

# Orange County Civil Rights: A History of an Enduring Struggle for Equality

*For many, mention of the civil rights era conjures up images of the protests, sit-ins and marches in the South. However, we in the West also contributed to achievements of the era and Orange County is no exception. From the fight for desegregated schools to the fight for LGBT rights, Orange County has shared in the nation's civil rights tragedies and triumphs.*

*As we mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Civil Rights Act, OC Human Relations has looked back at our local history to honor the extraordinary contributions of our civil rights leaders and highlight our local history.*

*It is our sincere hope that this look back will empower us, as members of the Orange County family, to own our past and use it as a source of inspiration to continue the struggle to make this a county where ALL live free from violence and discrimination.*

*OC Human Relations would like to thank our collaborators and community partners Bob Johnson, Kevin Cabrera, Robert McDonald, Reverend Ivan Pitts, students from California State University, Los Angeles, interns from OC Human Relations, and the OC Civil Rights Committee for helping to design, produce and host this exhibit.*



**OC Human Relations**

Building community by fostering respect, resolving conflict and pursuing equality

[www.ochumanrelations.org](http://www.ochumanrelations.org)



1866



1892



1896



1906

#### AROUND THE NATION...

### Civil Rights Act

The Civil Rights Act of 1866 was a seminal development in the nation's history. Forged in a context of intense political and social struggle, it became law on April 9, 1866 when passed over presidential veto. The act granted citizenship and the same rights enjoyed by white citizens to all male persons in the United States "without distinction of race or color, or previous condition of slavery or involuntary servitude." Its transformational legacy would surface over the course of 150 years, a period marked by entrenched resistance as well as heroic support.

### Santa Ana Lynching

On July 31, 1892, Francisco Torres, a Mexican laborer of the Modjeska Ranch, had an argument with William McKelvey, the ranch's foreman. McKelvey had deducted a weekly \$2.50 poll tax from his wages. Torres did not understand the reason for the deduction and felt cheated. Torres confronted McKelvey which resulted in McKelvey's murder. McKelvey's murder had residents upset because he was very well known and liked. Torres fled but was captured by the San Diego Sheriff, who turned him over to Sheriff Lacy in Santa Ana. Torres was incarcerated. In the early morning of August 2, 1892 a mob of men with covered faces dragged Torres from his jail cell while calling him racial epithets and carried him to a telephone pole at Fourth and Sycamore Streets in Santa Ana and hanged him.

#### AROUND THE NATION...

### Plessy v. Ferguson

*Plessy v. Ferguson* was a landmark decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1896 that set the precedent that "separate" facilities for blacks and whites were constitutional as long as they were "equal." The "separate but equal" doctrine would eventually apply to areas of public life, such as restaurants, theaters, restrooms, and public schools. As such, it would serve as the legal basis for public segregation and discriminatory practices until successfully challenged in the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision in 1954.

### Santa Ana Chinatown Burned

In the late 1800s, Santa Ana was one of the only cities in Orange County with an existing Chinatown. These Chinese immigrants were recruited to meet the demands of labor in farming, railroads, and construction and worked for low wages to send to their families back in China. They occupied about 200 homes on 3rd Street between Main and Bush Street. Unfortunately, some viewed the area as an "eye-sore," within the successful, well-kept community. In 1906, the city council claimed that a Chinatown resident contracted leprosy and in order to contain its spread the area needed to be burned down. This decision was supported by the Santa Ana community.

On May 25, 1906, as the fire department and on-lookers stood by, the area was set ablaze. The residents were forewarned of the decision, evacuated, and relocated along the Santa Ana River. Though city leaders professed that the relocation strategy created better conditions, by 1912 most Chinese had left Santa Ana to reside in nearby Anaheim.

While leprosy was used as a justification for setting Santa Ana's Chinatown on fire, many doubt the validity of that claim today.



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1920



1924



1931



1936

#### AROUND THE NATION...

### Nineteenth Amendment

Passed by Congress on June 4, 1919 and ratified on August 18, 1920, the 19th Amendment prohibited any U.S. citizen from being denied the right to vote on the basis of sex. Immediately, it granted 26 million women (half of the population at the time) the right to vote. The amendment, which had first been introduced in Congress over forty years earlier, in 1878, represented the political culmination of a long and consistent struggle by the champions of the women's suffrage movement in the United States. It transformed the electorate and eventually the face and nature of American politics.

### KKK in Orange County

In the 1920s, in addition to its 11,000 residents, Anaheim was home to members of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). The KKK started in the American South, shortly after the Civil War. It violently targeted racial minorities, especially African Americans.

The influence of the KKK took off in Anaheim upon the arrival of Reverend Leon Myers, a reverend of the First Christian Church in Anaheim. He believed that Catholics were to blame for all of the problems that were occurring in the city and beyond. Reverend Myers decided to take matters into his own hands by backing KKK affiliated candidates for the upcoming city council elections.

On April 14, 1924, Anaheim citizens elected the four candidates backed by Myers – three as city councilmen and the fourth as the president of the council. Following the election KKK membership in Anaheim expanded. The council members began spreading their prejudiced ideas throughout the city and were even said to have been given special treatment from different businesses throughout the city. However, once residents got wind of the council members' affiliation with the KKK they sprang into action. All four members were successfully recalled on February 3, 1925.

