

## THEMATIC GUIDE

### Looking Closely at the Japanese American Redress Movement

The **Legal and Social Histories of Reparations** assignment invites students to choose a reparations movement in history or present-day to study in depth. This supplemental resource outlines specific entry points of learning for students interested in studying the Japanese American Redress Movement.

Students can focus their investigations of the Japanese American Redress Movement in a wide variety of ways. Below are some themes you might offer students as starting points for their exploration of the movement:

- Students can focus their study on how the **U.S. government and Executive Order 9066 violated the constitutional rights** of people of Japanese descent during WWII. By centering this theme, students will develop an understanding of how people of Japanese descent resisted Executive Order 9066.
- **Students can conduct a historical analysis** by investigating the circumstances that created the conditions for the Japanese American Redress Movement to emerge and examining key social, political, and legal factors. In doing so, they might focus on illuminating the roles of art, literature, research, archival activism, and community organizing in shaping consciousness and laying the groundwork necessary to build the Redress Movement.
- Students can explore the **significance of the U.S. government's apology** in the aftermath of grave injustice, exploring the apology's political, social, and ethical implications, as well as its role in historical accountability and reconciliation.
- Students can **zoom in on a specific aspect** of the Japanese American Redress Movement. For example, students could center their investigations around:
  - **How the CWRIC was formed** and the roles of key stakeholders on the Commission. Students could **analyze CWRIC findings** that uncover the constitutional violations and injustices experienced by those incarcerated under Executive Order 9066.
  - **The key groups involved** in the fight for Japanese American redress, including the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), the National Coalition for Redress/Reparations (NCRR), and the National Council for Japanese American Redress (NCJAR). Students can compare and contrast these organizations' definitions of redress, their influences, and their organizing strategies, evaluating how ideological, regional, and tactical differences shaped their approaches to advocacy.
  - **The exclusions and limitations of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988:** Students can identify who did not receive reparations and the consequences of these omissions

as well as critically examine the impact of the Redress Movement on affected communities and broader civil rights advocacy.

- **The role of visual media as it relates to the representation and interpretation of the Japanese American Redress Movement:** Students can analyze how certain images become iconic representations of historical events, exploring the factors that contribute to their prominence. They can also assess the limitations of defining history through a narrow selection of images, considering how this practice can obscure complexities, marginalize alternative narratives, and shape public memory.
- **The role of testimonies in the Japanese American Redress Movement:** Students can examine the strategies that organizers used to gain testifiers' trust and commitment to sharing their personal experiences during the Redress Movement. They might analyze the significance of this "buy-in," exploring the personal, cultural, and political stakes involved in public testimony and its role in advancing collective advocacy efforts and bridging generations.
- **The "unheard" voices:** Students can also focus their investigation on the "unheard" voices, exploring the significance of the marginalization of wartime stories that do not fit neatly into patriotic narratives, and the ways in which forms of protest can demand or insist upon making stories, lives, and subjecthood legible.