



DOCUMENTS

Why Were Mexican-American Students Segregated?

DOCUMENT A James Kent Master's Thesis

Source: Excerpt from "Segregation of Mexican School Children in Southern California," written in 1941.

Author: James Kent was the superintendent of Garden Grove School District at the time of the *Mendez* case.

He wrote this research four years before testifying in favor of segregation at the *Mendez* trial in 1945.

In suggesting segregation for the Mexican children, there is no thought they are unwanted people. ... However, Mexicans seem to possess some undesirable attitude and characteristics ...

Their racial language handicap seems to be a severe limitation to their advancement in school. ...

The language handicap causes the Mexican to have difficulty with reading and comprehension. This probably could be overcome by having a special staff of teachers trained for remedial work and well aware of the problems presented by language handicaps ... the segregation of Mexicans would be of advantage to both them and the white children ...

The Mexican children have bi-lingual handicap when they come to the United States

The white children are slowed in their educational progress because of the slowing down the class as a whole in order to allow the Mexican pupils to progress at their own rate.

DOCUMENT B Judge McCormick Court Ruling

Source: Excerpt from Judge McCormick's *Mendez* court decision delivered on February 18, 1946.

The only reason for segregation practices is the English language deficiencies of some of the children of Mexican ancestry.

The evidence clearly shows that Spanish-speaking children are retarded in learning English by lack of exposure to its use because of segregation...The mixing of the entire student body develops a common cultural attitude among the school children, which is important for the continuation of American ideals. The methods of segregation in the school districts foster antagonisms in the children and suggest inferiority among them.

Segregation of children of Mexican ancestry because of language handicaps is not always necessary. The tests applied to Mexican students are hurried and not reliable. In some instances separate classification was determined by the Latinized or Mexican name of the child.

DOCUMENT C Pupil Segregation on Coast Is Fought

Source: Excerpt from newspaper article titled “Pupil Segregation on Coast Is Fought,” December 10, 1946.

Author: Lawrence Davies, special reporter for *The New York Times*

The school boards and superintendents justify their segregation policy on the belief that most children of Mexican ancestry come from homes where English is not spoken and...must be segregated for efficiency (not waste time and be organized) in instruction...

[The Mendez attorney] said, “if your name was Gonzalez, or Mendoso, or Palomino, you went to Mexican schools because you were of Mexican descent,” indicating the name was the deciding factor. The Judge, saying he once knew a man named O’Shaughnessy in Guatemala who was seven-eighths Spanish, asked if a pupil of the name would be segregated. The Mendez attorney thought he would be, as “they also segregate by appearance as well as names.”

**PUPIL SEGREGATION
ON COAST IS FOUGHT**

Judges Hear It Defended by
Officials in South California,
Hit by Mexico Descendants

LANGUAGE POINT ARGUED

Inability to Keep Up Is Not
Real Test but Names and
Faces Are, Say Taxpayers

By **LAWRENCE E. DAVIES**
Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES