

Cesar Chavez Curriculum Guide

Day of Service and Learning

Chicago Public Schools is excited to join with the Lieutenant Governor's Office of the State of Illinois to honor the life and legacy of Cesar Chavez through service-learning opportunities for high school students. We are proud to join efforts with our schools, local community organizations, and the Cesar Chavez Foundation to provide resources for our teachers and opportunities for our students to serve their communities in meaningful ways.

The Cesar Chavez Curriculum Guide is designed to prepare your students to explore the life and legacy of Cesar Chavez and the Chicano Civil Rights Movement. The guide contains 5 lesson plans for use in the classroom. We hope that teachers will find these lesson plans useful to provide insights for your students into Cesar Chavez and his work. The guide also contains ideas for service projects and a list of community organizations that are prepared to work with schools on the Chavez Day of Service and Learning.

The Service Learning Initiative of Chicago Public Schools will provide support and resources to you, beyond this curriculum, to help you link with an appropriate organization to complete your service project. Your project can take place anytime leading up to March 31, 2005, but we encourage schools to focus efforts during the week of March 31 to coincide with Chavez' birthday recognition events. Please contact us at 773/553-3425 or at jjschmidt@cps.k12.il.us.

At the conclusion of the project, please engage your students in reflection activities that will help them draw meaning from the complete experience and help you assess their work. A reflection might be any one of the following:

- ❖ Classroom small or large group discussion
- ❖ Journaling/Reflection Essay
- ❖ Video or Photo Journaling
- ❖ Test
- ❖ Presentation at a community organization or within the school

Thank you for participating in the Cesar Chavez Day of Service and Learning.

Session 1: Introduction to Cesar Chavez and the Farmworker's Movement

Goal: To understand the context that gives rise to the work of Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers.

Readings: *We're Human Beings, Not Dogs*
Grapes of Wrath excerpts
Chicano Civil Rights Movement Chronology
Cesar Chavez biography
Fight in the Fields excerpts

Activity: Small group reading and presentation
Leadership characteristics
Review of Chavez biography

State Goal: 16.A.4a: Analyze and report historical events to determine cause-and-effect relationships.
16.C.4c: Describe how American economic institutions were shaped by industrialists, union leaders, and groups including Southern migrants, Dust Bowl refugees, agricultural workers from Mexico and female workers since 1914.

Activity: The Context of Cesar Chavez and the Chicano Civil Rights Movement

In many ways, Cesar Chavez is to Mexican Americans what Martin Luther King, Jr. is to African Americans. Both emerge in a context of dramatic discrimination against Mexican Americans and African Americans. To introduce students to the life and work of Cesar Chavez, we first need to understand his context. Today's readings are included to help students understand the context in which Cesar Chavez emerges as one of America's most powerful grassroots leaders. Chavez was able to organize farm workers, a group of men and women who most experienced organizers felt could not be organized.

1. Divide your class into three groups. If necessary, sub-divide these groups in order to achieve groups of not more than four. Assign each small group one of the readings included in this curriculum package: Chicano Civil Rights Movement Chronology; *We're Human Beings, Not Dogs*; and a reading from Grapes of Wrath.
2. Each group should spend 10-15 minutes reading their selections and then develop a presentation for the rest of the class that helps the entire classroom understand the context for the work of Cesar Chavez.
3. Each group should address the following questions in its presentation:

❖ Describe the conditions faced by farm workers at the time of Cesar Chavez.

- ❖ Are there any historical events that you can point to that helped create these conditions?
 - ❖ How did people react to the injustices that they faced?
 - ❖ Discuss power as it is presented in the reading. Who has it? What form does it take?
4. Organizing people, as Cesar Chavez did, is about power. It is about giving people a sense of their own power to change an injustice. Ask students to come up with a list of qualities and characteristics that would be necessary to organize a group of people who have suffered grave injustices. Post these qualities on the board. Which qualities are absolutely essential?
 5. Now provide students with copies of the Cesar Chavez biography and/or the selection from Fight in the Fields, and review it with them. Discuss how the social political context gives rise to the leadership of Cesar Chavez.

We're Human Beings, Not Dogs

By Victor Villasenor

During the Great Depression, and for decades afterward, drinking water was a scarce commodity in the fields. That's what the parents of Mexican-American writer Victor Villasenor found out in the 1930s, when they worked as young migrants in California. In this excerpt from his epic work Rain of Gold, Villasenor writes about his parents, Salvador and Lupe, who meet during a showdown over drinking water with an abusive foreman.

The fields of cutting-flowers were in bloom as far as the eye could see: rows of pink, red, yellow and blue. Coming down between the rows, Lupe saw that her father was sweating profusely. It was only eleven in the morning, but already the sun had drained Don Victor and he needed water.

Quickly, Lupe took his arm and started to the truck. But, approaching the truck at the end of the field, Lupe saw the foreman sitting inside the cab. She stopped; they weren't supposed to come for water until noon, but Don Victor was coughing so badly that Lupe didn't care what the foreman might say.

Her father was ice-cold by the time Lupe got him to the vehicle. On the back of the truck was a barrel of water and hanging on hooks was a row of tin cans with wire handles twisted around them. Lupe sat her father down in the shade of the truck and reached for one of the cans.

"Hey, you!" said that big, heavy-set foreman, getting out of the cab with the comic book he'd been reading. "It ain't noon. You get your asses back out there."

"But my father," said Lupe, "he needs water."

"Water, hell!" said the Anglo. He was a huge, fat man, six-feet-four and well over two hundred and fifty pounds. "He looks more like an old wino to me," he said.

Lupe turned red with anger, but she refused to be intimidated. She took one of the tin cans, holding her head high with dignity.

"Eh, girlie, I thought I told you no water 'til noon," he said.

But Lupe ignored him, filling the can with water and handing it to her father, who was now panting dangerously fast, like a tongue-swollen dog.

"Hey, stop that!" yelled the huge man, rushing up and knocking the can out of Don Victor's hand. "You're fired!" he yelled at the old man. "And you," he said to Lupe, "get back to work or I'll fire you, too."

But Lupe didn't move. Her father was gasping. He could die if she didn't get him cooled down. "We're not dogs," she said, holding back her tears. "We've been working hard since before five! You have no right to abuse us like that."

"No right? Yelled the big Anglo. "Well, you got another thing coming, moo-cha-cha-girl!"

And just then, as the big, red-faced Anglo began shouting insults at Lupe, he was grabbed by a blur of motion, spun about and hit in the stomach with such power that his feet came off the ground.

"No!" yelled Lupe.

But it was too late. It was Juan Salvador, dressed in dirty work clothes, who hit the foreman two more times in the face with his huge, iron-driving fists. The big, soft-bellied Anglo went crashing into the side of the truck.

Still moving, still feeling his whole heart pounding with rage, Juan reached down and got the can that the Anglo knocked away from Lupe's father, rinsed it off, filled it with water and handed it to Lupe.

"Here," he said, smiling, "for your father.

"Thank you," she said, "but you didn't have to hit him so hard."

"What?" said Salvador.

"So hard," said Lupe. Her heart was pounding. Oh, how she hated violence. She turned back around to help her father drink the water down.

Salvador stood there, adrenaline pumping wildly, feeling confused, not understanding why Lupe hadn't enjoyed how he'd hit the foreman, especially after how he'd treated them.

He watched Lupe help her father drink. Other people came off the field to drink water, too. They congratulated Salvador, telling him that this big Anglo was one of the most abusive foremen that they'd ever had. Several young women started flirting with Salvador. But then they heard the roar of the boss's truck come rushing up the field and the workers tossed their cans and started back into the fields.

"Hold your ground!" yelled Salvador. "You've done nothing wrong! Drinking water is your right! Don't move! We're human beings! Not dogs! Damn it...!"

Excerpts from The Grapes of Wrath

by John Steinbeck

Once California belonged to Mexico and its land to Mexicans; and a horde of tattered feverish Americans poured in. And such was their hunger for land that they took the land—stole Sutter's land, Guerrero's land, took the grants and broke them up and growled and quarreled over them, those frantic hungry men; and they guarded with guns the land they had stolen. They put up houses and barns, they turned the earth and planted crops. And these things were possession, and possession was ownership.

The Mexicans were weak and fed. They could not resist, because they wanted nothing in the world as frantically as Americans wanted land.

Then, with time, the squatters were no longer squatters, but owners; and their children grew up and had children on the land. And the hunger was gone from them, the feral hunger, the gnawing, tearing hunger for land, for water and earth and the good sky over it, for the green thrusting grass, for the swelling roots.

