

CALL TO THE YOUTH LEADERS OF THE NEW MOVEMENT:

We can win. We can stop the raids. We can win the César Chávez holiday. Our movement is stronger than we have understood. Youth leadership is THE decisive factor.

Stop the Raids – Make California a sanctuary state Honor the César Chávez holiday – No more second-class treatment

STUDENT AND YOUTH CONTINGENT FOR THE MAY 1ST BOYCOTT AND MARCH

11 A.M.: Gather at Cinco Puntos (César Chávez Blvd. and North Lorena St.), Los Angeles

The walkouts and marches of Friday, March 30 spoke for the sentiments, interests and aspirations of all the immigrant and Latina/o communities of California. The students who walked out and marched were welcomed and recognized as the leaders of the whole community. Watching our walkouts live on Telemundo or from storefronts and street corners along the way, our parents and neighbors saluted us. Students who were locked down or fenced in their schools marched with us in their hearts.

In Los Angeles, when we marched down César Chávez Boulevard, we could feel the pride and defiance of our whole community. Our walkouts and marches made clear to all that our new, powerful mass civil rights movement was visible, back in the streets, fighting for our rights.

Young mothers with their babies and children swelled the ranks of the marches. Latina/o, black, Asian, white, and immigrant students of all races walked out and marched together. In each walkout and march, there came a moment—in Los Angeles, it was when we streamed off the sidewalks and took over the streets—when we knew that no one could stop our struggle for our dignity and rights.

The lessons of our struggle

The principals of almost all of our schools began the Chávez holiday by decrying our walkouts. By the end of the day, they had to follow our lead, acknowledge the strength of our action and the correctness of our demands, and in some cases sanction our actions. In Los Angeles, the school district made buses available to the students who wanted a ride back to school after our march and rally were completed. In some schools, including in Sacramento and Los Angeles, principals publicly announced amnesty for all who walked out. Traditional Chávez Day marches across the state were energized and emboldened by the example we set on Friday.

Even where school authorities and the police repressed students and tried to shut down our actions, our movement was able to gain strength, by just standing strong and refusing to back down. In Santa Ana, the police



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tried to intimidate and defeat our fight by detaining large numbers of students who walked out. The police could not dampen the fighting spirit of the students or our community. Instead of cowering in fear, the Latina/o community of Santa Ana turned out in large numbers on the Friday evening of the walkouts, waving Mexican and other flags.

A week after the walkouts, on Friday, April 6, students in Santa Ana for the first time ever picketed the police station demanding an end to racist police harassment and intimidation. On April 7, Santa Ana parents are marching in LA to show their support for our walkouts.

In communities where struggles to stop the raids have already been under way, the student walkouts on the Chávez holiday elevated these struggles to a higher level. In Richmond, California, where the community has been mobilizing in response to high-profile raids carried out this winter, the student walkouts inspired a prominent Latino church pastor to lead a sit-in at the BART subway station.

In Sacramento, where our walkouts were far bigger than the media reported, our rally at the Capitol assured that the whole state government establishment heard our demands.

The school walkouts for recognition of the Chávez holiday were immensely powerful and result in far more than we can see now. Over the next year, our movement will look back at these actions and recognize that the students who walked out and marched rejuvenated the struggle for immigrant rights.

We can see the power of our action in the gains we have already made. School authorities in Richmond have already said that they will join San Francisco and Oakland schools and honor the César Chávez holiday. Our walkouts in San Marcos led to office closings, and schools in many districts were forced to close early or give up trying to hold classes because of the strength of our movement. During the year, we must get other districts to follow. Winning recognition of the Chávez holiday will make clear to all that, when the new movement organizes and acts, we can win.

Youth leadership is the key to victory

This year, for the first time, the Chávez holiday became an assertion of the power of the Latina/o communities of California. The voices of the new leaders of our new movement could be heard from Yuba City to San Diego, thousands of different voices—one emphatic message "¡Aquí estamos, y no nos vamos!" On March 30, we put the state of California and the nation on notice that we will accept no more second-class treatment. The raids that terrorize our communities, the deportations that shatter and splinter our families, will be fought and stopped. We will make equality a reality for all Latinas/os, immigrants of all races, the black and Asian communities, and for all the oppressed of this nation.

The tasks facing our movement are simple, but only the young leaders and those who respect the youth and want our struggles to win will have the will and vision to lead us forward. The job of our leaders is to inspire our communities into action by making clear that we will accept nothing less than victory. We have the power to convince the government to grant our demands. By making clear that we will not give up or compromise our dignity or the fight for our basic rights, we can stop the ICE/INS from terrorizing our communities and win full citizenship rights for all. We can back the racists off. We speak for the majority of this society. Our enemies may be treated as strong by the media and by both liberal and conservative politicians, but in fact the racists are weak, isolated, and can be discredited and defeated. To win, we need a leadership filled with optimism and which is determined to win. Cynicism and demoralization have no place in our movement. Those who say nothing can change or be done must be replaced by the young leaders who feel that we can

change everything and are coming to understand and believe in the immense power we possess.

Our movement has the power right now to end our second-class treatment—We can stop the raids and protect our communities

The youth leaders who stepped forward on Friday, March 30 and led the walkouts and marches must lead again on May 1. May 1 has been called as a national day of action for immigrant rights. Our conviction and energy must set the direction, tone, and spirit of the national day of marches, walkouts, boycotts and rallies. We can make real our demands for recognition of the Chávez holiday, to stop the raids, to make California a sanctuary state—a place where people without papers will no longer live in fear of deportation—if the youth are in the lead.

May 1 presents a great opportunity to continue and to build our movement. Called as a national day of action on the same day as last year's huge May Day marches, this year's actions must be strong and forward looking. In the past few months the ICE/INS has carried out some highly publicized raids to test our strength and to re-assert their authority. May 1 must be turned into a day in which we show the nation that Latina/o and immigrant communities cannot be pushed back or intimidated from fighting for our rights and dignity.

Walk Out on May 1st!

Walking out of schools on the morning of May 1 is the best way for us to set the tone and spirit of the day. If our walkouts headline the morning news shows, more people will participate in the boycott and other events of the day. A year ago, our walkouts inspired others to stand up. To build and transform this year's boycotts, marches and rallies into struggles to win rather than commemorations of the past, the students and youth must lead again.

The next year will be the most exciting year of our lives. It will be marked by exciting struggles, heated debates and new turning points. The question of how to address the issue of immigrant rights will extend to all corners of our nation.

Latina/o invisibility is a thing of the past. The pride we feel in ourselves and our communities when we fight will be shared by many who admire us but have not yet dared to feel the joy and sense of freedom that struggle brings. Our struggles have already united people with and without papers, immigrants from all over the world, and people of all races. Our movement, fighting to end the oppression and isolation of all, can bring dignity and hope to all. There are so many people all over the world pulling for us. We can grow enormously and win if we pledge to ourselves and our communities never to stop fighting until power is in our hands.

For more information, call (323) 317-7675 or go to Myspace.com/ChavezDayOfAction

Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action, Integration, & Immigrant Rights & Fight for Equality By Any Means Necessary (BAMN)

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