



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
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Hidden Realities: School Desegregation and the Law – Brown and Black Victories During the Civil Rights Era

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Between mid-November through the first week in January, teachers at the Davis Street Arts & Academics Interdistrict Magnet School in New Haven, CT prepare for our annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Assembly. We collectively lay the foundation for examining the Civil Rights era and its impact on American society as we know it today. Grades Pre-K through 1 take a simplistic, developmentally appropriate look at the civil rights movement with emphasis on embracing cultural similarities and diverse peoples working and living together as a united community. Grades 2 through 3 take a generic look at Rosa Parks and the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycotts. Grades 4 through 6 briefly examine past injustices experienced by African Americans in the segregated South, including examining the story of 14-year old Emmet Till. Each of these grade levels delves into an excerpted overview of Dr. King's "I Have A Dream" speech, accompanied by mosaic images of myriad people gathered at the Lincoln Memorial. Emphasis is placed on Black/White relationships and individuals who fought against racial injustice during the era. Although teacher and student efforts regarding the aforementioned prove laudable, the effort is in a sense insufficient.

For years, we have taught our children about the black/white inequities encountered in the struggle for civil rights. The reality is that although African-American people were tremendously impacted by Jim Crow laws, other people of color were impacted by those laws, and they too played an integral role in the struggle for civil rights. Also to be emphasized is that students—ranging from ages 6 through adolescent years—were in the forefront of this struggle: children and their parents recognized that education was pivotal in their obtaining their share of the American Dream. During the 50s and 60s, the pursuit of quality education by disenfranchised people of color was top priority. To strive for academic excellence was respected and readily embraced by the children in elementary through middle and upper school grades. These realities cannot be overlooked: they are points to be brought into classroom instruction not only by educators at Davis, but for any school in which curriculum preparation pertaining to the civil rights era takes on a similar design.

To deliver meaningful, substantive instruction in this regard, several questions must be candidly addressed: Have we adequately conveyed that the struggle for racial equality during the civil rights era did not solely impact the African-American community? Have we highlighted specific laws that contributed to or countered segregationist practices within the U.S.? Have we emphasized that integrated classrooms and school districts experienced in America today were unheard in many places throughout the United States years ago? Have we made our students aware of courageous civil-rights activists—young and old across cultures—who helped pave the way for culturally-inclusive classrooms experienced today. Do we, like so many of our students, take

our culturally-rich learning communities for granted, and if so, how do we counter this trend? My Social Studies/Language Arts/Social Development curriculum unit, Hidden Realities: School Desegregation & The Law - Brown & Black Victories During the Civil Rights Era ("Hidden Realities"), provides answers to these inquiries.

Created for students in Grade 3, but modifiable to accommodate students in Grades 4 through 5, Hidden Realities zeroes in on school segregation as it impacted African and Mexican American communities during the mid-1950s. Young researchers will explore three court cases, beginning with Plessy v. Ferguson (1896 court legislation used to legalize and support segregation practices), followed by Mendez, et al v. Westminster School District of Orange County (1946) and Brown v. Board of Education (1954). The two, latter lawsuits paved the way for school desegregation. Students will additionally discover that although Brown v. Board of Education is heralded as a landmark case, Mendez et al v. Westminster set precedent for the Brown ruling.

Through the use of visual images and related literary resources, students experience that children often played a significant role in the fight for racial equality during the 50s era. Most important, they discover that although Jim Crow laws and segregation overwhelmingly impacted the Black community, other racial groups too were affected. Diverse groups of people fought collectively against race prejudice and other social injustices. The efforts of these civil rights activists too helped lay the foundation for the diverse learning communities and opportunities that exist in our society today.

Foundation for Comprehension

Essential questions are used to guide instruction and to promote enduring understandings when reading for information. They apply to related activities and performance tasks contained throughout the unit. Essential questions to be addressed include but are not limited to the following:

How does asking and answering questions help readers gain meaning from text?

How do illustrations support the readers understanding of text?

How does referring back to text help readers demonstrate their understanding of text?

How does developing your own point of view deepen your understanding of text?

How does the reader demonstrate understanding of informational text?

How does text structure help the reader to construct meaning from the text?

How does writing and discussing what we have read help and us to better understand an event or topic?

How does the use of audio and audio-visual support increase a reader's comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary acquisition?

Aligned with CCSS Standards, Hidden Realities incorporates the use of audio-visual, kinesthetic, and tactile delivery of instruction to meet the learning needs of students across ability levels. Students are drawn into the time period through the use of on-line resources, biographic film clips, and supportive children's literature students. Stepping into the shoes those impacted by the brunt end of Jim Crow laws, students will compare

and contrast gathered information in both written and verbal form to convey their understanding of complex subject matter. They will go a step further, articulating their views on (1) whether schools are more diverse in America today than they were during the mid-50s and (2) whether young people value education as much today as they did in the past.

The multicultural, interdisciplinary nature of this unit allows for it to be strategically implemented and/or extended throughout the course of the school year: at the beginning of September as a resource in establishing classroom community; between September and October aligned with Latino/Hispanic American Heritage Month; from month-end November through January as a prelude to Dr. King's commemorative birthday celebration; and/or through February aligned with African-American Heritage Month).

