

LESSON PLAN

LESSON OVERVIEW

Héctor P. García was an especially effective and significant advocate for civil rights in the United States. His grassroots efforts began with fighting for the rights of Latino veterans after World War II. Founder of the activist organization the American GI Forum, García emphasized that securing rights such as voting, serving in the military, and receiving a good education would elevate the status of Latinos and grant them the broader civil rights to which all Americans are entitled.

Note: This lesson plan uses the Stanford History Education Group's [Reading Like a Historian Framework](#). This method teaches students how to explore primary source documents and investigate historical questions by employing strategies such as sourcing, contextualizing, corroborating, and close reading. To see this process in action, watch this [video series](#) available on the Teaching Channel.

GRADES

9–12 (This lesson plan is suitable for middle school students with modifications such as excerpting the primary source documents used.)

OBJECTIVES

- Students will be able to describe how Héctor P. García, founder of the American GI Forum, advanced the cause of Latino civil rights in the United States.
- Students will be able to analyze primary documents to answer an essential question.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What role did Héctor P. García play as an advocate for Latino civil rights? Use primary and secondary source documents from the time period to support your answer.

LESSON PROCEDURE

1. Warm-up:

The purpose of this section is to generate student interest in the lesson.

- Project the document “American GI Forum Groups in the United States” and lead students through a quick exploration of the image.
 - Ask students a series of questions to lead them to notice details in the picture.
 - What does this map represent? When was this map created? What do the dates on each state mean? What does it mean that some states do not have dates?
- Tell students that they will be exploring how Héctor P. García sought equality for Latinos, beginning with his community in South Texas. Take a knowledge inventory. Who knows who Héctor P. García is? Who knows what the American GI Forum is?

2. Video and Discussion of Its Themes:

The purpose of this section is to discuss the events and themes presented in the video.

- Watch the clip from *Latino Americans* Episode 3: “War and Peace” (32:41–54:00) and have students complete the video worksheet.
- Once the students have completed the worksheet, ask the following questions:
 - What were the major events and who were the major players mentioned in this video? What is their significance?
 - What was the filmmaker’s point of view? How does this point of view affect the presentation of facts, events, and people?

3. Build Background Knowledge:

During the exploration of primary source documents, students will be asked to contextualize the documents within the time period. This section is intended to build background knowledge about the American GI Forum and Latino activism immediately following World War II.

- Key ideas:
 - After returning home from World War II, many Latino veterans experienced various forms of racial discrimination. Some had difficulties receiving the benefits outlined in the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 or what became known as the GI Bill.
 - The American GI Forum, founded and led by Army veteran Héctor P. García, became an important civil rights group whose members advocated for equal treatment of Mexican Americans.
 - Controversy over the burial of Private Felix Z. Longoria became a flashpoint in Mexican Americans' struggle against discrimination. After being contacted by Héctor P. García, then-Senator Lyndon B. Johnson arranged for Longoria to be buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, DC.
 - Héctor P. García maintained a connection to Lyndon B. Johnson, whose presidential administration saw the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965. Appointed by President Johnson in 1968, García became the first Mexican American to serve on the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

4. Exploration of Primary Documents:

In this section, students will use a Historical Thinking Chart to explore primary sources that describe the story of Héctor P. García and his work with the American GI Forum. In preparation, make copies of each of the documents. These may then be posted around the room for a gallery walk, or the teacher can choose to make copies of all of the documents for all students. The Historical Thinking Chart is set up so that the teacher can decide which documents to present to the students (the main consideration being the amount of time the teacher can dedicate to the activity). The exploration can also be modified by telling students that they must explore a set number of documents within the time allotted.

- Pass out the blank Historical Thinking Chart.
 - If necessary, introduce students to the terms **sourcing**, **contextualization**, **corroboration**, and **close reading** as steps historians take to paint a full picture of any historical event and be critical consumers of information.
- If doing a gallery walk, bring students' attention to the posted documents, and explain that they will circulate around the room reading the documents and filling out the notes template for each one. Give students at least thirty minutes to rotate around the room.
- Alternately, the teacher may give students copies of all the selected documents to work on individually or in small groups.
- Optional: Have students complete a Primary Source Worksheet for each corresponding document.

5. Discussing the Documents:

The purpose of this section is to explore the events and themes more deeply.

- Bring the class back together. If students were not able to see all of the documents in the time allotted, you may want to give them a few minutes to share notes with other students who were able to see documents they did not get a chance to view.
- Lead a discussion that helps students connect these documents to the following questions:
 - In what ways did Héctor P. García fight for civil rights?
 - How did García's personal experiences influence his work as a civil rights activist and founder of the American GI Forum?
 - How did García's relationship with Lyndon B. Johnson help him advance his cause?
 - What long-term influence has García had on the lives of Latinos?

