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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2005 Volume II: Art and Identity in Mexico, from Olmec Times to the Present

Conflict and Resolution through Sports: A Question of Civil Rights: The 1968 Olympics and Tlatelolco

Guide for Curriculum Unit 05.02.05, published September 2005

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This unit begins by focusing on the ballgame, the first team sport, played by Mesoamericans over 3000 years ago. The ballgame of the Olmecs and other Mesoamerican people predates the Olympic Games of Greece. This ballgame served a dual purpose; these games were important as social events for people to come together and support their team; and these games also served as a way for warriors play together to maintain their superiority. This duality of sports is seen again in the nineteenth century in the philosophy of the men involved in creating the Modern Olympic Games. Although centuries pass the philosophy that sport is important to both the citizen and the nation is a theme that continues. The duality of sports philosophy sees sports as preparing the young athlete to take his place in the world. According to this duality sports teaches the values of order and disorder; violence and tenderness; beauty and repulsiveness through wining and losing and by working with others for a common goal. By teaching sports in school the values of society would be disseminated and reinforced. The events of the 1936 Olympics; the Black Power salute of the 1968 Olympics; and Tlatelolco were all against the back drop of sports.

(Developed for Civics and World Cultures, grades 9-10; recommended for Spanish and Foreign Language, grades 9-12)

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