



Inquiry Question

***How do community food spaces
reflect cultural wealth and
resilience?***

**Relevancy
& History** PROJECT

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
UC RIVERSIDE PUBLIC HISTORY

HGP history-geography
project

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SAN BERNARDINO

UNIVERSITY OF
Redlands

How do community food spaces reflect cultural wealth and resilience?

Author

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Content Standards

CCHSS 11.8: Students trace the economic boom and social transformation of post–World War II America.

CCHSS 11.9: Students analyze the origins, goals, and key events of the civil rights movement.

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

CCHSS 11.11: Students analyze the major social problems and domestic policy issues that affected the United States after WWII.

CCHSS: 12.2: Students evaluate and take and defend positions on the scope and limits of rights and obligations as democratic citizens, the relationships among them, and how they are secured.

CCHSS: 12.3: Students evaluate and take and defend positions on what the fundamental values and principles of civil society are (i.e., the autonomous sphere of voluntary personal, social, and economic relations that are not part of government), their interdependence, and the meaning and importance of those values and principles for a free society.

CCSS Standards

Reading (RH), Grades 11–12

Reading, Grades 11–12: 1.

- Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

Reading, Grades 11–12: 2.

- Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among key details and ideas.

Reading, Grades 11–12: 3.

- Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging uncertainties where applicable.

Reading, Grades 11–12: 4.

- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of key terms.

Reading, Grades 11–12: 7.

- Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Writing (WHST), Grades 11–12

Writing, Grades 11–12: 2.

- Write informative/explanatory texts, including narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.

Writing, Grades 11–12: 4.

- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Writing, Grades 11–12: 6.

- Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products.

Writing, Grades 11–12: 7.

- Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate.

Writing, Grades 11–12: 8.

- Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources; assess the strengths and limitations of each source; integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

Writing, Grades 11–12: 9.

- Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Speaking & Listening (SL), Grades 11–12

Speaking & Listening, Grades 11–12: 1.

- Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners; build on others' ideas and express ideas clearly and persuasively.

Speaking & Listening, Grades 11–12: 2.

- Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Speaking & Listening, Grades 11–12: 5.

- Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., visual displays, videos, multimedia) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence.

Ethnic Studies Principles

- **CELEBRATE** and honor Native People/s of the land and communities of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color by providing a space to share their stories of success, community collaboration, and solidarity, along with their intellectual and cultural wealth

Overview of Lesson

Students will learn about the almost century-long history of Mitla Cafe in San Bernardino, California. Attention will be given to the founders of Mitla Cafe (1937), such as Lucia Rodriguez, and to the historical significance of the space as a community hub, site of politics, and celebration. From sponsoring student historical theatre and community meals such as Feed the IE to hosting civil rights leaders like Cesar Chavez, Mitla's significance in the community is historic and ongoing. Students will discuss the geographical and institutional challenges faced by Mitla Cafe, such as redlining, segregation, freeway infrastructure, and highlight the resilience that allowed cultural wealth to thrive, such as lowrider cruising, the cafe as a civil rights center, and community events for West San Bernardino. As extension activities, students can also learn about Glen Bell and the founding of Taco Bell (1964), as it relates to Mitla Cafe and Taco Tia (1954) in Redlands and San Bernardino.

Sources

- Source A: GIS map: "Color Lines in San Bernardino: Mapping Housing Segregation on San Bernardino's Westside,"

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/caf8835de4db495eb357784967ebd5dd?item=3>

- Source B: GIS map: "Live From the Frontline: 8 Neighborhoods Linked by the Long History of Logistics in the Inland Empire,"
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/e2c249568a3d4904806bde23cca83ed7>
- Source C: News video clip: "History and tacos served at the Mitla Cafe," CBS News
<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/history-and-tacos-served-at-the-mitla-cafe/>
- Source D: Audio and essay with photos: "The Community Cafe that Started a Revolution," KQED
<https://www.kqed.org/news/10341659/the-community-cafe-that-started-a-revolution>
- Source E: Documentary video clip: "The Untold Story of Women on the Mother Road: Lucia Rodriguez,"
<https://www.route66women.com/story-map>
- Source F: Article: "The Mitla Cafe: Serving the San Bernardino Community for Generations,"
<https://savingplaces.org/stories/the-mitla-cafe>
- Source G: Video: "Taco Bell's Origin Story," Lost LA PBS SoCal
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=shared&v=IGMvmkd5PkQ>

