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USING THIS GUIDE

“Si Se Puede”

— Dolores Huerta

“While her name’s rarely mentioned in history books, she just may be the most vocal activist you’ve never heard of.”

— Michelle Miller, CBS reporter, *Dolores*

This discussion guide is a resource to support organizations hosting Indie Lens Pop-Up events for the film *Dolores*, as well as for educators who wish to use the film to prompt discussion and engagement with audiences of all sizes. The guide offers event leaders information and ideas to facilitate civic dialogue and deepen understanding about the life and influence of Dolores Huerta and her ongoing leadership in movements that advance the rights of farmworkers, women, the LGBTQ communities, and Latinos and other communities of color.

Refer to the companion lessons on [PBS LearningMedia](#) to implement *Dolores* in schools.

“Despite the fact that Dolores didn’t follow her passion to become a dancer, she is a dancer on the stage of justice.”

— Professor Angela Davis, *Dolores*

Words Matter

In discussions of race, racism, sexism, and immigration, strong emotions and ideas may surface. The words you choose to describe racial, ethnic, religious, sexual and gender identities, immigration status, and citizenship, as well as when discussing other sensitive topics addressed in this film, matter a great deal. Understanding your audience and how groups in your area self-identify will help guide your choice of language as a facilitator. Be both transparent and explicit about why language is important and has power.

The *Dolores* guide amplifies and expands on these central questions in the film:

- Who is Dolores Huerta?
- In what ways has her work shaped our world?
- Who writes history?
- How is her story relevant to the challenges our nation faces today?



Indie Lens Pop-Up is a neighborhood series that brings people together for film screenings and community-driven conversations. Featuring documentaries seen on PBS’s *Independent Lens*, Indie Lens Pop-Up draws local residents, leaders, and organizations together to discuss what matters most, from newsworthy topics to family and relationships.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FILM



“Dolores Huerta is among the most important, yet least-known activists in American history. An equal partner in co-founding the first farmworkers unions with Cesar Chavez, her enormous contributions have gone largely unrecognized. Dolores Huerta tirelessly led the fight for racial and labor justice alongside Chavez, becoming one of the most influential feminists of the 20th century. Like so many powerful female advocates, Dolores and her sweeping reforms were, and still are, largely overlooked. Even as she empowered a generation of immigrants to stand up for their rights, her own relentless work ethic was constantly under attack. False accusations from foes and friends alike, of child neglect and immoral behavior, pushed Dolores out of the very union she helped create. Still, she remains as steadfast in her fight as ever at the age of 87.

Peter Bratt’s provocative and energizing documentary challenges this incomplete, one-sided history and reveals the raw, personal stakes involved in committing one’s life to the fight for justice. Interweaving archival footage with interviews from Dolores and her contemporaries, the film sets the record straight on one of the most effective and undervalued civil and labor rights leaders in modern U.S. history.”¹

¹ Synopsis taken from PBS resource:
www.doloresthemovie.com/stations

LETTER FROM THE FILMMAKER



Peter Bratt
DIRECTOR

In 2009, in the days leading up to the commercial release of *La Mission* (my second feature), Latino activists around the nation put out a call asking people and businesses across the country to boycott the state of Arizona for passing a controversial Senate bill that essentially gave police permission to racially profile Latinos. Faced with the dilemma of whether or not to go to Arizona to promote the film, I called activist and community elder Dolores Huerta for her advice. Before I could finish explaining my conundrum, Dolores insisted, “Our Latino people need stories like this more than ever. Not only should you go, but I’ll go with you!”

And so, true to her word, she did go with me and helped introduce the film. The primarily Latino audience was nervous about the national conversation surrounding the fate of our culture and our people and, by Dolores’s estimation, in need of reassurance that we are immovably, undeniably, permanently here to stay, as we have always been. Of course, they loved her. She was at once calming and inciting—the warmth and charisma of her presence was undeniable. I was, in a word, *amazed*.

