

Separate is Never Equal - Sylvia Mendez & Her Family's Fight for Desegregation

Duncan Tonatiuh

1. What happened on Sylvia's first day at the white school?
Another student told her that she didn't belong.
2. Why did Sylvia's family move to Westminster?
Mr. Mendez was able to lease his own property. He was going to be his own boss on a farm that was growing asparagus, tomatoes, and chilies.
3. How were Sylvia's cousins different from Sylvia?
They had lighter skin and auburn hair. Also, their last name did not sound Mexican.
4. How was the Mexican school different from the white school?
 - * It was a clapboard shack.
 - * A cow pasture surrounded the school and was surrounded with electric wire.
 - * The students had to eat their lunch outside.
 - * There was no playground.
 - * The teachers did not care about the children's education.
5. What happened when Mr. Mendez started a petition?
People were afraid to sign it. They worked for white families and did not want to make problems.
6. What did the truck driver tell Mr. Mendez to do to help him with his problem of unfair schooling?
He told him to hire the lawyer, Mr. Marcus, and to file a lawsuit to change the segregation policies.
7. Who was Mr. Estrada?
Mr. Estrada was a man who fought for the USA in World War II. His family was also told they could not go to school with the white children.
8. Describe Sylvia when she went to court.
She always wore her best clothes. She made sure she looked her best and practiced what she would say if she was called to the stand.
9. Where was the trial held?
The trial was held in a courthouse in Los Angeles, California. The defendants were from different districts in Orange County California.

Separate is Never Equal - Sylvia Mendez & Her Family's Fight for Desegregation

Duncan Tonatiuh

10. What were some of the reasons the superintendent stated that Mexican children had to go to the other school?

- * The children's English was not good.
- * The children needed to learn social behavior. (cleanliness of mind, manner, dress)
- * They are not learning at home and are dirty and have diseases (lice, impetigo, tuberculosis)
- * They have poor scholastic ability.
- * They do not good economic outlook.

11. What happened after Mr. Mendez won the court case?

The judge said that all students must be allowed to attend school, no matter what his or her race or background. The school board appealed this decision. The case was sent to the Court of Appeals in San Francisco.

12. Who supported the Mendez family during the appeal?

- * League of United Latin American Citizens
- * National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
- * Japanese American Citizens League
- * American Jewish Congress

People of different backgrounds from different parts of the country got involved in this fight for justice for everyone.

13. When was the final decision made?

April 15, 1947 - The judges in the Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the Mendez family.

14. Who was Earl Warren?

He was the Governor of California that signed the law that said that all children in California were allowed to go to school together, regardless of race, ethnicity, or language. He later became a Chief Justice on the Supreme Court in Washington, DC, and presided over the Brown vs. Board of Education case. (Desegregation of Schools)