

How can oppressed people attain power?



Supporting Questions

1. How do people control others and obtain power?
2. Does cultural influence turn into power?
3. How does culture, community life and experience turn into political power?

6th Grade Casas ACERO Humanities Inquiry Unit

How can oppressed people attain power?	
Inquiry Standard	SS.H.2.6-8.MdC. Analyze multiple factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras. SS.H.1.6-8.MdC. Analyze connections among events and developments in broader historical contexts.
Staging the Compelling Question	Who has power in your family? How do you know this? (provide evidence of; helps establish student awareness/knowledge-level with the concept of power) Where and who has power in your community? How do you know?

Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3
How do people control others and obtain power?	Can cultural influence turn into power?	How does culture, community life and experience turn into political power?
Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task
Gather specific evidence from historical accounts and primary documents of the tools used to obtain power - both violently and nonviolently.	From the Lyrics of "We're All Mexican" identify specific lyrics in which the artist's demonstrate their response to negative messages	Examine and explain and examine Sotomayor's assertion that her identity as a Latina impacts her positions and interpretation of the law as an intersection of culture and political position. Use evidence from the text to support your explanation.
Featured Sources	Featured Sources	Featured Sources
Source A: A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies Source B: In Defense of the Indian Source C: I Am Joaquin	YouTube Video - We're All Mexican "We're All Mexican" Lyrics	Source A: Sotomayor excerpt

Summative Performance Task	Argument
	Construct an argument that makes the case that Latino have demonstrated more agency/power as activists, artists, or politicians in the United States.
Summative Performance Task	Extension
	Choose a Latino to do a slide/poster visual presentation focusing on how they have made a positive impact on their community

Taking Informed Action	Understand
	Identify a current issue impacting the Latino community (immigration, bilingualism, etc.)
	Assess
	Analyze the various points/concerns of the issue and how it impacts Latinos
Taking Informed Action	Action
	Organize a meeting with a local politician (alderman) to address planned questions.

Overview

Inquiry Description

The Latino/Latina experience has been one of struggle for power from colonization to present participation in U.S politics. When does presence and cultural influence translate into political power? This unit study will explore how missionary and imperial forces used violence to assert power over indigenous peoples in Latin America, and conversely how individuals used their voices to advocate for justice.

The theme of nonviolent resistance and agency will be explored in advocacy, cultural influence and political power. Students will develop an understanding of the different ways that people move from oppression to power and representation over the course of time, as well as the forces that can undermine that trajectory.

Structure

This unit begins with examination of power and oppression in colonial Latin America. Students will read Bartolome de la Casas, a historian, missionary and writer who exposed the oppression of indigenous people during colonization. Additional historical and contemporary references allow for students to analyze non-violent resistance as a means of addressing societal injustice.

Students will explore ways that Latin@s have gained cultural influence in U.S. society, and used cultural influence as a lever for social change.

Lastly, students will examine examples of ways that elected officials draw on their identities and cultural backgrounds as a source of strength and knowledge of community as a competitive advantage.

Nonviolent protest, cultural influence and knowledge of community as a means to gain legitimate power will offer students and understanding of how oppressed and marginalized peoples have obtained power historically. It will also posit a framework for understanding their current environment and how contemporary issues around marginalization might be addressed.

Staging the Compelling Question

Compelling Question

How can oppressed people attain power?

Teachers may prompt this task with a definition of power, and then ask the following questions: Who has power in your family? How do you know this? (provide evidence of; helps establish student awareness/knowledge-level with the concept of power) Where and who has power in your community? How do you know? The goal with this staging task in this way is to surface students’ prior knowledge, rather than to introduce new content.

Supporting Question 1	
Supporting Question	How do people control others and obtain power?
Formative Performance Task	Gather specific evidence from historical accounts and primary documents regarding attainment of power, both violent and nonviolent.
Featured Sources	"In Defense of the Indian", "A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies", "Day Without Latinos", "I am Joaquin", "Larrazolo, Octaviano Ambrosio"

This supporting question and formative performance task is an exploration of Casas and his criticism of the Spanish's use of violence and murder in conquering the indigenous people in the Americas. This question also connects the violence that was used during colonization to current examples of Latinos exerting their power nonviolently as a form of resistance.

Students examine articles about contemporary examples of Latinos using nonviolent protest as a form of resistance, poems about dual identity and power, historic documents by Casas himself, and an excerpt from Justice Sotomayor.

Formative Performance Task

This formative performance task examines the different ways that power is exerted and obtained. Students can write down examples in a T chart or other format to compare and contrast the different ways to exert and obtain power from the various sources.

In various lessons and activities leading up to this formative task, teachers should guide student through close readings of the passages and discuss power and the measures taken to obtain it. Students should understand the context of political influence versus religious influence and the struggle for power during colonization.