You see, as a child of the movement, the son of a single Peruvian Indian mother who marched with Dolores and celebrated labor leader Cesar Chavez back in the early 1970s, I chanted “brown is beautiful” at 10 years of age, and I had a kind of awed respect for their work and their reputation. And now, here I was, hosting Q&As with Dolores Huerta, Super Chicana, in an Arizona multiplex. Rapt, I watched her warm interaction and tireless enthusiasm with the audience that day, and I wondered why there wasn’t yet a film about such an important and influential figure. I specifically remember thinking, “If only I was a documentary filmmaker...”

Then one day, some five years later, just like in the movies, the phone rang. The person on the other end was rock music icon Carlos Santana. In a mysterious and quietly urgent voice,

he whispered, “We need to make a documentary about sister Dolores while she’s still with us.” There was little doubt in my mind that this was not so much a question as it was a cultural directive, an artist’s call to action from one storyteller to another to fulfill a historical obligation. Even in the silence immediately following his words, we both knew there was only one way for me to respond. And yet I panicked, in part because I knew nothing about making a doc, but, more to the point, because I knew that a truly worthy story would have to present not simply a courageous iconic figure and her list of triumphs, but a fully fleshed human being, warts and all. With both excitement and trepidation, I replied, “What do you have in mind?” As it turned out, the answer was quite a lot.

In the copious volumes written about legendary civil rights activist Cesar Chavez and how he formed the first farmworkers’ union in America, there is comparatively little mentioned about Dolores Huerta, his equal partner and co-founder of the union, an equally formidable labor leader and civil rights organizer who had fought—and to this day still fights—tirelessly for the liberation of workers, women, and immigrants for nearly seven decades. Why was this? What had happened? Was her story lost accidentally or left out deliberately? Why had she been erased? It didn’t make sense. But it made for a great story.

After interviewing farmworkers, scholars, politicians, feminists, labor historians, and 10 of her 11 biological children, one thing became crystal clear: her erasure from the historical record was deliberate. And if Dolores had been excised, then only she could tell her story. Directly, calmly. Her voice. Her life. Her words.

As we worked on the film, Dolores’s voice revealed a woman both heroic and flawed. Her courage in speaking without filters deepened the narrative and naturally delivered a framework within which to organize the reams of material I had unearthed. Processing Dolores’s story and attempting to put it into a larger historical context ultimately begged the question, who decides what history is? Who decides which stories are told? And who gets to tell them?

In this consolidated, never-before-seen collection of personal memories, historical documentation, and compelling first-person narrative, Dolores Huerta emerges as more than just a footnote to 20th-century America—she proves to be a true American hero. And like many great figures held in an equally high regard, she is also revealed to be utterly mortal, a woman whose unconventional choices and personal sacrifices expose her humanity.

My hope is that people might now see Dolores’s story as part of their own, one that perhaps enables them to more fully and more honestly understand the last 50 years in America’s history and how those years connect to and inform where we find ourselves today.

— Peter Bratt
Director, *Dolores*

FOR THE FACILITATOR: Before You Screen

Given the importance and emotional power of this film, we recommend that prior to your screening event, you take the time to become familiar with important components of Dolores's life and her work. Used together, *Dolores* and this screening guide will help you prepare for a meaningful event.

Who Is Dolores Huerta? Rebel, Activist, Feminist, Mother

Dolores Huerta's ongoing life story is at once a look into struggle, poverty, and discrimination and a celebration of passion, conviction, victory, and persistence. She has strived and sacrificed to better the lives of others through seven decades of community organizing and activism. Today, at age 87, undaunted, full of power and charm, Dolores advocates around a broad set of community concerns, including immigration, education, sexual harassment, and the rights of women and LGBTQ communities.

She was born Dolores Clara Fernandez on April 19, 1930, in Dawson, New Mexico. From an early age, she witnessed trusted adults taking action and speaking out on behalf of others. Her compassionate and enterprising mother, Alicia (Chavez) Fernandez, exemplified independence in her business and personal life, modeling for Dolores what it looks like to take charge, be kind and work hard to build a life of substance. Dolores's father, Juan Fernandez, was a farmworker and a union activist. When Dolores was eight years old, he ran for political office and won a seat as a New Mexico state assemblyman (though Dolores's parents were divorced when she was three, and by that time Dolores had moved with her mother and brothers to Stockton, California).

