



Inquiry Question

How did Baseball help forge community ties and a strong sense of ethnic identity, pride, and power that was necessary for the fight for civil rights?

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How did Baseball help forge community ties and a strong sense of ethnic identity, pride, and power that was necessary for the fight for civil rights?

Author

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Content Standards

CCHSS.11.10: Students analyze the development of federal civil rights and voting rights.

CCSS Standards:

Reading, Grades 9–12

- RH.9–10.1 / RH.11–12.1 – Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- RH.9–10.2 / RH.11–12.2 – Determine the central ideas of a source; provide summaries distinct from prior knowledge or opinion.
- RH.9–10.4 / RH.11–12.4 – Determine the meaning of words and phrases as used in a text, including domain-specific vocabulary related to politics, society, and history.
- RH.9–10.6 / RH.11–12.6 – Compare the point of view of two or more authors and identify how they treat similar or related topics.
- RH.9–10.7 / RH.11–12.7 – Integrate quantitative or technical information presented visually (maps, photographs, charts) with other information in print.
- RH.9–10.9 / RH.11–12.9 – Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

Writing, Grades 9–12

- WHST.9–10.2 / WHST.11–12.2 – Write informative/explanatory texts, including narration of historical events
- WHST.9–10.4 / WHST.11–12.4 – Produce clear and coherent writing appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- WHST.9–10.6 / WHST.11–12.6 – Use technology to produce and publish writing

- WHST.9–10.7 / WHST.11–12.7 – Conduct short research tasks to answer a historical question
- WHST.9–10.8 / WHST.11–12.8 – Assess the credibility and accuracy of each source and integrate information while avoiding plagiarism.
- WHST.9–10.9 / WHST.11–12.9 – Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis.

Speaking & Listening, Grades 9–12

- SL.9–10.1 / SL.11–12.1 – Initiate and participate in collaborative discussions
- SL.9–10.1a–d / SL.11–12.1a–d:
 - Come prepared, having read/researched materials.
 - Work with peers to set goals, roles, and deadlines (group artifact work).
 - Propel conversations by posing questions and responding with evidence.
 - Summarize and synthesize points of discussion.
- SL.9–10.2 / SL.11–12.2 – Integrate diverse media formats
- SL.9–10.3 / SL.11–12.3 – Evaluate a speaker’s reasoning and evidence
- SL.9–10.4 / SL.11–12.4 – Present information clearly and logically

Ethnic Studies Values & Principles, & Eight Teaching Outcomes

- **CULTIVATE** empathy, community actualization, cultural perpetuity, self-worth, self-determination, holistic well-being, pursuit of justice and equity
- **CELEBRATE** and honor Native Peoples and communities of color by sharing stories of success, collaboration, and cultural wealth
- **CENTER** pre-colonial, ancestral, marginalized, and community knowledge
- **CONNECT** ourselves to past and contemporary social movements that struggle for social justice and an equitable and democratic society;
- **Outcome 2:** Working toward greater inclusivity
- **Outcome 3:** Furthering self-understanding
- **Outcome 4:** Developing a better understanding of others
- **Outcome 5:** Recognizing intersectionality
- **Outcome 6:** Promoting self-empowerment for civic engagement
- **Outcome 7:** Supporting a community focus
- **Outcome 8:** Developing interpersonal communication

Overview of Lesson

In this lesson, students will explore the impact of segregation on communities of color, with a particular focus on the Latino community in the Inland Empire region of Southern California. Emphasis will be placed on the historical context and implications of the "separate but equal" doctrine in the United States and how Inland Empire communities responded and resisted. Students will engage in the analysis of primary source materials, including an excerpt from the book *Mexican American Baseball in the Inland Empire*, a video from the Colton oral history project, and photographs highlighting Latino baseball and softball players during the era of segregation. These sources will serve as a lens through which to examine the social, political, and cultural dynamics of the time. Through critical discussion and analysis, students will develop a broader perspective on how segregation shaped everyday life and how the community resisted by forging community pride, support, and identity as they fought in the ongoing struggle for civil rights.

Sources

- Source A. Separate but Equal Doctrine: Handout summarizing the legal foundations of segregation in the United States, including Black Codes, Plessy v. Ferguson, Jim Crow laws, and Lopez v. Secombe.
- Source B. *Mexican American Baseball in the Inland Empire*. Excerpt from Santillan, Ocegueda, & Cannon, Introduction and Chapter 1.
- Source C. Oral History Project: Rudy Oliva. Oral history video excerpt (49:00–1:00:00) and transcript (pp. 27–32).
- Source D. Segregated Sports Teams (Slide Show Images). Historical photographs from the Latino Baseball History Project, CSU San Bernardino.

Procedures

1. **Anticipatory Set:** The teacher will begin by reviewing the lesson objectives and introducing the inquiry question: ***How did baseball help forge community ties and a strong sense of ethnic identity, pride, and power that was necessary for the fight for civil rights?***
2. Next, distribute the **Source A** “Separate but Equal Doctrine.”
3. The teacher provides a brief historical context by summarizing key legal foundations of segregation, including Black Codes, Plessy v. Ferguson, Jim Crow laws, and *Lopez v. Seccombe*. The teacher may project the document or read portions aloud.
4. Students read Source A and respond to the discussion questions printed on the sheet. The teacher facilitates a short conversation to ensure students understand how segregation shaped public spaces and access to community opportunities.
5. **Reading Contextual Background (Source B):** Excerpt from *Mexican American Baseball in the Inland Empire* (Introduction and beginning of Chapter 1: “Mexican American Baseball: The Golden State”)
6. Steps:
 - a. The teacher distributes the reading excerpt to all students.
 - b. The teacher explains that this background will help students understand the cultural, social, and economic experiences of Mexican American communities in the Inland Empire during segregation.
 - c. Students read the selected sections individually or in pairs.
 - d. As students read, they annotate for evidence connected to:
 - i. Community identity
 - ii. Segregation in public life
 - iii. The role of baseball as cultural space
 - e. The teacher circulates to support comprehension and annotation.
7. **Historical Analysis of Primary Source Artifacts:** The teacher introduces **Source C**, the oral history, as a firsthand account of life in Colton, CA, during the 1940s.
8. Steps:
 - a. Play or read aloud the Rudy Oliva oral history (video cue 49:00–1:00:00) or provide transcript pages 27–32.

