

LET FREEDOM RING

How Have Farm Workers Struggled for Economic Freedom?

UNIT SEVEN *World in Uncertain Times: 1950–Present*

Chapter III Decade of Change: 1960s

<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/socst/pub/sscore2.pdf> (p. 149)

These questions and documents can be used in conjunction with the New York State Education Department standard curriculum for grade 11 Social Studies: United States History and Government. Students will be able to discuss women's role in organizing farm labor and minority rights.

This lesson is appropriate for units on: labor movements, reform and minority rights. The lesson may require more than one class period.

AIM

Students will be able to:

- describe conditions faced by farm workers and their strategies to change those conditions
- explain how women were active in the farm workers movement
- explain the obstacles faced by the farm workers movement

VOCABULARY

migrant farm worker; boycott; National Labor Relations Act of 1935; collective bargaining; La Causa (the cause); Huelga (strike); United Farm Workers of America

ACTIVITIES

I. Opening activity

A. Instruct students to read the excerpt of the play “Flor Campesina” in “Forged Under the Sun,” by Maria Elena Lucas (Document Group A).

B. Have students answer the following questions:

1. How does the author portray the life of a farm worker?
2. Select several specific words or lines that you think best indicate the author's view of the life of farm workers. Why do you chose these specific lines?
3. What do you think was the purpose of the play? What in the play leads you to that conclusion?

C. Discuss student responses to the opening activity and the play.

1. Ask students why the character Rosamaria continued working as a farm worker. What social, political and economic factors kept her there?
2. How does Rosamaria change at the end of the play and why?

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II. Group activity

Divide students into small groups and inform them of their tasks.

Each group should have a reporter, recorder and materials handler. Each group will read and/or examine materials about the strategies used to address the problems faced by farm workers and/or the obstacles to their progress. Group members work together to complete the tasks on their handouts. The final task in each group's directions could be a group assignment developed in class or an individual assignment to complete as homework.

Group A: Maria Elena Lucas (text)

Group B: Dolores Huerta biographical information (text with visual product)

Group C: Statement of Dolores Huerta (text and visual with visual product)

Group D: Don't Buy Grapes flier (text with visual product)

Group E: El Mosquito Zumbador (text with visual or performance product)

Group F: Chavez Quote and Photographs (text and visuals with written product)

III. Share learning

Each group's reporter:

- briefly describes the materials used by the group
- explains the strategies and obstacles that farm workers faced
- reads and/or displays the group's product

IV. Discussion

What types of strategies and obstacles appeared repeatedly in group reports?

Why do you think that the farm workers faced such strong opposition?

Why do you think that the public gave so much support to the boycotts?

If you were a farm worker, which strategy would you personally have used to advocate for improved living and working conditions and why?

V. Assessment possibilities

A. Freedom can be defined in many different ways.

B. Design a memorial to the members of the farm workers movement. Write an explanation of the design (a description of its appearance and the reasons for it) and include any text that would appear.

C. Write a poem dedicated to members of the farm workers movement.

VI. Possible extension activities

A. Research the living and work conditions of farm workers today. Create a display or essay that compares the conditions to those prior to the emergence of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (U.F.W.O.C.).

B. Select a particular event in the farm workers' movement and locate documents and other materials that represent the point of view or official response of the growers, local law enforcement agencies or other government agencies. Write a comparison of the points of view on the event.

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VII. Additional resources:

Online resources: Go over timeline and overview of farm labor movement with students. Remind students that the United Farm Workers (U.F.W.) and Cesar Chavez were central to Rosamaria's transformation.

