

This Tools and Strategies piece in *Understanding and Dismantling Privilege* provides (a) a focus on the activism of the Chicano/a Civil Rights Movement while highlighting the voices of two Chicano leaders, César Chávez and Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales; (b) the topic’s relationship to Culturally Relevant Education (CRE); (c) a series of interrelated lessons on the topic; and (d) an accompanying WebQuest (<http://questgarden.com/194/54/9/170531101714/>) for educators interested in utilizing web resources to teach this content. Dodge (n.d.) defines a *WebQuest* as “an inquiry-oriented lesson format in which most or all the information that learners work with comes from the web” (para. 3). The ideas and resources in this article and the WebQuest can be linked as a mini-unit or divided to supplement a secondary social studies curriculum. Teachers and students are asked to explore how the lessons learned from the Chicano/a Civil Rights Movement can be applied to activism today.

The Chicano/a Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement provided a national stage for Mexican Americans to confront inequalities in U.S. life (Gómez-Quíñones & Vásquez, 2014; Gutierrez, 1993; Muñoz, 2007; Rosales, 1996). With the Black Power movement on the national stage and a reclaimed Indigenous heritage and birthright to the American Southwest, Mexican Americans began to identify as Chicanos/as, demonstrating an activist and militant-minded perspective (Delgado Bernal, 1999; Gutierrez, 1993). Organizations such as the Brown Berets, the La Raza Unida Party, and Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA) emerged due to the Chicano/a Movement. Founders of the movement include a multitude of Chicano/a leaders, such as César Chávez and Rodolfo “Corky”

Gonzales. Chávez, along with Dolores Huerta, fought for the employment and human rights of migrant workers. At the same time, Gonzales focused on the plight of urban Chicanos/as from advocating for fair housing, medical care, culturally appropriate school practices, and Chicano/a representation in the political arena.

This activism was comprised of grassroots Chicanos/as who demanded self-determination and sought to transform American life’s existing economic, political, and social institutions. They did this through educating the community on its dire state with the hope of creating a mass movement for change and activism (Acuña, 2019; Delgado Bernal, 1999; Gómez-Quíñones & Vásquez, 2014; Gutierrez, 1993; Muñoz, 2007; Rosales, 1996). Although these groups and individuals garnered national attention through their radical ideas and tactics, their measures were often rebuffed and rejected. One of the most important contributions of the Chicano/a Movement was the activists’ ability to classify the Mexican American community as an “identifiable ethnic minority” (Wilson, 2003). With this new identity, political and legal recognition followed. The 1964 Civil Rights Act authorized the federal government to withhold funds from states permitting racial discrimination. Under the act *national origin*, ethnic minorities were considered a protected group, including Mexican Americans and other Latinx populations (Wilson, 2003).

Mexican American History and Culturally Relevant Education

The underpinning rationale for infusing U.S. secondary social studies curricula with this particular period of Mexican American history is to bring to light the utility of employing a social justice framework for

teaching through Culturally Relevant Education (CRE). Aronson and Laughter (2016) distilled the culturally responsive teaching scholarship of Geneva Gay (2018) and the culturally relevant pedagogy research of Gloria Ladson-Billings (2009) into CRE. They noted, “CRE represents pedagogies of oppression committed to collective empowerment and social justice” (Aronson & Laughter, 2016, p. 164). CRE builds upon the work of Gay, Ladson-Billings, and other researchers who have been committed to the belief that schools serve as a microcosm of society—if the classroom embraces social justice means and ends, a more equitable and inclusive society will result (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Building on the work of Dover (2013), Aronson and Laughter (2016) developed four markers of CRE:

1. Culturally relevant educators use constructivist measures to develop bridges connecting students’ cultural references to *academic skills and concepts*. Culturally relevant educators build on the knowledge and cultural assets students bring with them into the classroom; the culturally relevant classroom is inclusive of all students.
2. Culturally relevant educators engage students in *critical reflection* about their own lives and societies. In the classroom, culturally relevant educators use inclusive curricula and activities to support analysis of all the cultures represented.
3. Culturally relevant educators facilitate students’ *cultural competence*. The culturally relevant classroom is where students learn about their own and others’ cultures while developing pride in their own and others’ cultures.
4. Culturally relevant educators

explicitly unmask and unmake oppressive systems through the *critique of discourses of power*. Culturally relevant educators work not only in the classroom but also in the active pursuit of social justice for all members of society. (p. 167)

For reference, these markers can be shortened and abbreviated according to their main tenets as 1) academic skills and concepts (AS&C), 2) critical reflection (C.R.), 3) cultural competence (CC), and 4) critiques of discourses of power (CDP) (Aronson & Laughter, 2016, p. 168).