Procedures

- Terms and concepts to know: cultural wealth, cultural assimilation, appropriation, syncretism, appreciation, colonization, cultural erasure, redlining, resilience, segregation, infrastructure, Route 66, 215 freeway, 210 freeway, primary source
1. **Anticipatory set**: Journal/quickwrite for 3 to 4 minutes. Post several questions so students can focus on responding to one in depth or they may answer several. Students should write for the entire time. Possible questions:
 - a. What makes a food authentic?
 - b. What are your favorite foods or food places to eat?
 - c. Do you consider fast food places like Taco Bell or Del Taco “real” or “authentic” Mexican food? Explain.
 - d. What’s the first food place you remember eating at?
 - e. What are some of the oldest food places in your neighborhood?
 - f. Do food places, like restaurants, taco trucks, pop ups, have other purposes or functions in addition to selling food?

After students' quickwrite, ask students to share out by allowing them to select one question they wouldn't mind sharing with a partner.

Afterwards, ask a few students to share what they discussed.

2. **Objectives and Inquiry Questions**: The teacher will explain that many food establishments that have been in our community for a long time hold history and preserve culture. The teacher will review the objectives of the lesson, explaining that they will be focusing on Mitla Cafe, and also introduce the inquiry question.

Objectives:

- a. Understand the contributions and significance of the almost century-long history of Mitla Cafe
- b. Explore geographic and institutional challenges faced by local food spaces in the context of Mitla Cafe
- c. Analyze resilience and cultural wealth demonstrated by Mitla Cafe, which could apply to other food spaces
- d. Evaluate multiple sources and media formats of information

Inquiry Question:

- e. *How do community food spaces reflect cultural wealth and resilience?***

3. **Vocabulary:** Introduce key terms by distributing the following terms to partners. On a whiteboard or Google slide, ask students to write the term, definition, provide an example, and a picture or visual. Have partners take turns sharing out their term, and the teacher may elaborate or explain further as needed. The following definitions are from the California Department of Education Ethnic Studies glossary published in 2019:

- a. Acculturation- the process of taking on another group's culture.
- b. Agency- the capacity of an individual to act freely and make independent choices in any given environment.
- c. Assimilation- the process whereby a historically marginalized person or group voluntarily or involuntarily adopts the social, psychological, cultural, and political characteristics of a dominant group.
- d. Community- a social group of any size whose members either reside in a specific locality, share government, and/or have a common cultural background, struggles, views, or history.
- e. Culture- the characteristics, creations, and knowledge of a particular group of people, place, or time. These characteristics include, but are not limited to, beliefs, customs, art, music, language, traditions, and religion.
- f. Cultural appropriation- the adoption of elements of a culture (i.e. clothing, jewelry, language/slang, iconography, textiles, sacred traditions, etc.) other than your own (often historically marginalized groups), without knowledge or respect for the original culture.
- g. Cultural retention- the act of preserving or retaining the culture of a specific group of people, in particular the cultures of those that have been historically marginalized, or cultures that are feared of being lost or erased for a multitude of reasons.
- h. Cultural wealth- critical education scholar Tara Yosso introduced the term "cultural wealth" in 2005 in her work, "Whose Culture has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth." The term speaks to a broader framework that encompasses various forms of cultural capital—aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance— that are

used to empower people. More specifically, the framework is used to better understand and describe what knowledge, experiences, adversities, strengths, etc., students of color bring with them to educational settings.

