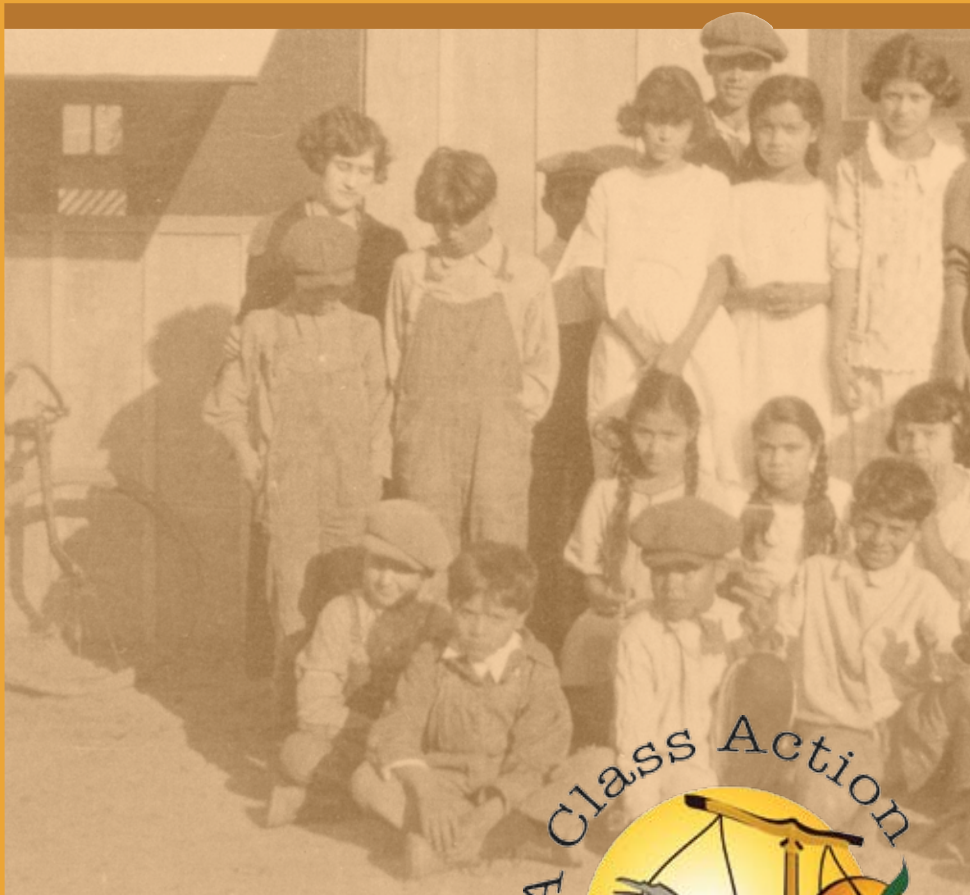


**The Museum of Teaching and Learning**  
*offers*



*A Class Action*



**A Class Action:**  
*The Grassroots Struggle for  
School Desegregation  
in California*

*You are*  
**Cordially invited**  
*to lease the  
exhibit*

# *An* **Introduction** *to the exhibit*

*A Class Action* is an exhibit about the court case that led to the desegregation of schools in California. California was the first state to do so.

Experts have called this the most important court case about segregation before *Brown v. Board of Education*.



Since early September 2011, groups of school children, parents, teachers, college students, and many other individuals have been traveling to the heart of Santa Ana to experience a 2,000-square-foot exhibit entitled *A Class Action: The Grassroots Struggle for School Desegregation in California*. Their comments always include the exclamation “I never knew that this happened right here in Southern California!”

This case, known as *Mendez v. Westminster* for short, originated in Orange County in the mid 1940s and was settled in the Los Angeles Federal Appeals Court in 1947. It was initiated by five families of Mexican backgrounds whose children were sent to separate “Mexican” schools and denied access to “white” schools.

The initial ruling on the case ruled in favor of desegregation based on two legal points:

- “separate but equal” was unconstitutional
- “Mexicans” were white

Key figures in this case were Thurgood Marshall and Earl Warren.