As a culminating activity facilitated by the instructor, students will create performance piece, to be presented before the school community during the course of the year. (The week of Dr. King's commemorative birthday celebration serves as a target date option.) Young learners will take the audience on a historic journey to accentuate the cultural inclusiveness and significance of the civil rights era. Their production will convey that although much progress has been made regarding the fight for civil rights and school desegregation, much is yet to be done, and that as in the past, children can serve as the catalyst for positive change regarding America's future.

1. And So We Begin

Week 1 - Duration: 3 days / 50-minute sessions

Focus Questions:

What does it mean to be an American citizen?

What are one's rights as American citizens?

What are the American Constitution and the Bill of Rights?

How does the Constitution impact our rights as American citizens?

Why might there be a need to amend the Constitution?

Day 1. Canvass students to determine their understanding of what it means to be a U.S. citizen and the privileges enjoyed as such. Record their responses on chart paper. Subsequently establish that there are multiple ways in which one can become an American citizen: being born within the United States or coming to America and undergoing the naturalization process. You may discover that some of your students or members of their family have undergone the naturalization: these students may be able to clearly articulate an understanding of the process. Allow them to explain that process to the class.

Highlight that being American entitles one to certain rights and privileges. This includes freedom to express oneself, the freedom to worship as one so desires, the right to a fair trial by jury, the right to vote in elections for public officials to represent us and our points of view, the right to run for public office, to apply for employment, and the freedom and right to have "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." With those

privileges come responsibilities. Americans are expected to uphold our country's laws, to stay informed of issues that affect the American community, to respect the rights, beliefs, and opinions of others, to be honest citizens who pay their share of federal, state, and local taxes, to serve on a jury, and to defend our country should the need arise. Emphasize that many Americans today enjoy these freedoms. Doing so helps to keep our society intact.

Introduce the terms Constitution, Bill of Rights, and Amendments, and have students share what they know regarding our country's legislative documents. Generally state that our rights as Americans are outlined in the Constitution, and that this legal document serves as the foundation in the governing our country and its people. Share that the Constitution begins the Preamble, which briefly summarizes its guiding principles, and the first 10 Amendments of the Constitution are known as the Bill of Rights. Add that on occasion, rules, rights, and privileges outlined in the Constitution have been amended and that, to date, 27 amendments have been made.

At this point, ask: "Why might there be a need for the Constitution to be modified?" Record student responses, and encourage them to keep this question in the back of their minds as the unit study progresses.

Make Language Interactive

Along with academic vocabulary, on an ongoing basis, introduce and reinforce domain specific vocabulary. Have students maintain a new words folder or vocabulary journal to record newly discovered words and definitions. Doing so proves empowering to young learners and enhances language expression. A few domain-specific words with which to begin include:

amendment	appeal	argue	attorney	citizen
citizenship	civics	class action suit	decision	democracy
defendant	desegregation	discrimination	District Court	ethnicity
14th Amendment	injunction	integration	Jim Crow	lawsuit
liberty	litigation	nationality	naturalization	petition
plaintiff	prejudice	ruling	school district	school board
segregation	Supreme Court	"separate but equal"	The Constitution	trial

Related Activities: Design a Classroom Constitution. Inform students that the framers of our country's Constitution, known as the Founding Fathers, underwent a democratic decision-making process when constructing the law of the land. Brainstorming and debating, planning, voting, and coming to consensus to create and implement the law were part of the process. Share that like—the Founding Fathers—students will collaborate in groups of 3 or 4 to establish classroom community rules.

Agreed-upon rules will be referred to as Articles. They will serve as guiding principles for creating and maintaining a welcoming, friendly, learning environment for all community citizens. Members within each group will select one representative to speak on the group's behalf. Each representative will present their group's recommendation(s) before the entire classroom body. Recommendations are recorded. Students vote and come to consensus regarding select "social-interaction legislation." Each student signs off on the document, affirming that all "classroom citizens" will adhere to the "Articles" contained therein. For future reference, the Constitution should be posted in a visible location within the classroom. Articles will be revisited on a routine basis, particularly when a classroom citizen's rights and/or privileges are violated, and the law must be enforced. Through this approach, children get a general feel for the democratic process.

Have students create posters depicting the liberties we enjoy as American citizens.

Show "School House Rock" film clip re: the United States Constitution (see Internet Resources) Have students commit Preamble song to memory.

Days 2 - 3. Canvass students to determine their familiarity with vocabulary and concepts that relate to the U.S. government. Introduce the words democracy, executive branch, legislative branch, and judicial branch. I found that the majority of my students are familiar with the terms; however, most are unable to articulate that a democracy is a form of government by the people, where citizens elect representatives to help decide how a country or community should be run. They are unfamiliar with the three branches of government. They do not know that the Legislative Branch is comprised of the Senate and the House of Representatives, collectively referred to as Congress. Most associate the Judicial Branch and the U.S. Supreme Court with "policemen, crime, and arrests." They do not affiliate the Judicial Branch with settling different kinds of problems and arguments confronted in our nation OR applying the law to determine whether those laws agree or disagree with America's Constitution. They too are unaware that the Supreme Court is the highest court in the land. Providing students with a basic understanding our government setup and responsibilities is thus important: make use of on-line posters, graphic organizers, and more to foster understanding in this regards resources (see Bibliography - Internet Resources).