- i. Institutional racism- the systemic normalization or legalization of racism and discrimination. This often emerges via the unequal and inequitable distribution of resources, power, and opportunity. Institutional racism is also referred to as systemic and/or structural racism.
 - j. Latina/o/x- terms used to identify men (Latino) and women (Latina) with ancestry in Latin America—Spanish-speaking countries in the Caribbean and Americas. Latinx differs from Latina/o as the “x” renders the term gender-neutral and more inclusive. Thus, the term can be used by women, men, gender non-binary, and trans identifying people.
 - k. Microaggression- a small or subtle comment or action that consciously or unconsciously expresses a prejudiced, biased, derogatory, or hostile attitude towards a member of a historically marginalized group.
 - l. People of color- someone who is not white. People of color as a collective identity emerged as a response to systemic racism and to assert resistance and solidarity against white supremacy. People of color are a global majority.
 - m. Redlining- a discriminatory practice by which banks, insurance companies, lenders, etc., refused or limited home loans, mortgages, and insurance policies to historically marginalized groups (often Black people) to aid in the segregation of cities.
 - n. Resilience- the ability to recover and/or adapt in the face of extreme adversity, trauma, stress, and difficulty.
 - o. Solidarity- unity or agreement of feeling or action, especially among individuals with a common interest; mutual support within a group.
4. **Context and Connections:** Apply the key terms and concepts using the video: “Taco Bell’s Origin Story.” Instruct students to see if they can see examples of any of the key terms as they watch “Taco Bell’s Origin Story” at [Taco Bell's Fast Food Origin Story | Lost LA | PBS SoCal](#) (Source G)

- a. "Taco Bell's Origin Story" video debrief questions:
 - i. What information was reviewed versus what you already knew?
 - ii. Did you see an example of your key term or other terms? Explain.
 - iii. What is the impact of the video not stating the name of the founder of Mitla Cafe, Lucia Rodriguez, while repeatedly saying the name of the founder of Taco Bell?
 - iv. Summarize or reflect on the video using at least three key terms (this may be written or verbal, or partner-share).

Video BINGO Option: As students watch the video, increase engagement by having students write the following words in a 4 x 4 grid (or you can prepare individual randomized grids for students using a free bingo generator site online). As students hear the word, they are to check the term. Afterwards, teachers can ask who had 4 in a row, 4 corners, blackout, etc. Teachers can also ask students which words they can explain in relation to the video.

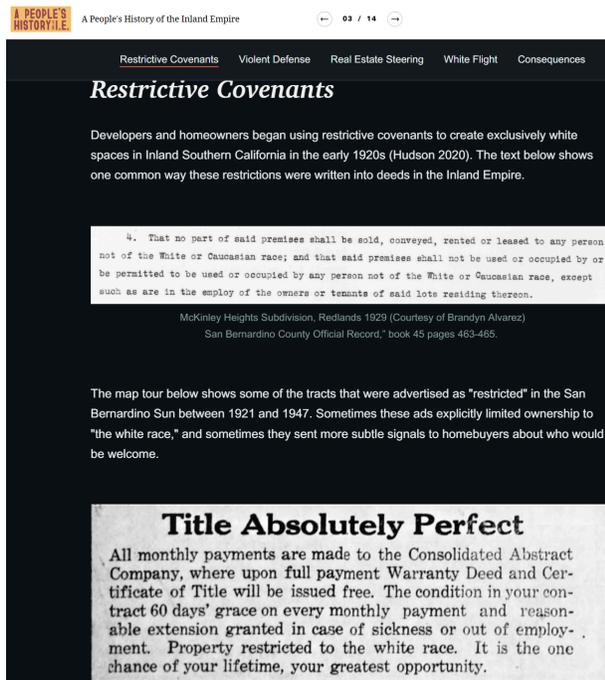
- v. Mitla Cafe, San Bernardino, Route 66, civil rights, 215 freeway, segregation, Lopez v. Secombe Lake, hard-shell taco, Taco Bell, Del Taco, McDonald's, In and Out, Wienerschnitzel, community, Glen Bell, real Mexican food.
- vi. Teachers can also choose to have the terms already printed out in small grids or use an online bingo generator to create mixed cards.

