

**¡Sí, Se Puede! / Yes, We Can!**  
 written by Diana Cohn, Luis Rodríguez  
 illustrated by Francisco Delgado

## About the Book

**Genre:** Fiction

**Format:** Paperback, pages

**ISBN:** 9780938317890

**Reading Level:** Grades 4-5

**Interest Level:** Grades 1-6

**Guided Reading Level:** U

**Spanish Reading Level:** T

**Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:**  
 N/A

**Lexile™ Measure:** N/A

\*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

**Themes:** Bilingual, Families, Latino/Hispanic/Mexican Interest, Mothers, Overcoming Obstacles, Protest, Spanish

**Resources on the web:**

[leeandlow.com/books/si-se-puede-yes-we-can](http://leeandlow.com/books/si-se-puede-yes-we-can)

## SYNOPSIS

“Carlitos’ mother is a janitor. Every night, he sleeps while his mother cleans in one of the skyscrapers in downtown L.A. When she comes home, she waves Carlitos off to school before she goes to sleep. One night, his mamá explains that she can’t make enough money to support him and his abuelita the way they need unless she makes more money as a janitor. She and the other janitors have decided to go on strike.

Will he support her and help her all he can? Of course, Carlitos wants to help but he cannot think of a way until his teacher, Miss Lopez, explains in class how her own grandfather had fought for better wages for farmworkers when he first came to the United States. Finally, Carlitos knows how he can show his mamá how proud he is of her. He and the other children in his class make posters and Carlitos joins the marchers with a very special sign for his mom!

Backmatter includes an interview by Luis J. Rodriguez (Always Running), discussing the real “Justice for Janitors” strike in 2000 with a union organizer who participated, as well as a poem inspired by it.

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

## BACKGROUND

### A Woman of Struggle, A Woman of Hope

Dolores Sanchez is a small woman with a big heart. Gracious and polite, she is a strong woman who knows what she wants. While others go about their business, and perhaps find time to relax, Dolores rushes from home to union hall, from babies to angry union members, to make her day valued—she is a union organizer and mother during the day, and a janitor of office buildings at night. And, like the mother of Carlitos in *¡Sí, Se Puede!/Yes We Can!*, she was a leader in the victorious Los Angeles Justice for Janitors Campaign in April 2000. At 37, Dolores has lived a full life—growing up in the tough streets of Mexico City, risking danger and persecution as a migrant, and now as a working mother and an organizer for the Service Employees International Union, AFL-CIO.

I met Dolores in her well-kept but sparse apartment in the poor immigrant community of Westlake in Los Angeles. While raising three children, one of them an infant, she devotes hours to the union's fight for decent pay and respect for janitors. She reminded me of my own mother, Maria Estela, who worked years in the garment industry or cleaning homes while trying to raise her four children. My father—despite being a principal in Mexico—retired in the US as a laboratory custodian. They came here more than 45 years ago. Millions of their compatriots have come since then. One of those millions is Dolores.

Dolores first arrived in the United States ten years ago. Her first jobs were cleaning offices. It was also around this time that she joined the union. "There are many laws that protect the rich in this country," she says. "We need laws to protect the poor, the working people. The bosses here have all the rights. But workers have nothing to protect them. That's why I joined the union." And that's why she also became active in political campaigns, working toward the election of decent representation for workers and immigrants. "Even if some of us can't vote, we walk the streets to help elect representatives who can pass laws beneficial to workers," she explains.

While being a union activist has taken her away from her home and children, Dolores makes sure they understand why she's in the union. "I want to show my children that their mother can fight for something better for them," she emphasizes. "But it takes a lot of time. I get home around three in the morning, and then I have to get up at eight to do a few errands. Around noon, I'm at the union hall helping in whatever way I can. After that I return to make dinner just before I go to work. My life is the union, my job, and my home. It's difficult, but any good thing has to be obtained through struggle. There are times I get tired, demoralized, but then I think about what we've achieved. I've learned many things. As a woman, I've gained a lot. For example, I feel more independent. So despite the struggles, it's worth it." Dolores is married to a man who she says is supportive. And her children also support her. "They know how much the union means to me," Dolores says while going to the kitchen to stir food cooking on the stove. "When I'm in a bad mood, they even tell me, 'Mami, go to the union hall.' They know I need this to have purpose and meaning in my life. And they know how it has made a better life for them."