DISCOVERING HISTORY IN TODAY'S NEW YORK TIMES

1. Visit the Times Topics pages on Labor and Unionization at NYTimes.com. What seem to have been the top labor issues in the U.S. and around the world in the past 10 years? When you feel well-informed about labor issues, stage a class roundtable discussion in which students play the roles of key people involved in a recent labor dispute or in a fictional situation that you develop based on a real one. For example, students might play union organizers and leaders, company executives and workers. Try to resolve the issue at hand.
2. Use The New York Times to research influential labor leaders other than Cesar Chavez and Maria Elena Lucas, such as Crystal Lee Sutton, whose struggles in a textile factory in the 1970s were portrayed in the movie "Norma Rae." Choose one leader and write a page designed for inclusion in a textbook about his or her challenges and accomplishments.
3. What conditions do farm workers face today? What percentage of farm laborers are members of minority groups? Are the minority workers often discriminated against and/or mistreated? What is the government doing to protect farm workers? Read and clip coverage in The Times about farm workers. Then write an editorial about how far, if at all, farm workers have come from the days of Cesar Chavez.
4. What is a grassroots movement? How effective are grassroots movements? How do they gain momentum? Look for mentions of grassroots movements in The New York Times, and choose one to investigate more deeply. Then choose an issue that you care about and, using what you learned, develop an idea for your own grassroots effort. Swap ideas with your classmates and comment on each other's plans, with an eye to how to get attention and participants, and how to be effective.

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Group A: Maria Elena Lucas

Directions: Read the excerpts from the review of “Forged Under the Sun,” by Maria Elena Lucas. As you read, underline the words or phrases that describe Lucas or her work or that have the greatest impact on you. Use the review and your excerpts from the play “Flor Campesina” in “Forged Under the Sun” to answer the following questions.

- A. What similarities and differences do you see in the life of Maria Elena Lucas and the characters in the play?
- B. How does what you know about Lucas’ life affect your understanding or perception of the play?
- C. What do you think the title of the book, “Forged Under the Sun,” refers to? Do you think it might have more than one meaning? Discuss.
- D. What strategies did Lucas use to work for improved conditions for farm workers? What success did she have?
- E. What obstacles did Lucas face in her fight for farm workers?

Review the words and phrases that you underlined while reading the review. Select which you feel are most important to know about or understand Maria Elena Lucas and use them to write a found poem.

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Group A

Maria Elena Lucas

Forged Under the Sun/Forjado Bajo el Sol: The Life of Maria Elena Lucas.

Excerpts from a review by Barbara Kingsolver, from the *Women's Review of Books*, February 1, 1994

The Life Of Maria Elena Lucas is probably the most difficult one I have ever read about or imagined. She was born in 1941, the first of seventeen children in an impoverished family in Brownsville, Texas. She and her siblings scavenged streets and garbage cans for survival; her only other economic option there would have been prostitution. In summers her family made the dangerous trip north with other migrant farmworkers. They lived and worked in the fields, were harassed by farm owners and the police, and survived (or often, didn't survive) the stark hazards of impossibly hard work in degrading and unsanitary conditions. As an observant child, she bore constant witness to illness, starvation and death.

At the age of fifteen, bent on escaping her abusive father, Maria Elena married a man who turned out to be no less abusive and whose family treated her, literally, as a slave. After many years she managed a difficult escape and continued her life as a farm laborer and, now, a single mother. She raised her children in a society that threatened her for being female and humiliated her children for being poor and Latino – a pain that eventually cost one of her sons his life. In 1988 she was sprayed with agricultural chemicals that nearly killed her. She lost consciousness; over the next hours her heart stopped three times. She was completely disabled for months. Pain, loss of equilibrium, sporadic losses of visual and mental acuity and other unpredictable symptoms still haunt her. . .

Lucas began organizing her coworkers by bringing them together for plays, music and a children's Mexican dance troupe. In the late 1970s she discovered the United Farm Worker movement. In the 1980s she joined the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) in Onarga, Illinois, and worked with other women to mount a successful campaign against Campbell Soup. As a grassroots organizer, she reached thousands of workers with the message of hope for change through collective strength. Within the labor organizing community she still struggled with sexism, but she honed her skills and continued her work as an organizer even after she was poisoned. This meant remaining in the fields where further exposure to chemicals might kill her; she went anyway.

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Group A

Maria Elena Lucas

Excerpts from “Flor Campesina,” a play by Maria Elena Lucas

ACT I

NARRATOR: Miguel, Rosamaría, and their children live in a small hut on a vegetable ranch. The patrón charges them \$25 a week to use the sanitary facilities. He does not charge them rent for the hut.

They work in the fields, picking and cleaning many kinds of vegetables. Soon they will be picking tomatoes. After they have worked Monday through Friday from 6am to dusk, and Saturday from 6am to 5pm, the time finally comes for them to stop working. The patrón comes to pay them and says that they have made very good money, that they have earned \$150. He takes out the \$25 charge for the facilities, hands Miguel \$125 in cash, and leaves. Miguel then takes Rosamaría and the children to the supermarket of the town, where they buy \$70 worth of food and put \$30 worth of gas in their old car. When they return to their hut, Miguel kisses Rosamaría and tells her he'll be back soon . . .