#### AROUND THE NATION...

### Lemon Grove Incident

In July of 1930, in Lemon Grove, California, members of the school board addressed concerns of overcrowding and "sanitary and moral" issues resulting from the mingling of Mexican and Anglo students by sending the students of Mexican descent to a separate school. The parents of these children, most of whom were US citizens, had not been informed of this change. As soon as they became aware, they refused to comply, and sought redress in law.

In March 1931, the case (*Alvarez v. the Board of Trustees of the Lemon Grove School District*) was decided in favor of the plaintiffs, ending the attempt at segregation. The arguments and issues introduced in the case would surface again, most notably in the *Mendez vs Westminster* case in 1943.

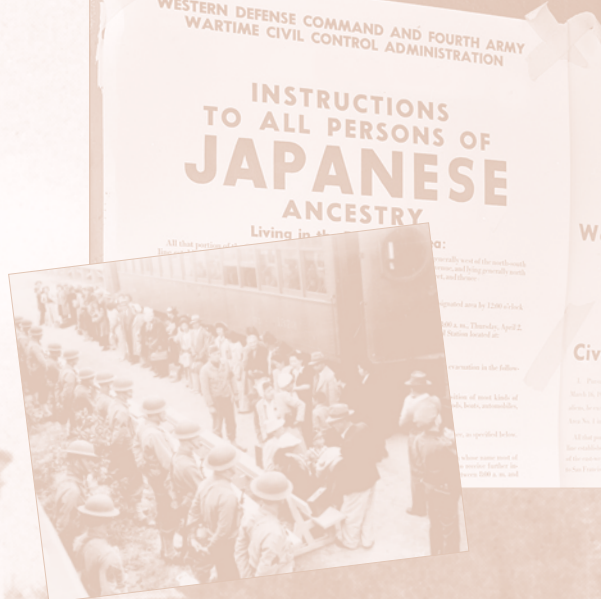
### Citrus Workers Strike

The Orange County Citrus Workers Strike occurred on June 10, 1936. The "Citrus Riots" involved thousands of citrus workers with violent clashes between the laborers and the county sheriff. The vast majority of laborers who worked the 70,000 acres of land involved in the citrus crop were immigrants from Mexico, seen as unskilled and treated as second class citizens. Unhappy with their deplorable work conditions they formed the Federation of Agricultural Workers Unions of America (FAWUA) to represent the citrus workers. In March 1936, FAWUA demanded improvements from the growers of Orange County. Their requests were ignored, and on June 10, 1936, the FAWUA called for a strike where almost 3,000 citrus workers walked off their jobs.

Sheriff Logan Jackson responded by sending officers and other members of the public to the orange groves with orders to "shoot to kill" any trespassers. Violence ensued and escalated by July 6th into full scale riots in the orchards with injuries on both sides. Fighting continued until July 26 when an agreement was struck. It gave the workers an increased wage of 20 cents per hour for a 9-hour day, the elimination of the unfair bonus system, and free work equipment and transportation.



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1930s-40s

### Public Segregation

The latter half of the nineteenth century marked a transitional period in American national identity; this was especially prevalent in the multiracial West. American and Euro-Americans converged into a heterogeneous region marked with multiethnic and multiracial groups. In order to uphold racial hierarchies, the idea of “whiteness” and the “other” led to forms of racial discrimination, de facto segregation, and de jure segregation. The notion of the “other” produced negative stereotypes of Native Americans, Chinese, Japanese, Mexicans, and other cultural groups. Racial discrimination and segregation became visible in daily life activities. Various Orange County swimming pools, such as Orange Plunge and Anaheim Plunge, had separate days for ethnic groups to use the facilities, typically Monday. Xenophobia against minorities was rampant among “whites” fearing ethnic groups to be dirty and infected with disease, hence segregation and separate days to use the pools. Other facilities such as theaters also had forms of segregation as minorities were forced to sit on the balcony levels. Oral histories also illuminate discrimination occurring at various restaurants throughout the county.

1942

### AROUND THE NATION... Japanese Internment

On February 9, 1942, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which allowed local military commanders to designate “military areas” as “exclusion zones,” from which “any or all persons may be excluded.” Accordingly, 127,000 US residents of Japanese ancestry, most of whom were US citizens, were removed from the Pacific Coast. They would be interned in “relocation” camps in the interior portions of the country, with little regard for the significant loss of property and assets and the disruption of traditional family structure this caused. Some would rationalize this flagrant denial of civil liberties as war time necessity or hysteria. Others would see it as the fruition of residual anti-Asian xenophobia and racism rooted in 19th century America.

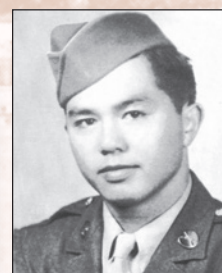


1943

### Doss v. Bernal

In 1943, Alejandro Bernal, a native Californian, and his family moved to a house on Ash Avenue in the Sunnyside neighborhood of Fullerton. Bernal's neighbors in this predominantly white community feared that the presence of Mexicans in their neighborhood would lower their property values. Failing to prevent them from moving in, the white residents filed an injunction against the family, requesting their removal from the house. They relied on a clause written into the deeds of lots for sale in Fullerton neighborhoods that supported residential segregation in housing covenants. The Bernals refused to vacate their new home, and sought redress in court.

