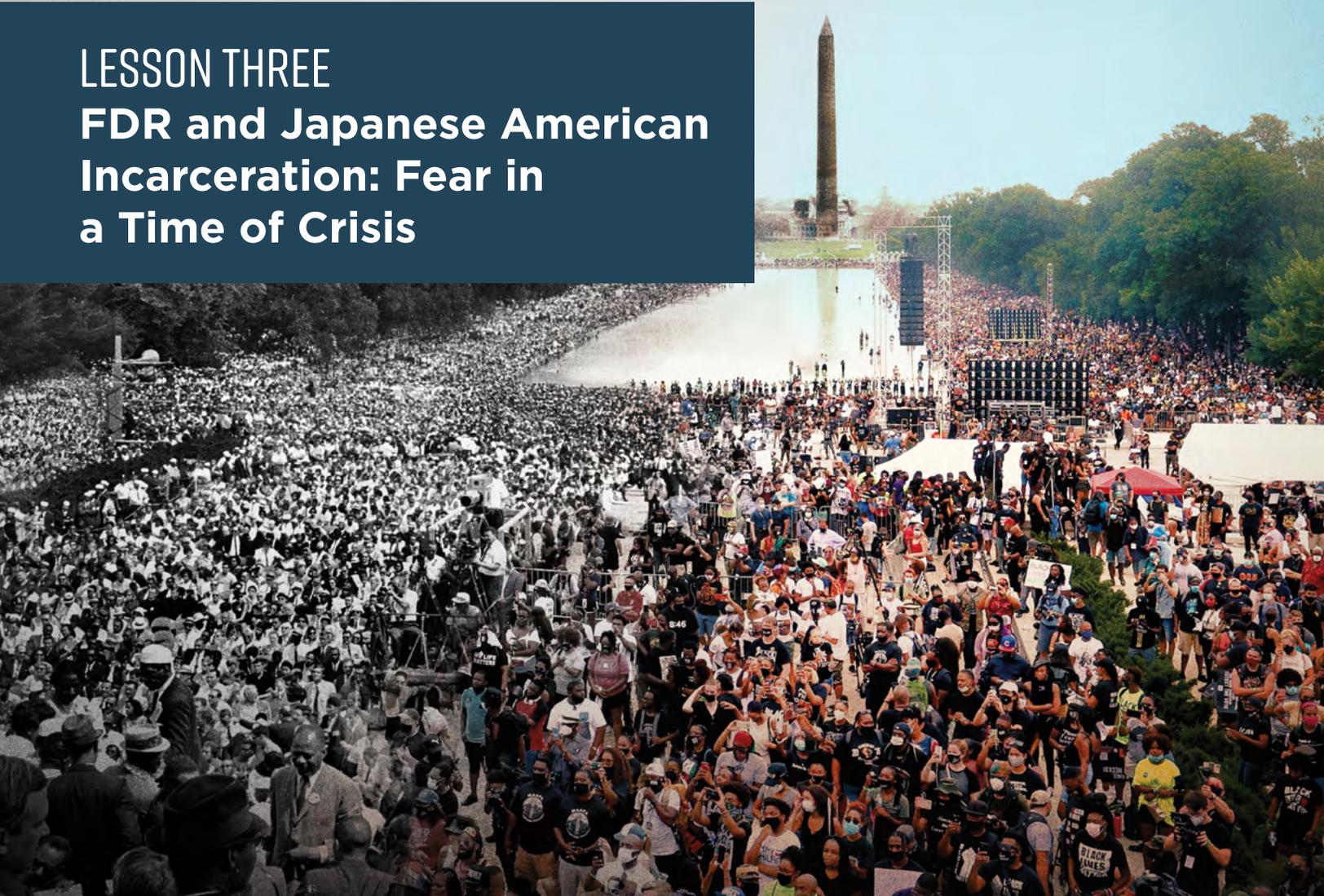


# THE SOUL OF AMERICA

KNOW OUR PAST.  
SHAPE OUR FUTURE.

