Objective: Students will be able to:

- Reflect on the information gained from their learning experience with the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum.
- Recognize the value of oral histories as sources of information.
- Demonstrate library research skills.
- Create multimedia presentations about a diverse range of major league baseball players.

Time Required: 3-4 class periods

Advance Preparation:
- Select a variety of books and other print sources that have information about the following individuals (or request such sources from a school librarian).
  - Rod Carew
  - Juan Marichal
  - Francisco Rodríguez
  - Tony Pérez
- Schedule at least one session for your class in your school library.

Materials Needed:
- 4 “Voices of Diversity in the Dugout” oral history sheets (included)
- Internet access for student research
- Presentation software (such as PowerPoint) or publishing software (such as Publisher)

Vocabulary:
Diversity - The condition of having or being composed of differing elements, especially the inclusion of different types of people in a group or organization

Oral History – A process of collecting, usually by means of a recorded interview, recollections, accounts, and personal experience narratives of individuals for the purpose of expanding the historical record of a place, event, person, or cultural group

Lesson 5 - Post-Visit
Voices of Diversity in the Dugout
Applicable Common Core State Standards:

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.4, WHST.11-12.4** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.5, WHST.11-12.5** Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.6** Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology’s capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.7, WHST.11-12.7** Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.8, WHST.11-12.8** Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
Applicable Common Core State Standards (Continued):

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.9, WHST.11-12.9 Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1, SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade-appropriate topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.5, SL.11-12.5 Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.
Additional Relevant National Learning Standards:
(Based on Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning)

**Civics. Standard 11. Level IV [Grade: 9-12]**. Understands the role of diversity in American life and the importance of shared values, political beliefs, and civic beliefs in an increasingly diverse American society

**Geography. Standard 6. Level IV [Grade: 9-12]**. Understands that culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions

**Geography. Standard 10. Level IV [Grade: 9-12]**. Understands the nature and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics

**Historical Understanding. Standard 1. Level IV [Grade: 9-12]**. Understands and knows how to analyze chronological relationships and patterns

**Historical Understanding. Standard 2. Level IV [Grade: 9-12]**. Understands the historical perspective

**United States History. Standard 29. Level IV [Grade: 9-12]**. Understands the struggle for racial and gender equality and for the extension of civil liberties

**United States History. Standard 31. Level IV [Grade: 9-12]**. Understands economic, social, and cultural developments in the contemporary United States
Lesson

1. Start the lesson by asking students to list some of the players they learned about during their experience with the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum.

2. Discuss some of the challenges or obstacles faced by the players. Students should be able to relate that different players faced racial, cultural, and language barriers.

3. Read students the following passages (and/or distribute this as a handout):

   “My godmother told me that I will not speak Spanish around the house. Everything had to be English. She made sure that I joined English-speaking clubs at school at least three, four days a week. I wasn't allowed to go out and play baseball until I had my school work done, my English work done. She would sit and talk to me in English all the time and ask me the meaning of certain words so that I could understand the meaning also in English. I hung around kids that were from different countries that were all involved in the same clubs. We would stay after school for an hour, two hours and learn the language.”
   
   “I was fortunate enough to be able to do something like that, and then when I got into pro ball and being around kids that spoke English all the time, I was able to pick up the language and learn a lot more. I started to learn how to do crosswords and learned a lot of words and the meaning and the understanding of these words.”
   - Rod Carew, MLB 1967 - 1985, Baseball Hall of Fame Class of 1991

   “Coming here to the States it was a huge change. For you to go somewhere, you have to learn how to deal with hardships, with obstacles there. So that was in the back of my mind. You’ll find a couple people, they don’t like Latins, they don’t like you speaking Spanish, they don’t like that. For a couple of months I didn’t speak Spanish with anybody. So, I don’t speak at all. I don’t say anything, nothing. The best way to learn English is just go on the field and listen and talk, you know, and do it. My first year in ’55, for 3 months I only ate apple pie and chili con carne, that’s all I knew how to get. Then I switched to ham fried rice. So, I said, “Well I have to get better.”
   - Orlando Cepeda, MLB 1958-1974, Baseball Hall of Fame Class of 1999
4. Have students discuss these passages. What challenges did these two players face? How did they overcome these challenges? Who would find these narratives valuable? Why?