After a four-day trial in August of 1943, Judge Albert A. Ross of the OC Superior Court rendered a decision in the case of *Doss et al v. Bernal et al*, ensuring the Bernals' right to keep their home. In reaching his decision, Judge Ross confirmed his constitutional objection to racially restrictive covenants against Mexicans as violative of the 14th Amendment. These same legal arguments would serve as persuasive precedent in overturning racial covenants on a national level, and formed the basis for overturning the educational segregation of California's Mexican students in *Mendez v. Westminster*.



1944

### Masuda Denied Burial

Kazuo (Kaz) Masuda, born in 1918, was one of eleven children in a farming family of Japanese descent in Southern California. Like many Nisei – children of Japanese immigrants – he was drafted in 1940 and began serving on October 16, 1941. During this time, Masuda's family was interned at the Jerome Center in Arkansas, and then relocated to the Gila River Center in Arizona.

On August 27, 1944 Masuda was killed while leading his unit across the Arno River in Italy. Masuda's actions earned him the Distinguished Service Cross, which was presented to his family by General Joe Stillwell.

In 1948, Masuda's family attempted to bring his remains to the Westminster Memorial Park cemetery. The cemetery refused to allow Masuda's remains to be buried because of his Japanese heritage. After considerable publicity and public and private pressure, Kazuo Masuda was allowed to be buried in his home county, where he remains today.





## RULING GIVES MEXICAN CHILDREN EQUAL RIGHTS

Segregation of Mexican school children from others in four Santa Ana school districts yesterday was held by U.S. Judge Paul J. McCormick to be a violation of their guarantees of equal rights under the 14th Amendment.

The opinion connects five parents asking for district trust Mexican schools. The case was heard in the Garden Grove, and named the trustees of the Santa Ana school districts. Judge McCormick ordered the school districts to desegregate their schools. The findings of the court were that the school districts had violated the 14th Amendment by segregating Mexican children from others in four Santa Ana school districts. The court found that the school districts had a policy of segregation and that this policy was unconstitutional. The court ordered the school districts to desegregate their schools and to admit Mexican children to all public schools on an equal basis with other children.



1946

### Mendez v. Westminster

By 1919, segregation in Orange County schools was common, and children of Mexican descent were routinely forced to attend shack-like public schools.

In 1946, four families – the Mendez, Ramirez, Estrada, Guzman, and Palomino families – were successful in a class action lawsuit filed on behalf of 5,000 students against four school districts, including Santa Ana and Westminster, in order to desegregate schools. The case became known as *Mendez v. Westminster*. The school districts unsuccessfully appealed the case to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, which upheld the previous ruling that because of social equity, public schools could not segregate students based on lineage or ancestry.

The triumph of *Mendez v. Westminster* paved the way for successes on the state and national levels, and eight years later *Brown v. Board of Education* would be taken up by the United States Supreme Court, which ruled to desegregate public schools across the United States.



1954

### Olympian Sammy Lee Denied Housing

Korean American Sammy Lee was the first Asian American Olympic gold medalist, and the first male diver to win consecutive gold medals, in 1948 and 1952. His achievements were hard-won, as his local Pasadena pool only allowed non-whites to swim on Wednesdays, or "international days." In 1954, after graduating from the USC School of Medicine, competing in the Olympics and serving in the US Army Medical Corps, he tried to move to Garden Grove to establish a medical practice. Orange County had enacted exclusive housing policies and Lee was met with resistance from developers, neighbors and fellow physicians. While attending a White House physical fitness conference, at President Eisenhower's invitation, he learned that a developer had rejected their purchase application.

San Francisco Chronicle editor Scott Newhall cautioned that Lee's case threatened to reinforce communist countries' allegations of US racism. In response, the Orange County Register, the Garden Grove Chamber of Commerce and others supported Lee. Developers then agreed to sell to the Lees, who eventually purchased a Garden Grove home from a Jewish man.



1955

### AROUND THE NATION... Montgomery Bus Boycotts

Sparked by the arrest of Rosa Parks on December 1, 1955, the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott was a 13-month mass protest that ended with the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that segregation on public buses is unconstitutional. The Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) coordinated the boycott, and its president, Martin Luther King Jr., would become a prominent civil rights leader as national and international attention focused on Montgomery. The bus boycott demonstrated the potential for nonviolent mass protest to successfully challenge racial segregation and served as an example for other southern campaigns that followed.



1958

### John Birch Society

Following the killing of Captain John Birch by Chinese communists on August 25, 1945, Robert Welch started The John Birch Society in December, 1958 to fight against communism in America. In its early days, the group focused its efforts on opposing issues such as those being addressed in the nation's Civil Rights Movement. Welch argued that the average African American "has complete freedom of religion, freedom of movement, and freedom to run his own life as he pleases;" so no movement was needed.

In the early 1960s, Orange County residents joined the John Birch Society in droves. According to author Lisa McGirr, "the strength of the movement gained Orange County the reputation as the national home of the John Birch Society." The actual headquarters were in Massachusetts. Orange County, in effect, gave birth in the early 1960s to a movement that would help shape the national political landscape and inform conservatism in the following years.



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1960s

### The OC Fair Housing Council

Up until the 1960s, many communities in Orange County prohibited renting or selling property to non-white residents. For this reason two local people became active in the cause toward fair and open housing. These individuals were Ralph and Natalie Kennedy.

Their involvement began in the 1950s when a Chinese family was restricted from moving into their neighborhood. Seeing this, they started a petition in favor of allowing the family to buy property.

Following the declaration of Prop 14, Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, also known as the Fair Housing Act, was introduced as a follow-up to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It provided equal housing opportunities regardless of race or origin and made it a crime to intimidate or threaten anyone because of their background.

