



Viewing Guide: *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946)

The Background of the Case (00:00-1:00)

1. What areas of the economy had allowed California to prosper after becoming a state in 1850?
2. What role had many Mexican American citizens played in the growing California economy after it became a state in 1850?

Gonzalo Mendez (1:01-5:40)

3. Who was Gonzalo Mendez and what had been his experience in the California school of Westminster Main?
4. Describe Mr. Mendez's life as an adult.
5. What happened when Mr. Mendez tried to enroll his three children in Westminster Main Elementary School?
6. How did Mr. Mendez and his wife react and what was his main reason for reacting in this manner?
7. What happened when his children were still refused enrollment in the Westminster schools?

Stop and Think: What problems do you see with the policy of segregation as it was being carried out in the district?

Question Brought to the U.S. District Court (5:41-9:14)

NOTE—This case is not a U.S. Supreme Court case. It was decided in the District Court and then appealed to a U.S. District Court of Appeals.

8. What was the question brought before the U.S. District Court with regards to this case?

[Formula for issue=Yes/No question + facts of the case + part of the U.S. Constitution in question]

9. What did attorney David Marcus argue?

10. How did the school districts answer this argument?

11. What was wrong with this assumption?

Stop and Think: What is your opinion of the policy segregating Mexican American children from Anglo students being used by several of the school districts in Orange County at this time?

The Ruling (9:15-11:24)

12. How did the court rule?

13. What did Judge Paul McCormick mean when he said, “[This policy had]...a clear purpose to arbitrarily discriminate against pupils of Mexican ancestry...”?

Stop and Think: Do you agree or disagree with the ruling of the District Court Judge? Explain your answer.

14. How did the school districts respond to the decision?

15. How did the California Legislature respond?

Impact of the Case (11:25-End)

16. Why was this case important in the struggle to end segregation?