



**A CLASS ACTION:  
THE GRASSROOTS STRUGGLE FOR  
SCHOOL DESEGREGATION IN CALIFORNIA**

**LESSON PLANS**

**Introductory Lessons for High School**

**Previsit Lessons and Postvisit Study**

Lesson Plans about the Exhibit  
at the  
Santa Ana Old County Courthouse, Santa Ana, CA  
September 2011– June 2012

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During the 1930s



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The following lessons are introductory lessons about the school segregation/desegregation of Mexican American students with special focus on the *Mendez et al. v. Westminster et al.* lawsuit. The lessons can easily be adapted for middle school students.



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## MUSEUM ETIQUETTE

Before visiting the exhibit, please read and discuss these expectations with your students.

- Walk, don't run.
- Talk, don't yell. There are government offices in the building and people are working.
- Listen carefully to the tour guide or docent.
- Raise hands to speak.
- Stay with your group.
- Unless the tour guide indicates that an artifact may be handled, look with your eyes, not with your hands.
- To ensure that no one is hurt, there is no pushing or shoving.
- Turn off cellphones.
- Ask docent or museum staff for permission before taking any pictures.
- Be curious and ask questions!



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## LESSON 1

### EXCLUSION, QUICK WRITE AND QUICK DRAW

**History-Social Studies Content Standards addressed:**

- 11.10 Students analyze the development of federal civil rights and voting rights.
- 11.11 Students analyze the major social problems and domestic policy issues in contemporary American society.
- 12.5 Students summarize landmark U.S. Supreme Court interpretations of the Constitution and its amendments.

**Objective:**

The students share verbally their individual quick write and quick draw response to the following prompt: Think about and visualize a time when you were excluded from a group at school, home, church or an activity by others. How did others exclude from playing or participating in an activity? How did this make you feel?

**Approximate time:** 50 minutes

**Materials:**

- Photographs/images of exclusion available at <http://www.google.com/imghp>; search “exclusion and segregation”
- Photographs/images of the segregation of Mexican Americans, Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and African Americans available at <http://www.google.com/imghp>; search “segregation”
- Photographs/images of Chinese Exclusion Act, Japanese American Internment available at <http://www.google.com/imghp>; search “Exclusion Act, Japanese American Internment”

**NOTE:** The above individual images also have links to the topics of segregation, exclusion of various cultural groups in California, Japanese American Internment, and so on.

**Class organization:**

Small cooperative learning groups of four students or large group with think-pair-share.



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**Lesson 1: Exclusion, Quick Write and Quick Draw (continued)**

**Procedure:**

The teacher:

- introduces the concept of exclusion by sharing above images of exclusion from a social group.
- shares an example of his/her social exclusion.
- provides the prompt: Think about and visualize a time when you were excluded from a group at school, home, church or an activity by others. How did others not permit you to play with them or participate in an activity? How did this make you feel?

The students:

- share in a cooperative group or think-pair-share a time when others excluded them from a social group.
- share out to the large group their experience with exclusion.

The teacher:

- asks students to share their personal experience and response to the above prompt in a quick write and quick draw.
- models a partial example of the quick write and quick draw.

The students:

- share their quick write/draw with a cooperative group .
- share their quick write and quick draw with the larger group (optional).

**Assessment:**

Students:

- share in a cooperative group their quick write and quick draw response to the above prompt.
- share with the large group (optional).

**Follow-up activity:**

Students:

- write a rough draft of their quick write and quick draw and then share in a read around.
- continue with the writing process to write a final draft and share in a read around.



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## LESSON 2

### HOW WOULD YOU FEEL?

### SEGREGATION AND ANTI-ALIEN/IMMIGRANT HISTORY

**History-Social Studies Content Standards addressed:**

- 11.10 Students analyze the development of federal civil rights and voting rights.
- 11.11 Students analyze the major social problems and domestic policy issues in contemporary American society.
- 12.5 Students summarize landmark U.S. Supreme Court interpretations of the Constitution and its amendments.

**Objective:**

The students will share verbally their response to the following prompt: How would you feel if you were subjected to segregation or anti-alien/immigrant laws and sentiment?

**Materials:**

- Photographs/images of segregation available at <http://www.google.com/imghp>; search “segregation” and “school segregation”
- Photographs/images of the segregation of Mexican Americans, Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and African Americans available at <http://www.google.com/imghp>; search “segregation” of the above groups
- Photographs/images of Chinese Exclusion Act, Japanese American Internment available at <http://www.google.com/imghp>; search “Chinese Exclusion Act” and so on

NOTE: The above individual images also have links to the topics of segregation, exclusion of various cultural groups in California, Japanese American Internment, and so on.

