

FOOD AND JUSTICE

Published by the United Farm Workers

April 1987



***Celebrating 25 Years of
Struggle and Achievement***



25 and Moving Ahead!

On March 31, 1987, La Causa and the UFW became 25 years old. We hope many of you will be able to join us for a joyful but simple celebration of our anniversary on May 23 in Delano, California (see pp. 3-4).

After 25 years, we have many blessings to count. The most obvious are, of course, higher wages; better working and living conditions; medical and retirement benefits; and workers' compensation, unemployment, and disability insurance.

Considering the powerful forces arrayed against us, it is nothing short of miraculous that we were able to do anything more than survive. Even today, those same forces that tried to choke us to death at our birth are still grasping at our throats: corporate growers who value profits more than humans; public officials who refuse to enforce laws passed to protect farm workers' rights; pesticide producers and growers whose recklessness causes the poisoning of thousands of farm workers each year and many deaths among workers and their families; biased police and judges who make justice for farm workers a farce.

The obstacles we still face are best illustrated by the recent Maggio decision (see pp. 14-15) of a judge in southern California's Imperial County, the most racist county in the U.S. — one that makes Georgia's Forsyth County look like a champion of civil rights.

One of our most cherished blessings over the past 25 years is the support you, our friends, have given us. We hope you will be with us in Delano on May 23 — in person or in spirit — as we celebrate the past and look to the future. Our thanks to you will be an important part of that celebration. 🌻

Volume 4, Number 4

Food and Justice

April 1987

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.



Millions of people in the U.S. and Canada turned out to support UFW grape and lettuce boycotts in the '60s and '70s.

Celebrating Silver — Going for Gold!

Mark your calendars. Make plane reservations. Tune up your car. Plan your hitchhiking route. Farm workers want you to come to Delano, California on May 23 to join them in a "double whammy" of a celebration.

The fiesta will celebrate both the birth of the union 25 years ago in Delano and the birth of La Causa leader and UFW President Cesar Chavez 60 years ago in Yuma, Arizona. Both took place on March 31.

The fiesta will be held in Delano in a park at the UFW's historic "Forty Acres." The day's events will begin with an early-afternoon registration of guests, a reception, and reunion reminiscing to the accompaniment of roving mariachis. A pit-barbecue beef dinner will follow.

An evening program will feature the presentation of an award to an honored friend of farm workers. The festivities will end with a dance.

An invitational mailer will soon be sent to you and all our friends and supporters, and more details will be available in next month's issue of this magazine.

Vision, Courage, and Achievement

The anniversary celebration will honor both the vision and determination of Cesar Chavez, who having learned how to organize under such giants as Saul Alinsky and Fred Ross, Sr., began organizing farm workers in the San Joaquin Valley in 1962. He was undaunted by the knowledge that every previous

effort to organize farm workers in California had been crushed by a “good-ol’-boy” conspiracy of growers, politicians, sheriffs, and judges that is as pervasive today as it was in 1962.

An ideal match for Chavez’ vision and determination was the courage of farm workers. They paid membership dues in blind faith, they walked out of fields in spite of snarling growers and threatening goons, they marched and picketed, they endured injunctions and jailings, they were badgered and beaten up, they saw five slain, they prayed and fasted, and they braved the forbidding world of huge cities to boycott.

That powerful combination of Chavez’ vision and farm workers’ courage — helped by millions of supporters from every walk of life who also picketed, leafleted, and boycotted — produced a series of impressive achievements for farm workers: election victories and contracts with good benefits that finally permitted thousands of farm workers to emerge from the migrant stream, settle down in one place, and raise their families in comfort and dignity.

Many police were ignorant of the constitutional rights of picketers during the 1965-70 grape boycott. Here Dr. Jorge Prieto is frisked by a Chicago policeman.



Looking Ahead

But the UFW silver anniversary celebration will not just trumpet the vision, courage, and achievement of the past. It will also fix the union’s sights on the future, aiming for even more impressive achievements during the next 25 years.

It won’t be easy. The menace of the “gentlemen’s” conspiracy of growers, politicians, sheriffs and judges, and the menace of pesticides threatening farm workers and consumers are just two of the many formidable obstacles that lie ahead.

But farm workers will embark upon the next 25 years as they did 25 years ago — behind the vision and determination of Cesar Chavez, with their own courage to sustain them in the struggle, and with the support of millions of good American men and women who will stand with them shoulder to shoulder.