5. Discuss the value of **oral history** as a primary source. If necessary, explain that an oral history refers to historical information obtained through an interview that relates a person’s experiences and recollections.

6. Explain that an oral history is a useful tool to collect information about a person, a period in time, or a particular topic. Historical records and documents often lack the everyday experiences of people, how they felt about a particular topic, why they made certain decisions in their lives, and how historical events impacted their personal lives.

7. Introduce the activity.
1. Provide students with the following background information:
   In 2009, the Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum unveiled a permanent exhibit entitled *¡Viva Baseball!*. This exhibit honors the Latin American impact on baseball. During the exhibit development process, several current and former Latino baseball players were interviewed about their experiences.

2. Divide the class into 4 small groups. Assign one *¡Viva Baseball!* interviewee to each group, and give each group the “Voices of Diversity in the Dugout” oral history sheet pertaining to their interviewee.
   - Rod Carew
   - Juan Marichal
   - Francisco Rodríguez
   - Tony Pérez

3. Have students in each group read their player’s interview and answer the reflection questions at the bottom of the sheet.

4. After groups have completed their questions, invite each group to share their reactions to the *¡Viva Baseball!* oral history interviews. Have students compare and contrast the experiences of the players. What challenges did they face? How did they overcome language or cultural barriers? How do they feel about Latino players in baseball today?

5. Explain that each group will now use their player’s oral history as the basis for a multi-media presentation about that player.

6. Remind students that, as with any research paper, they are expected to develop a bibliography for this project. The bibliography should be turned in as part of the final project.

7. Go to the school library during your scheduled time slot. During the first class visit to the library, each group should focus on finding out more information about their player’s life before, during, and after his professional baseball career.
8. Discuss students’ findings. What additional questions came up as part of students’ research? How can those questions contribute to a better understanding of the player’s life experiences?

9. During a subsequent trip to the library, or as independent research, students should identify books, articles and Web sites that can help them gain general knowledge about the player’s home country during the time of his childhood, and about the United States during the time of the player’s professional career.

10. Discuss research results with each group. Encourage each group to think about how larger historical events (i.e. the Civil Rights Movement or the Cuban Revolution) might have affected the life experiences of their player.

11. Students should present their findings in the form of a multimedia presentation of their choice (PowerPoint, Publisher, a video, etc.).

12. Provide all students with a due date for their projects. You may choose to assign a due date for a rough draft as well.

**Conclusion:**

To conclude this lesson and check for understanding, have each group share their final projects with the class.

For homework, have each student write a journal reflection about this project. Students should address what they learned about the experiences of Latino ballplayers, what the differences and similarities were among the interviewees, what the common challenges were, what hardships and opportunities they found in America, how these stories have influenced their perceptions of immigrants, etc.
About this Interviewee:

**Born:** October 1, 1945 in Gatún, Panama

**MLB Career:** 1967 - 1985

**Hall of Fame Interviewer:** Tell me about playing baseball as a boy in Panama.

**ROD CAREW:** The thing that a lot of people used to ask me about was, where did I learn how to play the game, do you guys play a lot of baseball in Panama, is it a big sport in Panama, is it a big sport in Latin America? I say yeah, it’s bigger than any other sport, any other major sport, because you can go into the countryside, anyplace in the countryside, and you’ll find kids with the broom sticks, swinging at tennis balls or swinging at little rag balls that they’ve made.

We played baseball year round. It was something that there's just a fever about it. Every single day after school, there's a baseball game going on. It was a number one sport when I was growing up in Panama, so we spent a lot of time playing. It's a game that has always been a part of the Latin American culture. We didn't have the greatest equipment, but, you know, you went out and you made do with what you had and as the years went on, you started getting more equipment, better equipment, and you started getting better at playing the game.

