Ahimsa Center K-12 Teacher Institute Lesson

Title:
The Nonviolent Means of César Chávez and Martin Luther King Junior: How They Brought About Social Change

Lesson By:
Gina Pagel, Arboretum Elementary, Waunakee, WI

Grade Level/ Subject Areas:
2nd grade social studies/Spanish (appropriate for any elementary level)

Duration of Lesson:
7 days (30 minutes each lesson)

Content Standards: (Wisconsin Model Academic Standards)
-Social Studies, Standard C: Political Science and Citizenship  Performance Grade 4: C.4.1
Identify and explain the individual's responsibilities to family, peers, and the community, including the need for civility and respect for diversity
-Social Studies, Standard E: Behavioral Science Grade 4: E.4.9 Explain how people learn about others who are different from themselves

Lesson Abstract:
Students will study the lives of César Chávez and Martin Luther King, Jr. They will compare their lives and how their nonviolent means brought about change in the U.S. The peaceful conflict resolution skills of each will be emphasized. Children’s literature, timelines, Venn diagrams and a chant will be used to support the learning process. The content essay, meant for the teacher, focuses on Chávez, while the classroom activities compare his work to that of MLK.

Guiding Questions:
What were the injustices that minority populations and farm workers faced?
What did MLK and Chávez do to promote social change through nonviolent action?
What changes came about as a result of the movements lead by MLK and Chávez?

Content Essay:
Biography of César Chávez

César Chávez’ childhood and background as a farm worker helped to shape his work as an activist. Chávez was born in Yuma, Arizona in 1927. He was the son of first generation Mexican Americans who owned a 160-acre ranch and ran a family farm store. Chávez struggled in school as an English language learner and as a member of a minority group in the United States during a time of deep segregation. He saw these experiences as unjust but, even as a young person, didn’t react violently in thought or action. He credits his mother as having great influence in the nonviolent way that he solved problems. In his eulogy for his mother, he shared that she advised that, “[…] it’s best to turn the other cheek. God gave you senses like eyes and mind and tongue, and you can get out of anything. It takes two to fight, and one can’t do it alone” (Chávez “Juana Estrada Chavez” 221). César internalized the idea of rising above violence and coming up with courageous, creative solutions to injustice. The Chávez’ lives were content and self sufficient until a drought and economic instability eventually led to the loss of their land. In complete contrast to the life that they had lived, their family was forced into the
new life of exploited farm workers. Thus, unbeknownst to him, César Chávez’ journey toward nonviolent social change had begun.

**Lives of farm workers**

Farm workers were faced, and are still faced, with inconceivable working conditions and maltreatment. Farm workers experienced everything from unfair wages and work schedules to exposure to chemicals and the hot sun. Even their inadequate tools and restroom facilities were demeaning. Agricultural workers were trapped in a cycle of working just to care for their families and often didn’t have the privilege of questioning their employers.

The pay that farm workers earned was low for the difficult work that they did. At age fifteen, as a result of World War II’s impact on industry, César, “managed to earn a […] dollar per hour wage in the fields.” After his return from serving in the Navy, he and his wife Helen, “both labored in the fields, sometimes earning as much as 100 dollars per week, sometimes going for weeks on end with no work and no pay” (Ingram 99). The income of workers was less than consistent as it was also dependent on the different seasons of harvests. Because of the socioeconomic situations that these systems perpetuated for most farm workers, children often began work in adolescence as Chávez did. Poverty forced children into the fields to help support their families, yet in turn it also exposed them to dangers and exploitation.

