

## Lesson 3: Individuals Making a Difference

### Resource Card



Name: Sun Yat Sen

Lifespan: 1866 – 1925

Home: Cuiheng Village of Guangdong province, China

ARC ID: 296447; "Photograph of Dr. Sun Yat Sen: "HB Sun Yat Sen, 40, XPI Korea 3-28-10, File no. 140-C", 03/28/1910; National Archives and Records Administration.

#### WHAT CHALLENGES DID THIS PERSON FACE?

Sun Yat Sen was born in Guangdong Province, China. During his childhood, China was governed by the Qing (pronounced "Ching") dynasty, whose rulers were ethnically Manchu, not Chinese. Sun Yat Sen's first connection with the United States came when his mother took him to Oahu, Hawai'i, where he studied at American schools. He returned to Hong Kong to study medicine and after a failed *coup d'état* against the dynastic government in 1895, he left for Europe and the United States to raise money for a republican revolution. His political philosophy centered around the Three Principles of the People: nationalism, democracy, and people's livelihood. He wanted to end the rule of the Qing dynasty and restore the rule of ethnic Chinese to the country. Sun Yat Sen spoke out for a popularly-elected, republican form of government. Later, he began writing and speaking about the "people's livelihood," a form of socialism, which was designed to help the common people through regulations on the ownership of land and industry.

The imperial government of China wanted to capture Sun Yat Sen; he was even held captive for a time in the Chinese Embassy in London by agents working for the government. He wanted to enter the United States to raise support for his cause, but the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 made it difficult for people of Chinese descent to immigrate or even travel to the United States.

#### HOW DID HE HANDLE THESE CHALLENGES?

Sun Yat Sen, like other Chinese who wanted to enter the United States, falsely assumed U.S. citizenship and tried to enter the United States in 1904. He claimed to be a "native born Hawaiian." When Dr. Sun landed in San Francisco on April 6, 1904, he was not included in the category of government officials, teachers, merchants, and students who were exempt from the Chinese Exclusion Act. He was detained for investigation by the Bureau of Immigration. However, within a few days of his arrival, Sun Yat Sen was informed "...that after due consideration of your case the Honorable Commissioner of Immigration has refused you admission to the United States."

Dr. Sun was "...ordered deported to the port whence he came upon the departure of the next vessel of the line bringing him here." He was held in a wooden immigration shed where he was able to smuggle out a note via an American newsboy, which resulted in assistance from pioneer publisher Ng Poon Chew and Chee Kung Tong. The Washington, D.C. law firm, Ralston and Siddons, filed an appeal with the Commissioner-General of Immigration in April 26, 1904 on his behalf, and two days later he was allowed to enter the United States. He successfully raised funds for the revolutionary cause from American sympathizers.

He returned to China in late 1911, after fifteen of the twenty-four provinces of China had declared their independence from the Qing empire. On January 1, 1912, he was inaugurated as provisional president of a newly-declared Chinese republic. The position did not last long, however, as Dr. Sun (who did not have an army under his control) agreed to relinquish the presidency in favor of Yuan Shikai, respected leader of the northern army. However, the constitution, drafted by members of Sun's revolutionary group, was soon changed at will by Yuan. In the summer of 1913, Sun and other revolutionaries instigated a rebellion of some Chinese provinces against Yuan Shikai. When the rebellion failed, he fled to Japan and remained until 1916.

When he returned yet again to China, he formed his own army with assistance from the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, he worked with rising leaders like Chiang Kai-Shek, the future nationalist army leader and Sun's brother-in-law, to work towards his republican form of government. He died in 1925 of liver cancer.

#### WHAT IMPACT DID THIS PERSON HAVE?

Sun Yat Sen is considered one of the "founding fathers" of the Republic of China. His time in the United States helped raise money and support for the revolution that was eventually successful in 1912, when Emperor Pu Yi abdicated the throne. Because of his position and his powerful friends around the world, he was often able to get around the Chinese Exclusion Act that limited entry into the United States for so many other immigrants.

He is known as the father of the Republic of China for his commitment to the "Three Principles of the People". His writings and speeches were used by both the nationalist and communist forces to further their political goals during the Chinese Communist Revolution.

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## Lesson 3: Individuals Making a Difference

### Resource Card



Name: Felix Tijerina

Lifespan: 1905-1965

Home: Houston, Texas

#### WHAT CHALLENGES DID THIS PERSON FACE?

Although he publicly claimed to have been born in Texas, Filiberto Tijerina was born in Mexico and immigrated to the United States with his parents, migrant farmworkers, as a child. When he was nine years old, his father died, leaving Felix to help support his mother and three sisters. He spent long hours working in the cotton fields of South Texas and did not attend school. Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans faced discrimination in Texas and throughout the United States in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Schools were segregated and Mexican Americans were prevented from serving on juries.