- b. Students follow along while listening and annotate key details about sports, community solidarity, segregation, and local activism.
- c. After listening, the teacher leads a discussion using the original questions (preserved exactly as written):
 - i. How were sports used as a positive outlet to help keep troubled youth on track?
 - ii. In what ways did the community come together to support the players and foster pride and unity?
 - iii. What incentives might local businesses have to sponsor youth sports teams?
 - iv. How can having local teams compete against each other build pride and solidarity within a community?
- d. Students share evidence from the oral history to support their responses.

9. Slide Show: [Mexican American Baseball in the IE Slides](#)

- a. The teacher presents a slideshow of historical photographs of Latino baseball and softball teams.
- b. The teacher distributes the 7 C's of Critical Historical Analysis handout. **Handout**
- c. The teacher models analysis of the first image by using the "Check-Out," "Contextualize," and "Connect" sections of the 7 C's.
- d. Students then analyze the remaining photographs independently or in small groups.
- e. Students record observations, inferences, evidence of segregation, and examples of cultural pride and resistance.

10. Closure / Reflection: The teacher leads a whole-class debrief discussion, using the following questions:

- a. How did segregation affect the Latino community in different aspects of life, including sports?
- b. In what ways did baseball serve as both a site of discrimination and empowerment?
- c. Students then complete a written Exit Ticket by writing 3–5 sentences summarizing one insight they gained about segregation or Latino history during the lesson.

Assessment

As a culminating assessment, students will create a tri-fold brochure that synthesizes their learning about segregation, Inland Empire (IE) baseball history, and community resistance. Drawing on their analysis of primary sources—including photographs, oral histories, and historical readings—students will craft an informative and visually engaging brochure that demonstrates their understanding of how Mexican American communities used baseball to build identity, pride, and solidarity during the segregation era. The brochure includes historical summaries, artifact analysis, a timeline, a geographic map, and a short creative writing piece written from the perspective of a teenager living in a segregated IE community. This assessment requires students to integrate historical thinking, visual literacy, and narrative voice while demonstrating mastery of the lesson’s inquiry question.

Materials Needed:

- [Mexican American Baseball Brochure Template](#)
- Handout 3
- Colored pencils, markers, glue sticks, or digital design tools (Canva, Google Slides Template, etc.)
- Access to printed or digital copies of artifacts

Optional Extension

Display student brochures in a classroom gallery walk or turn them into a digital archive to share with parents or the broader school community during a heritage night or Open House.

Bibliography

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- (1976). The Bingo Long Traveling All-Stars & Motor Kings [Film]. Universal Pictures.
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- National Museum of American History (2025, May 27). ¡Pleibol! In the Barrios and the Big Leagues. Smithsonian. Retrieved May 27, 2025, from <https://wayback.archive-it.org/3340/20230929155824/https://americanhistory.si.edu/pleibol/>
- San Bernardino Black History Lesson Plan (2025, May 27). IE Stories. Retrieved May 27, 2025, from <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/8961d1e7fef04a9ead8d8c84d40e625e?item=7>
- Santillan, R. A., Ocegueda, M. A., & Cannon, T. A. (2012). *Mexican American Baseball in the Inland Empire* (1st ed., pp. 8-9). Arcadia Publishing, Charleston, South Carolina.
<https://sabr.org/journal/article/los-chorizeros-the-new-york-yankees-of-east-los-angeles-and-the-reclaiming-of-mexican-american-baseball-history/>

Source A: Separate but Equal Doctrine

The legal foundation for **segregation in the United States** was established by several key laws and court decisions:

1. **The Black Codes (1865–1866)**: After the Civil War, southern states enacted the Black Codes, which were laws designed to control the newly freed African American population. They enforced segregation in public places, restricted voting rights, and imposed labor laws that resembled slavery.
2. **The Civil Rights Act of 1875**: This law was intended to guarantee African Americans equal access to public accommodations, public transportation, and jury service. However, the Supreme Court ruled parts of it unconstitutional in 1883, which led to a decline in protections against segregation.
3. **The Plessy v. Ferguson Decision (1896)**: This Supreme Court decision solidified the legal basis for racial segregation. The case involved Homer Plessy, an African American man who was arrested for sitting in a "whites-only" railroad car in Louisiana. The Court ruled that racial segregation was legal as long as the facilities provided to African Americans were "separate but equal." This doctrine became the constitutional justification for segregation in all public facilities, including schools, transportation, and public accommodations.
4. **Jim Crow Laws**: These state and local laws were passed primarily in the southern U.S. between the late 19th century and the 1960s. They enforced segregation in virtually all public spaces, including schools, restaurants, parks, and even drinking fountains, based on the Plessy v. Ferguson ruling.
5. **Lopez v. Seccombe (1944)** was a landmark case in San Bernardino's civil rights history. The city barred Mexican Americans from its public pool except on "Mexican Day," after which the water was drained. Community leader Ignacio L. Lopez and the Mexican American Defense Committee sued Mayor Seccombe and the city council, arguing segregation violated constitutional rights. A federal judge ruled in their favor, ordering San Bernardino to desegregate its facilities. This local victory not only ended discrimination in the city's pool but also helped inspire later cases like Mendez v. Westminster, advancing civil rights nationwide.

The Plessy decision remained the legal basis for segregation until the Brown v. Board of Education decision in 1954, which overturned the separate but equal doctrine and declared that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional.

