



Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta Commemorative Committee - 2017
Contest open to 2nd to 12th Grade Teachers and Students
Essay, Poetry and Poster Contest
Deadline for submittal April 10, 2017
Mendez v. Westminster - 70th Anniversary

Mendez vs. Westminster

Sylvia Mendez, who received the [Presidential Medal of Freedom](#) at a 2011 White House ceremony, was a child when she was turned away from a California public school for "whites only." That rejection fueled her father's determined journey through school, civic, and legal channels. Gonzalo Mendez, represented by a civil rights attorney, took four Los Angeles-area school districts to court and won a class action lawsuit at the trial and appellate levels of the federal court system. Ms. Mendez carries on the legacy of *Mendez v. Westminster* when she explains that her parents taught her: "That we are all individuals; that we are all human beings; that we are all connected together; and that we all have the same rights, the same freedom."

During the Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta Commemorative period the committee is proud to make a special call out to Berkeley Unified Teachers and their students from the 2nd through 12th grade to be part of recognizing the 70th Anniversary of the ruling in California that made it unlawful to segregate students by their race and ethnicity.

The Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta Commemorative Committee (CCDHCC) annually provide during the Cesar Chavez Dolores Huerta Commemorative period from March 20 to April 23 an essay/art and poetry contest for students in Berkeley Unified. This year the committee will provide resources to BUSD Teachers from 2nd to the 12th Grade (one award per school site) to carry out a project with their students around books written that tell the story of the Sylvia Mendez and her family.

Elementary: "Separate is Never Equal"

Middle School: "Sylvia and Aki"

High School & Middle School: "Mendez v. Westminster"

The contest is open now to Teachers and their students; and, we encourage teachers to participate during the contest period to garner special prizes for students. With a **deadline of April 10th** for submittal of essays, poetry or art work.

This contest project will conclude with a community presentation on April 13, 2017 by Mrs.

For more information: curriculum@chavezhuerta.org

Sylvia Mendez (details to be announced later) whose family 70 years ago was denied entry into the neighborhood school because of their language and ethnicity. CCDHCC believes that education is the right of all children, and in this climate of immigrant discrimination and deportation it is important for students to understand the importance of this ruling. This law was also a precursor to the Brown vs Board Act which found that “separate but equal is inherently unequal.” Nationally schools are endorsing resolutions like Berkeley Unified to ensure students and their families are safe from deportation and/or Immigration enforcement. We invite teachers with student’s grade 2nd to the 12th grade to support their students in being part of an educational action in the spirit of social justice, nonviolence, education and equity for all.

Step 1

Teachers that would like their class to participate can request in writing to curriculum@chavezhuerta.org how many books you would like for your class. One grade will be selected per school site.

Step 2

Students enter the contest by reading the book and completing an essay, or by completing a poetry or poster contest.

1. One submission per student for essay, poetry or poster – include students Name/date/age/grade/school site/teacher's name (if applicable)
2. There will only be 10 winners (one from each grade and one per site)
3. Bilingual Essays are welcomed.
4. Poster Art/Poetry inspired by the book/readings on Mendez v. Westminster
5. Middle and High School students can submit work on their own. Please include your contact information name/age/school/email

Step 3

We invite three teachers from one elementary/middle/high school to “organize” a Teach-In by their students for their school either through a play, reading of essays and/or display their classwork in the school library, or a class or assembly regarding the Mendez v. Westminster ruling. The 8 minute video can also be shown. Each teacher will be given \$200.00 gift card for their participation and activity with their students.

Step 4

Other recognitions: There is a strong possibility that winning essays, art and poetry and will be published in the Berkeley Times. We invite teachers participating to suggest changes and/or to add on activities to this project.

Teacher will read 2nd through 4th Grade:

“Separate is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family’s Fight for Desegregation” or students will read the book, “Sylvia and Aki”

Asking students to discuss and later write on one of these essay topics:

- In 2017, why is what happened over 70 years ago to the Mendez family back in 1947 important to remember, read about and discuss?
- Why are segregated schools wrong for students?
- Do you believe the Mendez v. Westminster case was right or wrong? Explain Why?

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Teachers 5th Grade to 12th Grade – Essay in response to one or more of these questions.

Mendez v. Westminster Book

- Why do you think public schools were segregated before 1947 in America? What were segregated schools like?
- What makes Mendez v. Westminster relevant to the national political climate we are experiencing today?
- Besides the Mendez v. Westminster case, what other cities and states were involved to end public school segregation? Who was affected by these cases and how were these cases alike or were they different?
- What does the 14th Amendment have to do with the Mendez v. Westminster ruling?

For additional questions please email:

curriculum@chavezhuerta.org

Submit materials to the Parent Engagement Office @ 2020 Bonar Street Rm 116, Berkeley

By or before 5pm on April 10, 2017.

Suggested Links

Cesar Chavez Dolores Huerta Commemorative Committee website: <http://www.chavezhuerta.org/>,

For Students:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mendez_v._Westminster

<https://www.texasbar.com/civics/High%20School%20cases/mendez-v-westminster.html>

<http://ca.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/osi04.soc.ush.civil.mendez/mendez-v-westminster-desegregating-californias-schools/>

<http://ecologycenter.org/chavez/why-now-is-the-time-to-honor-dolores-huerta/> by BUSD Teacher Elizabeth Fuentes

For Adults and older students

<http://ca.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/bln13.socst.ush.now.busingfour/boston-desegregation-four-years-later-1978/>

<http://mendezetalvwestminster.com/>

<https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/lasting-impact-mendez-v-westminster-struggle-desegregation>

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?295471-1/mendez-v-westminster> - video of the author (1 hour) of Phillppa Strum who wrote Mendez v. Westminster