"And what are the benefits?" I ask.

It doesn't take her long to answer. She says her pay is better than that of the people who toil

in industries without unions. They also get good political representation, which she believes is important to impact what happens in this country. "We've been able to obtain a measure of respect from office holders, the owners of the businesses we work for, and the community," she explains. "They see us as an example of how workers should unite, and how by being united we can be strong—every person going their own way just doesn't work."

Most importantly, the union has helped janitors win health insurance—including dental care, eye care, and regular checkups. "This is the most important benefit," she says. "Except for the baby, my children couldn't get Medicare since they weren't born here. We needed health insurance more than anything else."

No wonder Dolores envisions a future when all companies, all businesses become unionized—one hundred percent union labor. Despite claims by many owners that they don't have money, she knows they do. "In the offices, they raise their rents," she explains. "Many of these offices are full. They get big money for being owners of those buildings. This is what I see. So we're prepared to organize so that in the future, we can give our children more security, more opportunity. It's important that the young learn not to let anyone trample over them, not to let anyone humiliate them. I want my children to know how to be strong in a union." And, from what I can see, their best example is their mother—a strong union woman.

### The Los Angeles Justice for Janitors Campaign

For a complete history of the Los Angeles Justice for Janitors Campaign, check out UCLA's timeline that provides events leading up to the strike. This strike was revolutionary in that combined top-down and grassroots approaches to social change, and made an impact in the U.S. labor movement for years to come (<https://www.labor.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/J4J-Campaign-Timeline.pdf>).

The Justice for Janitors Campaign was unique in that it also put necessary pressure on the building owners and financiers in control of the real estate industry, as opposed to just focusing on the owners of the cleaning companies (<https://talkpoverty.org/2015/06/16/justice-for-janitors/>).

### Unions & Striking

A union is an organization formed by workers who join together and use their strength to have a voice in their workplace. Through their union, workers have the ability to negotiate from a position of strength with employers over wages, benefits, workplace health and safety, job training and other work-related issues. Unions also serve an important role making sure that management acts fairly and treats its workers with respect. (<https://afscmeatwork.org/union-hall/what-union>) Unions are democratic organizations and its leaders are elected by the membership.

### Strike

Intending to make the employer comply with the demands of the employees. For example, a strike may seek higher pay, better benefits, or safer working conditions.

(<https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/strike#:~:text=Strike%20means%20an%20organized%20and,benefits%2C%20or%20safer%20working%20conditions.>)

## Migrant Farmworkers

A migrant farmworker is someone who has traveled from their permanent residence to work in agriculture following the growing and harvesting seasons. Some may relocate several times throughout the year, whereas others spend months or an entire season at the same farm. A seasonal farmworker works in agriculture seasonally within commuting distance of their home and returns to their permanent residence each day after work. (<https://mhpsalud.org/who-we-serve/farmworkers-in-the-united-states/>)

# BEFORE READING

## Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- Take a look at the front and back covers. Take a picture walk. Ask students to make a prediction. Do you think this book will be fiction or nonfiction? What makes you think so? What clues do the author and illustrator give to help you know whether this book will be fiction or nonfiction?
- Ask students to think about their family and what family means to them. How is family important to you?
- Tell students that this is a bilingual book in English and Spanish. If students speak Spanish and are comfortable sharing, ask them how it felt to read a bilingual book in both English and in Spanish. What was the experience like reading the book in English? What was it like in Spanish? Have students discuss the different translations.
- Have you ever had to fight for what you believed in? What were you fighting for? Why? How did you fight for your beliefs?
- What does it mean to stand up for what's right? What are some examples from history where people stood up for what they believed in, even though they encountered challenges?
- Ask students if they have ever heard of union strike cases. What do you think of when you hear the term "strike"?
- Ask students if they have ever participated in a march or protest. What was your experience like? What did you march for? How did it feel to be a part of the march?

## Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)  
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

- **Book Title Exploration:** Talk about the title of the book *¡Sí, Se Puede! / Yes, We Can!*. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?
- **Read Diana Cohn and Luis Rodriguez's Biography:** Read about the author inside the book after the title page. What do you think inspired them to write *¡Sí, Se Puede! / Yes, We Can!*. What does their process look like for writing a picture book?
- Encourage students to stop and jot down notes in their reading notebooks during the read-aloud when they: learn new information, see a powerful image, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or hear new words.
- Have students write down their feelings in their notebooks during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote down those feelings and have them write journal entries about them.
- Ask students to make a prediction: Do you think this book will be fiction or nonfiction? What makes you think so? What clues are given that help you know whether this book will be fiction or nonfiction?

## Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- how the Janitor Strike in L.A and people like Dolores Sanchez fought for fair pay and respect for Janitors in her community. why reused materials were important to El during his artistic process
- how Carlito's mom, Carlitos and their community advocated for respect and fair pay for janitors and other workers elsewhere
- how a union strike works and what the janitors and others gained from going on strike
- why it is important to know about the history of the farmworkers who also fought for a better life and how the janitors are doing the same
- how Carlitos decided to help and support his mom in the strike and why this was important for not only him but his mom
- how it is important to gather community support to tackle issues that challenge and affect those in the community

Encourage students to consider why the author, Diana Cohn and Luis Rodriguez, would want to share with young people this story about Carlitos, his mamá, and their impact around in their community.

## VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

### Content Specific

skyscrapers, abuelita, janitor, strike, carpenters, ministers, union, union hall, accordion, paleta, churro

### Academic

shoot, sore, combed, marched

## AFTER READING

### Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

### Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What does Carlito's mamá say to him as she tucks him in bed?
2. Where does Carlito's mamá work?
3. When does Carlito's mamá work? What happened in 1957? How did El react?
4. Where is mamá when Carlitos wakes up?
5. What does he say to mamá as he goes to school? What is Adinkra cloth? What did El think about the image Sankofa?
6. What does mamá explain to Carlitos about taking care of him and his abuelita? What material did El choose for his art?
7. Where was Carlitos born?
8. What did the janitors vote on?
9. What do the janitors shout?

10. What does mamá ask Carlitos for?
11. What did mamá and all the other janitors do when the strike began?
12. Who all stood and marched with mama and the rest of the janitors?
13. What other parents were also on strike?
14. What does Miss Lopez tell the class about her grandfather?
15. What surprise does Carlitos plan for his mama? How did people in London react to his creations?
16. What surprise does Carlitos plan for his mama?
17. What type of instruments does Carlitos hear at the march? How did El create his work for the Venice Biennale exhibit?
18. How does Carlitos' mamá feel about his sign? When did El bring his bottle tops to Venice? What did he name his work?
19. What does Carlitos dream about the night when the strike ends? What does Carlitos dream about the night when the strike ends?
20. What does mama do now on the weekends after the janitor's strike?

### Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What does the title *¡Sí, Se Puede! / Yes, We Can!* mean to you after reading the book? Why do you think the author/illustrator chose this particular title?
2. Why do you think Carlitos' mamá chose to advocate for the right to fair pay and respect for janitors?
3. How do you think Carlitos comes up with his surprise for his mom? Why do you think that surprise was super special to her?
4. Why is the Janitor Strike in L.A important to learn about? What lessons are learned from this story?
5. Why do you think it is important to fight for what you believe is right despite it being difficult or challenging?
6. Why do you think mamá decided to vote to stop working? How did this affect Carlitos and his abuelita?
7. What does *¡Sí, Se Puede! / Yes, We Can!* teach us about the importance of family relationships?
8. What impact do you think the Janitor Strike in L.A. has had on workers who want to stand up for themselves? Why do you think it's important to advocate for yourself?

## Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

- 1. What is one big thought that you have after reading this book?** What is your takeaway from this book? What would you tell a friend about this book?
- 2. What do you think the creators' message is to the reader?** Think about possible motivations behind their intentions to write this book about Carlitos' journey to support his mother and the other janitors in the Janitor Strike in LA.
- 3. Have students make a text-to-self connection.** What kind of connections did you make between the story and your own life? What did you relate to and how did the book make you think of your own childhood or growing up experiences?
- 4. Have students make a text-to-text connection.** Did you think of any other books while reading from *¡Sí, Se Puede! / Yes, We Can!*? Why did you make those connections?
- 5. Have students make a text-to-world connection.** What kind of connections did you make between the text and art in the book and what you have seen happening in the world, such as on television, in a newspaper, or online? What in this book made you think of that?

## ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

- 1.** Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
- 2.** Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
- 3.** Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
  - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
  - Have students work in pairs to tell what they learned about one of the poems. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
- 4.** Have students give a short talk about which spread they identified with the most from *¡Sí, Se Puede! / Yes, We Can!* and why.
- 5.** The book contains some content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies.

6. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word. Also remind students to refer to the pronunciations and definitions in small print at the end of some poems when they encounter unknown words. Complete frequent checks for understanding

### Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4-6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. Carlitos' mom and other janitors voted to go on a working strike because they were not paid fairly nor with respect. How do you respond to situations where you are not treated fairly or with respect? How do you support those who are in situations where they are not treated fairly or respect?
2. What Social and Emotional Learning skills does the Carlitos exhibit over the course of the book? How does he show problem solving? How does he recognize and manage his emotions? Was it important for him to demonstrate those skills?
3. Which illustration in *¡Sí, Se Puede! / Yes, We Can!* best shows an emotion? Explain which emotion you think it shows. How does the image portray that emotion?
4. Choose an emotion that interests you: happiness, sadness, fear, anxiety, frustration, hope, perseverance, and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *¡Sí, Se Puede! / Yes, We Can!*.
5. In what ways did Carlitos' mom demonstrate her persistence and resiliency in her efforts to fight for fair pay and respect for janitors and others in her community? Show evidence from the book and track the different steps that she took to advocate for janitors and others who also asked for help.

## INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

### English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Read the poem *¡Sí, Se Puede! / Yes, We Can!* by Luis J. Rodriguez in the back of the book with students.** Have students write a reaction to the poem after they have read it. Why do they think this poem is important to the book? How do poems and music help people during difficult times? What are some other examples of poems in history that have inspired people to overcome adversity?
- **Have students come up with a list of questions to ask authors of the book and poem *¡Sí, Se Puede! / Yes, We Can!*, Diana Cohn and Luis Rodriguez.** Have students brainstorm a list of questions that would be appropriate for an interview with Diana and Luis. What do students want to know about the process behind writing a children's book? How did they conduct their research on Los Angeles Justice for Janitors Campaign in April 2000? Why did they want to write a book about this case?
- **Have students write a poem about a cause they are passionate about today in the style of the poem by Luis J Rodriguez "*¡Sí, Se Puede! / Yes, We Can!*".** Brainstorm a list of the qualities that students observed in "*¡Sí, Se Puede! / Yes, We Can!*". Then, have students write a poem about something that they are passionate about today in society. Why did they choose to write about that particular topic?
- **After finishing the book, encourage students to read the story of Dolores Sanchez in the backmatter at the end of the book.** Students can write a reaction to what they read and how it impacted their interpretation of the story. What new information did they learn? Why is the backmatter critical to a thorough understand of the events related in *¡Sí, Se Puede! / Yes, We Can!*. How does backmatter in nonfiction books help readers understand more about the history presented in the main story?
- **Have students analyze the simile and metaphors that the author uses throughout the story.** How does author Diana Cohn use these literary devices in her writing? Where are similes used in *¡Sí, Se Puede! / Yes, We Can!*. Where does the author use metaphors? Do you notice any other literary devices that she uses in the story? Students can track their findings with sticky notes, and then share their findings with a partner or small group. Have them reflect on the following guided questions: How do the literary devices contribute to the theme of the story? What about the author's voice?
- **Create a story map during the 1st or 2nd read aloud of the book *¡Sí, Se Puede!* /**

**Yes, We Can!.** This will help students follow the different elements in *¡Sí, Se Puede! / Yes, We Can!*. Discuss the main components of the story (characters, setting, problem/solution, theme). You can do this together as a class on chart paper or you can provide students with individual copies of a blank story map organizer. You can find and read more about using story maps graphic organizers here ([https://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/story\\_maps](https://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/story_maps)).