6. Closing:

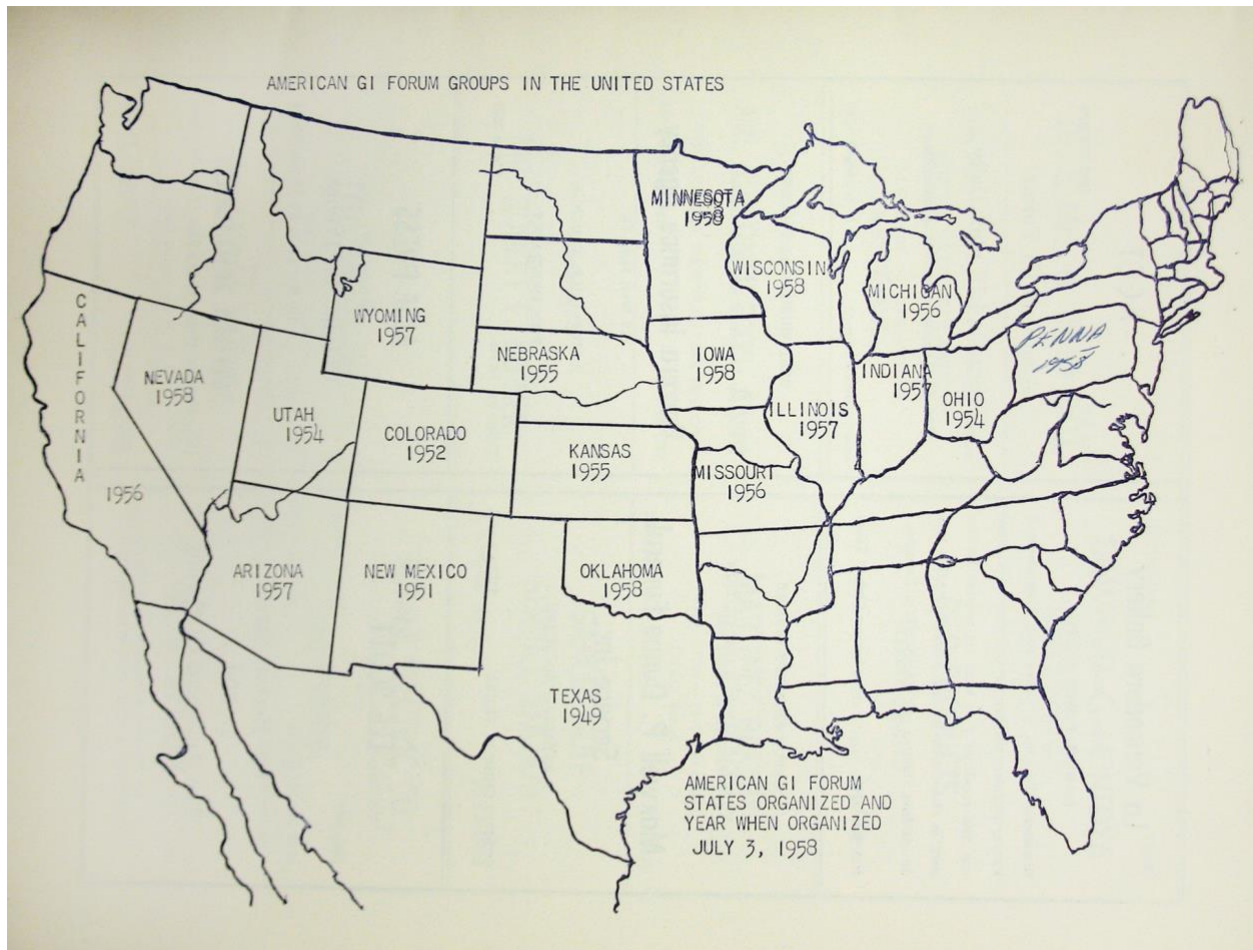
The purpose of this section is to give students a chance to synthesize their thoughts independently in writing.

- Give students the following writing prompt:
What role did Héctor P. García play as an advocate for Latino civil rights? Use primary and secondary source documents from the time period to write a paragraph supporting your answer.
- Give students time to compose their paragraphs.

WARM-UP WORKSHEET

MAP OF AMERICAN GI FORUM GROUPS IN THE UNITED STATES FROM AMERICAN GI FORUM CONVENTION BOOKLET, JULY 3, 1958.

LBJ Presidential Library; crediting the American GI Forum.



VIDEO WORKSHEET

DIRECTIONS

Answer the following questions using the information provided in the episode.

1. How did Latinos hope that their service during World War II would affect their position in U.S. society?
2. Both sides agreed on what aspect of the incident with Macario García at the Oasis Café in Richardson, Texas?
3. For Macario García, what was the outcome of the incident?
4. What questions did the Oasis Café incident raise for Latinos?
5. Describe the poverty that Héctor P. García encountered in Corpus Christi's barrios upon his return to civilian life.
6. What benefits did the GI Bill of Rights include?

HÉCTOR P. GARCÍA

PRIMARY SOURCE WORKSHEET

HÉCTOR P. GARCÍA, ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW BY DAVID G. MCCOMB, SEPTEMBER 9, 1969.
LBJ Presidential Library.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By Hector Garcia

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

In accordance with Sec. 507 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-10), I, Hector Garcia, hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. Title to the material transferred hereunder, and all literary property rights, will pass to the United States as of the date of the delivery of this material into the physical custody of the Archivist of the United States.
2. It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by terms of this instrument available for research as soon as it has been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.
3. A revision of this stipulation governing access to the material for research may be entered into between the donor and the Archivist of the United States, or his designee, if it appears desirable.
4. The material donated to the United States pursuant to the foregoing shall be kept intact permanently in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

Signed

Hector P. Garcia

Date

April 5, 1974

Accepted

Anna A. Wallston for
Archivist of the United States

Date

April 10, 1974

HÉCTOR P. GARCÍA

INTERVIEWEE: HECTOR GARCIA

INTERVIEWER: DAVID G. MC COMB

July 9, 1969

M: Let me identify the tape first of all. This is an interview with Dr. Hector Garcia. I'm in his office in Corpus Christi, Texas, at 1315 Bright Street. The date is July 9, 1969, and my name is David McComb.