Related Activities: Have students observe the "Three Branches of Government" film clip (access <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pyqEAPYnhjk&feature=related>). For shared or independent reading, have students review, analyze, and discuss the responsibilities of each of these branches (access "Three Branches of Government" article at <http://kids.usa.gov/three-branches-of-government/index.shtml>). Subsequently have students create a Branches of Government poster highlighting the members, their, roles, and the responsibilities of each branch.

Provide a general overview of the United States Constitution. Highlight the 14th Amendment; emphasize that it addresses citizenship rights and equal protection of the laws embraced within the U.S. (access Grade 2 and 3-friendly on-line informational reading selection at <http://www.usconstitution.net/constkidsK.html>).

Week 2 - Duration: 2 days / 50-Minute Sessions

Focus Questions: Has there been a time in American History when unjust laws affected select groups of people? If "yes," what people were impacted, and how were their rights as American citizens affected?

Were laws used to sanction segregation?

What do the terms "For Colored Only" and "Jim Crow" imply?

Days 1 and 2. Introduce the above-noted questions to determine student familiarity regarding societal inequities and our government's involvement in addressing such concerns. Record their responses.

Subsequently introduce two film clips: the first, a montage of discriminatory posters and billboards entitled "Segregation in the USA" (accessible via http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-7eNRB2_0Q). The second, a news report accompanied by photos entitled "California: First State to End School Segregation" (accessible via <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=juGzbgciQ3w>). Instruct youngsters to closely observe the pictorial images in both film clips, zeroing in on everything from people's facial expressions to the venues in which people are situated. Additionally listen closely to the narration in the second clip. Through the use of these resources,

students a sense that Jim Crow practices were not limited African-Americans.

Related Activities: After observing the film clips, have students create a "Feelings Chart." Initially, have students contribute words that depict how one would feel being a victim of segregation and race prejudice. (Upon administering this activity, my third graders across abilities levels came up with the words "bullied, disliked, unaccepted, excluded, dejected, degraded, lonely, isolated, inferior, unhappy, melancholy, disliked, shunned, irritated, angry, infuriated, hated, and victimized.") Post the chart in a visible classroom location. Add new feeling words to the list as the unit study continues; students will use it as a reference for story-writing purposes.

Introduce the words to Rodgers and Hammerstein's thought-provoking song, "You've Got to Be Carefully Taught." Have children analyze the lyrics. Subsequently inquire: "Why might the composers of this song have created it? What message are the composers attempting to convey? Do you believe race prejudice and discriminatory practices are concepts that are taught? Explain.

Using magic markers, colored pencils, multicultural, and/or other art media, have students in teams of 3 to 4 work together to create a poster highlighting ways to combat race discrimination and prejudice. Students should incorporate captions to accentuate each artistic image. Host a classroom art show. Invite other classes to tour the exhibit: have students explain the rationale behind the work to visiting guests.

2. Three Precedent-Setting Court Cases - Background Details

For this portion of the unit, each week, students will examine one of the three previously noted court cases. In multiple instances, the same focus questions will be applied.

Week 3 - Plessy v. Ferguson Duration: 3 Days/ 50-minute sessions (to be extended, if required)

Focus Questions: Have all Americans always been afforded equal rights and protection under the law?

Were government laws used to sanction racial segregation?

What do the terms "For Colored Only" and Jim Crow" signify?

Day 1. Before studying this case, provide a general overview of the way things once were in America. Emphasize that the enslavement of Black people for free labor and economic gain existed in America not too long ago (approximately 400 years). With the institution of slavery came the misconceived notion that people of African descent were inferior. That mindset was embraced by many Anglo-Americans after the abolition of slavery. In time, Jim Crow laws were embraced within many states across the U.S., particularly in the south. Louisiana, a state densely populated by people of "mixed ancestry," was one of many southern states that approved of race segregation.

Day 2 - The Case. On June 7, 1892, Homer Adolph Plessy was incarcerated for sitting in the "White Car" of the East Louisiana Railroad. Homer was an African-American male whose complexion was so fair, he could pass as being Caucasian. Louisiana law held that if you were Black or a person of mixed ancestry, being of a light complexion proved irrelevant: you were considered "colored," and as such were required to sit in the "Colored

Car." Plessy was a Louisianan resident; he traced his ancestry to French, Spanish, and Caribbean settlers. Additionally a social activist, Homer Plessy was an avid supporter of the Citizen's Committee—an organization that was against the Louisiana Railroad discriminatory practices. Homer decided to take a stand: he intentionally sat in the White section of the railroad car to counter Louisiana's Colored Car Act. He was subsequently arrested.

Plessy's case went all the way to the United States Supreme Court. Plessy's attorney argued that the Separate Car Act violated the Thirteenth and Fourteenth amendment. ¹ Despite this assertion, the Court upheld the idea that separate but equal was constitutionally sound under the 14th Amendment. Plessy v. Ferguson served as a springboard to sanction Jim Crow practices embraced in various states throughout the U.S.

Related Activity: Have students evaluate, compare, and contrast the facts within this case based on the plaintiff's and defendant's perspectives. Then, pose the question: "Do you agree with the court's decision in Plessy v. Ferguson? Use evidence from the case to support your opinion. Have students record their viewpoints in written response journals. Subsequently have them come to group to share their journal inserts and viewpoints among peers.