So mark your calendars — twice. May 23 for this year’s 25th anniversary and March 31, 2012 for the 50th.

The UFW is alive at 25 — and going for the gold! ♡



Toronto supporters help kick off a store boycott of A&P-owned New Dominion supermarkets in Canada.

Store Boycott Expanding

The California table grape boycott will intensify in the coming months as the UFW asks supporters and concerned consumers to start boycotting more major grocery store chains. At issue is the refusal by supermarket managers and executives to stop selling pesticide-tainted grapes that are a danger to public health.

Shabby enforcement of pesticide protection laws has forced the UFW into this boycott, one that will convince growers to use safer agricultural practices. Supermarket executives will ultimately become socially responsible and not sell grapes when shoppers go to other stores. These executives will then pressure growers for reforms.

In fairness though, before shoppers boycott a store, they should do the following:

- Ask store managers to remove the grapes. If they refuse, then shoppers should ask the managers to prove that the grapes are safe. If managers cannot do this, then they cannot justify selling the grapes.
- If managers insist that the grapes are

safe even though they cannot prove it, then shoppers should request that the grapes be tested for pesticide residue.

•If managers refuse to test the grapes, then shoppers can justify that store’s boycott.

As before, the UFW will succeed when vast numbers of people do their little part. Every time consumers avoid grapes or a targeted store, they promote social justice for farm workers.

The reasons for the boycott are clear: it will protect both consumers and farm workers from dangerous pesticides; it gives farm workers hope and a chance for a better future; and farm workers will regain their jobs, contracts, health and dignity. ♡

We at the UFW want our supporters and *Food and Justice* readers to share any information they have about the table grape boycott, its effect and success. We welcome any news clippings, personal involvement stories or observations. Mail to: Food and Justice, P.O. Box 62, Keene, California 93570. ♡



Chavez visits with Dr. Greene, dean of Academic Affairs (left), and Dick Courtney, organizing director, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1459 (right), after his speech at Westfield State College.

Chavez, Martyr's Mother Inspire Students

One minute a crowd of 1,000 students, professors, and workers at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst were on their feet for a rousing standing ovation and the next minute they sat in somber silence, moved to tears.

That dramatic scene took place on February 25 in the UMass student union ballroom, where a jam-packed crowd listened to UFW leader Cesar Chavez and Selma Freeman, mother of the first UFW martyr, Nan Freeman, an 18-year-old college student killed on a UFW picket line in Florida on January 25, 1972.

Chavez, on a two-day tour of western and southeastern Massachusetts, spoke after first presenting the boycott film, "The Wrath of Grapes." Responding to his boycott plea, the students rose to

their feet and roared their approval. "I haven't seen such a massive demonstration since the Vietnam War days," said Harvey Friedman, the university's director of the Labor Research and Relations Center.

Selma Freeman, whose husband Milton accompanied her from their home in Wakefield, Massachusetts, evoked deep sympathy from her listeners in a brief but moving speech. "When I look out upon this sea of faces," she said, "I know that my daughter did not die in vain."

"There wasn't a dry eye in the house when she finished," said Roberto de la Cruz, UFW boycott director of the New England area. "It was very touching."

The UMass rally was sponsored by 42 university and labor groups, including the Labor Center Student Caucus, the

Alumni Association, Frontlash, and teacher and clerical unions.

Standing-room-only crowds also greeted Chavez at Westfield State College and Southeastern Massachusetts University. And at the Amherst College Alumni House, a large crowd gathered for a fundraiser. Among the sponsors were long-time supporter Christina Platt; UMass Chancellor Joseph Duffey; U.S. Congressman Silvio Conte; State Senator John Olver, who introduced Chavez; State Representatives Shannon O'Brien, Stan Rosenberg, Carmen Buel, and William Nagle.

Another long-time supporter, Fr. Brian Boland, hosted Chavez in South Hadley during his two-day trip and held a successful fundraiser for an ecumenical group of clergy and other friends.