Pesticide poisoning was commonplace for field workers and their families. Later in life, Chávez, as President of the United Farm Workers, addressed the issue reporting that, “13 McFarland children [were] diagnosed with cancer in recent years; and one of six […] died from the disease. With only 6,000 residents, the rate of cancer in McFarland is 400 percent above normal.” In addition, women who worked in the fields while they were pregnant gave birth to children with severe birth defects. Pesticides have also been shown to cause respiratory conditions, skin disease, and even shorten the length of a worker’s life. Chávez said that the “Average life expectancy [was] more than twenty years below the U.S. norm.” Farm workers, were assured by growers that, “the pesticides that surrounded [them, sometimes even sprayed from above them] were safe, that they were harmless ‘medicine’ for the plants (Chávez Pacific Lutheran University).” This deception showed the greed and lack of compassion within agribusiness in the United States. The workers were not simply uninformed; they were intentionally misinformed. Once regulations changed as evidence mounted against a specific chemical and it was outlawed, another always took its place in the fields.

Beyond the life and death dangers of the work itself, the growers dehumanized the farm workers. The short-handled hoe was designed to keep workers in a bent, subservient position. It inflicted severe back problems on the workers. During long hours of backbreaking work, there was often no access to free, clean drinking water, even in the sun and heat. There was also often a lack of separate male/ female restrooms or access to any at all. Rights most Americans took for granted were not accessible to agricultural workers. César could not stand by and allow this cycle of oppression and abuse of power to continue. He began to organize people to stand up against the forces that stood in the way of farm workers’ right to equality.

**Nonviolent means of social change**

César Chávez’ philosophy of nonviolence is in contrast with other methods of social change, even while working against intense opposition. The injustices committed against farm workers have always been systemic. Therefore, it was never an easy fight and Chávez knew it. César was guided through the struggles of El Movimiento by firm principles and beliefs. They were grounded in the nonviolent means that his mother had taught him and that he later studied in the works of leaders like Mohandas K. Gandhi and Martin Luther King Junior. José-Antonio Orosco, author of *Cesar Chavez and the Common Sense of Nonviolence*, explains that:

Like Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., Chavez adheres to absolute pacifist direct
action, that is, that the use of nonviolence, whether directed at persons or property, is never justified […] Nonviolent direct action is the best form of social protest, not only from a moral point of view but strategy-wise as well, and that the costs of violent protest clearly outweigh the benefits for a social justice movement (Orosco 55).

Chávez knew that any violence that crept into the movement broke down its message. He was mindful of both public opinion and the sustainability of the changes that he hoped would come for the farm workers and all oppressed people. He was also careful to separate the unjust acts from those who are committing them; they too are victims of the societies in which they live. “[…] We hate the agribusiness system that seeks to keep us enslaved and we shall overcome and change it not by retaliation or bloodshed but by a determined nonviolent struggle carried on by those masses of farm workers who intend to be free and human (Chavez “Good Friday” 63).

Chávez held community meetings in order to begin organizing farm workers and their allies to work together against the injustices that they faced. In 1962, Chávez decided to work to organize farm workers full time. He slowly grew membership until the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) was formed. In an early collective action, farm workers went on strike to bring to light the true dependence that the growers had on the labor of those who worked for them. On Sept. 16th, 1965, the NFWA allied with the AFL-CIO affiliated Filipino workers eight days after they had begun their strike in Delano, CA. The groups merged to become the United Farm Workers (UFW). The strike brought these diverse groups of agricultural workers together against the power of the grape growers. (Filner Honoring Cesar Chavez 2003)