Mitla Cafe	San Bernardino	Route 66	civil rights
215 freeway	segregation	Lopez v. Secombe Lake	hard-shell taco
Taco Bell	Del Taco	McDonalds	In and Out
Wienerschnitzel	Glen Bell	real Mexican food	Gustavo Arellano

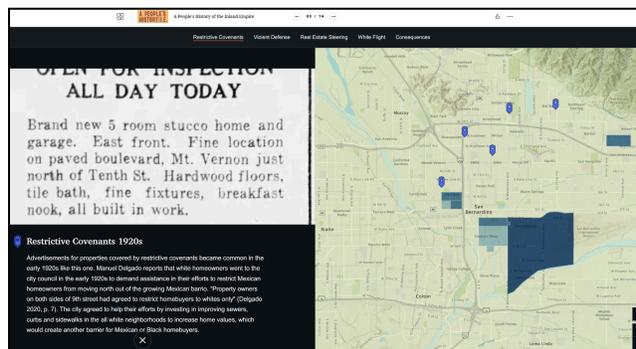
5. **Geographical context:** The Teacher will guide students in exploring the GIS map of housing segregation and the impacts of freeway infrastructure in West San Bernardino using the resources below. Students can use [Google My Maps](https://www.google.com/maps) to drop pins in a customized map of

San Bernardino. Students will pin the location of Mitla Cafe, as well as different areas, as they are discussed and projected digitally. Teachers can preview and review [this](#) or another YouTube video to show students how to use Google My Maps to create customized maps they can save and share.

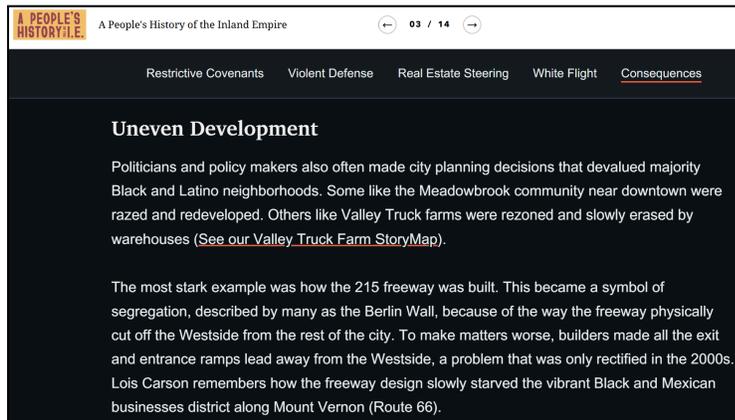
- The teacher starts by having students pin their school on Google MyMaps to practice. Then, pin Mitla Cafe to provide context to the different areas that will be studied through the maps.
- Source: “Color Lines in San Bernardino: Mapping Housing Segregation on San Bernardino’s Westside”
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/caf8835de4db495eb357784967ebd5dd?item=3>
- Begin by reading through “Restrictive Covenants” together.



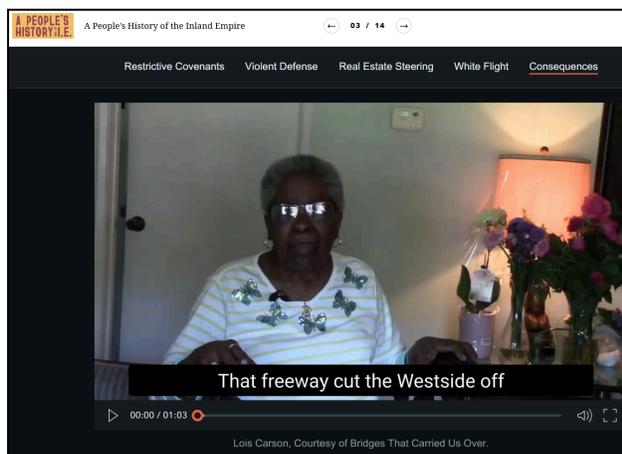
- Show students an example and have students pin it on their My Google Map.



- e. Teachers scroll to “Uneven Development” and read the paragraphs together.



- f. The teacher plays the short video clip of Lois Carson under the paragraphs. Help students find the 215 freeway in San Bernardino on their map and pin it.



- g. “Westside: Live From the Frontline, The Berlin Wall”
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/e2c249568a3d4904806bde23cca83ed7> Navigate to Westside San Bernardino in the menu, and scroll down to the sections “Mapping Community Businesses, 1940” and “A Berlin Wall.” Teachers can also show the short video by scrolling down after “A Berlin Wall,” where resident Lois Carson remembers how the 215 freeway cut off businesses.