Labor Support

Labor supporters turned out to throw their support behind the grape boycott at two large gatherings. The first was a labor breakfast attended by the leaders and members of four central labor councils — Pioneer, Holyoke, Berkshire, and

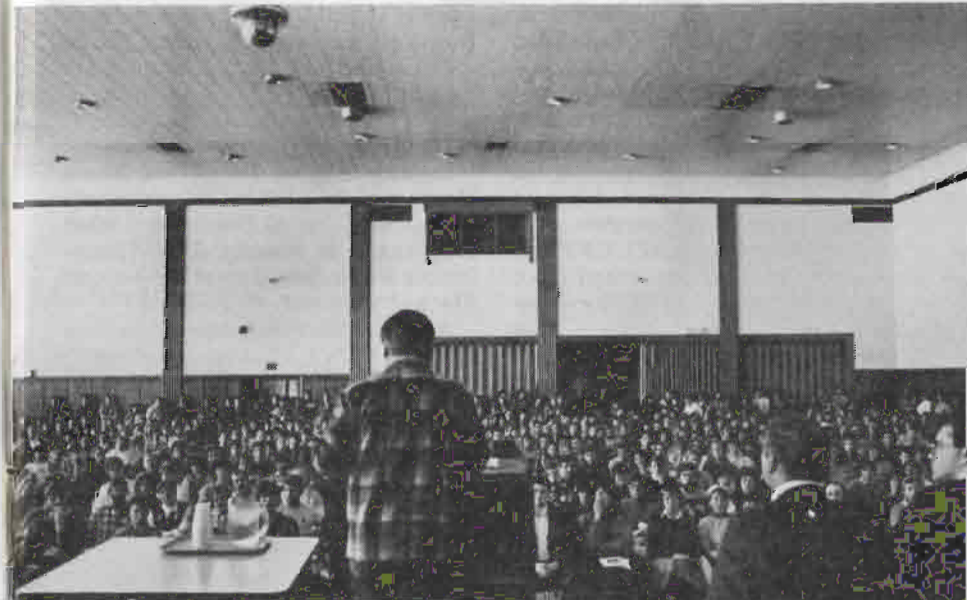
Northampton — and by Massachusetts State AFL-CIO President Arthur Osborn.

The other labor event was a dinner sponsored by three central labor councils from Greater Fall River, New Bedford-Cape Cod, Taunton, and another from Providence, Rhode Island. "Don't buy grapes," Chavez urged the crowd of more than 300. "That means black, red, green grapes; don't buy anything that even looks like a grape — except maybe olives," he added, smiling. The councils presented him a boycott contribution of \$1,000.

Cemetery Visit

Chavez stopped at St. Patrick's Cemetery in Fall River to place a wreath on the grave of Cardinal Humberto Medeiros, who befriended farm workers both as Bishop of Brownsville, Texas and as the head of the Archdiocese of Boston. "He prayed and marched with us in Brownsville in those hard times," Chavez said. "He was a good friend. I miss him. May he rest in peace." 🍷

Cesar asks students and professors to boycott grapes during rally at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. Seated at his right are Arthur Osborn, president of the State AFL-CIO, and Paul Wingle, student body president.





Hands across the border: Leo Gerard (center), director of Canadian Steelworkers District 6, pledges boycott solidarity with David Martinez (left), UFW boycott director in Canada, and Joe Robinson (right), UFW staff, at conference in Kitchener, Ontario.

Getting Out The Message

Organized labor in the Mid-Atlantic states helped spread the message about the UFW's table grape boycott this past month by purchasing 1,300 copies of the "Wrath of Grapes" video.

Arturo Rodriguez, the UFW's Mid-Atlantic boycott director, reports that Council 13 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) in Pennsylvania, led by executive director Edward J. Keller, condemned the grape growers for poisoning workers and threatening the health of consumers. Council 13 bought 350 videos for its 80,000 members.

Pennsylvania's State AFL-CIO also bought 60 videos for its central labor councils and District 13 of the Communications Workers of America, with 20,000 members, bought 30.

In Pittsburgh, the United Steelworkers of America purchased 300 videos as part of its plan to promote the grape boycott nationally.

The boycott film also became a best seller in New York City where the

92,000-member United Federation of Teachers bought 150 videos to use in the public high schools.

AFSCME District Council 1707 also bought 61 videos and AFSCME Local 420 took 26. In addition, the 17,000-member United University Professors of New York purchased 35 videos for its state chapters and for use in university libraries.

Toronto

In early March, David and Sandy Martinez of the UFW's Toronto boycott office, went to a District 6 United Steelworkers of America (USWA) conference where they showed the boycott film and addressed 400 delegates.

After the Martinez presentation, Leo Gerard, USWA District 6 director, urged the delegates to support the UFW by boycotting table grapes and by returning to their locals to seek contributions for the UFW.

