

STATEMENT BY CESAR CHAVEZ AT THE END OF HIS
24-DAY FAST FOR JUSTICE
PHOENIX, ARIZONA
JUNE 4, 1972

I want to thank you for coming today. Some of you have been to the Santa Rita Center many times. Some have made beautiful offerings at the Mass. I have received letters and telegrams and lettuce boycott pledges from all over the world. All of these expressions of your love and your support for the farm-workers struggle have strengthened my spirits and I am grateful. I want especially to honor the farm workers who have risked so much to go on strike for their rights. Your sacrifice will not be in vain!

I am weak in my body but I feel very strong in my spirits. I am happy to end the fast because it is not an easy thing. But it is also not easy for my family and for many of you have worried and worked and sacrificed. The Fast was meant as a call to sacrifice for justice and as a reminder of how much suffering there is among farm workers. In fact, what is a few days without food in comparison to the daily pain of our brothers and sisters who do backbreaking work in the fields under inhuman conditions and without hope of ever breaking their cycle of poverty and misery. What a terrible irony it is that the very people who harvest the food we eat do not have enough food for their own children.

It is possible to become discouraged about the injustice we see everywhere. But God did not promise us that the world would be humane and just. He gives us the gift of life and allows us to choose the way we will use our limited time on this earth. It is an awesome opportunity. We should be thankful for the life we have been given, thankful for the opportunity to do something about the suffering of our fellowman. We can choose to use our lives for others to bring about a better and more just world for our children. People who make that choice will know hardship and sacrifice. But if you give yourself totally to the non-violent struggle for peace and justice, you also find that people will give you their hearts and you will never go hungry and never be alone. And in giving of yourself you will discover a whole new life full of meaning and love.

Nan Freeman and Sal Sontos have given their lives for our movement this past year. They were very young. It hurt us to lose them and it still hurts us. But the greatest tragedy is not to live and die, as we all must. The greatest tragedy is for a person to live and die without knowing the satisfaction of giving life for others. The greatest tragedy is to be born but not to live for fear of losing a little security or because we are afraid of loving and giving ourselves to other people.

Our opponents in the agricultural industry are very powerful and farm workers are still weak in money and influence. But we have another kind of power that comes from the justice of our cause. So long as we are willing to sacrifice for that cause, so long as we persist in non-violence and work to spread the message of our struggle, then millions of people around the world will respond from their hearts, will support our efforts. . . .and in the end we will overcome. It can be done. We know it can be done. God give us the strength and patience to do it without bitterness so that we can win both our friends and opponents to the cause of justice.

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 * *The following statement by Cesar Chavez was read to near-* *
 * *ly 8,000 farm workers gathered in Delano on Sunday, March* *
 * *10, 1968 to break bread with their leader thus to cele-* *
 * *brate their wit and their determination to continue a* *
 * *militant but non-violent struggle for social justice.* *
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STATEMENT BY CESAR CHAVEZ
ON THE CONCLUSION OF A 25 DAY FAST FOR NON-VIOLENCE

I have asked the Rev. James Drake to read this statement to you because my heart is so full and my body too weak to be able to say what I feel.

My warm thanks to all of you for coming today. Many of you have been here before, during the Fast. Some have sent beautiful cards and telegrams and made offerings at the Mass. All of these expressions of your love have strengthened me and I am grateful.

We should all express our thanks to Senator Kennedy for his constant work on behalf of the poor, for his personal encouragement to me, and for taking the time to break bread with us today.

I do not want any of you to be deceived about the Fast. The strict Fast of water only which I undertook on February 15 ended after the 21st day because of the advice of our doctor, James McKnight, and other physicians. Since that time I have been taking liquids in order to prevent serious damage to my kidneys.

We are gathered here today not so much to observe the end of the Fast but because we are a family bound together in a common struggle for justice. We are a Union family celebrating our unity and the non-violent nature of our movement. Perhaps in the future we will come together at other times and places to break bread and to renew our courage and to celebrate important victories.

The Fast has had different meanings for different people. Some of you may still wonder about its meaning and importance. It was not intended as a pressure against any growers. For that reason we have suspended negotiations and arbitration proceedings and relaxed the militant picketing and boycotting of the strike during this period. I undertook this Fast because my heart was filled with grief and pain for the sufferings of farm workers. The Fast was first for me and then for all of us in this Union. It was a Fast for non-violence and a call to sacrifice.

Our struggle is not easy. Those who oppose our cause are rich and powerful and they have many allies in high places. We are poor. Our allies are few. But we have something the rich do not own. We have our own bodies and spirits and the justice of our cause as our weapons.

When we are really honest with ourselves we must admit that our lives are all that really belong to us. So, it is how we use our lives that determines what kind of men we are. It is my deepest belief that only by giving our lives do we find life. I am convinced that the truest act of courage, the strongest act of manliness is to sacrifice ourselves for others in a totally non-violent struggle for justice.

