# ***Civil Rights Thematic Unit***

**The Asian American Education Project**

# For educators who wish to teach with a thematic approach when using The Asian American Education Project curricular resources**,** the following are suggestions on how to utilize the different lesson plans with the time teachers can allot to the theme.

***Theme – Civil Rights:***

In this thematic unit, students explore issues pertaining to civil rights through the lens of the Asian American experience.

***Organizing Questions:***

* What are civil rights?
* Throughout U.S. history, what are some civil rights’ challenges Asian Americans have faced?
* What are ways in which Asian Americans have fought for their civil rights?

***Teacher Procedures:***

1. Inform students that they will be learning about issues pertaining to civil rights through the lens of the Asian American experience.
2. Outline expectations for discussions on this topic. Emphasize that they must be respectful when acknowledging classmates’ comments, as well as exhibit sensitivity toward cultures and ideas different from their own.
3. Follow the guidelines outlined below, depending on how much time you have available to teach this unit.
4. Please note that instructions for group work are based on a class size of 30. Adjust accordingly for different class sizes.

**DAY ONE:**

***Summary:***

Students explore what civil rights are and learn about the *Tape v. Hurley* case in which a Chinese American family fought against school segregation.

***Activity 1:***

1. Inform students that they will be learning about civil rights through the lens of the Asian American experience.
2. Ask students to brainstorm what “civil rights” are. Record their answers on a large sheet of butcher paper or whiteboard in front of the classroom.
3. Reveal to students the following definition for civil rights:

Guarantees of equal social opportunities and equal protection under the law, **regardless of race, religion, or other personal characteristics** ([*Encyclopedia Britannica Online*](https://www.britannica.com/topic/civil-rights)*)*.

1. Next, ask students to brainstorm several examples of civil rights. Write students’ answers on the sheet of butcher paper or whiteboard in front of the class.
2. As a class, review examples of civil rights, which include the following:

* right to vote
* right to a fair trial
* right to government services
* right to a public education
* right to use public facilities
* right to participate in political affairs

1. Ask students to think about which of the examples of civil rights they benefit from and to what extent. Ask students to consider whether there are any civil rights that they did not realize they had, or that they took for granted.
2. Inform students that throughout the history of the United States, many people, including Asian Americans have had to fight for their civil rights on many occasions.

***Activity 2:***

1. View the video in Lesson 1.4 – *The Fight for School Desegregation by Asian Americans*.
2. After students have finished viewing the video, distribute one copy of this lesson’s essay*,* and the handout, *A Letter from Mary Tape,* to each student.
3. Instruct students to read both handouts as homework and to answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper. (Questions are excerpted from Lesson 1.4).

* Keeping in mind the definition of civil rights (“Guarantees of equal social opportunities and equal protection under the law, regardless of race, religion, or other personal characteristics**”**), do you believe the Tapes’ civil rights were violated? Why or why not?
* Do you believe the establishment of the Chinese Primary School was a fair response to educating Chinese children in San Francisco? Why or why not?
* How does Mary Tape’s letter reveal the anti-Chinese sentiment in the West Coast/United States during the 1880s? Cite evidence from her letter.
* How does Mary Tape’s letter represent the resistance and activism of Asian Americans in the 19th century? Cite evidence from her letter.
* How did the law and education system exclude Chinese Americans in the 19th century?
* What are current issues in regard to educational equity in the United States?

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| **One Day to Teach Lesson:** |
| If you have only one day to teach about issues pertaining to civil rights, collect students’ homework assignments for assessment and conclude your lesson on civil rights here. If you have additional days to teach on this theme, proceed with the following directions. |

**DAY TWO:**

***Summary:***

Students review the *Tape v. Hurley* case and engage in a class discussion. Then, they view the video in Lesson 2.1 – *Japanese Americans and Aleuts Incarceration Constitutional Violations,* and explore constitutional amendments that pertain to the U.S. government’s incarceration of people of Japanese descent.