"This boycott will help protect steelworker families from agricultural poi-

sons," said Gerard. "For their efforts, Cesar Chavez and the UFW have earned our help."

Phil Falbo, president of the USWA Local 4947 in Mississauga, Ontario, responded to the UFW request and announced at the conference that his local would donate \$1 per member per month to the boycott. Also, steelworkers at the conference generously donated \$1,000 to help farm workers.

In other news from Canada, the Retail, Warehouse, and Department Store Union, which represents workers in Toronto's New Dominion stores, sent a letter to that chain's executives asking that they remove grapes from their shelves.

Texas

At a recent meeting of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference in Texas, 45 diocesan directors unanimously endorsed the grape boycott and urged all dioceses in the United States not to serve table grapes at church activities.

Because of the toxicity of agricultural chemicals, the directors also resolved to continue promoting the reduced use of petrochemicals to protect society and the environment.

Pennsylvania labor leaders purchased UFW boycott videos to promote the grape boycott. From left to right are Arturo Rodriguez, boycott director of Mid-Atlantic states; Julius Uehlein, president of the Pennsylvania State AFL-CIO; Judith Heh, secretary-treasurer; and New York boycott staffers Ismael Pallares and Irv Hershenbaum.



At the conference, Father Tim Matevino of the Holy Family Church in Missouri City, Texas, and Ann Cass and Sharon Dorsey of the National Farm Worker Ministry, led a discussion about the boycott, agricultural working conditions and farm worker legislation.

Chicago

In Chicago, the fourth largest consumer market for table grapes, Local 41 of the National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians (NABET) unanimously passed a resolution to boycott table grapes and to donate \$1,000 to the UFW.

Local 41 of NABET and its president, Don Delaney, have supported the UFW in its struggle for many years.

Colorado

The University of Colorado Student Union (UCSU) in Boulder recently endorsed the boycott and voted to ban the sale or use of table grapes in all facilities funded by student fees.

David Aragon, UCSU officer, said the next step is to ban the grapes in the dormitories and to get a resolution supporting the boycott passed in the Boulder City Council. 🍷



Maximina Rosa Contreras and her son, Julio, grieve during the funeral of her husband, Rufino, shot to death by Saikhon company foremen during the vegetable strike in the Imperial Valley in 1979.

The Struggle Continues

Ideally judges decide cases brought before them on the basis of merit and reason, and decisions do not reflect a judge's political bias or personal involvement. Unfortunately, this ideal is not always attained.

A recent judgment handed down by William Lehnhardt, a superior court judge in California's Imperial County, demonstrates the extent to which prejudice can pervert justice.

Lehnhardt awarded Maggio, Inc. a \$1.6 million judgment in a suit brought

against the United Farm Workers. The award, the judge said, was to pay for losses Carl Maggio, a grower, claims he suffered when workers at his ranch walked off their jobs in 1979 to join thousands of other workers on strike in the Imperial Valley.

The strike began in January 1979, and it resulted from growers' refusal to bargain in good faith during contract negotiations. Workers from many companies elected the UFW as their bargaining agent in state-run elections. When growers refused to take the negotiating process seriously, almost 4,000 workers walked off their jobs.

The strike began peacefully but soon turned violent. Growers armed themselves and hired guards who arrived at the fields with tear gas, shotguns, pistols and attack dogs. Workers were unarmed and followed the UFW policy of employing nonviolent methods such as picket lines to express their discontent.

No growers, guards or company personnel suffered any injuries during the strike. Workers were not so lucky. One worker suffered severe head injuries when a grower guard cracked the worker's skull with the butt of a shotgun, and another striker was crippled for life when a grower ran him over with a car.

Part of the \$1.6 million Lehnhardt awarded includes over \$100,000 in reimbursement to Maggio for "security expenses."

On the other hand, Lehnhardt offered nothing for the life of Rufino Contreras. Contreras was a worker at Saikhon, a large company near Maggio. On February 10, 1979, Contreras entered a field to talk to strikebreakers. Three grower supervisors opened fire, and Contreras was shot through the head. The supervisors again began shooting when Contreras' brother and other strikers tried to help the dying worker.

The supervisors were charged with murder and appeared at a preliminary hearing. Eyewitnesses to the shooting also appeared but were not allowed to testify. Instead, all three supervisors

were released and charges were dropped. The witnesses reported later that during the hearing the supervisors laughed and chatted. The judge in this case was William Lehnhardt.