ROSAMARÍA: What difference does it make if I leave this forsaken ranch today. What difference does it make if I grab my blankets and rags, because, after all, I own hardly nothing, and I go away from this forsaken ranch. I'm sick of this life, of the work and of the boss. Of living dead of hunger, but then, who forces me into this? Well, I really am a fool.

From the time I get up at the light of dawn, cross myself and commend myself to God, it's pull, pull, like a burro, without stopping. I work to get some money together to get out of this misery, and my crazy old man to go off and get drunk.

And then there's the boss, who gets after us and pushes us, driving us like animals with their horns close to the ground.

Cheapskate old boss, he knows very well that I don't make enough even to eat. He knows very well that I go around barefoot, but then, who forces me into this? Well, I really am a fool . . .

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ACT II

[Rosamaría, Miguel, their children and many farm worker friends work in the fields picking tomatoes in the Ranch of Vipers. Some of them chat and laugh, others are singing. In the distance one can hear the sound of an airplane. It comes closer and closer ... the plane flies over the field and the farm workers, spraying them with pesticides. Everyone complains and yells at the airplane.]

DON LUPITO: Damnit! They're spraying us with their grime!

GLORIA: Watch out, old dirtbag!

ROSAMARÍA: Hey, we're not worms!

LUCÍA: Hey, stop it! God, what barbarians!

MIGUEL: Cover your face with something! Cover your face!

[Finally the plane leaves. Everything is covered with pesticides: the tomato fields, the farm workers, the drinking water, their lunch, the ditch, everything. The farm workers rub their bodies with their hands to try to clean themselves a little, and then continue picking tomatoes.] . . .

PATRÓN: Hey, this isn't good, c'mon, move it! Not a lot of tomatoes, not a lot of money, understand? C'mon, move it!

[The boss, with an angry face, stays to watch them work. The women, serious and quiet, pick faster. After a while the boss leaves and Lucía rushes to Gloria.]

LUCÍA: Now, Gloria, because it's going to be time to eat and the men will arrive soon.

[The women make a wall of baskets and form a circle around Gloria to cover her in her time of necessity.]

WOMEN: A human act.

[Soon one begins to hear the men shouting that it's time to eat. Some run to the ditch to wash their hands, others break up tomatoes to wash their hands with the juice, then all of them gather at the edge of the field to eat, laughing, chatting and offering their lunch to each other.]

NARRATOR: And this is how, day after day, the beautiful harvest season is spent, and the many seasons of harvest, and many things happen . . . Miguel is consumed by drunkenness and wastes away, and Rosamaría is left all alone.

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ACT III

NARRATOR: Rosamaría continues living the only life she has known, dragging her burdens along the ruts in the fields, harvest after harvest, state after state; the summer harvest ends, and the winter arrives, lashing at her with cold, hunger, misery, gnawing away, like a hungry rat, her mind, her energy and her youth . . .

One day comes the last straw.

[. . . sign appears labeled, the National Labor Relations Act of 1935.]

ROSAMARÍA: (shouting) Noooo! No, it can't be possible, my God! I don't want to be a slave! Why, my sweet God? Why, answer me! Why have you abandoned me, if I've never offended you? Answer me! Whose God are you, then? Answer me!

[Rosamaría cries pitifully until her cries are silenced by a tender voice . . .]

THE VIRGIN: Rosamaría, Rosamaría, don't cry anymore, please, Rosamaría. Look, search for the man whom they call César Chávez.

You will find him where the sun sets and the beast falls, where a black eagle flies in my flag, in the fields where they sing "De Colores." There, reigning you shall find Justice, Peace, God and César Chávez. Fly, fly, black eagle, and when you return to these fields, "De Colores" you shall sing.

[By the time Rosamaría raises her head, The Virgin is gone.]

ROSAMARÍA: (shouting) Lucía! Chumba! Lola! Don Lupito! Gloria! Rosa! Trino! Chita! I'm going to look for César Chávez! We'll see each other when I come back as a Chavizta!

NARRATOR: And that is what happened . . .