Empirical evidence suggests that positive educational outcomes in terms of achievement, engagement, and motivation are realized by employing CRE practices in social studies curricula (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Choi, 2013; Epstein, Mayorga, & Nelson, 2011; Martell, 2013; Rodriguez, Bustamante Jones, Peng, & Park, 2004). Byrd (2016) found culturally responsive teaching practices to be significantly related to positive academic achievement. Students also reported greater feelings of belonging, interest in the subject matter, and stronger racial and ethnic identities due to a direct focus on classroom culture. One of the major inhibitors of employing CRE is the lack of diverse cultural content in school curricula (Gay, 2018), particularly Mexican American and Latinx history (Noboa, 2006; Rodriguez & Ruiz, 2000).

CRE practices ensure that all students experience a curriculum that is relevant and reflective of their lived experiences and have the opportunity to correct misinformation they receive about themselves and others (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2009). When these teaching strategies are in place, educators have the opportunity to develop

deeper relationships with students and understand the strengths they bring to their classroom. The focus on this historical period for Mexican Americans, along with lessons and applications related to the present day, allow educators to develop students' academic skills, to engage them in critical reflection, to facilitate students' cultural competence, and to require them to critique discourses of power—each of the CRE markers (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

While the lesson content foci are on Mexican American history, the components extend beyond this ethnic group and into the larger U.S. society. In the lesson series below, the four markers of CRE—academic skills and concepts (AS&C), critical reflection (C.R.), cultural competence (CC), and critiques of discourses of power (CDP)—are integrated into essential questions with key objectives:

1. How can activism be utilized to advance democratic principles and participation?
2. What is the role of the individual within a larger social justice movement?
3. How can individuals today take on activist roles in their communities?

As educators, we hope that this lesson series' ideas and resources will provide teachers with tools to help students think through these questions. They build the four markers in a historical context, as well as with the current realities of their lives and that of society.

Chicano Movement Leaders: Exploring the Contributions of César Chávez and Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales

Students will investigate key individuals in the Chicano Movement and how the

United States' social and political systems may have contributed to that era's activism. Students will compare the rhetoric of César Chávez and Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales by addressing how systemic discrimination influenced the migrant Chicano farmworker and the urban Chicano experience in the United States. Students also will consider how the voices of Chávez and Gonzales influenced national events in that period. They will examine multiple viewpoints behind their efforts to promote civic virtues and enact democratic principles. In doing these things, the students can reflect on their voice, values, and ideas and identify ways to take informed action.

Lesson Objectives

1. Students will be able to identify and analyze the contributions of César Chávez and Rodolfo Gonzales in relation to history and the Chicano Movement. (AS&C, CC, CDP)
2. Students will examine the chronology of events that may have influenced the activism of these leaders. (AS&C, CDP)
3. Students will identify and discuss how the activism of César Chávez and Rodolfo Gonzales affects American life today. (AS&C, C.R., CC, CDP)
4. Students will reflect on their personal identities and apply concepts of activism to a “next steps” action plan in which they will assume a role related to an issue of their choice. (AS&C, C.R., CC)

These objectives relate to the USA National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) Standards listed below.

National Council for the Social Studies: Standards for High School Teachers

Standard 5. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide the study of *interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions* [emphasis in original].

- Knowledge Indicator: The impact of tensions and examples of cooperation between individuals, groups, and institutions, with their different belief systems
- Knowledge Indicator: How in democratic societies, legal protections are designed to protect the rights and beliefs of minority groups.
- Process Indicator: Understand examples of tensions between belief systems and governmental actions and policies.
- Product Indicator: Discuss real-world problems and the implications of solutions for individuals, groups, and institutions.