Throughout the process of the Fair Housing Act, Ralph and Natalie continued their work for fair housing. They created the Fullerton Fair Housing Council, which later became part of the OC Fair Housing Council. This council serves to help thousands of formerly-excluded minorities be able to buy and rent homes within Orange County.



1961

### AROUND THE NATION... Affirmative Action

On March 6, 1961, President John F. Kennedy issued Executive Order 10925, which included a provision that government contractors "take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, creed, color, or national origin." The intent of this executive order was to affirm the government's commitment to equal opportunity for all qualified persons, and to take positive action to strengthen efforts to realize true equal opportunity for all.



1962

### AROUND THE NATION... United Farm Workers

Founded in 1962 by Cesar Chávez and Delores Huerta, the United Farm Workers of America is the nation's first successful and largest farm workers union and is currently active in 10 states. The two used their experiences with groups like the Community Service Organization, as well as the influences of activist mentors like Fred Ross and Saul Alinsky, to address the great needs of the farmworkers and their families in California, and throughout much of the Southwest. Their talents merged well as Chávez was a dynamic leader and speaker and Huerta was a skilled organizer and tough negotiator. Together they were instrumental in the union's many successes, including the strikes against California grape growers in the 1960s and 1970s. The UFW continues to organize in major agricultural industries across the nation.



1963

### Dorothy Mulkey

In May of 1963, the Rumford Act, which declared racial discrimination in the sale and rental of housing illegal, was enacted. Its impact was being blunted in Orange County by Proposition 14 which proposed to overthrow the Rumford Act. At this time Dorothy Mulkey and her husband, Lincoln, were looking for housing. The young couple found an attractive apartment in the city of Santa Ana, which was a segregated community at the time. The couple sought to rent an apartment but was refused by the landlord because they were African American.

The Mulkeys decided to challenge the landlord's refusal. With the support of the ACLU and the OC Fair Housing Council, they sought redress in court. Their case, *Reitman v. Mulkey*, eventually came before the United States Supreme Court.

In 1967, the court decided in favor of the Mulkeys, declaring Proposition 14 unconstitutional, and confirming that no landlords could refuse to rent to people based on their skin color, race/ethnicity, or religion.



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### I Have a Dream Speech

Cited by many as a landmark event in the annals of American rhetoric, Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech was a defining moment in the civil rights movement in the United States. Delivered on August 28, 1963, from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial to a crowd of over a quarter of million, the speech soon came to reflect the optimism and the potential in the movement for equality. In it, Martin Luther King Jr., by now the recognized leader of the civil rights movement, called for an end to racism in the United States. With references to the Declaration of Independence and the Gettysburg Address, Dr. King planted his call to action in the very marrow of the nation's political, social, and historical tradition, and joined Jefferson and Lincoln in the ranks of men who've shaped modern America.

### Civil Rights Act

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which ended segregation in public places and banned employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin, is considered one of the crowning legislative achievements of the civil rights movement. Proposed by President John F. Kennedy, it survived strong opposition from Congress but was later signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson. The act led to the creation of agencies such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and to additional legislation such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968. It was hailed by leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. as nothing less than a "second emancipation."

### Assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

On April 4, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the leader of the American civil rights movement, was assassinated at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. King was present in Memphis to support the strike by African American sanitation workers. While controversy still surrounds the question of conspiracy in Dr. King's death, there is no question, however, of the cold sobering effect his assassination had on the civil rights movement in the nation. Perhaps no single event has done more to dampen hope for equality in America.

### Civil Rights Act

The Civil Rights Act of 1968, enacted on April 11, 1968, established as law equal housing opportunities for all regardless of race, creed, or national origin. It did so by making it a federal crime to "by force or by threat of force, injure, intimidate, or interfere with anyone by reason of their race, color, religion, or national origin." A central section of the act, Title VIII, more commonly referred to as the Fair Housing Act, built on previous legislation in prohibiting discrimination concerning the sale, rental, and financing of housing. It would eventually be expanded to include gender, people with disabilities, and families with children in its protective categories.



# Board of Supervisors Announces Creation of Orange County Human Relations Commission



14 Part B-Wed., Aug. 9, 1978 R \*Los Angeles Times

## Mexican-Americans Accuse Anaheim Police of Brutality

Councilmen Refer Complaints to City Attorney  
Residents Describe Events at Little People's Park

BY JACK BOETTNER  
Times Staff Writer

ANAHEIM — A dozen residents of Anaheim's Mexican-American community appeared before the City Council Tuesday night to accuse police officers of brutality and harassment in a July 30 incident at the Little People's Park.

The shots were fired responded quickly and at the scene of the crowd like said.

"When six to 10 officers with clubs," Ornelas said, "too far." Some of the arrested, he added.

Police have alleged that rocks were thrown at them and to disperse the crowd, however, denied this was when they addressed the crowd.

Ornelas claimed the "innovative to our culture, of the Batrup recently counter community relations program smoothed out difficulties Mexican-Americans areas of the city.

One witness testified he saw officers dragging one young man by the hair, in the street, and six stitches were taken in the left temple and knocked the left temple and knocked the left temple.

1 Sunday, September 8, 1985

## About 1,500 Hispanics gather to mobilize rent strike

By Loretta Jones  
The Register

SANTA ANA — About 1,500 Hispanics gathered on Saturday to mobilize a rent strike against working-class Hispanics.

