DOLORES HUERTA: LABOR LEADER

Est. Time: 60 minutes
Subjects: ELA, History, General Music, SEL
Age Range: Elementary & Middle School
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TEACHROCK

In 2012, Dolores Huerta was awarded the Medal of Freedom, the highest honor a person can receive in the United States.

Essential Question: Who was Dolores Huerta and why was she so deserving of this honor?

In this lesson you will:

- Learn about the events that led to the United Farm Workers movement
- Understand why Dolores Huerta’s work was important and impactful to Civil Rights
- See how Dolores Huerta’s work continues to lead the way today

Consider or ask a friend:

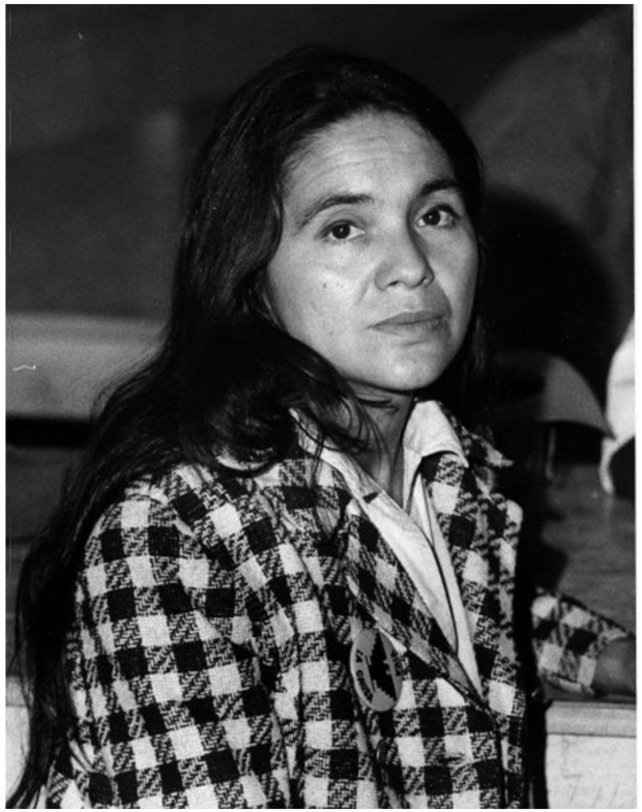
- Where does your family get their fruits and vegetables?
- What does it take to get fruits and vegetables to arrive at the store? What kind of work is needed?

People who harvest food are called Farm Workers.

In the 1960’s California Farm Workers worked under terrible conditions.

These farm workers had no electricity, no running water, and no bathrooms. They lived in tents or metal sheds with no heat. This photo of a farm worker's home was taken in California in the 1960's.

In 1962, Dolores Huerta was a teacher and a mom with seven children. She saw that the children of farm workers, her students, were coming to school hungry and without shoes.



Dolores Huerta could not stand by when farm workers and their families were suffering. She quit her job as a teacher and began working for the rights of farm workers.

The farm workers in this photo are carrying signs that say “Huelga”.

Did you know that “Huelga” means Strike in Spanish? **When workers strike, they stop working to show the need for better wages or working conditions.**

In 1962, Dolores Huerta worked alongside César Chávez to create the United Farm Workers of America Union.

A union is an organized group of workers who join together for better working conditions.

She quickly became a respected leader. She organized the Farm Workers a Huelga or Strike for the rights of farm workers.

Have you ever heard of a boycott?

A boycott happens when people decide to stop buying or doing something because they feel that a big change needs to be made.

Between 1965 and 1970, many people in California and across the USA stopped buying grapes to protest the working conditions of farm workers. Dolores Huerta organized this boycott to make the public aware of the awful working conditions of farm workers.

Since no one was buying grapes during the boycott, grocers offered them for free, but still no one ate them.

This peaceful protest made a big difference. Farmers wanted to sell their produce, so they started to make small changes to help the Farm Workers.