ROSAMARÍA: My General César Chávez, my name is Rosamaría De Los Campos, alias La Chavizta, Mr. President. I represent the AFL-CIO United Farm Workers in this state. I second the motion to approve the resolutions made by our companion and dear brother, Rufino Contreras, because I believe in God, peace and justice for the farm workers' struggle. Thank you, Mr. President.

[And the great Moses of the farm workers movingly requests a general vote . . .]

CÉSAR CHÁVEZ: All those who are against us, let them fall on their knees and beg God to forgive them.

All those who are for us, let them sing "De Colores," and may God bless them, and long live the United Farm Workers!

END

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Group B: Dolores Huerta Biographical Information

Directions: Review the mentions of Dolores Huerta in the timeline and read the excerpts from the biographical articles on Huerta. As you read, underline the words or phrases that describe Huerta, her work or that have the greatest impact on you.

Answer the following questions:

A. What roles did Huerta play in working for improved conditions for farm workers?
What did she do (type of activities)?

B. What success did she have?

C. What obstacles did Huerta face in her fight for farm workers?

Review the words and phrases that you underlined while reading. Select which you feel are most important for understanding Dolores Huerta and write them in the white spaces on the “Viva Dolores” poster along with your comments and questions about her life and work. At the bottom of the poster, write a one-paragraph explanation of your choices.

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Group B

Dolores Huerta Biographical Information

Excerpts from

http://www.doloreshuerta.org/dolores_huerta_foundation.htm

Her [Dolores's] efforts paid off in 1961 when she succeeded in obtaining the removal of citizenship requirements from pension and public assistance programs for legal residents of the United States and California State disability insurance for farm workers.

She was also instrumental in passage of legislation allowing the right to vote in Spanish, and the right of individuals to take the drivers license examination in their native language. In 1962 she lobbied in Washington D.C. for an end to the “captive labor” Bracero Program. In 1963 she was instrumental in securing Aid for Dependent Families (“AFDC”), for the unemployed and underemployed . . .

In 1966, Dolores negotiated the first NFWA contract with the Schenley Wine Company. This was the first time in the history of the United States that a negotiating committee comprised of farm workers and a young Latina single mother of seven, negotiated a collective bargaining agreement with an agricultural corporation. The grape strike continued and the two organizations (“AWA” and “NFWA”) merged in 1967 to form the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (“U.F.W.O.C.”). As the main U.F.W.O.C. negotiator, Dolores successfully negotiated more contracts for farm workers, she also set up hiring halls, the farm workers ranch committees, administrated the contracts and conducted over one hundred grievance and arbitration procedures on behalf of the workers.

These contracts established the first medical and pension benefits for farm workers and safety plans in the history of agriculture. Dolores spoke out early against toxic pesticides that threaten farm workers, consumers, and the environment. The early U.F.W.O.C. agreements required growers to stop using such dangerous pesticides as DDT and Parathyon. Dolores organized field strikes, directed the grape, lettuce and Gallo Wine boycotts, and led the farm workers in campaigns for political candidates. As a legislative advocate, Dolores became one of the U.F.W.'s most visible spokespersons. Robert F. Kennedy acknowledged her, the farm workers, and Cesar's help in winning the 1968 California Democratic Presidential Primary moments before he was assassinated in Los Angeles.

Dolores directed the U.F.W.'s national grape boycott that resulted in the entire California table grape industry signing a three-year collective bargaining agreement with the United Farm Workers . . .

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Dolores directed the east coast boycott of grapes, lettuce, and Gallo wines . . .

In 1974 she was instrumental in securing unemployment benefits for farm workers. In 1985 Dolores lobbied against federal guest worker programs and spearheaded legislation granting amnesty for farm workers that had lived, worked, and paid taxes in the United States for many years but [were] unable to enjoy the privileges of citizenship. This resulted in the Immigration Act of 1985 in which 1,400,000 farm workers received amnesty.

Dolores worked with Cesar for over thirty years until his death in 1993. Together they founded the Robert Kennedy Medical Plan, the Juan De La Cruz Farm Workers Pension Fund, the Farm Workers Credit Union, the first medical and pension plans and credit union in history for farm workers. They also formed the National Farm Workers Service Center (visit www.NSWSC.org) which today provides affordable housing with over 3,700 rental and 600 single family dwelling units, and educational radio with over nine Spanish Speaking Radio Stations throughout California, Washington and Arizona.

