

Happy Cesar Chavez Day!

**A DailyKos.com Diary Entry, a My.BarackObama.com Blog Entry, and
An E-Mail Sent to My Political List**

February 19, 2008

March 31st was the birthday of Cesar Chavez;
and that's also the date California has set aside
to honor the late, great labor leader ...

[Introduction to César E. Chávez Model
Curriculum \(CA Dept of Education\)](#)

Even though we weren't Latinos, Cesar Chavez
meant a lot to my family.

My dad was a working man—a ready-mix
cement truck driver—who worked with a lot of
Latinos on the job sites; they respected one
another as men who worked hard to provide for
their families. One of his dearest friends was a
Latino, Jim Gomez, who was ultimately Dad's
broker (Dad was an independent owner-
operator, who never crossed a picket line):
Unlike some others in the business who treated
Dad less than honorably, Jim was always fair
and square with Dad and the others he
represented and with the companies he dealt
with. So when Jim and the other Latinos Dad
knew spoke highly of Cesar Chavez, Dad listened
and told Mom and me to listen well, too.

Mom was a Catholic, and the United Farm
Workers' work on behalf of the "least among us"
resonated well with her and with the better
angels of our Church. In fact, before coming to

the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, now-Cardinal
Mahoney worked side-by-side with farm workers
in his Central Valley diocese—a position that,
last I heard, was occupied by a bishop, Stephen
Blair, who had once been a young priest at our
parish in Temple City, a priest I knew when I
served as an "altar boy."

Dad, Mom, and I looked up to Cesar Chavez
because he showed that even those whom society
considers as the "lowest"—even though they
work the hardest—have as much dignity, if not
more, than many of those whom society honors
as the "highest." There was something just
decent and right and just in all of that, and Cesar
Chavez and those who worked alongside him
sacrificed much to make sure that idea was not
forgotten (and that society backed up that ideal
with some better pay and working conditions).

I think that made Cesar Chavez a great man,
representing the very best in what is truly
American or simply human; and I'm proud that
California chose to honor him and what he stood
for with this holiday.