**HoF:** Did you ever make your own equipment?

**RC:** We would take cardboard from boxes and we’d cut out the shape of a glove and then you kind of form it to your hand. Then you made two pieces and you glued them together or you took string and made holes and you go around the outside so that it would at least last for a little bit. And then we would take rags and put them inside for the stuffing so when the ball hit, it wouldn’t hurt your hand.

Baseballs, we did the same thing. We would take paper, we would look for anything that we could find, and then we would wrap cloth around it, and then we’d wrap tape around it, and then we’d draw the lines like you see on the baseball - the seams. They didn’t go as far as we wanted them to, but they served a purpose. They served the purpose of giving us the opportunity to be able to play the game, swing the bat, run the bases, catch the fly ball. Sometimes you try to throw it hard and think you’re throwing it a hundred miles an hour but it would just float up there.
**HoF**: In your autobiography, you talk about Jackie Robinson being a hero to you, and to the people of Panama. Can you talk more about that?

**RC**: Jackie was a tremendous hero to all of us because he’s the one that really gave us the opportunity to play not only in Panama but all around the world. There are probably little black kids running around thinking they would like to play in the big leagues one day, but someone has to be the leader, someone has to step forth and then do that, and Mr. Branch Rickey picked the right guy to do it. And so when you go back and you think about all that Jackie had to go through and endure, it was very important to all of us.

**HoF**: What was it like coming to the United States? How did you adjust to your new environment?

**RC**: I was really looking forward to coming here. My godmother was living in New York and she was very instrumental in getting me to come to this country. So when she talked about it, I was happy because I said to myself now I’m going to get the chance to be able to play baseball someday. I got here flying into New York. We came in at night and you see all the lights and I wondered, “How many people live in this country, in this city?”

As a kid coming from a small country to the United States, I was in awe and I couldn’t wait for the next day to see what New York was about. I was pleasantly surprised. It was everything that I had envisioned. Seeing it in the movies and then flying in, it was everything that I had envisioned. But, I think one of the reasons that I was able to handle the difference in growing up in Panama and coming to New York is I was a loner. I felt that if I kept my nose clean, stayed by myself and stayed out of trouble, I was going to be okay. Kids that I went to school with would try to get me to go places and do things with them, but my mom kind of kept me close to home so I stayed away from all those problems.

**HoF**: How did you deal with racial insensitivity sometimes displayed by other players, managers, or fans? Were you treated differently in the minor leagues than in the majors?

**RC**: I think I learned that as a person, you can take a lot, you know, or you can get to that breaking point. I think if you have the discipline, you can take a lot, because I experienced it playing in the Florida State League, something similar to what Jackie had gone through with the guys screaming and yelling and stuff. My job was just to go out there and hit line drives. I didn’t care what they were saying in the stands.
RC: I played on teams where we had guys from the hills of Kentucky and Virginia and these places, and at first I was wondering how I was going to be able to get along with these guys, but I mean it was just unbelievable. They kind of took me under their wing. You know, we would go places that I wasn't allowed to go and if we went into a barber shop or a grocery store or someplace to get food to eat and they wouldn't allow me to go in, these guys, they got very upset. They were like my protectors. I remember even in spring training the [Minnesota] Twins’ Latin and black players couldn't stay at the same motel as the white players and they had to stay in the black neighborhood, so, you know, things change, and you learn how to deal with it.

RC: I was fortunate enough not to have had the problems on the baseball field except that as a Latin player or African American player, you had to be twice as good as the white player to have a job, otherwise you're going to spend the time in the Minor Leagues, they are not going to carry you at the big league level.

Rod Carew Reflection Questions

1. How would you characterize Rod Carew’s overall attitude toward life in Panama?
2. How did Carew’s family members encourage his acculturation?
3. During the interview, Rod Carew discusses Jackie Robinson several times. In what ways was Carew influenced by Jackie Robinson?
4. What year did Rod Carew begin his professional baseball career? What does Rod Carew’s experience tell you about race relations in the United States during this time?
5. According to Carew, what surprised him about the behavior of his white teammates?
6. Were there any references to individuals or events that were unfamiliar to you? Highlight or underline them.
7. What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of oral history as a historic source?
8. List three research questions based on this interview.
Juan Marichal

About this Interviewee:
Born: October 20, 1937 in Laguna Verde, Dominican Republic
MLB Career: 1960-1975

Hall of Fame Interviewer: Tell me about playing baseball as a boy in the Dominican Republic.