- Timelines of anti-immigrant exclusion and segregation in California available at: **Wherever there's a fight: How runaway slaves, suffragists, immigrants, strikers, and poets shaped civil liberties in California**  
<http://www.whenevertheresafight.com/contact>
- Overhead projector and transparency or Smart Board or laptop with LCD projector

**Approximate time:** 50 minutes



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**Lesson 2: How Would You Feel?** (continued)

**Class organization:**

Small cooperative learning groups of four students or large group with think-pair-share

**Procedure:**

The teacher

- introduces the concept of segregation and anti-alien/immigrant laws sentiment in the United States and California by showing some of the above digital images of segregation and exclusion with verbal explanation.
- explains that :
  - pre-civil rights racial segregation of public facilities in the United States existed throughout the United States including California.
  - many cultural groups in the United States historically experienced racial segregation.
  - many cultural groups including Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, African Americans have experienced racial segregation in California history.
- directs students to respond to the following prompt through a think-pair-share or in a small cooperative group: How would you feel if you were subjected to segregation or anti-alien/immigrant laws?
- scribes what students share on the white board, overhead projector, LCD projector, or on Smart Board student contributions.

**Assessment:**

The students share verbally with a partner or in a cooperative group their response to the prompt and then share with the larger group as the teacher scribes.



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## LESSON 3

### SCHOOL SEGREGATION IN THE UNITED STATES AND CALIFORNIA

**History-Social Studies Content Standards addressed:**

- 11.10 Students analyze the development of federal civil rights and voting rights.
- 11.11 Students analyze the major social problems and domestic policy issues in contemporary American society.
- 12.5 Students summarize landmark U.S. Supreme Court interpretations of the Constitution and its amendments.

**Materials:**

- Photographs/images of school segregation available at <http://www.google.com/imghp>
- “Segregation of Mexican Americans in Schools and Communities in the United States Anticipation Guide” included below
- Fleming, M. (2000). “A Tale of Two Schools” available at <http://www.tolerance.org/activity/tale-two-schools> or at [http://www.coventrypublicschools.org/chs/academics/english/eng11/place\\_at\\_table.html](http://www.coventrypublicschools.org/chs/academics/english/eng11/place_at_table.html)
- *Mendez vs. Westminster: For all the children/Para todos los niños*, DVD available at [www.wmht.org/](http://www.wmht.org/); item MVWD \$29.95 plus shipping.
- Historian John Valdez talks about the Lemon Grove School Desegregation incident of 1931, interview: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92DiTCecPlk> **or**
- The Lemon Grove incident: Roberto Alvarez vs. the Board of Trustees of the Lemon Grove School District. Video clip: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6glJy-5K4Qs&feature=related>
- California first to end school segregation. Interview <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=juGzbgciQ3w>





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**Lesson 3: School Segregation in the United States and California** (continued)

**Objective:**

Students verbally defend their agreements or disagreements about the lawful school segregation of Mexican Americans prior to the 1930s by comparing and contrasting their positions on “Segregation of Mexican Americans in Schools and Communities in the United States Anticipation Guide” with information presented in “A Tale of Two Schools,” Mendez vs. Westminster: For All the Children/Para Todos Los Niños, and/or the above video clips.

**Approximate time:** 100 minutes or 2 sessions

**Class organization:**

Small cooperative learning groups of four students or large group with think-pair-share.

**Procedure:**

The teacher:

- explains that students will be learning about a specific group of Americans who experienced school segregation in California prior to 1946.
- shows digital images of school segregation.
- explains: It is important to study about one group of Americans who were segregated in what were called “Mexican Schools” because of their physical, cultural, and physical characteristics.
- guides students to agree or disagree with the statements in “Segregation of Mexican Americans in Schools and Communities in the United States Anticipation Guide” by discussing in cooperative groups or using think-pair-share.
- explains that the students will view the videos: Interview of Historian John Valdez Talks about the Lemon Grove School Desegregation Incident of 1931, or video clip California First to End School Segregation after agreeing or disagreeing with statements in “Segregation of Mexican Americans in Schools and Communities in the United States Anticipation Guide” about school segregation in the United States and California.

Students:

- complete “Segregation of Mexican Americans in Schools and Communities in the United States Anticipation Guide” included below prior to viewing video clips, DVD, or reading “A Tale of Two Schools.”
- defend their agreement or disagreement with the larger group.



