

Lesson 8: Paying Tribute

OVERVIEW

This lesson addresses how Arkansans and Japanese Americans have paid tribute to those Japanese Americans who were forcibly relocated by the government to camps in Arkansas.

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to answer the guiding question, “How does Arkansas remember its World War II past?” after examining photographs and a newspaper article.

GUIDING QUESTION

How does Arkansas remember its World War II past?

ARKANSAS HISTORY FRAMEWORKS

TCC 1.2, 1.3

PPE 1.1

SSPS 1.1, 1.4

MATERIALS

Copies of the article “A Monument Recalls Hatred Born of War”

Photo Sheets of Camp Monuments

Documentary video *Time of Fear*, television, and VCR

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The imprisonment of Japanese Americans during World War II was one of the most serious government violations of civil rights in American history. While no simple reason explains why it happened, several studies have concluded the policy evolved from racism, wartime hysteria, and the failure of political leadership. No matter what the explanation, the damage was permanent. For Japanese Americans, the experience created deep distrust in the government. For many families, parents were unable to discuss incarceration with their children. Although the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 included a formal apology to Japanese Americans for their World War II mistreatment, provided individual payments for camp survivors, and established a community fund to promote civil liberties education, it did very little to alleviate the profound humiliation and pain suffered by Americans of Japanese ancestry.

The camps at Jerome and Rohwer closed in 1944 and 1945 respectively. Little evidence remains at either site of the incarceration that took place. At Jerome, a smokestack from the hospital complex, a concrete tank from the disposal plant, and some barrack foundations are visible from U.S. Highway 165. A cemetery and monuments dedicated to Japanese American soldiers and built by inmates during the war mark Rohwer. A granite memorial stands at Jerome and two modern monuments tell the story at Rohwer. In 1992, the cemetery at Rohwer was named a National Historic Landmark.

OPENING

Discuss the phrase, “paying tribute.” When do we use this phrase? To what kinds of accomplishments or triumphs do we pay tribute? Ask students to brainstorm the ways in which we pay tribute to people and events. Write the list on the board. [Answers may include erecting a monument, writing a poem or song, creating a postage stamp, naming a building, etc.]

ACTIVITIES

1. Show a short clip from the documentary video *Time of Fear* from 48:53 until the end of the film. (approximately 6 minutes). Ask students to take notes on the different ways in which Arkansans and Japanese Americans remember the camps at Rohwer and Jerome. Briefly discuss the redress and reparations movement. Ask students whether they feel monetary reparations were an essential part of the government’s official policy. Poll students as to whether they would have been in favor of or opposed to monetary reparations if they were a former inmate of Jerome and Rohwer.

2. Distribute the photo sheets with questions. Explain that the monuments were erected in memory of those inmates who died in the camps and those who died in the military. Have students work in pairs or groups to examine the photos and answer the questions. Then, read the excerpts from the article, “A Monument Recalls Hatred Born of War” from the *Arkansas Democrat*, December 22, 1972. According to the article, what did Arkansans think of the monuments? Do you think opinions have changed from 1972 until today? Why or why not?

CLOSING

Ask students how they would pay tribute to the Japanese Americans at Rohwer and Jerome? What should happen to the camp sites? Have students design a monument, piece of artwork or write a poem that pays tribute to the Japanese Americans who were incarcerated at Rohwer and Jerome.

EXTENSIONS

Ask students to interview family or community members to see how they remember the experiences of Japanese Americans in Arkansas during World War II. Compile a class list of answers.

Have students examine the website <http://www.lifeinterrupted.org>. This web site has information about the camps and is an example of how the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation and the UALR public history program have remembered the camp.

Do further research on some of the prominent people who played a role in the redress movement. For example: U.S. Sen. Daniel Inouye, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta, Michi Weglyn, and President Ronald Reagan. Examine their roles in the redress movement.

REFERENCES

Directions for reaching the camps sites are listed below. Mini-grants from the Arkansas Humanities Council are available for field trips to the camp sites taken in conjunction with this unit. Contact the Arkansas Humanities Council at (501) 221-0091 for more information.

Driving directions from Little Rock to Rohwer. The total distance is 116 miles and driving time is two hours and 42 minutes. Take US-65 South/US-167 South to Pine Bluff. Then merge onto I-530 South. Travel approximately 46 miles. I-530 South becomes US-65 South. Take US 65 South to McGehee. Travel approximately 55 miles. Take the AR-1 ramp and keep left at the fork in the ramp. Turn left; it is a slight left, onto AR-1. Travel approximately 11 miles to Rohwer. Turn left on Vogel Lane. You will go over the railroad tracks. The Memorial Cemetery is directly ahead.

Driving directions from Little Rock to Jerome. The total distance is 123 miles and driving time is two hours and 45 minutes. Take US-65 South/US-167 South to Pine Bluff. Merge onto I-530 S. Travel approximately 46 miles. I-530 S becomes US-65 South. Take US-65 South to McGehee. Travel approximately 55 miles. Travel through McGehee. US-65 South becomes US-165. Take US-165 South approximately 12 miles. The Jerome site is on the right. The monument is beside the road.

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