

LAW & JUSTICE



A 1976 photograph shows César Chávez at work in the community garden at La Paz in Keene, Calif.

Exhibit Opens on Life and Work of César Chávez

Civil rights hero suffered cruelty of racism

"In His Own Words: The Life and Work of César Chávez," an exhibition of photographs and autobiographical reflections, has opened at The Hamersly Library at western Oregon University in Monmouth.

As a child, César Chávez experienced the freedom and joy of growing up on his family's farm in Yuma, Ariz. But the Depression brought hard times, and Chávez's family was forced from their land into a life of migrant work. Throughout his youth and young adulthood, Chávez experienced the pain and suffering of farm labor and the cruelty of racism.

It was during these difficult times that a seed of determination was planted. Influenced by the principles of his parents and his religion, the ideals of his mentors and the study of successful civil rights leaders, Chávez developed a clear and uncompromising vision for change.

Chávez went on to found the first farm workers union. He worked to secure better pay, improved job safety, better living conditions and many other essential rights and protections for laborers.

In turn, he became an inspiration to millions who continue the fight for justice and equality.

Featuring thirty-eight photographs paired with personal recollections, "In His Own Words" examines the ethics and experiences that drove Chávez to work tirelessly to improve the lives of American farm workers, recognizing this important 20th Century leader as a civil rights hero, an influential labor leader and a champion of change.

The exhibition will be available through March 21.

Dr. John C. Hammerback, emeritus faculty from the University of Washington, will present a guest lecture titled "To Enable Common People to do Uncommon Things: The Rhetorical Career of César Chávez" on Wednesday, Feb. 23 at 5:30 p.m. in room 211 of the Instructional Technology Center. A reception will immediately follow the lecture.

The exhibit is produced by Humanities Texas, the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. "In His Own Words" is made possible by a "We the People" grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and is funded, in part by the Polk County Cultural Coalition.

For information, contact Jerrie Lee Parpart, exhibit coordinator at 503-838-8419, parparj@wou.edu.

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