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**Lesson 3: School Segregation in the United States and California** (continued)

- read the article, “A Tale of Two Schools.”
- further investigate the statements on “Segregation of Mexican Americans in Schools and Communities in the United States Anticipation Guide” by viewing *Mendez vs. Westminster: For All the Children/Para Todos Los Niños*, DVD and/or the above video clips
- compare and contrast their agreements/disagreements to the information presented in the article, DVD, and/or video clips



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**Segregation of Mexican Americans in Schools  
and Communities in the United States  
Anticipation Guide**

1. Chinese American students were often excluded by law from California public schools during the 1800s and early 1900s.  
Agree/Disagree
2. African American students were often excluded from California public schools in California during the 1800s.  
Agree/Disagree
3. Native American students were often excluded by law from California public schools during 1800s and early 1900s.  
Agree/Disagree
4. Japanese American students were often excluded by law from California public schools in the 1800s and early 1900s.  
Agree/Disagree
5. Japanese American students were not allowed to attend public school with other cultural groups in California during the 1940s.  
Agree/Disagree
6. Japanese American students were forced to attend school only with other Japanese American students in concentration camps in California during the 1940s.  
Agree/Disagree
7. Many Mexican American students were forced to attend “Mexican only” public schools throughout California during 1930s and 1940s.  
Agree/Disagree
8. Mexican Americans were not allowed to use some public facilities with other cultural groups in Orange County during the 1930s and 1940s.  
Agree/Disagree



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9. Many Mexican American students were forced to attend “Mexican only” public schools throughout California during the 1930s and 1940s.  
Agree/Disagree
10. Some Mexican Americans protested against public schools that did not allow Mexican Americans to attend during the 1930s in Lemon Grove near San Diego, California.  
Agree/Disagree
11. Mexican Americans won the right to attend nonsegregated public schools with all other children in California by organizing a protest and winning a court case in the 1930s and 1940s.  
Agree/Disagree
12. Many different cultural groups and organizations supported Mexican Americans in their protest against being required to attend schools called “Mexican Schools” in California including Orange County in 1946.  
Agree/Disagree
13. Some school officials in California in 1946 said that Mexican American students needed to be segregated in “Mexican Schools” because they were “filthy and had all kinds of diseases.”  
Agree/Disagree

**Assessment:**

Students adjust their original responses on the **Segregation of Mexican Americans in Schools and Communities in the United States Anticipation Guide** and defend their original agreements or provide new defense of their agreements/disagreements with information from the article, DVD or video clips, article in pairs, a cooperative group or to the large group.



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## POST EXHIBIT STUDY OR FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

### Topics

- American school desegregation in general
- Segregation in the United States and California
- Civil rights and school segregation
- The Civil Rights Act of 1964

### Activities

- Role playing of various school segregation cases
- Simulated interviews of students attending segregated “Mexican Schools”
- Oral history interviews of former students who attended “Mexican Schools”
- Analysis of court documents: *Mendez et al. v. Westminster et al.*
- Mock trial of *Roberto Alvarez v. the Board of Trustees of Lemon Grove School District*
- Mock trial of *Mendez et al. v. Westminster et al.* lawsuit



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## RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Alvarez, Robert, Jr. (1986). **The Lemon Grove incident: The nation's first successful desegregation court case.** *The Journal of San Diego History*, 32(2).

Retrieved on June 27, 2011 from

<http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/86spring/lemongrove.htm>.

This is an article about the *Roberto Alvarez v. the Board of Trustees of the Lemon Grove School District* case which preceded *Mendez v. Westminster* by almost two decades. This would be excellent background and follow-up reading about *Mendez et al. v. Westminster et al.*

Balderrama, F. (1982). ***In defense of la raza: The Los Angeles Mexican Consulate and the Mexican Community, 1929-1936.*** Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.

This monograph contains a chapter on school segregation of Mexican American students in the 1930s with a special focus on the *Roberto Alvarez v. the Board of Trustees of the Lemon Grove School District* and the Bliss Bill.

**California first to end school segregation.** [Video clip]. Retrieved June 27, 2011 from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=juGzbgciQ3w>.

A very short video of a news report on proposed legislation requiring inclusion of *Mendez et al. v. Westminster et al.* in the school curriculum.

Elinson, E. and Yogi, S. (2009). ***Wherever there's a fight: How runaway slaves, suffragists, immigrants, strikers, and poets shaped civil liberties in California.*** Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books. ISBN: 9781597141147.

General history about many topics and groups often excluded from U.S. and California history suitable for teachers and students. Some topics include women's rights, rights of the disabled, Mexican Americans, Japanese Americans, Chinese Americans, and so on. This publication includes simple general coverage of *Mendez et al. v. Westminster et al.*



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**Five views: An ethnic historic site survey for California.** [Web page]. Retrieved on June 27, 2011 from [http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online\\_books/5views/5views5.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/5views/5views5.htm).

This excellent website has many articles about various cultural groups in California. It would be excellent background reading for high school students about various cultural groups often given limited coverage in general U.S. and California history textbooks. In addition, it would be excellent background and follow-up reading about *Mendez et al. v. Westminster et al.*

Fleming, M. (2000). **A tale of two schools.** In M. Fleming (Ed.) *A place at the table.* (pp. 88-97). Montgomery, AL: Teaching Tolerance. Retrieved June 27, 2011 from [http://www.coventrypublicschools.org/chs/academics/english/eng11/documents/apat/o8two\\_schools.pdf](http://www.coventrypublicschools.org/chs/academics/english/eng11/documents/apat/o8two_schools.pdf).

