



Cesar Chavez

March 31, 1927 - April 23, 1993

Died: San Luis, Arizona

Interment: National Chavez Center, Keene, California

Cesar Chavez died in his sleep in San Luis, Arizona, on April 23, 1993, in the house of a former union colleague, a day after testifying in a lettuce-grower's lawsuit. He was sixty-six. Born near Yuma on March 31, 1927, on a small family farm lost to taxes in the Depression, he followed the migrant circuit through California camps, left school after the eighth grade, served in the Navy, and learned organizing from Fred Ross and the Community Service Organization.

With Dolores Huerta he built the National Farm Workers Association, later the United Farm Workers, out of house meetings, a newspaper, and a willingness to fast. The Delano grape strike and the boycott that followed taught grocery aisles in the East what a short hoe and a pesticide drift felt like in the San Joaquin. He used nonviolence as discipline, not discipline, and he made enemies among growers, Teamsters, and, at times, his own staff. The 1968 fast, twenty-five days on water, was a public argument that a union could be a moral fact and not only a contract.

Yuma was the birthplace he returned to in the fall. Keene, in the Tehachapi foothills, was the union's headquarters at Nuestra Señora de La Paz. San Luis, a border town a few miles from the farm he had lost as a boy, was simply where the last night ended.

Tens of thousands walked the funeral route in Delano. He is buried at the National Chavez Center in Keene, California - not in Yuma, and not in San Luis.

Services

Died in San Luis, Arizona, on April 23, 1993. Funeral procession in Delano. Interment at the National Chavez Center, Keene, California.

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