Harvesting Millions

To harvest crops during the strike, growers hired students and housewives to work in the fields. Lehnhardt's wife, Sarah, joined the strikebreakers and helped pack Maggio's crops.

UFW attorneys tried in vain to have Lehnhardt removed from the case because his impartiality was obviously compromised because his wife had worked for Maggio. Because Lehnhardt refused to remove himself and because Imperial County is controlled by growers and their allies, Lehnhardt remained on the case.

Union attorneys made the best of a biased judge and presented a month of testimony and evidence which indicated that Maggio did not lose millions during the strike. In fact, UFW lawyers argued, Maggio made nearly \$1 million more from the sale of his lettuce in 1979 than he would have made had there not been a strike because the dispute caused the price of lettuce to rise four times above normal levels. This profit was appar-

Ellen Eggers, UFW attorney, said: "Judge Lehnhardt refused to prosecute the killers of one of our workers [Rufino Contreras], and his wife worked for Maggio during the strike under his judgment. I am convinced his mind was made up even before we put on our first witness."



ently not enough in Lehnhardt's eyes.

"The decision is an abomination," UFW President Cesar Chavez declared after the sentence was announced. "Farm workers, not the growers, were the victims of violence during the 1979 strike. It was farm workers, not the growers, who were shot and beaten and run down on the picket line."

Since Lehnhardt's decision, many growers have been happily predicting that the award will force the union into bankruptcy and eventual disintegration. The union will, of course, appeal the case before a judge less intimately tied to growers, but the appeal will cost money. Growers and union foes claim the appeal costs will strip the union financially.

What the growers, and perhaps Lehnhardt, do not understand is that the UFW has struggled against rich, powerful opponents since its inception 25 years ago. The UFW was established for farm workers, to help workers receive the just treatment they deserve and to protect them from unreasonable dangers. No lawsuit can change that commitment, and no judgment, however unjust or excessive, can force the UFW from its goal. The union has been here for workers for 25 years; it will be here for many more. ♡



Anna Corona lost her baby after pesticide poisoning.

A Frightening Mystery

When 30 farm workers from Bruce Church, Inc. in Santa Maria, California became ill in late February, pesticide poisoning was suspected.

The cauliflower field where the workers were harvesting when they became ill was quarantined. The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and the state Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA) were called in to investigate. The workers were taken to the hospital and blood samples were taken. Follow-up medical examinations were made by a company doctor.

A week after this incident, workers again became ill in the field. The investigation intensified.

The result of these investigations has been disappointing, though not surprising. The cause of the workers' illness is — according to the company, CDFA, and the company doctor — a mystery.

And yet the workers are suffering. Most are afraid of being interviewed for fear they will lose their jobs. Two

workers, however, were willing to describe what happened.

Anna Corona is a worker who became ill in both incidents. She was also pregnant. "I was wrapping cauliflower," she said. "And there was a pain in my chest and a numbness in my hands. I was also dizzy. I began crying because of the way I felt."

Because Corona does not trust the company doctor, she sought the opinion of her own physician. Her doctor told her there may be problems connected with her pregnancy.

On March 20, Corona lost her baby because the child had not developed properly. The loss, Corona maintains, is due to being poisoned in the field.

Rebecca Salinas is also ill. She said, "I have the symptoms of being poisoned. My chest hurt and I felt nauseous. Recently, I began spitting up blood."

CDFA claims that four pesticides were found on the cauliflower but these were below tolerance for consumption. Since the setting of most tolerance levels is suspect at best, these findings are by no means conclusive.

Bruce Church claims that by transporting the workers to the hospital and notifying the state, it has acted responsibly. What the company does not publicize is the fact that it docked the workers' wages for hours spent in the hospital.

And, of course, the company claims it does not know what caused the workers to become ill. To the workers, the cause is less mysterious — and this frightens them. ♡

Rebecca Salinas



EVERY YEAR MORE THAN 300,000 FARM WORKERS ARE POISONED BY THE FOOD YOU EAT.



Welcome to Death Valley.

Each year, hundreds of thousands of people who labor in the fields are poisoned by toxic pesticides like those used in the cultivation of table grapes.

The fruits of their labor are birth defects, cancer, chronic illness. And death.

But the danger of pesticides isn't just to field workers. The danger sits right on your table.

You see, one third of all pesticides are known to cause

cancer. And some of them won't even wash off under your kitchen tap. Which means that you could unwittingly be poisoning yourself or your family with every table grape you eat.