Mirroring her mother's civic engagement, Dolores was active throughout high school and in her community of Stockton, where she developed her political identity. Stockton was a culturally diverse farming community of African Americans and immigrants from the Philippines, China and Japan. Conditions were harsh for the farmworkers, and discrimination was rampant against people of color.

Dolores earned her teaching credentials at the University of Pacific's Delta College in Stockton. She taught school briefly in the 1950s, but became distraught by the number of schoolchildren living in poverty and showing up to school hungry. She concluded that her work would matter more if she could focus directly on organizing farmworkers. Dolores met Fred Ross, founder of the Community Service Organization (CSO), and launched her organizing career.²

"If you were coming of age in the 1950s in California in the San Joaquin Valley, you were coming of age in a time of conformity. Everybody was being fit into a mold, and if you were Dolores Huerta, there was no mold."

— Luis Valdez,
playwright, filmmaker

² Biography compiled from National Women's History Museum, 2017. Dolores Huerta (1930–) www.nwhm.org/education-resources/biographies/dolores-huerta and Cesar Chavez, "The Organizers Tale," *Ramparts Magazine*, July 1966. libraries.ucsd.edu/farmworker-movement/ufwarchives/DalzellArchive/RampartsMagazine/Cesar%20Chavez_001.pdf

FOR THE FACILITATOR:

Before You Screen

Dolores's accomplishments span almost seven decades:

1930

Born in Dawson, NM

1947

Graduated Stockton High School

1955

Started Stockton Chapter of Community Service Organization with Fred Ross; met Cesar Chavez

1960

Founded Agricultural Workers Association (AWA); set-up voter registration; lobbied for assistance for non-US citizen farm workers

1962

Co-founded the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA)

1965

AWA and the NFWA united to become United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (eventually, United Farm Workers (UFW))

1970

Led negotiations with 26 grape growers to sign historic agreement to improve conditions for workers

1970s

Coordinated national lettuce boycott leading to passage of 1975 Agricultural Labor Relations Act, granting collective bargaining to farmworkers

1980s

Served as vice president of UFW; co-founded UFW radio station

1988

Suffered life threatening injuries following an altercation with San Francisco police

1993

Recipient of Ellis Island Medal of Freedom Award; inducted into National Women's Hall of Fame

1998

Received Eleanor Roosevelt Award

1999

Retired from UFW

2002

Awarded Puffin/Nation Prize for Creative Citizenship

2003

Founded Dolores Huerta Foundation, advocating for working poor, women, and children

2012

Recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom

Before You Screen

What Was Dolores's Work?

Challenging Systems and Inequality

Dolores was increasingly concerned about the unsafe and indecent conditions that immigrant farmworkers had to endure. She had personally experienced discrimination and felt that a turning point in her work was when she witnessed the police violence toward Mexican Americans and African Americans in the farming communities in California. And in 1955, she and Cesar Chavez together organized a Stockton chapter of the CSO.

But it became clear that the CSO was less interested than they were in the plight of rural Mexican Americans and farmworkers, so Dolores and Cesar resigned from the organization. In 1962, the pair co-founded the United Farm Worker's Association, predecessor to the United Farm Workers (UFW), which formed three years later. Dolores left her comfortable home, her friends, her love for dancing, her beloved jazz music and some of her children in the hands of other caretakers in order to pursue community organizing for farmworkers in Delano.

“When we started Organized Farm Workers, people would say to us, ‘They’re poor. They don’t speak English. They’re not citizens. How are you going to possibly organize them?’ and of course the response that we had to that is, ‘The power is in your body.’”

— Dolores Huerta,
Dolores

“These were not small farmers. This was agribusiness, and the growers were tied into local government and have control of local sheriffs. When we would go on a picket line, the sheriffs would not hesitate to beat somebody. The contractors or the foremen or some of the tractor workers wouldn’t hesitate to run over a striker.”

— Lori de Leon,
daughter of Dolores Huerta, *Dolores*

“Farmworkers should share in the fruits of their labor. The growers cannot own it all.”

— Eliseo Medina,
executive vice president, Service Employees
International Union, *Dolores*

“Making this huge decision to leave my home and to come to Delano, I didn’t know where my next meal was going to be coming from, I was worried about how my kids were going to be able to take the move.”