César Chávez was also known for the means he used to draw attention to the cause of the farm workers and to share information about their struggle. In March through April of 1966, Chávez led an approximately 250-mile march or pilgrimage from Delano to the capital in Sacramento. The march grew from almost 70 people to 10,000 people upon arrival. As a result of the march, one grower signed an agreement with the union (Viva La Causa Teacher’s Guide 26). Perhaps even more importantly, marches like this one, raised awareness and acted as a confirmation of commitment to participants. Throughout the work of La Causa, or the movement toward justice, Chávez gave speeches that empowered agricultural workers and other oppressed peoples. He gave them hope to maintain the fight. The strikes continued and in 1967 picketers asked the public to boycott grape products in the US and Canada to put pressure on the growers to make changes. In 1968, César Chávez, in response to the violence that had begun to taint the movement and as an act of penance, began a 25-day hunger strike. This water-only fast was broken at a mass where influential leaders, such as Robert Kennedy and Rev. Jesse Jackson, broke bread with him. (UFW.org UFW Chronology) The fasts to which Chávez committed himself had multiple layers of intention. He fasted in order to bring awareness to the challenges faced by the farm workers. The bodily repercussions of a fast are more quickly evidenced, yet may not be any more detrimental than the health consequences brought about by agribusiness. Finally, in 1970, the grape strike and boycott ended after a contract was signed between the Delano grape growers and the UFW. These successes marked progress but the work continues to this day.

**Lasting influence beyond the movement**

César Chávez’ leadership in nonviolent social change affected more than the wages and working conditions of the members of the United Farm Workers of America. He believed that the participation of those he lead would forever change them. “Once social change begins it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. And you cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore.” (Chavez “MLK Jr. II” 165) He knew that while working to affect immediate problems, people would progress as individuals who knew their own worth and thus would continue to fight for equality in other arenas of their lives. “In walking a picket line, staffing an
information table, conducting contract negotiations, or engaging in a fast, a person could begin to understand the nature of planning, group deliberation, and compromise, as well as the importance of service, patience, and sacrifice” (Orosco 52). Whether one is a member of a group who is exploited or discriminated against or not, all can benefit from being involved in a movement which brings about positive social change. The challenge still today is to ask, what will it take for real and sustainable change to come to farm workers and to the oppressed people of the world? What can be done to keep issues of inequality in the forefront of the minds of people who are relatively far removed from the matters; whether it is the growth of the food that they eat or the hardships that fellow community members face? One place to begin is with the children, to begin in classrooms.

Bibliography:

Teaching Activities/ Materials Needed:
Materials:
(Spanish book: Cosechando esperanza)
Spanish audio track: ¡Viva Cesar Chavez! by José-Luis Orozco
Bilingual digital story: ¡Viva Cesar Chavez! by Gina Pagel

The classroom activities are shown on the central section of the lesson grids contained on the following pages. Details about timing, materials, assessment, and standards are also included.
Spanish/Social Studies  
**Unit Theme:** Diversity: Famous Leaders & Social Change  
**Day 1**  
**Lesson:** Martin Luther King Jr. (book)  
**Grade:** 2nd

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<thead>
<tr>
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<td>• Él _____</td>
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**Activities:**

2. Introduce Martin Luther King Jr. via vocabulary card set. (repeat words with actions)  
3. Read “Feliz Cumpleaños (Happy Birthday) Martin Luther King”  
4. Name issues of inequality in the story.  
5. Name the nonviolent actions of MLK that brought about change.  
6. Canción de adiós.

**Assessment:**

1. Vocabulary card comprehension as shown in actions  
2. Book comprehension checks  
3. Read vocabulary cards to respond to questions following the book

**Materials:**

calendar, MLK vocabulary card set, “Feliz Cumpleaños Martin Luther King” book

**Standards:**

**B.4.3** Examine biographies, stories, narratives, and folk tales to understand the lives of ordinary and extraordinary people, place them in time and context, and explain their relationship to important historical events.

**B.4.4** Compare and contrast changes in contemporary life with life in the past by looking at social, economic, political, and cultural roles played by individuals and groups.

**B.4.5** Identify the historical background and meaning of important political values such as freedom, democracy, and justice.

**B.4.6** Explain the significance of national and state holidays, such as Independence Day and Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, and national and state symbols, such as the United States flag and the state flags.
### Spanish/Social Studies

**Unit Theme:** Diversity: Famous Leaders & Social Change

**Day 2**

**Lesson:** MLK (timeline)

**Grade:** 2nd

**Social Studies Concepts:**
- Everyday people became known for their contributions to society; We will study them through non-fiction books.
- Understand the lives of extraordinary people and place them in time and context.
- The lives and the nonviolent actions of César Chávez and Martin Luther King Jr. where different but shared many similarities.
- Understand the powerful impact that nonviolent actions can have on social change.