Now you gave me this copy of the GI Forum program of the 21st Annual Founders' Day Banquet which has a capsule biography of you here, which I will place into the record so that anybody using this tape will have the opportunity to use this.

There are several points about this that I'd like to ask you about. In the first place it says you were born in Mexico, and I'd like to know when you came to the United States.

G: Well, Mr. McComb, I came to the United States when I was only about three and a half to four years old. I was not quite four and I was a little bit over three, so I would say approximately four years old.

M: Did you come to Corpus--your family?

G: No, my father emigrated to Mercedes, Mercedes is in the southern part of the State of Texas along the Rio Grande River, and there he set up his business and we were actually raised there and went to school.

M: What kind of business was he in?

G: He had a general grocery store at that time with his brothers, who are still living in Mercedes.

M: And then you went through school, and it says here you graduated from the University of Texas in 1936.

HÉCTOR P. GARCÍA

G: That's correct, University of Texas BA, Austin, Texas, 1936.

M: Graduated from the University of Texas School of Medicine, got a Doctor of Medicine in 1940, and an internship in Omaha, Nebraska.

G: That's right.

M: How did you happen to go to Nebraska?

G: Well, when I was getting my Doctor's degree at Galveston, of course, we met some people over there who recommended Saint Joseph's Hospital which is the teaching hospital of Creighton University, so that I thought I'd go over there and take a look at Nebraskan fields.

M: And then of course you went into World War II.

G: That's correct. I volunteered as an infantry officer from Nebraska when I finished my surgical residency, because I had stayed two years. So I volunteered to go into the military service as an infantry officer.

M: And then you were in the Major Medical Corps?

G: That's right, I served in the Medical Corps.

M: Then after the war, you founded American GI Forum in 1948. Now I'd like to know what motivated you to do this. Why did you set up the GI Forum? Now it pretty well explains what this is, but why did you do this?

G: Well, Mr. McComb, actually the way the American GI Forum started--when I came back from the service, I happened to have my office next to the Veterans Administration Office, I met our congressman, John E. Lyle in Italy before he got elected to Congress, John E. Lyle happened to be a good friend of President Lyndon Johnson. So Congressman Lyle was in the same theater of operations with me, European Theater of Operations, and he said he was coming to Corpus Christi, and of course by that time my brother, J. A. Garcia was living and practicing in Corpus Christi. So I came back to Corpus Christi--I happened to have an office next to our present congressman of

today, Congressman John Young, who was at that time getting out of the Navy, and I set up my office next to the Veterans Administration. They needed doctors at that time, doctors were scarce to start with, and they put me on a contract basis or a "fee basis," so I got to know the veterans from this area. In fact, I was the "veterans' doctor" although I was not working under the Veterans Administration per se, I was merely a private doctor helping out with individual veteran's cases, and getting paid on a piecemeal basis.

Well, it happened that at that time the returning sick veterans met some opposition in hospitalization here because the Navy hospital would say, "This is a naval hospital, not a veterans hospital." So more or less, although we had a certain amount of beds under contract, the Veterans Administration limited us. In fact they practically limited us to emergencies. So one day in 1948, actually about February, we got together. All the veterans, not necessarily the Mexican-Americans but all of us, to protest the actions of the naval hospital in Corpus Christi in limiting the number of veterans who could go to the hospital. And also practically requiring that they be emergencies, which means they would be dying. We thought it was an unfair deal, so we got together a group of veterans, all of us, blacks, Mexican-Americans and Anglos to protest this limitation.

Well, at that time we were starting, the veterans schools, which were more or less "basic educational courses." No sooner had we achieved a certain success of victory in opening the Naval Hospital, because the number of beds were increased, that the veterans pointed out to me that the government was holding back the "subsistence checks" of many of these veterans who were taking basic academic classes. Now, of course, at that

HÉCTOR P. GARCÍA

time most of the veterans were Mexican-Americans, and they averaged less than two years of school. So they were going to quit because they needed the money, they had no other jobs, their families were pressuring them and wives were getting upset. So they said, "Doctor, let's get organized together and protest the Veterans Administration's failure to send us the subsistence checks." So then we got organized, not necessarily as a Mexican-American organization, although then by necessity we were working on veteran's education. And then I got to know the schools and the educational system of the basic educational courses, so that night we decided we'd go ahead and get organized and of course the name "American GI Forum" came up at that meeting here in Corpus Christi in March 26, 1948. I was elected and the vice chairman was an anglo and the secretary was an anglo and the treasurer was a Mexican-American, Mr. Montoya--Greg Montoya.

