

# Teaching history from **DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES:**

## First Grade Lesson on Ruby Bridges

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### GA Social Studies Standards

SSIH1 Read about and describe the life of historical figures in American history. a. Identify the contributions made by these figures: Benjamin Franklin (inventor/author/ statesman), Thomas Jefferson (Declaration of Independence), Meriwether Lewis and William Clark with Sacagawea (exploration), Theodore Roosevelt (National Parks and the environment), George Washington Carver (science), and **Ruby Bridges** (civil rights). b. Describe how everyday life of these historical figures is similar to and different from everyday life in the present (for example: food, clothing, homes, transportation, communication, recreation, etc.).

Alice Piper - 1924,  
*Piper v. Big Pine*: Paiute  
high school student



Mamie Tape - 1885,  
*Tape v. Hurley*: Chinese  
American elementary  
school student



Sylvia Mendez - 1946,  
*Mendez v. Westminster*:  
Puerto Rican and Mexican  
American middle school  
student



This standard includes the historical figure, Ruby Bridges. Using Ruby Bridges as a starting point, similar cases involving segregation in public schools can be taught in conjunction with the following historical figures:



**According to Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, telling a single story is dangerous because it makes the story the only story and, thus, presents an incomplete story.**

Among the stories lost if we focus only on the Brown case are the struggles and actions of Indigenous, Asian, and Latinx communities regarding schooling. Although their struggles are not widely known, Asian, Latinx, and Indigenous children are no strangers to the history of school (de)segregation.

For example,

- **Mamie Tape** was an eight-year-old Chinese American girl who was denied attendance at a San Francisco public school because of her Chinese descent. In 1884, Mamie and her family went to court to fight against discrimination.

- **Alice Piper** was a fifteen-year-old Paiute girl who was denied entrance to the Big Pine public school in California because of her Native American descent. Alice and her community protested this unjust action by taking the case to the California Supreme Court in 1924.

- **Sylvia Mendez** was a Mexican-Puerto Rican American girl who was forced to attend a segregated school for Mexican children in Westminster, California. Sylvia's and other Mexican families fought against discrimination by filing a group lawsuit against the school district in the 1940s.

The stories of these three girls are among more than one hundred school (de)segregation cases in state and federal courts that began as early as the 1840s and involved various groups of color. In sum, an exclusive focus on Brown in teaching about school segregation hides the long multicolored history of school.

Adding Chinese, Latinos or Latinx, and Indigenous peoples' struggles for equal education to our teaching of history would not diminish the importance of Brown as the groundbreaking Supreme Court decision in this area. Instead, it would be an exercise in telling multiple truths to reveal the complicated yet connected narratives of various groups and their efforts over more than a century.

This is an excerpt from:  
An. (2020). First Graders' Inquiry into Multicolored Stories of School (De)Segregation. *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, 32(3), 3-8.

### Complete Article and Lesson Plan



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