LESSON THREE  
FDR and Japanese American  
Incarceration: Fear in  
a Time of Crisis



# OVERVIEW

## Essential Questions

- Why were Japanese Americans incarcerated in the United States during World War II?
- What does the incarceration of Japanese Americans illustrate about the leadership of President Franklin Roosevelt and others in the United States government?
- What does the incarceration of Japanese Americans reveal about the soul of America?

## Objectives

Students will:

- Learn about the steps the U.S. government under the leadership of President Roosevelt took to incarcerate Americans of Japanese descent after the attack on Pearl Harbor including Executive Order 9066
- Reflect upon this era of U.S. history through multiple historical perspectives
- Analyze historical evidence of Japanese incarceration
- Reflect on connections between Japanese incarceration and contemporary examples of religious or racial discrimination

## Length

Two 55-minute class periods

Lesson Three examines what Jon Meacham argues is one of the most shameful episodes in contemporary American History—the incarceration of 126,000 people of Japanese ancestry, two-thirds of whom were U.S. citizens living on the West Coast of the United States. While the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service attack on December 7, 1941 on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii signaled the official entrance of the United States into World War II in the Pacific, domestically, American leadership reacted to the attack by capitalizing on existing anti-Asian racism and xenophobia. Using a film clip from **THE SOUL OF AMERICA**; an interview segment from George Takei, who spent three years at a camp; and historical photographs and documents from the era, students will practice historical analysis and thinking skills to reflect on and learn from the decisions made by leaders during a time of crisis in the United States.

## Materials

- Equipment to screen the video segments
- Clip from **THE SOUL OF AMERICA**: 1:35:08 - 1:43:05)
- Copies of documents or access via a shared classroom drive:
  - [Map of incarceration camps](#)
  - Online access via a shared class drive or printed copies of these documents:
    - [A Chronology of Evacuation and Relocation](#), War Relocation Authority
    - [Executive Order 9066](#)
    - [Civilian Exclusion Order](#)
- Online access to the Photo Archive
- Handout: Analyzing Historical Photographs

# HISTORICAL CONTEXT

It is important to situate and consider Japanese American incarceration within the historical context of other domestic and international events of this time period. It is also critical to keep in mind that this lesson is not a comprehensive study of World War II. It is an opportunity for students to consider the contradictions and the consequences of false accusations by the United States government in the name of national security. To provide some of this necessary background, here are some recommended resources from the interviews conducted for **THE SOUL OF AMERICA**:

## → Immigration Quotas and Anti-Asian Racism in the United States:

Interview Archive, Donald Tamaki

- (01:08:00 - 01:10:08:20) Discrimination against Japanese Americans before Pearl Harbor

Interview Archive, Dale Minami

- (01:00:35:03 - 01:04:02:21) Pearl Harbor and the racism that led to Japanese-American incarceration
- (01:09:00:23 - 01:12:31:22) Who was deemed a threat? What are the politics of fear?

## → Japanese American Legal Challenges to Incarceration

- [Background on Fred Korematsu Case](#)
- Interview Archive, Donald Tamaki (01:43:10 - 01:49:00) Fred Korematsu and Others
- [Stop Repeating History](#) has resources that explore the continued misconduct of the government intelligence agencies in intentionally withholding evidence and key documents from the Supreme Court and how Fred Korematsu's case was reopened 40 years later and overturned in a federal court.

## → America Goes to War

- [The National World War II Museum](#) offers numerous [resources for students](#) to learn more about the years and decisions leading up to the United States entering World War II. Students may want to start by reading this: [Take a Closer Look: America Goes to War](#)
- For helpful background on Executive Order 9066 and its legacy, [watch this video](#) published by the FDR Presidential Library.
- [Text of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution](#)

# ACTIVITY



## Opening

### THE ELEMENTS OF HISTORICAL THINKING: FDR AND JAPANESE AMERICAN INCARCERATION

As an introduction, share the following two viewpoints and debrief with the recommended discussion questions. View One is from an exhibit held at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library to mark the 75th anniversary of Japanese incarceration, and View Two is a film clip from **THE SOUL OF AMERICA**.