So then we decided that we had to help the veterans because of the bad conditions of other situations. So we organized American GI Forum groups all over this south Texas area. Now the name "American" -- although we are Americans, we have been subjected to a lot of discriminatory practices. One of these practices is we are told "You are not Americans, you are Mexicans." And I said, "Well, we are American citizens of Mexican origin, so let's point out to the people we are really Americans." "GI" merely means that we are ex-soldiers or ex-G.I.'s. The word "Forum" was like the Roman open forum derived from the fact that we were hoping that this would be an open meeting, and open discussion meeting for everybody taking part.

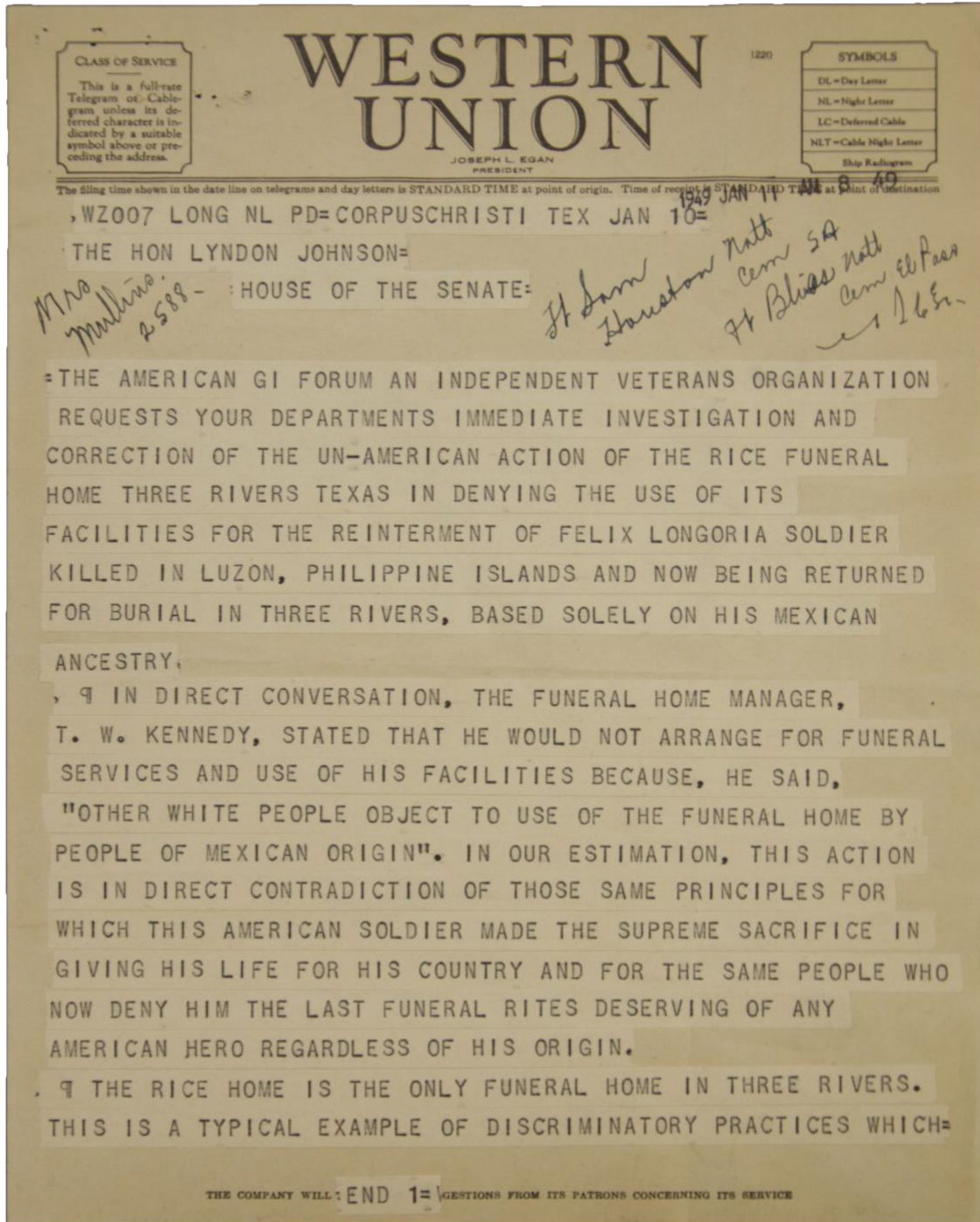
So by the end of the year 1948 we were in many cities in this area. In practically all the area from south of San Antonio to the Valley, and certainly from Laredo to Corpus Christi. So we became a statewide organization known as the American GI Forum of Texas, the first meeting being held in Corpus Christi to organize statewide.

QUESTIONS

1. What led Héctor P. García and others to organize veterans in the Corpus Christi area?
2. Initially, what racial groups were involved in the protests in Corpus Christi?
3. Why was the name “American GI Forum” chosen?
4. What are some possible reasons that the American GI Forum became known primarily as a group supporting the civil rights of Latinos, despite its earlier membership?

PRIMARY SOURCE WORKSHEET

HÉCTOR P. GARCÍA, TELEGRAM TO SENATOR LYNDON B. JOHNSON, JANUARY 10, 1949.
LBJ Presidential Library; courtesy Héctor P. García family.



LATINO AMERICANS

500 YEARS OF HISTORY

HÉCTOR P. GARCÍA

CLASS OF SERVICE
This is a full-rate Telegram or Cablegram unless its deferred character is indicated by a suitable symbol above or preceding the address.