**Language Skills:**

**RECEPTIVE**
- Understand the biographies of the two influential men
- Identify from a verbal description who is being described – Chávez or King
- Understand the questions: “Who is…?” “What did he do?” “When?”
- Understand clues to sequence events on a timeline

**PRODUCTIVE**
- Name issues of inequality and oppression
- Name the nonviolent actions and contributions of César Chávez and Martin Luther King Jr.

**Key Structures and Vocabulary:**

**RECEPTIVE**
- **Personas:** el campesino, los pobres, la gente, el niño, el ministro, afroamericano, mexicano americano
- **Acciones no violentos:** la marcha, decir el discurso, ayunar, luchar por (en el sentido de trabajar por)
- **Causas:** el respeto, la dignidad, los sueldos
- **Comparando:** justo y injusto, segregado/dividido, integrado, igual y diferente
- **¿Quién es?**
- **¿Qué hizo? ¿Porqué?**
- **¿Cuándo?** (línea de tiempo)

**PRODUCTIVE**
- el campesino, el ministro, mexicano americano, afroamericano, luchar por, marchar, decir discursos
- justo y injusto
- El ___.

### Activities:

2. Review the Martin Luther King Jr. vocabulary card set. (repeat words with actions)
3. Construct basic MLK timeline on the floor using a long string and dated life event card set. Students can stand on the appropriate section on the timeline with the card and be rearranged as necessary.
4. Highlight how the life of MLK influenced his actions.
5. Connect his nonviolent actions with the social change that he helped to bring about.
6. Canción de adiós.

### Assessment:

1. Vocabulary card comprehension as shown in actions
2. Read vocabulary cards to respond to questions
3. Time line comprehension as shown in correct placement

### Materials:
- calendar, MLK vocabulary card set, timeline string and dated life event card set

### Standards:

<p>| B.4.2 | Use a timeline to select, organize, and sequence information describing eras in history |
| B.4.3 | Examine biographies, stories, narratives, and folk tales to understand the lives of ordinary and extraordinary people, place them in time and context, and explain their relationship to important historical events |
| B.4.4 | Compare and contrast changes in contemporary life with life in the past by looking at social, economic, political, and cultural roles played by individuals and groups |
| B.4.5 | Identify the historical background and meaning of important political values such as freedom, democracy, and justice |
| B.4.6 | Explain the significance of national and state holidays, such as Independence Day and Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, and national and state symbols, such as the United States flag and the state flags |</p>
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  - Understand clues to sequence events on a timeline | **PERSONAS:** el campesino, los pobres, la gente, el niño, el ministro, afroamericano, mexicano americano  
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| • Understand the lives of extraordinary people and place them in time and context | **PRODUCTIVE**  
  - Name issues of inequality and oppression  
  - Name the nonviolent actions and contributions of César Chávez and Martin Luther King Jr. | **ÉL _____** |
| • The lives and the nonviolent actions of César Chávez and Martin Luther King Jr. where different but shared many similarities. |  |  |
| • Understand the powerful impact that nonviolent actions can have on social change. |  |  |

**Activities:**

2. Introduce Chávez vocabulary via vocabulary card set. (repeat words with actions)  
4. Name issues of inequality in the story.  
5. Roll play farm worker task: teacher is overseer, students must bend all the way over and stand all the way back up to place picked vegetables in the imaginary bucket. Teacher hastily reminds workers to hurry and work harder. No breaks or drinks allowed. Discuss how it felt after 1 or 2 minutes. How would it feel after 8 or more hours, after days, after week and months, years?  
6. Name the nonviolent actions of Chávez that brought about change.  
7. Canción de adiós.