# Offered by



**Museum of Teaching and Learning (MOTAL)**  
714.814.4221

Director: Greta Nagel, PhD

*All are invited to keep up with our activities  
through the MOTAL website at  
[www.motal.org](http://www.motal.org)*

## **Our Mission**

*To explore, communicate,  
and celebrate  
how people learn.*

## **Vision**

*We create exhibits and events to educate communities  
about the learning process and the role and importance of  
education in a democratic society. Our goal is to raise  
social awareness of how education shapes our children,  
to build respect for the teaching profession, to promote  
citizens to action, and to inspire change in educators.*

*We have established a positive record of successful  
exhibits and inventive leadership in a unique niche within  
the museum world.*

© 2012 Museum of Teaching and Learning

*Offered in  
conjunction with*  
**A Class  
Action**



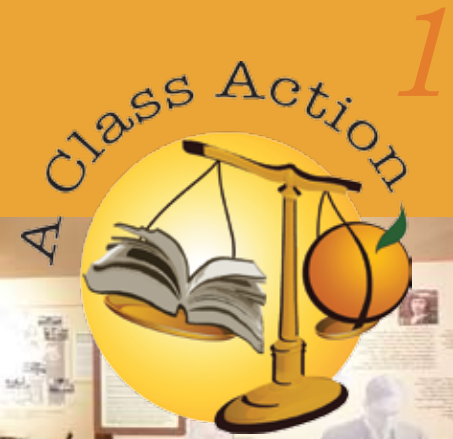
*CONTENTS*

- 1** Exhibit design  
*wall murals containing text/graphics/photographs*
- 2** Exhibit layout and floorplan/construction
- 3** Manuscript for five exhibit “rooms”
- 4** Photographs
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*including activities and games*
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*programs/invitations/banners/posters/gallery guides*

*This dynamic 2,000-square-foot exhibit was created by the Museum of Teaching and Learning (MOTAL) in collaboration with many individuals, especially from The Old Orange County Courthouse (OCParks), The Center for Oral History (COPH) at CSU Fullerton, the Orange County Department of Education, and Fullerton College.*

*Gonzalo Mendez, Jr., one of the children involved in the court case, was intimately involved in putting the exhibit together. His sister Sylvia Mendez was awarded the Medal of Freedom in 2010 for her work in communicating the story of integration throughout the nation. Members of all the involved families have visited, shared their stories, and even shared artifacts saved from the 1940s.*

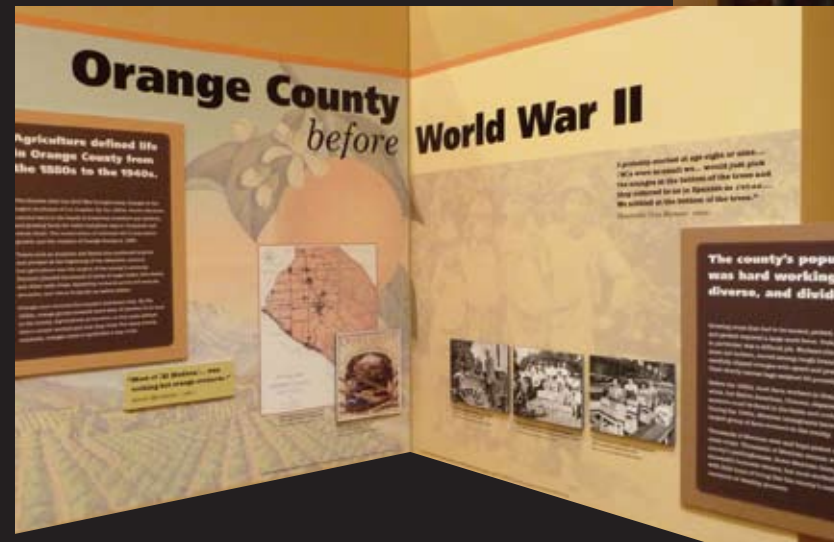
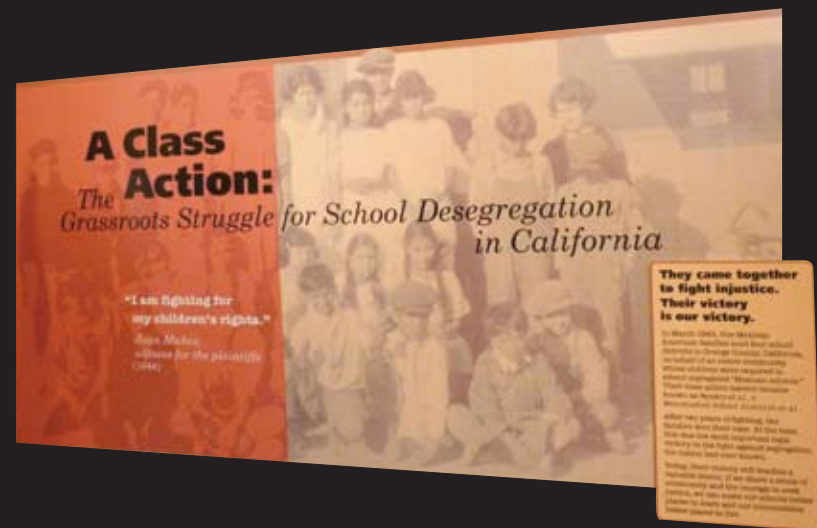
# A Class Action Exhibit Design