#### View One

“THROUGHOUT AMERICAN HISTORY OUR PRESIDENTS HAVE STRUGGLED TO FIND THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN THE HIGHEST IDEALS OF OUR FOUNDING CHARTERS AND THE COLD REALITIES OF NATIONAL SECURITY. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE IN TIMES OF WAR. PRESIDENT JOHN ADAMS PASSED THE ALIEN AND SEDITION ACTS, ABRAHAM LINCOLN SUSPENDED THE WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS, AND WOODROW WILSON SUPPRESSED FREE SPEECH AND TRAMPLED ON THE FIRST AMENDMENT.

SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, AT THE BEGINNING OF WORLD WAR II, ONE OF OUR GREATEST CHAMPIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS APPROVED THE INCARCERATION OF APPROXIMATELY 80,000 AMERICAN CITIZENS, AND ANOTHER 40,000 LEGAL ALIENS, IN THE NAME OF NATIONAL SECURITY. PRESIDENT FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT’S SIGNING OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 9066 ON FEBRUARY 19, 1942, PROVIDED THE LEGAL BASIS FOR THE REMOVAL AND CONFINEMENT OF PEOPLE OF JAPANESE DESCENT LIVING ON THE WEST COAST.”

#### View Two

Watch film clip from **THE SOUL OF AMERICA**: 1:35:08 - 1:43:05 (8:02 mins)

*Begins: “In the wake of Pearl Harbor...”*

*Ends: Meacham “The internment is a cautionary tale. When we give in to the worst in us, we exclude, we oppress, we marginalize.”*



**Discuss using these prompts:**

- Compare and contrast the two viewpoints
- What words or phrases stand out to you?
- Reflect on the source of each example and why it might project that viewpoint



## **Analyze Evidence: First Person Account, Documents, Photographs**

**Teacher Note:** There is a wealth of historical evidence available for students to study Japanese incarceration. With the first person account of George Takei central to this lesson's film segment, students will use his testimony as the focal point for their examination of historical evidence. The documents and photographs provided are directly mentioned in Takei's testimony, or echo moments he recalls.

Keep in mind that there are many options for students to explore and analyze these historical sources—individually, in pairs, as a [jigsaw activity](#), or this exercise can be teacher directed if analyzing historical evidence is a new activity for your class.

### **Watch the firsthand account in the Interview Archive:**

George Takei (01:03:52:04 - 01:14:59:07)

In this segment, George Takei shares his memories and family's experience at Rohwer, Arkansas. Have students listen to the unedited version of this segment of his interview ("Family History and Personal Experience of Japanese Incarceration"). Students will recognize that many portions of his story are included in the film excerpt viewed earlier.

**Discuss:**

- What do we learn about the experience of Japanese American incarceration from George Takei?
- Is a first person account useful historical evidence?
- What questions do we need to ask about the person or the recording of the account to ensure it is useful historical evidence?



**Now review a series of primary source documents:**

[A Chronology of Evacuation and Relocation](#): War Relocation Authority (WRA)

***Discuss:***

- What do you notice about the chronology created by the WRA?
- What words stand out as misleading or biased?

Documents archived at the FDR Presidential Library: [here](#). Survey the descriptions of the letters and choose several to read more closely. Read EO 9066 and underline the specific actions the order outlines.

[Civilian Exclusion Order](#): In a series of 108 exclusion orders, Japanese Americans, two thirds of whom were citizens, were forcibly taken from their homes, detained in “assembly centers,” and then moved to concentration camps in Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, and Arkansas for the duration of World War II.

Read through the Order. If you find the document difficult to read, click on More Info for a summary.

***Discuss:***

- What are your initial reactions?
- Make a list of words you find misleading in the document. What different terms would you use that would be more accurate?
- What were the consequences of this Order?

“WE KNOW NOW THAT IF WE LOSE THIS WAR IT WILL BE GENERATIONS OR EVEN CENTURIES BEFORE OUR CONCEPTION OF DEMOCRACY CAN LIVE AGAIN.”

PRESIDENT FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT



## Photographs

Using the questions for analyzing photographs as credible historical evidence, view and analyze each of these photographs.



