

## Statement on the Death of Helen Fabela Chavez

June 7, 2016

For 88 years, Helen Chavez was a force of quiet strength, but she left a legacy that will echo for generations. Alongside her husband Cesar she devoted her life to organizing farmworkers in California and across America, fighting for higher wages, better working conditions, and a brighter future—La Causa. She managed her union’s finances, prepared meals, marched in picket lines, and was even arrested for her actions, all because she believed in the dignity of America’s farmworkers: men and women she toiled with in the fields, even as she raised eight children and helped lead a movement.

I had the great privilege to meet Helen when I designated the home that she and Ce-

sar lived in for so long as the Cesar E. Chavez National Monument. Michelle and I send our condolences to her many children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, including her granddaughter Julie Chavez Rodriguez, a trusted member of our White House team. And we join them all in celebration of a life well lived, a life that proves those who love their country can change it. *Si se puede.*

NOTE: The statement referred to Sylvia Delgado, Eloise Carillo, Liz Villarino, Anna Ybarra, and Fernando, Paul, and Anthony Chavez, children of Ms. Chavez; and Deputy Director of Public Engagement Julie Chavez Rodriguez.

## Eulogy at the Funeral Service for Former Deputy White House Counsel Cassandra Q. Butts

June 7, 2016

*The President.* Good evening.

*Audience members.* Good evening.

*The President.* We are here to celebrate the life of our dear friend Cassandra, a warrior for social justice, a warm and generous servant who devoted her life to bettering the lives of others, and an unbelievable friend.

I first met Cassandra in a place that tends to stoke one’s passions for social and economic justice: the financial aid line at law school. [Laughter] We were just entering Harvard Law. We happened to be next to each other in line, I think it was in Pound Hall, and we were furiously filling out our financial aid forms. I have no doubt I was doing something wrong. She may have looked over my shoulder and said, “I think that’s wrong.” [Laughter] And we were inching forward each time the registrar shouted, “Next!” We introduced ourselves to each other, and we bonded over the fact that we were signing our lives away to Harvard, fully aware of how long it would take us to pay off that debt that we were about to accrue.

And then, we bonded over other things. We bonded over our love for jazz. We bonded over our fandom of Michael Jordan, because she was a Tar Heel and I was a Bull. We talked about our early beginnings in civic engagement, protesting apartheid, her at North Carolina and me at Occidental. And we talked about our interest in the law, why we were there: the notion that we might somehow take this knowledge that we were going to extract from this place and apply it to help those on society’s margins to improve their circumstances.

I made a lot of great friends at Harvard. Some of them are here today, like Judge Wilkins, who was older and cooler than I was at the time and still is. [Laughter] I don’t know about older, but maybe still cooler. But Cassandra I relied on. I relied on her for counsel and for encouragement. I have a confession to make: I still possess some albums of hers. [Laughter] I think there’s a Miles Davis album, a John Coltrane album. I’ve been listening to some of that music since she passed. In my defense, she kept one of my constitutional law