

## WORLD WAR II ALIEN ENEMY CONTROL PROGRAM CURRICULUM GUIDE AND LESSON PLANS

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### LESSON PLAN FOURTEEN: *“The Myth of Voluntary Internment”*

APPROPRIATE GRADES/COURSES: 8-14, U.S. History, Civics, American Government, Political Science

#### TOPIC BACKGROUND SUMMARY:

During World War II, the US government interned 31,275 persons of German, Italian, and Japanese ethnicity in Department of Justice and military camps located throughout the United States. The internment was carried out pursuant to the Alien Enemies Act and related Presidential Proclamations issued by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. (Please review “Lesson Plan One” for general background regarding the internment program.) Included in this number are so-called “voluntaries”--family members of enemy alien internees who joined a spouse or parent at a family internment camp. These family members were frequently American-born children. The one parent who was not originally interned, typically the mother, was often also a native-born or naturalized American citizen.

Once fathers were arrested, daily life for the family left behind became difficult. (See Lesson Plan 11 re: the Eiserloh Family.) During the 1940s, men were the primary wage-earners and controlled the family finances. Women stayed home to care for the family and do domestic chores. Most internees were immigrants who had been in the U.S. for years but had not yet obtained their citizenship. (Citizenship took at least five years to obtain and required much study.) Suddenly, husbands were taken for no known reason, for an indefinite period, to places unknown. Life had to go on, however, and the bills had to be paid, including mortgages or rent. Family financial problems were compounded by the fact that their assets were frozen by the U.S. government. On March 11, 1942, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9095 creating the Office of the Alien Property Custodian. That order gave discretionary, plenary authority over all alien property to the Property Custodian.

In addition, to financial problems, many families also faced a hostile community. Friends and neighbors began to shun them, even fellow Germans, Italians, or Japanese who were fearful of what might happen to them if they communicated with persons who had a family member interned. Men also struggled when wives were taken. They still had to work, but had children to care for. Some relied on the kindness of families and friends, but others actually placed their children in orphanages. In other cases, when both parents were taken, children became wards of the state and ended up in orphanages. Eventually, many families found themselves destitute and stigmatized. Depending on the locale, welfare was not always an option and many proud immigrants disliked being dependent. Of course, the agony of separation from their family members and fear of the

unknown was a constant. Individuals were interned in remote locations without regard to their residences, so family visits were rare. Internees and their spouses wrote letters constantly, pleading with the government to be reunited.

In 1942, recognizing the developing problems for families left behind, the U.S. Government created family camps in Seagoville and Crystal City, Texas. Families were also housed at Ellis Island, although family groups were separated by sex. Families had to apply to be accepted at the family camps and many were more than willing to do so. Seagoville eventually became a women's facility and Crystal City was the family camp to which thousands were sent. Japanese, German, and Italian aliens and their families from the U.S. and also fifteen Latin American countries lived in Crystal City, where they awaited an unknown fate. Once they were accepted to the camps, release was difficult. Family members became true internees. Years passed behind barbed wire. With assets frozen and no source of income, homes and other property were plundered and lost. Precious family belongings were taken from abandoned homes. However, the families were together and to them, that was the most important.

ESTIMATED TIME OF COMPLETION OF LESSON PLAN: One class period

#### STUDENT OBJECTIVES:

Review and understand the Alien Enemies Act and related Presidential Proclamations 2525, 2526, 2527.

Review and understand Executive Order 9095.

Understand the financial and emotional ramifications of having a husband/father, wife/mother or both arrested and interned.

Understand the internment process (see also "Lesson Plan One").

Understand the ramifications of the denial of Constitutional rights to the internees

Understand what happens to a community when internment is possible and when community members are interned, including the affect of exercising Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Assembly.

Understand life in the camps and why, when faced with a life behind barbed wire, families preferred camp life to separation.

Learn about the system of internment camps the Department of Justice operated in the U.S.

#### MATERIALS:

Printed copies of the **Topic Background Summary** (see above)

Printed copies of **Executive Order 9095** (see below)

Printed copies of the **Alien Enemies Act** (see "Lesson Plan One")

Printed copies of the **First Amendment** to the Constitution re: Freedom of Speech and Assembly (see below)

Printed copies of **Letter to Franklin Delano Roosevelt** by Theo Graber (for

access, see: [http://www.gaic.info/images\\_real/graber/fdr.htm](http://www.gaic.info/images_real/graber/fdr.htm))

## TEACHER PREPARATION:

Before unit begins:

1. Distribute above materials. Instruct students to read materials as homework. Teacher may also visit the following websites, review case studies, and print copies of specific studies for students to read, or give students instructions to read case studies online at the sites listed in the **Online/Media Sources** section of Lesson Plan One.

2. Prepare list of discussion questions surrounding family internment. Some suggested questions:

Were the families who applied to go to the family camps truly “voluntaries?”

Would it have been better for the government to intern entire families?

What obstacles would a family face if their assets were suddenly frozen and all sources of income terminated?

Why did the government feel the creation of the Alien Property Custodian was necessary?

What legitimate purposes were served by such a law? Such purposes could include the desire to limit the funds going to organizations which were enemies of the U.S.

Do you think the government anticipated what would happen to families of internees when the law was issued? Should it have? Was the law too broad?