Week 4 - Mendez et al v. Westminster - 3 Days/ 50-minute sessions (to be extended, if required)

Focus Questions: Were Jim Crow laws limited to the American South?

Did segregation practices solely impact African-American communities?

Did Plessy v. Ferguson impact the decision in the Mendez case? Why or why not?

Day 1 - Inform students that they will take on the role of detective. Their task is to observe pictures of an anonymous family, their community of residence and neighborhood school, and the school district in which the family's children were forced to attend. Projecting the photographic images on the ENO board, have students to compare and contrast the images. Call on students to share their observations, and urge them to provide explicit details. Students will eagerly raise their hands to share: they will immediately identify differences in the physical attributes of the residential neighborhoods and surrounding districts, the recreational facilities contained therein, and the racial composition of student populations and community residents.

Subsequently share that the photos were taken in California in the Westminster school district around 1946. Add that during the early to mid-1900s throughout California and the American southwest, most Mexican Americans resided in segregated, agrarian communities. Schools within those areas were typically overcrowded and contained in dilapidated edifices. Textbooks and other school resources available in Mexican schools were inadequate as compared to those afforded in neighboring Anglo communities. Career-oriented, college preparatory subjects like Math and Science were taught in Euro-American schools. Schools that accommodated Mexican-American children delivered instruction that prepared them for entry into the industrial or domestic labor workforce. Mendez was the first court ruling to address these inequities in education as they pertained to people of color—particularly those of Mexican or Latino/Hispanic descent. The Westminster School District cited Plessy v. Ferguson in support of their stance regarding segregated schools.

Related Activities: Show film interview of Sylvia Mendez, one of three siblings in her family to experience firsthand the school desegregation process (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMoAXggpj_0&list=PL4A943C2012189F26&index=2).

Ask your students to put themselves in the shoes of a Mexican-American child residing in the Westminster residential community. If given a choice, would you have wanted to attend the Anglo or Mexican school? Have students make use of info gathered from previously viewed photos and Sylvia Mendez' interview to support their viewpoints. Have students record their points of view in their writing response journals. Create an illustration to accompany the written opinion. Call on students to share their opinion and pictorial depiction with the class.

Day 2 - The Case. In 1946, a class action lawsuit was filed on behalf of approximately 5,000 Mexican American students in Orange County, California. That lawsuit marked the first challenge against school segregation in America.

The lawsuit involved Señor Gonzalo Mendez, a migrant farmer born in Mexico in 1913. Six years after his birth, his mother and four other siblings moved to Westminster, California. As a child, young Gonzalo attended the Westminster Main School along with other Mexican-American and Euro-American children. During that time, California state law classified Mexicans as being white; being Mexican did not impact one's ability to attend an Anglo-American school. ²

By 1943, Gonzalo became a naturalized American citizen. He married Felicitas, a woman of Puerto Rican ancestry. Together they raised a family. The Mendezes were diligent workers; in time, they were able to lease a 40-acre asparagus ranch in the town of Westminster, California. Gonzalo, his wife, and children had achieved the American dream: they made a good living, were fluent in English, and were model citizens. The Mendezes, along with another Mexican-American and Japanese-American family, were the only non-whites who resided in their Westminster community.

In 1945, Mr. Gonzalez and his wife proceeded to enroll their three children in their neighborhood public school. The Mendezes, however, met with disappointment, for they were told their children must attend Hoover, a neighboring elementary school for Mexican Americans. Not one to concede, Gonzalo met with the school principal and the school's board members, but to no avail. According to the Westminster School District and the Orange County School Board, the decision was final: the Mendez' children would attend Hoover.

Gonzalo Mendez went on to work closely with Los Angeles Civil Rights Attorney David Marcus. Marcus helped Gonzalo discover that segregation practices were not limited to Mendez' immediate Westminster community, but was prevalent throughout other school districts within Orange County. Those school districts additionally included Santa Ana, Garden Grove, and El Modena today referred to as the Eastern Orange school district. As a result, Attorney Marcus filed a class action representing Mendez and approximately 5,000 other Mexican and Latino Americans. He sought an injunction—a court order by which an individual is required to perform or restrain from performing a particular act—for the schools to desegregate. The suit was assigned to the United States District Court of the Southern District of California, Central Division, presided by Judge Paul McCormick. The defendants were the four school districts, their superintendents, and their school boards.

The defendants argued that "the 1896 Supreme Court decision in Plessy v. Ferguson gave legal sanction to racial segregation, provided the separate facilities for different races were equal." ³ They too emphasized that there "were sound educational and social advantages to segregated schooling for Mexicans, that Mexican schools gave special instruction to students who didn't speak English and who were unfamiliar with American values and customs. According to the defendants, such programs were beneficial to both Mexicans and Anglos.

The plaintiff's attorney countered that notion. He argued that the Mendez children were fluent in English, and

that they had been assigned to attend schools "reserved for and attended exclusively by children of Mexican and Latin descent, while other schools in the same system were "reserved exclusively for children considered Anglo-Saxon." ⁴ Additionally, no state law mandated the segregation of Mexican people, thus, segregating children of Mexican ancestry was a violation of equal protection of the law under the 14th Amendment.