Discussion Questions:

1. What were the key elements of the **separate but equal doctrine**, and how did it affect public spaces in the United States?
2. How might the **separate but equal doctrine** be applied to others outside of the African American community?
3. In what ways did segregation laws, like those established after the **Plessy v. Ferguson** decision, limit opportunities for people of color in the workforce and education?
4. How did the legal and social enforcement of **segregation** contribute to systemic **racial inequality** in the United States?
5. How did **San Bernardino's** segregation of the public pool demonstrate unequal treatment of Mexican Americans, and why was this policy considered discriminatory?
6. Make a prediction: What role do you think sports, music, and art play might play in **challenging segregation laws** and fostering social change? (Opinion only)

Source B: Excerpt from *Mexican American Baseball in the Inland Empire*, by Richard A. Santillian, Mark A. Ocegueda, and Terry A. Cannon, foreword by Jose M. Alamillo

Introduction:

At the turn of the 20th century, the inland region of Southern California, more commonly known as the Inland Empire, sustained a thriving agricultural citrus industry that provided the economic pull factors for Mexican immigration into the San Bernardino Valley, the Pomona Valley, Riverside, Corona, and the Coachella Valley. Mexican immigrants labored within the citrus economy as pickers, packers, and other low-wage positions. In addition, various Santa Fe and Southern Pacific Railroad depots throughout the Inland Empire provided Mexican immigrants with additional employment. With the large **influx** of Mexican immigration during the first decades of the 20th century, long-lasting Mexican communities developed in the Inland Empire. As Mexican migrants settled in Inland Empire barrios, Mexican immigrants and their Mexican American **progeny** formed baseball teams that facilitated senses of community pride and ethnic identity for women and men. Many of the barrio baseball games were played on weekend afternoons in front of lively, overflowing crowds. Some fans even preferred to park their cars in the outfield and blare their horns after every home run. Both women and men formed community teams that allowed Mexican Americans to proclaim their social equality through athletic competition and to publicly demonstrate community strength.

This photo-documentary reveals baseball's social and cultural impact on the various Mexican communities within the Inland Empire. Particular emphasis is given to the era of segregation when Mexican immigrants and their Mexican American children experience exclusion from various societal arenas, including schools, labor, theaters, politics, public recreational facilities, and sports. Comparable to the Negro Leagues of the Southern and Eastern United States, Mexican-American baseball leagues developed in the context of segregation and discrimination during the interwar period. While some attention is given to the rise of individual professional and major-league players, the emphasis rests on the celebration of ethnic identity and community solidarity that Mexican American baseball leagues provided Inland Empire barrios. Although former players and members of the Mexican

communities within the Inland Empire have not forgotten baseball's cultural and social significance, this book serves as one of the first efforts to present the history of Mexican American baseball in the Inland Empire's barrios.

Chapter 1: Mexican American Baseball: The Golden State

Mexican American baseball in California dates back to at least the 1890's and was well established in nearly every Mexican American community by the early 1920's. On any given Sunday, baseball and softball teams competed on city parks and makeshift fields. Each game attracted many fans, especially family members and friends of the players.

There were commonalities associated with these games. Most of the players and fans attended church in the morning before heading out to the baseball diamond. The players, who practiced hard during the week after working at their jobs 10 to 12 hours a day, had to get the fields into shape before each game. Mexican food and beer were sold, and Mexican music and the Spanish language were heard. Spectators sat on the grass or on makeshift stands, and a baseball cap was passed around to collect gas money for the visiting team. After the game, the home team often went to the local bar to drink beer.

Unfortunately, these same communities shared other similarities. Mexican Americans confronted racial prejudice and discrimination in housing, health care, education, employment, and recreation. It was not uncommon for Mexican Americans throughout California to be forced to sit in certain sections of movie theatres, to swim in public pools only one day out of the week, to be barred from or assigned special times for use of public parks, to attend segregated schools with inferior classrooms, to live in the most rundown sections of town, and to be forced from their homes because of urban renewal programs.

Yet, despite these economic hardships and social forms of segregation, the greater Mexican American community in California endured and eventually overcame many of these institutional obstacles by organizing political and social organizations, labor movements, and religious groups, by filing lawsuits, and by establishing recreational clubs and facilities. The Mexican American community formed its own network of sports, including boxing, basketball, baseball and softball. To Mexican Americans, sports were not just

games—they were important elements of community identity, cultural affirmation, civil rights, and political empowerment.

Source C: Oral History Interview with Tom Rivera, Bobby Vasquez, and Rudy Oliva, Colton Area Museum Oral History Committee, Colton History: Oral Histories Collection, ScholarWorks @ California State University, San Bernardino, 2018



Source: <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/colton-history/68/>

Transcript

TOM RIVERA: Bobby? How many brothers and sisters do [00:49:00] you have,

BOBBY VASQUEZ: I had four brothers and three sisters.

TOM RIVERA: I remember your little brother, Raul. He played football with me at Colton High School, good football player. So it runs in the family, verdad?

BOBBY VASQUEZ: No, he didn't play. What I heard was that he got in trouble one time at school. And they told him that if he played football, they would not do anything. So he went out for football, but he didn't last too long.

TOM RIVERA: We played the freshman year. It was freshman year. When I played with him it was freshman year. He was a very good football player, yeah. Let me change the subject a little bit. In the middle book there, Bobby, you wrote an article on the Colton Mercuries. Tell me about the Colton Mercuries.

BOBBY VASQUEZ: Well, the Colton Mercuries was [00:50:00] something that -- way back in about 1938 or '39, there was a group of men there in South Colton that

wanted to make a softball team. They picked a few (inaudible). The first one was Robert Rosales. I don't know if you know him.

TOM RIVERA: My neighbor, my [grandmother's neighbor?].

BOBBY VASQUEZ: Robert Rosales, he lived up there where you used to live.

TOM RIVERA: O Street, yeah.