6. **Historical context stations and graphic organizer:** Students will explore Mitla Cafe and the historical context through various stations. For each source of information, students will complete the [Mitla Cafe MEDIA Graphic Organizer](#) analyzing the primary and secondary sources.

- a. **Source C:** News video clip: “History and tacos served at the Mitla Cafe,” CBS News “[History and tacos served at the Mitla Café](#)” – CBS News
 - b. **Source D:** Audio and essay with photos: “The Community Cafe that Started a Revolution,” KQED “[The Community Cafe That Started a Revolution](#)” | KQED
 - c. **Source E:** Documentary video clip: “The Untold Story of Women on the Mother Road.” www.route66women.com
 - d. **Source F:** Article: “The Mitla Cafe: Serving the San Bernardino Community for Generations” <https://savingplaces.org/stories/the-mitla-cafe>
 - e. The teacher may choose an optional 5th resource or have students find a related, credible 5th resource of their choice.
7. **Review and connect:** Teacher will review the inquiry question: ***How do community food spaces reflect cultural wealth and resilience?*** The teacher will distribute a Post-it to each student with a different term on each. The teacher will then group students into small groups of three or four, and on a poster or whiteboard, students will write a response to the inquiry question using the terms from their group. Share out.

Assessment

Inquiry Question: How do community food spaces reflect cultural wealth and resilience?

Task: Students will research and share the history of a local food establishment in their community using one of the options from the choice board. Create a project of your choice that explores this community food space, including resilience from obstacles and the cultural wealth it holds for the community.

Possible questions students may ask businesses. Encourage students to create or add their own, and also how to follow up if a question does not yield a complete answer:

- Name:
- Name of Business:
- When did this restaurant or business begin?
- Where were you born?
- What made you decide to go into the food business?
- Whose recipes are you using?
- If you moved to the I.E., did you cook in your homeland?
- Have you been cooking or serving for a long time?
- When did you become an owner of this business/restaurant?
- Why did you decide to start this restaurant or buy it?
- How does serving food bring you joy or satisfaction?
- What are some challenges you have faced?
- What do you want people to know about your business?
- Who works at your restaurant? Is it a family business?

Options for projects:

- **Create a Google map** plotting points of local and indigenous food spots (raspadas, elotes, etc.) Include the name of the establishment, type of food served, and at least one other piece of helpful information. Students may be encouraged to interview at least one business owner or vendor to bring a first-hand primary source account to this narrative.
 - To plot locations on Google Maps, open Google My Maps, sign in, and create a new map. Students can search for and add

locations, or use the "Add marker" tool to manually click and place a pin on the map.

- **Create a short video** in the form of an Instagram or TikTok reel featuring a cultural food establishment in the community. Highlight a unique aspect of this food place, a few food items that represent the menu, atmosphere, and history of the location. Add music that represents the "vibe" of the food space.
- **Create a short podcast** discussing the history of a cultural food space in your community. Highlight a unique aspect of this food place, a few food items, the atmosphere, and the history. Students may be encouraged to interview at least one business owner or vendor to bring a first-hand primary source account to this narrative.
- **Create an Instagram post** (which may be several slides) acknowledging the roots of a cultural food establishment with connections to the local community. The final product should include text large enough to read, embedded in the design, or a well-written and thorough caption. The post should include the history of the food place (and if possible, the founding person or family), the year it was established, a map of its location, and what makes this food place unique. Images can include photos of the founders, old photos of the food establishment, and historical events during that time. Students will be encouraged to share this post with the food place.

Reflection

Reflect and Discuss: The teacher will provide a paper or digitally project the following statements and have students mark if they *strongly agree*, *somewhat agree*, *somewhat disagree*, or *strongly disagree*. Afterwards, the teacher may lead into a [Four Corners Activity](#) for students to verbally express and dialogue their thoughts. In the Four Corners activity, if many students agree and there is not enough variety of opinion for discussion, the teacher may choose to move on to the next statement.