They had these things so completely that they did not know about them any more. They had no more a stomach-tearing lust for a rich acre and a shining blade to plow it, for seed and a windmill beating its wings in the air. They arose in the dark no more to hear the sleepy birds first chattering, and the morning wind around the house while they waited for the first lift to go out to the dear acres. These things were lost, and crops were reckoned in dollars, and land was valued by principal plus interest, and crops were bought and sold before they were planted. Then crop failure, drought, and flood were no longer little deaths within life, but simple losses of money. And all their love was thinned with money, and all their fierceness dribbled away in interest until they were no longer farmers at all, but little shopkeepers of crops, little manufacturers who must sell before they can make. Then those farmers who were not good shopkeepers lost their land to good shopkeepers. No matter how clever, how loving a man might be with the earth and growing things, he could not survive if he were not a good shopkeeper. And as time went on, the businessmen had the farms, and the farms grew larger, but there were fewer of them.

Now farming became industry, and the owners followed Rome, although they did not know it. They imported slaves, although they did not call them slaves: Chinese, Japanese, Mexicans, Filipinos. They live on rice and beans, the businessmen said. They don't need much. They wouldn't know what to do with good wages. Why, look how they live. Why, look what they eat. And if they get funny—deport them.

And all the time the farms grew larger and the owners fewer. And there were pitiful few farmers on the land any more. And the imported serfs were beaten and frightened and starved until some went home again, and some grew fierce and were killed or driven from the country. And the farms grew larger and the owners fewer.

And the crops changed. Fruit trees took the place of grain fields, and vegetables to feed the world spread out on the bottoms: lettuce, cauliflower, artichokes, potatoes—stoop crops. A man may stand to use a scythe, a plow a pitchfork; but he must crawl like a bug between the rows of lettuce, he must bend his back and pull his long bag between the cotton rows, he must go on he knees like a penitent across a cauliflower patch.

And it came about that the owners no longer worked on their farms. They farmed on paper; and they forgot the land, the smell, the feel of it, and remembered only that they owned it, remembered only what they gained and lost by it. And some of the farms grew so large that one man could not even conceive of them any more, so large that it took batteries of bookkeepers to keep track of interest and gain and loss; chemists to test the soil, to replenish; straw bosses to see that the stooping men were moving along the rows as swiftly as the material of their bodies could stand. Then such a farmer really became a storekeeper, and kept a store. He paid the men, and sold them food, and took the money back. And after a while he did not pay the men at all, and saved bookkeeping. These farms gave food on credit. A man might work and feed himself; and when the work was done, he might find that he owed money to the company. And the owners not only did not work the farms any more, many of them had never seen the farms they owned.

And then the dispossessed were drawn west—from Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico; from Nevada and Arkansas families, tribes, dusted out, tractored out. Carloads, caravans, homeless and hungry; twenty thousand and fifty thousand and a hundred thousand and two hundred thousand. They steamed over the mountains, hungry and restless—restless as ants, scurrying to find work to do—to lift, to push, to pull, to pick, to cut—anything, any burden to bear, for food. They kids are hungry. We got no place to live. Like ants scurrying for work, for food, and most of all for land.

We ain't foreign. Seven generations back Americans, and beyond that Irish, Scotch, English, German. One of our folks was in the Revolution, an' they was lots of our folks in the Civil War—both sides. Americans.

They were hungry, and they were fierce. And they had hoped to find a home, and they found only hatred. Okies—the owners hated them because the owners knew they were soft and the Okies strong, that they were fed and the Okies hungry; and perhaps the owners had heard from their grandfathers how easy it is to steal land from a soft man if you are fierce and hungry and armed. The owners hated them. And in the towns, the storekeepers hated them because they had no money to spend. There is no shorter path to a storekeeper's contempt, and all his admirations are exactly opposite. The town men, little bankers, hated Okies because there was nothing to gain from them. They had nothing. And the laboring people hated Okies because a hungry man must work, and if he must work, if he has to work, the wage payer automatically gives him less for his work; and then no one can get more.

And the dispossessed, the migrants, flowed into California, two hundred and fifty thousand, and three hundred thousand. Behind them new tractors were going on the land and the tenants were being forced off. And new waves were on the way, new waves of the dispossessed and the homeless, hardened, intent, and dangerous.

And while the Californians wanted many things, accumulation, social success, amusement, luxury, and a curious banking security, the new barbarians wanted only two things—land and food; and to them the two were one. And whereas the wants of the Californians were nebulous and undefined, the wants of the Okies were beside the roads, lying there to be seen and coveted: the good fields, earth to crumble experimentally in the hand, grass to smell, oaten stalks to chew until the sharp sweetness was in the throat. A man might look at a fallow field and know, and see in his mind that his own bending back and his own straining arms would bring the cabbages into the light, and the golden eating corn, the turnips and carrots.

And a homeless hungry man, driving the roads with his wife beside him and his thin children in the back seat, could look at the fallow fields which might produce food but not profit, and that man could know how a fallow field is a sin and the unused land a crime against the thin children. And such a man drove along the roads and knew the temptation at every field, and knew how lust to take these fields and make them grow strength for his children and a little comfort for his wife. The temptation was before him always. The fields goaded him, and the company ditches with good water flowing were a goad to him.

And in the south he saw the golden oranges hanging on the trees, the little golden oranges on the dark green trees; and guards with shotguns patrolling the lines so a man might not pick an orange for a thin child, oranges to be dumped if the price was low.

He drove his old car into a town. He scoured the farms for work. Where can we sleep tonight?

Well, there's Hooverville on the edge of the river. There's a whole raft of Okies there.

He drove his old car to Hooverville. He never asked again, for there was a Hooverville on the edge of every town.

The rag town lay close to the water; and the houses were tents, and weed-thatched enclosures, paper houses, a great junk pile. The man drove his family in and became a citizen of Hooverville—always they were called Hooverville. The men put up his own tent as a near to water as he could get; or if he had no

tent, he built a house of corrugated paper. And when the rains came the house melted and washed away. He settled in Hooverville and he scoured the countryside for work, and the little money he had went for gasoline to look for work. In the evening them men gathered and talked together. Squatting on their hams the talked of the land they had seen.

There's thirty thousan' acres, out west of here. Layin' there. Jesus, what I could do with that, with five acres of that! Why, hell, I'd have ever'thing to eat.

Notice one thing? They ain't not vegetables nor chickens nor pigs at the farms. They raise one thing—cotton, say, or peaches, or lettuce. 'Nother place'll be all chickens. They buy the stuff they could raise in the dooryard.

Jesus, what I could do with a couple pigs!
Well, it ain't yourn, an' it ain't gonna be yourn.
What we gonna do? The kids can't grow up this way.

In the caps the word would come whispering, There's work at Shafter. And the cars would be loaded in the night, the highways crowded—a gold rush for work. At Shafter the people would pile up, five times too many to do the work. A gold rush for work. They stole away in the night, frantic for work. And along the roads lay the temptations, the fields that could bear food. That's owned. That ain't our'n.

Chicano Civil Rights Movement Timeline

- 1836 The Republic of Texas gains its independence from Mexico.
- 1845 Texas is officially annexed to the United States.
- 1848 United States invades Mexico under the banner of Manifest Destiny.
- 1848 The Treaty of Guadalupe ends the Mexican War and gives half the land area of Mexico to the United States including Texas, California, Arizona, New Mexico and parts of Colorado, Utah and Nevada.
The gold rush lures a flood of Anglo settlers to California, which becomes a state in 1850.
- 1880 Mexican immigration to the USA is stimulated by the advent of the railroad.
- 1910 The Mexican Revolution begins with hundreds of thousands of people fleeing north from Mexico and settling in the Southwest.
- 1917 An immigration act is passed by Congress making literacy a condition of entry into the United States. During World War I, “temporary” Mexican farm workers and other laborers are given a waiver to the immigration law so that they can enter the U.S. to work.
- 1925 The Border Patrol is created by Congress.
- 1929 The League of United Latin American Citizens is founded in Texas by frustrated Mexican Americans who find avenues for opportunity in the United States blocked.
- 1933 Mexican farm workers strike in California supported by groups of independent union organizers and radicals.
- 1938 Young Mexican and Mexican American pecan shellers strike in Texas.
- 1943 Prompted by a labor shortage of World War II, the US government makes an agreement with Mexico to supply temporary workers, known as *braceros*, for American agricultural work.
- 1950’s Immigration from Mexico doubles from 5.9% to 11.9% of total US immigrants.
- 1954 In *Hernandez v. Texas*, the Supreme Court recognizes that Hispanics are a separate class of people suffering profound discrimination.
- 1954-58 *Operation Wetback* deports 3.8 million persons of Mexican descent.
- 1965 The National Farm Workers Association meets in a Delano church and vote to join the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee strike.
Chavez’ National Farm Workers Association begins its grape boycott.