Eventually, Filiberto changed his name to Felix Tijerina and moved to Houston, Texas, where he took a job as a dishwasher, taught himself English, and began to save money.

#### HOW DID HE HANDLE THESE CHALLENGES?

Felix Tijerina worked his way from busboy, to waiter, to bank director and wealthy owner of a successful chain of Mexican restaurants. He was an astute businessman and entrepreneur and became a leading voice in civic organizations, including the Rotary Club and Chamber of Commerce, in Houston. He advocated assimilation with the Anglo-American business community as the way to further the rights of Mexican Americans and promote interethnic cooperation with Anglo Americans. Tijerina was active in LULAC, the League of United Latin American Citizens, which was founded in Corpus Christi, Texas, in 1929. He served as its president for an unprecedented four terms between 1956 and 1960.

When asked for advice about how to succeed in the United States, Tijerina replied, “Work hard, help yourself, help others, be a good citizen, take an active part in community affairs, and attend a church of your choice regularly.” However, he was criticized by those who favored more aggressive actions for his more conservative, assimilationist approach to gaining civil rights.

#### WHAT IMPACT DID THIS PERSON HAVE?

Felix Tijerina never forgot his experience as an immigrant without the ability to attend school. He was the financial backer and organizer of the “Little School of the 400,” a program which provided early education to Mexican and Mexican American children in order to

prepare them to enter the public school system. The preschool program taught the children 400 basic English words they would need to be successful in English-speaking schools. Started in the 1950s, the program served over 15,000 Spanish-speaking children in over 600 schools over the next decade. This education initiative received international acclaim and influenced President Lyndon Johnson's Head Start Initiative, which eventually served the children targeted by the Little School.

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### Resource Card



*Photo courtesy of Rosalie Santine Gould*

Name: Mabel Rose Jamison Vogel

Lifespan: 1905 - 1994

Home: Texas, Arkansas, Ohio, and Tennessee

#### WHAT CHALLENGES DID THIS PERSON FACE?

Miss Jamison was one of the teachers at the World War II concentration camp in Rohwer, Arkansas. Although she arrived with a limited understanding of what awaited her, she came nevertheless with full knowledge that the public resented her decision to work in the camp schools. The public felt that because the federal government was paying the camp teachers higher wages with which the Arkansas schools could not compete, the quality of the education in Arkansas public schools would suffer.

The following “Letter to the Editor” that was printed in the *Arkansas Gazette* was captioned, “Says the Government is Robbing American Children of Teachers.” The letter demonstrates the public sentiment of the time:

Had you ever thought of the serious position our schools are in? The draft is taking many of our men teachers and will take many more in the near future. The government has a “pet” down there at Rohwer where you will find the “cream of the crop” of our men and women teachers. Their pay is much higher than that of the average teacher and the men, no doubt, will be deferred from the draft. Full-blooded American children are being robbed of their teachers while they remain to teach the Japs. It is just another of those things, but is it right.

Federal wages for teachers in the camps were set at a national average, higher than that offered in the state of Arkansas. However, teachers in the camps had to also endure the harsh conditions. Miss Jamison was one of the few who stayed more than a few months in the camps.

#### HOW DID SHE HANDLE THESE CHALLENGES?

Life in the American concentration camps was difficult because she was living amongst Japanese Americans, whom she had been taught to distrust. However, she was able to understand, come to appreciate, and even grow close to her new students.

Some of the days when the wind blows sharp and cutting across my face as I trudge with leaden feet through black gumbo mud, or when the blazing, ruthless sun sears right through the ever-present parasol, it seems as though time has stopped. Then I ‘come to’ with a start and gaze at rows

of drab black barracks, piles of stove wood, lines of clothes, frozen and flapping stiffly in the north wind, a bent old man plodding slowly along, a few children scuttling from barrack unit to bath house – and wonder where am I? And what am I doing here? Why am I spending months – yes, now, even years – of my life behind this barbed wire fence with a race of people who were entirely strange to me until that January Sunday in 1943! Sometimes it has seemed so useless to try to stay. But the answer always comes back to me the same: I have learned to love them. They have ‘taken me in’ as one of them and have given me a place here with them in their hearts as we work and play and cry and laugh and wonder together.