Possible statements:

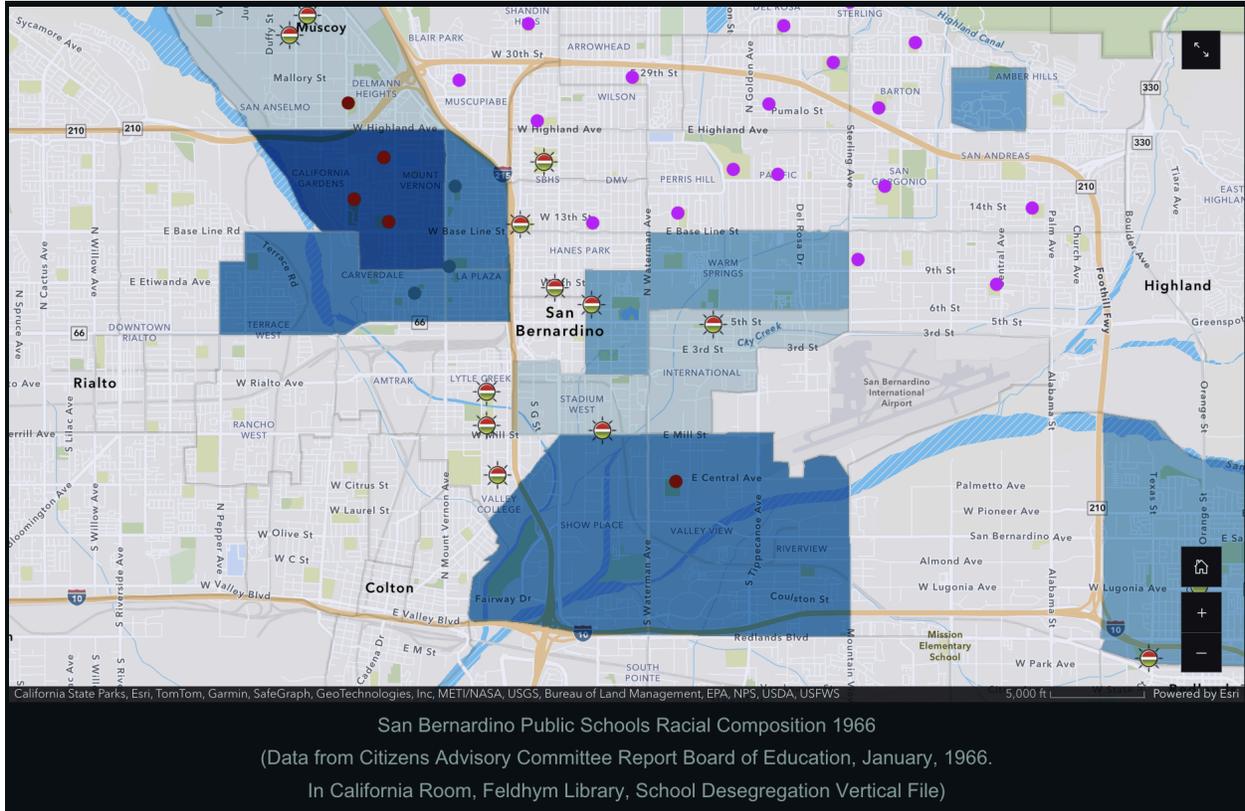
- Food helps people understand a community.
- Food places are important spaces for civil rights.
- Food helps preserve different parts of a community for the future.
- Food spaces are important spaces for cultural knowledge.
- Mitla Cafe is an example of cultural diffusion.

- Taco Bell is an example of cultural appreciation.
- Taco Bell is an example of cultural appropriation.
- Businesses owned by Black, indigenous, and people of color are negatively impacted by redlining.