- 1966 Rodolfo Acuna starts teaching the first Mexican American history class in Los Angeles.
Cesar Chavez leads a march from Delano to Sacramento, CA, taking 25 days and arriving on Easter Sunday.
The United Farm Workers wins a contract with a major grape grower.
- 1967 The Mexican American Youth Organization is formed on college campuses in Texas.
David Sanchez forms the *Brown Berets* to begin a series of pickets in front of police stations.
- 1968 Cesar Chavez begins a 25-day fast near Delano, stating that he is fasting in penitence for farm workers' moral problems and talk of violence.
Denver Chicanos begin a boycott of Coors Brewery for discriminatory hiring.
Students protest educational and military draft policies and walk out of schools in California and Texas.
- 1974 The Southwest Voter Registration Education Project is established.
Raul Castro becomes the first Chicano governor of Arizona.
- 1975 The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is extended to Hispanic Americans

Source: Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement

The Fight in the Fields: Chapter 3 - Delano

Building a farmworker's union in California

Cesar Chavez and his family drove into Delano in early April of 1962, just as the sun was beginning to warm the great flat plain of the San Joaquin Valley, ripening its crops and turning its fields of grass into pungent golden pastures. The weeks ahead would be a lousy time for Chavez; he deeply missed working with his friends in the CSO. He was also worried that he had no sure means of supporting his family. “For the first time, I was frightened—I was very frightened,” he said later.

The family rented the cheapest house they could find...near downtown Delano, for fifty dollars a month. Within days, Cesar was back in the simple work clothes he preferred over suits and ties, and he was out quietly talking to local people about a new project: the National Farm Workers Association, a grassroots group that would build strength slowly, almost one worker at a time. Rather than a traditional union, he envisioned a social movement—a crusade he later called “*el movimiento*”—that would inspire farmworkers, the poorest of America’s Laborers, to organize themselves and change their lives.

Cesar and Helen, along with Dolores Huerta, who had agreed to help the Chavez’s, made a calculated decision to avoid calling their association a union at first. They knew the word provoked one single image in the minds of growers and workers: a strike. And strikes, while sometimes leading to quick pay increases and a fleeting sense of power, often led to firings, black listings, and violence. Another group that had recently started organizing farm laborers was the AFL-CIO-sponsored Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC), which had led dozens of strikes in Imperial Valley and in other areas outside Delano. Sometimes striking workers were given a quick boost in wages, but none of the strikes resulted in contracts or better conditions or tipped the balance of power with the growers. AWOC’s mostly white leadership had little success organizing Mexican workers, and Chavez believed he knew a better way.

Chavez knew that farmworkers were hungry for change—he came from the fields—but he also knew that even some of the toughest were afraid or discouraged by past failure. One old Chicano farmworker, remembering the strikes that ended in spilled blood, warned Chavez: “They come and they go, good organizers and would-be organizers. But one thing they have in common is that all of them have failed and all will fail.”

In 1962, the San Joaquin workforce was a mix of Latinos, aging dust bowl Okies, Filipino immigrants who had arrived as far back as 1920’s, and American blacks. Mexicans and Chicanos were already beginning to predominate in the fields, however, and growers were still bringing in the *braceros* when authorized to do so. Cesar tried to bridge divisions that kept ethnic groups apart and competing with each other for jobs, but it wasn’t easy. Even the Mexicans were a tough sell, although they were more likely to listen.

Chavez thought if his association were to succeed, it would take many years to build a solid membership throughout the valley before it could take on California’s growers, whose generous campaign contributions had bought the support of legislators from Delano to Washington, D.C. This new movement would have to be stealthy, even clandestine. It would meet in homes, not in union halls, and be a “marvelous secret” as Fred Ross put it. One of the workers’ advantages was that they could communicate in a code the growers didn’t understand—Spanish.

“Everyone but everyone wants to know if this means ‘strikes’ and I have been saying—no strikes, unless we know we’ll win,” Chavez wrote Ross on May 10. The workers’ most bitter complaints were about the labor contractors, who worked closely with the growers. In the first house meetings, over beer or *pan dulce*—Mexican “sweet bread”—they freely vented their loathing for the contractors, who bussed them to fields for a price, took a slice of their wages, and often charged them water to drink. The early meetings gave Chavez a boost because the workers seemed so bold and clearly identified what their problems were. In a postscript to one of his first letters to Ross, Chavez added that he was “a heck of a lot more confident now than a week ago.”

There were other basic reasons why farmworkers would respond to overtures for change. The state of California had already documented the inadequacy of farm wages. In a 1960 survey of one hundred field laborers' households in Fresno County, a quarter of the families had no place to refrigerate food. Another 25 percent had to use privies instead of flush toilets, and fewer than half had a water tap in their homes. Many lacked access to the preventive medicine that most Americans took for granted: More than half of the farmworkers' children under eighteen had not been immunized against polio.

To reach people in homes as dismal as these, Chavez drew a map of the valley, and pinpointed eighty-six towns and farm-labor camps between Stockton, to the north, and Arvin, to the south. The plan was to distribute tens of thousands of mimeographed registration cards that asked for a name, address, and answers to a few simple questions: How much do you think you should be paid? What do you think about having no guarantee to Social Security, unemployment, or minimum wage? Once the cards rolled in, Cesar and other volunteers would quickly fan out to form committees in as many towns as possible.

Julio Hernandez, a Mexican field worker married to a Chicana from Yuma, remembers doing his best to avoid Cesar. Their encounter was almost an exact replica of Ross's first attempt to meet a reluctant, suspicious Chavez, but Cesar, too, had learned the art of persistence. "[Cesar] came to the house in Corcoran, and he was talking to my wife and other people who had come into the house that night. I was out playing pool," recalls Hernandez, then a cotton-field supervisor and a CSO volunteer.

"I was a pretty good pool player, almost a professional, and I had played to support myself in Mexicali," Hernandez, now in his seventies, recalls. "I was told that Chavez was at my house waiting for me to talk about a union, but I was not interested because we [unionists] had been blackballed earlier. We had worked with an organizer in 1951, and he just up and left us, stranding us in the fields as we were getting ready for a strike." Soon employers would no longer hire Hernandez, and his family moved to Oregon in search of jobs. When he returned to California six years later, "I swore I wouldn't get involved again with a union."

So the day Cesar came to visit, Hernandez says, "I stayed out until two a.m. playing pool. I thought he'd be gone by then... When I came home, he was still there." Cesar kept Hernandez up until five in the morning, chipping away patiently at his stony resistance. Finally, Hernandez relented after his wife called him a fool. "He seems like good people," she said of Cesar, much as Helen Chavez had characterized Ross. "We found out that the harder a guy is to convince, the better leader or member he becomes," Cesar said, looking back on that summer.

"When we began, we were nothing," muses Hernandez, as if he was still surprised, even in the memory. "But we got started by putting out leaflets, all day long. We'd begin before the roosters got up, around three in the morning. Then we'd go to work, and then we'd go back to passing out the information, until well after dark."

Angie Hernandez Herrera, Julio Hernandez's daughter, was another early recruit. At sixteen, she was already bitter about farm work, which she'd been doing since she was old enough to pick up a basket. "Always hated it. Always got blisters on my hands from the hoe," she remembers. "We'd hoe cotton, and clean it too. Pick grapes, melons. All for fifty cents an hour. I remember when my dad made it up to ninety cents, we were all happy because my brothers were working, too, and that was a big raise." Like the rest of her family, Angie was excited when her father later became one of the new farmworkers association's vice presidents. Hernandez became the first "full-time convert," Cesar later said proudly. He pulled in more than three hundred members, more than any other recruiter in the valley.

The California Migrant Ministry, an interdenominational church group that had a history of charity among laborers, was one of the association's early supporters; the ministry loaned Cesar a badly needed mimeograph machine, which was set up in Richard's garage. Chris Hartmire, the ministry's Los Angeles-based director, had met Cesar back in the CSO days, and he knew what Fred Ross's star organizer was up to. Most of the Migrant Ministry volunteers were convinced union organizing was the only way to really support farmworkers; Hartmire himself was shepherding as many as fifty college students who had volunteered to work with farmworkers in California. One of the ministers, Jim Drake, was eager to help,

but had his doubts. How could Cesar support his family and build an independent union from virtually nothing, Drake wondered. One look at all those kids and the family's battered 1953 Mercury station wagon that devoured oil and burned gas like a tank, and Drake had to think the man was crazy.

But the volunteers were naturally attracted to Cesar, whose approach and conviction appealed to the ministry activists. Chavez accompanied the pastors and their aides to weekend retreats, where they pray and talked about their work. "He was organizing us," Hartmire says. "He didn't come to our retreats just because he loved us so much. He came really because he knew that the day was going to come when he would need outside support. So we were the closest group other than his own family."