Wall murals containing text/graphics/photographs



32 large decal panels, with applied main text and quotation panels

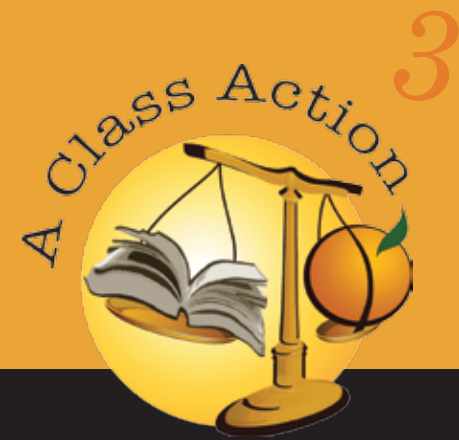


# A Class Action Exhibit Layout

Exhibit layout and floorplan, with freestanding box panel construction plans



# A Class Action Manuscript



Complete manuscript for all five exhibit “rooms”

## Recognizing Injustice

Mexican American parents throughout Orange County knew that segregated schools were unjust.

The struggle for school desegregation began in October 1943 when two women, Rebecca Sanchez and Frances Garcia, denounced Santa Ana’s Mexican schools as discriminatory. The School Board promised to study the issue, but a year of inaction prompted William and Virginia Guzmán to hire a local attorney and confront the Board again in November 1944. Thirty parents and members of the Latin American Voters League joined them. The Board asked for additional time to study the issue.

Gonzalo and Felícitas Méndez moved from Santa Ana to Westminster in 1943. Gonzalo’s sister tried to enroll the Méndez children in the nearby Westminster School, but the administrator said they had to go to the Mexican school. Gonzalo and Felícitas complied, but they also consulted a local attorney and prepared for a fight. In September 1944 they appeared before the Westminster School Board with other parents and several members of the Latin American Voters League. They submitted a petition calling for desegregation. The Board said it would be too expensive.

When Lorenzo and Josefina Ramírez moved from Whittier to El Modena in November 1944, the superintendent refused to allow their children to attend the white school. They decided to fight. Parents in El Modena connected them with other parents and civil rights advocates protesting segregation in Santa Ana, Westminster, and Garden Grove.

***“Larry [Ramírez] was very good at speaking English and . . . formulating concepts and ideas and just getting things going. You needed someone like that, outspoken. Someone who wasn’t afraid to start making a few waves and afraid that the establishment would come back and pound him. He wasn’t afraid.” – Dan Gomez (1991)***

The fight against school segregation in Los Angeles also began in 1943. Manuel Ruiz, chairman of the Los Angeles Citizens’ Committee for Latin American Youth, began to lobby for a repeal of state laws sanctioning school segregation. By 1945 he had convinced California Governor Earl Warren to sign any school desegregation legislation that reached his desk.

