

Section 1: Suggested Use of the Exhibit

Preparation

Give the students a limited amount of time to write a list of their most important possessions to take with them on a long trip. Do not answer questions about how long the trip will be, or to what kind of environment. Give them a limited amount of space to pack them in, such as the kind of suitcase that is allowed as carry-on by the airlines. Ask them to read their lists aloud. Point out “essentials: that they have omitted – do they have a winter coat? Did they think of a pen and paper? A toothbrush? Aspirin? Arbitrarily take some items away from some people [put them in a list on the board] and announce that they are free to trade items among themselves or trade from the “stock” on the board. There should be a certain amount of perplexity here, because you haven’t told them where they are going or why.

Before going to see the Exhibit, you can tell them that all of the people they are about to “meet” have had a similar experience. They were all forced to leave their homes without knowing why or where they were going. They were given a limited amount of time to pack and no idea when they would return to their homes.

Refer to the information on each culture presented later in the material for other historical background you may wish to give them.

Other exercises would be directed at creating empathy and having the students “participate” in the Survivor experiences in other ways; for example, they could take a quiz directly before lunch, when they are distracted and their performance will be relatively poor. You could explain that reduced caloric intake was one of the ways that our Survivors were prevented from organizing themselves or making decisions about how to protect themselves.

Exhibit Viewing

You may wish to provide the students with specific questions to keep in mind as they view the photographs and read the excerpts, directing them to think about the following themes:

Social Organization and the Role of the Government

1. Do the people have a right to go to or hold meetings? To practice a variety of religions? To travel? To get information or to pass on information? To join trade unions?
2. Does the government permit racial or religious minorities to be persecuted by others?

3. Does the government permit people to be tortured or subjected to cruel and inhuman punishment or conditions?
4. How were the survivors systematically deprived of their rights? What kinds of rationales/excuses were used?
5. By what means are people divided into different groups within one society? By what characteristics? By what means are they brought together?
6. What happens to people whose families are separated? What do people lose when they are forced to leave their homes? (economic, social, and developmental consequences)

Information – Communication

7. How are people influenced by the news they receive?
8. Is there a free press? Are people allowed to criticize the government?
9. Who controls radio and television broadcasts?
10. How else is information transmitted? What of these sources of news can be taken away?
11. How do we get information about what is going on in other countries? Is it accurate? How can we know?

Recovery and Survival

12. What role does education play in the lives of the Survivors? What role does family play?
13. List different ways survivors keep from dwelling on the past and rebuild their lives. Compare these among the groups.
14. What personality traits or factors do the Survivors feel helped them cope? What factors or traits might have influenced someone in the majority group to defy the rules and aid them?
15. How do the Survivors use their past experiences in deciding what to do in the present? How do they relate to the problems of other groups?

Follow Up

Discussion or assigned essays on the questions presented above should form the basis of follow-up work. Additionally, ask the students to tell stories about other cultures that they know about who have undergone similar experiences. Do they know about experiences like these in their family history? Encourage them to record and present them (materials on preserving family histories are available from the Project). You may wish to ask the students to identify the following paragraph:

The legislature shall prescribe all necessary regulations for the protection of the State, and the counties, cities, and towns thereof, from the burdens and evils arising from the presence of aliens who are or may become vagrants, paupers, mendicants, criminals, or invalids afflicted with contagious or infectious diseases, and from aliens otherwise dangerous or detrimental to the well-being or peace of the State, and to impose conditions upon which such persons may reside in the State, and to provide the means and mode of their removal from the State, upon failure or refusal to comply with such conditions.

... which is from the original California State Constitution, written in 1878 (Article XIX, labeled “Chinese”, section 1). Section 3 reads: “No Chinese shall be employed on any State, county, municipal, or other public work, except in punishment for crime.” Article II, “Right of Suffrage”, also states:

no native of China, no idiot, no insane person, no person convicted of any infamous crime, no person hereafter convicted of the embezzlement or misappropriation of public money, and no person who shall not be able to read the Constitution in the English language and write his name, shall ever exercise the privileges of an elector in this state.

How/against whom was this used? (Soon after Statehood, the original State Constitution reflects the social and economic pressures caused by the Gold Rush and building of the railroads. Nevertheless, its provisions stood and were used to discriminate against Asians until 1943, when Congress ruled that they conflicted with federal law. An “Alien Land Law” intended to discourage Asian ownership of California land, was not ruled unconstitutional until 1952. Separate schools for Orientals in California were authorized by law until 1936.) What powers does it give the government? How *could* it be used? What strategies could we use to prevent it from happening?

The Sonoma County Survivor Project

Possible Supplementary Activities for Students

Following are additional ways (see "Teacher's Guide" pp 3-4) to help engage your students as they view photos and text of "The Sonoma County Survivor Project.

-Ask students to select one person from the Project. The student should then read the selected person's statements, analyze the biographical background information and take time to study the photographs of each person portrayed in his/her everyday life. List 5 things that are similar and 5 differences from your life experiences; values you have; etc.

-Have students select two participants from different cultures within the Project. Compare and contrast what their experiences were like. What wisdom did each person have for you? Write a report, share with class.

-Create a list of questions for someone from one of the cultures presented. Invite a local person into the classroom who has had similar experiences and listen to their story. Take time to ask some of the questions you have created.

-What are human and civil rights? Select 3 people (one from each culture presented) and list what civil or human rights you think they lost. Do you know anyone who has lost civil or human rights? What rights did they lose? How are their losses like those in the Project? How are they different?

Please note:

As a teacher, be creative. Know your curriculum and the needs and abilities of your students fabricate ways to actively engage your students with the work. The challenge is to make it relevant... What do these stories have to do with us?

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