— Dolores Huerta,
Dolores

FOR THE FACILITATOR:

Before You Screen



Challenging racism and overturning the system of economic inequity that farmworkers lived with on a daily basis were inseparable to Dolores and Cesar. As co-founder of the UFW, Dolores helped coordinate the 1965 strike of 5,000 grape workers and lead the negotiation to create the first workers' contract as a result. She also organized the 1973 consumer grape boycott, which ultimately secured collective bargaining rights, better pay and improved conditions for agricultural workers in California with the historic 1975 California Agricultural Labor Relations Act. Since that time, corporations have gone global, and some have moved workforces overseas to avoid labor disputes.³

Dolores served as vice president of the UFW until Cesar's death in 1993, after which she made the painful decision to leave the UFW. In 1992, Dolores founded the 21st Century Party, and in 2002, she founded the Dolores Huerta Foundation as a continuation of her ongoing commitment to nonviolent social justice work. Dolores is also a mother of 11, grandmother of 15 and great-grandmother of seven.

"Nobody's ever been convicted for any of the murders of any of the martyrs of the United Farm Workers. Think about that."

— Ricardo Chavez,
son of Dolores Huerta, *Dolores*

³ www.nytimes.com/2016/09/29/business/economy/more-wealth-more-jobs-but-not-for-everyone-what-fuels-the-backlash-on-trade.html

SCREENING EVENT



Opening Conversation

Set the Tone: Begin your community event with an informal conversation, as if you were in a living room speaking with neighbors and friends.

- Why did you come to see *Dolores*?
- What do you know about Dolores Huerta?
- What changes do you want to see in the world?
- What obstacles keep these changes from happening?
- How do you participate in creating those changes?

Post-Screening Discussion Topics

Dolores is full of opportunities to engage audiences in a meaningful dialogue on many issues. The following topics can be used as points of departure for sharing perspectives and inviting multiple viewpoints. Discussion guidelines for each topic are below.

- The Power of a Woman in Grassroots Organizing
- How Does Dolores's Work Reflect Intersectionality?
- Whose Story? Whose History?
- An American Story: Dolores Huerta

The guidelines for each topic include:

1. Framing context for facilitators to use to open their post-screening discussion.
2. Compelling quotes from the film and leading thinkers to spark audience discussion and inspire individual reflection.
3. Discussion prompts to help the audience participate in the dialogue.

Post-Screening Discussion Topics

The Power of a Woman in Grassroots Organizing

Framing Context: The principles and strategies of community organizing—that people have the ultimate power to demand change—fueled the successes of the United Farm Workers union. Dolores’s passion and commitment moved individuals to act, even in the face of tremendous and sometimes violent resistance and sexism. She was one of only a few women leading organizing work, and her life and decisions were scrutinized and criticized like few other leaders in the movement. She faced challenges to her leadership, she had to contend with sexism and *marianismo* (the traditional cultural roles and ideals of Latina women, including patriarchal authority), and she had to deal with reconciling her work with her Catholic beliefs, around such issues as reproductive choice.

With this reality in mind, use these passages and prompts to facilitate a discussion on the power and challenges Dolores faced as a community organizer and as a Latina leader.

“Hatred and racism are extensions of violence, and if we become that which we are trying to end, then we are becoming like the oppressor, and we’re trying to set up a different system.”

— Dolores Huerta, *Dolores*

Discussion Prompts:

- Why is community organizing such a powerful tool?
- Discuss Dolores’s commitment to using nonviolence in her organizing work.
- What lessons can we learn from Dolores’s story about the power of grassroots organizing, the power of protest and the power of one person’s voice to motivate people to create change?

“One of the things that was very helpful in the beginning was that Dolores being out there made it all right for women to be in the picket line, and so it made it all right for the husbands to permit their wives to be in the picket line and their daughters and their mothers and so forth.”

— Cesar Chavez, *Dolores*

“For a woman of my culture, there used to be only three directions she could turn: to the Church as a nun, to the streets as a prostitute or to the home as a mother.”⁴

— Gloria Anzaldua, author

Discussion Prompts:

- Which challenges did Dolores face because in union organizing, she was a “first” of so many kinds—first Latina, first woman, and so on?
- Are male leaders of social movements held to the same standards as women? Why or why not? How did Dolores navigate and confront marianismo within the UFW?

