ORAL HISTORY

FARMDALE ELEMENTARY
EL SERENO, LOS ANGELES
PRODUCED BY THIRD GRADE STUDENTS
Farmdale: The Past

- Founded 1889
- Surrounded by rolling hills
- 2 classrooms
- Only 5 books in library
- Bell tower
- Uniforms
- Horse and buggy

Became a Jewish and Italian community
Farmdale: Present

- 800 students
- Mostly Mexican and El Salvadoran, some Asians
- 2 2-story buildings
- Surrounded by many houses and small stores
- Bilingual classes
- Teachers of all races
Our School
Photos from Farmdale
Sylvia Mendez

- A girl who wanted to go to a white school
- Principal refused
- Lighter skinned cousin, Alice, was allowed to attend
- Mendez vs. Westminster
Dear Sylvia,

Skin color really doesn’t matter. It is sad that you could not go to school with your cousin because of your skin. It wasn’t fair. How old were you when that happened? At Farmdale School we are mixed. I have friends of all different colors.

Love,

Cynthia
Linda Brown

- Linda Brown wanted to go to her neighborhood school.
- Principal would not let her because of her skin color.
- Brown vs. Board of Education 1954.
What We Wanted to Learn

- What was schooling like in the past?
- Was there lots of segregation?
- Did students feel like their culture was taught?
- Did students learn about segregation?
Our Project

- 10 teachers were chosen
- Made a list of interview questions
- Picked the most important questions to ask
- Video taped and interviewed teachers and administration
Sample Questions

- What race were your friends and teachers?
- Did you learn about your culture?
- What was your school like?
- Do you remember learning about Linda Brown or Sylvia Mendez?
- Did you feel racism or segregation in school?
- What was your favorite memory?
- Do you think things are getting better?
Interview Snapshots
Our Results
Ms. Marian Wong

- One of five Asian families in neighborhood
- Had Italian and Jewish teachers
- Never learned about her culture
- Did not celebrate Chinese holidays
- Teacher changed her name to Marion saying it was wrong with an ‘a’
Ms. Lydia Acosta

- Wilson H.S.
- Didn’t celebrate Cinco de Mayo, celebrated May Day
- No Mexican teachers
- Remembers that students wanted Mexican history in class and protested the war
- Mother had dark skin and had to go to Lincoln HS, many blacks and dark skinned people went there
Ms. Renee Barron

- Remembers El Sereno MS as high school
- Had mostly white teachers
- Remembers the walk outs
- El Sereno had many shop classes but not very many classes for college
- Superintendent and Social Studies teacher went to jail
- Protesting against the war right now
Dr. Carol Clary

- Grew up in Oklahoma
- Blacks were not allowed to buy houses in white neighborhoods
- Catholics were treated badly
- Mother sold house to a black friend and got in trouble
- Remembers the Blowouts
- Remembers seeing students in special handicap classes just because they spoke Spanish and not English
Principal Saracho de Palma

- Went to Mexican private school
- In Pasadena public school, saw Mex. and whites in different classrooms but didn’t understand
- Remembers not understanding teacher speaking English
- Saw very few Latinos in USC
- Believes in the right to go to neighborhood schools
The End