



# After Silence

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Civil Rights and the Japanese American Experience

## Teacher's Guide

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*Civil Rights and the Japanese American Experience*

A 30 minute video available for purchase or rental from Bullfrog Films.

Directed by Lois Shelton  
Produced by Foxglove Films, LLC

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## **A Study Guide for After Silence**

*by Lois Shelton*

### **Overview:**

This program provides insights into our nation's crisis following the attacks on September 11, 2001, by exploring the dynamics and consequences of a similar time of fear in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, through the story of the family of one American citizen, Dr. Frank Kitamoto. The past comes to life as Frank—who spent 3 1/2 years of his childhood in a United States internment camp during WWII—and five students from his island community develop archival photographic prints in the high school darkroom. Together Frank and the students discuss the need to safeguard constitutional rights for all.

### **Objective:**

This video and study guide offer students the opportunity to experience the point of view of a citizen whose own government denied his rights and identity as an American; to engage in discussion on civil rights, the Constitution, citizenship, and discrimination; and to develop important critical thinking skills about what it means to be an American in a time of uncertainty and fear.

### **Lesson I. Prejudice and Discrimination**

Prejudice against Japanese Americans before WWII developed into various forms of discrimination—social, economic, and legal.

*Objective:* To help students gain insight into the mutually reinforcing dynamics of prejudice and discrimination and how they can lead to unconstitutional behavior. The learner will be stimulated to make connections and comparisons with forms of discrimination based on prejudices of various kinds.

1. Explain the difference between “prejudice” and “discrimination.” Mention that prejudice (prejudging) is often stimulated by a feature or features that cannot be changed (such as skin color), while discrimination is the treatment that results.
2. Ask the students to identify three instances of prejudice and/or discrimination portrayed in the video.

### **Lesson II. Constitutional Rights on Paper and in Practice**

Many legal scholars and some Supreme Court Justices think that constitutional rights were violated when Japanese Americans were excluded from the West Coast and incarcerated on the basis of their ancestry.

*Objective:* By ascertaining what violations of the Bill of Rights pertain to the internment of American citizens, the learner will be able to see more clearly the value of those rights.

1. Have students write the violations of the Bill of Rights that occurred in the internment, state the reasons why they were violations, and defend their answers.

2. Compare what happened to the rights of Japanese Americans during WWII with the post-9/11 denial of rights of some people who were Arab American or Muslim.

### **Lesson III. Propaganda, Media and Peer Pressure in Times of Crisis**

*Objective:* The learner will be able to understand that in times of fear, people, including leaders and journalists, may exaggerate, purposely make false statements, or omit information. Students will also recognize the courage it takes for a person to speak out in times of crisis, even when the right to free speech is protected by the Constitution.

1. Discuss the government's version of key events that happened throughout the internment versus Frank's version, as demonstrated in the video.
2. Famed photographer Ansel Adams accepted the invitation of the Manzanar War Relocation Center to create a visual record of the camp because he wanted to use his photographic skills to show that these were loyal American citizens, many with sons and daughters serving in the U.S. military, making the best of a terrible situation, despite a great injustice done. But he was accused of being disloyal to the war effort. Discuss why Ansel Adams was criticized for depicting loyal Americans. Have students look at WWII newspaper articles and other media, and discuss how people of Japanese ancestry are depicted and described. Encourage the students to discuss the difficulty of expressing a perspective that is counter to that of the main stream, especially in a context of war.

3. Discuss the impact of the stand taken by newspaper publisher Walt Woodward and the ripple effect of his printing the news of Bainbridge Island Japanese Americans in their hometown throughout their internment.

#### **Lesson IV. The Silence after the Return of the Japanese Americans to their Homes**

*Objective:* The learner will be able to analyze the significance of silence in the early days after returning, and to understand that the silence must finally be broken to insure that future generations will not make the same mistakes.

1. Ask the students to imagine that they had just returned, shaken by 3 1/2 years of wrongful incarceration in an internment camp, to find someone riding their old bicycle. A friend who promised to store the bike moved away and sold it. What could they do or say?
2. Have the students discuss the impact of the internment on Frank's relationship with his father.

#### **Lesson V. Japanese American Redress**

*Objective:* The learner will be able to understand the importance of the Redress—including monetary payments and a formal apology—to both the internees and to the entire country.