#### WHAT IMPACT DID THIS PERSON HAVE?

Mabel Rose Jamison Vogel was able to inspire and educate the students in Rohwer, Arkansas. One of her major projects was to engage her classes in painting murals to brighten up the walls of the new community building, then under construction. Under her guidance, her students chose to depict the history of the Japanese American experience before, during, and after the incarceration experience.

In her journal, she summed up her reasons for executing the mural project:

A good painting is thing of lasting beauty. Long after the poster paint has peeled off the beaver boards, these murals, painted by these eight high school students will be remembered. For the story and history of the evacuation are not likely to be forgotten soon.

Over the years and in spite of her many moves, Mrs. Vogel held on to hundreds of cherished items made by students at Rohwer. She made donations of artifacts to the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History and the Japanese American National Museum and left many with Rosalie Gould, a friend in McGehee, Arkansas. These donations were made to insure that institutions and individuals would continue to educate future generations about this chapter in American history.

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### Resource Card



*National Archives and Records Administration, ARC 529026*

Name: Stand Watie (De-gado-ga)

Lifespan: 1806-1871

Home: Georgia, Indian Territory (Oklahoma)

#### WHAT CHALLENGES DID THIS PERSON FACE?

De-gado-ga, or “he stands on two feet”, who later adopted the name Stand Watie, was born on his father’s plantation in Cherokee territory in Georgia in 1806. At this time, Cherokees were facing increased pressure to give up their land from white settlers moving south and west. Many responded by adopting the ways of white settlers. Watie, who was three-quarters Cherokee, left his home at the age of twelve to attend Moravian Mission School, where he learned to read, write, and speak English. His family attended the Moravian Christian Church built in New Echota, the new capital of the Cherokee Nation. Following the implementation of the Cherokee Nation’s constitution, approved in 1827, Watie served as a clerk of the Cherokee Supreme Court and Speaker of the Cherokee National Council.

When, in 1830, the U.S. Congress passed the Indian Removal Act, there was great disagreement within the Cherokee nation about how to respond to the government’s mandate to move west of the Mississippi. Stand Watie, along with his uncle Major Ridge, signed the Treaty of New Echota, agreeing to cede Cherokee lands for a cash payment and a reservation in Indian Territory. This put him in direct opposition to John Ross, the principal leader of the Cherokee. His family faction was attempting to gain financial benefits for themselves, as well as take control of the tribe away from the anti-treaty leaders. They signed away the Cherokee lands to the government without having authority to do so, in violation of Cherokee law.

#### HOW DID HE HANDLE THESE CHALLENGES?

Stand Watie’s strategy, along with many Cherokee, was to show the civilized ways of the Cherokee nation to the U.S. government in the hopes that accommodation would bring more autonomy. The Cherokee, including Watie’s father David, sided with the U.S. government in its fight against the Creek Indians at Red Stick. The nation wrote a constitution, developed an alphabet, and participated in the plantation economy. Watie was a symbol of this accommodation: he was educated, gained wealth, and was a slaveholding planter. He signed the Treaty of New Echota, believing that it would be impossible to halt or even slow the flow of immigrants into Cherokee territory. The best strategy, Watie and his family agreed, was to

receive money for the lands before they were simply taken from the Cherokee nation by the government. Stand Watie, his brother, Elias Boudinot, uncle Major Ridge, and cousin, John Ridge, all signers of the treaty moved to the Indian territory (before the majority of eastern Cherokees) with their families in 1837. The U.S. army imposed the Treaty of New Echota even on the majority of Cherokees who did not agree with its signing. This massive forced migration, known as the Trail of Tears, occurred between 1838 and 1839. After arriving in Indian Territory, members of the anti-treaty majority met and agreed upon a death sentence, the penalty given by Cherokee law, for those who had agreed to the treaty without authorization. Elias Boudinot, Major Ridge, and John Ridge were all murdered, but Stand Watie was warned and escaped execution. The factions very slowly worked towards coexistence, and after six years, Watie was elected to the Tribal Council, where he served from 1845 until 1861.

The Civil War again aggravated the dissension to the Cherokee tribe. Stand Watie sided with the Confederacy during the Civil War and was commissioned a colonel. He raised and organized an all-Cherokee regiment that fought with the Confederacy during the war. His rival John Ross was sympathetic towards the Union, and although the Cherokee nation initially agreed to support the Confederacy, Ross later led his Cherokee supporters to ally with Union troops. Watie was promoted to brigadier general, the only American Indian to rise to that military rank on either side of the war. After the war, he continued his leadership role amongst the Southern Cherokee, serving as a delegate to the negotiation of the Cherokee Reconstruction Treaty of 1866. Following the destruction of the Civil War, he was unable to rebuild his wealth before his death in 1871.

