



Peaceful Protesters

Many people in the history of the United States have worked to make this country better by taking a stand against unfair laws and practices. Their peaceful **resistance** to unfair laws and practices brought about positive changes.

Henry David Thoreau, who was born in Concord, Massachusetts, in 1816, always stood up for what he believed to be right. After he graduated from Harvard, Thoreau taught school for a brief time in Concord, but he resigned to **protest** the school's practice of whipping students for misbehavior. Later in his life he was arrested for refusing to pay a poll tax. He refused to pay the tax as a protest against slavery, which was still practiced in the United States, and against the country's involvement in a war against Mexico. Thoreau wrote an essay called "Civil Disobedience" in which he urged people to use peaceful resistance to bring about changes in laws and government policies with which they disagreed. Thoreau's **principles** would **inspire** and influence future protesters like the leaders of the Civil Rights movement.

On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks, an African-American woman, refused to give up her seat to a white man on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. At the time, the law said that all African Americans had to sit in the back of public buses. Rosa was arrested for breaking the law. Rosa's simple protest caught the attention of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He and a group of African-American leaders decided to **boycott** the Montgomery buses as a form of peaceful **resistance** to laws that **discriminate** against one group of people. For 368 days African Americans walked or carpooled rather than use the buses. Dr. King was arrested. Threats were made against him and his family, but he and his followers held strong. They continued to boycott the buses and to hold peaceful marches to show their **opposition** to the laws. In 1956, the United States Supreme Court declared Alabama's **segregation** laws unconstitutional. Dr. King's protest was successful! He said, "The strong man is the man who can stand up for his rights and not hit back."

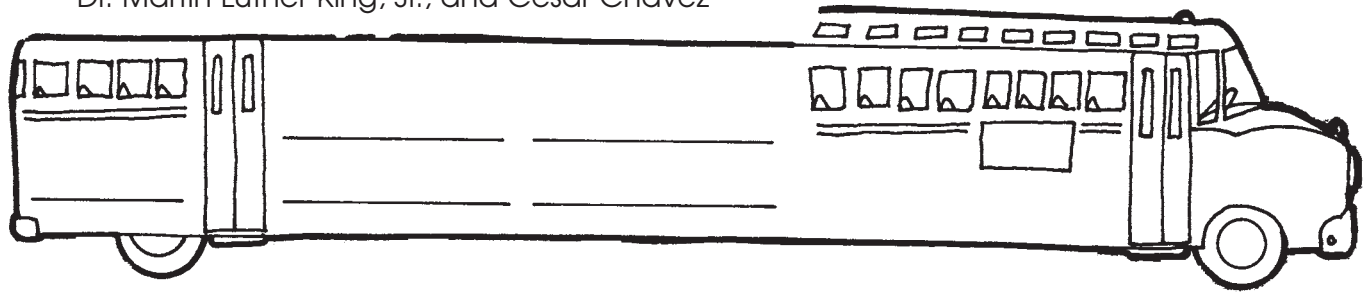


Dr. King's success inspired Cesar Chavez, another believer in peaceful protest. In 1962, he organized farm workers to protest low wages and poor working conditions. Chavez and all the members of the newly organized United Farm Workers of America took a pledge to use only nonviolent methods to bring about change. Through organized protest marches, strikes, and a national boycott of grapes, Chavez and the UFWA were able to improve the lives of the **migrant** farmers. Farm workers earned higher pay and benefits and had safer working conditions. Although Chavez died in 1993, his work continues through the union he founded. In 1994, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in the United States, was awarded **posthumously** to Cesar Chavez. He was the second Mexican American to receive this honor.



1. On the bus, write five words that describe these peaceful protesters:

Henry David Thoreau, Rosa Parks,
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Cesar Chavez



2. Henry David Thoreau, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Cesar Chavez all believed that one should take a stand against unfair laws and practices. What other belief did they share?

3. Complete the puzzle using the bolded words from the story.

Across

- 1. after death
- 4. to object
- 5. stand against
- 6. a farm worker who moves from place to place
- 8. the policy of separating by race

Down

- 1. basic truths, laws, or beliefs
- 2. to refuse to buy, sell, or use
- 3. to show preference in favor of or against
- 7. to motivate
- 9. the act of taking a stand against



On another piece of paper, create an award for another famous African American or one you know and admire. Write why you believe this person deserves the award you created.

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1. Answers will vary. 2. They all believed that the protest should be peaceful and non-violent.

3.

