

César Chávez, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Civil Rights

Grade 4



Both César Chávez and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. faced resistance to their crusades for equality.

Consider the following quotes:

"All truth passes through three **stages**. First, it is **ridiculed**. Second, it is violently **opposed**. Third, it is accepted as **self-evident**."

—Arthur Schopenhauer, German philosopher

"Every great **movement** must experience three stages: ridicule, discussion, **adoption**."

—John Stuart Mill, English philosopher

"First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win."

—Mahatma **Gandhi**

Define and discuss the **bold** words from the quotes above.

[Answers will vary.]

Choose a quote from above and explain how it relates to what you have learned about the struggle for civil rights or farm workers' rights.

[Answers will vary. Example: Every movement for change has initially faced opposition from those who fear that they will lose if another gains. For example, when farm workers, who were once considered unworthy of any legal protection, had no rights, growers benefited because they were able to overwork their employees, exploit them, or, sometimes, not even pay them. Granting rights to the workers prevented the growers from getting away with these abuses. With persistence, Chávez and the United Farm Workers were able to establish the long-overdue protection that farm workers deserved.]

When Chávez was 14 years old, he read about Gandhi's belief in nonviolence and vegetarianism. Years later, Chávez realized that the food on his plate was once an animal who had a life and family, just as he did. Chávez decided that if he loved animals, he could not eat them.

What is a vegetarian?

[Answer: Someone who does not eat animals.]

Why do you think that a vegetarian diet is considered to be nonviolent?

[Answers may vary. Example: A vegetarian diet is nonviolent because it doesn't require animals to be killed for their flesh.]

Knowing that Chávez did not support violence in his campaign for migrant farm workers' rights, do you find it surprising to learn that he was also a vegetarian? Explain.

[Answer: No, Chávez believed in practicing nonviolence in every aspect of his life, including his diet.]

Like Chávez, civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. embraced nonviolence. In 1968, Dr. King Jr. was assassinated, but his words of equality and nonviolence still inspire people today.

What kind of impact did Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s campaign for equality have on society and on our laws?

[Answer: Dr. King Jr. felt that discrimination should not be accepted. He championed the civil rights movement, which resulted in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This act outlawed discrimination based upon a person's skin color, race, national origin, religion, or gender.]

Why do you think that the movements led by Chávez and Dr. King Jr. faced such criticism?

[Answers will vary. Example: Oppression is maintained through a hierarchy of power. Those who hold the most power control those who hold less. Chávez and Dr. King Jr. challenged those in power to change the laws to benefit those with less power. Those in power saw no need for change because keeping others oppressed benefited them, and the suggested changes threatened their position.]

Can you think of reasons that some people might have opposed Chávez's campaign for animal rights?

[Answers will vary. Example: Protecting animals sometimes involves changing our customs, traditions, and jobs. Some people resist that change.]

Chávez and Dr. King Jr. were ridiculed at first, but decades later, we praise them and even have national holidays to celebrate their work.

Why do you think Chávez and Dr. King Jr. were successful in changing the way that society treats people? Explain.

[Answers will vary. Example: Despite opposition and ridicule, they were unwavering in their nonviolent efforts to improve the lives of others. They educated people who previously believed that farm workers and African-Americans were unworthy of equal rights.]

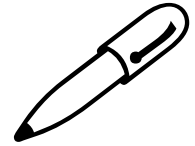
Is there something in the world that you would like to improve? Do you believe that you can do something to bring about this change?

[Answers will vary. Encourage students to share their responses with the class.]

On a separate piece of paper, describe the necessary steps that you will need to take to make this change.

Name: _____ Date: _____

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Stages: _____

Ridiculed: _____

Opposed: _____

Self-evident: _____

Movement: _____

Adoption: _____

Gandhi: _____

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