In times of war, fear can make people do things they would not ordinarily do. If you were a friend of someone whose father or mother was arrested and your parents told you it was because they were spies, what would you do?

How would you feel if your parent(s) were taken away? Or your friends?

Would you rather be in an internment camp together or separated? What do you think it felt like for a child to be interned? For an adult?

Do you think the US government’s decision to limit the due process afforded enemy aliens took the affect on families into consideration? Should it have been? Are such actions justified to protect national security?

3. Prepare a list of discussion questions surrounding the freedom of speech/assembly issues. Some suggested questions:

Do you think that individuals should be able to discuss freely issues relating to a war even if they are in opposition to the U.S. government’s position?

Do you think individuals should be interned because of what they might have said about their homeland or its leader during the war?

Do you think membership in an ethnic club should be prohibited if the U.S. government is at war with the country from which the membership originally emigrated?

Should attendance during WWII of German, Italian or Japanese Americans at social club gatherings have been viewed with suspicion? Should it have been grounds for internment?

## PRE UNIT STUDENT HOMEWORK:

Read copies of **Topic Background Summary** (see above)

Read copies of **First Amendment** (see below)

Read copies of the **Alien Enemies Act** (see Lesson Plan One)

Read copies of **Executive Order 9095** (see below)

Read copies of **Graber Letter**

Draft a letter from mother, father or child to the internee explaining home life since the person was arrested, or, draft a letter to the President explaining why you want the family to be reunited in an internment camp, or draft a letter from an internee to family members expressing their feelings about being interned.

(Optional) Ask students to visit any of the Web sites listed in the Online/Media Sources section in Lesson Plan One. Have them review at least three enemy alien family case histories.

(Optional) Ask students to visit any of the Web sites lists in the Online/Media Sources section in Lesson Plan One. Have them review the materials regarding Department of Justice Internment Camps, especially the Crystal City Family Internment Camp. See, for example, [http://www.gaic.info/internment\\_camp.html](http://www.gaic.info/internment_camp.html)

## PERIOD ONE--CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

### For the teacher and students

Discuss what it means to be interned and what it means to be left behind.

Use questions set forth under Teacher Preparation above for discussion.

Intermittently have students read aloud the letters done as homework, to trigger further discussion. If a student wrote a letter supposedly coming from a parent, child, internee, community member or government representative, the student will take the part of that individual when reading the letter. Other students can ask questions to foster further discussion, as appropriate, and the author of the letter will “stay in character” for the response.

## KEY TERMS/CONCEPTS:

See Lesson Plan One – “The World War II Alien Enemy Control Program,” for a glossary of key Enemy Alien terms and concepts.

## THE FIRST AMENDMENT:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 9095: ESTABLISHING THE OFFICE OF ALIEN PROPERTY CUSTODIAN, Franklin D. Roosevelt, March 11, 1942:

By virtue Of the authority vested in me by the Constitution, by the Trading with the Enemy Act of October 6, 1917, as amended, by the First War Powers Act, 1941, and as President of the United States, it is hereby ordered as follows:

1. There is hereby established in the Office for Emergency Management of the Executive Office of the President the Office of Alien Property Custodian, at the head of which shall be an Alien Property Custodian appointed by the President. The Alien Property Custodian shall receive compensation at such rate as the President shall approve and in addition shall be entitled to actual and necessary transportation, subsistence, and other expenses incidental to the performance of his duties. Within the limitation of such funds as may be made available for that purpose, the Alien Property Custodian may appoint assistants and other personnel and delegate to them such functions as he may deem necessary to carry out the provisions of this Order.

2. All power and authority conferred on the President by Sections 3(a) and 5(b) of the Trading with the Enemy Act of October 6, 1917, as amended, and by Sections 301 and 302 of Title III of the First War Powers Act, 1941, approved December 18, 1941, except such powers and authority as were delegated to the Secretary of the Treasury by Executive Orders issued prior to February 12, 1942, and to the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System by Executive Order No. 8843 of August 9, 1941 (which powers and authority shall continue to be vested in and exercised by the Secretary of the Treasury and the Board of Governors respectively), are hereby delegated to and vested in the Alien Property Custodian. The memorandum of February 12, 1942, delegating to the Secretary of the Treasury certain powers and authority under said sections, is hereby revoked and canceled. Any and all action heretofore taken by the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System after February 11, 1942, in pursuance of Executive Order No. 8843 of August 9, 1941, is hereby confirmed and ratified. In the exercise of the authority herein delegated, the Alien Property Custodian shall be subject to the provisions of Executive Order No. 8839 of July 30, 1941, and shall designate a representative to the Board of Economic Warfare in accordance with Section 6 thereof.

3. Any property, or interest therein, of any foreign country or a national thereof shall vest in the Alien Property Custodian whenever the Alien Property Custodian shall so direct; and, in the case of any property, or interest therein, subject to the control of the Secretary of the Treasury, when the Alien Property Custodian shall notify the Secretary of the Treasury in writing that he has so directed, the Secretary of the Treasury shall release all control of any such property, or interest therein, to the Alien Property Custodian.

4. Any outstanding order, proclamation, regulation, ruling, license, or instruction issued pursuant to, or relating to the administration of, any power or authority vested in the Alien Property Custodian by this Order shall remain in effect unless and until amended or revoked by the Alien Property Custodian.