

Common Read *Sal Si Puedes*

Sample Prompts

Introduce *Sal Si Puedes* by playing this [brief audio of Cesar Chavez](#). Ask students what they already know about Chavez. Why do they think CSUSM has a statue of him at the top of the stairs? What was the cause (“la causa”) Chavez was working for, and why was it important?

What factors might motivate you to fight for a cause? How can we affect social change in a nonviolent way?

Reflect: what is something you feel is worth fighting for? What is your cause or revolution?

Share: post on social media **#SalSiPuedes** or in Cougar Courses



"When the man who feeds the world by toiling in the field is himself **deprived** of the basic rights of feeding and caring for his own family, the **whole community of man** is sick."
César Chávez

Post the following quote:

"When the man who feeds the world by toiling in the field is himself deprived of the basic rights of feeding and caring for his own family, the whole community of man is sick." - Cesar Chavez

Discuss in small groups or individual reflection:

- What do you think Chavez meant by this?
 - What basic rights do you feel you should have?
 - Should everyone in the community have those same rights? Why or why not?
 - What can you do to help others have their rights?
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- How are the poor and vulnerable of our global community are treated? There are those who clean up after us – custodians, garbage collectors, dishwashers, etc. Do they receive the same respect as a university professor or a Wall Street banker? Why or why not? Do you respect them?

Post the following excerpts from Chavez' "The First Shall Be the Last" speech:

"All my life, I have been driven by one dream, one goal, one vision: To overthrow a farm labor system in this nation which treats farm workers as if they were not important human beings. Farm workers are not agricultural implements. They are not beasts of

burden--to be used and discarded. That dream was born in my youth. It was nurtured in my early days of organizing. It has flourished. It has been attacked. I'm not very different from anyone else who has ever tried to accomplish something with his life. My motivation comes from my personal life--from watching what my mother and father went through when I was growing up; from what we experienced as migrant farm workers in California.

That dream, that vision, grew from my own experience with racism, with hope, with the desire to be treated fairly and to see my people treated as human beings and not as chattel. It grew from anger and rage--emotions I felt 40 years ago when people of my color were denied the right to see a movie or eat at a restaurant in many parts of California. It grew from the frustration and humiliation I felt as a boy who couldn't understand how the growers could abuse and exploit farm workers when there were so many of us and so few of them. [...]

Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducated the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore. Our opponents must understand that it's not just a union we have built. Unions, like other institutions, can come and go. But we're more than an institution. For nearly 20 years, our union has been on the cutting edge of a people's cause--and you cannot do away with an entire people; you cannot stamp out a people's cause.

Regardless of what the future holds for the union, regardless of what the future holds for farm workers, our accomplishments cannot be undone. "La Causa"--our cause--doesn't have to be experienced twice. The consciousness and pride that were raised by our union are alive and thriving inside millions of young Hispanics who will never work on a farm!

Like the other immigrant groups, the day will come when we win the economic and political rewards which are in keeping with our numbers in society. The day will come when the politicians do the right thing by our people out of political necessity and not out of charity or idealism.

That day may not come this year. That day may not come during this decade. But it will come, someday! And when that day comes, we shall see the fulfillment of that passage from the Book of Matthew in the New Testament, "That the last shall be first and the first shall be last. And on that day, our nation shall fulfill its creed--and that fulfillment shall enrich us all." -- [1984 Cesar Chavez Address to the Commonwealth Club of California](#)

Questions for individual papers in response to “The First Shall Be the Last” Speech:

- What is the problem that Chavez was so concerned about?
- What did Chavez believe was the cause of the problem?

- What did Chavez suggest could help solve the problem?
- What is nonviolence, and what role did it play in this movement?
- Reflect on the principles that he used to mobilize the farmworkers movement. Why would he choose the social teachings of the Catholic Church to be the basis of his organizing effort?

Group activity on boycotts

Intro: What is a boycott, and what role did it play in farmworker movement?

Working in groups of 4.

Research sprint: Use Google to brainstorm a list of products or companies that your might boycott because of the company's labor practices, the negative impact on the environment, or the negative impact on the community.

Assign one student in each group one of the following identities: spokesperson for an organization being boycotted, worker, consumer, and protester.

Choose a current or historic boycott, groups focus on the following questions:

- Who is affected by the boycott?
- How is the boycott organized?
- What are the goals of the boycott?
- What other measures have been or might be taken instead of a boycott?
- What were/are some possible outcomes of the boycott?
- What were the economic implications of the boycott?

In their groups, students discuss their findings, sharing ways in which they think each member of their group (spokesperson for the organization being boycotted, worker, consumer and protester) might be affected by the boycott.

Adapted from:

<http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2000/03/27/powerful-consumers/>

<http://blog.leeandlow.com/2015/04/13/interpreting-cesar-chavezs-legacy-with-students/>

<http://www.edutopia.org/blog/lesson-about-cesar-chavez-civil-rights-maurice-elias>

<https://educationforjustice.org/free-files/chavez%20041414.pdf>

http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/kits/Viva%20Teachers%20Guide_web.pdf