work in a safe and decent environment.” (Jay Mazur, New York, New York. Mazur is the president of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union.)



SHIRLEY COHELAN-BURTON

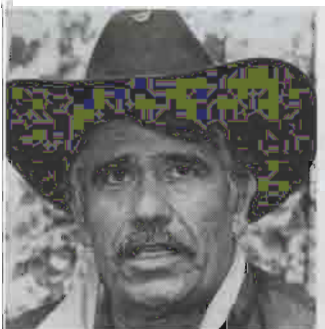
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## Why Farm Workers Need Your Support

For many farm workers, the holiday season is a time of hardship. It is a time when workers are painfully reminded of what they do not have — protection from pesticide poisoning, freedom to freely associate and hold union elections, and freedom to negotiate union contracts in good faith.

For these workers, the grape boycott represents the best chance they have to regain their rights. In the next four pages, California farm workers explain why they are counting on you.



**Rodolfo Amezcua**, unemployed: “The boycott is the best weapon we have. If the public supports us, we’ll win our fight, and farm workers will be treated justly. We believe that a successful boycott will mean that we will regain our jobs, our contracts and our dignity.

“The boycott gives us hope. It makes us believe that we will win back what we deserve.”

(Amezcua was a pruner at Paul Masson in Soledad for 14 years. He lost his job in 1985 when the company closed the ranch, laid off Amezcua and 200 other workers, broke the union contract and then reopened under another name.)



**Maricela Almaguer**, 30, general laborer at Sam Barbic, a table grape company in Delano: “We have been trying to negotiate a contract with the grower since June, but the negotiations have stalled. The grape boycott is a way to force the grower back to the bargaining table.

“I’m lucky because I will have a decent Christmas, but I know a lot of workers who will not be able to buy a turkey or presents for their children. The boycott could change that.”



**Lidia Jimenez**, 50, general laborer at Giumarra Vineyards, a table grape company in Bakersfield: “The boycott will make growers understand that we deserve better working conditions and wages. The growers pressure us to do more work than we are physically capable of doing. They try to get blood from a stone.

“The boycott will also protect us from the pesticides which are constantly sprayed around us. The growers tell us they are spraying medicine, but we know it’s poison.”

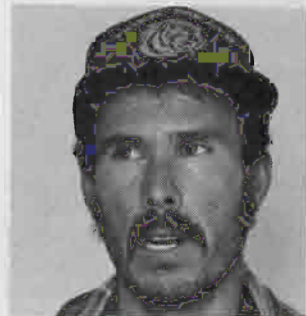
**Jose Garcia**, 50, general laborer at Green Valley Co-op, a lettuce company in Salinas: “The growers, the state government and the Agricultural Labor Relations Board is against workers. The boycott is the only way to fight back.

“The majority of farm workers are suffering, and the boycott will enable us to get contracts to protect workers.”



**Juan Gutierrez**, 36, tractor driver at Marc and Peter Mondavi, a wine grape company in the Napa Valley: “The grape boycott means a chance to provide a better future for our children. I know this because I have participated in other boycotts, and I have seen them work.

“The growers tell us that boycotts do not work, but they know, deep inside, that they work because they feel it in their pockets.”



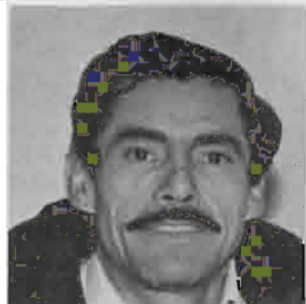
**Teresa Serrano**, 33, worked for Paul Masson in Soledad as a general laborer before being laid off: “Many of us sacrifice for the boycott, but we do it because we believe we can win. We are committed to the boycott because, through it, we will regain our jobs and contracts.

“We will not give up this struggle. There is too much on the line for us.”



**Julio Ramirez**, 45, celery picker at Sun Harvest in Salinas: “Among farm workers there is always hope and spirit. We hope the boycott will be a success because it would mean we would automatically regain our contracts.

“I first worked under a union contract after we won the boycott in 1975. We will win again. It’s sad that we even need to boycott. If growers obeyed the laws and treated us with dignity, this would not be necessary.”





MARVIN CORTNER

**Minerva Zuniga**, 39, general laborer at Baird Neece, a citrus company in Porterville: "The boycott is important because the union is the only one who will help us. We need protection. We need to be protected from pesticides. I know people who work with table grapes, and they are always being poisoned.

"The boycott will help women workers too. Growers, foremen and labor contractors do not respect us. Women are often sexually harrassed."