BOBBY VASQUEZ: Yeah, on O Street. Him and a guy named Ralph Martinez and -- well, a group of those guys, they built a softball team there. They played right there in that park on the corner of Seventh and La Cadena. There was an empty lot there. They played there on weekends now and then in regular clothes. They'd play anybody that [00:51:00] wanted to play. And then from then on, they continued playing. In South Colton, there was Perris Hill Park, and they had a Mexican guy working up there by the name of Gabe Castorena. Everybody was wondering why Gabe Castorena was working for the City of Colton because they wouldn't hire Mexicans in the City of Colton then. So apparently, being that the park was in South Colton, no white guy wanted to work over there so they gave that job to Gabe Castorena. And being that it had a ballpark there with lights, he contacted the boys there that if they wanted to use the ballpark to practice and play with lights and everything. So from then on, they went up there and they -- [00:52:00] that's where they started the Colton Mercuries.

TOM RIVERA: I hear they were pretty good.

BOBBY VASQUEZ: Yeah. Yeah, they had a lot of the -- the first guys that started was Robert Rosales, Gus León, Freddy Vasquez. Who else?

RUDY OLIVA: Theo Duarte.

BOBBY VASQUEZ: Theo Duarte, Tony Garcia.

RUDY OLIVA: Charlie Martinez.

BOBBY VASQUEZ: Ralph Martinez, the catcher; Charlie and Pat Carranza were the pitchers. They were from Highgrove, and Rudy Herrera. And they started -- eventually, they just started playing -- Gabe Castorena wanted to buy uniforms for them. So he went out to the stores, the businesses in South Colton, to see if they would [00:53:00] donate money to buy the uniforms, which they did. They agreed to

it. They bought uniforms; red, white, and green. But [duke?] cuando fue él (inaudible). It was Martinez Market that put the money up to buy the uniforms.

RUDY OLIVA: Yeah, they were one of --

BOBBY VASQUEZ: Because Baker Martinez used to be on the team.

TOM RIVERA: Okay, okay. And he was with the bakery store?

BOBBY VASQUEZ: Yeah. So, he was the owner of Martinez Market was the one that put up the money to buy their uniforms. From then on, they started playing games. They'd go and -- in San Bernardino, they had a league called the -- they used to have games up there, [Reseda?]. San Bernardino used to have games, people playing games and all that. They would play the Mercuries. And then they started going out of town playing. They even went [00:54:00] to Tijuana and Calexico and all those towns up there to play over there. They always came back victorious, you know.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, I hear that they were pretty good. And then they decided in the late '40s, they decided to become pro. But each city could only have one semipro team, and they had the Hubbers. The Hubbers were the Anglo team from North Colton. So, the Mercuries challenged them for a game, two out of three, and whoever won would represent Colton.

BOBBY VASQUEZ: Yeah. They had this softball professional league that was in other teams around. The Mercuries wanted to join the league. But being that Colton already had a team playing there, which were the Colton Hubbers, nothing but white guys, they wouldn't allow [00:55:00] two teams from one city to join. Before the season started next, the Mercuries started challenging the Hubbers to play a couple of games. See, if they win, they would join the league. The Colton Mercuries beat the Hubbers. And the point is that the Hubbers were all the white guys that went to high school with the Mercuries and all that. Carl Swing, Dave Swing's brother; [Hal Prieste?]; [Ed Timby?]; Marty -- who else [was in the white guys?]? In other words, they beat them and then the Mercuries joined the league. There was another team from Bloomington, the Cedar Lumber, that also joined the league. Yeah, they played. We used to go to Perris Hill Park to see them. San Bernardino, they had a [00:56:00] guy named [Neil McDermott?] that used to own a bar in San Bernardino, the [Prop Room?]. He had a team that played in the league. And also the Colton players like Carl Swing and Prieste and those guys, Timby that went and played in San Bernardino. They played for the Prop Room, and the rest of them went to Cedar Lumber.

TOM RIVERA: I understand that the Mercuries played one of the major leagues that were training in Perris Hill. Do you remember that team?

BOBBY VASQUEZ: They just didn't -- after the football [played it away?], they also played baseball, some of us. Players that played softball, they also played baseball. They had a bunch of good players. Colton had a bunch of good players. Of course, Ralph Martinez and his brother --

TOM RIVERA: Ray?

BOBBY VASQUEZ: Ray, they were pretty -- Ray Martinez [00:57:00] actually played two years with the Oakland Oaks of the Pacific Coast Conference, a very strong triple league.

TOM RIVERA: How about [Art Miguel?]??

BOBBY VASQUEZ: Who?

TOM RIVERA: Art Miguel from Corona, first baseman?

BOBBY VASQUEZ: Art Miguel, he came from Corona and he joined a baseball team. He played professional ball, the Saint Louis Browns of the old American League.

TOM RIVERA: What about the Abril brothers?

BOBBY VASQUEZ: Oh, Manuel and Ernie Abril. I played ball with them. We used to play American Legion ball in high school. They were two twins that were raised together. They were very close, always together. Ernie Abril, in his senior year in Colton High School, he batted seven hundred and [something?] in his senior year.

TOM RIVERA: Seven hundred?

BOBBY VASQUEZ: [00:58:00] And that's when the Pittsburgh Pirates drafted him. They not only drafted him, but they also drafted his brother. They drafted both of them, so they went to play for the Pittsburgh Pirates traveling. But then the Korean War interrupted [and they went to Korea?]. After the Korean War ended, they came back and they started going back to Pittsburgh with the Pittsburgh Pirates traveling all over, Triple-A and all that, Texas. The last game [that they were?] was in Lincoln, Nebraska. In Lincoln, Nebraska there was a guy named -- I can't remember the name of that guy. That guy hit 87 homeruns in Lincoln, Nebraska Triple-A [for?] the

Pirates. So the Pirates right away was going to next year, but they also wanted [00:59:00] Ernie. They wanted Ernie to go out to play in the bigtime league. Ernie told them, "What about my brother?" "Well, right now there's not room for your brother. We just want you." He said, "Well, if my brother's not going to go, I'm not going to go." So [they took him home?].

