

Lesson 3: Individuals Making a Difference

Resource Card



Gift of Frank S. Emi, Japanese American National Museum (96.109.35H)

Name: Frank Emi

Lifespan: 1916 –

Home: Los Angeles, California

WHAT CHALLENGES DID THIS PERSON FACE?

Born and raised in Los Angeles, California, Frank Emi expanded his family's produce business into a full-service grocery store. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, he was forced to sell the profitable business for six cents on the dollar. After the outbreak of World War II and the forced removal of all people of Japanese descent from the West Coast, Frank Emi and his family were sent to a concentration camp in Heart Mountain, Wyoming. Of this time, Emi remembers,

We arrived in Heart Mountain in the middle of a violent dust storm. You could not see further than 10 or 15 feet. That first winter was unpleasantly memorable. It was the coldest winter in Wyoming history. We were attired in southern California clothing. None of us even had a topcoat. The barracks did not get an inner wall of celotex until the middle of December. We had our first snowfall in late September.

I mention this to give you an idea of the harsh environment we were thrust into.

HOW DID HE HANDLE THESE CHALLENGES?

Japanese Americans in the concentration camps were required to answer a government questionnaire. Included in the list of questions were numbers 27 and 28, which asked whether inmates would forswear allegiance to the emperor of Japan and whether they would be willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States. Those who answered yes and were draft-eligible were drafted into the U.S. army.

Although Frank Emi was not eligible for the draft because he was married with children, he led the Fair Play Committee, a group committed to using civil disobedience to protest the incarceration of Japanese and Japanese Americans during World War II. Of that time, he recounts,

Resistance was not that far from the surface when, in January 1943, we were confronted with the loyalty questionnaire and its questions 27 and 28. Insult was added to injury. Am I willing to serve

in the armed forces of the United States? Sounded to me like they wanted to know if I wanted to volunteer. After this? Will I forswear allegiance to the Japanese emperor? The more I examined them, the more disgusted I became. This internment was treating us as though we were enemy aliens and not U.S. citizens. After studying the questionnaire with my younger brother, Art, I finally devised my answer. To both questions, I answered, 'under the present conditions and circumstances, I am unable to answer these questions.' That was how I felt. Art concurred.

My first act of resistance began innocently enough. Art and I hand-printed copies of my answer and described it as a suggested answer to the two questions. We posted these copies on mess hall doors and other public places through out camp.

When buses showed up to take army inductees for their physical examinations, some refused to show up. Frank Emi and six other leaders were convicted of conspiracy to evade the draft and of counseling others to evade the draft in federal court. They spent a total of 18 months in the Leavenworth federal penitentiary in Kansas before the ruling was overturned on December 1945 by the 10th circuit Court of Appeals.

WHAT IMPACT DID THIS PERSON HAVE?

Frank Emi and the Fair Play Committee offered a voice of dissent for the Japanese Americans at Heart Mountain. They empowered other inmates to look critically and question the legality of the incarceration and the draft. While at the Leavenworth federal penitentiary in Kansas, he remembers a conversation with his bunkmate, Guntaro Kubota:

We were sitting together one time, and we were talking about various things. He said, "You know, Emi, I will never forget this. I will never forget this fight that I have been in with your fight for principle. This will be the proudest thing that I will ever remember." ... He was an Issei, and over forty years of age. He didn't have to participate in this. He didn't have to be in prison. He was there with us, and his spirit was just as high as the rest of us.

In 1982, he joined the successful campaign for government redress and remains active in community affairs by continuing to speak about his experiences and the similarities between them and the events of September 11th, 2001.

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Lesson 3: Individuals Making a Difference

Resource Card



*Warren K. Leffler, photographer,
Library of Congress, LC-U9-
12470B-17*

Name: Fannie Lou Hamer

Lifespan: 1917-1977

Home: Mississippi

WHAT CHALLENGES DID THIS PERSON FACE?

Fannie Lou Hamer was the youngest of in a family of twenty children and grew up in poverty in the Mississippi Delta. Her family members worked as sharecroppers, and she was only able to attend school four months out of the year for six years.

When she attempted to register to vote, she was denied because she could not pass a test about the Mississippi State Constitution. She was threatened with the loss of her job and pursued by armed men who attempted to prevent her participation in the voter registration drive. This experience led her to become an active member of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). On her third try, she passed the test and became a registered voter. Fannie Lou Hamer participated in the Civil Rights Movement and drew attention to the violence and injustice faced by those who participated in the struggle for equal rights. She remembered that at first, “I figured that the white people must be right, but as I got older I said no, there’s something wrong, and if I ever get a chance I’m going to do something about it.” Even within the Civil Rights Movement, men held most of the leadership positions. Fannie Lou Hamer took up the challenge of leadership in both SNCC and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.

HOW DID SHE HANDLE THESE CHALLENGES?