**National Council for the Social Studies:
The College, Career, & Civic Life (C3)
Framework Standards**

Dimension 2. Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools: Civics — Participation and Deliberation: Applying Civic Virtues and Democratic Principles

D2.10.9-12: Individually and with others, students analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on applying civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.

Dimension 4. Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action: Taking Informed Action

D4.7.9-12: Individually and with

others, students assess options for individual and collective action to address local, regional, and global problems by engaging in self-reflection, strategy identification, and complex causal reasoning

Setting Ground Rules

Prior to introducing the lesson series on the Chicano Movement Leaders, it would be necessary for teachers to have ground rules in place. Ground rules ensure that students know what is expected of themselves and their peers, create a safe environment for exploring ideas, support the inclusive classroom, and minimize incivility issues (Center for Teaching Innovation, n.d.). A best practice is to cooperatively create ground rules with your students at the beginning of the academic year, revisiting them regularly. Given the personal and political connections embedded in these lessons, it would be important to remind students of the ground rules—emphasizing the need to listen to and respect others’ experiences and ideas.

Lesson

Personal Identity Mapping

To begin this lesson series, the teacher will ask students to map their personal identities. This will subsequently relate to the students’ personal activism action plans. The teacher may want to ask: *What are the different aspects of your identity* (such as daughter, artist, animal lover)?

Students can answer this prompt using a brainstorm bubble or web diagram. (A sample identity mapping diagram is available via the WebQuest (<http://questgarden.com/194/54/9/170531101714/>.)

Students will then engage in a free write: Choose one of the aspects of your identity. Free write about how this aspect developed over time. For example, if you choose “student,” think about what you were like as a younger student. Ask yourself who and what influenced you to become who you are as a student today? What was or was not important to you as a student then, and what is or is not important to you now?

After writing their responses, students will share with a partner of their choosing. If the topic is too sensitive for some, they may choose not to share. The teacher will ask for volunteers to share their ideas with the class.

The teacher may ask students whether, in relation to any of these aspects of their identity, students ever felt the need to act, make life changes, or make any type of statement. The teacher may ask whether they have felt that they should have taken action, and maybe did not and why not. The students can add their thoughts to their free-write and then share their thoughts in a short discussion with a partner.

The teacher will then ask for volunteers to share any of their ideas with the class.

Introduction to César Chávez and Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales

The teacher will briefly explain that Chávez and Gonzales, due to their experiences, personal identities, and societal outlooks, became activist leaders who played a major role in the Chicano Civil Rights Movement.

The teacher will perform a *KWL* (What do you *know*? What do you *want to know*? What have you *learned*?) activity with students. (A sample *KWL* handout and a short biography of Chávez and Gonzales are

available via the WebQuest).

The teacher will ask students to think first about their background knowledge related to the Civil Rights Movement:

- For the letter “k”: What and who do you *know* related to the Civil Rights Movement?
- For the letter “w”: What do you *want* to know about the Civil Rights Movement?
- For the letter “l”: Keep blank for what was *learned* (to do afterward).

Students will then draw a line under this section and do the same about either Chávez or Gonzales.

- For the letter “k”: What and who do you *know* related to your activist?
- For the letter “w”: What do you *want* to know about your activist?
- For the letter “l”: Keep blank for what was *learned* (to do afterward).

The teacher will distribute a short one-page reading on Chávez and Gonzales’ background, include a group activity, and read and discuss it. The teacher will add newly learned knowledge to the class’s *KWL* chart, while students will add the newly learned knowledge to their own under the “l” (learned) section. Students also may add further questions and notes about what they want to know in the “w” (want to know) section.

Students will continue to research information and take notes about these activists through a small group activity utilizing laptops, electronic devices, or

computers in a lab.

The teacher will distribute a scavenger hunt sheet to each small group. (Scavenger hunt, guiding questions, resources, and primary source documents are available via the WebQuest.)

Each group will share the information they discovered through their fact-finding activity.

Famous Words: The Rhetoric of Chávez and Gonzales

This segment of the lesson series will focus on the actual words of Chávez and Gonzales.

