



TITLE

HELEN ZIA AND THE ORIGINS OF MODERN ASIAN AMERICAN ACTIVISM



GRADE LEVEL: PRIMARY AUDIENCE - HIGH SCHOOL.

ALL PROVIDED MATERIALS CAN BE ADJUSTED TO BE AGE-APPROPRIATE FOR ALL GRADE LEVELS.

DISCIPLINE: History

TOPIC: Helen Zia; Vincent Chin Civil Rights Case.

STANDARDS: United States History Content Standards: Era 10, Standards 2 (Economic, Social, and Cultural Developments in Contemporary United States | The Roadmap - Educating for American Democracy: Theme 1 (Civic Participation), Theme 5 (Institutional and Social Transformation)

OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able to

- Describe specific events in Helen Zia’s life that illustrate her activism; identify other figures who are important in the growth of APIA activism; expand their understanding of what it means to be an “American” activist.
- Explore ways in which they might strive to improve the lives of others and the society around them.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- How does Helen Zia's life exemplify the desire to bring about a better life for all in America?

KIT INCLUDES:

- Background Reading for Educator
- Glossary of Terms
- Academic Readings
- Historical Sources
- PowerPoint Slides
- Video Links
- Activities



CREDIT AUTHOR AND CONTACT: *DIANA KIM, 1882 FOUNDATION*

RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 9, 2020
LAST UPDATE: JUNE 7, 2022



THIS LESSON PLAN FOCUSES ON:

Activist Helen Zia who was involved in advocating for the Vincent Chin civil rights case in the 1980s. She is a successful journalist, serving as executive editor for Ms. magazine. She was a witness in the court case Perry v. Schwarzenegger which legalized same-sex marriage in California. She is also an author and public speaker.

INTRODUCTION

- **Class activity:** Name as many Asian-American activists, figures, or key events in history as possible.
- Depending on the demographics, age, and local curriculums, the students' input will vary. The point of this exercise is to expose to students the lack of representation in their current curriculum.

DIRECT INSTRUCTION:

- [A presentation](#) is available to be edited and used at the instructor's leisure with a [note sheet](#) for the video on Helen Zia's career.
- **Helen Zia's Life and Career**
-There is a short video (4:34) available about Helen Zia's career, featuring the Vincent Chin civil rights case. It is a good introduction to Helen Zia, who provides her own commentary on her life events in the video.
- **Vincent Chin Civil Rights Case**
-There is a short video available about the Vincent Chin case, told by Asian-Americans. The instructor can choose to show the video to explain the Vincent Chin case or use the available resources to explain the case themselves.

GUIDED PRACTICE/ INDEPENDENT PRACTICE:

- Examine periodicals and other sources about Helen Zia and Vincent Chin to fill out a worksheet or complete a general digital scavenger hunt on various Asian-American activists or do more in-depth research on Helen Zia.
- Introducing other Asian-American activists along with Helen Zia digital scavenger hunt.

CLOSURE:

- Have a discussion with the class about the people they chose to make profiles for.



CREDIT AUTHOR AND CONTACT: DIANA KIM, 1882 FOUNDATION

RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 9, 2020
LAST UPDATE: JUNE 7, 2022





LESSON REFLECTION:

The point of this lesson is to expose students to different leaders in the United States and the various authentic ways they can create an impact. It aims to motivate them to learn or seek out other untaught leaders in the United States.

LIST OF POSSIBLE RESOURCES

All listed resources are available in a Google Drive to ensure accessibility for all.

ON HELEN ZIA:

Audio, Video

"Opening Plenary: Facing the Future." Speech, August 27, 1992. Opening Plenary: Facing the Future. C-SPAN. First broadcast August 27, 1992.

Hosted by AAJA.

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4993436/user-clip-helen-zia>

This involves an iconic introduction where Helen Zia first comes out professionally to the public. In the speech, she discusses and addresses racially-biased journalism. Helen Zia's part is from 13:35 to 26:04. 18:25 is the recommended start time.

"Helen Zia." Video file. YouTube. Posted by Rick Quan, September 23, 2013.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-gcBk2ixxY>

This video features Helen Zia recounting landmark events of her life, discussing her childhood, activist days, life as a journalist, and her marriage.

Periodicals

By Helen Zia. "Another American Racism: Violence Against Asians Goes Unnoticed." New York Times (1923-Current File), Sep 12, 1991

<https://search.proquest.com/docview/108619018?accountid=184156>

The newspaper article demonstrates Helen Zia's journalistic application to her advocacy for Asian American rights.



ON HELEN ZIA:

Print

Zia, Helen. Asian American Dreams. New York, USA: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000.

Helen Zia's book was an amazing resource to work with as it gave a personal insight into her life and her analysis of activist movements. Photographs and excerpts were used to illustrate the Asian-American community, the Vincent Chin Case, and her struggles with her LGBT identity. Zia also gave a walk through some historic events and activist events that went on during her life.

Website, E-Sources

Shih, Gerry. "Same-Sex Marriage Case, Day 5: Children." New York Times. Jan 15, 2010.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1s8k6NDL2uQgdUxQE380h4cSTP5NG5LMb/view?usp=sharing>

Provides a summary of Helen Zia's contributions as a witness for the Perry v. Schwarzenegger Supreme Court case.



CREDIT AUTHOR AND CONTACT: DIANA KIM, 1882 FOUNDATION

RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 9, 2020
LAST UPDATE: JUNE 7, 2022



ON VINCENT CHIN:

Audio, Video

NBC Asian America, Jubilee Project, and Wallace H. Coulter Foundation.

"Voices: Who Is Vincent Chin?"

Video file. NBC News. May 10, 2016.

Accessed February 16, 2020.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/video/voices-who-is-vincent-chin-681994819882>.

The video clip aided in illustrating the significance of the Vincent Chin case. His case was a monumental one for Asian-Americans, allowing the Asian-Americans featured on camera to tell his story and use their voice in activism.

Periodicals

By JUDITH CUMMINGS Special to The New York Times. "Detroit Asian-Americans Protest Lenient Penalties for Murder." New York Times (1923-CurrentFile), Apr 26, 1983.

<https://search.proquest.com/docview/122210297?accountid=184156>.

This newspaper article describes the emergence of the Asian-Americans of Detroit protesting for a just sentence of the murderer of Vincent Chin.



ON VINCENT CHIN:

Websites, E-Sources

Wu, Frank H. "Why Vincent Chin Matters." New York Times. Last modified June 22, 2012. Accessed February 9, 2020.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/23/opinion/why-vincent-chin-matters.html>

Contextualizes the gravity of the case as an Asian-American civil rights court case that sparked a mobilization of the Asian-American community.



CREDIT AUTHOR AND CONTACT: DIANA KIM, 1882 FOUNDATION

RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 9, 2020
LAST UPDATE: JUNE 7, 2022

