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## **Grape Boycott at the UW Lesson Plan**

**Targeted Age: High School or Middle School**

**Targeted class time: 1 90-minute class period**

### **Objectives:**

Students will:

- Examine and assess the tactics used by UW students in their successful attempt to remove non-union grapes from all campus eating facilities during the United Farm Workers grape boycott of 1968-69.
- Make connection between the 1968-69 boycott and present-day responsible-consumerism movements such as Fair Trade and Sweatshop-Free
- Assert whether and how these tactics could be used as a model for their own activism.

### **Introduction for Teachers:**

Soon after forming a chapter at the University of Washington, the United Mexican American Students (UMAS) was instrumental in removing California grapes from all campus eating facilities. They did so in a month-long campaign that featured innovative leadership and protest tactics.

In September of 1968, a small group of Chicano/Latino students arrived at the UW from Eastern Washington. Most were the children of farm workers and had worked in the fields with their parents. A few months later, a coalition of Chicano, White, and Black UW students decided to support a farm worker campaign that had been in progress for two years. This campaign was a nation-wide grape boycott led by Cesar Chavez's United Farm Worker Organizing Committee (UFWOC). The boycott was intended to put pressure on California grape growers who refused to bargain with the farm workers union. The UW students hoped to support the union boycott by having grapes removed from all university eating facilities.

The students were opposed in their actions by the Young Republicans campus group which argued that removing the grapes would be a violation of students' right to individual choice. The boycott leaders grappled with various levels of student government, and finally had the university administration review their petition, but their efforts were rejected by UW president Charles Odegaard. Under pressure and despite Odegaard's opposition, the Husky Union Building, target of the most intense boycotts, pulled the grapes, making UW a grape-free campus for the remainder of the 1969.

The UW grape boycott offers middle and high school students an excellent opportunity to witness the power of students in action, as well as to understand the anatomy of a consumer-protest movement. This lesson plan will ask students to connect the activities of the students at UW with present-day consumer responsibility movements such as the Fair Trade and the Sweatshop-Free movements. It is hoped that in the course of the lesson students will learn how to be more responsible consumers, and also learn about active citizenship. Students will identify a problem and chart some possible solutions and activities they can perform to help solve it.

**Prior Knowledge:**

At this time, the label “Chicano” was coming into popularity as a term of identity for Americans of Mexican descent. However, the term was controversial and some preferred “Mexican American.” Students should be familiar with both terms, as they are both used in the primary sources for this lesson plan.

**Materials Needed:**

- Newsprint and markers
- PC Computer and LCD Projector

**-Oral Histories:**

These oral histories are available streaming video at

[http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/mecha\\_intro.htm](http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/mecha_intro.htm)

- **Juan Jose Bocanegra:**

- From Mexico to Texas to Seattle: The struggle to get an education in Corpus, Christi, TX shapes his activism and educational aspirations.

- First impressions of Seattle: Chicanos, few in number, still unite to create change.

- **Erasmus Gamboa:**

- Gamboa’s family migrated from Texas to Eastern Washington when he was a young boy.

- I became very aware of the nature of agriculture and the relationship of farm worker to farm owner.

- **Rebecca Saldena:** Fair trade agriculture at the U

- **Tomas Villanueva**

- Oral History Transcript

**-Grape Boycott Documents:**

Bulletin #1: About conditions, why boycotting HUB food, effects of picketing HUB (sales drop)

<http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/images/mecha/docs/specCol/BB1.jpg>

Bulletin #2: About comparisons between California and Washington, annual wages, ASUW support, documentary (tactics/techniques)

<http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/images/mecha/docs/specCol/BB-2.jpg>

#3: Info on who farm workers are, NLRB

<http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/images/mecha/docs/specCol/BB3.jpg>

-UW *Daily* articles:

“Mexican American students tell opposition to grapes,” Jan.22, 1969

[http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/display.cgi?image=mecha/news/1969/Crop%20Daily%20Jan\\_22\\_1969%20p%201.jpg](http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/display.cgi?image=mecha/news/1969/Crop%20Daily%20Jan_22_1969%20p%201.jpg)

Richard Sanders, “The Devil’s Advocate,” Jan. 16, 1969

[http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/display.cgi?image=mecha/news/1969/Crop%20Daily%20Jan\\_16\\_1969%20p%203.jpg](http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/display.cgi?image=mecha/news/1969/Crop%20Daily%20Jan_16_1969%20p%203.jpg)

**Products Produced:**

At the end of the lesson, students will have produced their own “action plan” for activism, including list of possible activities, and will have completed an activity such as a “boycott bulletin” or a letter to the editor of a local paper.