TOM RIVERA: A lot of loyalty there.

BOBBY VASQUEZ: Yeah, so they came home. But they were so close together, they didn't want to be separated. So Ernie said, "No, we're going to go home." So they came down. They came down and started playing for the Colton Mercuries.

TOM RIVERA: Right. Let me get back to the politicians in Colton. We talked about Jeremias, 1941. We talked about Pete Luque in the '50s. And then we talked about Pascual in the '60s and Abe in the '50s, '60s, '70s; and then Frank Gonzales.

Source D: The San Bernardino-Colton Centrals pose at Cubs Park, also known as *El Corralón* (the Corral), in South Colton, in April 1930.



Owned by entrepreneur and team sponsor Juan Caldera, *El Corralón* served as a multipurpose recreational site for Mexicans in Colton with a community swimming pool, boxing facilities, and a baseball diamond. *El Corralon* proved to be especially important during this era, as Mexican Americans were segregated from Anglo recreational sites.

Source: *Latino Baseball History Project*, John M. Pfau Library Special Collections, California State University, San Bernardino.

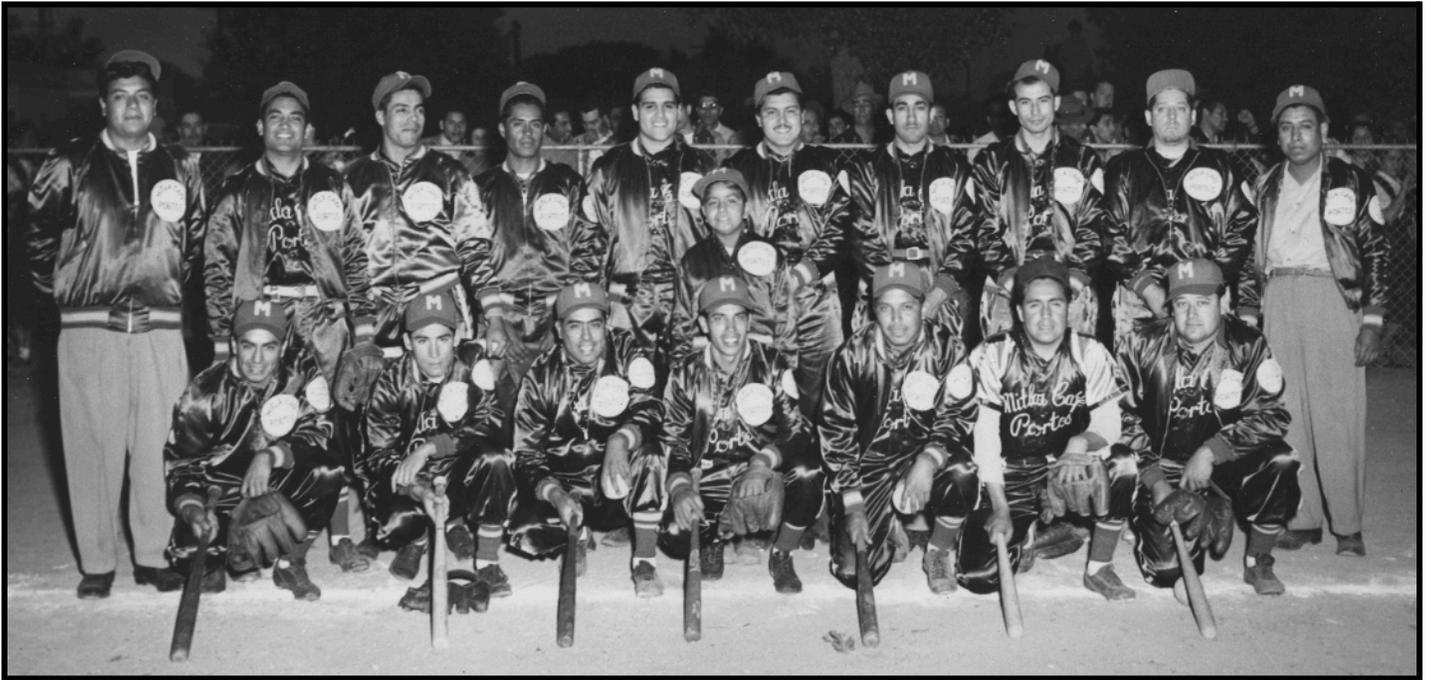
Source E: San Bernardino-Colton Centrals and a team from Cordoba, Veracruz, Mexico, pose before a transnational baseball match at the Santa Fe Railroad depot on November 24, 1938.



The Centrals featured players from San Bernardino, East Highland, and Colton, and often played visiting teams from the Mexican nation. The Santa Fe Railroad yard employed many Mexicans from the Mount Vernon barrio.

Source: Latino Baseball History Project, John M. Pfau Library Special Collections, California State University, San Bernardino.

Source F: City Champions Mitla's Cafe are seen above in 1949. Notable figure in image: Cruz Nevarez located second row, 2nd on the left-hand side.



Cruz served in the US Army during WWII and became San Bernardino's first Mexican American school teacher, and founded the San Bernardino chapter of Community Service Organization (CSO).

Source: Latino Baseball History Project, John M. Pfau Library Special Collections, California State University, San Bernardino.

Source G: *Las Debs de Corona* or Corona Debs softball team comprised of Mexican American women and coached by Anglo males and sponsored by American Dry Cleaners. Photo courtesy of the Corona Public Library Heritage Room, Corona, California.



Las Debs de Corona was sponsored by American Dry Cleaners and featured an all-Mexican American roster in April 1949.

