

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Stamp Honors 60th Anniversary of Landmark Desegregation Case *Mendez v. Westminster Set the Stage for Equality in Education Nationwide*



To obtain 300 dpi images of the stamp visit <http://www.usps.com/communications/newsroom/2007stamps/>.

SANTA ANA, CA — Sixty years ago, a landmark desegregation ruling opened the door toward equality in education for Mexican-American students in California — and ultimately for all students in the United States.

Tomorrow, many of the students who attended desegregated schools for the first time in 1947 will be on hand when the U.S. Postal Service dedicates a stamp to honor the case that made it possible, *Mendez et al. v. Westminster School District et al.*

“This stamp captures the vision and inspiration of a group of parents who fought the odds to make a difference for all Americans,” said Thurgood Marshall, Jr., member, U.S. Postal Service Board of Governors, and stamp dedicating official.

Marshall's father, Thurgood Marshall, represented the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) as a friend of the court in the case. Seven years later, Marshall drew upon key legal points from *Mendez et al. v. Westminster School District et al.* in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, which abolished segregation in schools nationwide.

“My father often spoke of the importance of individuals working together to achieve great things,” said Marshall, Jr. “The Mendez, Estrada, Guzman, Palomino and Ramirez families certainly proved the power of a small group to overcome obstacles. Together, they took some of the first courageous steps on our nation's journey to win equality in education for Americans of every color.”

When their children and nephews were denied entry into a local school in 1943, Gonzalo and Felicitas Mendez took up the cause of desegregating Orange County schools. The next year, with no success through meetings and attempted negotiations, they and four other families filed suit in U.S. District Court. They claimed that their children, along with 5,000 other children of “Mexican and Latin descent,” were victims of unconstitutional discrimination by being forced to attend separate Mexican schools in the Westminster, Garden Grove, Santa Ana and El Modena school districts.

“Our five families — Estrada, Guzman, Palomino, Mendez and Ramirez — are recognized for their contributions to the civil rights movement,” said Sylvia Mendez, who was in the third grade when she and her brothers were turned away from a “white” school. “This beautiful stamp demonstrates how important equality and education are for everyone. It will help me, as the daughter of Gonzalo and Felicitas Mendez, to share the significance of my parents’ and the other families’ achievements with the American people.”

The families received a ruling in their favor in February 1946. The school district appealed but on April 14, 1947, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeal upheld the district court’s ruling. Two months later, a bill affirming desegregation of California schools was signed into law by Governor Earl Warren (R), who was Chief Justice of the United States when *Brown v. Board of Education* was decided in 1954.

Tomorrow’s First-Day-of-Issue stamp ceremony will be held at the Gonzalo and Felicitas Mendez Fundamental Intermediate School, 2000 N. Bristol in Santa Ana, CA, at 10 a.m. It is free and open to the public.

Philatelic Fact Sheet

Philatelic Products

There are three philatelic products available for this stamp issue:

- 461661, First Day Cover, \$0.79.
- 461691, Ceremony Program, \$6.95.
- 461693, Cancellation Keepsake (First Day Cover w/Pane), \$8.99.

How to Order First-Day-of-Issue Postmark

Customers have 60 days to obtain the first day of issue postmark by mail. They may purchase new stamps at their local Post Office, at The Postal Store web site at www.usps.com/shop or by calling 800-STAMP-24. They should affix the stamps to envelopes of their choice, address the envelopes (to themselves or others), and place them in a larger envelope addressed to:

MENDEZ V. WESTMINSTER STAMP
POSTMASTER
SANTA ANA NORTH GRAND POST OFFICE
2201 N GRAND AVE
SANTA ANA CA 92711-9998

After applying the first day of issue postmark, the Postal Service will return the envelopes through the mail. There is no charge for the postmark. All orders must be postmarked by November 13, 2007.

How to Order First-Day Covers

Stamp Fulfillment Services also offers first day covers for new stamp issues and Postal Service stationery items postmarked with the official first day of issue cancellation. Each item has an individual catalog number and is offered in the quarterly *USA Philatelic* catalog. Customers may request a free catalog by calling 800-STAMP-24 or writing to:

INFORMATION FULFILLMENT
DEPT 6270
US POSTAL SERVICE
PO BOX 219014
KANSAS CITY MO 64121-9014

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