

The University of Southern Mississippi

Si Se Podía: A Case Study Analysis of Differential Student Participation in the National
Taco Bell Boycott

by

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Dedication

This study is dedicated primarily to the members of the CIW and SFA, but also all of those worldwide who work daily to combat exploitation, slavery, racism, and other seemingly-insurmountable barriers we still face to creating a world that respects human dignity and freedom.

Este estudio principalmente se dedica a los miembros de la CIW y SFA, pero también a todos aquellos trabajando constantemente para enfrentar la explotación, la esclavitud, el racismo y los demás obstáculos que parezcan insuperable y continúan a impedir la construcción de un mundo que respite la dignidad humana y la libertad.

Abstract

Although farmworker communities have been described as “powerless” in the sociological literature, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers’ (CIW) success in utilizing sophisticated social movement tactics is now undeniable in the wake of their boycott victory over Taco Bell and its parent corporation, Yum! Brands. In this study, I use survey data, interviews with student activists, primary source documentation and participant observation findings to analyze what factors brought some students into higher levels of boycott participation than others. This study shows that the recruitment and channeling of student activists into high levels of active solidarity with the CIW was accomplished through specific microlevel processes that created a sufficient group of student conscientious constituents to the Taco Bell boycott movement to sustain the boycott within the student population, thus helping to secure victory after a four year boycott campaign. Mobilizing master protest frames, a type of ideological resource, helped to link the CIW’s struggle with the social movement community of anti-corporate student activists, while direct meetings and structural relationships between workers and student activists, related to zealous outreach and organizing by CIW members, prove transformative in the creation of movement solidarity, inspiring students to take the CIW campaign on as their own.

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List of Abbreviations

CAFTA = Central America Free Trade Agreement
CIW = Coalition of Immokalee Workers
DOJ = U.S. Department of Justice
DOL = U.S. Department of Labor
FTAA = Free Trade Area of the Americas
IMF = International Monetary Fund
LGBTQ = Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer
NAFTA = North American Free Trade Agreement
SFA = Student/Farmworker Alliance
SMO = Social Movement Organization
SOA = School of the Americas
USAS = United Students Against Sweatshops
WTO = World Trade Organization