Note: Mendez' attorney did not argue that the school districts were not integrated on the basis of race: instead, he noted that "racial" segregation was a moot point because according to California law, Mexicans were deemed Caucasian. ⁵ The plaintiff's attorney realized he had no argument regarding racial segregation being unconstitutional because the U.S. Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson* upheld racial segregation. Nevertheless, Attorney Marcus continued the legal battle.

The Mendez case was assigned to U.S. District Court under Judge Paul McCormick of the Southern District of California, Central Division. By April, 1947, Judge McCormick's decision was upheld. It was determined that "a paramount requisite in the American system of public education is social equality. It must be open to all children by unified school association regardless of lineage." ⁶ Judge McCormick's opinion heralded that separate but equal was in fact inequitable and unjust in the eyes of the law. By April 1947, it was decided that Mexican American children could not be segregated because of California state policy. This was a triumphant victory for the Mendez. Although the ruling was limited to the state of California, it laid a foundation for future school desegregation cases.

Related Activities: Have students view Audio-Visual Resources regarding interviews with Sylvia Mendez (e.g., PBS on-line interview resource accessible via <http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/0Si04.soc>). Encourage students to listen closely as Señora Mendez recounts her experiences. Also ask that they listen intently too to additional speakers, and take notes as the film footage runs through the end. Subsequently introduce a follow-up question: "Was Sylvia Mendez' and her family's civil rights activism worth the effort? Did the 1947 enactment of Mendez v. Westminster make a difference for all diverse communities in California? Use detailed info from the presented film clips to support your responses. Have children exchange viewpoints with one another. Inform them that this type of questioning will be revisited again.

Contact Sylvia! Attempt to communicate with Sylvia Mendez via sylviafmendez@yahoo.com or [facebook.com/syvia.mendez.0607](https://www.facebook.com/syvia.mendez.0607). If possible, have your school conduct a fundraiser to host a "Meet & Greet Sylvia" interview session at your school. If costs make this impossible, when writing Ms. Mendez, request that she conduct an on-line Q&A or SKYPE session with your school or class. Perhaps your request will be fulfilled.

Week 5 - Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas - 3 Days/50-minute session:

Day 1. When introducing this lawsuit, highlight that it was actually comprised of five separate cases. The collective lawsuit included *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, KS*, *Briggs v. Elliot (SC)*, *Davis v. Board of Education of Prince Edward County (VA)*, *Boiling v. Sharpe*, and *Gebhart v. Ethel*. Make note that each of the cases slightly differed, however, despite those differences, each had a common thread: the major focus of concern was the constitutionality of state-sponsored segregation. Each case greatly impacted African American minors who wanted to obtain admission to public schools on an integrated basis.

The Case. In 1951, an African-American man by the name of Oliver Brown and 12 other parents filed a lawsuit against the Topeka, Kansas Board of Education. The Topeka BOE did not allow their children to attend a white school that was located within their neighborhoods. The schools Black children were forced to attend were located far distances away from their communities. The parents contended that these schools were not only

out of the way, but were inferior to white educational facilities.

The case was heard before the Supreme Court. Initially, the courts relied on *Plessy v. Ferguson*, ruling in favor of the Board of Education. *Brown et al* appealed the ruling in the United States Supreme Court on October 1, 1951. Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund handled these cases. Attorney Marshall personally argued the case before the court. He emphasized that the most common issue impacting the consolidated cases was that separate school systems for blacks and whites were inherently unequal, and that this reality violated the "equal protection clause" of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Referring to *Mendez*, he also argued that segregated school systems had a tendency to foster a sense of inferiority as it related to white children. Because of this, such a system should not legally be permitted to exist.

A Reinforcing Reality. Attorney Marshall's argument regarding segregated schools having a tendency to foster a sense of inferiority is substantiated in Sylvia Mendez's recount of her experience. According to Sylvia Mendez, before, during, and after the trial, Mexican people were bombarded with derogatory name calling. She recollected that when her parents attempted to enroll her into their neighborhood school, Caucasian school officials shared that half-Mexican, fair-skinned students with French surnames could register as white; darker-hued students with Mexican surnames would not be admitted. She initially felt hurt, uncomfortable, and disillusioned upon attending the desegregated school. ⁷

Impressive, however, were the persevering spirit of her parents and the solidarity of Hispanic/Latino community in their struggle for equal opportunities in education. Although not all community members agreed with or participated in the front-line struggles, the solidarity among members within the community seemed to foster enduring strength and collaborative effort on behalf of their cause. By September 1947, Mexican American children were able to attend integrated schools throughout Orange County. The collective effort of *Mendez et al* helped to accentuate discrimination practices against non-whites throughout the U.S., serving as a motivational force and foundation for *Brown*.

Related Activities: Individually or in small groups of 3 or 4, have students evaluate similarities and differences found between *Mendez* and *Brown*. Using a Venn diagram, encourage students to compare and contrast viewpoints provided by the plaintiff and defense attorneys for each case. Ask: Did the issue of race affect both cases? Did language and ethnicity affect both cases? Explain. Have students convey their opinions through classroom discourse and in written form.