City officials reportedly have denied accusations that they are using police enforcement to evict low-income Hispanics and middle-income Anglo professionals.

Many said they were at the event Saturday to give and receive support for their actions.

"This is good building up for us," said Martina Sosa, 37, surveying the crowd in the park at 22nd and Mainland avenues.

"There has been no progress at my apartment. I have never lost faith," Sosa said.

"It is a very large fight," Sosa said.

Sosa said her family of six lives in one room on Lucas Street. She said they are a "subgroup with other tenants; there are no other tenants."

"We are not an expense of poor city officials," she said.

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## Fund-raiser for rent strikers set Saturday in Santa Ana

By Anita Snow  
The Register

Participants in the countywide rent strike now involving nearly 500 families will gather at Madison Park in Santa Ana on Saturday afternoon for a fund-raiser to help pay their legal expenses.

The rent strikers, who will gather from 3 to 9 p.m. in the park at Madison and Edinger avenues, also will speak out against city redevelopment policies, which they believe discriminate against working-class Hispanics, strike leader Nativio Lopez said.

City officials reportedly have denied accusations by Lopez, the rent strikers that they are using redevelopment and code enforcement to remove the area's low-income Hispanics and replace them with middle-income Anglo professionals.

The city recently completed a \$9-million housing plan to build 1,000 new units.

## Briggs Vows to Continue Fight Against 'Immorality'

SEN. JOHN BRIGGS VOWS TO CONTINUE FIGHT AGAINST 'IMMORALITY'  
Addressing Supporters After His Prop. 6 Goes Down to Defeat in State

Many in the crowd were upset when Sen. John Briggs announced the defeat of Prop. 6.



1971

1978

1978

1985

## Creation of Human Relations Commission

In 1971, the Orange County Board of Supervisors created the Human Relations Commission as a pilot project to build mutual understanding among residents and to eliminate prejudice, intolerance and discrimination. Twenty years later, in 1991, the non-profit Orange County Human Relations Council was created to expand the vision and augment the goals of the Commission by offering much-needed programs and services to the community.

The Council and the Commission became two separate but related arms in a renewed human relations strategy. This innovative public/private structure became known simply as OC Human Relations.

OC Human Relations has become a leader in establishing model programs such as the Hate Crime Network, the BRIDGES School Inter-Group Relations and Violence Prevention Program, the Police Community Reconciliation Program, the Dispute Resolution Program, community dialogues, and grassroots leadership development. They also sponsor an annual Human Relations Awards Event to honor every-day heroes who champion human rights in our communities.

## Little People's Park

The afternoon of Sunday, July 29, 1978 started out as an average day in the Little People's Park in Anaheim. However, when residents using the park called the police after hearing gun shots nearby, officers responded by targeting a group of football playing teenage Latino boys as though they were criminals. Dozens of officers rushed to the Little People's Park, blocking off any escape route, beating any and everyone, and invading people's homes without warrants. The conflict soon escalated into a riot. In the aftermath, charges of police brutality led to reforms in the Anaheim Police Department. To increase accountability, officers were required to carry business cards, wear large embroidered name patches on their jackets, travel in clearly marked patrol cars, and attend cultural awareness training sessions. The police complaint procedure was revised, offering citizens the opportunity to pick up complaint forms at their local branch libraries. Also, more importantly, the Police Community Relations Board was created. These changes commemorate the perseverance of human rights protesters in Orange County.

## Prop 6: Effort to Ban Gay Teachers

Proposition 6, also known as the Briggs Initiative, was an initiative on the California state ballot in 1978. The proposition, sponsored by John Briggs, a legislator from Orange County, called for the banning of gay and lesbian teachers or anyone who supported gay rights from working in California public schools. The initiative provided that anyone who was found to engage in either "public homosexuality" (an act of homosexual sex which is not discreet or private) or "public homosexual conduct" (advocating, encouraging, promoting public homosexual activity) would be terminated upon hearing from the school board. It also went on to state that individuals could not be hired if they had practiced any public homosexuality prior to applying for the job. Several politicians, such as Ronald Reagan and Harvey Milk, opposed the initiative and campaigned to teach the public about the harm that passing this initiative would cause. In the end, the initiative was defeated on November 7, 1978.