To be a man is to suffer for others. God help us to be men!

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE
Add or delete as your situation requires.

CONTACT:
PHONE:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DATE:

**CESAR CHAVEZ'S FAST FOR LIFE ENDURES;
THOUSANDS JOIN GRAPE BOYCOTT CAMPAIGN**

_____ (Name of group and/or people involved) _____

will be _____ (beginning a fast; chain of fasting; picketing at local market; etc.) _____
on _____ (day, date, time) _____ at _____ (location) _____ to show
their support for Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers union in their fight against
deadly pesticides.

_____ (This action) _____ is part of thousands of similar activities
at local supermarkets throughout the United States and Canada in support of Chavez's Fast
for Life and the UFW's boycott of California table grapes. The farm workers are asking for
contracts with grape growers to ban the use of five deadly pesticides, to guarantee free and
fair elections and good faith bargaining, and to establish a UFW-grower program for testing
for pesticide residues on grapes sold in supermarkets.

The Fast for Life began at midnight July 16 when UFW President Cesar Chavez began a
water-only fast in response to the dangers generated by the reckless use of deadly pesti-
cides. Chavez ended his fast 36 days later when he broke bread with Ethel Kennedy at an
outdoor Mass in Delano, California on Sunday August 21.

At that time the farm labor leader gave Rev. Jesse Jackson a small wooden cross symboliz-
ing the passing on of "the Fast for Life to hundreds of concerned men and women
throughout North America and the world who have offered to share the suffering." The Fast
for Life has continued to be passed on from person to person and has focused international
attention on the problems caused by the reckless use of pesticides in California's agricul-
tural areas.

In a statement read for him by one of his sons, Chavez said, "The fast will go on in hundreds
of distant places and it will multiply among thousands and then millions of caring people
until every poisoned grape is off the supermarket shelves."

CESAR CHAVEZ' STATEMENT AT THE END OF THE FAST

August 21, 1988

My heart is too full and my body too weak to read this message. So I have asked my oldest son, Fernando, to read it to you.

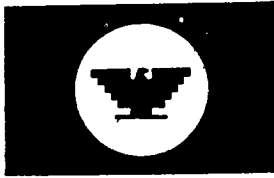
I thank God for the love and support of my family as well as for the prayers and hard work of the members and staff of our Union. I am grateful to the many thousands of people who came to be with me and for the millions who have kept me in their prayers and who have taken up our cause in their own communities. They have opened up their hearts, not just to me, but to the farm workers and the families who suffer from the unrestrained poisoning of our soil, our water, our air and our people.

Many generous people have traveled long distances to be here during the fast. It is especially meaningful to me and all farm workers to have Ethel Kennedy and her children here on this day. Twenty years ago Bobby Kennedy stood with us when few had the courage to do so. We will always carry him in our hearts.



Today I pass on the fast for life to hundreds of concerned men and women throughout North America and the world who have offered to share the suffering. They will help carry the burden by continuing the fast in front of their local supermarkets.

The fast will go on in hundreds of distant places and it will multiply among thousands and then millions of caring people until every poisoned grape is off the supermarket shelves. And the fast will endure until the fields are safe for farm workers, the environment is preserved for future generations, and our food is once again a source of nourishment and life.



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August 4, 1988

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CESAR CHAVEZ' "FAST FOR LIFE" ENTERS 19th DAY

Cesar Chavez, President of the United Farm Workers (UFW) is on a water-only fast that enters its 19th day today. His fast seeks to draw attention to the toxic chemicals used on grapes that poison farm workers and endanger the environment.

A picket line in solidarity with Cesar Chavez was held at noon in front of the Food Emporium on 215 Park Avenue South in New York City. Local community and labor activists held signs that said, "Don't Buy Poison Grapes".

Coinciding with the New York picket line was a press conference held in California by Kennedy family members, Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, Kerry and Douglas Kennedy that urged support for the boycott of California table grapes. Earlier in the week, comedian Dick Gregory visited Chavez and stated, "We must stop these poisonous pesticides before its too late."

The UFW kicked off a "Non-Cooperation with Supermarkets" campaign aimed at supermarkets who continue to sell and profit from California table grapes. Mailings are being sent to tens of thousands of New York area activists to distribute "Action Kits" which explain how to confront local markets about the dangers of pesticides used on grapes. These kits are available from the UFW Boycott Office, La Paz, California 93570, according to UFW organizers.

Already fifteen California supermarkets have removed grapes from their shelves. In New York City, four Co-op supermarkets have voted to refrain from purchasing any California table grapes. Cesar Chavez in a statement called on "friends everywhere to begin a great movement of non-cooperation with supermarkets to resist in many non-violent acts the presence of California table grapes in the stores where they shop."

Demonstrations and vigils are scheduled to take place in Boston, Detroit, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Los Angeles.