“We—as women, we’re so used to being accommodators. We want to try to please people... I just always felt it was wrong for me to try to take credit for the work that I did. I don’t think that way anymore. We’ve got to be able to say our ideas, and then—I’m going to quote Gloria Steinem on this—‘Put lights around it.’ Right? Beat the drum. Put it in writing. Put your name on it to make sure that you get the credit for the idea that you had.”

— Dolores Huerta, *Dolores*

Discussion Prompts:

- In what ways does being a woman increase Dolores’s influence and leadership? In what ways is it a challenge for her?
- Think of an activist or organizer who is an inspiration for you. What drew him or her to activism? Do ethnic, national, religious, gender or other identities shape his or her work? How?

⁴ Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, second edition, 39.

Post-Screening Discussion Topics

How Does Dolores’s Work Reflect Intersectionality?

Framing Context: A major thread of Dolores’s life and career is the connection that she understood between the civil rights and social justice struggles—especially as they related to sexism, economic inequality and systemic racism—of many different groups. Rather than seeing competition among groups striving for rights, Dolores saw the commonalities and intersections between their struggles and the value and power of working together.

Using these passages, discuss how and why Dolores’s work reflects intersectionality:

“The reason for the existence of the union was to try to get power for the powerless. The farmworkers don’t have any power to solve any of their own economic and social problems. They’re faced by not only economic discrimination and social, but also racial discrimination. This is true of the Mexican farmworkers. It is of the black farmworker, the Arabian, and sometimes even the poor white farmworker.”

— Dolores Huerta, *Dolores*

“I was out there fighting for the Mexican American movement, but I was not focused on the rights of Mexican American women. I think that was the big shift that I had.”

— Dolores Huerta, *Dolores*

“Oftentimes today, looking back we think about distinct and discrete movements. We think that the black movement was one movement and then the Chicano movement was over here. And then there was the Native American movement. But all those movements and the individuals within those movements were connected. And we knew that one movement would not be successful without the other.”

— Professor Angela Davis, *Dolores*

“One thing I learned from Dolores in this process of making this film was that men can be feminists. And that a feminist is also somebody who stands up not just for women’s rights, but for immigrant rights, black lives, labor, environment, you name it.”⁶

— Peter Bratt, *Huffington Post*

Discussion Prompts:

- How does intersectionality influence the work of Dolores Huerta?
- Why is intersectionality an important concept for understanding and addressing the challenges our nation faces today?
- Think of an example in your own community or life of the importance of intersectionality.

“Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It’s not simply that there’s a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things.”⁵

— Professor Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, UCLA School of Law

⁵ www.law.columbia.edu/news/2017/06/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality

⁶ www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/dolores-huerta-documentary-biopic_us_59bc08bee4b02da0e141a268

Post-Screening Discussion Topics

Ethnic Studies: Educational Intersectionality

The teaching of ethnic studies in U.S. high schools and colleges emerged primarily from the civil rights protests of the 1960s, when students of color and their allies organized to demand to be taught by teachers who represented them and to be taught about their own history in the United States, not just that of white people. Since that time, ethnic and multicultural studies classes have grown more common across the country. A 2010 study from the National Education Association showed that high-quality ethnic studies programs significantly improve educational outcomes for all students, and especially for students of color, including student engagement and graduation rates.⁷

“What happens when historians leave out many of America’s peoples? What happens, to borrow the words of Adrienne Rich, ‘when someone with the authority of a teacher’ describes our society and ‘you are not in it’? Such an experience can be disorienting—a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing.”⁸

— **Professor Ronald Takaki**, University of California, Berkeley

“Yeah, I remember those marches, and it was kind of amazing for a brown boy to see a bunch of brown people in the United States marching simultaneously about something. As a Latino kid, the pressure to assimilate was great. Seeing women like Dolores Huerta out there gave me an example as a young brown kid to be able to engage in a way that’s not white, that was actually particular to us as brown people in this country.”