## Grassroots Struggle for School Desegregation in California

**to fight injustice. Their victory is our victory.**

In American families sued four school districts in Orange County, California, on behalf of an children were required to attend segregated “Mexican schools.” Their class action lawsuit *et al. v. Westminster School District et al.*

the families won their case. At the time, this was the most important legal victory in the fight

ourage to seek justice, we

ican community.

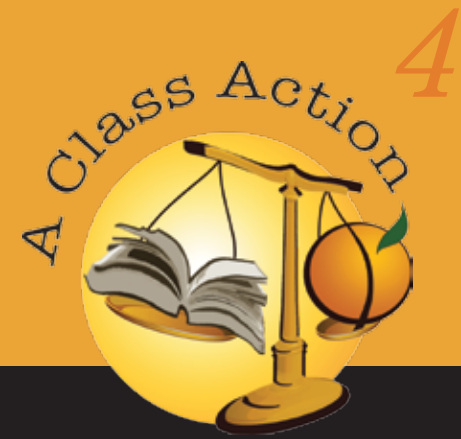
all houses with two bedrooms and a kitchen. Some houses  
d indoor toilets before the 1940s. A wood-burning stove  
ouse and boiling water for washing and bathing.

nd memories. Mothers woke early every morning to make  
nd daughters cooked evening meals with tortillas, beans,  
putchering chickens, chopping wood, and tending the stove.

what was expected of them: to respect their parents and  
on, work hard, learn their lessons in school, be considerate  
eir American citizenship.

***ould get stained black. You belonged to the black hand  
our parents.” – Annie Quintana (1991)***

# A Class Action Photographs



Photographs printed directly to wall panels  
or mounted to gator board and mounted on panels



Courtesy of Placentia History Room, Placentia Public Library.



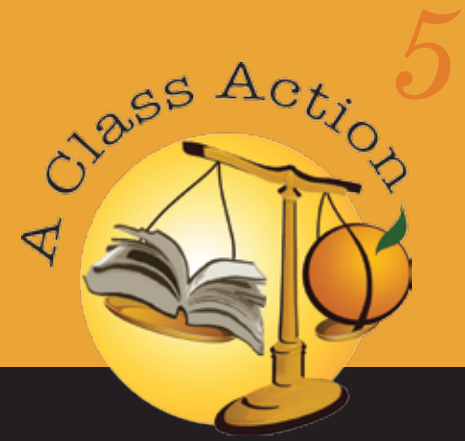
Image courtesy of the Ramirez family.



Photo courtesy of Orange County Mexican American Historical Society.



# *A Class Action* **Most Artifacts**



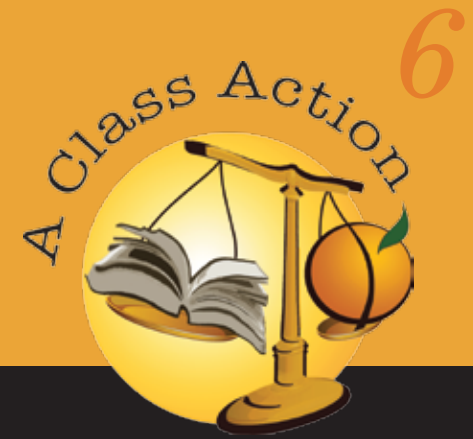
Most case and freestanding artifacts, depending upon availability. Label descriptions included; display cases not included.