In 2002 Dolores was the second recipient of the Puffin Foundation/Nation Institute Award for Creative Citizenship (visit www.nationinstitute.org) that included a \$100,000 grant which she utilized to establish her long time dream, the Dolores Huerta Foundation's Organizing Institute.

The Foundation's mission is to focus on community organizing and leadership training in low-income under-represented communities.

At age seventy-five (75), Dolores Huerta still works long hours serving as President of the Dolores Huerta Foundation leading the development of the organization and the Organizing Institute as well as the community organizing. It is not unusual to find her traveling regularly to cities across North America educating the public on public policy issues affecting immigrants, women, and youth. She speaks at colleges and organizations throughout the country in support of "La Causa".

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Group B

Dolores Huerta Biographical Information

“Viva Dolores!”

Image of U.F.W. organizer, Dolores Huerta, speaking into megaphone,
by Favianna Rodriguez Giannoni



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Group C: “Don’t Buy Grapes”

Directions: Read the flier and answer the following questions about it.

- A. Which company was targeted by a strike and why?

- B. What did the company do to deal with the strike?

- C. How did grape growers respond to the boycott of the company’s grapes?

- D. How did the union respond to the grape growers’ collective action?

- E. Who is the audience for the flier? What is its purpose?

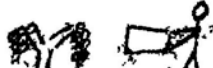
Make a visual timeline that illustrates the events described in the flier. You should include your answers to A, B, C and D. Your illustrations can be as simple as those on the flier itself, but should be original. Write a paragraph in your own words to serve as a caption for the timeline.

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Group C

"Don't Buy Grapes," 1969

You are making history.

 You live in the biggest agricultural State in the world's most productive nation.

Grapes are California's number one agricultural product. The Giumarra corporation is the largest producer of table grapes in the world. Yet the men, women, and children who work in the fields of this great corporation are denied what every American worker has the right to expect, a collective bargaining agreement with their employer. Without such an agreement, a man is at the mercy of big business. He is valued, like the soil is valued, as a producing unit; and he is stepped on like the soil is stepped on.



In 1967, Giumarra's workers demanded a collective bargaining agreement. When it was denied them, they left the fields in protest. The Giumarra Corporation then imported mere human producing units from other States and from across the border, some illegally.



When these new workers later learned about the strike, many joined, but others were so desperate as to sell out their brothers by becoming strikebreakers. Giumarra thus gradually rebuilt his work force.

When American consumers responded to the plight of the farm workers by refusing to buy Giumarra's grapes, California agribusiness began to close ranks. Other growers allowed Giumarra to confuse the public by lending him their labels. This forced the farm worker to take on the entire grape industry at once - like David against Goliath. And the cry went up to America and the world: "Don't Buy Grapes!"



--A few misinformed people have called the grape boycott illegal. It is not illegal.

A primary boycott is legal for any type of worker. A secondary boycott is legal for farm workers, since they are not covered by the national Labor Relations Act. For the past fourteen months American citizens have responded with the traditional spirit of justice by avoiding grapes like the plague.



In some parts of the country, major food-store chains have recognized the will of the American people by agreeing to handle no more grapes until the massive grape industry recognizes the rights of those whose labor provides our nation with food.

Why does Los Angeles lag behind? Why do the food-store chains in this city continue to stock grapes, even when consumers refuse to buy them?

The answer is simple. No large food-store chain in Los Angeles acts alone. The big chains continue to carry grapes, not because the people want them, but because the biggest and strongest chains control the rest. Big business in America is no longer interested in supplying what the American consumer wants. Big business is out to make the American consumer buy what big business has to sell.

Safeway is the largest food-store chain in the West. Please do not shop at Safeway until its management agrees to stop handling California table grapes, or until the giants of the table-grape industry agree to negotiate with the chosen representatives of their laborers.

PLEASE DON'T SHOP AT SAFEWAY.

Citizens' Don't Buy Grapes Committee
3016 1/2 East First Street
Los Angeles, California 90063
265-1053

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Group D: “El Mosquito Zumbador”

Directions: Read “El Mosquito Zumbador” (the Spanish or English version).

Answer the following questions:

- A. Why are the farm workers on strike?

