Rights in Action

How LULAC challenged school segregation through courts and voters

USH.C.7.2.C "Describe how the League of the United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) challenged school segregation through landmark lawsuits and organized voter registration drives for Mexican Americans."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline what LULAC challenged in court and the ruling that followed, circle its voter-registration actions, and number the ways either strategy could change school decisions.

Two Paths to Fair Schools

1. Imagine arriving at school and being directed to a separate classroom because of your family's Mexican ancestry. In parts of the Southwest, Mexican American children faced this kind of separation, even though officials sometimes claimed the assignments reflected language needs. Founded in Corpus Christi, Texas, in 1929, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) fought such discrimination. Members argued that public institutions should treat Mexican Americans as equal citizens. To challenge school segregation, they worked with families, raised money, and supported lawsuits. Their strategy turned a local school practice into a question for the courts.

2. One important case was Delgado v. Bastrop Independent School District, decided by a federal court in Texas in 1948. LULAC helped support the case, which challenged the routine placement of Mexican American children in separate schools. The court ruled that schools could not separate children simply because of Mexican ancestry. It did allow temporary grouping when a child's English skills called for specific instruction, rather than separation based on identity. This distinction mattered: a school could no longer defend a blanket policy by claiming every child with a Spanish surname needed the same placement.

3. Winning in court did not automatically make every school follow the ruling. LULAC members also organized Mexican American voters, encouraging eligible people to register and helping them understand the steps to vote. At a registration drive, volunteers could explain deadlines and help neighbors prepare required paperwork. More registered voters could press elected school board members to change district policies and could support candidates who opposed segregation. Lawsuits addressed what schools were legally allowed to do; voter registration drives increased a community's influence over officials who made and enforced school decisions. Together, these efforts linked legal rights with political power.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did LULAC's support for the Delgado lawsuit challenge a school practice?

2. Why did the Delgado ruling allow some English instruction groups but reject separation based on Mexican ancestry?

3. How could LULAC's voter-registration drives affect a school district's segregation policy?

4. Why did LULAC organize voters as well as support lawsuits against school segregation?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A district announces that every student with a Spanish surname will attend a separate school. Write a four-sentence plan for a local LULAC chapter that includes one legal action, one voter-registration action, and how each could affect the district's decision.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.7.2.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline what LULAC challenged in court and the ruling that followed, circle its voter-registration actions, and number the ways either strategy could change school decisions. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did LULAC's support for the Delgado lawsuit challenge a school practice?	**The lawsuit challenged the routine placement of Mexican American children in separate schools. The court ruled that schools could not separate children simply because of Mexican ancestry.**
2	Why did the Delgado ruling allow some English instruction groups but reject separation based on Mexican ancestry?	**Temporary groups could address a child's specific English-learning needs. Ancestry alone did not justify placing children in separate schools.**
3	How could LULAC's voter-registration drives affect a school district's segregation policy?	**Registered voters could press elected school board members to change the policy or support candidates who opposed segregation.**
4	Why did LULAC organize voters as well as support lawsuits against school segregation?	**A lawsuit could establish what schools were legally allowed to do, but a ruling did not ensure compliance. Voter organizing gave the community influence over officials who made and enforced school decisions.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The chapter could collect families' school assignment notices and ask a lawyer to challenge the policy using the Delgado ruling. That action could show the district that a Spanish surname alone is not a lawful reason to separate students. The chapter could hold a registration drive for eligible voters and explain how to vote in school board elections. Those voters could press board members to end the policy or support candidates who would end it.

Accept plans that distinguish a legal challenge to ancestry-based separation from voter organizing aimed at school officials. English instruction based on individual need should not be described as automatically unlawful.