Furnishings include:

- Classroom desks and chairs
- Courtroom chairs



# A Class Action OnCell Recordings



OnCell recordings and script in Spanish and English

## Oral History Listening Station

Recordings held at the Center for Oral and Public History  
at California State University, Fullerton

### Track 1

Marianne Morales discusses  
segregation in public swimming  
pools (2004)

OH 3523

### Track 2

Samuel Romero explains the  
unity of the Logan Barrio (2010)

OH 4055.1

### Track 3

Samuel Romero recalls Mexican  
American patriotism during  
World War II (2010)

OH 4055.2

### Track 4

Arletta Kelly speaks about the  
aptitude of her Mexican American  
students (1971)

OH 48b

### Track 5

James Allen discusses  
his grandmother's views on his  
Cuban heritage (2011)

OH 4792

## Oral History Listening Station

Recordings held at the Center for Oral and Public History  
at California State University, Fullerton

### Track 1

Maria Solis Martinez recalls  
speaking Spanish and English  
at Delhi School (2001)

OH 2967

### Track 2

Virginia Guzmán shares her  
reasons for keeping her son out  
of a Mexican school (2011)

OH 4883

### Track 3

Virginia Guzmán discusses the  
barriers between Mexican  
American and Anglo children  
(2011)

OH 4883

### Track 4

Alex Maldonado recalls having  
inefficient school supplies in  
segregated schools (2011)

OH 4885

### Track 5

Alex Maldonado speaks about  
ineffective writing implements at  
Hoover School (2011)

OH 4885

## Oral History Listening Station

Recordings held at the Center for Oral and Public History  
at California State University, Fullerton

### Track 1

Samuel Romero discusses  
discrimination in housing after  
the *Mendez et al.* case (2010)

OH 4055.3

### Track 2

James Allen reflects on a legacy  
of discrimination against Latinos  
(2011)

OH 4792

### Track 3

Sylvia Mendez discusses the  
impact of the *Mendez et al.* case  
(2001)

OH 957

### Track 4

Samuel Romero discusses the  
impact of the *Mendez et al.* case  
(2010)

OH 4055.3

### Track 5

James Allen discusses activism in  
Orange County in the 1950s and  
1960s (2011)

OH 4792

# *A Class Action* **Documentary**



## *Mendez v. Westminster:* **Families for Equality**

by Erica Bennett

In 1945 the Mendez, Guzman, Palomino, Estrada, and Ramirez families led a movement to integrate Orange County elementary schools.

They succeeded.

A 2010 Fullerton College production of a 28:30 documentary film by librarian and dramatist Erica Bennett. It weaves together family members' memories of the case with the first public performance of Bennett's play *El Primer Dia de Clases*. The film focuses on civil rights, educational equality, and multicultural understanding of the landmark case that set the precedent for *Brown vs. Board of Education*. It features many of the original family members who participated in this class action lawsuit and students from the college's Ethnic Studies Department. *Families for Equality* was created in collaboration with the Fullerton College Office of Special Programs and the Division of Academic Services.

*A Class Action*  
**Mexican School exhibit**



An adjunct exhibit featuring photographs and oral histories featuring former students of the California Mexican schools



# A Class Action Docent Support



Docent training materials/script/tips for success

## Guidelines for Docents

### Discussion Points:

Use learning styles of students: Auditory, Visual, Kinesthetic, Combination

Flexible use of script

Know the BIG IDEA for each section

Memorize transition sentences

Arrange students so that all can see

Taking charge of the tour

Eye Contact

Ask questions to engage students

How to handle questions not on topic

How to respond to incorrect answers

Be aware of time

## Four Types of TOURS

1. Self-guided – with a small brochure
2. Cell-phone technology – curatorial to do the stations
3. Junior Docent 3:00 Tours for Youth and School Groups  
100 minutes long
4. Traditional School Tours -- 10 o'clock Tours  
2 hours long

FIRST = movie 30 minutes—Documentary by Erica Bennett  
Jury Room  
15-20 minutes minute courtroom procedure—What goes on; who would say this quiz? (Example: Order in the Court ) The various positions  
20 minutes activity to travel downstairs to see "Memories of Mexican Schools"

Early agricultural California  
a 50# sack of oranges -- ten pounds IS heavy  
Villa Park crate is available for use to handle  
Minimum wage 43 cents; pay was LOW  
Two dollars a day pay --was that less than minimum wage? 8 hour day??

