

One Nation, Indivisible

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Barbara Yasui · 3 days ago 



What drew me to this work of art?

I was looking for works of art related to the Japanese American incarceration during World War II. I knew that Dorothea Lange had taken many photographs of Japanese Americans during that time. This photograph was particularly compelling, because the subject was Japanese American school children (who were American citizens & presumably NOT spies) demonstrating their loyalty to the United States, even as the U.S. government was preparing to incarcerate them in prison camps.

What information were you able to find out about this work?

Lange was an American photographer known for her documentary style of photography. She is well known for her photographs of migrant workers during the Great Depression, particularly her photograph, *Migrant Mother*. In 1942 she was hired by the War Relocation Authority to photograph Japanese neighborhoods, “processing centers”, and “camp facilities” (benign-sounding euphemisms for prison camps).

This photograph was taken in April, 1942, at Raphael Weill public school in San Francisco. The school was located at Geary and Buchanan Streets, in the heart of S.F.’s Japan Town. The photograph was taken after President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which authorized the forced removal of people of Japanese ancestry living on the West Coast to prison camps, but before people were removed from their homes.

Lange was disturbed by the racial and civil rights issues that were raised by the incarceration, and she

found herself at odds with her employer and the U.S. government. Her photographs raised questions about loyalty and patriotism, and often juxtaposed scenes of human dignity and courage with images showing the indignities of prison camp life. Many of her photographs were censored by the federal government.

If you were to teach with this work, what aspects would you like to introduce to your students?

In addition to their observations about the photograph, I would like participants to think about deeper questions such as:

- Who is an American? What do Americans look like?
- How do Americans demonstrate their loyalty to the United States?
- What can happen when American citizens look like the “enemy”?

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Sarah Braxton · 6 hours ago 

Barbara -

I appreciate the way you move directly into the deeper questions that you want your students to consider. How do you think they could demonstrate what they have learned in a summative way?

Also, did you see the Library of Congress' collection of Ansel Adams' photos?
The Library of Congress also has a Teaching Guide for the collection.

Perhaps you can use these!

Sarah

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