- B. What has Di Giorgio done that is upsetting the workers?

- C. Review the timeline. What is the legal status of Di Giorgio’s actions at that time?
What law addresses such actions?

- D. What actions are the farm workers planning against Di Giorgio?

- E. Who is the audience for this flier? How do you know?

- F. Why does the flier attack Di Giorgio as un-Christian?

- G. According to the flier, why are the Teamsters an unacceptable choice for the farm workers?
What do you think is their relationship to Di Giorgio?

For presentation:

- A. Create a cartoon that satirizes Di Giorgio and his actions. Write a caption for it and a paragraph that explains the cartoon.

- B. Create a satirical skit about Di Giorgio and his actions that portrays the striking farm workers’ point of view.

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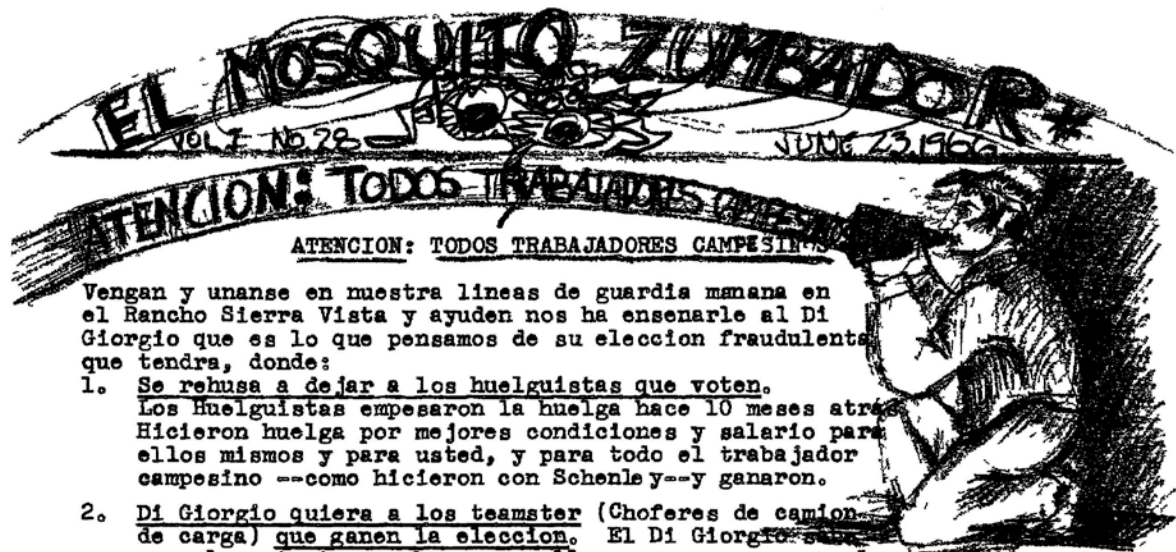
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Group D

VOCABULARY TO KNOW

picket line; Teamsters

El Mosquito Zumbador, 1966



ATENCIÓN: TODOS TRABAJADORES CAMPESINOS

Vengan y unanse en nuestra líneas de guardia mañana en el Rancho Sierra Vista y ayuden nos ha enseñarle al Di Giorgio que es lo que pensamos de su elección fraudulenta que tendra, donde:

1. Se rehusa a dejar a los huelguistas que voten.
Los Huelguistas empesaron la huelga hace 10 meses atrás. Hicieron huelga por mejores condiciones y salario para ellos mismos y para usted, y para todo el trabajador campesino --como hicieron con Schenley--y ganaron.
2. Di Giorgio quiera a los teamster (Choferes de camion de carga) que ganen la eleccion. El Di Giorgio sabe que el contrato que haga con ellos sera suave para el y muy duro para los trabajadores campesinos. El sabe que el contrato que haga con la NFWA sera para los trabajadores campesinos! Por eso es que tiene miedo que vote la NFWA.

ES ESTA UNA ELECCION LIBRE? No! Esta es una eleccion forzada como las que tienen y tenían en Russia y Alemania facista.

LE AYUDARA ESTO A LOS TRABAJADORES? No! vendera a los trabajadores a las manos de Di Giorgio y los Teamsters (Choferes de Camion de Carga)

ES ESTO UN ACTO CRISTIANO? No! Este es el acto mas immoral que cualquier patron ha perpetrado en contra sus trabajadores.