In the Kitchen  
Salaries were low; people bought large amounts  
bought supplies in bulk. Large sacks of flour, beans, rice  
list of chores on the wall  
calendar on the wall with the year 1943 (?)  
grinding your own cornmeal – with a metate

In the Classroom  
Have a lesson on the board  
Students seated at desks and.....????  
Old books - what would they have been reading?

## Docent Training Workshop Part 1

4:00- 4:15 Welcome and Introduction

4:15- 4:45 Section I- Orange County Before World War II

4:45-4:50 Break

4:50-5:45- Section II- An American Community

5:45- 6:00- Snack Break

6:00- 6:45- Section III- Lessons in Inequality

6:45-7:00 Wrap-up and Next Steps

Lawyer  
for  
Defendants

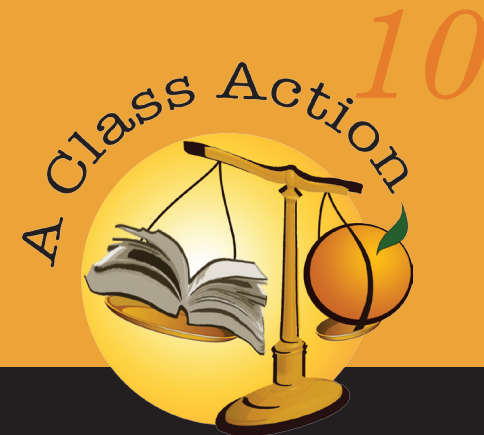
Defendant

Lawyer  
for  
Plaintiffs

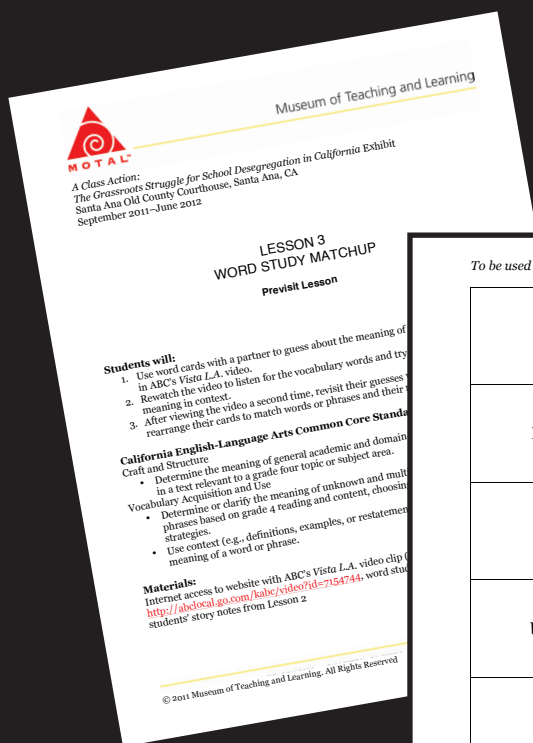
Plaintiff

Judge

# A Class Action Classroom Materials



Pre- and postvisit classroom materials  
for elementary and secondary students



To be used with Lesson 3, Word Study Matchup

Legacy	School Board
Integrated School	Class Action Lawsuit
Injustice	<i>Brown v. Board of Education</i>
<i>Mendez et al. v. Westminster et al.</i>	Separate Is Not Equal
To Segregate	Mission
Court of Appeals	Legislation
Et al.	

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### A 1940s Timeline

The United States in 1941 enters World War II against Germany, Italy, Japan, et al.

In 1942 individuals of Japanese descent are sent to internment camps.

The first electronic computer is built in 1945.

Chuck Yeager flies a test plane faster than the speed of sound in 1947.

In 1941 U.S. growers support the Bracero Program allowing Mexican citizens to enter the U.S. temporarily to work for low wages.

Japan surrenders and World War II ends in 1945.

