

Honor the California César Chávez Birthday Holiday!

**Boycott School-
-Rally and
March!**

**Monday, March
30th, 2009**

**Win the Right of
Undocumented
Students to Receive
Financial Aid to Attend
College-Pass the
DREAM Act!**

**Make the Chavez
Holiday a National
Holiday**

**No Second Class
Treatment of
immigrant, Latina/o,
black or other minority
communities**



Now that we have cast aside the last eight years of racist right wing government rule, it is the time to advance our agenda for the dignity and equal treatment of the Latino and immigrant communities. Monday, March 30, 2009, the César Chávez Birthday Holiday is our day to do this. This is our moment to lift the Latino and immigrant communities from invisibility, just like César Chávez and the farm workers did decades ago. This year, *tens of thousands* of undocumented students across the country will be unjustly banned from receiving financial aid and therefore *denied the opportunity to attend college and pursue their dreams*. President Barack Obama has made clear his support for both a Federal and California DREAM Act which, if enacted, would change this. Marching on the César Chávez Holiday, we can take an important step in our fight against the racist second-class treatment of the Latino and immigrant communities.

The families of undocumented students make an enormous contribution to our nations' economy and prosperity—yet, their sons and daughters face the same kind of discrimination that young black students experienced in the old segregated Jim Crow south. Undocumented students are unjustifiably denied equal educational opportunities and assigned to permanent second-class status. **Fighting for the DREAM Act on the Chávez Holiday is truly the best way we could honor the memory of César Chávez.**

Every undocumented student across America who graduates high school knows that from the moment they walk across the stage they will not have the same opportunity to go to college as their classmates, even if they are the valedictorian of their class. It is unfair and unjust to ask undocumented students to accept a situation in which their dreams are deferred because of something they could not control and cannot change—which side of the border they were born on. Having the DREAM Act signed into law will establish the principle that undocumented students are the peers and the equals of every other young person in California, and that their right to develop their full potential will be honored and respected in this nation.

The Fight for the Cesar Chavez Birthday Holiday

In 2000, Antonio Villaraigosa, now mayor of Los Angeles, sponsored and secured a California law which made March 31st, César Chávez's birthday, a school and public workers holiday throughout the state of California, meant to be honored in the same manner as Presidents Day or Martin Luther King Day. As a result, across the state, many public workers get the day off in recognition of the holiday. San Francisco and Oakland public schools, as well as many colleges and universities across California close during the holiday.

However, the majority of predominantly Latino school districts in California, including LAUSD, San Jose, and Sacramento, do little to nothing to honor the holiday. Few public schools, colleges and universities in our state hold celebrations to honor his legacy, no school-wide assemblies to teach the young people of our state about his importance to the history of our nation—all of this despite the fact that the law urges schools to close and hold school-wide assemblies in honor of the holiday. Across the country the Cesar Chavez Holiday is barely even recognized.

Chavez' birthday must become an occasion to struggle for the proper recognition of the contributions of the Latina/o and immigrant communities in California and around the country. César Chávez was the most persistent Latina/o civil rights leader of the 20th century. His name is synonymous with the struggle of the Latina/o and immigrant communities for equality, justice, and respect. The civil rights and union movement he led lifted Mexican-American and other immigrant workers from invisibility and turned our communities into a powerful force for freedom in this society. Yet young people, in particular in California, are deprived of any real knowledge of him or the struggles he led.

Building Young Leaders of the New Civil Rights Movement in California & Across the Country

The purpose of our education must be to learn about who we are, how we can express our creativity and talents, and about the society we live in and how we can change it for the better. Our education would be improved immeasurably if we attended schools which treated us and our communities with respect and refused to accept maintaining Latino invisibility. Instead of holding boring and demeaning assemblies to lecture us on bad attendance or poor test scores, we need school administrators prepared to hold assemblies on how we can successfully struggle to end the forced segregation

and racism which deform our opportunities to learn and go to college. We need assemblies which give us the collective opportunity to learn how we can successfully struggle to win our rights and equality. *In this new era of hope and optimism LAUSD should direct all schools to hold assemblies in recognition of the Chavez Holiday just as they directed staff in LAUSD to make it possible for students to see President Obama's inauguration.* School districts across California should do the same.

Too often, attending school feels more like a prison sentence than an opportunity to learn. We languish in overcrowded, run-down schools without the resources we need to succeed. Learning should be exciting and joyous. The schemes of politicians and well-paid educators to "improve" our education—mayoral takeovers, charters, small schools, academies, and stripping us of our right to self expression by putting us in uniforms—have all failed. Simple, obvious, and cheap solutions like showing us respect, treating us with dignity, listening to our concerns and building up our pride and self-worth through events like celebrating the Chávez holiday are never put into practice. It is clear that the powers-that-be fear our asserting our power and improving our lives more than they fear our failing. **We deserve better!**

We demand school-wide assemblies for the Chávez Holiday so that we can learn about how the determination of ordinary people like us can change history. We demand the opportunity to celebrate who we are. We need to experience the pride of the contributions of the Latino and immigrant communities finally being recognized. We want the schools we attend—from the teachers on up to the school district superintendent and Board members—to show in action that they truly believe in our ability to succeed. Holding school-wide assemblies for the Chávez Holiday and closing schools to recognize the César Chávez Birthday Holiday is an easy way for the district to make that declaration. We want the César Chávez Holiday to be recognized in the same way that Presidents Day and Martin Luther King Day are recognized. This demand is not complicated or hard to meet. We can win it, if we fight.

Our generation needs a voice to speak for our own interests and aspirations. Our demands for progress need to be heard beyond the vote tallies in the presidential election—we need to be heard here and now. In this state. Everywhere. We need our own leaders, and we need to BE leaders ourselves. That is why BAMN exists. We are the leaders of our generation. Join BAMN and march for equality, dignity, and respect on the César Chávez Birthday Holiday!