



Change the World? “¡Si Se Puede!” Dolores Huerta

In this lesson, students will learn about activist and labor leader Dolores Huerta, who throughout her career has fought against poverty and discrimination, and on behalf of improving the lives of farmworkers, women and children, immigrants and all Americans. Dolores Huerta’s guiding principle has always been: “Every moment is an organizing opportunity, every person a potential activist, every minute a chance to change the world.”

Step 1: Hook: Can You Convince Me? (5 minutes)



In 1966, Dolores Huerta, an American labor leader and civil rights activist, spoke at a rally in Madison Square Garden in New York City. She was given only 60 seconds to persuade the crowd to join a boycott of grapes grown by non-union producers. ***What’s something that you want changed? How could you explain and persuade a crowd to join you in a 60-second speech?***

Step 2: Profile of Dolores Huerta (20 minutes)



Dolores Huerta is a labor legend and civil rights activist who grew up in Stockton, Calif., in the San Joaquin Valley, an area filled with farms. After college, she worked as an elementary school teacher, where she saw that her students, many of them children of farmworkers, were living in poverty without enough food to eat or other basic necessities. To help, she became one of the founders of a community group that worked to improve social and economic conditions for farmworkers and other migrants.

Introduce students to Dolores Huerta through [this video](#) (two minutes) that serves as the trailer for the documentary film *Dolores!*

Viewing questions:

- What do you think the man means at the beginning of the trailer when he says, “She’s the first general that I followed into war!”?
- Why might anyone consider Dolores Huerta to be “dangerous”?



Video (nine minutes): [The story behind an iconic mural](#)



With César Chávez, she co-founded a workers' union that became the United Farm Workers (UFW), an organization that consolidated the worker power of Filipino and Mexican migrant workers. Huerta was instrumental in the union's many successes, including the strikes against California grape growers in the 1960s and '70s. Huerta worked alongside [Robert F. Kennedy](#) in his political campaigning, and the two [shared a vision of economic justice](#).

Today, Huerta remains an iconic national figure and civil rights leader. Her fighting slogan “Sí, Se Puede” (“Yes, We Can!”) became a rallying cry for the election of President Barak Obama. Huerta has been chosen by RFK Human Rights to receive the 2020 Ripple of Hope Award.

[Watch a PBS background video \(eight minutes\) on Huerta’s life and career on the occasion of receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom.](#)

Step 3: Questions for Discussion (15 minutes)

- How can family and community influence an individual to challenge injustice and inequity?
- What were some of the events and concerns in her youth that led Dolores Huerta toward community activism?
- What kinds of change did Dolores Huerta fight for?
- How can individual concerns become an organized movement for social change?

Step 4: What Can Students Do?



First, have students view the short video (30 seconds) [“What’s a movement for change?”](#)

Activity 1: “Movements Wall”

Ask you students to work individually or in pairs.

- Students should identify a movement for change in their community that they are interested in.
- Who is a person associated with this movement?
- Ask students what stood out to them about the defenders they chose?
- How are they trying to bring about social change?
- Students write their information on a sheet of paper and then tape the card up on a “Movements Wall”
- Students then do a gallery walk of the Movements Wall, using large Post-it notes to add anything they know about any local movement for change and the people associated with it.

Extension Activity: Students make the Movements Wall into a permanent museum, with formal photos of community defenders and their stories.

Activity 2: “Meeting” with Dolores Huerta

Ask students: “Imagine you have invited Dolores Huerta to your classroom, along with someone you have chosen from your community as a defender of human rights. If they were to have a conversation, what would they talk about?”

- What kinds of significant questions might each ask the other, and how would each be likely to answer?
- What direct connections would they find with each other?
- What might they disagree about?
- What would you want to ask them?

Extension Activity: Students can role-play the conversation they imagine might take

place between Dolores Huerta and their community defender.

Additional Resources



- [Read a Profile of Dolores Huerta from the National Women's History Museum.](#)



- View a portrait of Dolores Huerta, by Chicana artist Barbara Carrasco, that hangs in the [National Portrait Gallery](#) in Washington D.C., part of an installation called "One Life: Dolores Huerta."