WESTERN UNION
JOSEPH L. EGAN
PRESIDENT

1949 JAN 11 11:20 AM
(44)...

SYMBOLS
DL = Day Letter
NL = Night Letter
LC = Deferred Cable
NLT = Cable Night Letter
Ship Radiogram

The filing time shown in the date line on telegrams and day letters is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination.

VZ007 2=

OCCUR INTERMITTENTLY IN THIS STATE DESPITE OUR EFFORTS TO PREVENT THEM. WE BELIEVE ACTION FROM YOUR OFFICE WILL DO MUCH TOWARD ELIMINATION OF SIMILAR SHAMEFUL OCCURENCE IN THE FUTURE=

DR HECTOR P GARCIA PRES AMERICAN GI FORUM=

GI GI=

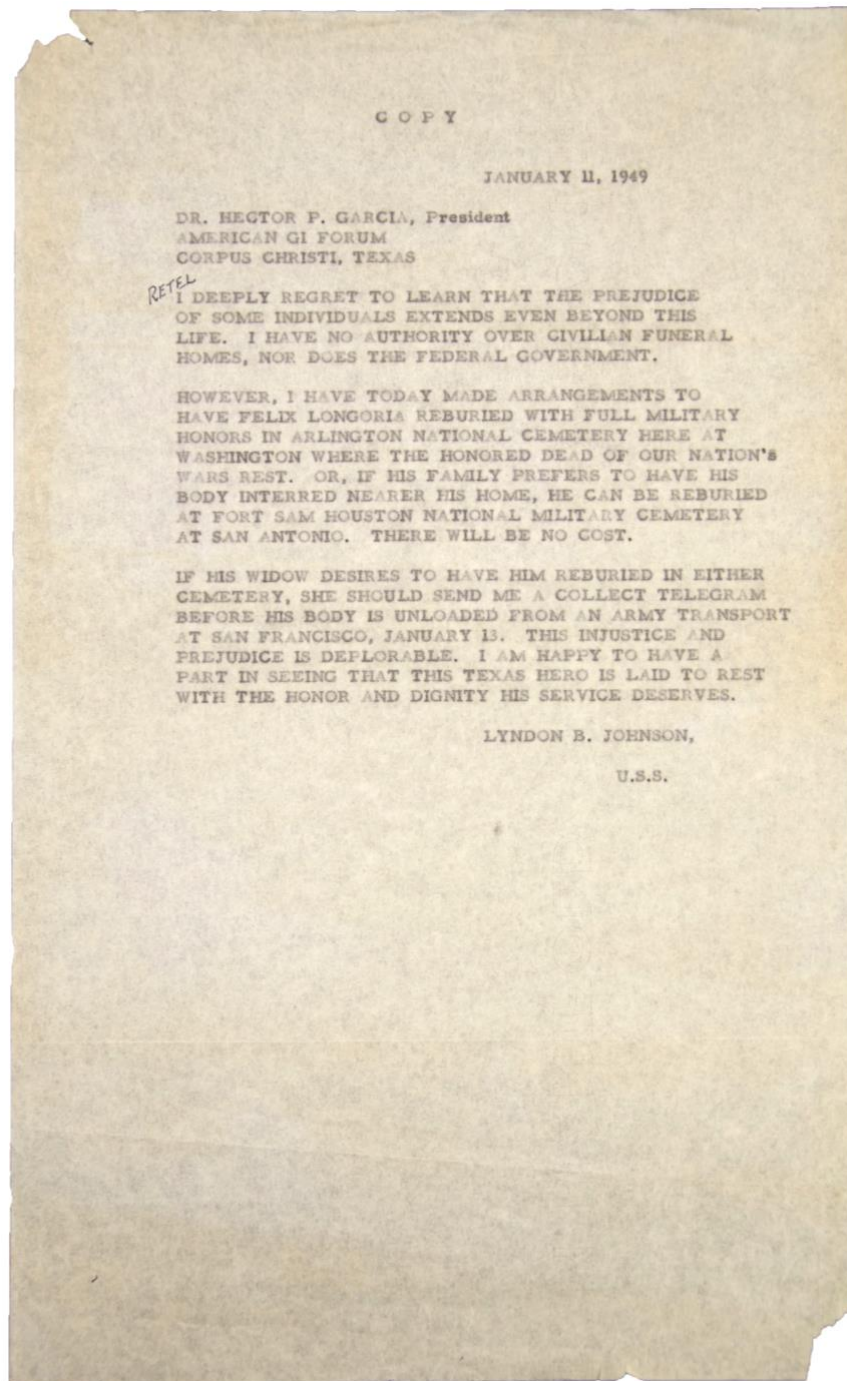
THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE

QUESTIONS

1. How does Héctor P. García describe the American GI Forum in the telegram?
2. Why do you think he felt it necessary to provide Senator Lyndon B. Johnson with such a description?
3. What explanation did García give for the failure of the funeral home to provide services for the Longoria family?
4. How had the Longoria family earned the right to these services?
5. Why do you think García involved a U.S. senator in such a local matter?