**Image 1:** <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3a39404/>

Photographer unknown

Caption: San Pedro, Cal. Apr. 1942. Fishing boats, formerly operated by residents of Japanese ancestry, tied up for the duration in Los Angeles harbor.



**Image 2:** <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2004665381/>

Dorothea Lange, March 1942

Caption: Oakland, Calif., Mar. 1942. A large sign reading "I am an American" placed in the window of a store, at [401 - 403 Eighth] and Franklin streets, on December 8, the day after Pearl Harbor. The store was closed following orders to persons of Japanese descent to evacuate from certain West Coast areas. The owner, a University of California graduate, will be housed with hundreds of evacuees in War Relocation Authority centers for the duration of the war.



**Image 3:** <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2015645490/>

Lee Russell, April 1942.

Caption: The evacuation of Japanese-Americans from West Coast areas under U.S. Army war emergency order Japanese waiting for registration at the Santa Anita reception center.



**Image 4:** <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2017699963/>

Dorothea Lange, Apr-July, 1942.

Caption: Japanese relocation, California. Baggage belonging to evacuees of Japanese ancestry at an assembly center in Salinas, California, prior to a War Relocation Authority center.

What historical narrative do these photographs illustrate about the incarceration of Japanese Americans in the United States during World War II?



## **Exit Ticket: Echoes and Connections to Today**

Discuss as a class or assign as a short reflective writing assignment:

How does the story of Japanese American incarceration support Jon Meacham's historical argument about the "soul of America"? Name an example of a contemporary violation of civil rights in the name of national security. What does it reveal about our worst instincts and our better angels?



# HANDOUT ONE:

## Film Clip Transcript

JON MEACHAM:

In the wake of Pearl Harbor there were anxieties particularly along the West Coast that Japanese Americans might serve as agents of the Japanese Imperial Government, an enemy force.

RADIO BROADCAST (archival):

Word has just come that some 91 Japanese have been taken into custody in Northern California by the FBI. In Fresno, California, two Japanese were arrested, their automobile seized by the police.

B-ROLL (archival): an agent writing on a paper around with four Japanese men; agents walking by a wooden shack; agents rounding up more Japanese men

DONALD TAMAKI / Civil Rights Attorney:

Within a day, the Secret Service, the FBI sweeps into cities and urban areas from Seattle to Arizona, arresting community leaders, martial arts instructors, Japanese school language teachers, Buddhist priests.

B-ROLL (archival): MP's standing guard on a dock; Japanese people walking up

and down a street; a Japanese florist tending flowers outside her store.

MILTON EISENHOWER (archival):

Our West Coast became a potential combat zone. Living in that zone were more than 100,000 persons of Japanese ancestry, two-thirds of them American citizens, one-third aliens.

STILLS: Photo of the Takei family; photo of George and his brother; photo of

George Takei's mother holding baby Nancy.

GEORGE TAKEI / Actor and Activist:

My parents met in Los Angeles and they married there. I turned five years old on April 20th, 1942. I'm the oldest and my brother was next, a year younger, and my baby sister Nancy.

GEORGE TAKEI / Actor and Activist:

My parents met in Los Angeles and they married there. I turned five years old on April 20th, 1942. I'm the oldest and my brother was next, a year younger, and my baby sister Nancy.

B-ROLL (archival): Men holding up newspaper with headline that reads

"ENEMY PLANES OFF COAST" and details of riots in various cities; man looking through binoculars; soldiers standing guard looking out at the water.

TAKEI:

Here we were in the United States and the country was at war with our ancestral land and so there was great concern about what might happen to us.

HEADLINES: "COMPLETE ALIEN OUSTER IS URGED"; "BANISH JAPS FROM THIS COAST FOREVER"

STILL: Earl Warren speaking into a microphone.

HEADLINE: "MASS OUSTER OF JAPANESE IS DEMANDED BY ATTY.-GEN"; LOS ANGELES URGES OUSTER OF JAPANESE";

JON MEACHAM:

The Attorney General of California Earl Warren and others argued that people of foreign descent were dangerous, were potentially enemies of the country.