- **Conduct a Diana Cohn author study with her other Lee & Low titles, *Crane Boy*** (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/crane-boy>), ***The Bee Tree*** (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-bee-tree>). Have students answer the following questions in an essay after planning their thoughts in a graphic organizer: where do you think Diana Cohn gets her inspiration for his stories and settings? What makes you think so? How would you describe Diana Cohn's writing style? What themes or topics are most meaningful to her? Why do you think that?
- **Conduct a Luis Rodriguez poet and author study with his other Lee & Low title, *It doesn't have to be this way/ No tiene que ser así: A Barrio Story / Una historia del barrio*** (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/it-doesn-t-have-to-be-this-way-no-tiene-que-ser-asi>). Have students answer the following questions in an essay after planning their thoughts in a graphic organizer: where do you think Luis Rodriguez gets his inspiration for poems? What makes you think so? How would you describe Luis Rodriguez's writing style? What themes or topics are most meaningful to him? Why do you think that? For more information on Luis Rodriguez, consult his website (<https://www.luisjrodriguez.com/>).

### Social Studies/Geography

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Have students to take notes on the timeline of the Janitor Strike in L.A.** For guidance, students may use the information from UCLA's timeline about events prior to and leading up to the strike (<https://www.labor.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/J4J-Campaign-Timeline.pdf>). Have students take notes of the following questions: When did "Justice for Janitors" begin? How long did it take for the janitors to get justice? What else did you notice about the timeline?
- **Conduct a "Social Change" project in your classroom.** After reading *¡Sí, Se Puede! / Yes, We Can!* have students pick a cause in which they believe. Carlitos' mama, other janitors, and their families advocated for change in their employment. Have students brainstorm a list of different causes for which they would want to fight. Then have students pick their top three choices and arrange groups according to interest. In the groups, have students research the topic and come up with a way to enact change, whether it's a letter, a flyer, a petition, an online campaign, etc. For more ideas on how to incorporate social change in your classroom, consult Learning for Justice's Social Change Unit (<https://www.learningforjustice.org/learning-plan/social-change-unit>).
- **As a follow up to the previous "social change" project, have students plan out**

**a strike for the cause they chose in the previous activity.** Encourage students to create signs, have a leader/speaker for the group that will present and address the concerns of the people to the have them plan out where they want to strike. If possible you can have administration be the leaders responsible for hearing the grievances of the students. Encourage students to use their home made instruments from the activity in the Art/Media section of this guide.

- **Have students research other strikes that have occurred in U.S History and compare those strikes to the Los Angeles Justice for Janitors Campaign in April 2000** (<https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2020/04/08/31-largest-worker-strikes-in-american-history/111460504/>) (<https://aflcio.org/about/history/labor-history-events>) (<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/theminewars-labor-wars-us/>). For example, students can research the 1968 Memphis Sanitation Strike and Dolores Huerta and the United Farm Workers. Ask students the following guiding questions: what kind of conditions were the laborers working in? What were the conditions that incited a strike? How did the laborers band together to form a strike? What platform did the workers use to talk about their issues with their labor conditions? How did the people involved with the strike advocate for themselves? What impact did the strike have in the community and U.S. labor overall?. If possible, you can split students up into groups and assign them different strikes to research and have them present their findings to the class.
- **Display a brief video about unions and have students write down what they learned about unions** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubIWYt7nGdU>). After, consider following this lesson plan from PBS on how to facilitate a “negotiation” a labor/management simulation for students (<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/classroom/2020/09/negotiation-labormangement-simulation/>).

### Art/Media

(K-ESS3-3 Earth and Human Activity: Communicate solutions that will reduce the impact of humans on the land, water, air, and/or other living things in the local environment; MS-LS2-5: Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, Dynamics: Evaluate competing design solutions for maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem services;

(MS-PS3-4: Energy: Plan an investigation to determine the relationships among the energy transferred, the type of matter, the mass, and the change in the average kinetic energy of the particles as measured by the temperature of the sample)

- **Encourage students to select the illustration from ¡Sí, Se Puede! / Yes, We Can! that resonated with them the most.** Have each student write a reflection about the illustration. What stood out to her or him? How did it make the student feel? What did it make her or him think about?
- **Consider having students conduct an author/illustrator study about Francisco Delgado.** Other titles Francisco Delgado has illustrated are: *Lover Boy* (<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/lee-merrill-byrd/lover-boyjuanito-el-carinoso/?page=2>), *Juanito Counts to Ten* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/juanito-counts-to-ten>), and *Birdie's Beauty Parlor* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/birdie-s-beauty-parlor>). Display the books for students to examine the illustrations. Then ask students to talk about how Francisco Delgado's artwork is similar and how it differs per book. What is his specific artistic style in ¡Sí, Se Puede! /

*Yes, We Can!*? How does it compare to his other books?