— **Roberto Lovato**, writer, research associate, *Dolores*

Discussion Prompts

- Discuss whether you were taught about your history and identity in school and what that meant to you.
- Do you think schools should have an ethnic studies program?
- Read aloud Roberto Lovato’s quote from the film and ask audience members to discuss their ideas about what seeing themselves in history means to students.

⁷ www.nea.org/assets/docs/NBI-2010-3-value-of-ethnic-studies.pdf

⁸ Takaki, R. (2008). *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*, p. 15. New York: Back Bay Books.

Post-Screening Discussion Topics

Whose Story? Whose History?

Framing Context: The film *Dolores* prompts the question, “Who is written into history?” One of director Peter Bratt’s central motivations for making the film *Dolores* was to make sure Dolores’s story gains its rightful place in the study of history and in our national narrative of civil rights leaders.

Use these passages to discuss how *Dolores* informed, changed, or challenged our understanding of history during this era:

“All that a person has is his or her story: who they are, what they’ve gone through, what their families have gone through. This is their story, and when you’re trying to deny them their story, you’re taking away their power.”

— **Dolores Huerta**, *Dolores*

“It’s about all the generations of young Chicanas, who are currently involved in their own struggles and need to be taught by example.”

— **Maria Elena Chavez**, daughter of Dolores Huerta, *Dolores*

Discussion Prompts:

- Peter Bratt asks audiences in his opening letter to this guide, “Who decides what history is? Who decides which stories are told? And who gets to tell them?” After screening *Dolores*, how would you respond to those questions?
- What is lost when your community’s story is absent?
- What do we learn about the role of sacrifice and social change from *Dolores*?
- What tools of history and filmmaking does Peter Bratt employ in documenting the life and work of Dolores Huerta?

“Latina girls do need to see statues of you, and they do need to have you in their history books. We’ve really got to set the record straight. Women cannot be written out of history.”

— **Juana Chavez**, daughter of Dolores Huerta, *Dolores*

“I mean, we’re knee-deep in sexism. We’re like downtown sexism city when it comes to how powerful she is and why she isn’t studied and why people don’t know her.”

— **Professor Curtis Acosta**, University of Arizona, *Dolores*

“Then we see the racism that we’re looking at today, we see the misogyny, homophobia and all that. And that’s because our histories are not being told, they are not included in our schoolbooks. So then what happens is that people will grow up ignorant of the contributions of people of color or of women or of the LGBT community, of labor unions, etc. We have this abysmal ignorance of women inside America. I think that it’s not only important for women, but it’s important for our whole society that our stories be told and that our victories and our achievements can be recorded in history.”⁹

— **Dolores Huerta**, *Huffington Post*

Discussion Prompts:

- Why does documenting Chicana history matter?
- What is your reaction to Professor Acosta’s criticism of omitting *Dolores* from the historical narrative of American history? Are we “knee-deep in sexism”?
- In today’s information-saturated environment, what role does the media play in documenting history? What examples come to mind?

⁹ www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/dolores-huerta-documentary-biopic_us_59bc08bee4b02da0e141a268

Post-Screening Discussion Topics

An American Story: Dolores Huerta

Framing Context: Dolores’s love for and pride in her ethnicity and culture gave her strength and fueled her conviction to improve the lives of her community and her country. Call her nonconformist, unorthodox, or nontraditional, Dolores faced criticism and pushback from people her entire life. The question of what it means to be an American continues to be at the forefront of our nation’s conversation on identity, culture, and assimilation. Who dictates what “American culture” is and who is “American”?

Use these passages to discuss the ways in which Dolores expressed her American identity:

“My mom, she grew up in the ‘40s, the dances, the bebop, the swing. She’s an American girl.”

— Ricardo Chavez, son of Dolores Huerta, *Dolores*

“We didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us.”

— Dolores Huerta, *Dolores*

“We are Indio, Mestiço, Hispano, Mexicano. The names have all been changed across the centuries, but they all mean the same thing. We have been Americanos longer than America has existed.”

— Dolores Huerta, *Dolores*

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean to be “American”?
- How do you define your American identity?