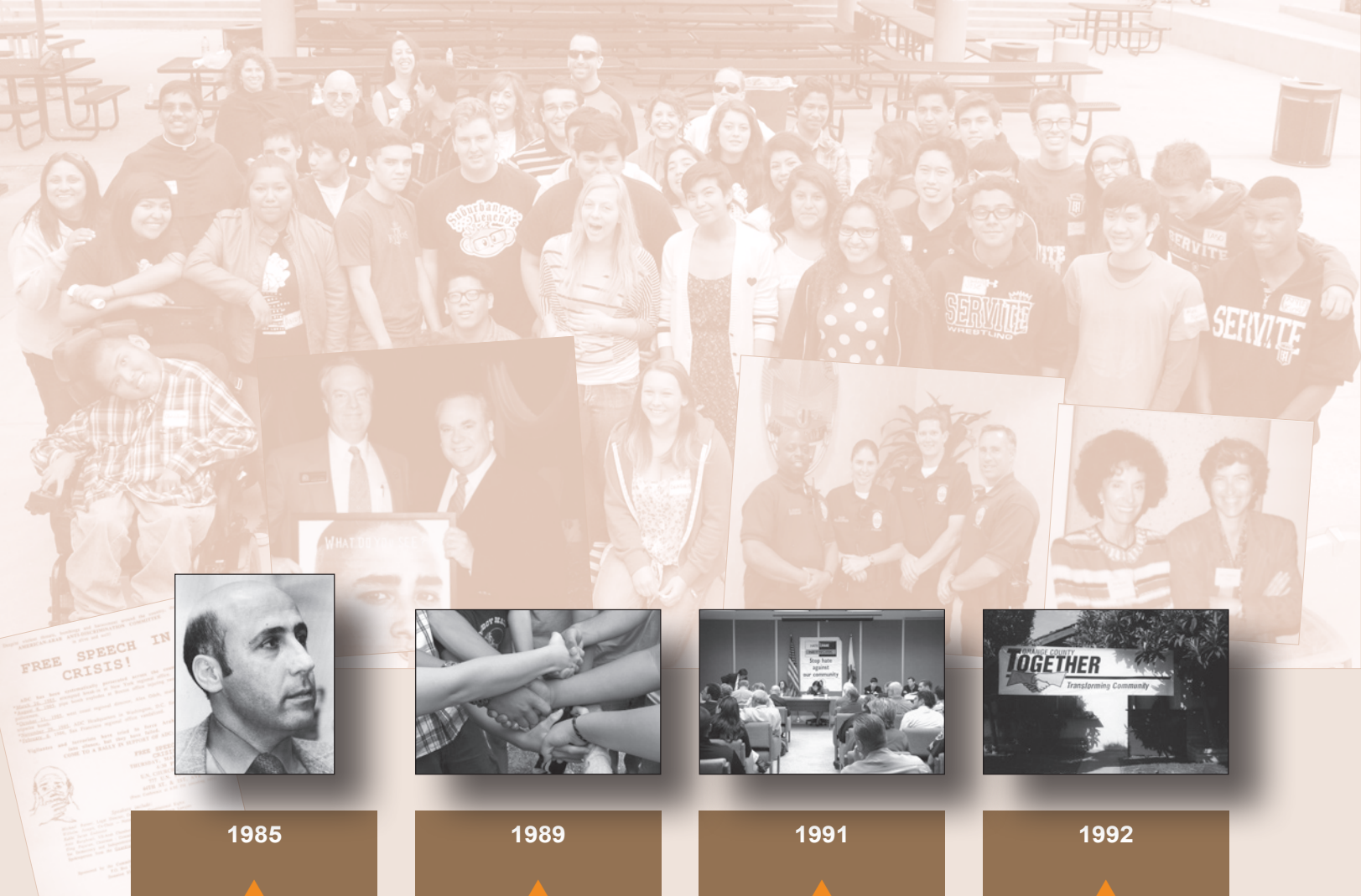
## Santa Ana Rent Strike

In an act of courage, Santa Ana residents, mostly undocumented immigrants, rose up in protest against their landlords due to unsafe housing conditions and lack of maintenance of their apartments. Santa Ana tenants ceased paying rent and initiated a tenant and landlord battle for fair housing. Although some felt uneasy due to their immigration status, many tenants overcame the fear of deportation and took their struggle to the streets, city council meetings, and church gatherings to shed light on the substandard living conditions. With the assistance of Hermandad Mexicana Nacional and the Immigration Reform and Control Act making its rounds through legislation, tenants received support and assurance that their immigration status would not come into question. Tenants filed suit against their landlords and came out victorious, receiving court ordered monetary compensation and repairs to their homes. However, finding their collective voice and using it in service to their families and neighbors, was the real victory for the tenants. The 1985 Santa Ana Tenant Strike proved to be a rare occasion when undocumented residents defied traditional norms and risked deportation to take their struggle into the public sphere.



OC Human Relations





1985

### Alex Odeh Assassination

**A**lex Odeh was born on April 4, 1944 in Jifna, the West Bank, but migrated to the United States in 1972. An ardent anti-discrimination activist within the city of Santa Ana, Odeh eventually was named the Western Regional Director of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. On October 11, 1985 Odeh was killed by a bomb as he opened the door of his office on East 17th Street Santa Ana, California.

Almost thirty years later, the murder remains unsolved. The FBI has attributed it to a terrorist act and is still seeking suspects in its ongoing investigation.

1989

### BRIDGES Youth Program

**I**n 1989, OC Human Relations was called in to help with an incident at El Modena High School. Student government leaders and cheerleaders had created a skit for a pep rally in which they used "black face." Many of the African-American students and their families were outraged and offended. Not knowing how to heal this wound, school administrators called on OC Human Relations staff for help. They mediated a session with the student government leaders and African American students to ease the tension, and later created a "Student Retreat" to bring together a cross section of the students which resulted in a successful effort to better understand the diversity on their campus.

The school administrators wanted more so in 1989 Tina Correa and Rusty Kennedy created the BRIDGES School Inter-Group Relations and Violence Prevention Program to bring students, teachers, parents and administrators together to create a school community that respects society's diversity.

This Orange County Human Relations program continues to thrive in middle and high schools across Orange County today.

1991

### Hate Crime Network

**O**n September 15, 1992, Vernon Flournoy was outside a local McDonald's when he was approached by two young men. An altercation broke out which led to a physical fight. In the scuffle one of the young men shot and wounded Flournoy. He died as a result of his injuries and both were charged with second-degree murder with hate crime enhancements.