**Assessment:**

1. Vocabulary comprehension  

**Materials:**

calendar, Chávez vocabulary card set, “Cosechando Esperanza” book by Kathleen Krull

**Standards:**

**B.4.3** Examine biographies, stories, narratives, and folk tales to understand the lives of ordinary and extraordinary people, place them in time and context, and explain their relationship to important historical events  
**B.4.4** Compare and contrast changes in contemporary life with life in the past by looking at social, economic, political, and cultural roles played by individuals and groups  
**B.4.5** Identify the historical background and meaning of important political values such as freedom, democracy, and justice
### Spanish/Social Studies

**Unit Theme:** Diversity: Famous Leaders & Social Change  
**Lesson:** César Chávez (timeline)  
**Grade:** 2nd

#### Social Studies Concepts:
- Everyday people became known for their contributions to society; We will study them through non-fiction books.
- Understand the lives of extraordinary people and place them in time and context.
- The lives and the nonviolent actions of César Chávez and Martin Luther King Jr. where different but shared many similarities.
- Understand the powerful impact that nonviolent actions can have on social change.

#### Language Skills:

**RECEPTIVE**
- Understand the biographies of the two influential men
- Identify from a verbal description who is being described – Chávez or King
- Understand the questions: “Who is…?” “What did he do?” “When?”
- Understand clues to sequence events on a timeline

**PRODUCTIVE**
- Name issues of inequality and oppression
- Name the nonviolent actions and contributions of César Chávez and Martin Luther King Jr.

#### Key Structures and Vocabulary:

**RECEPTIVE**
- Personas: el campesino, los pobres, la gente, el niño, el ministro, afroamericano, mexicano americano
- Acciones no violentos: la marcha, decir el discurso, ayunar, luchar por (en el sentido de trabajar por)
- Causas: el respeto, el derecho, la dignidad, los sueldos
- Comparando: justo y injusto, segregado/dividido, integrado, igual y diferente
- ¿Quién es?
- ¿Qué hizo? ¿Porqué?
- ¿Cuándo? (línea de tiempo)

**PRODUCTIVE**
- el campesino, el ministro, mexicano americano, afroamericano, luchar por, marchar, decir discursos
- justo y injusto
- Él _____.

#### Activities:

2. Review the Chávez vocabulary card set. (repeat words with actions)
3. Construct basic Chávez timeline on the floor using a long string and dated life event card set. Students can stand on the appropriate section on the timeline with the card and be rearranged as necessary.
4. Highlight how the life of Chávez influenced his actions.
5. Practice Viva César Chávez chant, which highlights his actions and impact. (Use digital story.)
6. Connect his nonviolent actions with the social change that he helped to bring about.
7. Canción de adios.

#### Assessment:
1. Vocabulary card comprehension as shown in actions
2. Read vocabulary cards to respond to questions
3. Time line comprehension as shown in correct placement

#### Materials:
- calendar, Chávez vocabulary card set, timeline string and dated life event card set, iPod

#### Standards:
- **B.4.2** Use a timeline to select, organize, and sequence information describing eras in history  
- **B.4.3** Examine biographies, stories, narratives, and folk tales to understand the lives of ordinary and extraordinary people, place them in time and context, and explain their relationship to important historical events
- **B.4.4** Compare and contrast changes in contemporary life with life in the past by looking at social, economic, political, and cultural roles played by individuals and groups
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**¿Quién es?**  
**¿Qué hizo? ¿Porqué?**  
**¿Cuándo?** (línea de tiempo)  
**PRODUCTIVE**  
- Name issues of inequality and oppression  
- Name the nonviolent actions and contributions of César Chávez and Martin Luther King Jr.  
**PRODUCTIVE**  
- el campesino, el ministro, mexicano americano, afroamericano, luchar por, marchar, decir discursos  
- justo y injusto  
- Él _____. |
| Understand the lives of extraordinary people and place them in time and context  
The lives and the nonviolent actions of César Chávez and Martin Luther King Jr. where different but shared many similarities.  
Understand the powerful impact that nonviolent actions can have on social change. |  |  |