1. Have the class find and discuss three important lessons that America learned.
2. Discuss events in our nation's history when our government has chosen to be silent about past mistakes.

## **Civics National Standards**

### **1. Civic Life, Politics And Government**

- *What are the nature and purposes of constitutions?*

### **2. Foundations of the Political System**

- *What are the distinctive characteristics of American society?*
- *What values and principles are basic to American constitutional democracy?*

### **5. Roles Of The Citizen**

- *What is citizenship?*
- *What are the rights of citizens?*
- *What are the responsibilities of citizens?*
- *What dispositions or traits of character are important to the preservation and improvement of American constitutional democracy?*
- *How can citizens take part in civic life?*

## **History National Standards**

### **8. Era 8: The Great Depression and World War II (1929-1945)**

- *The student understands the causes and course of World War II, the character of the world at home and abroad, and its reshaping of the U.S. role in world affairs.*

### **9. Era 9: Postwar United States (1945 to Early 1970s)**

- *The student understands domestic policies after World War II.*
- *The student understands the struggle for racial and gender equality and the extension of civil liberties.*

### **10. Era 10: Contemporary U.S. (1968 to Present)**

- *The student understands recent developments in foreign and domestic policy.*
- *The student understands economic, social, and cultural developments in contemporary United States.*

## **Additional Resources:**

*Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians* (paperback)  
University of Washington Press, 1997.

*Farewell to Manzanar* by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston (paperback) Bantam Books

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/experience/index.html>

[http://www.archives.gov/exhibit\\_hall/charters\\_of\\_freedom/bill\\_of\\_rights/bill\\_of\\_rights.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibit_hall/charters_of_freedom/bill_of_rights/bill_of_rights.html)

<http://www.densho.org>



## The Making of **After Silence**

I'm often asked how this video came about. My short answer is "almost by accident." Actually, there's a lot more to it.

In the spring of 2001, the Bainbridge Island Historical Society was awarded a grant by the Washington State Legislature's Civil Liberties Public Education Program, to fund a WW II exhibit for the island's museum. The exhibit would include a video documenting Dr. Frank Kitamoto's first-person account of the first Japanese-American exclusion following the attacks on Pearl Harbor, and its repercussions on his family and community on Bainbridge Island. Joan Piper, BIHS Executive Director, knew of my award-winning films and videos done for Foxglove Films, and asked me to produce the video portion of the grant.

It sounded easy. Then came the attacks of September 11, 2001, which changed everything. Galvanized by the ensuing events, I created, with the blessings of Frank and the Historical Society, over the course of nine months, a second and much more ambitious documentary, "After Silence".

This new video aimed to address the wider subject of fear in a time of national crisis and followed several Bainbridge High School

students as they began to come to terms with the issues of propaganda by those in power, including the media, and the subsequent erosion of our civil liberties in an atmosphere of silence encouraged by a governmental message that seemed to say, “To question is to be unpatriotic.”

As I thought about this new video, I imagined being a WWII-era teen-ager on Bainbridge Island. Suddenly, the desk next to you at school is empty, and all your classmates of Japanese descent have disappeared. I wanted to go back and retrace those events through the eyes of Bainbridge High School students of today.

I gathered five students from advanced placement classes, each of them intelligent, thoughtful, and articulate. Third-year Japanese Language Studies teacher, Kristin Henshaw, became the high school advisor on the project. I gave the students a video camera and let them film one another during the preparatory sessions as we batted around the question: “If we give up all our rights in order to be safe, do we really have security?”

My role was to be a listener, not an authority figure—this had to be a—cooperative venture. I encouraged the students to develop their own critical thinking on the subject matter of the documentary, and to speak from their own individual perspectives as to the effects of September 11, 2001, and the ensuing parallels

with the events following the attacks on Pearl Harbor 60 years earlier.

“After Silence” has become the centerpiece of the museum’s WWII exhibit, offering to visitors and scholars alike a look at the events that have so deeply affected the history of one small island for over 60 years. It is a rich, first-person historical account of the unjust exclusion of a vital part of the island’s community, and captures the zeitgeist of the same community two generations afterward in a similar time of national crisis. There are still unknown lessons to be examined and contemplated from this dark chapter in our nation’s history.

- *Lois Shelton*



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