“My great-grandfather was in the Civil War on the Union side. My father was in the military. My brother was in the military, and I remember when I first read the Constitution of the United States in grammar school, I always felt so proud of being an American. I thought, “God, we have all these rights.” In a democracy, you make your demands and then somebody will listen to you. Justice will prevail. But I found out that when you do this in an economic situation, it doesn’t quite work like that. Once we started making those kind of demands, we had the same response that the black movement has had. Our people were killed. The system doesn’t really want brown people or black people to have an organization and to have any power. I found out that no matter what I did, I could never be an American. Never.”

— Dolores Huerta, *Dolores*

Discussion Prompts

- Reflect on Dolores’s statement “I could never be an American. Never.” What is your reaction to her belief given your thoughts on what it means to be an American?
- Is there a relationship between struggle, sacrifice, and American identity?

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES: Activities Beyond a Panel

Dolores offers multiple opportunities to engage audiences, including a panel discussion. Consider integrating these engagement activities for a more interactive event.

Panel Discussion

Convening local stakeholders for a panel discussion followed by a Q&A session is a reliable format to use for community conversations. Local leaders of advocacy groups, scholars, and other community stakeholders can be helpful to better inform the community and offer a chance for multiple perspectives to be shared, respected, and heard in an open and safe format.

A panel moderator may be helpful given the emotions associated with this topic. It may also be helpful to review and share with participants the “Using This Guide” section in the opening of this discussion guide.

Potential Partner Organizations and Speakers to Consider

Professors from women’s history, feminism, Latino studies and ethnic studies programs at local universities

Local chapters of the
Congressional Hispanic Caucus: chci.org

Local chapters of national civil liberties and civil rights organizations, such as the **ACLU:**
www.aclu.org/about/affiliates

Local grassroots organizations dedicated to the issues central to *Dolores’s* ongoing advocacy work, including women’s rights and equity, education, LGBTQ rights, and labor and employment rights such as:

American Association of University Women (AAUW)—the nation’s leading voice promoting equity and education for women and girls; since its founding in 1881, AAUW members have examined and taken positions on the fundamental issues of the day—educational, social, economic, and political:
www.aauw.org

Athena International—seeks to support, develop, and honor women leaders through programs that it administers in partnership with “host organizations” from local communities; the programs inspire women to reach their full potential and strive to create balance in leadership worldwide:
www.athenainternational.org

Girl Scouts of the USA—offers leadership development experiences for girls: www.girlscouts.org

National Association for Ethnic Studies—forum for scholars and activists concerned with the national and international dimensions of race and ethnicity: ethnicstudies.org

National Migrant & Seasonal Head Association—the national voice for migrant and seasonal farmworker children who are participants in a Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Program, helping member agencies provide quality comprehensive services to all farmworker children and their families:
<http://www.nmshsa.com/>

VoteRunLead—the largest and most diverse campaign and leadership program in the country; a training powerhouse for women looking to run for local and state office:
voterunlead.org

Activities Beyond a Panel

Dear Dolores Letter

In 2016, at an event honoring Dolores Huerta, community members of CIRCLE (www.circlestamp.org) were invited to write a “Dear Dolores” tribute letter describing how she influenced and inspired their life and work. Letters were written by a range of audiences, from young high school students to seasoned activists in the community.

After viewers screen the film and engage in some discussion, ask them to take a moment to write their own “Dear Dolores” letter, sharing their thoughts and feelings about her work, her influence on them personally or on how they think about what it means to be an American, a Latina, a mother, a social justice activist and more. Depending upon the size of your screening, invite the audience to share their letters with each other.

Considering copying the letters and sending a package directly to Dolores at:

Dolores Huerta Foundation
P.O. Box 2087
Bakersfield, CA 93303

Here are a few sample letters. Depending on time, you may want to read one aloud:

Dear Dolores,

When I first learned that you left your teaching career to help organize farmworkers, I instantly had respect for you and hoped that we would someday meet.

When someone changes the direction of their life to be of service to others, they are being true to themselves. Your actions over the years have given me courage to take the risks I had to take to be true to myself. Along with my abuela and my mother, you have helped to make me who I am today.

In working with youth, especially Latina and Latino youth, I have always talked about how you made the decision to help others and have encouraged them to be principled and compassionate, like you. They responded because they can see themselves in you and they like what they see.

