

Fred Korematsu: “Don’t Be Afraid to Speak Up”

This lesson is designed to teach students about resistance to Executive Order 9066. As a young man Fred Korematsu refused to follow the Executive Order 9066. He was arrested in San Leandro and imprisoned. Ultimately he was sent to an internment camp, but he also filed a lawsuit against the US government claiming that the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans was unconstitutional. His became the landmark Supreme Court case, in which the majority of the Supreme Court ruled that internment was a wartime necessity and therefore constitutional. In reading the biography of Korematsu, provided by the Korematsu Institute of Civil Rights and Education, students also learn that his case was reopened in the early 1980’s. The film, *Of Civil Rights and Wrongs: the Fred Korematsu Story*, tell’s Korematsu’s story including the reversal of his conviction and his elevation to a civil rights hero as a recipient of the National Medal of Freedom in the 1990’s.

Lesson Steps:

1. Handout the biography of Fred Korematsu and the [Biography Timeline and Viewing Guide Student Worksheet](#).
2. Have students read the biography and put the ten events from Korematsu’s life in order.
3. Show the film, *Of Civil Rights and Wrongs: the Fred Korematsu Story*, and have students fill out the viewing guide.
4. Discuss the viewing questions with the class.

Extension Activities:

There is a very good on-line graphic biography for young people called, [Fred Korematsu: All American Hero](#). Korematsu was one of several Japanese Americans who filed court cases, including one by Gordon Hirabayashi. His stories and others are discussed in film, *Unfinished Business*. You may also want to introduce students to the NO-NO boys, those internees who refused to agree to the loyalty oath or US military service, many of whom were taken to the Tule Lake camp. These stories, including the history of the Redress and Reparations Movement which finally forced a government apology for internment, can be found in the on-line [Densho Encyclopedia](#).

Finally, if you want to make a thematic tie to other historical events, Marilyn and I have used an excellent film, *Divided We Fall*. This film, made by a young Sikh American, documents the hate crimes against American Sikhs after 9/11.