- **Have students create their own signs for the Janitor Strike in L.A. Students can go back through the book for inspiration and find signs that they like or find inspiring.** What would they put on their sign? What would their message be? Why? The National Gallery of Art has additional photographs of famous protest signs throughout history for more information and activity extensions (<https://www.nga.gov/learn/teachers/lessons-activities/uncovering-america/activism-and-protest/activism-and-protest-activity.html>).
- **Maria's father has a trashcan and uses it like a big steel drum and Carlitos' mama had a soda can filled with beans and shakes the can to the sound of the music.** Have students make their own instruments with items that they can find at home or in the classroom and have them play them to the rhythm of a song you choose. After the concert have students reflect on the following questions. What container are they going to choose? What are they going to fill the container with? What sound do their instruments make?

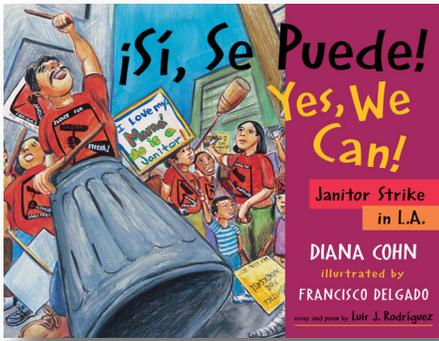
### School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Have students interview a parent, a guardian, or an adult mentor about their experiences fighting for something that they believe in.** How did the person react to and handle the situation when they were faced with obstacles? What advice does the person have for someone trying to take up a cause and stand up for justice today?
- **Have students bring home a copy of *¡Sí, Se Puede! / Yes, We Can!*** Ask students to read with adults at home in English or Spanish. Encourage conversation and discussion after reading. Why is the L.A. Janitor Strike case important to learn about for people of all ages?



## Ordering Information

### General Order Information:

[leeandlow.com/contact/ordering](https://leeandlow.com/contact/ordering)

### Secure Online Ordering:

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/si-se-puede-yes-we-can>

**By Phone:** 212-779-4400 ext. 25

**By Fax:** 212-683-1894

### By Mail:

Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue,  
New York, NY 10016

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Diana Cohn** has worked on environmental, economic, and global justice issues as a teacher, a media activist, and an advisor, program officer, and executive director in philanthropic institutions. She is the award-winning author of seven children's books, including *¡Si Se Puede! / Yes We Can! Janitor Strike in L.A.*, *The Bee Tree*, and *Crane Boy*, all published by Cinco Puntos Press/Lee & Low. She lives with her husband on a houseboat in northern California.

**Luis Rodríguez** is the critically acclaimed author of *Always Running: La Vida Loca, Gang Days in L.A.*, the inspiring story of how he found a way out of gang life in Los Angeles. Now a prominent poet, author, and educator, Rodríguez frequently travels throughout the country, educating the public about youth and violence, and counseling young people in gangs. He lives in Chicago with his wife, Trini Rodríguez, and their two young sons.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

### Francisco Delgado

Francisco Delgado, a *fronterizo* artist, was born in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua in 1974. Through out his life he has resided in both twin cities of El Paso and Ciudad Juarez. Delgado's artworks reflect the United States and Mexican Border life and speak to the working class of the barrios. His visual language often uses iconic figures like El Chapulin Colorado, George W. Bush, Tin Tan, Lady Liberty, and Luchadores among many others to convey his political narrative. Even though his body of work is political and his message is direct it is delivered with the dark sarcasm and humor that is often found in Mexican, Chicano and *Fronterizo* Cultures. He attended the University of Texas at El Paso where he received several honorary awards and a BFA. He received his MFA from the Yale School of Art. His paintings have been on book covers, in national art exhibits, private collections and community institutions. Delgado's first picture book was *¡Sí, Se Puede! / Yes, We Can!* And his second book, *Lover Boy* is available now! Francisco and his wife Barbara have three children, Pedro, Xitlali and a Xochi.

## ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

**LEE & LOW BOOKS** is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at [leeandlow.com](https://leeandlow.com).