Still working for the CSO in Stockton, Dolores Huerta carved out time on weekends and evenings to pack her children in her own battered car and drive from camp to camp, distributing the farmworker survey cards in the northern valley counties: Stanislaus, Merced, and San Joaquin. Gilbert Padilla, who was called *flaco*, "skinny," by his friends, was also a CSO staffer in Stockton. He had grown up working California's fields, and like Huerta, he jumped on board immediately. He took jobs picking cherries and peeling peaches so he could pass out cards on the sly and quietly talk up the idea of an association. The three of them carried each other through the early days of the union.

From his base in Delano, Cesar logged hundreds of miles, traveling the length and breadth of the valley, leaving stacks of questionnaires in grocery stores, visiting homes in every farmworker community he could. His obsession led to grueling 16-hour workdays. "I left Stockton at 2:30 A.M. and arrived in Delano at 6:30 A.M.," he wrote on May 22. "Saw a small crew on the road in Tipton and stopped off long enough to register them—and drop off more cards." Sometimes he'd squeeze his eight children into the station wagon and take them on his long rides. His daughter Linda remembers that Cesar made such days festive, often treating them to ice cream after the long hot rides.

"We are no really in the swing of things," Chavez wrote enthusiastically to Ross on May 16. "I have fifteen young bucks on the drive, including two Negroes and one Filipino. Which I could tell you how many have been registered but I don't know myself... The leaflet committee, all my kids plus my nephews and nieces, covered part of Delano last night and immediately we got some reaction from the workers."

In spite of his exhausting schedule, Cesar was beginning to enjoy himself. "The local office-supply store is running in circles trying to keep me supplied with white cards," he wrote Ross. "I know the guy [in the store] wants very badly to find out what in the hell I'm doing but I'm just letting him suffer day in and day out. He won't ask me directly and I can't take any hints, either." He was also outgrowing the security of a regular salary. "When I missed the fourth paycheck and things were still going, the moon was still there and the sky and everything... I began to laugh, you know. And I began to feel free."

Despite his enthusiasm, Cesar confided to Ross that the campaign was more difficult than he had ever imagined. Farmworkers and other contacts tended to drop out of the cause as quickly as they had agreed to help out. Cesar would sometimes drive for hours to get to meetings he'd arranged, only to find an empty house. Initial optimism often gave way to skepticism and was blunted by the consuming task of making ends meet. "They are working every day and trying to pay off the winter debts, so that they can go right back and pile up more debts come this winter," Cesar wrote Ross, during a moment of acute discouragement.

On his long drives, Chavez had time to think about how the threads of his network were starting to come together—yet how easily it could all fall apart. "Anyone who comes in with the idea that farmworkers are free of sin and that the growers are all bastards," Chavez said of that time, "either has never dealt with the situation or is an idealist of the first order. Things don't work that way." Early in his campaign that summer, Cesar discovered he would face more obstacles than apathy and the growers' might.

Cesar Chavez Biography

Cesar Chavez was born in an apartment above his father's grocery store near Yuma, Arizona on March 31, 1927. He was the second out of six children born to Librado and Juana Chavez.

Cesar began school at age 7, but found it difficult because his family only spoke Spanish at home. Learning English was not an easy task, and his teachers became angry whenever he spoke Spanish at school. Fortunately, Cesar was taught many things at home. His aunts and uncles would often read to him, while his mother taught him important lessons about service and sacrifice. She was a compassionate woman and taught her children to help the poor. Many times she would send Cesar and his brother out to bring less fortunate the people home for dinner.

Cesar grew up during a difficult time. The whole country was suffering from the Great Depression, and it was difficult for people to find work. Although Cesar's father owned his own business, many of his customers were poor and could not afford to pay him for the food that they needed. Cesar's father felt bad for them and would let them have the food anyway. Eventually it became impossible for the Chavez family to pay their bills, and they were forced to sell the store.

The rest of Cesar's family wasn't doing very well either. Cesar's grandfather owned over 100 acres of farmland where he raised animals and grew crops. Unfortunately, there was not enough rain one year. Once again, the family was unable to pay the bills and, in 1939, was forced to sell the family farm as well.

When Cesar was 10 years old, his family packed their belongings and headed to California in search of work. In California, the Chavez family became part of the migrant community, traveling from farm to farm to pick fruits and vegetables during the harvest. They lived in many different migrant camps and were often forced to sleep in their car because they could not afford housing. During this time, Cesar attended over thirty different schools, where he often faced great difficulties with teachers who didn't like the fact that he was Mexican-American and came from a migrant family.

Once Cesar completed the eighth grade, he quit school and began working full-time as a migrant worker to help support his family. He worked long hours under the hot sun without any water to drink. In 1946, when Cesar was only seventeen years old, he joined the navy and served in the Western Pacific during World War II.

Two years later, Cesar returned to California, where he eventually married Helen Fabela in 1948. They soon moved to Central Valley. Once again, Cesar began to work in the fields, but this time he started to fight for change. Like Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Cesar believed that the best way to fight a battle was through non-violent tactics such as strikes, boycotts, fasts, and marches. That same year, Cesar took part in his first strike to increase wages and improve working conditions for the migrant workers. The strike didn't last long. Within several days, the workers were defeated and forced back to the fields.

In 1952, Cesar was working in apricot orchards near San Jose and living in a community called *Sal Si Puedes*—Get out if you can—when he became involved with a group called the Community Service Organization (CSO). He soon began urging Mexican-Americans to register to vote. He learned that people have the power to vote for candidates who understand their problems and will help them do something about it. He believed that when people work together for a common cause, there's nothing they can't accomplish. As a result, Cesar began traveling

throughout California and making speeches in support of workers' rights. In 1958, he became the director of the Community Service Organization.

Four years later, Cesar decided to form his own organization, which would focus on improving the lives of migrant workers. It was originally called the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA), but was later renamed the United Farm Workers (UFW). The UFW not only brought together Mexican-Americans, but for the first time, it united farm workers of all nationalities. In 1965, Cesar and the United Farm Workers led a strike of California grape-pickers to demand higher wages. In addition to the strike, they encouraged all Americans to boycott table grapes as a show of support. The strike and boycott lasted for five years and attracted national attention.

In 1968, Cesar began a 25-day fast to recommit himself and the migrant workers' cause to non-violence. Cesar's fast increased national awareness of the migrant workers' cause. Finally, in 1970, the United Farm Workers signed union contracts with most California grape growers. Through the union, Cesar was able to help the migrant workers receive fair wages, medical coverage, decent living conditions, as well as the respect that they deserve.

Although the migrant worker's situation had improved greatly, there were still many serious problems that needed to be addressed. One of the most dangerous was the use of pesticides on crops picked by migrant workers. Many workers became ill as a result of their contact with these poisons. In 1988, when Cesar was 61 years old, he began another fast that lasted for 36 days to protest the use of toxic pesticides on fruits and vegetables.

Cesar Chavez continued to work for better conditions for the migrant workers until he died in his sleep at the age of 66 on April 23, 1993. He touched so many lives that more than 30,000 people attended his funeral. Many thought that without Cesar, the union would not continue. But, they were wrong...his work does continue.

From: Orange County Cesar Chavez Day Initiative

Session 2: Tactics of the Farm Workers Movement

Goal: To understand how individuals working collectively can effect social change

Reading: Selection from The Fight in the Fields

Activity: Boycott Simulation

Vocabulary: boycott, consumer rights, “right-to-work”, trade union, militant

State Goal: 14.D.4: Analyze roles and influences of individuals, groups and media in shaping current debates on state and national policies.
14.C.4: Describe the meaning of participatory citizenship at all levels of government and society in the United States.
15.B.5a: Analyze the impact of changes in non-price determinants on consumer demand.

Activity: Boycott Simulation

An important tactic used by Cesar Chavez to achieve justice for workers was the boycott. One of the most famous boycotts in American history was the grape boycott during the 1970’s. Chavez and the United Farm Workers were able to convince hundreds of grocery stores to remove grapes from their shelves and thousands of consumers to stop buying grapes until conditions for workers improved. During today’s activity, you will help your students understand boycotting and explore products today that could be boycotted.

1. Assign the enclosed reading prior to Session 2 or read the article aloud in class. Discuss the following questions:

- ❖ What is a boycott? Why do some organizations use a boycott? Can you name examples of a boycott?
- ❖ What did Cesar Chavez know about boycotts prior to sending his workers out to conduct a boycott? What does this say about his leadership? What does this say about his colleagues?
- ❖ Al and Elena Rojas found individuals and groups to help them with the boycott. Names some of these people/groups. Why do you think they joined them in the boycott?
- ❖ What side did the government take in the boycott? Why do you think the U.S. government sided where it did?