JUAN MARICHAL: Those were very good times. We knew that a glove, bat and ball existed, but we had no way of getting any of them. We had to make them ourselves. I remember that in Manzanillo there was a big company that made a little 9-hole golf course. We picked up golf balls there, and took them home with us. There we’d find one of my mother or sister’s socks, unraveled it, and wrapped that string around the golf ball until it was about the size of a baseball. If we found a couple of pesos, we’d take them to a shoemaker and have him put a leather cover on the ball. If we didn’t, we’d look for some twine and we’d wrap it and wrap it until it was strong enough to hold up to us hitting it with the bat for some time.

For a glove, we used some canvas and a wire to make what we called the “fish net” and that was the glove that all the positions used. It looked like a first baseman’s mitt, and that’s what we played with. And for the bat, there was a – or there is a tree in the Dominican Republic called Guásuma, and we would cut off a branch from one of those trees, one that was pretty thick, and we would smooth it, and then set it out to dry so it would be lighter. That’s how we learned to play using that kind of material for the glove, ball and bat.

HoF: What ballplayers served as your inspirations as a young player?

JM: There was a man named Tetelo Vergas. He used to be so fast and everybody in our country, and all the countries where he played professional baseball, thought that he could have been a great, great baseball player, a major league player. But, because of the black barrier, he never made it to the major leagues. But he was one of the fastest players in all Latin America. So, I used to hear so much about Tetelo Vargas, that he became one of my Dominican idols.
JM: I was a young kid, age 9 maybe, when my brother-in-law took me to see a baseball game in Monte Cristi. There was the best team, amateur team, of my country. That day we went to see the game and a man named Bombo Ramos pitched the second game on that Sunday afternoon. When I saw that man pitch, I went back to my hometown, Laguna Verde, and told all my friends that I want to be a pitcher like Bombo Ramos. So I started pitching right away. I tried to imitate him. He was a side-arm pitcher like Don Drysdale. So I grew up thinking about becoming a pitcher, a baseball player. My mother didn’t agree with me. Many times I left for school, and never got to school because I stopped half way to play baseball. She used to talk to me and say, “What are you going to do when you grow up? When you have a family, how are you going to support your family playing baseball?” And I used to say to her, “Mother, you’re going to be so proud when you hear my name on the radio.” At that time, there was no television. She would say, “Yes, but you can’t support a family just by being named on the radio.” I said, “Well, I want to be a member of a national team in the Dominican Republic.”

HOF: What was it like coming to the United States? How did you adjust to your new environment?

JM: I remember at the Major League level, with Felipe Alou, Orlando Cepeda, you know, it sounded funny to us talking, or trying to talk English between us so we always spoke Spanish. Orlando was the closest one to me. He was on first base, I was on the mound. We became like brothers. I wasn’t afraid to pitch inside because the hitter would want to rush the mound and Orlando would be next to me, right away, he was there. Nobody wanted to face Orlando. They used to call him “The Baby Bull.” We’re still like brothers. Felipe Alou became a godfather. He baptized my first girl, and I baptized his, so we’re godfathers twice.

HoF: How do you feel about your accomplishments as a Latino player, and what’s your opinion of Latin baseball today?

JM: Just to play in the Major Leagues for 16 years, that was a long and difficult road. I came from a small village. At that time, every time I was going to the mound was like a curfew in my country. People wouldn’t go to work just trying to be ready to listen to that game on the radio because the only game they could have watched on TV was the Saturday Game of the Week. The rest of the games were on radio. And they broadcast those games to the Dominican. I retired in 1975, and in ’83 I was inducted. That day, that election was not only for Juan Marichal but for my country, being the first one and, up to today, the only one. I don’t think that’s going to last too long because we have a bunch of players that soon enough after they retire they’re going to be in Cooperstown. I’m very glad because I’m very proud of the Latin players that play the game the way it should be played, conduct themselves the way they’re supposed to, and, I think, make us so proud to see that.
Juan Marichal Discussion Questions