Despite her limited time in school, Fannie Lou Hamer loved to read and continued to learn on her own. She, like other members of the SNCC, was determined to challenge policies that prevented African Americans from obtaining equality. This led her to protest voter registration policies and segregation in public places. On one of these occasions, she was arrested for sitting in a “whites only” waiting room in Winona, Mississippi, and then beaten so severely by police that she sustained permanent damage to her kidney and eye.

She was vice-chair of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), which challenged the Mississippi Democratic Party when, in 1964, it sent an all-white delegation to the Democratic National Convention. At the convention in Atlantic City, she addressed the credentials

committee in front of a national television audience and recounted her experiences of trying to register to vote in Sunflower County, Mississippi, concluding by stating that members of her group must be allowed to represent the state's Democrats. She drew national attention by emphatically asking, "Is this America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, where we are threatened daily because we want to live as decent human beings?" After this embarrassment to the national Democratic Party organization, no all-white delegations were sent to represent southern states.

WHAT IMPACT DID THIS PERSON HAVE?

Fannie Lou Hamer helped challenge voter registration procedures and enlisted many young African Americans in the fight for civil rights as a field secretary for the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee. She counseled other African Americans and helped them become registered voters. In addition, she drew national attention to the violence faced by civil rights workers and the need to integrate the Democratic Party in the southern states.

She was concerned with equal opportunities for all citizens, regardless of race or social class. She founded the Freedom Farms Corporation, a non-profit foundation, in 1968 to help poor farming families with land, social services, and educational grants. Later in her life, she gave attention to school desegregation issues, access to affordable child care, and availability of low-income housing.

At her funeral, Andrew Young, the former Ambassador to the United Nations and mayor of Atlanta, Georgia, said of Fannie Lou Hamer, "Mrs. Hamer was special, but she was also representative. She shook the foundations of this nation."

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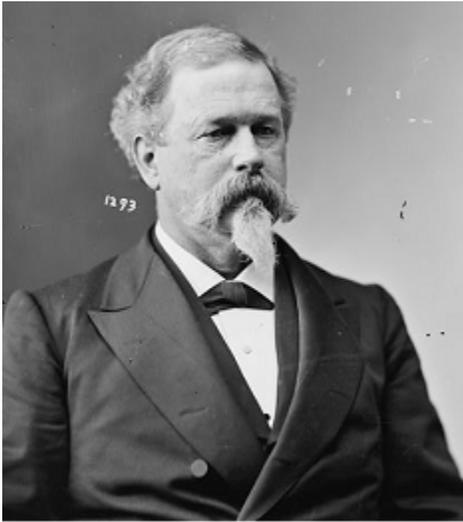
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Resource Card



*Brady-Handy Photograph Collection,
Library of Congress LC-BH832- 1293
(detail)*

Name: Joseph Roswell Hawley

Lifespan: 1826-1905

Home: North Carolina; Hartford, Connecticut;
Washington, D.C.

WHAT CHALLENGES DID THIS PERSON FACE?

Joseph Hawley was born in North Carolina in 1826, and moved with his family to Connecticut in 1837. In many ways, the United States of the mid-nineteenth century was divided geographically. Issues such as slavery, tariffs, and immigration split the country into sections – north, south, and even west. Hawley, having lived both in the south and the north, had witnessed slavery firsthand and was an ardent free-soiler, or anti-slavery spokesman, first as a lawyer, then as an editor, publisher, soldier, and politician.

He spent over twenty-five years as an elected official – first, as Republican governor of Connecticut in 1866, and then in the U.S. Congress, a representative and then a senator, between 1873 and his death in 1905. Among the issues he tackled in his career were slavery, civil service reform, women’s suffrage, immigration laws, tariffs, and the need for a stronger army to defend the borders of the United States.

HOW DID HE HANDLE THESE CHALLENGES?

Before the Civil War, Joseph Hawley was the publisher of the *Hartford Evening Press*; in 1867 he purchased the *Hartford Courant* and combined its operations with the *Evening Press*. This served as one of the most important Republican newspapers in the country. He served with the 1st and 9th Connecticut Infantry Regiments in the Civil War and was promoted to brigadier general in the Union army.

His family and his wife were also active in politics and social causes. His parents were both abolitionists, and his wife, Harriett Ward Foote Hawley, was the organizer and president of the Washington Auxiliary of the Women’s National Indian Association. Joseph and Harriet Hawley lived for a time in the progressive community of Nook Farm, Connecticut, where residents frequently discussed and took action regarding universal suffrage, abolition, and civil service reform.

Reverend Joseph Twitchell, a friend of the Hawleys, was involved with Yung Wing, the first Chinese graduate of Yale University, in bringing Chinese students to the United States to study. Joseph Hawley deeply believed that immigrants from all countries should be allowed to pursue their dreams in the United States. In 1870, when a letter to the Hartford Courant protested against the hiring of Chinese immigrant labor, Hawley blasted back, "If we did not want problems like these, we should not have put up the Stars and Stripes and invited all the world to come, be free, work and help make the continent of wilderness blossom like a rose." In Congress, he spoke out strongly against legislative efforts to restrict Chinese immigration, including the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Geary Act of 1892. He compared Chinese exclusion to the fugitive slave laws, stating, "An exclusion based upon race or color is unphilosophical, unjust and undemocratic." Despite Hawley's objections, the Chinese Exclusion Act received strong support from Democrats and many Republicans from western states. It passed in 1882, and its provisions were renewed until the law was overturned in 1943.

