New Song at Conservatory Lab

*Mi canto es una cadena My song is a chain
Sin comienzo ni final Without beginning or end
Y en cada eslabón se encuentra And within each link is found
El canto de los demás The song of others.*

On Thursday, March 2, 6th graders welcomed Sergio Reyes, a former political prisoner under General Augusto Pinochet’s brutal dictatorship in Chile, and a nueva canción (new song) musician. Reyes performed two songs, with students clapping the beat, and shared his experiences as a young student organizer in Chile during the early 1970s, which led to his arrest and three-year imprisonment. He emphasized the critical role of music in the struggle for social justice in Chile, and movingly explained how music was essential to his survival, and the survival of fellow political prisoners. “I believe,” said Reyes, “that it is the role of every musician to make beautiful music to give voice to people who don’t have a voice.”

In their social studies expedition, *Conform or Resist: Response to Authoritarian Regimes*, 6th graders are investigating the dictatorships of General Pinochet in Chile, Chairman Mao in China, and Adolph Hitler in Germany. They are exploring the role of music, poetry, and art as forms of resistance to oppression.

After his visit, Reyes wrote: “What a great time I had at the Conservatory Lab Charter School in Dorchester! And what a great educational concept, to teach elementary school based on music, and to have these great children work under the necessary self-discipline of making music collectively, and learn about the real musical developments around the world. . .. I will treasure these pictures, from an energized class, ready to assume that fight for justice we need. Each one of these young brothers and sisters should know that I was so impressed with them and their teachers. I wish I would have had the opportunity they have. Que vivan los estudiantes!