In 1966 the United Farm Workers marched for 300 miles from the small farming community of Delano to Sacramento, the capital of California.

Watch **this video** to see the Farm Workers arrive in Sacramento.

Consider or talk with a friend:

- How do you think that Dolores Huerta inspired so many people to march with her and Cesar Chavez?
- Why was this march a success?
- Imagine that you were one of the marchers. How would you have felt when you arrived in Sacramento?
- Imagine that you were the Governor of California. What might have been going through your mind as you saw these marchers arrive at the state capitol?

The Mexican Folk Song, “De Colores” became the United Farm Workers’ anthem. This traditional song was already familiar to many people, but it took on new meaning when it was paired with the movement to bring fair wages and better working conditions to farm workers.

The lyrics in the song, “De colores, De colores es el arco iris que vemos lucir.” (“In colors, in colors / Is the rainbow that we see shining”) showed a positive vision of equality and social justice. At the end of the song, people would shout “¡Si se puede!” (Yes we can!).

Listen to “De Colores” and read the lyrics through **this TeachRock Video**. You can sing along if you are familiar with this traditional folk song.

Consider or talk with a friend:

- “De Colores” had been sung for over 400 years. Why do you think that Dolores Huerta used this song with the United Farm Workers?
- Have you heard other songs that are sung at marches or protests? How is this song different?
- Why do you think that farm workers would shout “¡Si se puede!” at the end of the song?

When Barack Obama ran for president in 2008, he borrowed the phrase “¡Si se puede!” from Dolores Huerta. He went on to win the election and served as the US President for eight years.

Consider or talk with a friend:

- Why do you think that Barack Obama felt that this phrase was important to his campaign?
- How did this phrase bring people together?
- Do you think that the phrase ¡Si Se Puede! may have helped Barack Obama become President? Why or why not?

Dolores Huerta continues to inspire people today. Watch **this video** of Alice Bag performing Nikki Darling's poem, "A Street Called Dolores Huerta" and **read the lyrics**.

Then consider or talk with a friend:

- How do you think Alice Bag feels about Dolores Huerta?
- What do you notice about this style of music?

Read the poem **Huelga by Diana Garcia**.

Then consider or talk with a friend:

- How is Dolores Huerta portrayed in Diana Garcia's poem?
- Compare this poem to the song performed by Alice Bag.

Because of the efforts of Nikki Darling, Alice Bag, and Diana Garcia, Dolores Huerta was honored with a public square in Los Angeles in 2019. This place will forever honor the work of Dolores Huerta, her lasting impact on Civil Rights and the way that she showed that women are great leaders.

SUMMARY

- The United Farm Workers movement began in the 1960's with the goal of improving the lives of farm workers
- Delores Huerta organized peaceful protests, a march on Sacramento, and the Grape Boycott to draw attention to the serious problems of farm workers
- Delores Huerta is known as a Civil Rights Icon, a brilliant leader, and a role model for women

BE CREATIVE

- Shepard Fairey, is famous for his ¡Si Se Puede! election poster for Barack Obama and for his **“We the People” series**. Use the color palette of these posters (red, aqua, navy blue, and off-white) to create your own ¡Si se puede! Poster with your own self portrait in the style of Shepard Fairey.

- Write a Haiku about Dolores Huerta. (A Haiku is a poem with three lines, each with a specific number of syllables. The first line is five syllables, the second line is seven syllables, and the third line is five syllables.)

BE CURIOUS

View this **Google Arts and Culture Exhibit**, then create your own animated slide deck featuring information on Dolores Huerta that you have learned in this lesson.
Learn more about Delores Huerta while exploring her **foundation website**.

CONNECT

Share with us! Either you or an adult in your life can share a picture of your ¡Si Se Puede! Poster, your Haiku, or your animated slide deck with TeachRock on **Instagram** or **Facebook**, email to **info@teachrock.org**, or Tweet it to **@TeachRock**, and tag it with #LeanOnUs

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