PRIMARY SOURCE WORKSHEET

**SENATOR LYNDON B. JOHNSON, TELEGRAM RESPONSE TO HÉCTOR P. GARCÍA,
JANUARY 11, 1949.**
LBJ Presidential Library.



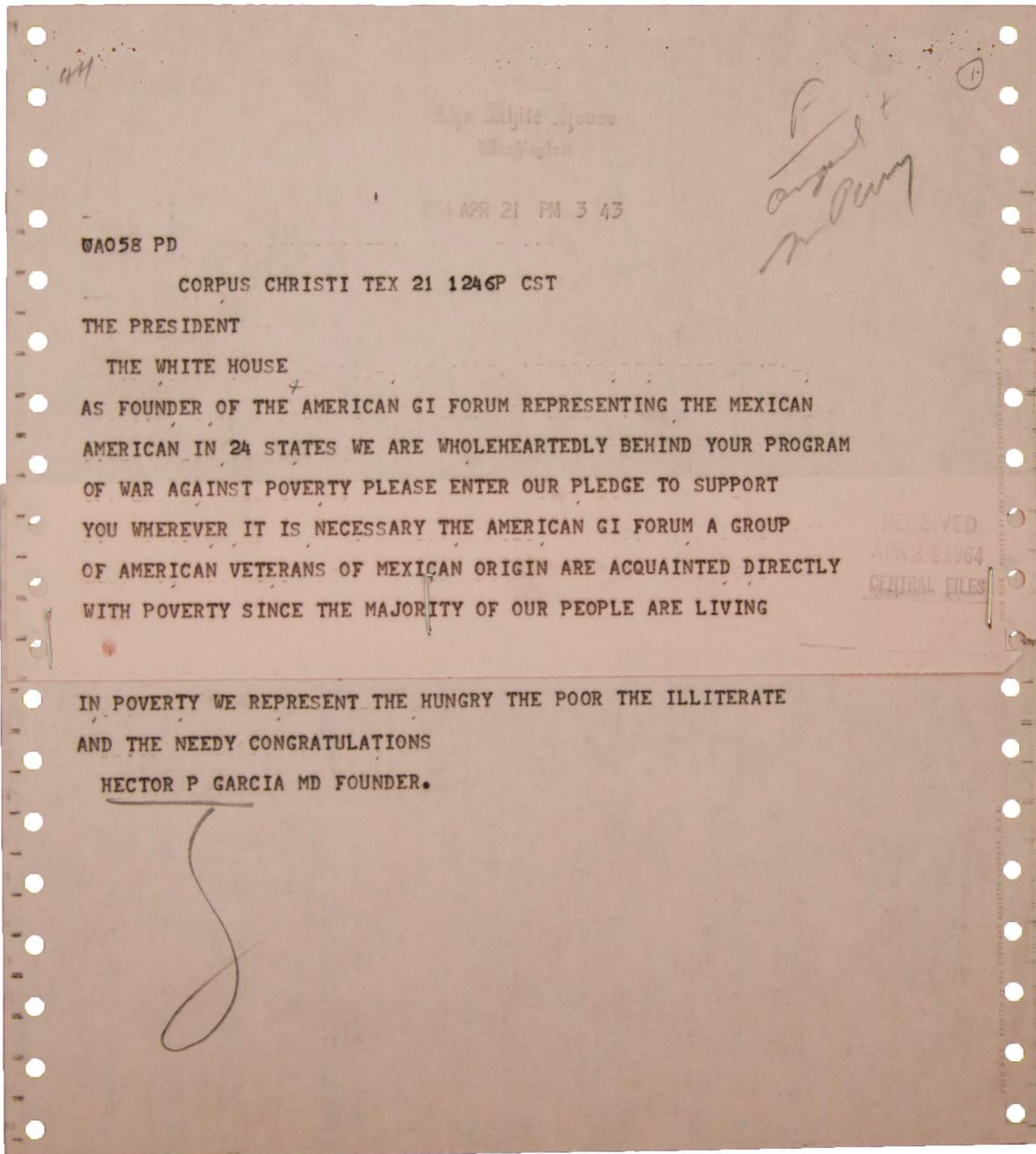
QUESTIONS

1. In the telegram, Senator Lyndon B. Johnson states that he regrets the decision of the funeral home's director, but what authority does Johnson as a U.S. senator have over the funeral director's decision?
2. Instead of simply expressing his condolences to the family, Johnson offers to remedy the situation. What is his offer?
3. What does this offer say about Johnson's view of his responsibilities to all of his Texas constituents?
4. In the telegram, how does Johnson justify his actions?

PRIMARY SOURCE WORKSHEET

HÉCTOR P. GARCÍA, MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON REGARDING THE WAR ON POVERTY, APRIL 24, 1964.

LBJ Presidential Library; courtesy Héctor P. García family.