STILL: Graffiti on house reading "NO JAPS WANTED"; Sign reading "NO JAPS

SERVED HERE" at the Liberty Café; house with signs displayed, reading "JAPS

KEEP OUT YOU ARE NOT WANTED" and "JAPS KEEP MOVING THIS -IS A WHITE MAN'S NEIGHBORHOOD."

MILTON EISENHOWER (archival): No one knew what would happen among this concentrated population if Japanese forces should invade our shores.

B-ROLL (archival): Birds-eye view of White House; FDR signing page; secretaries in army office; General DeWitt among soldiers.

DON TAMAKI:

By February 1942, President Roosevelt signs Executive Order 9066, and this empowered the military to take control of the eight most western states. General Dewitt is placed in command of that whole western region. General DeWitt said that Japanese Americans are an enemy race.

MAN (archival):

He said very emphatically, "A Jap's a Jap. Any scrap of paper attesting to his citizenship doesn't alter that fact."

B-ROLL (archival): Army staff taking out stacks of notices; notices being nailed to posts.

TAMAKI:

He began issuing public proclamations singling out Japanese Americans.

STILL: Japanese-Americans reading curfew notice on a building; two men standing in front of notices nailed to a building; Japanese people in line outside; exterior of bank; police officers standing by bank; store with "selling out" signs plastered on windows; pan down to store with older man walking up to door; store with "close out sale" sign on window.

GEORGE TAKEI:

A curfew came down. Japanese Americans had to be home by eight o'clock and stay home until six AM in the morning. The government froze our bank account, rents couldn't be paid. My father's dry-cleaning business fell apart. Everything was lost. Everything. And then the soldiers came.

B-ROLL (archival): Japanese man with child in front yard of their house; soldiers look out window; tracking shot from car arriving at house; soldiers march past with bayonets.

TAKEI:

One morning my parents got me up very early together with my brother and my baby sister and dressed us hurriedly, and suddenly we saw two soldiers marching up our driveway

carrying rifles with shiny bayonets. And they stomped on the front porch and with their fists began pounding on the door. That sound still resonates in my mind.

B-ROLL (archival): Soldier walks by storefronts; soldiers carry luggage and load them onto trucks; Japanese women standing around outside.

TAKEI:

My father came out, answered the door and we were ordered out of our home. We stood on the driveway waiting for our mother to come out and when she came out she had our baby sister in one arm, a huge heavy looking duffel bag in the other and tears were streaming down her cheeks.

B-ROLL (archival): Japanese American people waiting on street to board buses; soldiers assist an elderly woman with walking.

STILL: Japanese woman standing beside truck with Japanese child peering out the back; Japanese kids in the back of a truck, a small girl peeking out through two pieces of wood.

B-ROLL (archival): Luggage piled roadside; children wait, sitting on top of luggage

TAKEI:

We were taken by truck to the Buddhist temple in downtown Los Angeles in Little Tokyo. And that's where we were all assembled.

B-ROLL (archival): Japanese boy waiting next to stacked luggage and belongings; two small children waiting by their family's belongings.

WOMAN (archival):

The heads of the families were ordered to report and we were given our family number and tag.

STILL: Japanese family posing for a photo with their tags attached to their coats; two young children wearing hats who have tags on their coats; Japanese girl with a tag attached to her shirt; a young child looking out of a bus window.

B-ROLL (archival): Buses pulling up to drop off Japanese families; shot of the racetrack with the internment bunks lined up into the

distance; interior of a camp with men carrying belongings; people being handed their tag and blankets/pillows.

TAKEI:

And a row of buses took us to Santa Anita where we were unloaded and herded over to the stable areas and each family was assigned a horse stall to sleep in, still pungent with the stink of horse manure.

STILL: Horse stall.

B-ROLL (archival): Crowd of Japanese Americans with belongings waiting around; Japanese Americans board trains, armed soldiers stand by; luggage tossed into train cars; fellow Japanese Americans wave to friends and family aboard train.

TAKEI:

We were there about three or four months... and then we were loaded onto trains with armed soldiers at both ends of each car.