2. Now divide your class into groups. Ask each group to identify a product or practice today that they might boycott. Each group should be ready to report out to the class one thing that they might boycott and why they would boycott. Your class might, for

example, name Nike shoes because of unfair labor practices in other countries. They might boycott Wal Mart because it refuses to enable its workers to unionize. It might boycott a local store because it sells pornographic magazines.

3. When each group has reported, ask them to use the enclosed boycott worksheet to develop a boycott campaign.
4. Ask each group to report its boycott strategy to complete today's lesson.
5. Your class should now vote to support one boycott based on the quality and compelling nature of the presentation.

Extension Activity

1. Ask your students to conduct an Internet search on boycotts that are currently taking place around the country. What is the reason for the boycott? Would students support the boycott? Why or why not?
2. Have students write letters of support for a boycott or generate letters from the school and community to support the boycott, or support the boycott by not purchasing the items currently being boycotted. Develop a report about the boycott and the student's actions.

Excerpts from The Fight in the Fields *The Grape Boycott*

To make the ambitious boycott work, the union needed more volunteers, so staffing was cut back at some of the service centers that had sprung up around the state. Picket captains were pulled back from strike lines and field organizers redirected to the urban campaign, for which the union had targeted forty strategic cities across the United States and Canada.

With his work on the Kennedy campaign halted by tragedy, Al Rojas bundled his wife, Elena, and their three children into a union car and left the Forty Acres for Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in July. Neither he nor Elena had ever been out of California. He was born in a labor camp—with a peach box as his cradle—and he had no idea what it would be like on the East Coast. They were stuffing their clothes into grocery bags when Chavez came by to say good-bye. “Take car, good-bye, make sure you have all your contacts,” Rojas remembers Chavez saying. “I stepped back and I said, this is my chance to ask him the real big question... ‘Cesar,’ I said, ‘How do you do a boycott?’”

Chavez was speechless at first. After an uncomfortable pause, he told Rojas the boycott would be on-the-job training. “To be truthful,” Cesar said, “what you and your family are going to do has never been done before. I don’t know how you do a boycott. You just go out there and tell those people to stop eating grapes. Get them to stop eating grapes”

On the way to Pittsburgh, Anglo sympathizers—contacted at random from *El Malcriado’s* subscription list—fed the family, offered them money for gas, and helped them on their way. The Rojas family were taken aback, however when they drove through a tunnel into downtown Pittsburgh and found a metropolis of high-rises and bridges; Cesar had told them Pittsburgh was a “small mining town.” They were put at ease, though, after an Irish Catholic priest welcomed them enthusiastically, and the Steelworkers union put them up for a few nights in a luxury hotel.

For more than two years, the Rojas family worked with all sides of Pittsburgh, from unions and churches and synagogues to the black power and antiwar movements. From the beginning, there was much to learn: A friendly steelworker took Rojas aside and advised him to get rid of his Volkswagen plastered with boycott stickers. “He says, ‘Rojas, goddamn it, in this town you don’t drive around pushing the union scene in a non-union car’ ... I corrected that right away and we got a Plymouth.” Rojas found that Jewish groups were among some of the cause’s strongest supporters in Pittsburgh. (He also learned, after a gentle admonishment, to stop referring to them as “Anglos.” In 1969, Al and Elena would name their fourth child, a “boycott baby”, born in Pittsburgh, Shalom, Hebrew for “peace.”)

The black community also backed the boycott, Rojas recalls. But his first meeting with activists was a near disaster: Young men in dashikis, mourning Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination, told Rojas they would be happy to get rid of the grapes “by any means necessary.” With Al trailing behind them, they marched into a store and ordered the manager to remove all California grapes immediately. When he hesitated, the militants carried all the boxes of grapes the store had outside, poured gasoline on them, and set them on fire.

By November 1968, the FBI was keeping a close watch over Rojas and the boycott, with spies reporting on events as innocuous as the screening of an Andy Warhol movie at Carnegie Mellon University, where a student urged the group to attend a march in support of the boycott. When the march took place, an FBI source was there as well. As recorded in bureau files, “Rojas

distributed to each participant one grape, a plain envelope, and the address of President-elect Richard M. Nixon.... Each person receiving the above was instructed to mash the grape, place it in an envelope, and mail it to Nixon at the New York address.”

In the spring of 1969, the union declared a boycott on the West’s largest grocery chain: Safeway, where Giumarra sold 20 percent of its grapes. Safeway’s directors, some of whom were also involved in agribusiness, fought back. They refused to take grapes off their shelves, and “freedom-to-work” committees shadowed boycotters to argue against union contracts. Growers hired the Whitaker & Baxter public relations firm to launch a \$2 million campaign to churn out op-ed pieces, ads, and bumper stickers urging the public to protect “consumer rights” and to “Eat California Grapes, the Forbidden Fruit.”

Meanwhile, the Rojas family branched out to New York, West Virginia, and Ohio, organizing parades and marches against the Kroger chain, where the couple was once arrested for using a loudspeaker. After months of work, Rojas finally had his big victory: The Pittsburgh boycott yielded an agreement that removed all California grapes from all inner-city grocery stores and supermarkets.

The disappearance of grapes from the shelves was not all due to the boycott. In January 1969, the union had started hearing rumors that the Defense Department was gobbling up reduced-price California grapes and sending them to troops in Vietnam. Roja’s brother, who was a navy cook on a destroyer off Vietnam, wrote to him that he and some shipmates threw dozens of boxes of grapes off the side of the ship. “There’s no way we’re going to eat them,” Roja’s brother said. I told the guys here those are being boycotted.”

By the middle of 1969, the Defense Department was buying 11 million pounds of grapes for each serviceman. The union reacted by picketing military installations from California to Washington, D.C. But the farmworkers’ campaign had touched a nerve in America and abroad. It was no longer just college students and trade unionists boycotting grapes. Consumers all over the country were avoiding the fruit—something that struck fear into the hearts of agribusiness—and people were thinking about farmworkers in a new way.

One of the most effective young boycotters sent out to appeal to consumers was Jessica Govea, a bright twenty-one-year-old from the racially polarized town of Bakersfield, who, starting at age four, had picked everything from grapes to cotton. Govea volunteered to go to Toronto on the boycott, not realizing it was three thousand miles away. In July of 1968 she left with Marshall Ganz, her boyfriend at the time, and a Catholic priest, Mark Day, to set up a boycott office on a very important front: Toronto was the third largest export market for California table and wine grapes. Canada as a whole purchased about 20 percent of the state’s crop. “On the one hand, it was tough; on the other, it was a liberating and wonderful experience,” Govea remembers.

“My strongest memory of going out on an information picket line in Toronto was when I saw these two white men walking toward me who reminded me of young white men in Bakersfield,” Govea recalls. “I made myself strong and went up to them and said, ‘Excuse me, could I ask you to help farmworkers by not buying grapes?’” As if on cue, they both turned around and showed me their jackets, which had giant United Auto Workers emblems on them. And they turned around and said “We’re all for you. We’re all for you.’

It turned out the world wasn’t like Bakersfield,” concluded Govea, who now teaches organizing at Rutgers University in New Jersey. “It turned out the world was much, much bigger and much kinder than Bakersfield.”

Boycott Worksheet

A boycott is when a group of people refuses to buy a product or service in the hope that the company will discontinue an unfair practice. For example, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. led a successful boycott against the city of Montgomery and its bus company. Almost all African Americans and some sympathetic whites refused to use the bus because of segregationist practices. Eventually, the bus company discontinued its policy of segregation. Many Americans worked to support South Africans in their attempts to end apartheid by boycotting American companies doing business in South Africa.

1. Take a few minutes to brainstorm a list of products or companies that your group might boycott because of the company's labor practices, the negative impact on the environment, or the negative impact on a community.

2. Of the things that you listed above, choose one thing that your group would boycott. Now list individuals, groups, or institutions that might support your boycott.

3. Now list the individuals, groups, or institutions that might work against your boycott.

4. How would your group organize its boycott? How would you publicize it?

Session 3: Non-Violent Social Change

Goal: To explore how Cesar Chavez, like Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., used principles of non-violence to under gird the movement for social change

Reading: *An Open Letter to the Grape Industry*, Cesar Chavez
Letter from a Birmingham Jail, Martin Luther King, Jr.

Activity: Comparing King and Chavez Worksheet and Discussion

State Goal: 16.A.4b: Compare competing historical interpretations of an event.

Activity: Comparing and Contrasting King and Chavez

Both Martin Luther King, Jr. and Cesar Chavez were both deeply committed to principles of non-violent direct action to achieve social change. Both men were vilified for their commitments and for their actions. In *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, King responds to pastors who have raised questions about his tactics by discussing the reasons for his actions. In *An Open Letter to the Grape Industry*, Cesar Chavez responds to criticism from leaders of the grape industry who have accused him of using violence to achieve his ends. How do both men respond to their critics and how do they provide rationalization for their commitments to non-violence?