111

Dr. Hecto Garcia
Washington

JUL 23 PM 9 33

*F
angl to
m Hecto* ①

WA076 PD

CORPUS CHRISTI TEX JUL 23 242P CST

THE PRESIDENT

THE WHITE HOUSE

THE AMERICAN GI FORUM AND ITS FOUNDER DR HECTOR GARCIA LONG YOUR ADMIRERS AND FRIENDS WILL GO ON RECORD BACKING YOUR ENTIRE PROGRAM OF "WAR AGAINST POVERTY". FURTHERMORE, THROUGHOUT THE FORUM'S AREA OF ACTIVITY OUR GROUPS WILL BE ORGANIZED FOR ACTION IN COOPERATION WITH YOUR REPRESENTATIVES. EVERY YEAR SINCE ITS FIRST CONVENTION THE AMERICAN GI FORUM HAS BEEN HONORED AND

RECEIVED
JUL 25 1964
CENTRAL FILES

FAVORED WITH A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT JOHNSON SUCH A MESSAGE TO THE GI FORUM NATIONAL CONVENTION ON OUR PROGRAM WAR AGAINST POVERTY WOULD BE ENCOURAGING, INSPIRING AND HELPFUL IN THIS WORK. OUR NATIONAL CONVENTION IS ASSEMBLED AT THE GUNTER HOTEL SAN ANTONIO TEXAS JULY 23, 24, AND 25. IF YOU ARE IN TEXAS YOU AND YOUR LOVELY WIFE ARE STILL INVITED AND WELCOME. THANK YOU MR PRESIDENT

DR HECTOR GARCIA FOUNDER AMERICAN GI FORUM OF THE UNITED STATES.

J

FORM NO. 10 (REVISED 12-13-60) GPO: 1964 O-348-100

QUESTIONS

1. In earlier communications with Senator Lyndon B. Johnson, Héctor P. García referred to himself as the “President of the GI Forum.” What title does García claim in this message?
2. How might this new title relate to García’s understanding of his role in the movement for Latino civil rights?
3. Why would García include the number of states where the American GI Forum has chapters?
4. What was the War on Poverty?
5. Why does the American GI Forum support the War on Poverty?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES, ASSIGNMENTS, AND FURTHER RESOURCES

CURATE A MUSEUM EXHIBITION

Gather images and documents that indicate the barriers faced by Latinos in acquiring civil rights and opportunities in the U.S. during and immediately after World War II. Make a similar exhibition for one of the following groups: women, African Americans, American Indians, or Japanese Americans. Compare and contrast the struggles of the two groups.

Groups may present their exhibitions as PowerPoint presentations or print images to create physical exhibitions.

ASSIGNMENT PROMPTS

- After viewing the video clip relating to Héctor P. García, write a paragraph for each of the following individuals, connecting each individual's achievement to the others and to the growth of equality for all Americans. Use the attached "Making Connections" worksheet.
 - Felix Z. Longoria*
 - Héctor P. García*
 - Lyndon B. Johnson*
 - John F. Kennedy*
 - Martin Luther King Jr.*
- The Constitution of the American GI Forum of Texas, Article I, Section 2, states the organization's purpose. Create a spoke diagram that illustrates these goals. (A teacher key is attached.)
- Martin Luther King Jr. and Héctor P. García were contemporaries. In a [1968 telegram](#), King requested a strategy meeting with García regarding the rights of the poor. King stresses the importance of coalitions formed by groups of all racial, religious, and ethnic backgrounds in battling the problem of poverty. Write a brief essay comparing and contrasting the efforts of the two men as they fought for civil rights.
- Using your textbooks or other sources, research the treatment of African Americans who served in the military during World War II. Write a brief essay comparing the experiences of African Americans and Latinos who served. In your essay, provide evidence that illustrates your comparison.
- While Latinos faced barriers to equality and full citizenship during World War II, they also made gains in civil rights during this time. Write a brief essay describing how Latinos successfully challenged racism and segregation on the home front.
- Using your textbooks or other sources, examine the strategies employed by African Americans post-World War II to gain their civil rights. Using the provided primary source documents and the video, examine the strategies employed by Latinos. Write a brief essay identifying the two groups' strategies and discussing their similarities and differences.
- Research the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case *Hernandez v. Texas* (1954), in which lawyers from the American GI Forum filed suit on behalf of Pete Hernandez, a migrant worker convicted of murder by an all-Anglo jury. Write a brief essay explaining the decision and the resulting significance of this case. What gains in civil rights for Latinos were made?
- Research the landmark U.S. Supreme Court cases *Hernandez v. Texas* (1954) and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which were decided within weeks of each other. Write an essay comparing the strategies employed by the plaintiffs.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY WORKSHEET

MAKING CONNECTIONS EXTENSION ACTIVITY

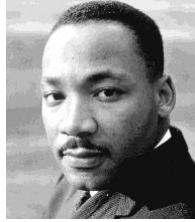
Write a paragraph explaining how these individuals' achievements are similar to each other and how those achievements support equality for all Americans. Use detailed examples.



Héctor P. García



Lyndon B. Johnson



Martin Luther King Jr.



John F. Kennedy



César E. Chávez

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for the student to write their paragraph response.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY WORKSHEET

CONSTITUTION OF THE AMERICAN GI FORUM OF TEXAS, JULY 7, 1956.

Dr. Héctor P. García papers, Special Collections and Archives at Mary and Jeff Bell Library, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi; crediting the American GI Forum.



Fuo
↓

**CONSTITUTION
OF THE
AMERICAN GI FORUM
OF
TEXAS**

VETERANS FAMILY ORGANIZATION

July 7, 1956

*Dr. Hector P. Garcia
1956*

**CONSTITUTION
OF
THE AMERICAN GI FORUM OF TEXAS, INC.**

ARTICLE I

NAME, PURPOSE, PRAYER, PLEDGE, MOTTO AND SEAL

Section 1: NAME

The official name of this organization shall be "The American GI Forum of Texas, Inc." and can be shortened for practical use to "GI Forum".

