

The Freakonomics Podcast published a show on boycotts on January 21st, 2016. The following is the summary of the investigation on whether or not boycotts work.

<http://freakonomics.com/podcast/do-boycotts-work-a-new-freakonomics-radio-podcast/>

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Now, our question of the day, you'll remember, was simply this: "do boycotts work?" Here's what the evidence seems to suggest: The typical boycott is more smoke than fire. And it doesn't often seem to financially hurt the targeted company. But, humans being human, and the court of public opinion working as it does, a boycott can color the reputation of a given firm — as it has for Monsanto, and for its new plant scientist Ben Hunter. And a boycott, when it reflects dissatisfaction with a larger social issue, can become some wind in the sail. The way the Montgomery Bus Boycott did. The way that even — perhaps, *maybe*, who knows, maybe just a tiny bit — the Chick-fil-A boycott did.

*KING: I think the activists would say the boycott against Chick-fil-A is successful even if they didn't get people who typically go to Chick-fil-A to stop buying Chick-fil-A sandwiches. And the reason they would say it was successful is because they got the media to pay attention.*

The issue here, you'll remember, was same-sex marriage. The firm's CEO was against it. The boycott was in 2012. In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that same-sex marriage is a Constitutional right, and that every state in the U.S. must allow it. So, did the Chick-fil-A boycott generate noise that drove attention to the issue? Or, did the issue's preexisting momentum create an environment for the boycott to make a lot of noise?

What's the Chick-fil-A and what's the egg? We'll probably never know. But just because a question doesn't have a concrete answer doesn't mean it isn't worth asking.