Supporting Question 1	
Featured Source A	"In Defense of the Indian", "A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies", "Day Without Latinos", "I am Joaquin", "Larrazolo, Octaviano Ambrosio"

Excerpt

"In Defense of the Indian" is a an excerpt of an essay by Casas written in 1550 that details his arguments against the horrendous treatment of the "barbarians". It is a good example of someone using the written word to attempt to have power instead of violence.

[https://woodlawnschool.pbworks.com/f/Excerpt+from+In+Defense+of+the+Indians\(1550\)+Bartolomé+de+las+Casas'.pdf](https://woodlawnschool.pbworks.com/f/Excerpt+from+In+Defense+of+the+Indians(1550)+Bartolomé+de+las+Casas'.pdf)

"A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies" is a piece written by Casas for the Prince of Spain where he further details the atrocities committed by the Spanish to exert and obtain power over the indigenous peoples of America.

http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/amerbegin/contact/text7/casas_destruction.pdf

“Day Without Latinos” Is an NBC news article that explains how thousands of activists in Wisconsin took nonviolent action to protest the Milwaukee County Sheriff from punishing undocumented immigrants. Latinos and other protestors were encouraged to stay away from work, school, close businesses, and avoid purchases to make a statement and impact.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/day-without-latinos-thousands-protest-immigration-crackdown-wisconsin-n720286>

I am Joaquin by Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales, a Chicano activist from Denver, Colorado in 1967. After a brief career as a professional boxer, Gonzales became a leading figure in the Chicano Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. In the poem, Joaquin (the narrator) speaks of the historical triumphs, struggles, and inherent contradictions experienced by Mexicans and Mexican Americans.”

<http://msalbasclass.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/IAmJoaquin.pdf>

“Larrazolo, Octaviano Ambrosio” In 1928 Octaviano A. Larrazolo was elected the first Hispanic Senator in U.S. history. This biography pages illustrates his power and influence as he fought for more power and representation for the Latino community.

<http://history.house.gov/People/Detail/15032401304>

Supporting Question 2	
Supporting Question	Can cultural influence turn into power?
Formative Performance Task	List specific examples of how Latino celebrities have influenced mainstream pop-culture. Identify celebrities and influencers who transitioned from cultural influence to advocacy/political power.
Featured Sources	<p>We're All Mexican - Official Music Video</p> <p>YouTube Video - We're All Mexican</p> <p>"We're All Mexican" Lyrics</p>

Mainstream society more readily grants minorities cultural influence than political or economic power. However, there are many examples of minorities using cultural influence to serve social and political purposes.

Sources for this supporting question present Emilio and Gloria Estefan’s trajectory from cultural innovators economic and social influencers. Students will develop an understanding of the trajectory of the Estefans’ career, see Barack Obama’s speech and award of the Presidential Medal of Freedom to the Estefans and analyze lyrics and interviews regarding the Estefans’ 2015 protest song *We Are All Mexicans* which was written in response to anti-Mexican political rhetoric.

Google: Arts and Culture

[Gloria Estefan on Bringing Latin Music to the World](#)

Medal of Freedom Recipient Gloria Estefan interview video

[Gloria Estefan interview video](#)

Gloria and Emilio Estefan Receive Presidential Medal of Freedom

[Estefan Receives Presidential Medal of Freedom NBC News Article](#)

Formative Performance Task

In this formative performance task, students examine both the music video and lyrics of the song “We’re All Mexican” and record evidence of Latinos in pop-culture translating cultural influence into political power.

Teachers may want to provide students with a graphic organizer or some additional structure within which to gather information from the sources. Students should explore both medians to uncover the specific ways in which Latino culture has influence over mainstream American culture and how that culture translated into a political power and voice for the Estefans, gaining them the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Supporting Question 2**Featured Sources**

We're All Mexican - Official Music Video

[YouTube Video - We're All Mexican](#)["We're All Mexican" Lyrics](#)**Description**

Emilio Estefan: 'We're All Mexicans' Song, Video Was "Labor of Love"

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/we-re-all-mexicans-all-star-tribute-honoring-latino-accomplishments-n431116>

The title of the song, "We're all Mexican" is intended as a metaphor symbolizing that we can all become the victims of racism and bigotry at any moment as Mexicans are experiencing in recent times. Mexicans are being vilified in the United States by some of the media and political leaders and in some of the public's sentiment because they comprise 67% of the Latino population and because their native country shares a direct border with the United States and are the majority of the "Latinos" crossing that particular border. But around the world, different immigrant groups are harassed and made to be scapegoats for the ills of their respective countries of residence. The song, "We're All Mexicans", celebrates the positive contributions of immigrants in the United States as a balance to the negativity being expressed publicly.