Section 2: PURPOSE

As veterans, this organization will strive for the procurement, of all veterans and their families, regardless of race, color or creed, the equal privileges to which they are entitled under the laws of our country. Also, this organization will strive for the preservation of the Democratic Ideals for which this country has fought in all wars, and we propose to ever maintain as well as advance these ideals wherever possible; to foster the training and education of our citizens in order that a true and real democracy may exist in the lowest as well as the highest unit so that our loyalty to these principles may never be questioned.

As loyal citizens of the United States of America, we sincerely believe that one of the principles of Democracy is religious and political freedom for the individual and that all citizens are entitled to the right of equality in social and economic opportunities and that to produce a stronger American society we must advance understanding between the different nationalities.

Section 3: OFFICIAL PRAYER

The official Prayer of this organization shall be the "Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi" and this prayer shall be read at the beginning of every GI Forum meeting — Local, District, or State.

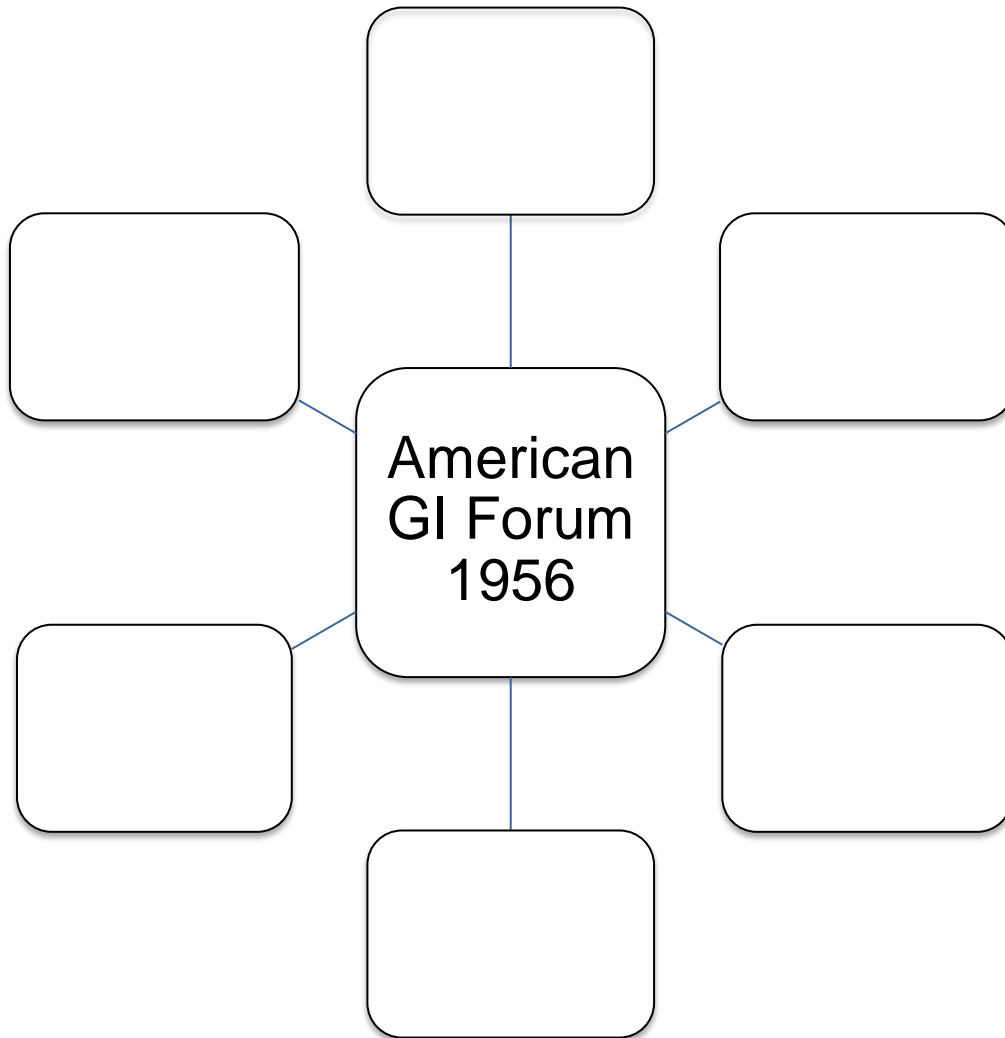
PRAYER OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

LORD, Make me an Instrument of Thy Peace
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.

Oh, DIVINE MASTER, grant that I may not so
much seek to be consoled as to console; to be
understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to
love; for it is in giving that we receive; it is in
pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in

DIRECTIONS

The constitution of the American GI Forum of Texas, Article 1, Section 2, states the organization's purpose. Using the text of the constitution, create a spoke diagram that illustrates the central principles behind the American GI Forum's work.



TEACHER KEY

The constitution of the American GI Forum of Texas, Article I, Section 2, states the organization's purpose. Using the text of the constitution. Ask the students to create a spoke diagram that illustrates the central principles behind the American GI Forum's work. A teacher key is included below.