#### WHAT IMPACT DID THIS PERSON HAVE?

Stand Watie and the signers of the Treaty of New Echota are often accused of betraying their nation by agreeing to removal to Indian Territory. It is not clear what might have happened if the treaty had not been signed. The Seminole, for example, participated in three long wars against the U.S. government before most tribe members moved to their reservation in Oklahoma prior to the Civil War. Watie stood up for what he believed was the most advantageous action, first for himself, his family. His ability to negotiate and surround himself with loyal friends enabled him to escape death at the hands of the anti-treaty faction. His later leadership position in the Confederate Army during the Civil War confirmed his dedication to his beliefs and way of life.

#### REFERENCES

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### Resource Card



*Gift of Nancy K. Araki,  
Japanese American National  
Museum (2000.88.1)*

Name: Michi Weglyn

Lifespan: 1926-1999

Home: New York, California, Arizona

#### WHAT CHALLENGES DID THIS PERSON FACE?

Michi Weglyn spent World War II in a concentration camp in Gila River, Arizona. More than thirty years later, the Vietnam War and Watergate brought many changes and questions about the government and about the United States' past to the forefront of social conscience. This reexamination of the past propelled Ms. Weglyn to research and take a new look at the historical evidence and explanations given for the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans.

In the preface of her groundbreaking book, *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps*, she wrote:

With profound remorse, I believed, as did numerous Japanese Americans, that somehow the stain of dishonor we collectively felt for the treachery of Pearl Harbor must be eradicated, however great the sacrifice, however little we were responsible for it. ... In an inexplicable spirit of atonement and with great sadness, we went with our parents to concentration camps.

#### HOW DID SHE HANDLE THESE CHALLENGES?

Working without pay for eight years, Ms. Weglyn spent years reading through dusty boxes of documents in the National Archives, at the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, and at other institutions. She was usually there when the doors opened in the morning, ate her sandwich at midday, and did not leave until closing time. She was consumed with searching for proof that there was no military necessity for the incarceration as the government had claimed. She received some of her best information from tips from curators and librarians. Other times she had to rely on her own growing awareness of what was important. When she found key documents, she waited in line at the copier machines, and then paid for the copies out of her own money.

“Curiosity led me into exhuming documents of this extraordinary chapter in our history,” Ms. Weglyn once said, “Among once-impounded papers, I came face-to-face with facts, some which left me greatly pained. . . . At a time when angry charges were being hurled at heads of state, the gaps of the evacuation era appeared more like chasms.”

#### WHAT IMPACT DID THIS PERSON HAVE?

Michi Weglyn’s book, *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America’s Concentration Camps*, is credited for helping fuel the redress and reparations movement for Japanese Americans incarcerated during World War II. It was the first major work on this history to be written by a Japanese American. Not only was her work important to the Japanese American community, she also inspired others to question, research and speak out about issues affecting all Americans. Ms. Weglyn’s research and that of other activist-scholars, made the difference for many Congressional skeptics and critics of redress. In 1988, then-President Reagan signed into law the Civil Liberties Act, through which more than 80,000 Japanese Americans received an official government apology and token reparations of \$20,000.

Japan scholar and former ambassador to Japan, Edwin O. Reischauer, described Ms. Weglyn’s book as a “truly excellent and moving book. . . . The story of the concentration camps for Japanese [Americans] has often been told, but usually with an emphasis on the silver lining. . . . Michi Weglyn concentrates instead on the other side of the picture. *Years of Infamy* is hard-hitting but fair and balanced. It is a terrible story of administrative callousness and bungling, untold damage to the human soul, confusion, and terror.”

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LESSON 3: INDIVIDUALS MAKING A DIFFERENCE  
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Complete the following questions as you read about the individual you were given to study:

1. Which individual did you study?
2. To what human rights violations were they responding?
3. How would you have felt in a similar situation?
4. What actions did they take in response to these events?
5. Why do you think he/she chose to act in this way?
6. What other options might he/she have had? (Brainstorm at least 2 other options)
7. What might you have done in a similar situation?

Complete the following questions after reading or hearing about other individuals:

8. Compare and contrast the actions of at least 3 people you have studied. How were their situations and actions similar? How were they different?

9. With which individual's actions, thoughts, or situation do you most identify? Why?

10. Whose actions do you think were most effective at making a difference? Why?

11. What are three characteristics that you feel these people shared that helped shape their responses?