***Activity 1:***

1. Begin class by revisiting the questions from the homework. Facilitate a short discussion based on the assigned questions.
2. Inform students that there have been many instances of civil rights violations in the history of the United States. Today, they will learn more about the U.S. government’s incarceration of over 120,000 people of Japanese descent.

***Activity 2:***

1. View the video in this lesson.
2. Distribute one copy of the essayfrom Lesson 2.1 to each student.
3. Group the class into partner pairs and direct them to take turns reading the handout to each other.
4. When they have finished, divide the class into small groups of four students each. Explain to the students that Constitutional rights provide protections that the government cannot violate. Many of the protections come from the 27 amendments to the Constitution.
5. Instruct the groups to divide the list of the following Constitutional amendments amongst its members: the 1st, 4th, 5th, 6th, 8th, 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments. These are the amendments most applicable to the incarceration of Japanese Americans and Aleuts during World War II.
6. Direct students to research the definition of their two assigned constitutional rights and how the right is applied. They should find several examples to illustrate the scope of the right and how it is protected.
7. Following the completion of their research, distribute a sheet of poster paper to each group. Instruct students to create a table on the poster paper according to the following:

* In the first column, have students list out the eight constitutional amendments that they researched.
* In the second column, ask students to brainstorm what events or actions during the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans and Aleuts might be considered violations of the rights listed in the first column.

1. When they have finished, facilitate a class discussion based on the following questions (excerpted from Lesson 2.1).

* What was incarceration like for the Japanese Americans, based on the film clip you watched?
* When you hear the word, “incarceration,” what does it mean to you? What are the differences between incarceration camps versus prisons or detention centers? What are some similarities?
* What caused the U.S. government to force Japanese Americans and the Aleuts from Alaska into incarceration camps during World War II? What role did anti-Japanese prejudice and anti-Japanese propaganda play in this? Was the belief that Japanese Americans were aiding the enemy found to be true or false?
* In what ways were the constitutional rights of Japanese Americans and Aleuts violated by Executive Order 9066?
* In what ways did the incarcerated Japanese Americans and Aleuts fight back?
* In *Korematsu v. United States*, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Executive Order. What are your opinions regarding this decision?
* Why are constitutional rights and freedoms important, and how do we ensure that they are protected for everyone?

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| **Two Days to Teach Lesson:** |
| If you have only two days to teach about issues pertaining to civil rights, conclude your lesson on civil rights here. If you have additional days to teach on this theme, assign the homework outlined below and proceed with directions for the following day. |

***Homework Prior to Day Two:***

1. Instruct students to read “[Remembering the No-No Boys](https://advancingjustice-la.org/sites/default/files/ELAWWII%20Remembering_the_No_No_Boys.pdf)” an article posted on About.com by Race Relations guide Nadra Kareem Nittle. In 1943, Japanese Americans were asked to answer a so-called “loyalty questionnaire” to bear arms for the military and to swear their allegiance to the United States. Question 27 asked if they would serve on U.S. combat duty. Question 28 asked if they would renounce allegiance to Japan. Many citizens resented being asked to renounce loyalty to Japan when they were Americans. On the other hand, Japanese immigrants were barred from becoming U.S. citizens on the basis of race. So, if one renounced loyalty to Japan and if the United States deported them, they would be barred from returning to Japan. They would become stateless. If a person responded “no” to the two questions, they were labeled as disloyal “no-no boys” and sent to Tule Lake, a segregated detention center with harsher conditions. Others simply refused to answer the questionnaire and were segregated as well. Their stance is an example of resistance in the name of civil liberties. (The following assignment is excerpted from Lesson 2.3.1 – *WWII, Japanese American Internment, Post 9/11*).
2. On a separate sheet of paper, instruct students to create a T-chart as shown below:

Textual Evidence/Quotations   
(Select 5)

Analysis (Why do I find this quote interesting or important?)

1. Direct students to select five important passages/quotes from the text and list them on the left side of the chart. On the right side, have students analyze and respond to the quote.

**DAY TWO:**

***Summary:***

Students review their homework and discuss the situation of the “no-no boys.” Then, they explore activism through the Filipino American farm workers’ role in improving living and working conditions.