There is only one way to know the whole story. Send for our free video cassette, "The Wrath of Grapes," and see how the farm workers have dedicated themselves to saving their lives. And yours.

What you choose to do after that is up to you. After all, we don't want to poison your mind. We just want to give you food for thought.



UNITED FARM WORKERS OF AMERICA
P.O. Box 62
Keene, CA 93570

YES! Please send me a free copy of "The Wrath of Grapes." (Available in VHS format only.)

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UNITED FARM WORKERS OF AMERICA

Your Letters

Pesticides Are Everywhere

In 1979 my wife and I served with a Teen Missions Team in Jalapa, Guatemala. We saw the horrible effects of pesticides that had washed down the hills during the monsoon season polluting the streams. An entire village of Indians who drank from that stream died as a result.

We are outraged that these practices continue not only in Central America but also here in the United States. We support your boycott and are trying to help in this area where we live by alerting the people.

Jim and Esther Devito
Berkeley Heights, NJ



From Someone Who Knows

I am in full support of boycotting grapes. I have long been concerned about the pesticides growers use and their effect on fruit.

I was an employee of a landscape company. The overuse of pesticides was appalling as was the company's policy of strongly advising workers not to use any type of mask or protection beyond rubber gloves when spraying toxic pesticides.

The agricultural fields need to be closely examined. I have two sons, and I want them to grow tall and strong.

Janel Louis Hill
New York, NY



Passing The Word

As a recent reader of your magazine, I am shocked to hear that our government is not doing more to stop the contamination of so many innocent people. I now boycott grapes and so do many of my

friends. I teach Girl Scouts, and, as part of one of our many programs, I tell the girls about what is happening with farm workers. I also pass your magazine around so they can read firsthand what is going on and what is trying to be done. They relay the information to their families, and it has stirred many parents to become regular readers of your magazine.

I have a friend who, when she was little, lived in California by farms using pesticides. She contracted leukemia. Now she is 20 years old. I have shared the information I received from you, and it seems clear to her and her family how she got cancer. I support your work and will keep passing the information around.

Cynthia Sirovatka
Menominee, MI



This Is One Approach

For some time now I have been considering Cesar Chavez' suggestion that boycotters confront our store managers to ask that they remove grapes from their shelves. My wife and I boycott grapes, and we take every opportunity to urge others to do so, but we have never felt comfortable with the confrontational approach. I have discovered a course of action I am comfortable with, however. I was in the supermarket, and as I passed the grapes, I said to myself, "You've got to do something more about this business." So I whipped out my pen and wrote on the price sign: "Boycott Grapes — Unfair to the United Farm Workers."

I figured the management would replace the sign, but I decided that the next time I shopped I'd write it again, and they'd have to replace it again.

Charles Harrington Elster
San Diego, CA



Manuel Cortez Renteria worked for nine cents an hour.

Almost Slavery

As part of the grape boycott, the UFW is demanding the restoration of farm workers' rights. What follows is a tragic example of how workers are treated when growers are allowed to ignore these rights.

In Carmel Valley, California, there is a 40-acre ranch wedged between a shopping mall and a golf course. The lives of the workers who tend and harvest the crops of this ranch lie in sharp contrast to the lives of other, more affluent residents of the town.

Manuel Cortez was one such worker. He is a 16-year-old boy who traveled from Mexico to the U.S. in search of work. Cortez' parents had died, and he came to this country to support his grandmother and sisters.

Cortez found work on the Carmel Valley Ranch which is owned by Jose Lopez. Since all the workers on Lopez' ranch receive minimum wage, Cortez expected the same salary. Instead, he was paid erratically, often receiving only \$5 a week. Cortez worked 10 hours a

day, seven days a week. He worked this schedule for 10 months and estimates his total wages at \$350. That works out to about nine cents per hour.

The boy had no money for shelter so Lopez housed him in a packing shed. For seven months, Cortez lived in the shed which measures eight by eight feet and has no running water, electricity or heat. When Lopez brought in two other workers to live in the shed, he put Cortez in a broccoli crate. Cortez lived in this crate for three months.

When the boy tried to leave the ranch, Lopez threatened him. Finally, some friends of Cortez persuaded him to seek assistance. A priest helped the boy find new employment and enroll in high school.

The money he now earns — and any money he may receive from a lawsuit which has been filed on his behalf — will go to his family. "All my life, I've lived under difficult conditions," Cortez told reporters. "I had to leave home and go to work. I want to support my family."



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