After the 1996 Superbowl, Thien Minh Ly went rollerblading at the Tustin High School tennis courts. Two local men, excited after having just watched the Cowboys win the game, decided to head out to celebrate what they felt was a true American win. Upon arriving at Tustin High School, they found Thien, trapped him within the courts and for no apparent reason, attacked him, eventually stabbing him to death.

Since 1991, the Commission has monitored, responded to and reported on hate crimes like these in Orange County. The Commission also created the Hate Crime Network, an ad-hoc organization that meets annually to: document hate crimes and incidents county-wide; share training resources and increase collaboration among law enforcement and hate crime victim assistance groups in order to more effectively detect, investigate and prosecute perpetrators of hate.

1992

### Orange County Together

**I**n 1992, the OC Human Relations Commission organized Orange County Together (OCT). With more than 60 community, corporate, ethnic, law enforcement, and religious leaders in tow, OCT set out to study and strategize around the racial, social, and economic issues raised by the Los Angeles riots that were triggered by the verdict in the Rodney King Case. The collaborative worked together facilitating "Listening Sessions" to hear the concerns and stories from Orange County's diverse communities and made a series of recommendations to prevent the community disintegration that was witnessed in the LA Riots. One of the lasting accomplishments was promoting positive police-community relations through community oriented policing. Since that time, OC Human Relations has placed a priority on these issues and honors outstanding community-oriented policing initiatives annually.



# Judge's final ruling scraps Prop. 187

FROM ASSOCIATED PRESS

The long court fight over Proposition 187, which sought to bar illegal immigrants from receiving public benefits and services, was ended Monday by the federal judge who first found most of the initiative unconstitutional in 1994.

U.S. District Judge Mariana R. Pfaelzer approved a July agreement between the state and civil rights groups to drop remaining challenges to her rulings that Proposition 187 violated the U.S. Constitution.

Her original ruling, issued shortly after voters passed the initiative, barred the state from providing public education to non-citizen immigrants eligible for most health and welfare benefits.

The court's decision required the state to provide services to all children, regardless of their immigration status.

## Prop. 187 Opponents rally in Anaheim

1994

1996

# ORANGE CITY NEWS

## Gay club gets temporary OK

Federal judge grants temporary injunction allowing club to meet on campus

By Victor Patton  
Orange City News

At tonight's meeting, the Orange Unified School District board of education will review its options regarding the Gay/Lesbian Straight Alliance Club at El Modena High School.

Federal Judge David O. Carter issued a temporary injunction allowing the club to meet on campus during the trial. The judge will determine what the rights are. The request for a stay of the ruling was granted.

**GAY/LESBIAN STRAIGHT ALLIANCE CLUB**  
Orange Unified School District drop its opposition to a gay support club at El Modena High School. The club will be allowed to meet on campus during the trial. The judge will determine what the rights are. The request for a stay of the ruling was granted.



1999

2001

### CA Prop 187

California Proposition 187, also known as the Save Our State Initiative (SOS), was a 1994 ballot initiative sponsored by Barbara Coe, the founder of the California Coalition for Immigration Reform (CCIR) in Huntington Beach. The initiative called for the prohibition of undocumented immigrants from using health care, public education and other social services throughout California. It would also require all state and local government employees to report any suspected illegal immigrants to the Attorney General's Office.

In the prevailing environment of economic uncertainty, the proposal's founders were able to tap into nativist sentiment throughout the state and in Orange County in particular. They secured the requisite number of signatures to place it on the November, 1994 ballot. Despite significant broad-based opposition the initiative was passed in November of 1994.

Days after the initiative was passed, a temporary restraining order was issued, preventing the proposition from being implemented. It was eventually declared unconstitutional in 1997, though Governor Wilson appealed the ruling. In 1999, Governor Davis halted any further state appeals against the ruling, killing the law.

### AROUND THE NATION...

#### CA Prop 209

Proposition 209, also known as the California Civil Rights Initiative (CCRI), was a measure placed on the California ballot in November, 1996 designed to end state-mandated Affirmative Action programs. It proposed to amend the state constitution to prohibit state and public institutions from considering race, sex, or ethnicity in public employment, government contracting and public education. UC Regent Ward Connerly and Governor Pete Wilson, leaders of the CCRI campaign, relied heavily on "reverse discrimination" sentiment to garner support. Despite strong opposition by advocates of affirmative action, civil rights and feminist organizations, the measure was approved by 54% of the voters. The proposition, often referred to as "the first electoral test of Affirmative Action in America," continues to engender heated debate.

### El Modena

#### Gay-Straight Alliance

As one of the few openly gay students in El Modena High School, 15-year-old Anthony Colin was accustomed to abuse. It had been part of his school experience from early on. By 1999, as the verbal derision began to turn violent at times, Anthony decided to form the Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) club on campus as a harbor from hostility.

The Board of the Orange Unified School District denied the club's application, demanded that it change its name and agree to speech limitations. In response, club members proceeded to sue the district (*Colin v. Orange Unified School District*).

In February, 2000, a temporary ruling on the case was issued, ordering the district to allow the club to meet pending litigation. The following September, the Board settled the lawsuit by adopting new rules regarding student clubs. The GSA was recognized as a student club, allowed to keep its name, and had no restrictions on its speech.