**Activities:**
2. Review MLK/Chávez vocabulary via card sets. (repeat words with actions)  
3. Practice Viva César Chávez chant; which things does he share with MLK?  
4. Compare MLK/César Chávez timeline with class.  
5. Create a new timeline, including both.  
6. What do these leaders have in common? They shared similar nonviolent strategies? What made these strategies so courageous and powerful?  
7. Canción de adiós.  

**Assessment:**
1. Vocabulary card comprehension as shown in actions  
2. Read vocabulary cards to respond to questions  
3. Time line comprehension as shown in correct placement  

**Materials:**
Flashcard set, César Chávez time line, iPod, calendar.

**Standards:**
**B.4.2** Use a timeline to select, organize, and sequence information describing eras in history  
**B.4.3** Examine biographies, stories, narratives, and folk tales to understand the lives of ordinary and extraordinary people, place them in time and context, and explain their relationship to important historical events  
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**B.4.5** Identify the historical background and meaning of important political values such as freedom, democracy, and justice
## Spanish/Social Studies

**Unit Theme:** Diversity: Famous Leaders & Social Change

**Day 7**

**Lesson:** MLK/Chávez Assessment Venn Diagram  
**Grade:** 2nd

### Social Studies Concepts:
- Everyday people became known for their contributions to society; We will study them through non-fiction books.
- Understand the lives of extraordinary people and place them in time and context
- The lives and the nonviolent actions of César Chávez and Martin Luther King Jr. where different but shared many similarities.
- Understand the powerful impact that nonviolent actions can have on social change.

### Language Skills:

**RECEPTIVE**
- Understand the biographies of the two influential men
- Identify from a verbal description who is being described – Chávez or King
- Understand the questions: “Who is…?” “What did he do?” “When?”
- Understand clues to sequence events on a timeline

**PRODUCTIVE**
- Name issues of inequality and oppression
- Name the nonviolent actions and contributions of César Chávez and Martin Luther King Jr.

### Key Structures and Vocabulary:

**RECEPTIVE**
- **Personas:** el campesino, los pobres, la gente, el niño, el ministro, afroamericano, mexicano americano
- **Acciones no violentos:** la marcha, decir el discurso, ayunar, luchar por (en el sentido de trabajar por)
- **Causas:** el respeto, el derecho, la dignidad, los sueldos
- **Comparando:** justo y injusto, segregado/dividido, integrado, igual y diferente
- ¿Quién es?  
- ¿Qué hizo? ¿Porqué?  
- ¿Cuándo? (línea de tiempo)

**PRODUCTIVE**
- el campesino, el ministro, mexicano americano, afroamericano, luchar por, marchar, decir discursos
- justo y injusto
- Él _____.

### Activities:

2. Review MLK/Chávez vocabulary via card sets. (repeat words with actions)
3. Compare MLK/César Chávez timeline with class.
4. Compare vocabulary sets, using Venn diagram chart.
5. Students complete their own Venn diagram cut and paste work at their seats.
6. Canción de adios.

### Assessment:

1. Vocabulary comprehension
2. Summative Venn diagram assessment.

### Materials:
- calendar, flashcard sets, Venn diagram pocket chart, Venn diagram worksheets

### Standards:

**B.4.4** Compare and contrast changes in contemporary life with life in the past by looking at social, economic, political, and cultural roles played by individuals and groups

**B.4.5** Identify the historical background and meaning of important political values such as freedom, democracy, and justice

**C.4.1** Identify and explain the individual’s responsibilities to family, peers, and the community, including the need for civility and respect for diversity

**E.4.9** Explain how people learn about others who are different from themselves