B-ROLL (archival): shots of train moving and of tracks below; train in far distance moves across a landscape with smoke billowing from the top; soldiers waiting for Japanese Americans to deboard train; people deboarding train; families registering at camps.

TAKEI:

We were transported two-thirds of the way across the country to the swamps of Arkansas. There were ten camps altogether. Rohwer, Arkansas was the farthest east.

B-ROLL (archival): footage of barracks; still of kids sleeping on cots; people being handed out food in camps.

DALE MINAMI / Civil Rights Attorney:

The camps were not camps. They were prisons. They lived in dusty barracks. There were cracks in the walls so they had to stuff newspaper in to stop the wind from blowing in. They had common latrines without doors. The food was terrible, inadequate medical care.

GEORGE TAKEI:

I did go to school and I remember we began every school day with the pledge of allegiance to the flag. I could see the barbed wire fence and the sentry tower right outside my

B-ROLL (archival): Bell ringing, a mountain in the distance; school kids in class; guard tower; American flag flying over a barrack.

schoolhouse window as I recited the words, "With liberty and justice for all."

STILLS: Japanese crowded behind barbed wire fence

B-ROLL (archival): interned people walk around camp.

STILL: Japanese American woman outside her living quarters in a camp

DON TAMAKI:

By the end of 1942, you had almost 120,000 Americans, people like my mother and my father who were born in California, who are citizens by birth, who had lost their property, they had lost their freedom, some had even lost their lives without any trial, without any charges and for no offense.

STILLS: Japanese Americans lined up, one man holding American flag

B-ROLL (archival): Japanese Americans lining up by trains, returning home

GEORGE TAKEI:

We were incarcerated for the duration of the war, four years. When we were freed, we had nothing. For my parents, everything that they had worked for was taken away.

FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT:

We know now that if we lose this war, it'll be generations or even centuries before our conception of democracy can live again.

B-ROLL (archival): Still of Tule Lake camp, still of Japanese Americans walking past camp guard; boats during WWII, FDR with Churchill; still of young Japanese boy sitting on pile of luggage next to officer; young Japanese Americans with tags; Man pointing to sign that reads "We don't want any Japs back here... EVER!"; Modern - families trying to come to the U.S. detained behind fence; young child crying and looking up at mother and border patrol; young boy standing among border patrol.

JON MEACHAM: It's one of our most shameful episodes and a reminder that even in the midst of a global campaign to defend liberty, someone as otherwise remarkable as Franklin Roosevelt was able to make a decision that violated fundamental principles of both human and American rights. The internment is a cautionary tale. When we give in to the worst in us, we exclude, we oppress, we marginalize.

## HANDOUT TWO: Analyzing Historical Photographs

### Image One

Where and when was the photograph taken?

Why was the photograph taken?



Do we know who took the photograph?

Do we know anything about the context in which the photograph was taken?

What kind of camera was used to take the photograph?

How may have the photograph been altered from its original form? Why is this important to know?

## Women's Suffrage

Where and when was the photograph taken?

Why was the photograph taken?



Do we know who took the photograph?

Do we know anything about the context in which the photograph was taken?

What kind of camera was used to take the photograph?

How may have the photograph been altered from its original form? Why is this important to know?

## FDR and Japanese Incarceration

Where and when was the photograph taken?

Why was the photograph taken?



Do we know who took the photograph?

Do we know anything about the context in which the photograph was taken?

What kind of camera was used to take the photograph?

How may have the photograph been altered from its original form? Why is this important to know?

## McCarthy and the Press

Where and when was the photograph taken?

Why was the photograph taken?



Do we know who took the photograph?

Do we know anything about the context in which the photograph was taken?

What kind of camera was used to take the photograph?

How may have the photograph been altered from its original form? Why is this important to know?

## LBJ & MLK

Where and when was the photograph taken?

Why was the photograph taken?



Do we know who took the photograph?

Do we know anything about the context in which the photograph was taken?

What kind of camera was used to take the photograph?

How may have the photograph been altered from its original form? Why is this important to know?