**Title of Lesson Plan:** Write On! Students Carry On Fred Korematsu’s Legacy of Civic Engagement

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**Grade Level:** 3-12

**Synopsis/Summary of Lesson:**
Students often feel like they are not able to make a difference because they are so young or do not know how to go about voicing their opinions. Learning about Fred Korematsu’s story will empower students to realize they too can make change and continue the civil rights endeavor Fred Korematsu began. If the state students live in does not currently have a day recognizing Fred Korematsu, students will write letters to their local representatives asking for one to be instituted. If students live in a state where Fred Korematsu Day already exists in perpetuity, students will write letters to their local library requesting that they create a display in honor of Fred Korematsu, to further educate the community about his journey and legacy.

**Background Introduction:**
Fred Korematsu was a civil rights icon who was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In 2010 his home state of California led the charge to establish a state-level day to honor him in perpetuity. In 2014, my 7th grade students were amazed that their state, Florida, did not have a day of recognition for Fred Korematsu. I planned a lesson for students to write their state Senate and House of Representative members requesting a day of recognition in Florida for Fred Korematsu, just as California had done. Their letters were successful. In 2015, Florida enacted a day of recognition for Fred Korematsu in perpetuity. The lesson has had a positive lasting impact on my students, the community, and the state.

Fred Korematsu’s legacy was about standing up for what is right and being involved in your community to ensure all voices are heard. Empowering young people to follow in Fred Korematsu’s steps, by petitioning their civic leaders to pay homage to his courage, is one of the best ways to honor him.

**Possible Units to Use With:** Civil Rights Heroes, Civic Engagement

**Focus/Essential Question(s):**
- How do you define a hero?
- How do you honor the life of a hero?
- How can young people have their voices heard in their community?
Objectives:
1. Learn about the life and legacy of Fred Korematsu
2. Become civically engaged

C3 Framework Standards:
D2.His.3.3-5. Generate questions about individuals and groups who have shaped significant historical changes and continuities.

Required Materials and Preparation:
A. Copies of “Hero” graphic organizer for each student
B. Copies of Fred Korematsu’s biography for each student from the Fred T. Korematsu Institute. You can also project the website for the whole class to see, or if students have computers they can access his biography directly at www.korematsuinstitute.org/fred-t-korematsu-lifetime
C. Addresses of local senators and representatives and/or addresses of local libraries
D. Template of letter to local senators and representatives (optional)

Procedure:
1. Students complete the “What is a Hero?” graphic organizer to brainstorm what the word “hero” means to them.
2. Ask for student volunteers to share their responses on their graphic organizers. Note any commonalities.
3. Students read the biography of Fred Korematsu from the Fred Korematsu T. Institute’s website (see above). The reading can be done as individuals, groups, or the class as a whole.
4. Students discuss, analyze, and/or annotate the biography reading to identify the heroic nature of Fred Korematsu in comparison to the responses on their “Hero” graphic organizers.
5. Inform students how Fred Korematsu believed in the power of civic engagement. One way they can follow in his footsteps is to ask their local government leaders for a day of recognition in perpetuity for Fred Korematsu. If their state already has a day of recognition, students can write to their local library to request a display be set up to educate the community about Fred Korematsu Day.
6. Students use the “Letter to a Representative Template” or a format of their own to ask for a Fred Korematsu Day. If students are writing to their local library, they may use a standard letter format. In either case, in their letters students should cite evidence to back their claim that Fred Korematsu is deserving of the honor.
7. Send the letters to their appropriate destinations.
8. Keep students informed about any replies to their letters that you receive.

**Differentiated Engagement Strategies for Accessibility of All Students (optional):**
For younger students and for those needing accommodations, teachers may scaffold, annotate and provide comprehension questions for the biography reading. Additionally, teachers could provide a letter template to students that contains sentence frames.

**Additional Resources (optional):**

**Extension Activity (optional):**
- Students can research the right to petition the government, guaranteed in the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.
- Students can research the process of how days of recognition are drafted and passed by their state government.
- Students can write letters to their representatives at the federal level to petition for a national day of recognition for Fred Korematsu
What is a Hero?

Directions: Use this graphic organizer to summarize what the word *hero* means to you. Use the following information to help guide your thoughts:

- **Characteristics**: List at least two personality traits that you think a hero has.
- **Famous Examples**: List at least two people who are famous historical figures, lawmakers, community leaders, athletes, singers, actors, etc., and who you would consider heroes.
- **Non-Famous Examples**: List at least two people who you know personally (family, friends) who you would consider heroes.
- **Definition in Your Own Words**: If you had to explain to someone else the definition of a hero, what would you tell them?
- **Illustration**: Draw a picture that illustrates what a hero means to you. Your drawing can be a single picture or drawn in comic book-style frames.
Letter to Representative/Senator Template

Date

The Honorable (Representative/Senator name) 
Representative/Senator address

Dear Representative/Senator ________________________,

Introduce yourself: name, age, school name

Explanation of why you are writing

Reasons why your suggestion should be considered

Appreciation of taking time to read your letter

Sincerely,

First and last name
School name
School address