**Efren Ayala**, 33, citrus worker at Airdrome Orchards in Woodlake: "There will be better wages, better working conditions and protection from pesticides when the boycott is a success. Farm workers will be treated with respect again.

"Most farm workers are going to have a hard time during Christmas. They will be lucky if they can afford a small gift for their children."

**Florentino Gonzalez**, 61, worked for Paul Masson in Soledad for 17 years until he was permanently laid off: "Winning the boycott means that we will have more food for our children. It means we could provide a decent education for our children. We could own a house and have benefits such as medical insurance. The boycott means we could live like normal people again."

**Rufino Fernandez**, 57, general laborer at Marc and Peter Mondavi, a wine grape company in the Napa Valley: "Farm workers are suffering more and more. Growers pay us very little so that they can keep their large profits. This means that most workers do not have very much.

"We work so that our children can eat. Winning the boycott would mean our children would have a better future. That is what we are working for. The boycott is the best way we can stand up for our rights."



**Luisa Mejia**, 38, broccoli cutter at Arrow Lettuce in Salinas: "Everything valuable in life requires sacrifice and hard work. That is why we sacrifice for the boycott. The boycott will change our working conditions.

"It is especially important for women. I used to work at a ranch where the foreman told the women to sleep with them to keep their jobs. Women need the union to be able to demand the respect they deserve."

**Marcelino Lara**, 45, tractor driver at P & R Farms in Clovis: "The only way for people to keep pesticides off of their food and to help farm workers is to boycott grapes.

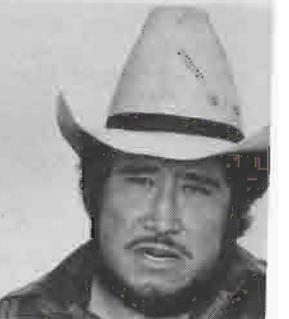
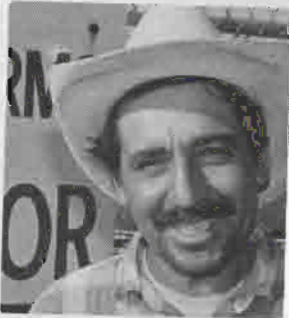
"This Christmas, we know that the growers will have everything they want. They'll have a lot of food and gifts and beautiful trees. Many farm workers will not even have enough to eat."

**Gloria Tenchavez**, 42, fired by Anton Caratan, a table grape company in Delano: "The workers at Caratan want to be represented by the union, but they are so afraid of the grower. I tried to organize them, but they fired me after I had worked for them for nine years.

"I am fighting to get my job back. The boycott means there is hope."

**Salvador Mendoza**, 38, general laborer at Napa Valley Vineyards, a wine company: "I know what it is like to work at a company that does not have a contract. I used to work at a company without a contract, and there was no water or toilets or breaks from the work.

Foremen would pressure us to always work faster. If you have a union contract, you're protected from this."



## Group Calls for a Ban on Crop Dusting

Valerie Marten, Kris James and Betty Wehrly of Lemoore, California, recently collected 1625 names on a petition which demanded the ban of aerial spraying in Kings County. The women — who do not have any connection to agriculture other than living in a town surrounded by cotton fields — began the petition for different reasons.

Marten's son, Glindon, has asthma. During the fall, when growers spray defoliants on their cotton, Glindon often has trouble breathing. "I take him to the emergency room 20 to 30 times a year," Marten said.

James said, "When I moved here, I was told not to drink the water because



Valerie Marten

it was contaminated. Then I was told to stay away from Dinoseb because I was pregnant. So, I couldn't drink the water or breathe the air. I knew something was wrong."

Wehrly discovered the dangers of pesticides when a crop duster sprayed her while she was walking in Lemoore. Wehrly said, "It was frightening. I didn't see him coming."

The women began collecting signatures and in 72 hours they collected over 1600 names. They presented their demand to the Kings County Board of

Supervisors on October 28.

The board agreed to set up a committee to study the problem; but instead of creating a committee of residents, the



Betty Wehrly

board included an agricultural chemical industry representative, a crop duster and a grower. They also included one resident.

"At the meeting, I said they should include a farm worker on the committee. These workers are being exposed to pesticides every day. The growers and crop dusters started laughing," James said.

Despite the board's irresponsibility, the group plans to keep trying.

James said, "I was always healthy before I moved here. Now I have constant headaches. I'll tell you how bad it is. I have a friend who goes to Los Angeles just to clear her head."