### Living Room Dialogues

In the period following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, fear often gave rise to pronounced antagonistic reactions and attacks against individuals perceived to be Middle Eastern, Arab, or Muslim. In an effort to redirect these irrational energies in a more fruitful vein, the Orange County Human Relations Commission initiated its Living Room Dialogues Program. Groups of ten to fifteen Orange County residents from many cultures, religions and backgrounds were brought together in living rooms and public settings across the county to share their thoughts, stories and family histories, and learn about one another through facilitated dialogues.

The dialogues provided a forum for participants to foster and deepen cross-cultural understanding and communication, helped forge ties across what were once seen as vast divides and kept the community united during that challenging time.



OC Human Relations



## Police Community Reconciliation Program

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The Police Community Reconciliation Program (PCRP) assists the community in navigating the police department's complaint process by providing an opportunity for officers and community members to come together to address concerns, promote understanding, and create mutual respect.



2008

2011

2013

2014

### Police Community Reconciliation Program

In 2008, the OC Human Relations Commission responded to public concerns over law enforcement misconduct by creating the Police Community Reconciliation Program (PCRP) as part of the Commission's police/community complaint process. The Police Community Reconciliation Program assists community members in understanding and utilizing the OC Sheriff's Department (OCSd) complaint process, and provides an opportunity for police officials and community members to come together, with the guidance of a mediator, to resolve complaints. The reconciliation program expands the mediation/ombudsman role of OC Human Relations.

The PCRP handles complaints that have been determined by the Office of Independent Review or OCSd not to involve criminal misconduct, and are not so egregious as to warrant significant disciplinary action. Participation in the PCRP mediation is completely voluntary for both OCSd personnel and community members.

### Kelly Thomas

Born on April 5, 1974, Kelly Thomas was a homeless man diagnosed with schizophrenia, living on the streets of Fullerton. On July 5, 2011, the Fullerton Police Department responded to a report that someone was vandalizing cars near the Fullerton Transportation Center. Officers reported encountering the shirtless and disheveled Thomas who they attempted to search. According to statements given by the officers, Thomas was uncooperative and resisted when they attempted to search him. In the resulting encounter, Kelly Thomas was brutally beaten by the officers and died on July 10, 2011.

Following this tragedy, the City Manager of Fullerton convened a group to make recommendations about how to better serve the vulnerable homeless population; OC Human Relations was asked to facilitate the assignment. Working with the Fullerton Task Force on the Mentally Ill and Homeless, eight recommendations were delivered to the Fullerton City Council, among them was the addition of a multi-service homeless shelter in the city. The city has yet to act on this recommendation, but the County of Orange has plans to develop such a shelter in North Orange County, though a site has not been identified yet.

### AROUND THE NATION...

#### Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA)

The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), signed by President Bill Clinton in 1996, prevented same-sex couples – even those whose marriages were recognized by their home state – from receiving benefits available to married couples under federal law.

On June 26, 2013 the Supreme Court ruled by a 5-4 vote that DOMA was unconstitutional.

**Same-Sex Marriage in California:** Same-sex marriage first became legal in California on June 16, 2008. However, Proposition 8, a California ballot proposition and a state constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriages, passed in the November 2008 state elections. Proposition 8 was ultimately ruled unconstitutional by a United States District Court decision in 2010. In 2013, a Supreme Court decision upheld the ruling, paving the way for same-sex marriages to resume in California on June 26, 2013, after several years of legal battles.

### The Trust Act

The Trust Act prevents local law enforcement from detaining non-legal citizens pursuant to an immigration hold or detainer requested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement or Customs and Border Protection beyond the time they otherwise could be released from criminal custody. The Trust Act (AB 4), which was approved by California's Governor Jerry Brown on October 5, 2013, went into effect on January 1, 2014. It has, in a way, served as some protection to immigrants who commit minor offenses.

Currently, the Orange County Human Relations Commission, in an effort to build safe communities and promote mutual understanding among Orange County residents and law enforcement agencies, has partnered with several law enforcement agencies and community and faith organizations to discuss the possibility of conducting a series of forums to disseminate information about the Trust Act.



OC Human Relations

*“After climbing a great hill, one only finds  
that there are many more hills to climb”*

*~Nelson Mandela*

## **Reflections on the Struggle for Equality**

Fifty years have passed since the Civil Rights Act was signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson on July 2, 1964. During that time, our society has undergone many changes that have contributed to a more equitable Orange County. None of our country's civil rights challenges have been easy to overcome but perseverance, commitment, and faith have made progress possible.

Public and private organizations, community groups, community leaders and residents have done great work and we thank them for their incredible contributions.

Yet still more work remains to be done to change the conditions that prevent us from living in an equitable and fair society. We need to continue working together to build bridges with our community's stakeholders, law enforcement agencies and residents.

At OC Human Relations, we believe that ALL people should live free of prejudice, discrimination, and harassment. We invite you to partner with us in working to create an Orange County that is safe, respectful and inclusive for ALL people.



# **OC Human Relations**

*Building community by fostering respect, resolving conflict and pursuing equality*

[www.ochumanrelations.org](http://www.ochumanrelations.org)

The OC Civil Rights History Exhibit has been created by OC Human Relations in collaboration with community partners and students from California State University Los Angeles to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act. This exhibit honors the extraordinary contributions of civil rights leaders and highlights civil rights history in Orange County. Special thanks to Anaheim Public Library's Anaheim Heritage Center, Orange Public Library, Orange County Register, University of California Irvine Library, Online Archives of California, Library of Congress, Santa Ana Archives, Santa Ana Library, Rusty Kennedy, Bob Johnson and Joe Bernal for providing pictures that made this exhibit possible.