Re(ad)dressing Racial Injustice: From Japanese American Incarceration to Anti-Muslim Bigotry

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Grade Level(s)  
3rd - 12th

Summary of Lesson  
Students will connect the WWII Japanese American incarceration experience with current political and social issues of the U.S. by reading various primary and secondary sources in small groups, posting responses on a group Graffiti Wall, and then presenting their ideas within a whole class discussion. This lesson allows students to voice their opinions in a safe space through a Gallery Walk activity, where they will view each group’s Graffiti Wall and respond to concluding questions by writing on post-its and attaching them on a separate sheet of poster paper. It gives students the opportunity to empathize and understand targeted “others” and those who are in different situations than themselves. Teachers will also be able to employ differentiated learning strategies by organizing students into groups according to readings that best match their reading level.

Background  
During World War II, Americans of Japanese ancestry were racially profiled and targeted as “others” and enemy aliens. Their civil liberties were stripped from them when they were forcibly removed to incarceration camps without due process and any evidence of wrongdoing. Fred Korematsu stood up against the military orders to imprison Japanese Americans.

After 9/11, people of Middle Eastern, Arab, and South Asian descent were discriminated similarly to how Japanese Americans were. In 2017, in the wake of world events and terrorism, President Trump implemented an executive order targeting people of Middle Eastern and Muslim descent.

Possible Units(s) for Lesson  
Constitution - Powers of the Executive Branch

World War II

Focus Question(s)  
To what extent has the WWII Japanese American incarceration experience continued within current events?

Objective(s)  
1. Analyze the implications of executive orders on American citizens
2. Make connections between the racial bigotry against Americans of Japanese ancestry during WWII and against American Muslims and people of Middle Eastern and South Asian descent after 9/11 and in current times
3. Argue whether history is repeating itself

C3 Framework Standards

• Civic and Political Institutions. D2.Civ.5.6-8. Explain the origins, functions, and structure of government with reference to the U.S. Constitution, state constitutions, and selected other systems of government.
Required Materials and Preparation

- Create enough copies or create a digital station for one group of students. Students will be divided into four different groups
- Chan, Melissa. “George Takei Warns President Trump is Repeating a Dark Time in History.” Time, Feb. 15, 2017. http://time.com/4670721/george-takei-allegiance-donald-trump/Students will answer Critical Thinking Questions from a quote in this article. The entire article is for reference only
- Poster paper and tape or large Post-it chart paper
- Post-its

Korematsu Institute Curriculum Kit Materials:

- Graphic Novel - Fred Korematsu All American Hero
- Patriot Acts: Personal Narratives of Post-9/11 Discrimination - Gurwinder Singh oral history excerpt
- Executive Order 9066 - See Teacher’s Guide
- Exclusion Order poster - See Teacher’s Guide

Procedure

1. Create 4 groups
2. Determine roles of each student
   a. Suggested roles: Reporter, Recorder, Discussion Leader, Timekeeper/Task Manager
3. Graffiti Wall Directions:
   a. Poster paper for each group will be posted on the wall behind each group that has the following:
      i. Title of Reading
      ii. Question(s)
   b. Groups are as follows:
      i. Fred Korematsu All American Hero p. 1-15
         Question: What does it mean to be an American in the 21st Century?
         Questions: What does Gurwinder fear? Why do they exist?
      iii. 2017 Executive Order: Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States
         Questions: What is the President’s reasoning behind this order? What reactions and fears will be created as a result of this?
      iv. Executive Order 9066 and Exclusion Order poster
         Questions: What does it mean to be a target of fear? What fears do people of Japanese descent who were targeted and imprisoned have?
   c. Each group will read their document and write one reaction/word/response on a Post-It. Each group member will post their reactions on the large poster paper for the entire group to see.
   d. The Facilitator will engage all participants in the discussion as the Recorder records the group’s responses. Below are some suggested questions:
Fred T. Korematsu: Don't Be Afraid To Speak Up  |  Teacher’s Guide - 11

i. What do we notice about our answers?
ii. Is anything missing?
iii. What would we want other groups to know and understand?
e. Whole Group Share-Out: Have each group’s reporter summarize the reading and share out the group’s response(s) to the group’s question(s).

4. Critical Thinking Questions for whole class:
   a. Have each group read George Takei’s *Time* Magazine Quote: “It’s not going to happen again. It is happening again,” Takei said in an interview with *Time* ahead of his Broadway musical Allegiance. “It is being repeated.”
   b. Pose the following Critical Thinking Questions:
      i. Is history repeating itself? How is this true or not true?
      ii. What can we do to prevent history from repeating itself?

5. Gallery Walk:
   a. Each person will come up with responses to the Critical Thinking Questions based on looking at other groups’ small group responses.
   b. Each person will write their responses on Post-its and post on a whole class poster(s) titled:

   *Is history repeating itself? What can we do to prevent this?*
   c. After all of the groups have posted their responses, provide time for the class to discuss their responses.
   d. Have groups circulate around the room in a clockwise circle to see each group’s responses.

6. Whole Class Discussion: Below are suggestions of what the teacher can do to facilitate and wrap up the discussion.
   a. What did you notice from the Gallery Walk?
   b. What has history taught us about government actions?
   c. Should citizens refuse to follow government orders? When are the appropriate circumstances?
   d. What can we do to prevent history from repeating itself?
   e. What is causing history to repeat itself?

Differentiated Engagement Strategies

For lower grade levels, teachers may do the following:
- Choose a few key sentences/paragraphs from the 2017 Executive Order instead of reading the whole thing
- *Patriot Acts* Gurinder Singh personal narrative - define key vocabulary; read and annotate together as a class

For enrichment: Compare and contrast current events with the Japanese American Experience during the WWII era.
- Research 2-3 current event articles on incidents related to groups of people being targeted or discriminated against. You may want to go over with your students who/what should be researched by discussing who the targeted groups are today. Keeping this an open-ended assignment may provide intriguing responses as well.
- Fill out a “Compare and Contrast” Chart to compare what happened to Japanese Americans during WWII versus the current event researched
- Final Written Response – “The current events prove/disprove or agree/disagree with the George Takei’s quote ‘It [history] is happening again... It is repeating itself’”