Later in his career, Senator Hawley served as chair of the Committee on Civil Service and advocated reform in the spoils system. He was also concerned about the strengthening of the U.S. military in the wake of the Spanish American War in 1898.

WHAT IMPACT DID THIS PERSON HAVE?

Reverend Dr. Parker said of Senator Hawley in 1915, "Only those who remember what displeasure and antipathy they incurred who... openly espoused the anti-slavery cause, can appreciate the moral courage of a young lawyer... in adopting and advocating opinions so distasteful to many of his friends, so repugnant to the major part of his townsmen, and apparently, so unfavorable to his professional prospects."

With respect to the exclusion of Chinese immigrants, Hawley again proved to be ahead of his time: "Let the proposed statue be read 100 years hence, dug out of the dust of ages and forgotten as it will be except for a line of sneer by some historian, and ask the young man not well read in the history of this country what was the reason for excluding these men and he would not be able to find it in the law." History has not forgotten the Chinese Exclusion Act, nor the lesson that racism can combine with economic interests to deny the promises of the Constitution.

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Pacific Citizen Archives, Japanese American National Museum

Name: Senator Daniel K. Inouye

Lifespan: 1924 -

Home: Honolulu, HI

WHAT CHALLENGES DID THIS PERSON FACE?

Senator Inouye was born and raised in Honolulu, Hawai'i, the son of Japanese immigrants.

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, he rushed into service as the head of a first-aid litter team. He saw a “lot of blood.” He did not go home for a week. In his autobiography, *Journey to Washington*, he remembers, “Like all Nisei [second generation Japanese Americans], I was driven by an insidious sense of guilt from the instant the first Japanese plane appeared over Pearl Harbor. Of course we had nothing to feel guilty about, but we all carried this special burden. We felt it in the streets, where white men would sneer as we passed. We felt it in school when we heard our friends and neighbors called Jap-lovers. We felt it in the widely held suspicion that the Nisei were a sort of built-in fifth column in Hawaii.”

HOW DID HE HANDLE THESE CHALLENGES?

In 1943 as a freshman in pre-medical studies at the University of Hawai'i, Inouye enlisted in the U.S. Army's 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the famed “Go for Broke” regiment of soldiers of Japanese ancestry. In Italy as the war was drawing to a close, Inouye displayed “extraordinary heroism” on April 21, 1945, near San Terenzo as he led his platoon through “formidable resistance” to capture a key ridge. His Medal of Honor Citation states in part:

“With complete disregard for his personal safety, Second Lieutenant Inouye crawled up the treacherous slope to within five yards of the nearest machine gun and hurled two grenades, destroying the emplacement. Before the enemy could retaliate, he stood up and neutralized a second machine gun nest. Although wounded by a sniper's bullet, he continued to engage other hostile positions at close range until an exploding grenade shattered his right arm. Despite the intense pain, he refused evacuation and continued to direct his platoon until enemy resistance was broken and his men were again deployed in defensive positions.”

He lost his right arm and spent 20 months recovering in a Michigan Army hospital. It was there that he made the decision to study law in order to effect social change in Hawai'i. Senator Inouye was honorably discharged with the rank of Captain and on his way home to Hawai'i, he stopped briefly in California where he decided to get a haircut. He entered an empty barbershop and remembers, ". . . a barber comes up to me and wants to know if I'm Japanese. Keep in mind I'm in uniform with medals and ribbons and a hook for an arm. I said, 'Well, my father was born in Japan.' The barber replied, 'We don't cut Jap hair.' I was tempted to slash him with my hook, but then I thought about all the work the 442nd had done and I just said, 'I feel sorry for you,' and walked out. I went home without a haircut."

He was first elected to the U.S. Senate in 1962 and in 1998 was re-elected for his seventh consecutive term. He is now the third most senior member of the U.S. Senate and is known for his distinguished record as a legislative leader.

For his distinguished military service, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the nation's second highest award for military valor, along with a Bronze Star, Purple Heart with cluster, and 12 other medals and citations. His Distinguished Service Cross was upgraded to the Medal of Honor, presented to him by President Clinton on June 21, 2000.

WHAT IMPACT DID THIS PERSON HAVE?

Senator Inouye worked with other members of Congress to eventually pass H.R. 422, the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which called for an official apology from the U.S. government and the payment of \$20,000 each to thousands of surviving inmates.

"Please remember that the story of my experiences during World War II is – by itself – not important," Senator Inouye wrote in 2003 to a girl who had visited him in his Washington office. "Much more significant are the values that the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and other segregated units represented: that patriotism and love of our great country are not limited to any ethnic group, and wartime hysteria must never again lead us to trample on our democratic principles."

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