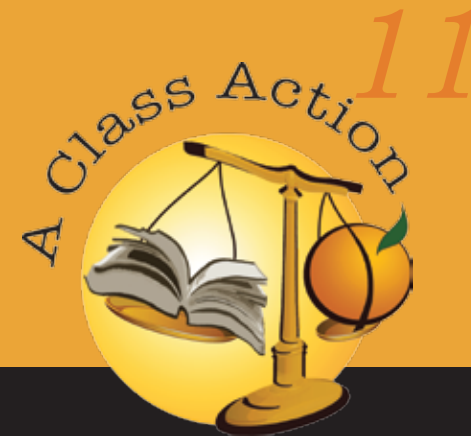
In 1947 California votes to create a statewide freeway system.

1. What year did World War II start? \_\_\_\_\_ How many years did World War II last? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Describe what happened to Japanese families living in California during World War II.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Why was the Bracero program created? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What development came first—computers or freeways? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Why do you think lawmakers decide that freeways were needed in California?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What event do you think triggered the decision to do this?  
\_\_\_\_\_

# A Class Action Suggested Events

Public Programs  
including Activities and Games



## Calendar of Events

Saturday, September 24 10 AM - 4 PM  
**Smithsonian Museum Day**

Friday, October 14, 2011, 7 - 9 PM  
Screening of **Heart of Loneliness:  
The Bracero Program**  
Gil Gonzalez and Vivian Price discuss  
the film with audience members.

Wednesday, October 19 11:45 AM  
Annual Meeting:  
**Old Courthouse Museum Society**  
"Ask a Barber" with Bob & Paul Benitez

Thursday, November 17, 7 PM  
Screening of **Mendez v. Westminster:  
Families for Equality**  
Film by Erica Bennett

Screening of  
**California School Segregation:  
the Neglected History  
of the Lemon Grove Incident**

Film clips and discussion of the  
significant 1931 case. Students of  
Mexican descent were required to attend  
a separate but unequal school, known as  
"The Barn." Mike Madrid, PhD,  
& Christina Luna, EdD will comment.

Screening of **Stand Up for Justice:  
the Ralph Lazo Story**

Film by Nikkei for Civil Rights and  
Redress with Patty and Steve Nagano.  
Learn the amazing story of the Mexican-  
American who went to internment camp  
with his Japanese-American friends.

Screening of **Cruz Reynoso:  
Sowing the Seeds of Justice  
with Justice Reynoso**

Film presenting a compelling portrait  
of one of America's unsung heroes and  
the turbulent times in which he lived.

**Family Day for the Public**

Enjoy learning and activities with our  
field trip schools such as El Sol School,  
Santa Ana. Bring your cellphone!

Screening of **Mendez vs. Westminster:  
For All the Children / Para Todos los Niños**  
Documentary film by Sandra Robie.  
Discussion following screening.

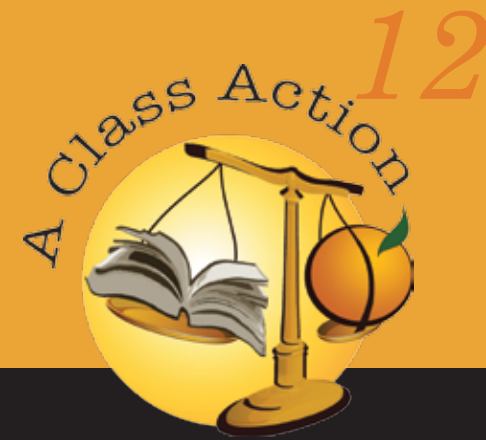
**Helping Our Children to Succeed**  
Outstanding Orange County projects share their  
secrets to educational success for families.

**Panel Discussion: Reflections on  
Mexican American History  
in Southern California**  
Scholars gather in lively discussion.

