

› › › LESSONS AND ACTIVITIES

CAN IT HAPPEN IN AMERICA? TAKING SOCIAL ACTION

OBJECTIVES:

- Students develop and share informed points of view on a variety of subjects/events and marshal evidence in support of a thesis and related claims, including information and explanation about all relevant perspectives. (*California Content Standards for English-Language Arts, Grades 9-10, 11-12, Listening and Speaking Standard 2.0*)
- Students analyze the divergent paths of American people, their contributions and the challenges they faced. (*California Content Standards for History-Social Science, Grade 8, Standards 8.7, 8.8, 8.11*)

ACTIVITY:

This activity allows students to seek accurate and complete information about events in American history. By investigating evidence from the past, students can make informed decisions to stand against injustice in the present and future.

Working in groups of five, students are provided information about a particular manifestation of racism/oppression in America.

Primary source documents might include:

- Jim Crow Laws
- Executive Order 9066
- Chinese Exclusion Act
- The Indian Removal Act

These primary source documents are available in the Teach section of the Museum of Tolerance Teachers' Guide web site. Teachers may select other historical documents that describe the subjugation or exclusion of a particular group.

Students read the information and discuss it. Begin with a brief description of the document reviewed by your group, and conduct further research to answer the following questions:

- *When and where was your document written?*
- *What was the stated intent of the policy? What was the outcome?*
- *Who was the primary group targeted by this policy/practice? Who else do you think was affected? How?*
- *Who was responsible for enacting this policy/practice? Were those responsible aware of the consequences? How did they justify their actions?*
- *Who, if anyone, intervened or protested this policy/practice?*
- *What were the risks of intervening in or protesting the policy/practice? What were the benefits?*

Call on various student groups to report their findings and responses to other groups.

PRODUCT/APPLICATION:

Students review information about events in U.S. history and discuss and analyze the causes and the consequences. Students understand the different paths, contributions and challenges encountered by diverse groups of Americans.

EXTENSION:

Students (especially older or more advanced students) discuss or write in response to the following question:

You have just examined and shared information about many examples of injustice and discrimination that have occurred in U.S. history. Write a composition in which you explain the causes and consequences of one or more of these events. What generalizations can you make about the policies/practices studied and the on-going struggle for human rights and social justice? To what extent do similar struggles exist today for some Americans?

This lesson was developed from work by Pamula Hart and Jim Rodriguez.



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