

Solidarity - When I think of solidarity I draw on the lessons of our great civil rights leaders, Dr Martin Luther King Jr. and Cesar Estrada Chavez. When I think of solidarity, I think of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. I think of the march from Delano, CA to the steps of the state Capitol in Sacramento, CA (250 miles).

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Dr Martin Luther King and Cesar Chavez are icons in the American labor movement. We will forever be indebted to them for their acts of selflessness and courageous stand against injustices. Yet, they were not alone. It took individuals coming together, people like you and I, to protest against bus segregation. It took individuals like you and I to march to the steps of the state capitol in support of the grape boycott. It took the solidarity of the people to unite, fight and sacrifice for the greater good. Without solidarity, our Civil Rights Act may not be a reality today.

Certainly their merits were not without skepticism and criticism, which still exists today, not only in the labor movement, but in every aspect of society. It is important not to allow ourselves to be consumed with such negativity, but to focus on the greater good of our labor movement and on what can be done to strengthen our cause.

Now, allow me to take you to a place where tyranny ruled, where you and your family lived each day with fear and intimidation, living with the reality that your loved ones may not be there upon your return from work. After years of oppression along came an opportunity for you to join others to fight for freedom, would you fight knowing that the only certain out come is death or would you choose to live out your life under tyranny rule and the burden of what if?

Mexican revolutionist Emiliano Zapata Salazar once said *¡Prefiero morir de pie que vivir siempre arrodillado!* Translation: *I prefer to die standing than to live forever on my knees.*

We may not be fighting for our lives today but we are fighting for our livelihood. Your local union is taking a stand and fighting the company on force reductions, job consolidations, subcontracting of our work, outsourcing our jobs, aggression in the work place, oppressive working conditions, to name a few. Let there be no question, the fight is amongst us, the only question is will you join us in the fight or will you waiver this opportunity? I ask you to take this opportunity to join the fight. Become involved in your union and help make a difference, not only for ourselves but for future generations to come. As President Kennedy so eloquently put it "Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country."

In Solidarity,

Joseph Venegas –President CWA Local 9510