The students will examine and engage in a close reading of either the “Address to the Commonwealth Club of California” by Chávez or the poem “Yo Soy Joaquin” by Gonzales. Students will listen to the poem or speech online while following a written copy. (Resources are available on the WebQuest.)

Students will pair with a partner of their choosing who will then read the text and ask the following:

1. As a listener or reader, what words were most powerful?
2. What stood out?
3. What was emphasized?

The teacher will follow up by leading a class discussion. Students will be invited to discuss their responses.

The teacher will choose one passage or section from each text that students mentioned in the discussion and model how to closely read and examine the section, using a document camera to analyze what

made the section interesting, powerful, or rhetorically influential. Throughout this segment, the teacher should encourage students to participate in the analysis.

Students will continue this analysis of the text on their own or with a partner of their choosing.

The teacher will ask for volunteers to use the document camera to enable students to share their analysis of a passage that was not previously chosen.

Discussion Related to Chávez and Gonzales

1. Why are these activists important to study about the Civil Rights Movement?
2. Why might certain voices be less known than others concerning this historical period?
3. What are the key takeaways that you learned based on studying Chávez and Gonzales?

Activism and Personal Identity

The teacher will ask students to find someone who read the other text (the “Address to the Commonwealth Club of California” or the poem “Yo Soy Joaquin”). In pairs, students will discuss and compare similarities and differences related to these works.

The teacher will follow up with a class discussion on the similarities and differences the students noted.

Students will return to their partner from the previous day and finish the close reading analysis.

Still in small groups, students will return

to the scavenger hunt information and the poem and speech. They will identify aspects of personal identities that are suggested. Then, using their identity diagram as a model, they will create an identity diagram for Chávez or Gonzales.

The teacher will lead a class discussion examining how identity can be used to propel activism.

Activism: Taking a Personal Stand

As a culminating assignment, the students will return to their identity diagrams and writing earlier in the week. The teacher will ask what they might want to add to their diagrams in terms of what is important to their identity.

The teacher will ask students to think and add notes to their diagrams about an aspect of their identity that might propel them to take action or a personal stand on an issue.

Students will discuss their revised diagrams with a partner of their choosing.

The teacher will write these sentences on the board so students can copy the text and fill in the blanks: _____ is important to who I am and what I care about as a _____. I would like to explore how I could take action in relation to _____.

Students will leave their sentences on their desks and participate in a gallery walk and commentary session. They will write on each sheet of paper suggesting ideas about how someone could take action in an area of interest or issue. The teacher may need to remind them that, although students may disagree with someone's area of interest or issue for activism, they are respectful of one

another's ideas and thoughts. They should also write how a student could find resources and ways to become more involved in a particular area of interest without inserting personal opinions and biases.

The teacher will bring the class back together and ask students to share a few of the issues and areas of interest that caught their attention. The teacher will then ask whether anyone received any helpful ideas for becoming more involved with an issue or area of interest.

On the other side of their paper or a new sheet, students will use their peers' suggestions to write one or two paragraphs explaining how they might learn more about an issue and what they can do to individually take action in relation to it.

The teacher will ask them to reflect on Chávez and Gonzales and answer these questions: *How did Chávez and Gonzales' identities impact their activist work? How did your identities impact your desire to take action on the subject you chose?*

Students will share their action plan with a partner of their choosing. The teacher will ask for volunteers to share what they discussed.

Conclusion

The purpose of this *Tools and Strategies* piece is not to encourage the sprinkling of Mexican American history into standardized U.S. social studies curriculum but, instead, to shed light on the importance of purposefully integrating missing voices and experiences along with incorporating Culturally Relevant Practices. As the researchers for this series, we are aware that many educators engage in CRE and other

social justice teaching practices. Still, we hope that more will do so. Our students' future and the cultural vibrancy of the United States are at stake if we all do not. Education is a powerful means by which culture is transmitted, and it is the educator's chief responsibility to communicate the cultural content and values that are to be transferred to future generations (Banks, 2016; Dewey, 1938). Only when educators understand the politics of privilege and oppression and reflect upon their own identities, attitudes, and beliefs are they able to teach "through and to cultural diversity" (Gay, 2013).

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