-YouTube:Estefan Channel

Supporting Question 3	
Supporting Question	How does culture, community life and experience turn into political power?
Formative Performance Task	Examine and explain Sotomayor’s assertion that her identity as a Latina impacts her positions and interpretation of the law as an intersection of culture and political position. Use evidence from the text to support your explanation.
Featured Sources	Sotomayor Excerpt

This supporting question demonstrates political leaders using their understanding of the communities that they represent as an advantage and asset, which they use to gain legitimate power through elected office. This theme is presented in the profiles of 5 Latino politicians, who cite their identity and experiences as shaping their legislative agendas. A campaign video that helped Alexandria Ocasio Cortez become the youngest person elected to congress gives voice to her understanding of the community’s needs, developing ‘people power’ and political will to earn a seat at the table. Justice Sotomayor suggests that Thomas O’Connor’s statement “A wise old man and a wise old woman will come to the same conclusions” is false, and that a person’s life experience informs their priorities.

This supporting question seeks to connect the arc of Latino power from the beginning of colonization to the present day, where Justice Sotomayor helps to make the biggest decisions in our country as a member of the Supreme Court. The excerpt highlights her belief that she is better informed and makes better decisions than a white man because of her *Latinidad* - the fact that she is Latina and a female. Sotomayor uses her culture and gender to influence the law.

Formative Performance Task

Examine and explain Sotomayor’s assertion that her identity as a Latina impacts her positions and interpretation of the law as an intersection of culture and political position. Use evidence from the text to support your explanation.

Supporting Question 3	
Featured Source A	Sotomayor Excerpt

Excerpts and Description

“Five Young Leaders Improving Hispanic Representation in U.S. Politics” is an article that sheds light on five young hispanic leaders working in government to then affect culture. Each profile includes quotes regarding their identities and backgrounds shaping their work as representative leaders.

[Five Young Leaders Improving Hispanic Representation in US Politics Article](#)

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez outlines her life experience and deep knowledge of the needs of her community as an advantage, and pivotal to her ability to serve her constituency.

[Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Campaign Video](#)

"Sonia Sotomayor on Civil Rights"

Wise Latina Woman Reaches Better Conclusion Than White Male

At a 2001 UC Berkeley symposium, Sotomayor said that the gender and ethnicity of judges does and should affect their judicial decision-making. From her speech:

"By ignoring our differences as women or men of color we do a disservice both to the law and society. I accept that our experiences as women and people of color affect our decisions. The aspiration to impartiality is just that--it's an aspiration because it denies the fact that we are by our experiences making different choices than others."

"Our gender and national origins may and will make a difference in our judging. Justice O'Connor has often been cited as saying that a wise old man and wise old woman will reach the same conclusion in deciding cases. I am not so sure that I agree with the statement. First, there can never be a universal definition of wise. Second, I would hope that a wise Latina woman with the richness of her experience would more often than not reach a better conclusion than a white male who hasn't lived that life."

Source: CNN coverage of upcoming Sotomayor hearings , Aug 1, 2009

http://www.ontheissues.org/Court/Sonia_Sotomayor_Civil_Rights.htm

Summative Performance Task

Compelling Question	How can oppressed people attain power?
Argument	Construct an argument in response to the question “How can oppressed people attain power?”
Extension	Choose a Latino to create a slide/poster visual presentation focusing on how they have made a positive impact on their community.

Argument

The compelling question asks how oppressed people attain power. Supporting questions have offered examples including advocacy, cultural influence and elected position. Students will argue that one of these methods is more or most effective. Students’ responses will vary and may include some of the following ideas:

- People like Lin-Manuel Miranda have used their cultural influence in the arts to highlight political issues like with supporting the arts in Puerto Rico, where some argue the United States has not offered enough aid to help the island after Hurricane Maria. (Example source [HERE](#))
- Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor uses her culture to influence her political decisions as she helps to make decisions on the supreme court.
- Non-violent resistance and use of voice to protest immigration policy (example source [HERE](#))

Teachers may have students produce a written argument or present their argument using a different modality (speech, public service announcement, poster, etc..)

Extension

The extension seeks to bring the issue of cultural and political power back to students own communities. After looking nationally, students now are able to examine how they can have power in their communities.

Taking Informed Action	
Understand	Identify a current issue impacting the Latino community (immigration, bilingualism, etc.)
Assess	Analyze the various points/concerns of the issue and how it impacts Latinos.
Action	Organize a meeting with a local politician (alderman/woman) to address planned questions

This inquiry is focused on a recent issue that is very present in the students' community. To understand the issue, students should get the latests on the political debate about their chosen issue. Students can then take the lead on organizing a meeting with a local politician, planning questions, and having other students participate in that discussion.