NEGESITAMOS SU AYUDA Vengan al Rancho Sierra Vista el Viernes por la mañana a las 6:00 y juntense con la línea de guardia y juntense con nosotros en oracion en el sepulcro de la Virgen De Guadalupe donde oraremos por las almas de Di Giorgio y los teamsters (Choferes de Camion de Carga) por este infamose acto que no es Cristiano.***

ATTENTION: ALL FARM-WORKERS!!!

Come and join our picket line tomorrow at Sierra Vista and help us show Di Giorgio what we think of the phony election he is holding at which:

1. He refuses to let the strikers vote.
These strikers started the strike 10 months ago. They struck for decent wages and conditions for themselves and you, and all farm-workers like they did at Schenleys--and WON!
2. Di Girogio wants the Teamsters to win the election.
He knows the contract he makes with them will be easy on him and hard on the workers. He knows the contract he is going to have to make with the NFWA will be for the workers! That is why he is afraid to let the NFWA vote.

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IS THIS A "FREE" ELECTION? No! It is a forced election like they had in Russia and Nazi Germany.

WILL THIS HELP THE WORKERS? No! It will sell the workers into the hands of Di Giorgio and the Teamsters.

IS THIS A CHRISTIAN ACT? No! This is the most Immoral act any employer has ever perpetrated against his workers.

SO, WE NEED YOUR HELP!!!

Come to Sierra Vista Friday morning at 6:00 A.M. and join our picket-line, and join with us in prayer at the Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe out there where we will pray for the souls of Di Giorgio and the Teamsters for this infamous, un-Christian act!!!

Viva la Huelga!



NFWA
P.O. BOX 130-102 Albany St.
Delano, California
Ph. 725-8661

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Group E: Statement by Cesar Chavez

Directions: Read the statement by Cesar Chavez regarding obstacles faced by the strikers and protestors.

Answer the following questions:

A. How did Chavez view the United States government's position in terms of the growers during strikes?

B. How do you think the government may have justified its actions?

C. How did strikes become violent?

D. What in the statement supports Chavez's statement that "unchecked raw power" was being used against strikers and protestors?

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Group E

Chavez Statement

**Excerpts from Hearings before the Committee on Labor and Human Resources,
U.S. Senate, 96th Congress, 1st Session, 1997**

For so many years we have been involved in agricultural strikes; organizing almost 30 years as a worker, as an organizer, and as president of the union — and for all these almost 30 years it is apparent that when the farm workers strike and their strike is successful, the employers go to Mexico and have unlimited, unrestricted use of illegal alien strikebreakers to break the strike. And, for over 30 years, the Immigration and Naturalization Service has looked the other way and assisted in the strikebreaking...

We have observed all these years the Immigration Service has a policy as it has been related to us, that they will not take sides in any agricultural labor dispute... They have not taken sides means permitting the growers to have unrestricted use of illegal aliens as strikebreakers, and if that isn't taking sides, I don't know what taking sides means...

The growers have armed their foremen. They have looked to professional agencies to provide them unlimited numbers of armed guards recruited from the streets, young men who are not trained, many of them members of the Ku Klux Klan and the Nazi Party...who are given a gun and a club and a badge and a canister of tear gas and the authority and permission to go and beat our people up, frighten them, maim them, and try to break the strike by using this unchecked raw power against our people...

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Brief Overview and Timeline of the Farm Labor Movement

Attempts at organizing farm labor in the early 20th century had very limited success. There was no legal protection to keep employers from firing employees who joined a union or to require them to recognize unions and allow employees to bargain collectively. While all workers found it difficult to unionize, farm workers faced additional obstacles.

“Farm laborers suffered from high rates of illiteracy and poverty (average family earnings were just \$2,000 in 1965), they also experienced persistently high rates of unemployment (traditionally around 19 percent) and were divided into a variety of ethnic groups: Mexican, Arab, Filipino, and Puerto Rican. That farm workers rarely remained in one locality for very long also hindered unionism, as did the ease with which employers could replace them with inexpensive Mexican day laborers, known as braceros, who were trucked into California and the Southwest at harvest time. Farm workers were specifically excluded from the protection of the National Labor Relations Act of 1935. Unlike other American workers, farm workers were not guaranteed the right to organize, had no guarantee of a minimum wage and had no federally guaranteed standards of work in the fields. State laws requiring toilets, rest periods and drinking water in the fields were largely ignored.”

