

PRESS RELEASE



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DeFrank Center Executive Director Aejaie Sellers Addresses the Fifth Annual César Chávez Commemorative Breakfast

Mexican Heritage Plaza
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"The love for justice that is in us is not only the best part of our being, but it is also the most true to our nature." – Cesar Chavez

The concepts of justice and human rights - fundamental tenets to the Constitution of the United States - have not always been given to every member of this great society we live in. And despite 230 years since the founding of the United States, they are still not concepts we have taken in theory and put into practice.

In this country, children in families earning less than \$35,000 a year have a mere 1-in-17 chance of completing college.

In this country, it is illegal in 49 states for couples of the same gender to have the rights, responsibilities, and benefits of the ordinary married couple.

In this country, 20,000 workers each year are illegally fired or discriminated against simply for attempting to form a union.

That's what makes Cesar Chavez's observation so important.

In the history of the people of the United States, there are many who exemplify Cesar Chavez's definition of the love for justice; whether it is the local school teacher who advocates for more resources for students in low-income areas; whether they are local or state elected officials who advance human rights bills so that all loving and committed unions between two consenting adults are recognized by the state; or whether it is the individual who stands up for the worker's right to organize and to have representation. Every one of these individuals has a fundamental belief in the concept of justice, and every one of these individuals works relentlessly to ensure that justice is achieved.

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What was truly remarkable about Cesar Chavez was that his vision of justice was not just an exclusive concept for one group of people; it was for everyone. As Christine Chavez, Cesar Chavez's granddaughter and the political director of the United Farm Workers, frequently notes, Cesar Chavez marched at gay rights rallies in the 1970's because, as Christine observes, "you can't champion equality for your own people when you tolerate discrimination against any people because of who they are."

Just as race, heritage, or culture should not dictate the human rights you are entitled to, nor should who you love - or what gender you are – disqualify you from gaining full equality.

Justice, as defined by Cesar Chavez, is not only the most true to human existence, but also the most essential. Human rights are simply non-negotiable. We all deserve the same freedoms, liberties, responsibilities and rights. Cesar Chavez would agree that it is time for this country to put these theories of justice into practice.

About The Billy DeFrank LGBT Community Center:

Founded in 1981, the Billy DeFrank LGBT Community Center addresses the needs and rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender people of all ages and backgrounds in Silicon Valley. The DeFrank Center provides a broad range of wellness, social and recreational activities, and emotional support services to approximately 400 visitors each week. The DeFrank Center is a 501(c)3, federally registered, tax-exempt organization, and receives over 21,000 contacts and requests for service a year (either in-person, via phone or on-line). To learn more, visit www.defrank.org.

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