Source: *Peloteros in Paradise: Mexican American Baseball and Oppositional Politics in Southern California, 1930-1950*, Jose Alamillo

Source H: Casa Blanca Girls Baseball Team, 1940s, *A People's History of the Inland Empire Digital Archive*



A picture of nine players on the Mexican girl's baseball team, standing in a line with one hand on a rail and the other hand behind their back. The girls are all wearing the same outfit of pants with a belt and a light-colored button-up short-sleeved shirt that is tucked in. The girls depicted were from Casa Blanca and played baseball from 1945 to 1949. Jessie, Mary Louise (Pastie) Gutierrez, Stella Galvan, Mercy Chavez, Emma Galvan, Vera Rodriguez, Jennie Gomez, Kinny Galvan.

Source: Riverside County Mexican American Historical Society (RCMAHS)

Source I: Carmen Lujan with *Cherokee's* Team, 1950s, Salazar Family, Smithsonian National Museum of American History, 2021



During World War II, Lujan stepped away from softball while working as a Rosie the Riveter. Once the war was over, she returned to playing with former teammates on the newly formed San Bernardino Cherokees women's team. Courtesy of the Salazar Family.

Source:

[https://Americanhistory.Si.Edu/Explore/Exhibitions/Pleibol/Online/Game-Changers/All-American-Girls-Professional-Baseball-League](https://Americanhistory.si.edu/explore/exhibitions/pleibol/online/game-changers/all-american-girls-professional-baseball-league)

Source J: Carmen Lujan on Base, 1936, Salazar Family, Smithsonian National Museum of American History, 2021



At the age of 12 or 13, Lujan began playing for the Colton Mercury Señoritas. For five years, she played second base for the Señoritas as they traveled to play other women's barrio teams.

Courtesy of the Salazar Family.

Source:

<https://Americanhistory.si.edu/explore/exhibitions/pleibol/online/game-changers/all-american-girls-professional-baseball-league>

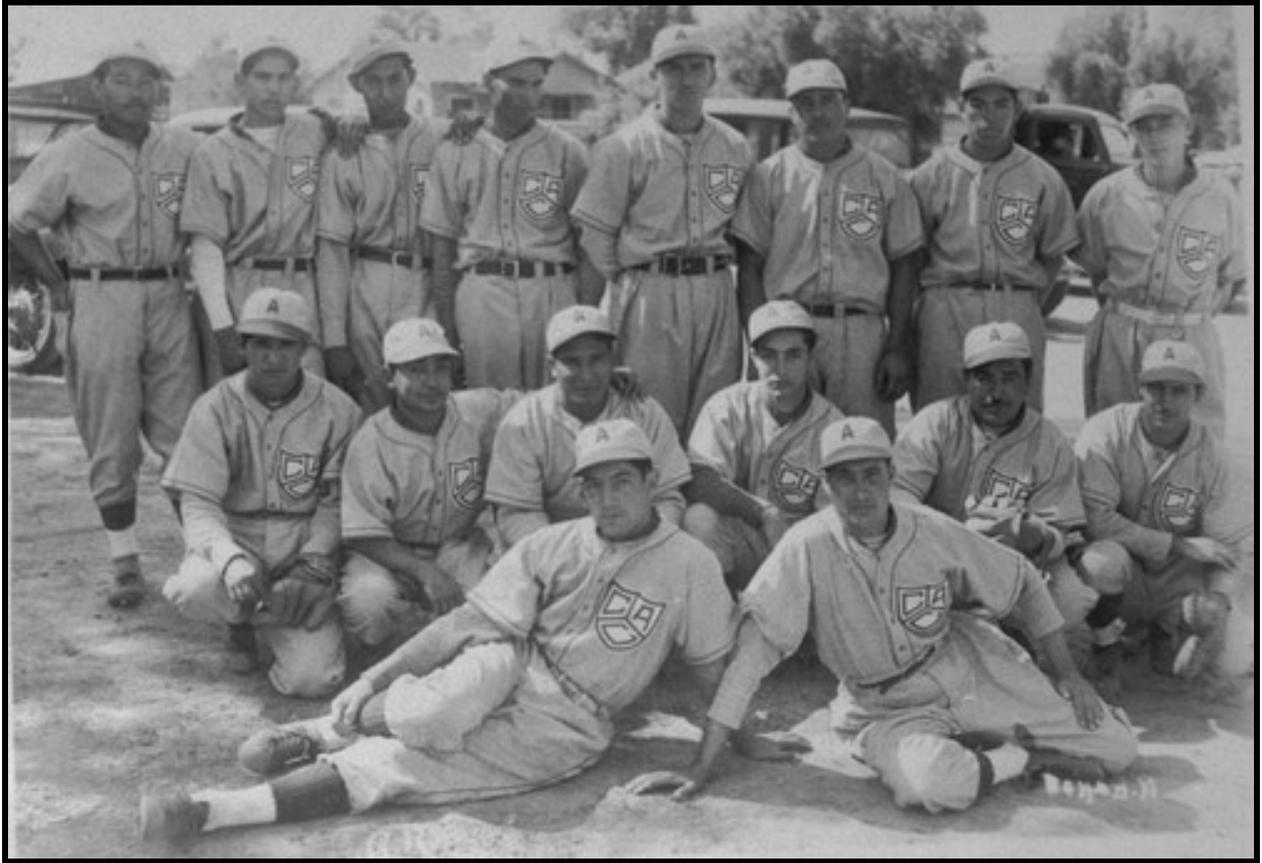
Source K: Father Nuñez poses with the mayor and city attorney alongside the Guadalupe Angels



Description: Church sponsorship was crucial for the development of Mexican American teams. Father Jose Nunez of Our Lady of Guadalupe stands next to Mayor James E. Cunningham (center) and San Bernardino city attorney T.C. Perry (left) with five church sponsored teams around 1947. Combating delinquency among Mexican youth served as one of Padre Nunez's primary objectives for the Mount Vernon barrio.

