



2024-25 ETHNIC STUDIES FREEDOM SCHOOL

¡SÍ SE PUEDE! (1987) STUDY GUIDE



ABOUT THE FILM

Eddie Wong completed the documentary ¡Sí Se Puede! for the Cannery Workers Support Committee swiftly and on a shoestring budget. Using VHS, the cheapest and most accessible medium at the time, he was barely able to cover just one rough edit of the footage. The film was intended to serve as popular education in service of the strike.

VOICES FROM THE FILM

OFELIA LOPEZ (STRIKER)

“Without the workers, the owner is nothing. My plan is to continue fighting, united, within the company to continue to have better benefits.”



REVEREND JESSE JACKSON (CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST)

“Just as Selma, Alabama, was an unlikely place for political emancipation, Watsonville is an unlikely place for economic emancipation.”



CHAVELO MORENO (STRIKER)

“We’re going to continue to stay on strike for as long as it takes. They [bosses] are trying to abuse us, take advantage of us because we’re Chicanos, Mexicanos, and they didn’t think we were going to fight back.”



MARIA CORRALEJO (HUNGER STRIKER)

“The hunger strikers have promised some peace to the violence of this struggle. We have promised to give of ourselves a sacrifice for the benefits of the workers.”





COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE

1. What have you learned about the cannery strikes before? Where/when/from whom?
2. Do you have family members or friends who participated or felt the effects of the strike? What were their experiences like?
3. What can we learn from key voices highlighted in the documentary (see some examples of statements on prior page)?
4. For those of you who lived through the strike, what did the film not cover about the strike?

Racism has to be reckoned with because it is "an underlying issue in everything that we do," Corralejo told supporters meeting in Watsonville yesterday.

LEARNING FROM THE STRUGGLE

1. What can we learn from the Watsonville strikers and their 18-month struggle for economic justice? How were they able to resist repression and to combat demoralization?
2. What key approaches/tactics stand out to you as having helped them to develop a strong strike?
3. What does this strike teach you about power, both how it is wielded against uprising workers, and how it is built within the community?
4. Chicax and Latinx people make up an overwhelming majority in Watsonville yet how does the power structure minoritize our interests?
5. How has Watsonville changed for the better because of the strike? Conversely, what problems faced by the strikers remain?
6. Is the strike taught widely in local schools? Is it commemorated in plaques, landmarks, or monuments in the city of Watsonville? Why or why not?
7. What was the significance of the workers' chants?



- “El pueblo unido jamás será vencido.”
“Unidas en la huelga, no los moveran.”
“No contrato!”
“Esquiroles!”