“Cesar Chavez,” Hearings Before the Committee on Labor and Human Resources, U.S. Senate, 96th Congress, 1st Session, 1997

- 1903 Sugar beet strike in Oxnard, California, by the Japanese Mexican Labor Association.
- 1913 Wheatland, California, strike by the Industrial Workers of the World.
- 1935 The National Labor Relations Act excluded farm workers from the right given to other workers to join unions and engage in collective bargaining.
- 1941 The United States and Mexican governments began the Bracero program to supply needed farm labor during World War II.
- 1955 The Community Service Organization was begun to assist Mexican Americans in California. Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez met while working for it.
- 1960 Dolores Huerta founded the Agricultural Workers Association (A.W.A.) while working for C.S.O.
- 1962 Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta resigned their C.S.O. positions after the organization denied Cesar’s proposal to organize farm workers.
Chavez, Huerta and others organized farm workers into the National Farmworkers Association (N.F.W.A.)
- 1964 The Bracero program ended.
- 1965 In September, the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (A.W.O.C.), composed primarily of Filipino farm workers, went on strike against the Delano, California, table grape growers. The N.F.W.A. joined the strike. The farm workers movement became known as La Causa (the Cause).
Chavez led a 250-mile march from Delano to Sacramento to draw attention to the problems faced by migrant farm workers.
Huerta successfully negotiated the first N.F.W.A. contract with Schenley Wine Company.

LESSON VII

LET FREEDOM RING

- 1967 N.F.W.A. and A.W.O.C. joined together to become the United Farmworkers Organizing Committee (U.F.W.O.C.).
Chavez fasted almost a month to model nonviolent protest and draw attention to La Causa. The U.F.W.O.C. began a nationwide boycott of all table grapes when growers targeted by a strike started using the labels of other grape growers. More than 14 million Americans honored the boycott.
- 1968 The U.F.W.O.C. endorsed Robert Kennedy as candidate for president, helping him win the California Democratic primary election and demonstrating the national importance of the Union.
- 1969 The Delano growers signed contracts with the U.F.W.O.C.
- 1970 The U.F.W.O.C. launched a strike and lettuce boycott in response to the Teamsters Union (reputed as corrupt and working against worker rights) being invited by Salinas lettuce and vegetable growers to represent their workers, in order to prevent the U.F.W.O.C. from organizing them.
- 1972 The U.F.W.O.C. became the United Farmworkers Union (U.F.W.) after acceptance as a full member of the A.F.L.-C.I.O.
- 1973 The U.F.W. struck when grape growers signed what it believed were sweetheart contracts with the Teamsters Union. Two farmworkers were killed in the violence that accompanied confrontations between strikers, their supporters and persons brought in by the Teamsters.
- 1975 The California Agricultural Labor Relations Act gave farmworkers the right to secret ballot in elections selecting a union and required growers to recognize and bargain with unions so elected.
- 1980s U.F.W. membership declined.
- 1993 Cesar Chavez dies in Yuma, Arizona. His funeral in Delano, CA, is attended by 40,000 people. Arturo Rodriguez is named new U.F.W. president.
- 1994 Cesar Chavez is awarded a posthumous Medal of Honor by President Clinton.
- 1994 U.F.W. wins new contracts representing workers in rose, mushroom, strawberry, wine to
2004 grape, lettuce and vegetable workers in California, Florida and Washington state.
- 2000 California establishes a state holiday in honor of Cesar Chavez.
- 2003 Cesar E. Chavez commemorative stamp is issued by the United States Postal Service.

Sources:

“Cesar Chavez,” Digital History

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/mexican_voices/voices_display.cfm?id=110

The Fight in The Fields: Cesar Chavez and The Farmworkers’ Struggle

<http://www.pbs.org/itvs/fightfields/cesarchavez1.html>

“Dolores Huerta Biography,” The Dolores Huerta Foundation

http://www.doloreshuerta.org/dolores_huerta_foundation.htm

NOTE: A much more detailed timeline focusing on Cesar Chavez and the larger Labor and Civil Rights movements is available at www.pbs.org/itvs.fightfields/timeline.html