Source: *Latino Baseball History Project, John M. Pfau Library Special Collections, California State University, San Bernardino.*

Source L: Corona Athletic Club Team Photo, 1940s



Corona Athletics featured players like Ray Delgadillo (third row, second from the right) and Tito Cortez (third row, third from the left), who displayed outstanding talent but were not allowed to compete professionally with Anglos because of Major League Baseball's racial restrictions.

Source: <https://calisphere.org/item/ark:/13030/kt6k4034d3/>

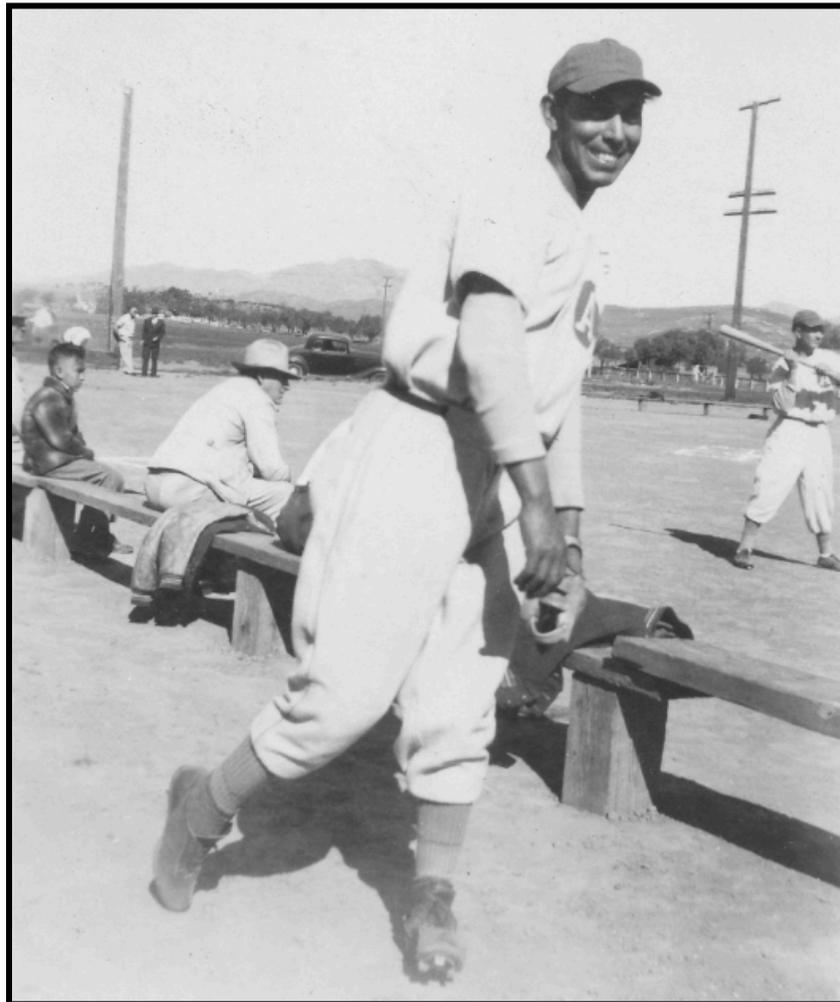
Source M: Casa Blanca Aces Baseball Team, 1940s, *A People's History of the Inland Empire Digital Archive*



A black and white picture featuring two rows of Mexican boys dressed in baseball uniforms standing in front of the baseball stands. A description of the photo reads: "Late 1940s 'Casa Blanca Aces' baseball team. Ernie Benzor (top row, second from right). Leo Baca (second row, far right) was the sixth-grade teacher at the Casa Blanca School. The team was composed primarily of World War II veterans. Often wore their military belts with their baseball uniforms.

Source: Riverside County Mexican American Historical Society (RCMAHS)

Source N: Corona Athletics Pitcher Tito Cortez, 1940s.



Pitcher Tito Cortez shined for the Corona Athletics from 1939 to 1947. During his tenure with the Athletics, Cortez, whose signature pitch was a curveball, tossed an incredible five no-hitters. He eventually signed with the Cleveland Indians in 1947 at 28 years old, the same year that Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in major league baseball.

Source: *Latino Baseball History Project*, John M. Pfau Library Special Collections, California State University, San Bernardino. <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/lbh-images/456/>

Source O: Ernie Bensor on the Casa Blanca Comets and Casa Blanca Vagabounds, approx. 1949 and 1959



Ernie Bensor, back row, second from right; (left); Casa Blanca Vagabonds, City Champions, 1959 (Bensor appears second from right, back row). Bensor served in the military during World War II from 1944 to 1946. He later served in the Korean War and eventually made sergeant first class.

Source: [City of Riverside Latino Historic Context Statement](#)

Handout 1: Segregation Vocabulary List

1. Segregation	
2. Separate but Equal	
3. Discrimination	
4. Jim Crow	
5. Black Codes	
6. Segregated	
7. Civil Rights	
8. Oppression	
9. Supreme Court	
10. Institutional Racism	

Answer Key

1. Segregation	the separation or isolation of a race, class, or ethnic group by enforced or voluntary residence in a restricted area, by barriers to social intercourse, by separate educational facilities, or by other discriminatory means
2. Separate but Equal	the doctrine set forth by the U.S. Supreme Court that sanctioned the segregation of individuals by race in separate but equal facilities but that was invalidated as unconstitutional
3. Discrimination	The treating of someone unfavorably because he/she is of a certain race or ethnicity.
4. Jim Crow	the racial caste system that enforced segregation and discrimination against African Americans, primarily in the Southern and border states, from the late 19th century until the mid-20th century.
5. Black Codes	a series of laws enacted in the Southern United States after the Civil War (1861-1865) to restrict the civil rights and liberties of newly freed African Americans.
6. Segregated	restricted to members of one group or one race by a policy of segregation.
7. Civil Rights	personal rights guaranteed and protected by a country's laws, ensuring equal treatment and protection from discrimination.
8. Oppression	prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or control.
9. Supreme Court	The Supreme Court of the United States is the highest court in the federal judiciary of the United States.
10. Institutional Racism	Institutional racism, also known as systemic racism, is a form of institutional discrimination based on race or ethnic group and can include policies and practices that exist throughout a whole society or organization that result in and support a continued unfair advantage to some people and unfair or harmful treatment

The 7 C's of Critical Historical Analysis

Inquiry Question: *How did Baseball help forge community ties and a strong sense of ethnic identity, pride, and power that was necessary for the fight for civil rights?*

Check-Out:

- What details stand out to you in this image?
- Based on what you observe, what can you infer about the people in this image?