Using an oversized, retractable classroom map of the United States or individually Xeroxed map handouts, have students highlight all cities and states represented in each of the three studied court cases. Students can continue to fill in the map as they learn of additional desegregation battles in America. Use easy-to-remove adhesive stars to highlight key locations on the retractable map. Have students use crayons or colored pencils to highlight cities and states on map handouts. Students will geographically discover that although Jim Crow practices weighed heavily in the U.S. below the Mason-Dixon Line, they were not exclusive to the south.

3. Children on the Frontlines - Real-Life Connections

Weeks 6, 7, and 8: 3 days per week / 50-minute sessions (duration to be extended or shortened as required)

The three lessons that follow serve as culminating activities to reinforce understanding with regard to covered subject matter.

Week 6 - Lesson #1: "Step Into Their Shoes" Performance Task

Materials: "Separate Is Never Equal - Sylvia Mendez & Her Family's Fight for Desegregation by Duncan Tonatiuh children's book resource.

Writing Response Journals

"Step Into Their Shoes!" graphic organizer (See Exhibit A)

Journals and pencils

Preliminary Instructions: Lead a shared reading of "Separate Is Never Equal - Sylvia Mendez & Her Family's Fight for Desegregation View Sylvia Mendez and California's School Desegregation Story." Have children take a picture walk through this literary work to preliminary gather or reinforce background information.

When presenting the story, divide it into four segments. Pose a set of focus questions after each reading, to which students will respond in written form. Inform students that for each question, they are to provide explicit evidence from the text to support each response. Provide graphic organizers to those students who require additional support; encourage students to make use of multiple text features and text structures when accessing supportive details:

Pages 1 - 5: What word(s) best describe Sylvia's sentiments about Sylvia's first-day experience at the Westminster School?

Pages 6 - 13: What did Sylvia and her siblings envision upon first arriving at the Westminster School?

How might they have felt upon encountering the school secretary's office?

What word best describes Mr. Mendez' sentiments post meeting with members of the Westminster school board?

What dilemma was encountered between Sylvia's cousins, Alice and Virginia Vidaurri, and Sylvia and her siblings when attempting to enroll in the school?

Pages 14 to 24: Who was Mr. Marcus, and what word best describes his personality?

What word best describes Mr. Mendez at this point in time?

Pages 25 to 32. What words best describe the plaintiffs' sentiments as the court hearings progressed; what primary opinion supports this sentiment?

What words best describe the defendants' sentiments as the court hearings progressed?

What primary opinion supports this sentiment?

Some say the Mendez' were victorious based on the outcome of the trial; others state that they were not victors. Which viewpoint do you support?

Performance Task: Distribute a copy of the Step Into My Shoes! graphic organizer to each student. Have students collectively review its content. Inform them that they will pretend they are one of the key figures in the Mendez struggle for school desegregation. Their task is to write a journal insert from their select individual's perspective. Students will make use of our feelings word chart when through the written response exercise. They are required to provide details in sequential order, use good syntactic and semantic form, and to vividly convey their understanding of subject matter and point of view. Students will have an opportunity to revisit and craft their journal entry. (Note: the graphic organizer includes the names of key figures found at the beginning of the book. The form can be modified and reused to include additional key figures found throughout the reading and subsequently used for lesson extension.)

Week 7 /Lesson #2 - "What's Your Opinion" Performance Task #2

Materials: The Ruby Bridges Story Film. (Note: This engaging Disney film runs for 1:30 minutes. I recommend that it be strategically viewed on three separate days, followed by group discussion and journal writing exercises as noted herein. Strategically pose focus questions based on the portion of the film that has been presented.)

Literature Response Writing Journal

Pencils

The Ruby Bridges Story by Robert Coles- in print (see Bibliographic Resources). Students can make use of this hard copy resource as a follow-up to the classroom film study.

Preliminary Instructions: Inform students that they will view a film that will permit them to travel back in time, after the passing of Brown v. Board of Education. Share that efforts to enforce the law regarding school desegregation in the south had already begun. Six year-old Ruby Bridges was the first African-American child in her southern hometown to experience the process; she attended the Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans, Louisiana—an all-white school. As they watch the film, envision themselves walking in Ruby's shoes. Think of words to best describe the feelings evoked when viewing each film segment, and jot down words that best reflect those feelings. They will use of this information when completing their performance task.

Focus questions: Why did Ruby's mother push for her to attend the Frantz Elementary School?

How did attending the school impact her mother and father at the beginning of the story? At the middle of the story? At the conclusion?

What challenges did Ruby face within her family? From members within her residential neighborhood? From white residents whose children attended the Frantz Elementary School?

What word best describe Ruby Bridge's personality at the beginning of the story?

How did her personality change by the middle of the story? By the climax of the story?

Use evidence from her biography and the Ruby Bridges' film clip to support your response?

Were challenges faced by Ruby Bridges similar to those experienced by Sylvia Mendez? Explain.

Why did school desegregation meet with such resistance?

Based on Ruby's school desegregation experience, do you believe the ruling for school desegregation should have been upheld or overruled by the court?

At the close of each segment, have students engage in discussion. Use video-camera or I-Phone equipment to record student input.

