Integrating Asian American Narratives into Elementary Social Studies

Instructional topics/themes: Immigration, Civil Rights, Labor Rights, Interracial Alliances

When teaching about Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers...


Missing from this narrative are Asian American laborers, particularly in California, who worked alongside Mexican migrants and were essential to agricultural development in the West. In the famed farmworker march from Delano to Sacramento in 1966 and subsequent grape boycott, Filipino and Mexican workers joined together: Cesar Chavez’ National Farm Workers Association merged with the Filipino Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) to form the UFW – a fact not portrayed in popular tradebooks. Braun’s (1996) Cesar Chavez: Fighting for Farmworkers includes describes the Filipinos’ initiation of the Delano grape strike and later solidarity between Filipinos and Chicanos, facts omitted in the vast majority of picture books about Cesar Chavez. Altman's (1996) The Importance of Cesar Chavez dedicates much of its section on Filipino farmworkers to the life of Filipino AWOC and UFW leader Larry Itliong. The free Teaching Tolerance video Viva la Causa includes interviews with UFW leaders such as Chicana Dolores Huerta and Filipino Andy Imutan; while Viva la Causa contains some strong language, its combination of historical film, interviews, and reenactments are particularly compelling for older elementary children. The short documentary Delano Manongs (Aroy, 2014) focuses on the forgotten narratives of Filipino immigrant laborers, known as the manongs.

Visit http://www.tolerance.org/kit/viva-la-causa to order Viva La Causa from Teaching Tolerance
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Instructional topics/themes: Immigration, Civil Rights, School Segregation

When teaching about the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s...

The civil rights movement of the 1960s is often highlighted in elementary social studies but limited to stories of Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, and Ruby Bridges. Consider expanding students' understanding of school segregation based on race, ethnicity, and language by introducing them to the segregation experienced by Mexican American Sylvia Mendez (Separate is Never Equal, Sylvia & Aki) and Chinese Americans Mamie Tape and Martha Lum. Older students can research Asian Americans including Yuri Kochiyama, Grace Lee Boggs, and Richard Aoki who were inspired by the Black Panthers and the Black Power Movement. Fred Korematsu (mentioned in Rosalie’s WWII vignette) won a Supreme Court case arguing the unconstitutionality of Japanese American incarceration, is a civil rights leader who won a Presidential Medal of Freedom but whose story is often untold. Korematsu's legacy is the subject of a documentary, lesson plans, books, and a graphic novel.

Korematsu Institute http://www.korematsuinstitute.org/curriculum/

"I want to go to school": The case of Tape v. Hurley

"We have always lived as Americans": Mamie Tape's Story
http://chineseamerican.nyhistory.org/we-have-always-lived-as-americans/

Chinese American Women: A history of resilience and resistance
https://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/chinese/31.html

Equally Present: Remembering Gong and Martha Lum
http://hyphenmagazine.com/magazine/issue-26-south-spring-2013/equally-present

Documenting Brown 3: Gong Lum v. Rice
http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/osi04.soc.ush.civil.gonglum/documenting-ibrowni-3-igonglum-v-ricei/