***Activity 1:***

1. Begin the class by reviewing the homework assignment. Divide the class into six small groups of five students each. Instruct them to share their textual evidence/quotations and analyses that they completed for homework.
2. Instruct each group to select the quotation that made the most memorable impression on the group as a whole, and to be prepared to share with the class.
3. Facilitate group presentations of their quotes and analyses. Identify any similarities, if any. Ask students if they were in the same situation as the “no-no boys” how might they have responded?
4. Inform students that when civil rights are challenged or taken away, they are rarely maintained or ensured through passive acceptance. Tell students social activism was—and still is—an important tool for change. Inform them that they will explore Asian American activism through studying the Filipino American farmworkers’ role in improving living and working conditions.

***Activity 2:***

1. View the video in Lesson 4.1 – *Filipino American Farmworkers*.
2. When the class has finished viewing, distribute one copy of the essayfrom Lesson 4.1*.*
3. Group the class in ten small groups of three students each. Direct them to read the handout together and then answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper (one answer sheet per group is sufficient).

* How were Filipino American farm workers treated unfairly?
* Larry Itliong told his fellow farmworkers about the reality of going on strike, i.e., that they might suffer hardships such as going hungry, losing their car or their house. Why do you think the farmworkers still voted to go on strike?
* How did grape growers counter the strike by Filipino farmworkers?
* Who were Larry Itliong, Philip Vera Cruz, and the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee?
* Who were Dolores Huerta, Cesar Chavez, and the National Farm Workers Association?
* How did the Filipino farmworkers convince Mexican American/Chicano farmworkers to join their strike?
* What agreements were made between the United Farm Workers and grape growers?
* What strengths did the solidarity between Filipino and Mexican American farmworkers bring to the overall labor/civil rights movement?

1. Collect groups’ answers for assessment. Conclude the day’s lesson with a class discussion based on the following questions:

* In what ways were the farmworkers’ civil rights being violated?
* How did they decide to improve their situation?
* How did joining in solidarity improve the living and working conditions for farmworkers? How have these circumstances remained the same?
* Why is it important to build coalitions?
* How do you think you would have reacted if you were in a similar situation?

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| **Three Days to Teach Lesson:** |
| If you have only three days to teach about issues pertaining to civil rights, conclude your lesson on civil rights here. If you have additional days to teach on this theme, assign the homework outlined below and proceed with directions for the following day. |

***Homework Prior to Day Three:***

1. Inform students that during the next class, they will examine the situation behind more recent challenges to civil rights.
2. Distribute one copy of the article, “[Who Took the Rap? A Call to Action](https://www.advancingjustice-la.org/sites/default/files/UCRS%2011_Who_Took_the_Rap_story%20r2.pdf),” from Lesson [5.6.1 – *Hate Crime Analysis, Post 9/11*](http://www.advancingjustice-la.org/what-we-do/leadership-development/untold-civil-rights-stories/unit-plan-math-alg-1-statistics-hate)).
3. Instruct them to read the article and to write three questions pertaining to the article on a separate sheet of paper.

**DAY FOUR:**

***Summary:***

Students review the reading and homework assignment, then view the video for Lesson 5.6 – *“Victimized Twice”: 9/11, South Asian Americans & Islamophobia*. Students conclude the day’s lesson with a group project on either the USA Patriot Act or Executive Order 13769 (“Travel Ban” or “Muslim Ban”).

***Activity 1:***

1. Begin the class by asking students to focus on a statement from their reading assignment for homework: “[Who Took the Rap? A Call to Action](https://www.advancingjustice-la.org/sites/default/files/UCRS%2011_Who_Took_the_Rap_story%20r2.pdf).”

“…it was the argument of Peggy Noonan, a *Wall Street Journal* columnist who claimed that we must all ‘accept the necessity of racial profiling.’… that all Americans have to sacrifice some of our liberties in this post-September 11 world.”