1. How would you characterize Juan Marichal’s overall attitude toward life in the Dominican Republic?
2. Juan Marichal references a very talented player named Tetelo Vargas. Vargas was unable to join the major leagues in the United States. Why?
3. Who or what got Marichal interested in a professional baseball career?
4. How did Marichal’s mother react to his desire to become a professional baseball player?
5. How does Marichal portray his relationship with other Latino players?
6. Were there any references to individuals or events that were unfamiliar to you? Highlight or underline them.
7. What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of oral history as a historic source?
8. List three research questions based on this interview.
Francisco Rodríguez

About this Interviewee:
Born: January 7, 1982 in Caracas, Venezuela
MLB Career: 2002 - Present

Hall of Fame Interviewer: When you were a child playing baseball, did you have baseball equipment or did you make your own?

Francisco Rodríguez: When I grew up, thankfully, my parents and my grandfather gave me the chance to get a glove. But I wasn’t always able to do that, so I would just make gloves out of cardboard.

HoF: What major league players served as inspirations for you? Who were the greatest ballplayers from Venezuela?

FR: I came from Caracas, I was always a baseball fan. I was a fan of a lot of the Venezuelan stars, like [Ugueth] Urbina, [Omar] Vizquel and David Concepción; for me they were – my childhood was very good because I could follow their careers. My favorite American player was always Ken Griffey, Jr.

HoF: What is special about baseball in Venezuela?

FR: Well, in Venezuela there is an everlasting rivalry between Caracas and Magallanes. I’m not from either of those teams, but I have had the opportunity to play with them, and it’s tough. The fans are very demanding in our country, especially in Venezuela. And it’s a passion, and you have to be there to experience it.

Here the America fans are more patient. I don’t think they make as much noise as 10,000, 11,000, or 8,000 fans in Latin America. I think the Venezuelan fans are especially aggressive. If you’re not doing the job, they’ll let you know that they are not happy. The American fans are a little bit more patient and a little bit more relaxed.

My people in Venezuela have always supported me unconditionally, whether I have good days or bad days. That is really a big relief, to feel the support of your family and your Venezuelan people.

HoF: What is your relationship with other Latino players?
FR: We Latino baseball players always have a great community because we all came to this country trying to do the same job, make it to the Major Leagues.

I think the communication and the way the Latin Americans treated each other was a big help when I was in the Minor Leagues. You would see your fellow Latinos as another brother in your family. I just tried to make it step by step and thank God for the veteran Latino ballplayers at that time. Latin Americans who were on different teams gave us that support and helped us get where we are.

HoF: How have you been able to help younger Latin players?

FR: I’m a baseball player and a very thankful person. I try to – I don’t forget where I came from, I know. I know all the sacrifices I had to make and all the people who helped me. That’s why I try, in the Academy of Ravelo, I try to make sure that all the kids that go there receive good instruction, and have the basic equipment like a glove, balls, and hats, completely free so they can develop and be the future Venezuelans in the Major Leagues.

HoF: What’s your opinion of Latin baseball today?

FR: Baseball is progressing in Venezuela. It’s been developing more each year. More fans go to the games to support the Venezuelan teams. A lot of baseball players have made it to the Major Leagues this year and God willing, the public will keep on supporting us, and we can continue advancing.

Francisco Rodríguez Discussion Questions

1. How does Francisco Rodríguez portray baseball fans in Venezuela?
2. According to him, how do Venezuelan fans differ from American fans?
3. Who inspired Rodríguez when he was a young player?
4. For what reasons was Rodríguez thankful for the company of other Latino players in the minor leagues and major leagues?
5. For what reasons does Francisco Rodríguez help fund the baseball Academy of Ravelo in Colombia?
6. Were there any references to individuals or events that were unfamiliar to you? Highlight or underline them.
7. What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of oral history as a historic source?
8. List three research questions based on this interview.
About this Interviewee:
Born: May 14, 1942 in Ciego de Ávila, Cuba
MLB Career: 1964-1986

Hall of Fame Interviewer: When you were a child playing baseball, did you have baseball equipment or did you make your own?