Bibliography

- “Color Lines in San Bernardino: Mapping Housing Segregation on San Bernardino’s Westside”
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/caf8835de4db495eb357784967ebd5dd?item=3>
- “History and Tacos Served at Mitla Cafe”
<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/history-and-tacos-served-at-the-mitla-cafe/>
- “Mitla Cafe, Route 66” [Mitla Cafe / Route 66](#)
- “Taco Bell’s Fast Food Origin Story”
<https://www.pbs.org/video/taco-bells-fast-food-origin-story/>
- “Taco Bell Wouldn’t Exist without San Bernardino’s Mitla Cafe”
<https://la.eater.com/2015/1/30/7952807/san-bernardino-mitla-cafe-history-taco-bell-feature-photos>
- “The Community Cafe That Started a Revolution”
<https://www.kqed.org/news/10341659/the-community-cafe-that-started-a-revolution>
- “The Mitla Cafe: Serving the San Bernardino Community for Generations”, <https://savingplaces.org/stories/the-mitla-cafe>
- “The Untold Story of Women on the Mother Road.”
www.route66women.com
- “Westside: Live From the Frontline, The Berlin Wall”
<https://livefromthefrontline.org/westside-sb>

Source A: "Color Lines in San Bernardino: Mapping Housing Segregation on San Bernardino's Westside," Jennifer Tilton, "A People's History of the Inland Empire" website, Sept. 10, 2023



Source: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/cdf8835de4db495eb357784967ebd5dd?item=3>

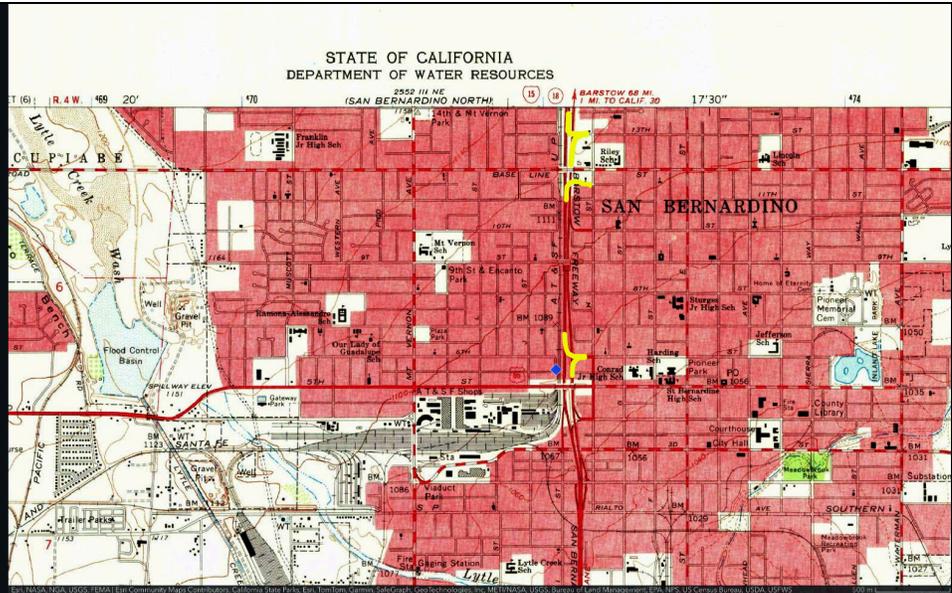


Source B: "8 Neighborhoods Linked by the Long History of Logistics in the Inland Empire," Jennifer Tilton, Cathy Gudis, and Audrey Maier, "Live from the Frontline" website, Nov. 18, 2024

All of the freeway exits on this 1969 map lead travelers away from the Westside and towards downtown.

In the 1950s, James Guthrie -- a powerful San Bernardino businessman and California Highway Commissioner -- pushed for the construction of a North-South freeway through San Bernardino to address congestion on Route 66.

Opened in 1959, the freeway starved businesses along Mt. Vernon corridor. Most streets no longer ran through, and businesses like Ybarra's found themselves isolated on streets that dead-ended into the freeway. Referred to as the "Berlin Wall" by Westside residents, the freeway served as a concrete barrier that divided San Bernardino and deepened segregation.