**EALRs:**

Skills 1.1 Understand and use inquiry and information skills required by citizens in a democratic society

Skills 3.1 Understand and apply critical thinking and problem solving skills to make informed and reasoned decisions

**Lesson Plan****Before class:**

Have students read the first two sections of Jeremy Simer’s essay, “La Raza Comes to Campus.” The first two sections are called “Chicano Students at the U” and “The National Grape Boycott.

**Day of Class:**

1: Watch the four oral history clips on growing up Chicano in the United States: the first two by Juan Bocanegra and the next two by Erasmo Gamboa. Additionally, have students read the oral history transcription of Tomas Villanueva, entitled “Growing up Mexican American in Washington State.”

A: Have students discuss the following:

How were these three experiences similar? How were they different?

How might similarities in experiences create a sense of commonality or solidarity among Mexican Americans? How might that translate into a desire for political activism?

B: Bring up the Simer article from the night before. Ask students:

How do the stories of Chicano students at the U and the national grape boycott fit with the stories of these three men growing up in the United States?

2: In small groups, have students read the next two sections of the essay, “The Grape Boycott at the U” and “The Hub Boycott.”

On large newsprint, have them identify the tactics that the students used. This can be done chronologically or thematically. For example, students could pull out the tactics used in the order the students did, or they might pick themes such as: appealing to students, petitioning the administration, governmental action, and public action, and then categorize the activities as such.

3: Have students examine the grape boycott documents.

Have them discuss the following:

What tactics do you see being used in producing these documents? What are they hoping the public will get out of them? What decisions did they make in producing the documents? What impact do you think they had?

Have them add to or alter their newsprint including the bulletins.

4: Have students read the *Daily* article about the boycott, and Richard Sander's YR editorial.

On a second sheet of newsprint, or in a different color, have them brainstorm techniques in response to the Sanders editorial.

Have them read the short section "Boycott Concludes." Have students look back at the newsprint and circle the tactics they think were most effective.

As homework, have them read the conclusion to the Simer article, as well as brainstorm current events issues that impact them.

The next day, discuss Simer's criticisms of the UW. Using their own student handbooks, discuss ways in which the rules at their school are similar or different from the UW's: what resources do they have that encourages student activism? What rules discourage it?

View Rebecca Saldena's oral history excerpt, "Fair Trade Agriculture at the UW." Be sure that students know Saldena is speaking of a recent campaign some 30 years after the grape boycott. Ask them how the work of Saldena and others was similar or different from her predecessors at the U.

Brainstorm a list of topics that are connected to responsible consumerism in the United States. At the time of writing this, sweatshop-free clothing, fair trade coffee, tea, and cocoa, and hybrid vehicles were hot topics.

Either as a class, in groups, or individually, have students draw an action plan for how they can mobilize students in their school around a particular issue. The plan needs to be specific; they should refer back to the actions of the grape boycott leaders as an example for tangible activities that served their purpose.

Have them implement at least one part of their action plan. This could be writing a letter to the editor, making a "boycott bulletin" calling for public action, or having fellow students make a personal commitment to buy less clothing or frequent vintage shops more often.

Wrap up: As a wrap-up, you may want to talk about the personal histories of these grape boycott activists. Ricardo Martinez is now a federal judge. Tomas Villanueva ran for Congress. Erasmo Gamboa is a UW Professor. Roberto Maestro helped form and is the director of El Centro De La Raza, one of the largest community centers in Seattle. Students can see that activism in school can have an important and long-lasting impact on their life choices.

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