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Images, Art, and Paraphernalia: Analyzing Tactics of the United Farm Workers and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers

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In 1970 grape growers signed union contracts with the UFW. The campaign was led by Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez. They were renamed the United Farm Workers (UFW).

In 1965 when Filipino farm worker group the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee began to strike against farm owners for unfair wages and poor working conditions. This group merged with the National Farm Workers Association which was led by Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez. They were renamed the United Farm Workers (UFW).

The UFW led workers in strikes and protests in the fields, which eventually grew into a nationwide boycott of grapes from California. In 1970 grape growers signed union contracts with the UFW which guaranteed better pay and working conditions for farm workers.

How and why did the United Farm Workers strategically use art in the Delano Grape Boycott? How have the Coalition of Immokalee Workers adopted these practices?

Methodology:

Multiple items were accessed including posters, buttons, manuscripts, documentary footage, and audio interviews. These items were looked at for mentions of deliberate inclusion of art such as graphic design, music, and theatre. These items were then analyzed using two theories popularized in the fields of Peace Studies and Education.

Social movement strategy: The study and categorization of tactics used by social movements. This project used the work of Gene Sharp who specialized in nonviolent movements

Popular education: A concept whereby participants learn from each other as equals versus the hierarchical norm of education that assumes one person has knowledge and the other does not. Established by Paulo Freire, this theory gives education through various means, including art and theatre, as the major way in which marginalized communities can work towards equality.

Conclusions

The United Farm Workers strategically included art in the Delano Grape Boycott primarily through the Taller Grafico and El Teatro Campesino. The art used by the movement was reflective of Mexican-American culture from images of Emiliano Zapata to traditional jarocho music. The assumption that art and protest paraphernalia are included in a movement out of tradition includes protest puppets, cultural music, and radio shows how similar movements learn from each other. Much like the UFW, the CIW chooses art that is culturally significant such as son jarocho music.

By comparing both the CIW and the UFW one can see how movements learn from each other and borrow successful tactics. This project also shows how incorporating art and culture within a movement can strengthen solidarity among movement participants.

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