Contextualize:

- How does this image deepen your understanding of segregation?
- In what ways does this image change or expand your perspective on segregation?
- How might this image serve as a symbol of resistance or protest against segregation?

Connect:

- How do you think you would feel experiencing segregation firsthand, and what challenges might you face?
- How do you think segregation affected the daily lives and overall well-being of the community depicted in these images?

Corroborate:

- What other images or scenes do you associate with segregation?
- In what ways was the "separate but equal" doctrine enforced in society?

Criticality: Power

- How did the "separate but equal" doctrine create and reinforce systemic power imbalances?
- In what ways were laws, statutes, or policies designed to uphold segregation and suppress certain groups?

Call to Action:

- Imagine yourself in their shoes—what actions might you take to challenge or navigate segregation if you were living in those circumstances?

Conclusions:

How do these images provide evidence to help you answer the inquiry question?

What new questions has this inquiry lesson sparked for you?

Handout 3: Baseball in the Inland Empire Brochure

Objective

You will synthesize your learning by creating an informative and visually engaging tri-fold brochure based on the historical artifact your group analyzed. This assessment allows you to demonstrate your understanding of segregation, Inland Empire (IE) baseball history, community identity, and resistance.

FRONT PANEL

Title of Project



Name
Class Period

Segregation Summary & Mexican American Resistance (4–5 sentences):

Explain the meaning of the “Separate but Equal” doctrine. Describe how segregation impacted Mexican American communities in the Inland Empire and summarize the forms of resistance they used, including community organizing, legal challenges, and building cultural spaces such as baseball leagues.

Artifact Summary 4–5 sentences



Describe what the artifact shows and what story it tells about Latino communities in the Inland Empire during segregation. Explain how the item represents cultural pride, community support, or discrimination. Include why the artifact is historically important and how it connects to the lesson’s inquiry question.

BACK PANEL

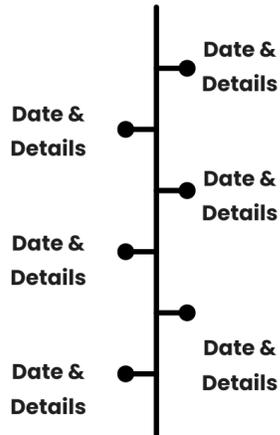


People in the Photograph / Artifact

Provide details about the individuals or group shown in the artifact. Describe their roles in the community or local baseball teams. Explain how segregation shaped their opportunities, access to recreational spaces, or participation in sports. Include any names, places, or relevant historical connections from the lesson sources.

INSIDE FRONT PANEL

Timeline



List **at least five events** between 1896 and 1954.

Insert your Map here



Your map must include:

- Colton
- Riverside
- San Bernardino
- Baseball fields or community spaces used by Mexican American teams
- Any relevant locations from the lesson sources or your artifact

INSIDE BACK PANEL

Personal Reflection 3-5 Sentences



How did the Mexican American community handle segregation?

How was baseball used to create community solidarity and pride?

Use specific examples from your artifact, the oral history, the readings, or the photograph analysis.

Instructions: You will create a tri-fold brochure that includes the following components

<p>Front Panel (Cover Page)</p> <p>Title of your brochure</p> <p>Your name and class period</p> <p>An image related to the artifact or the era</p> <p>A brief summary of the Separate but Equal doctrine</p> <p>A description of Mexican Americans' resistance struggle</p>	<p>Panel 2: Artifact Presentation</p> <p>Insert a picture of the historical artifact your group analyzed</p> <p>Describe what the artifact shows and what story it tells about Latino communities in the Inland Empire during segregation.</p> <p>Explain how the item represents cultural pride, community support, or discrimination.</p> <p>Include why the artifact is historically important and how it connects to the lesson's inquiry question.</p>	<p>Panel 3: People in the Photograph / Artifact</p> <p>Identify the individuals or groups pictured</p> <p>Explain who they were, what roles they played, or how segregation impacted them</p>
<p>Panel 4: Timeline of Key Events</p> <p>List at least five events between 1896 and 1954.</p> <p>You must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) ● Brown v. Board of Education (1954) ● At least two events related to Mexican American or Inland Empire baseball history, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Formation of community baseball leagues -Significant games or tournaments -Local civil rights actions involving recreation or public facilities 	<p>Panel 5: Map of the Inland Empire</p> <p>Insert Your Map Here</p> <p>Your map must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Colton ● Riverside ● San Bernardino ● Baseball fields or community spaces used by Mexican American teams ● Any relevant locations from lesson sources or your artifact <p>You may draw the map or create it digitally. Click here for help with mapping data</p>	<p>Personal Reflection (3–5 sentences)</p> <p><i>How did the Mexican American community handle segregation?</i></p> <p><i>How was baseball used to create community solidarity and pride?</i></p> <p>Use specific examples from your artifact, the oral history, the readings, or the photograph analysis.</p>

Handout 4: Rubric for Baseball in the Inland Empire Brochure

Criteria	Points
Segregation summary	3 Points
Picture & Summary of Artifact	3 points
People in the Photograph	3 points
Timeline of Key Events	3 points
Map of the Inland Empire	3 points
Personal Reflection	3 points
Creativity and Neatness	2 points