1. Ask students whether or not they agree with this statement. Allow them 3–5 minutes to write their answers on a sheet of scratch paper. Then, divide the class into partner pairs. Instruct students to share their answers with their partners.
2. Once students have finished sharing their answers with their partners, conduct a survey of the entire class. Have students raise hands whether they agree or disagree with Noonan. (If anonymity is a concern, you can direct students to have their heads down during the vote). Write the results on the board.

***Activity 2:***

1. Inform students that according to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU): “**’Racial profiling**’ refers to the practice by law enforcement officials of targeting individuals for suspicion of crime based on the individual’s race, ethnicity, religion or national origin.”
2. Facilitate a short class discussion beginning with the questions listed below. Then, invite students to ask some of their own questions that they formulated for their homework assignment.

* What would prompt Noonan to feel that racial profiling is a necessity?
* Who do you think are victims of racial profiling?
* Have you ever seen/experienced racial profiling?

1. Inform students that they will now learn more about the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and how they affected policies toward immigration, privacy, and the ways South Asian Americans were perceived and treated after.

***Activity 3:***

1. View the video for Lesson 5.6.
2. When the class has finished viewing the video, inform the class of the following:

The 9/11 attacks and subsequent irrational fear towards immigrants had severe implications for U.S. security and immigration policies. In October 2001, Congress under the Bush administration passed the USA PATRIOT Act to stop and punish terrorist acts in the United States and around the world, and allowed for the legal surveillance of certain communities. (Excerpted from the essayfor Lesson 5.6).

1. Divide the class into six small groups of five students each. To three of the groups, assign the following activity (excerpted from Lesson 5.6).

* *USA Patriot Act:*

Research some of the provisions in the Patriot Act for fighting terrorism, and analyze how it might be wrongly used to target certain groups of people, in particular the South Asian community. What does the Patriot Act allow the U.S. government to do in order to fight terrorism? Should the government have the ability to watch certain communities even if there is no evidence of any wrongdoing? Why or why not?

* *Executive Order 13769 (“Travel Ban” or “Muslim Ban”)*

Research Executive Order 13769, also known as the “Travel Ban” or “Muslim Ban.” How did sentiments from 9/11/01 play into the fears and sentiments that pushed this ban forward in 2017? How did the various impacted groups, organizations, and communities react and respond to the policy?

* Both groups should create an informational flyer (i.e., one that might be posted on a bulletin board at your school, church, or community center) that summarizes their key findings, such as what the USA Patriot Act/ Executive Order 13769 is, its relation to sentiments that were intensified through and after 9/11, its effects on various communities, the answers to the questions assigned to your group, and any other relevant information you think people should know. Make strategic use of formatting and stylistic elements (headings, tables or columns, boldface letters, etc.) to keep the flyer engaging and easy to read.

1. Allow students time to finish their group projects in class and as homework.

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| **Four Days to Teach Lesson:** |
| If you have only four days to teach about issues pertaining to civil rights, conclude your lesson on civil rights here. If you have additional days to teach on this theme, proceed with directions for the following day. |

**DAY FIVE:**

***Summary:***

Students choose an extension activity pertaining to civil rights, research, and prepare to present it to the class.

1. Present a list of extension activities to the class and direct students to choose an extension activity to work on during class and as homework.

***Extension Activities:***

* Conduct research on the cases *Mendez v. Westminster* (1947), and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), and write a short report comparing and contrasting these cases with *Tape v. Hurley.*
* Explore Satsuki Ina’s statement in the film clip from Lesson 2.1, “There was no due process. The government framed it as an issue of loyalty. But there had never been a question of loyalty to the Japanese American community. Nobody asked about loyalty before they were incarcerated.” Due process has many different forms, but generally, an individual’s right to liberty is so fundamental that it can only be taken away by a criminal conviction. Research and write a short report on due process in the criminal system in the United States.
* Write a reflection on the following prompt:

In your opinion, could something like the incarceration of Japanese Americans happen again today? Consider the structure of our government, the different actors in our democracy including organizations and individuals, and any connections you see to current events. Make sure to give examples to support your position.