Performance Task: Have students envision themselves as news reporters, standing amid the crowd, observing Ruby Bridges as she enters the Frantz Elementary School. Their task is to create a feature article to highlight actions and attitudes surrounding that moment surrounding school desegregation. Encourage students to think about six-year old Ruby, the Federal marshals, adults and youngsters in the crowd, the sights and sounds, the human interaction... Using onomatopoeia, similes, adjectives, energized verbs, and other descriptive language, student narratives should immerse the reader into experiencing the school desegregation ordeal. Students make use of editing, proofreading and revising skills, and language conventions to craft their work. Their final product should be well-organized and written in good syntactic form. (Note: As a lesson extension, have students observe Norman Rockwell's painting, "The Problem We All Live With" (accessible on line via Goggle Search). Have them relate the pictorial image to the Ruby Bridges film and related readings. Have students create an illustration to complement their feature article. Additionally, have them watch a film clip featuring Ruby Bridges giving a first-hand account of her childhood, school desegregation experience (access <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKyQV0-z6HE>). Have students compare and contrast feelings conveyed in the film clip with those conveyed in their story creations.)

Week 8 - Lesson #3 A Lyrical Performance - Culminating Group Presentation

Materials: Writing Response Journals

Flash Drive

ENO Board (Smart Board equivalent)

Journals and Pencils

Preliminary Instructions: Announce to students that as a culminating activity, versus emphasizing the Montgomery Bus boycott and similar triumphs traditionally noted when celebrating the legacy of Dr. King and the civil rights era, they will put a new spin on the topic. Convey that they will have an opportunity to showcase their literary effort before the entire school body, and you will rely on them to work collaboratively with peers to craft and convey a stirring message. Your role as teacher will be to serve as a facilitator, guiding them through process. Add that their presentation should emphasize why and how past civil rights efforts impact us today, and how we can continue the legacy of Dr. King. Close the discussion with a rousing, "Can we do it!" Excitement stirred, students will buy in to taking on the charge.

Call on students to work on key facets of the performance creation: some may elect to assist in developing the

lyrical narrative; others may want to create illustrations to accompany the literary work. Some may opt to serve as directors, brainstorming on hand gestures to be used or body movement to complement each speaking part. Others may volunteer to serve as speakers and/or understudies; they will be responsible for memorizing and reciting the literary creation with prosody and poise. Some may want to incorporate posters and will work on artistic accompaniments. Roles will vary. The key is to allow flexibility in the designation of responsibilities. This way, students will take a vested interest in the activity.

Inform students that they should refer to previously recorded notes in their writing response journals to develop the piece. Allow students to work in small groups for between 10 to 15 minutes to gather their info. Have group members come to consensus; call on a representative from each group to provide input. Record their responses, collectively listing details in chronological order. (To facilitate the collaborative note-taking process, if available, make use of Microsoft Word and the ENO Board, keying in info is provided.)

We Gave It a Try

My third graders were energized to begin developing their lyrical presentation. They came to consensus and decided to highlight school desegregation and related laws. They thought it best to divvy the lyrical narrative into several speaking parts and agreed to use body gestures to accentuate verbal expression. The entire class emphasized that presenters must recite their parts audibly, using prosody and poise. Based on group discussions and provided information provided from group, they came up with the following:

Speaker #1: During 1896, a law called Plessy versus Ferguson was passed. It was a law that said black people could not ride in the same railroad cars as whites.

All: Ooooo! Oo!

Speaker #2: That law set the tone for race segregation in America. Plessy versus Ferguson and other Jim Crow laws greatly affected African-American people in the South, but it affected other people of color across our country too!

All: Ooooo! Oo!

Speaker #3: Because of Jim Crow Laws, black people and other people of color were not allowed to ride in the same railroad cars or buses as whites. They were not allowed to use the same restrooms or other public facilities.

Speaker #4: They couldn't even attend the same schools. Hard to believe a law helped to perpetuate discrimination and race prejudice in America.

All: Ooooo! Oo!

Speaker #4: But people across cultures banded together to fight against racial injustice. They fought to overturn Plessy v. Ferguson. A Mexican-American family and others were the first to challenge school desegregation.

All: Yes! Yes!

Speaker #5: Back in 1944, Sylvia Mendez and her brothers were not allowed to go to their neighborhood school in Westminster, California. They were of Mexican/Puerto Rican ancestry; they spoke Spanish and English, and their skin was brown. The school was for whites only.

All: Mmmmmm! Mmm!

Speaker #6: Their father joined with others in their community to speak out against this injustice. Along with their skilled attorney, David Marcus, they took their case to court, and in 1947, they won!

All: Yes! Yes!

Speaker #7: Seven years later, Oliver Brown and 4 other African-Americans whose children were affected by school segregation banded together. They took their case to court to fight against separate-and-unequal schools.

All: Oooooo! Oo!

Speakers #1 and #2: An African-American attorney with a powerful voice defended Brown and others. His name was Thurgood Marshall. He argued that Plessy versus Ferguson was unfair. He argued that the decision in Mendez versus Westminster countered that law. In 1954, Thurgood Marshall, Brown, and others who joined in the court battle won their lawsuit.

Speakers #3 and 4: These are two of many triumphs in the struggle for civil rights. That is why today, we can attend integrated schools like ours, a diverse school where everyone can learn!

All: Yes! Yes!