Kris James



## A Farm Worker's Spirit

Juanita Valenzuela deserves more. She has worked in the agricultural fields of California's San Joaquin Valley for the past 24 of her 50 years. She has experienced first-hand the deplorable conditions under which farm workers labor.

Juanita works in table grape fields for Superior Farms. Because she has never worked at a unionized ranch, she does not know what protection means. She does know, however, that a victory through the grape boycott could change her life.

"The boycott is essential because farm workers suffer more every day," Juanita said. "Not only do we suffer from low wages, unsanitary conditions and sexual harassment, but we must also work with pesticides."

The working conditions at Superior may assault the sensibilities, but they are not atypical.

"Where I work, we are not even given the most essential things," Juanita said. "When I go to the bathroom there is no water or toilet paper, and my hands are covered with filth and pesticides. How

can I touch my body with hands like that?

"When I and the others eat lunch, no water is provided for washing our hands. We eat poison and dirt with our food."

Juanita feels that the greatest injustice is a company policy which disallows gloves. This means that workers come in direct contact with pesticide-covered crops.

"We would provide our own gloves, but the company tells us we will be fired if we show up with gloves," Juanita said.

Now Juanita may be laid off during the holidays. She said, "Christmas is going to be very hard for my family and I. I have not been given enough work, and I'm afraid I will lose my car and house. Lately, I have only been eating twice a day because I cannot afford three meals."

Despite her suffering, Juanita does not despair. "The boycott is my hope," she explained. "It is the foundation of our struggle, and the only way our lives will improve. I pray it will be a success."

*Farm worker, Juanita Valenzuela, says, "The grape boycott is our only chance."*





*Kenneth Barger, anthropology professor, has found widespread support for the UFW's cause.*

## Survey Shows Strong Support for UFW, Grape Boycott, Pesticide Protection

Recently released results of a statewide California survey showed a strong positive public image of the UFW and Cesar Chavez, support for the boycott of table grapes, and almost unanimous approval of the UFW's struggle for pesticide protection for farm workers and consumers.

Chavez won a 70% positive response compared to 52% for Gov. George Deukmejian, according to the survey conducted last August by researchers at the Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI).

And 72% thought the UFW is more likely to improve conditions of farm workers than growers (43%) or laws (51%). "There is widespread endorsement of the UFW's social and labor role in improving farm workers' rights and conditions," said Kenneth Barger, IUPUI anthropology professor and survey director.

### Grape Boycott Support

Barger said there is "significant

popular support" for the boycott as a means for the UFW to obtain its goals (57%), and 22% said they had participated in at least two UFW boycotts. Eight percent said they are supporting the current UFW grape boycott, and 64% of those who have heard of the boycott so far said they are not buying grapes.

Chavez said those figures bode well for the boycott. "We're well on our way toward winning. We just have to keep spreading the news of the boycott."

### Pesticide Protection

A whopping majority supported the UFW's role in obtaining pesticide protection for farm workers and consumers: 92% for the UFW's goal to seek pesticide-free foods, 81% for a ban of the most dangerous pesticides used by growers, and 86% for the UFW's call to have fields and foods tested for pesticide levels.

## Table Grape Official Minimizes UFW Pesticide Concerns

When California Table Grape Commission President Bruce Obbink served as moderator for panelists in San Antonio in October, he could not have been more insensitive to the pesticide threat to farm workers and consumers in his advice to food producers on how to combat boycotts.

Obbink expounded on his "principle of magnitude" as the best way to offset the current UFW boycott of table grapes. "The principle of magnitude," he lectured, "is that if there is an issue, you need to identify an issue that has greater magnitude." So ridicule the UFW for boycotting only grapes when, in fact, growers contaminate all fruits and vegetables with pesticides. In other words, the principle of magnitude should be used to seduce the public into criticizing the UFW for not simultaneously boycotting ALL fruits and vegetables — instead of blaming

growers for using dangerous pesticides in the first place!

Obbink felt no need to touch on a more basic principle — truth. Not a word about whether the grape boycott has any merit in the first place. Not a word about farm workers poisoned . . . infants born with birth defects . . . children dying of cancer . . . consumers eating pesticide residues. Obbink, unfazed by facts, saw nothing unprincipled in advising food producers and retailers: "your company, right or wrong."

Outprincipling even Obbink in callousness was John Meadows of the Adolph Coors beer company. He presented four basic principles for fighting boycotts. Two were "go for the throat" and "keep a sense of humor."

Most people don't see anything humorous about pesticide poisoning — no matter how basic the principle is.



*Bruce Obbink lectures growers to ridicule the union for exposing the threat of pesticides.*





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