* Explore the situation of present-day farmworkers, some of whom are undocumented, and the challenges they face while being an integral part of the U.S. agricultural industry. Using the 2017 study, “Public Health, Immigration Reform and Food System Change” (<https://clf.jhsph.edu/publications/public-health-immigration-reform-and-food-system-change>), by the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, write a short report answering the following questions:
* What health risks and impacts are associated with agricultural labor, low wages, poor housing conditions?
* How are immigrant workers particularly vulnerable to job loss or deportation, limited access to health care, labor laws, and guest worker programs?
* How is the U.S. food system affected by the health impacts facing immigrant workers?
* What are some suggestions for assisting immigrant workers?
* Choose a specific cause to research and create a plan to solve a problem. This cause can be based on an issue that is of importance at your school or community. Or, you can feel free to choose a cause with a more national, or even global focus. Use material from the documentary and/or handouts from throughout this thematic unit, and also include the information listed below.
* What did you learn from the examples of Asian American activism?
* How can you apply what they did to what you want to do?
* How can you work with others to support your goal(s)?

1. Collect students’ projects for assessment, or allot an additional day of class time for students to present their projects.

**ADDITIONAL DAYS:**

If you have more than five days to teach about civil rights issues through the lens of the Asian American experience, consider spending one class per time period, and incorporating activities from the following lessons in particular:

***Breaking Ground, 1850s – 1920s***

* 6.1, *Defining American (Elementary)*
* 1.4, *The Fight for School Desegregation by Asian Americans*
* 1.5, *Angel Island Exclusion or Inclusion?*

***A Question of Loyalty, 1920s – 1940s***

* 2.1, *Japanese Americans and Aleuts Incarceration Constitutional Violations*
* 2.2, *Constitutional Rights—Japanese American Incarceration*
* 6.2, *Japanese American Incarceration During World War II (Elementary)*
* 2.3.1, *WWII, Japanese American Internment, Post 9/11*
* 2.3.2, *Korematsu v. United States*
* 2.5, *Protecting Our Democracy*

***Generation Rising, 1960s – 1970s***

* 4.1, *Filipino American Farmworkers*
* 4.1.1, *Philip Vera Cruz, Justice for Farmworkers*
* 4.1.2, *Ecological Model and Philip Vera Cruz*
* 4.3, *Ethnic Studies—The Fight to Teach Our Stories!*
* 6.4 -Filipino American Farmworkers Fight for Their Rights *(Elementary)*

***Breaking Through, 1980s - Present***

* 5.1.1, *Powerful Individuals, Powerful Movements*
* 5.6, *“Victimized Twice”: 9/11, South Asian Americans & Islamophobia*
* 5.6.1, *Hate Crime Analysis, Post 9/11*
* 5.7.1, *LGBTQ Civil Rights*

If class time allows, consider including additional activities such as the following:

* Campaign to have your school or state to declare a Fred Korematsu Day. Have students write to the [Fred T. Korematsu Institute](http://www.korematsuinstitute.org/homepage/) to speak to the class, in person, or virtually. Engage the Institute to help your campaign.
* Arrange a guest speaker or panel of speakers of someone who was interned, or a descendant of someone who was interned.
* Participate in the Smithsonian’s “Story Experience” about the Japanese American incarceration: <https://amhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/non-flash/index.html>
* Visit Japanese American museums virtually or in-person. The following are a few suggestions:
* [Manzanar War Relocation Center](https://www.nps.gov/manz/learn/kidsyouth/beajuniorranger.htm)
* [Japanese American National Museum](http://www.janm.org/)
* [Japanese American Museum of San Jose](https://www.jamsj.org/)
* [Japanese American Museum of Oregon](http://www.oregonnikkei.org/exhibit/interrupted.html)
* [The Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation](https://www.heartmountain.org/)
* [The World War II Japanese American Internment Museum](https://rohwer.astate.edu/history/)

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The thematic unit was created by Waka Takahashi Brown, Curriculum Specialist, Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education (SPICE), and the lesson plans were developed by Asian Americans Advancing Justice.