Tony Pérez: We didn’t have gloves, we didn’t have bats, so what we did was we stole my mom’s broom, cut the handle off and used that as a bat. We also made a ball – we would put a stone inside or with paper from a newspaper we would mold it as if it were a ball and put that inside cigarette packs, which were made of cardboard and empty. Then we would cut those up with scissors and cover it, and play with that, with our hands and with the broom. We played, my brother and I, with pine cones from the pine groves that fell down, that dried out. We tossed the pinecones and played baseball with them too.

HoF: Who came before you and inspired your baseball career? Which players did you admire?

TP: In Cuba when I was growing up, we didn’t have too much information about the Major League baseball. We didn’t see too many games. My father was a baseball fan. He listened to the games in Cuba, the Winter Ball. That’s what we followed most. We followed the Winter Ball. We had four teams playing in Havana and we heard the games on the radio and I followed all of my heroes.

All the heroes on the teams in Cuba were from Cuba. Minnie Miñoso was one of the big names over there and everybody wanted to be like Minnie Miñoso. He played for the White Sox. He was a great player and when we saw him play in Cuba, everybody liked him. Everybody wanted to be Minnie Miñoso. All the players who played in the big leagues like Tony Taylor and [Chico] Fernández and [Camilio] Pasqual and [Pedro] Ramos and some of those are players we followed. I listened to them on the radio when they played Winter Ball.

HOF: What was it like coming to the United States? How did you adjust to being immersed in a foreign environment?
TP: Well, the language was difficult because I didn’t know how to speak English. I still have problems. I wanted to play baseball and I didn’t want anything in my way to stop me from getting to the Big Leagues. I tried hard, and I didn’t try to seem like I had bad times or anything like that.

I went to Geneva, New York and I went with six guys from Cuba on the team. When we got there, we got such a warm welcome from families in Geneva who helped us. Guys from Puerto Rico, Cuba they helped us. They took care of us when we were in Geneva. We didn’t have too many problems. They made us feel at home. Somebody who understood what we said. Somebody to help us and invite us to their house for dinner and other things. And they did that and I still remember those people because they really helped me and the other guys.

It was hard for me when I left Cuba because there wasn’t any professional baseball there anymore, and I had to leave my family behind. It meant leaving my dad, my mom, my brothers and sisters, and the whole family, because on my mother’s side I had a big family. And not being able to see them for so long...It took me 10 years to see them again.

I went back to Cuba in ’72 because I was told that my father was sick, and so I decided to go back. Through the Cincinnati Reds, they helped me get the visa here in the United States to be able to return, and we also got the Cuban one. And that is how I was able to return and see my family. There was a big reception when I got there. The first thing I did was to go see my father. He had a good recovery after that, when he saw me, and I was very happy about that. And seeing my brothers, my mom, my sister, the whole reception was incredible, the entire town came into my house to see me and greet me and congratulate me for having succeeded in the Major Leagues, and for having given my town, my tiny town a good name – I mean throughout the United States and Latin America. A lot of people were proud when I returned, a lot of friends that I left behind, that grew up with me, that played ball with me from when they were little, they were also there, and I could hug them, and that was great. It was very emotional.

Tony Pérez Discussion Questions

1. Tony Pérez and his brother didn’t have formal baseball equipment. What materials did they use to make what they needed to play?
2. Growing up in Cuba, Tony Pérez was not able to follow Major League baseball. Which leagues did he and his father follow instead?
3. Who inspired Pérez when he was a young player?
4. What barriers or obstacles did Pérez encounter when he came to the U.S.?
5. Tony Pérez joined the major leagues in 1964. He was unable to see his family in Cuba until 1972. What special permission did he have to get in order to travel to Cuba? What was happening at this time between the U.S. and Cuba that would make special travel permission necessary?
6. Were there any references to individuals or events that were unfamiliar to you? Highlight or underline them.
7. What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of oral history as a historic source?
8. List three research questions based on this interview.