Speaker 5: Much time has passed, and race relations have improved in our country. BUT the U.S. still has problems with racism, poverty, and inequalities in education.

Some schools and the communities around them are still segregated. Some schools in different districts are still separate and unequal.

Student 6: Plus, some students add to the problem because they are not always on their best behavior in school. They do not know or appreciate the sacrifices made by civil rights activists in the past whose courageous acts opened doors for us in education today.

All: Mmmm! Hmmm!

Speaker #7: Fortunately, many young people and adults DO appreciate those past efforts. They try to get to know people because of the content of a person's character—not because of the color of a person's skin.

Speaker #6: Like civil rights activists in the past, we believe all Americans are entitled to equal rights based on our country's Constitution. We also know that even though laws exist, they are not always fair.

Speaker #5: We know something else! Together, diverse groups of Americans can come together to challenge unjust laws. That way, tragic events like those that occurred in our country's past will not happen again.

All: Yes! Yes!

Speakers 1 and 2: Today, we say thank you to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, to Sylvia Mendez, to Oliver Brown, David Marcus, Thurgood Marshall, and to the many diverse groups of Americans who fought for equal opportunities in education and more. Together, they helped make celebration of diversity and inclusion possible."

All: We gather here today because we want EVERYONE to know that efforts of past civil rights leaders were not in vain, and that WE take our education seriously.

Speaker #1: And who knows! Maybe one day, we too can make a positive difference for all people in our country just like them!

Because we began working on this effort during the third quarter of school, my third graders and I were unable to showcase it during this school year. Nevertheless, we agree that we are off to a terrific and will continue crafting this effort for next year's Dr. King Assembly. The children also recommend that we conclude the presentation with a group song entitled "Tomorrow." The tune (on Quincy Jones' "Back on the Block" album, downloadable in MP3 form via Amazon.com) is one I had taught them at the start of the school year. It begins: "I hope tomorrow will bring a better you, a better me; you know that we'll show this world that we've got more that we can be..." Somehow, I rest assured that these children will one day make their mark in the world and do us proud.

4. Conclusion

Hidden Realities: School Desegregation & The Law - Brown & Black Victories During the Civil Rights Era serves as an enlightening and empowering discovery resource for students. Through its implementation, children experience and embrace that the fight for equality in America was no easy task. They recognize that civil rights activists young and old helped pave the way for the many rights and privileges enjoyed by diverse populations within American society today. Young learners are moved by what is learned, analyzing, questioning, and challenging concepts of race prejudice and discrimination. By way of candid discussion and written responses rich in fact and supportive details, students demonstrate an understanding of subject matter. Our "future citizens" make use of newly-acquired vocabulary, further conveying their understanding of the topics at hand. Through the implementation of hands-on instruction, hands-on implementation, children gain a sense of American democracy and the role of government. They embrace the reality that laws can be just or unjust, that American citizens can and must play a role in helping make those laws equitable and beneficial to all Americans. Equally important, young learners make text-to-self-to-world connections: they begin to see themselves as future members of society who, like courageous civil rights activists of the past, may one day help make positive contributions that have a positive impact on diverse members of American society.

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A/V Resources

Film: Mighty Times: The Legacy of Rosa Parks: A Film by Hudson & Houston accessible via www.amazon.com or Teaching Tolerance: www.teachingtolerance.org

Recordings: Civil rights protests and activism was often accompanied by song. Introducing students to music resources via CD, MP3 player, on on-line via YouTube is worth the investment. Try these for starters:

If I Had A Hammer - Songs of Hope and Struggle - Free Download - www.amazon.com. Includes "If I Had A Hammer," "Turn, Turn, Turn," and "Where Have All The Flowers Gone" sung by songwriter Pete Seeger - (Produced 1998)

This Land Is Your Land: Songs of Freedom - Sing For Freedom: The Story of the Civil Rights Through Its Songs - Smithsonian Folkways - (Produced 1990)

Let Freedom Sing: The Music of the Civil Rights Era- Time/Life Entertainment (Produced 1992)

Appendix of Curriculum Standards

This unit correlates with the Connecticut Framework K-12 Curricular Goals and Content Standards for Language Arts and Social Studies. Upon being immersed in select children's narratives and scaffolded instruction, students will embrace the following:

Social Studies Curriculum Content Standards 1.5, 1.13, 2a, and 2c. Students will discuss how geographical

features and natural resources helped shape people's lives; understand the characteristics and interactions among and across cultures, social systems, and institutions; compare and contrast identities of ethnic/cultural groups; and identify the rights of American citizens in a democratic society.

Language Arts Curriculum Content Standards 1 (Reading and Responding) and 2 (Producing Texts). Students will describe their thoughts, opinions, and questions that arise as they read and listen to a text; use relevant info from the text to summarize the content; use what they know to identify characters, settings, themes, events, ideas, relationships, and details found within the text; work both individually and on a collaborative basis in gathering historical info from a variety of primary and secondary sources (including published resources, film and electronic media) to substantiate historical fiction and informational text; read/share their creative writings with partners, who will constructively critique the work, highlighting elements in the literary piece that coincide with questions they have about the writing; and will use strategies to generate and develop ideas for speaking, writing, and visual activities, and publish and present final products in myriad ways, including the use of the arts and technology.

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