1. Divide your class into two groups and then again into groups of three to four. Assign one set of groups the enclosed letter from Cesar Chavez entitled *An Open Letter to the Grape Industry*. Assign the other set of groups King's *Letter from A Birmingham Jail*. Have students their assigned article read silently or quietly in small groups.

2. As students complete their readings, ask them to complete the enclosed worksheet.

3. When students have completed their worksheet, ask each group to report out. Lead a discussion that helps them make connections between King and Chavez. Pose some of the following questions:

- ❖ Who are King and Chavez responding to in their letters?
- ❖ Why are there differing interpretations of events? What are the interpretations?
- ❖ What are the conditions that lead King and Chavez to take direct action?
- ❖ Why do King and Chavez feel that they cannot rely on negotiation to achieve their goals?
- ❖ How do King and Chavez justify taking non-violent direct action to achieve social change? Why do they believe so strongly in non-violence?
- ❖ How do King and Chavez feel about tension? Is it a good or bad thing? Can it be useful?
- ❖ Based on the worksheets and discussion, are there differences and/or similarities between King and Chavez? What are they?
- ❖ What kind of person can engage in non-violent action? Is it a legitimate strategy for today? What issues might lead to non-violent, direct action?

Excerpts from Letter from a Birmingham Jail

AUTHOR'S NOTE: This response to a published [statement](#) by eight fellow clergymen from Alabama (Bishop C. C. J. Carpenter, Bishop Joseph A. Durick, Rabbi Hilton L. Grafman, Bishop Paul Hardin, Bishop Holan B. Harmon, the Reverend George M. Murray, the Reverend Edward V. Ramage and the Reverend Earl Stallings) was composed under somewhat constricting circumstance. Begun on the margins of the newspaper in which the statement appeared while I was in jail, the letter was continued on scraps of writing paper supplied by a friendly Negro trusty, and concluded on a pad my attorneys were eventually permitted to leave me.

April 16, 1963

MY DEAR FELLOW CLERGYMEN:

While confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities "unwise and untimely." Seldom do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas....But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to try to answer your statements in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

I think I should indicate why I am here in Birmingham, since you have been influenced by the view, which argues against "outsiders coming in." I have the honor of serving as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization operating in every southern state, with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. We have some eighty-five affiliated organizations across the South, and one of them is the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. Frequently we share staff, educational and financial resources with our affiliates. Several months ago the affiliate here in Birmingham asked us to be on call to engage in a nonviolent direct-action program if such were deemed necessary. We readily consented, and when the hour came we lived up to our promise. So I, along with several members of my staff, am here because I was invited here I am here because I have organizational ties here.

But more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their "thus saith the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds.

You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham. But your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations. I am sure that none of you would want to rest content with the superficial kind of social analysis that deals merely with effects and does not grapple with underlying causes. It is unfortunate that demonstrations are taking place in Birmingham, but it is even more unfortunate that the city's white power structure left the Negro community with no alternative.

In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self-purification; and direct action. We have gone through these steps in Birmingham. There can be no gainsaying the fact that racial injustice engulfs this community. Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of brutality is widely known. Negroes have experienced grossly unjust treatment in the courts. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any other city in the nation. These are the hard, brutal facts of the case. On the basis of these conditions, Negro leaders sought to negotiate with the city fathers. But the latter consistently refused to engage in good-faith negotiation.

Then, last September, came the opportunity to talk with leaders of Birmingham's economic community. In the course of the negotiations, certain promises were made by the merchants—for example, to remove the stores humiliating racial signs. On the basis of these promises, the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and the leaders of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights agreed to a moratorium on all demonstrations. As the weeks and months went by, we realized that we were the victims of a broken promise. A few signs, briefly removed, returned; the others remained.

As in so many past experiences, our hopes had been blasted, and the shadow of deep disappointment settled upon us. We had no alternative except to prepare for direct action, whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscience of the local and the national community. Mindful of the difficulties involved, we decided to undertake a process of self-purification. We began a series of workshops on nonviolence, and we repeatedly asked ourselves: "Are you able to accept blows without retaliating?" "Are you able to endure the ordeal of jail?" We decided to schedule our direct-action program for the Easter season, realizing that except for Christmas, this is the main shopping period of the year. Knowing that a strong economic withdrawal program would be the by-product of direct action, we felt that this would be the best time to bring pressure to bear on the merchants for the needed change....

You may well ask: "Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are quite right in calling, for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent-resister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word "tension." I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension, which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, we must see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood.

The purpose of our direct-action program is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. I therefore concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in a tragic effort to live in monologue rather than dialogue. One of the basic points in your statement is that the action that I and my associates have taken in Birmingham is untimely. Some have asked: "Why didn't you give the new city administration time to act?" The only answer that I can give to this query is that the new Birmingham administration must be prodded about as much as the outgoing one, before it will act...My friends, I must say to you that we have not made a single gain in civil rights without determined legal and nonviolent pressure. Lamentably, it is an historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture; but, as Reinhold Niebuhr has reminded us, groups tend to be more immoral than individuals.

We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have yet to engage in a direct-action campaign that was "well timed" in the view of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This "Wait" has almost always meant "Never." We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that "justice too long delayed is justice denied." We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God-given rights.

An Open Letter to the Grape Industry

by Cesar Chavez

E.L. Barr, Jr., President
California Grape and Tree Fruit League

Dear Mr. Barr,

I am sad to hear about your accusations in the press that our union movement and table grape boycott has been successful because we have used violence and terror tactics. If what you say is true, I have been a failure and should withdraw from the struggle. But you are left with the awesome moral responsibility, before God and man, to come forward with whatever information you have so that corrective action can begin at once.

If for any reason you fail to come forth to substantiate your charges then you must be held responsible for committing violence against us, albeit violence of the tongue. I am convinced that you as a human being did not mean what you said but rather acted hastily under pressure from the public relations firm that has been hired to try to counteract the tremendous moral force of our movement. How many times we ourselves have felt the need to lash out in anger and bitterness.

Today on Good Friday, 1969, we remember the life and sacrifice of Martin Luther King, Jr., who gave himself totally to the nonviolent struggle for peace and justice. In his letter from Birmingham Jail, Dr. King describes better than I could our hopes for the strike and boycott: "Injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion before it can be cured." For our part, I admit that we have seized upon every tactic and strategy consistent with the morality of our cause to expose that injustice and thus to heighten the sensitivity of the American conscience so that farm workers will have without bloodshed their own union and the dignity of bargaining with their agribusiness employers.

By lying about the nature of our movement, Mr. Barr, you are working against nonviolent social change. Unwittingly perhaps, you may unleash that other force that our union by discipline and deed, censure and education has sought to avoid, that panacean short cut: that senseless violence that honors no color, class, or neighborhood.

YOU MUST understand, I must make you understand that our membership—and the hopes and aspirations of hundreds of thousands of the poor and dispossessed that have been raised on our account—are, above all, human beings, no better no worse than any other cross section of human society; we are not saints because we are poor but by the same measure neither are we immoral. We are men and women who have suffered and endured much and not only because of our abject poverty but because we have been kept poor. The color of our skins, the languages of our cultural and native origins, the lack of formal education, the exclusion from the democratic process, the numbers of our slain in recent wars—all these burdens generation after generation have sought to demoralize us, to break our human spirit. But God knows we are not beasts of burden, we are not agricultural implements or rented slaves, we are men. And mark this well, Mr. Barr, we are men locked in a death struggle against man's inhumanity to man in the industry that you represent. And this struggle itself gives meaning to our life and ennobles our dying.

As your industry has experienced, our strikers here in Delano and those who represent us throughout the world are well trained for this struggle. They have been under the gun, they have been kicked and beaten and herded by dogs, they have been cursed and ridiculed, they have been

stripped and chained and jailed, they have been sprayed with the poisons used in the vineyards. They have been taught not to lie down and die or to flee in shame, but to resist with every ounce of human endurance and spirit. To resist not with retaliation in kind but to overcome with love and compassion, with ingenuity and creativity, with hard work and longer hours, with stamina and patient tenacity, with truth and public appeal, with friends and allies, with mobility and discipline, with politics and law, and with prayer and fasting. They were not trained in a month or even a year; after all, this new harvest season will mark our fourth full year of strike and even now we continue to plan and prepare for the years to come. Time accomplishes for the poor what money does for the rich.

This is not to pretend that we have everywhere been successful enough or that we have not made mistakes. And while we do not belittle or underestimate our adversaries, for they are the rich and powerful and possess the land, we are not afraid nor do we cringe from the confrontation. We welcome it! We have planned for it. We know that our cause is just, that history is a story of social revolution, and that the poor shall inherit the land.

Once again, I appeal to you as the representative of your industry and as a man. I ask you to recognize and bargain with our union before the economic pressure of the boycott and strike take an irrevocable toll; but if not, I ask you to at least sit down with us to discuss the safeguards necessary to keep our historical struggle free of violence. I make this appeal because as one of the leaders of our nonviolent movement, I know and accept my responsibility for preventing, if possible, the destruction of human life and property.

For these reasons and knowing of Gandhi's admonition that fasting is the last resort in place of the sword, during a most critical time in our movement last February 1968, I undertook a 25-day fast. I repeat to you the principle enunciated to the membership at the start of the fast: if to build our union required the deliberate taking of life, either the life of a grower or his child, or the life of a farmworker or his child, then I choose not to see the union built.

MR. BARR, let me be painfully honest with you. You must understand these things. We advocate militant nonviolence as our means for social revolution and to achieve justice for our people, but we are not blind or deaf to the desperate and moody winds of human frustration, impatience, and rage that blow among us. Gandhi himself admitted that if his only choices were cowardice or violence, he would choose violence. Men are not angels and the time and tides wait for no man. Precisely because of these powerful human emotions, we have tried to involve masses of people in their own struggle. Participation and self-determination remain the best experience of freedom; and free men instinctively prefer democratic change and even protect the rights guaranteed to seek it. Only the enslaved in despair have need of violent overthrow.

This letter does not express all that is in my heart, Mr. Barr. But if it says nothing else, it says that we do not hate you or rejoice to see your industry destroyed; we hate the agribusiness system that seeks to keep us enslaved and we shall overcome and change it not by retaliation or bloodshed but by a determined nonviolent struggle carried on those by masses of farmworkers who intend to be free and human.

Sincerely your, Cesar E. Chavez
1969

Chavez and King: Two Leaders of the Non-Violent, Civil Rights Movement

After reading your article, develop answers to the following questions about Cesar Chavez or Martin Luther King. Be prepared to report your answers to the whole class and compare the philosophy and strategies of both leaders.

1. To whom does King/Chavez write a letter defining his position? Why does Chavez/King have to justify his work to this group?
2. What kind of conditions was King/Chavez reacting to that caused him to lead the civil rights movement? Who is King/Chavez organizing for non-violent direct action?
3. What kind of changes was King/Chavez hoping to accomplish?
4. King/Chavez attempted to negotiate with those in power? What was the result of his negotiations?
5. What are the principles of non-violence identified by King/Chavez?
6. What issues would be important enough today for you/your group to be willing to engage in non-violent direct action?

Session 4: Teatro Campesino

Goal: To understand how the arts can be used to motivate people for action

Readings: Fight in the Fields Sidebar
Background on El Teatro Campesino

Activity: Students will dramatize a social inequity through a skit, role-play, or visual art.

State Goal: 27.B.5: Analyze how the arts shape and reflect ideas, issues, or themes in a particular culture or historical period.
27.A.4b: Analyze how the arts are used to inform and persuade through traditional and contemporary art forms.

Activity: Street Theatre (*Teatro Campesino*)

The United Farm Workers used street theatre as a way to introduce everyday people to problems of injustice and oppression. Street theatre used humor and irony to dramatize the plight of working people. Street theatre is a very non-traditional means of getting a message across. The United Farm Workers didn't have a lot of money so it could not pay for ads on television or in newspapers. Street theatre, then, was a highly personal, non-traditional way of presenting an important issue.

1. Ask students to think about a movie or play that introduced an important social issue or injustice. List those movies or plays on the board.
2. Return to the list and ask students to identify the problem and whether or not they felt compelled to do something.
3. Now present the readings about the street theatre of the United Farm Workers.
4. Lead a discussion about this tactic of getting a message out.
5. Next, present the following list of important social problems:
 - ❖ Inequitable funding in the state of Illinois between suburban, rural and urban school districts
 - ❖ Lack of affordable housing in Chicago
 - ❖ Chicago is the Murder Capital of the United States
 - ❖ New laws have been passed to grant the U.S. Government greater access to personal information of private citizens
 - ❖ The high rate of pregnancy among teenage girls in Chicago

6. Divide your class into groups of four. Assign each group of the issues listed above and ask them to create a short skit (street theatre) that dramatizes the problem. Each group should then have 2-3 minutes to perform the skit. The skit should ideally compel individuals to action. Alternatively, if your class or a portion of your class is uncomfortable performing skits, enable groups to develop a poster or graffiti art that communicates their issue.

7. Reflect on today's activities using the following questions as a guide:

- ❖ Is street theatre an effective mobilization strategy?
- ❖ What do you think is meant by *ridicule* today's reading? What is the difference between ridiculing and attacking?
- ❖ Do you see any examples of art being used to address a social issue of great importance? If so, what are we supposed to do or how should we react?
- ❖ Should art be used in this way, or should it merely reflect our society?
- ❖ As a result of today's activities, do you look at art differently now?

Extension Activity

1. Perform skits or design artwork at your school or for a local community center or school that dramatize the life and work of Cesar Chavez.

El Teatro Campesino

In 1965, an aspiring playwright named Luis Valdez joined Cesar Chavez in organizing farmworkers in Delano, California. Valdez organized the workers into El Teatro Campesino (The Farmworkers Theater) in an effort to popularize and raise funds for the grape boycott and farmworker strike. In 1968, El Teatro Campesino left the fields in a conscious effort to create a theater that reflected the greater Chicano experience. El Teatro Campesino won awards for "demonstrating the politics of survival."

By 1970, El Teatro Campesino had established what would come to be known as teatro chicano. It was style of agitprop theater, incorporating the spiritual and presentational style of the Italian Renaissance commedia dell'arte with the humor, character types, folklore and popular culture of the Mexican theater, the type presented by vaudeville companies and tent theaters that had toured the Southwest earlier this century. The performances drew on traditions from European drama, Spanish religious dramas adapted for teaching Mission Indians, a Mexican tradition of performances in California, which began in the mid-nineteenth century, and Aztec, and Maya sacred ritual dramas.

El Teatro Campesino began with short performances in the fields of California's central valley for audiences of farmworkers in 1965. By 1970 the Teatro had gained an international reputation and had inspired the formation of many other Chicano theater companies. The transformation started in a context of a new awareness of cultural identities in the 1960s that brought a new consciousness of their social, political, and economic positions to minorities. This context provided one of the resources that contributed to El Teatro's growth: audiences who were ready for the clarity, which its dramatic art brought to their situation.

In the early years, all of the actors were farm workers. Valdez emphasized ensemble work, in which all actors contributed to the interpretation of the performance. Most troupe members took on multiple roles. One person, for example was an actor, technical director, company manager, and tour coordinator; another was an actor, business manager, administrative director, researcher, and producer. Members of the Teatro created their own material. They started with no scenery, no scripts, and no costumes. They used props and costumes casually, and hung signs around their necks to indicate characters. Working with their own material, the actors were free to express what they knew and felt. "Real theater lies in the excited laughter (or silence) of recognition in the audience, not in all the paraphernalia on the stage," said Valdez.

The dramas were short, but Valdez decided to call them actos rather than skits, because skits seemed too light a word to express the work they were doing. In 1967 Valdez explained that El Teatro's purpose was to examine and redefine the heart of the Chicano people: ritual, music, beauty, and spiritual sensitivity. He sees theater as a vehicle "to affect and modify and change and give direction to society.... You can take people's minds off their problems by entertaining them, but you can also do that by giving them a different perspective," said Valdez. "One of my approaches to life in general [is] if you feel you're short-changed, fill the gap yourself. Why mope? Why feel angry? You've got the power to do something."

Humor has always been an important ingredient in the Teatro's drama, inspired by Mexican folk humor, which is typified by the performances of the Mexican comedian Cantinflas. Valdez explains that the troupe was not concerned with being witty, but only with the truth of the moment, and humor was found in raw truth. Social points were made not in spite of comedy, but through it, using broad farcical statements. Humor became a major asset and weapon, adding understanding and appeal to the messages of the actos.

From the website of El Teatro Campesino

Teatro Campesino

from *The Fight in the Fields*

There are various versions of how Luis Valdez came to the union movement. This is Cesar Chavez's version. In 1965 on an occasion when Chavez happened to be in Berkeley attending to union business, Valdez introduced himself. Chavez replied, "Look, okay, why don't you follow me right now." So the poor guy followed me all night, and we're going to meetings and raising money. Finally...it was almost midnight, he said, 'I'm sorry, I'm just graduating and I'd like to come to Delano and do a teatro.' I said, 'Great! Come one! When? Right now.' So he came."

