

Standing With the Voiceless:
The Life and Legacy of Archbishop Oscar Romero

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Group Documentary

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We wanted to research an extremely influential figure who has received little recognition for their activism in history classrooms. After investigating various books, online articles, and discussing personal experiences with friends and neighbors from El Salvador, we decided to focus on Archbishop Oscar Romero and how he took a stand to protect the oppressed. The astonishing amount of turmoil surrounding El Salvador during this time period made us determined to share his story by creating a National History Day project related to this year's theme: Taking a Stand.

Our research began with listening to personal testimonies from those in our community who experienced the horrors in El Salvador. Our Spanish facilitator, Milton Martinez, relayed personal accounts of his home and time in El Salvador. This allowed us to gain more insight on the daily lives of El Salvadoran citizens. A fellow student, whose family originated from El Salvador, directed us to more primary and secondary sources related to Archbishop Romero. One of these sources contained all of Archbishop Romero's homilies and diaries, introducing us to the personal struggles he faced during his stand. We were able to interview Dr. Yajaira M. Padilla and Father John Dear, both of whom had traveled to El Salvador and spoken with those close to Romero. Another significant interview was Sister Madeline Dorsey. She described her experiences working with Archbishop Romero and how he impacted others. This interview was conducted by Chelsea Waller, the Maryknoll Sister's media director; however, the questions Mrs. Waller asked were written by us. AP Image and Video Archives provided many visuals relevant to our topic. We were also able to strengthen our argument by using journals written by experts.

With the vast amount of graphic images and video footage available, we decided a documentary was the best way to convey Archbishop Romero's stance in El Salvador. The images reveal the suffering of the oppressed and also exhibit the intense stratification of El Salvador's society. We utilized iMovie and After Effects to create infographics and animations. The visual aspect of the documentary, combined with our musical score, helped us create a level of deep emotion while showing the stand Archbishop Romero took.

Archbishop Romero, although widely influential, was also controversial. While his activism inspired many, the Church, El Salvadoran government, elites, and other nations viewed him as a threat. He received numerous death threats, but never weakened his stance against those

who wanted to harm him. Despite facing danger from every corner of the globe, he continued to take a stand by defending the innocent and publicly chastising those in authority who were responsible for El Salvador's horrific situation. Archbishop Romero's struggle to liberate the mistreated created change by inspiring both the voiceless and the powerful to take peaceful action and bring awareness to the atrocities in El Salvador. Archbishop Romero stood against the calamities plaguing his country, proving that leaders who take a stand for the good of their people can bring significant change, even by sacrificing their own life.