Jaime Escalante became famous for his work with troubled, "unteachable" high school math students. His story was told in the 1988 film Stand and Deliver.

Synopsis

Jaime Escalante was born December 31, 1930 in La Paz, Bolivia. He came to the United States in the 1960s to seek a better life. He began teaching math to troubled students in a violent Los Angeles school and became famous for leading many of them to pass the advanced placement calculus test. He was played by Edward James Olmos in the film *Stand and Deliver*. He died of cancer on March 30, 2010.

Early Life

Educator Jamie Escalante was born on December 31, 1930 in La Paz, Bolivia. The child of two teachers, Escalante became one of the most famous educators in America during the 1980s and 1990s. He left Bolivia in 1960s to seek a better life in the United States. An educator back at home, he had to work many odd jobs, teach himself English and earn another college degree before he could return to the classroom.
Professional Career

In 1974, Escalante took a job at Garfield High School in East Los Angeles, California. He found himself in a challenging situation: teaching math to troubled students in a rundown school known for violence and drugs. While some had dismissed the students as "unteachable," Escalante strove to reach his students and to get them to live up to their potential. He started an advanced mathematics program with a handful of students.

In 1982, his largest class of students took and passed an advanced placement test in Calculus. Some of the students' test scores were invalidated by the testing company because it believed that the students had cheated. Escalante protested, saying that the students had been disqualified because they were Hispanic and from a poor school. A few months later many of the students retook the test and passed, proving that they knew the material and that the company was wrong.

Escalante's classroom challenges and successes were the topic of much public discussion in 1988. That year his story was the subject of a book entitled *Jaime Escalante: The Best Teacher in America* and a film called *Stand and Deliver* starring Edward James Olmos. Both educators and students have found Escalante's work at Garfield inspiring.