Retrieved June 27, 2011 from <http://www.tolerance.org/activity/tale-two-schools>

An article suitable for average high school students about the general history of Mexican Americans prior to *Mendez et al. v. Westminster et al.* and including important issues of *Mendez et al. v. Westminster et al.*

**Historian John Valdez talks about the Lemon Grove School desegregation incident of 1931.** [Video] Retrieved June 27, 2011 from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92DiTCecPlk>.

A short interview with historian Professor John Valdez about the *Roberto Alvarez vs. the Board of Trustees of the Lemon Grove School District* case, which preceded *Mendez et al. v. Westminster et al.* by more than almost two decades. This would be excellent background and follow-up reading about *Mendez et al. v. Westminster et al.*

**Mendez et al. v. Westminster School District of Orange County et al. Civil Action No. 4292.** United States District Court for the Southern District of California, Central Division, February 18, 1946. [Web page: Learning California.org] Retrieved on June 27, 2011 from <http://www.learncalifornia.org/doc.asp?id=979>.

This is the actual text of the case and would be suitable for teacher background and then as student follow-up for document analysis and court simulations.



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Orange County and Pacific Islander Community Alliance (Year Unknown). **Civil rights and school desegregation. Mendez v. Westminster: An Orange County perspective.** Retrieved on June 27, 2011 from <http://www.ocapica.org/documents/MendezCurriculum.pdf>.

This curriculum guide includes discussion questions, ideas for lessons or activities and abridged documents related to the *Mendez et al. v. Westminster et al.* case.

**Race, Demographics, and History in Monterey County: Local History Resources** [Web page]. Retrieved on June 27, 2011 from

<http://web.me.com/joelarkin/RaceDemographicsandMonterey/HomePage.html>.

This is a comprehensive website outlining historical issues of race, discrimination, and laws affecting various groups in California. It would be excellent background reading for high school students about various cultural groups often given limited coverage in general U.S. and California history textbooks. It is excellent background and follow-up reading about *Mendez et al. v. Westminster et al.*, California school law, and segregation of Chinese, Japanese, and Native Americans.

Robbie, S. (2002). ***Mendez vs. Westminster: For all the children/para todos los niños.*** [DVD]. [www.wmht.org/](http://www.wmht.org/)

DVD provides a simple overview of the case.

Ruiz, V. (2004). **We always tell our children they are Americans: Mendez v. Westminster.** *Brown Quarterly*, pp 1, 4-5. Retrieved on June 27, 2011 from <http://brownvboard.org/sites/default/files/BQ-Vol6-3.pdf>.

An article suitable for challenged high school students about the school segregation of Mexican American students and *Mendez et al. v. Westminster et al.* This can be used in place of the “A Tale of Two Schools.”





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Strumm, P. (2010). ***Mendez v. Westminster: School desegregation and Mexican American rights***. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press. ISBN 978-0-7006-1719-7. Available at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

This is a general book on Mexican American history preceding and including *Mendez et al. v. Westminster et al.* This is an excellent source for teacher and students.

***The fight for racial equality in education.*** Wherever there's a fight: How runaway slaves, suffragists, immigrants, strikers, and poets shaped civil liberties in California [Web page]. Retrieved on June 27, 2011 from [http://www.wherevertheresafight.com/curriculum/the\\_fight\\_for\\_racial\\_equality\\_in\\_education](http://www.wherevertheresafight.com/curriculum/the_fight_for_racial_equality_in_education).

A lesson with related articles and follow-up lessons for students.

**Westminster School/Seventeenth Street School, Westminster, Orange County.** Retrieved on June 27, 2011 from [http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online\\_books/5views/5views5h99.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/5views/5views5h99.htm)

This article explains in simple terms suitable for high school students the segregation of Mexican American students and highlights *Mendez et al. v. Westminster et al.*

**Wherever there's a fight: How runaway slaves, suffragists, immigrants, strikers, and poets shaped civil liberties in California.** [Web page] Retrieved on June 27, 2011 from <http://www.wherevertheresafight.com/>.

Web page with many of the topics found in the publication ***Wherever there's a fight: How runaway slaves, suffragists, immigrants, strikers, and poets shaped civil liberties in California.*** This is an excellent source for extension of study about school desegregation and topics of other marginalized Americans. The web page addresses many topics often ignored in U.S. and California history with lessons, articles, timelines, and so on suitable for student use. Some topics include women's rights, rights of the disabled, Mexican Americans, Japanese Americans, Chinese Americans, and so on. Included are thought-provoking images, posters, etc.