**Memories of Integrated Schools**  
with Gonzalo Mendez, Jr. and other children  
of the 1940s desegregation.

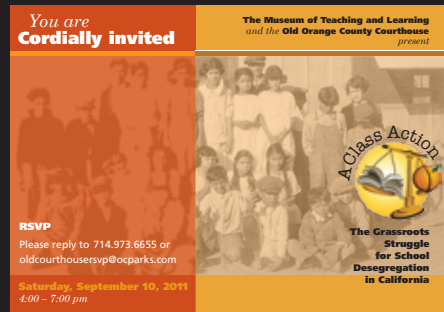
**Closing Reception & Celebration**  
Join the crowd for a journey back in time,  
with great food, music from the 1940s,  
and special speakers and activities.

# A Class Action Marketing Materials

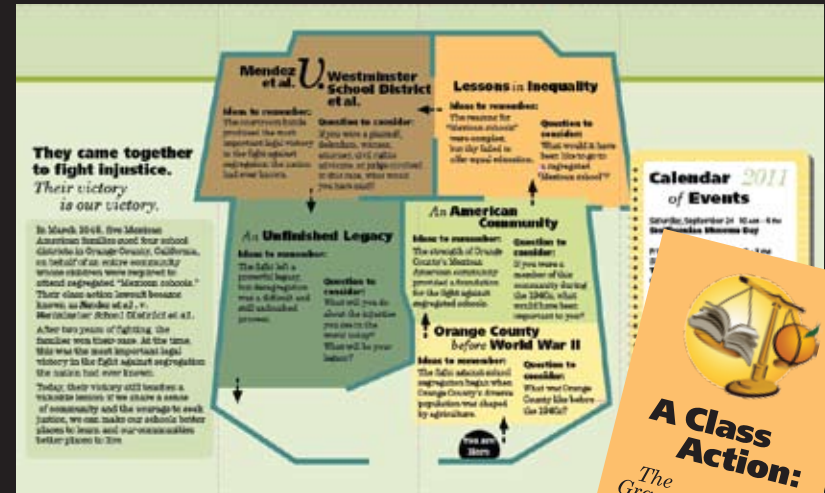


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template art

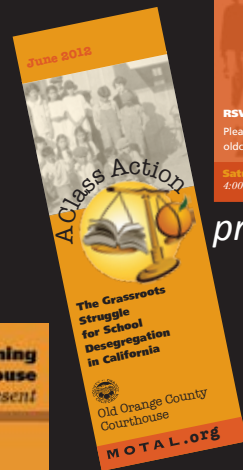
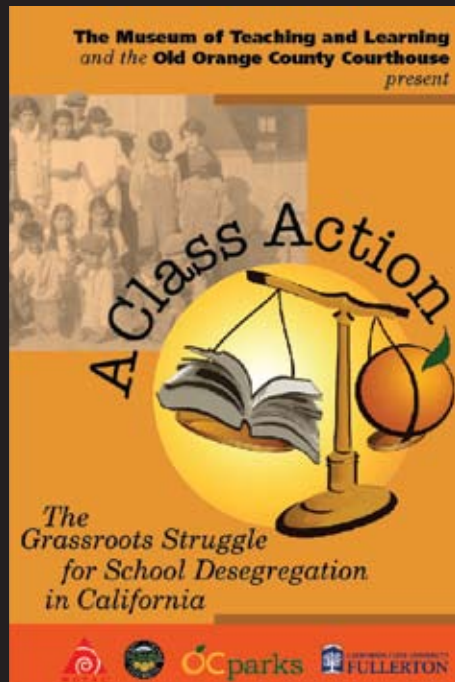


programs

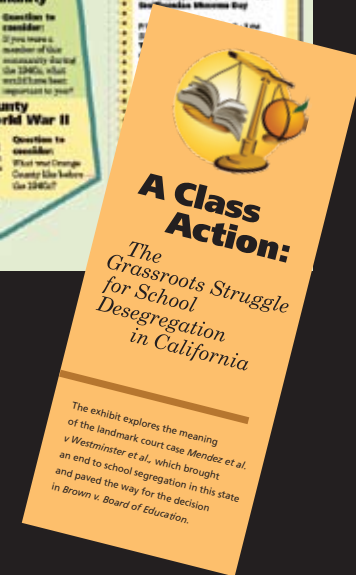


gallery guides

posters



banners



invitations