

# CHALLENGING RACIAL SEGREGATION IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS

## RESOURCES:

**RG 21, Records of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California, Central Division (Los Angeles), Civil Case file #4292, *Gonzalo Mendez, et al. V. Westminster School District of Orange County, et al.***

This groundbreaking 1945 civil lawsuit, filed by citizens of Orange County, California against four Southern California school districts, accused the school districts of conspiring to segregate Mexican migrant workers' children in the school systems. The suit alleged that the children had been turned away from Westminster's 17<sup>th</sup> Street School and consigned to Hoover, generally regarded as the school for children of Mexican descent. The schools admitted that they taught differently to students of Mexican descent, but denied a conspiracy. The plaintiffs won their case in the U.S. District Court and on appeal, and enrolled their children in the 17<sup>th</sup> Street School. This early school desegregation case preceded *Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* by many years. The case files contain affidavits, transcripts, the opinion, correspondence, complaints, etc.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources

*Petition, March 3, 1945*; Civil Case file #4292, *Gonzalo Mendez, et al. v. Westminster School District of Orange County, et al.*; United States District Court for the Southern District of California, Central Division (Los Angeles); Records of the District Courts of the United States, Records Group 21; National Archives at Riverside.

*Answer of Westminster School District of Orange County, et al., 05/05/45*; Civil Case file #4292, *Gonzalo Mendez, et al. v. Westminster School District of Orange County, et al.*; United States District Court for the Southern District of California, Central Division (Los Angeles); Records of the District Courts of the United States, Records Group 21; National Archives at Riverside.

*Conclusions of the Court, 02/18/46*; Civil Case file #4292, *Gonzalo Mendez, et al. v. Westminster School District of Orange County, et al.*; United States District Court for the Southern District of California, Central Division (Los Angeles); Records of the District Courts of the United States, Records Group 21; National Archives at Riverside.

*Judgement and Injunction*, 03/21/46; Civil Case file #4292, *Gonzalo Mendez, et al. v. Westminster School District of Orange County, et al.*; United States District Court for the Southern District of California, Central Division (Los Angeles); Records of the District Courts of the United States, Records Group 21; National Archives at Riverside.

### **Secondary Sources**

“Hispanic Heroine.” *Orange County Register*, 15 April 1998, sec. 5, p. 1.

Sánchez, George J. *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Scott, Robin Fitzgerald. “The Mexican-American in the Los Angeles Area, 1920-1950: From Acquiescence to Activity.” Thesis (Ph.D.): University of Southern California, 1971.

United States Commission on Civil Rights. “A Generation Deprived: Los Angeles School Desegregation: A Report of the United States Commission on Civil Rights.” Washington: Commission on Civil Rights, 1977.

### **Internet resources**

National History Day website: <https://www.nhd.org/>

National History Day California website: <https://www.nhdca.org/>

National Archives Online Catalog: <https://catalog.archives.gov/advancedsearch>

How to Do Research at NARA: <https://www.archives.gov/research/start>

Citing Records in the National Archives of the United States:

<https://www.archives.gov/publications/general-info-leaflets/17-citing-records.html>

Information on National Archives at Riverside: <https://www.archives.gov/riverside>