The Teatro Campesino's and Luis Valdez's tremendous contributions to the formation of a Chicano art movement are legendary. But in its initial years, Valdez only wanted the genre to serve the farmworker cause. In Chavez's own words,

Well, it helped with the workers....It was street theater...it was able to deal with three important things. One was just deal with...like we're here to stay. You know, he came out and sang, "Viva la Huelga" [Long Live the Strike] and "No nos moveran" [We will not be moved] and all that stuff—great! The other thing he was able to ridicule...growers...which was great. Not attack them. But ridicule....Then deal with the internal problems we had about the strike-breakers or being afraid....Oh, the Friday night meetings would be jammed with people...because even through we were losing the strike...they're still coming because the teatro was there.

Session 5: The Cost of Sacrifice

Goal: To develop an understanding of the kinds of sacrifices that individuals make in order to build a fairer, more just society.

Reading: *At the Heart of a Historic Movement*

Activity: Is it worth the Sacrifice?

State Goal: 4.B.5b: Use speaking skills to participate in and lead group discussions.

Activity: Is it worth the Sacrifice?

In order to achieve anything important, an individual must make sacrifices. A young person who goes to college has to forgo at least four years of wages in order to complete a college degree. A person who has a demanding job might have to sacrifice friends because he/she has to stay late a work. A person who has a family member who is sick might have to forgo any number of things in order to care for the family member. Cesar Chavez spent so many hours working to improve the lives of farm workers, that his own family members felt neglected. Was his work for the cause of improving the lives of thousands of laborers important enough to neglect his family?

1. Read the enclosed article aloud in class, or, alternatively, assign the reading the night before today's discussion and activity. Pose the following questions to your class either as a discussion or as a journaling activity:

- ❖ Cesar Chavez and his key organizers probably had to neglect their families in order to lead the farm workers union in the southwest. Do you think their children had a legitimate right to feel anger toward their fathers and/or mothers?
- ❖ Could Cesar Chavez have spent more time attending to the needs of his family or would the movement have suffered?
- ❖ Cesar Chavez and some of his organizers got their kids involved in the work by bringing them to meetings and strikes. Was that the right way to introduce children to their work?
- ❖ After having read this article, how do you feel about Cesar Chavez and his organizers? How do you feel about the author, who was a son of one of Chavez' organizers?

2. Now ask your students to consider the following quote from Martin Luther King, Jr.: *If a man has nothing to die for, he has nothing to live for.* Do students agree or disagree with this statement?

3. Divide your class into small groups of two to four. Ask each group to think about the following question: Under what conditions is it okay for a parent to “neglect” his or her

family? Have each group report out their answers and then lead a discussion based on the answers.

4. Ask your students to consider the kinds of sacrifices they see their own parents, family members, friends, or other people making. Why do they make the kinds of sacrifices they do?

5. To conclude, ask your students to write down 3-5 sacrifices that they will have to make in their own lives to achieve something. What do they hope to achieve? What will they have to sacrifice?

At the Heart of a Historic Movement, by John Hartmire

When my friend's daughter asked me if I knew anything about the man her school was named after, I had to admit that I did. I told her that in California there are at least 26 other schools, 17 streets, 7 parks and 10 scholarships named after Cesar Chavez. Not only that, I said, I once hit a ground ball through his legs during a softball game, and I watched his two dogs corner my sister's rabbit and, quite literally, scare it to death. I used to curse his name to the sun gods while I marched through one sweltering valley or another knowing my friends were at the beach staring at Carrie Carbajal and her newest bikini.

During those years I wasn't always sure of how I felt about the man, but I did believe Cesar Chavez was larger than life. The impact he had on my family was at once enriching and debilitating. He was everywhere. Like smoke and cobwebs, he filled the corners of my family's life. We moved to California from New York in 1961 when my father was named executive director of the National Farmworker Ministry; and for the next 30-plus years our lives were defined by Cesar and the United Farm Workers.

During those years my father was gone a lot, traveling with, or for, Cesar. I "understood" because the struggle to organize farmworkers into a viable union was the work of a lifetime, and people would constantly tell me how much they admired what Dad was doing. Hearing it made me proud. It also made me lonely. He organized the clergy to stand up for the union, went to jail defying court injunctions and was gone from our house for days on end, coming home, my mother likes to say, only for clean underwear. It was my father who fed the small piece of bread to Cesar ending his historic 25-day fast in 1968. It's no wonder Dad missed my first Little League home run.

The experience of growing up in the heart of a historic movement has long been the stuff of great discussions around our dinner table. The memories are both vibrant and difficult. There were times when Cesar and the union seemed to be more important to my father than I was, or my mother was, or my brothers and sister were. It is not an easy suspicion to grow up with, or to reconcile as an adult.

While my friends surfed, I was dragged to marches in the Coachella and San Joaquin valleys. I was taken out of school to attend union meetings and rallies that interested me even less than geometry class, I spent time in supermarket parking lots reluctantly passing out leaflets and urging shoppers not to buy nonunion grapes and lettuce. I used to miss Sunday-afternoon NFL telecasts to canvass neighborhoods with my father. Since my dad wanted his family to be a part of his life, I marched and slept and ate and played with Cesar Chavez's kids. When we grew older his son, Paul, and I would drink beer together and wonder out loud how our lives would have been different had our fathers been plumbers or bus drivers.

But our fathers were fighting to do something that had never been done before. Their battle to secure basic rights for migrant workers evolved into a moral struggle that captured the nation's attention. I saw it all, from the union's grape strike in 1965, to the signing of the first contracts five years later, to the political power gained then lost because, for Cesar, running a union was never as natural as orchestrating a social movement.

My father and Cesar parted company four years before Chavez died in 1993. Chavez, 66 at the time of his death, father of eight, grandfather of 27, leader of thousands, a Hispanic icon who transcended race, left the world a better place than he found it. He did it with the help of a great many good people, and the sacrifice of their families, many of whom believed in his cause but didn't always understand what he was asking of, or taking from, them.

So as students here attend Chavez School, as families picnic in a park named after him and public employees take off March 31 in honor of his birthday, I try to remember Cesar Chavez for what he was—a quiet man, the father of friends, a man intricately bound with my family—and not what he took from my childhood. Namely, my father. I still wrestle with the cost of my father's commitment, understanding that social change does not come without sacrifice. I just wonder if the price has to be so damn high.

Do I truly know Cesar Chavez? I suppose not. He was like a boat being driven by some internal squall, a disturbance he himself didn't always understand, and that carried millions right along with him some of us kicking and screaming.

From: Newsweek, July 24, 2000

Service Learning Project Ideas

The Service Learning Initiative of Chicago Public Schools will work with you and your class to connect to an appropriate community organization and develop a project idea for and with your students. Project ideas can be generated by the teacher, through interaction with students, or based on the work of a community organization. Below are some ideas of service projects that can get you started. Please call the Service Learning Initiative at 773/553-3425 for assistance.

1. Identify a boycott campaign around the country and mobilize other students, teachers and community residents to write letters of support for that campaign.
2. Prepare a one-page information sheet on the life and accomplishments of Cesar Chavez and make available for distribution at community organizations and schools on March 31, 2005.
3. Prepare a lesson on Cesar Chavez and lead at an after school program or local feeder school during the week of March 31.
4. Identify a worker's rights issue and join an organization on a campaign or write letters of support for the campaign.
5. Partner with an organization that serves immigrants and provide a needed service for that organization.
6. Identify an organization working to reduce toxic chemicals in the environment and provide a service to that organization.
7. Throw a Cesar Chavez birthday party at a local organization or school.
8. Create a mural depicting Chavez and his work.
9. Work with a local feeder school or after school program to provide literacy or homework help to children.
10. Work with an organization to provide citizenship services such as test prep for the citizenship exam.
11. Work with a food pantry or homeless shelter to provide food, meals, or other life necessities to those in need.
12. Learn about conflict resolution strategies and host a teach-in on conflict and how to successfully resolve conflict in your school and community.
13. Develop a skit or play about the life of Cesar Chavez or the Chicano Civil Rights Movement or a contemporary issue and perform it at school or a local organization.
14. Work with a local organic community garden, or create a garden at your school.
15. Create a recycling program or join a recycling effort in your community.

Resources

Resources included in this Curriculum Guide

1. Grapes of Wrath, John Steinbeck
2. Fight in the Fields, Susan Ferriss and Ricardo Sandoval
3. Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement
F. Arturo Rosales
4. Orange County Cesar Chavez Day Initiative

Videos about Cesar Chavez and the Chicano Civil Rights Movement are available upon request on a lend basis. Please contact the Service Learning Initiative at 773/553-3425 to request a video.