I feel so fortunate and grateful to have lived during the same time period as you and that our paths have crossed more than once. You are a living legend who continues to inspire me every day.

*Thank you, Dolores.
 I love you.*

Estimada Sra. Dolores Huerta,

The first time we met was at La Paz, CA, at the headquarters for the UFW back in 1973. I was 17 years old. I had traveled with a caravan of Chicanos from Boulder, Colorado, arriving on the evening that one of your offices had been bombed.

We met again a year later when you were visiting Boulder on your birthday, and that was when my mother, Dora Esquibel, realized that you and she shared the same birthday. She was regarded as a significant Chicana leader in el movimiento in Colorado. Her involvement guided my involvement, which has never ended. Our paths have crossed in your visits to Colorado, in your work with LLEGO, at various events across the country. There is no reason for you to remember me. Much of my work is in the background, making sure things get done unless I am called to defend our community. My words carry weight when they have to, and my reputation has been earned. If you are like me, we meet many people in the course of a week, and there are too many names and faces to remember.

There have been any number of men from the Chicano community that have stepped up to lead. Many are now just lines in history. Your name, however, has been a consistent icon in the psyche of the Chicana, the Chicano and the new, young breed of activists. Our struggle has never ended, and I remain encouraged by the work that you continue to do. You are not alone in the work that you do—there are still many of us out here carrying the torch that guides our future. It is reassuring to know that I am not alone, that you and many others sigue con la lucha.

*Siempre,
 [XX]*

Activities Beyond a Panel

Community Organizing Exercise: Share Your Passion

In *Dolores*, we learn that Dolores's passion, integrity, and commitment to the cause not only drove her own successes, but also encouraged other people to get involved. Dolores speaks openly and passionately about her own beliefs and why she holds them, and in doing so, she encourages others to join her in action.

Ask participants to think about a change they would like to see in their country, community, workplace, or school. Have them take a few minutes to write down why this change matters to them. Tell them to think less about the facts and the data that prove their point of view and more about sharing their personal connection to the issue, a moment in time when they understood it differently or were moved to act. Ask them to write down their reflection or story.

Then ask them to share it with a person sitting near them. After one partner reads, the other offers feedback about what he or she liked and noticed about the reflection and about how hearing it made him or her feel.

Have viewers think about examples in the news or online of personal stories that have changed their thinking on an issue and share those with the group. Ask them to talk about how they could share their story to influence policy and legislation that relates to their passion.

Exploring Self-Identity

Dolores identifies as a rebel, an activist, a feminist, a mother, and many other identities. Each of those labels describes her gifts and challenges, and each influences her values and decisions as a change-maker.

Hand out pieces of paper to participants and ask them to draw a circle in the center of their paper, with six circles around it. Have them write their name in the center circle. After they are done, ask them to consider other parts of their identity to include in each of the other circles, such as national identity, gender, religion, family role, community role, or other identities they feel apply to them.

After a few moments of reflection, ask them to think about which part of their identity stands out in the following settings:

- When the national anthem is sung
- In a room full of people with a different race or religion
- In an occupation in which they are the only one of their gender or sexuality
- At a gathering of people who share many or most of their identities
- Other settings as appropriate to the group

Discussion Prompts

- What did you notice about how your identity might change in different settings?
- How does your identity influence important decisions in your life?
- In what ways have your identities shifted over time?
- What happens when your self-identity does not match the way others identify you?

“I, too, have the dream that I learned from Dolores Huerta that farmworkers can share in the wealth that they help to produce. She has such a firm belief in what she’s doing that she infects you with it.”

— *Elisio Medina, Dolores*

Additional Resources for Further Learning

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ITVS is a San Francisco-based nonprofit organization that has, for over 25 years, funded and partnered with a diverse range of documentary filmmakers to produce and distribute untold stories. ITVS incubates and co-produces these award-winning films and then airs them for free on PBS via our weekly series, *Independent Lens*, as well as other series through our digital platform, OVEE. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. For more information, visit itvs.org.

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Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 PM. The acclaimed series, with Lois Vossen as executive producer, features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens. Join the conversation: [facebook.com/independentlens](https://www.facebook.com/independentlens) and on Twitter @IndependentLens.

