

“As brothers in the fight for equality, I extend the hand of fellowship and good will and wish continuing success to you and your members. The fight for equality must be fought on many fronts—in the urban slums, in the sweat shops of the factories and fields. Our separate struggles are really one—a struggle for freedom, for dignity and for humanity.” -Martin Luther King, Jr. to Cesar Chavez, 1966

Cesar Chavez and Martin Luther King, Jr. were *hermanos* in fighting against oppression and in *la causa*. They adopted nonviolence as a moral choice. Both men believed in the inherent worth of all human beings. Violence often perpetuates a vicious cycle of continued hatred and brutality. Nonviolence allowed both men to maintain their dignity, integrity, and moral righteousness of their causes.

Chavez and King also understood nonviolence to be a strategic choice. Nonviolent protests are more likely than violent demonstrations to garner sympathy and support from larger segments of society. Nonviolence frames the injustices of maintaining the unacceptable status quo. It can be a catalyst for action. Peaceful protest helps activists to maintain the moral high ground while placing pressure on those in power to make changes. For example, in 1968, Chavez went on a hunger strike and attended coordinated nightly Catholic masses. The hunger strike and masses attracted Protestant and Jewish religious leaders as allies. Robert Kennedy agreed to attend a mass after doctors encouraged Chavez to end the hunger strike for health reasons. National press coverage of the mass attended by Kennedy brought more attention to the working conditions of farm workers.

Peaceful protests can also be a uniting act of resistance. This unity helps to create a sense of solidarity. This strength was vital to the success of the civil rights movement. Chavez's nonviolent protests convinced businesses to boycott agricultural products from growers that engaged in unfair labor practices.

Peaceful resistance can also lead to change without extreme measures. Chavez was able to advocate for the right of union organizers to have access to agricultural fields and better working conditions. Dr. King's persistent nonviolent protests, boycotts, marches, and sit-ins to the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act.

The tactics and strategies used by Chavez and King have been adopted by other movements around the world. The Women's March Movement and various environmental causes have adopted nonviolent protests within the United States. Abroad, the Solidarity movement in Poland and the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa adopted nonviolent tactics used by Martin Luther King, Jr. and Cesar Chavez. Nonviolence is an important tool for challenging oppression and bringing about social justice.

Cesar Chavez and Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. both believed in nonviolent resistance to social injustices. Their ideology has allowed for long-lasting change. Their conscience, disciplined approach was a model and example during their time and for subsequent generations. They demonstrated change was possible through nonviolence. *Sí, se puede.* Cesar Chavez and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s legacies continue to inspire people around the world.