Source: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/e2c249568a3d4904806bde23cca83ed7>



Source C: "History and tacos served at the Mitla Cafe," Amol Mhatre, CBS News website, Nov. 21, 2021



Source: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/history-and-tacos-served-at-the-mitla-cafe/>



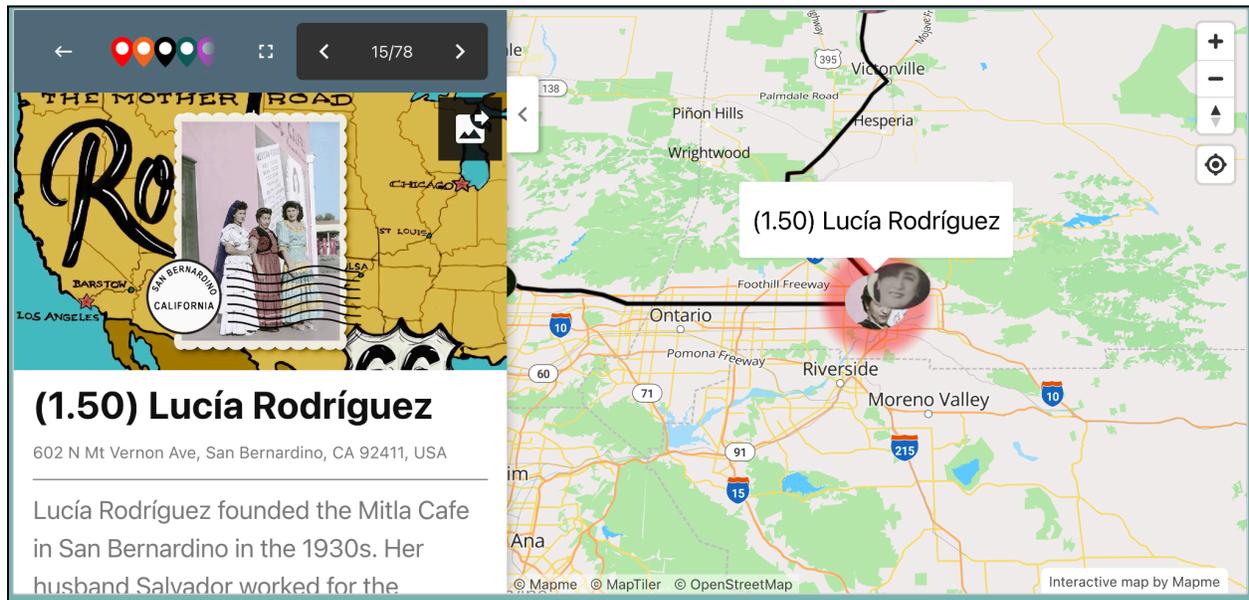
Source D: "The Community that Started a Revolution," Lisa Morehouse, KQED: The California Report, Sept. 12, 2014



Ralph Botello poses in his Mitla Cafe uniform during the 1940s. Latino business sponsorship was crucial for sustaining community life during an era where Mexicans were banned from city parks and pools. (Courtesy of Mark Ocegueda)

Source: <https://www.kqed.org/news/10341659/the-community-cafe-that-started-a-revolution>

Source E: "The Untold Story of Women on the Mother Road: Lucia Rodriguez," Tarek Baig, "Route 66: The Untold Story of Women on the Mother Road"



Source: <https://www.route66women.com/story-map>



Source F: "The Mitla Cafe: Serving the San Bernardino Community for Generations," Rebecca Ortenberg, The National Trust for Historic Preservation, Dec. 7, 2023



Source: <https://savingplaces.org/stories/the-mitla-cafe>

Source G: "Taco Bell's Origin Story," *Lost LA*, January 8, 2024, PBS SoCal



URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=shared&v=IGMvmkd5PkQ>



Handout: MEDIA Analysis + Inquiry Reflection

Title of source	<u>M</u>ain Idea What is the principle/ message this source (article, image, video) is conveying?	<u>E</u>vidence Gather details or information provided by this source that support the main idea	<u>D</u>rawing or definition Sketch or visual OR define a term you didn't know	<u>I</u>nquiry Ask a question related to the content in the source	<u>Ah-ha moment or another connection!</u> Cite a sentence or specific detail that best validates the main idea from the "M" column.
C					
D					
E					
F					

How does Mitla Cafe reflect cultural wealth and resilience? (Answer in the space below)