

# TEACHING JAPANESE AMERICAN INCARCERATION THROUGH COMICS & GRAPHIC NOVELS

## Objective:

Students will learn about the personal experiences of Japanese American incarcerated during World War II and will practice communicating information concisely by developing an original comic.

## Common Core State Standards:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7](#)

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

## Description:

According to the School Library Journal's article [Teaching with Graphic Novels](#), the advantages\* of teaching with comics and graphic novels as supplemental texts includes:

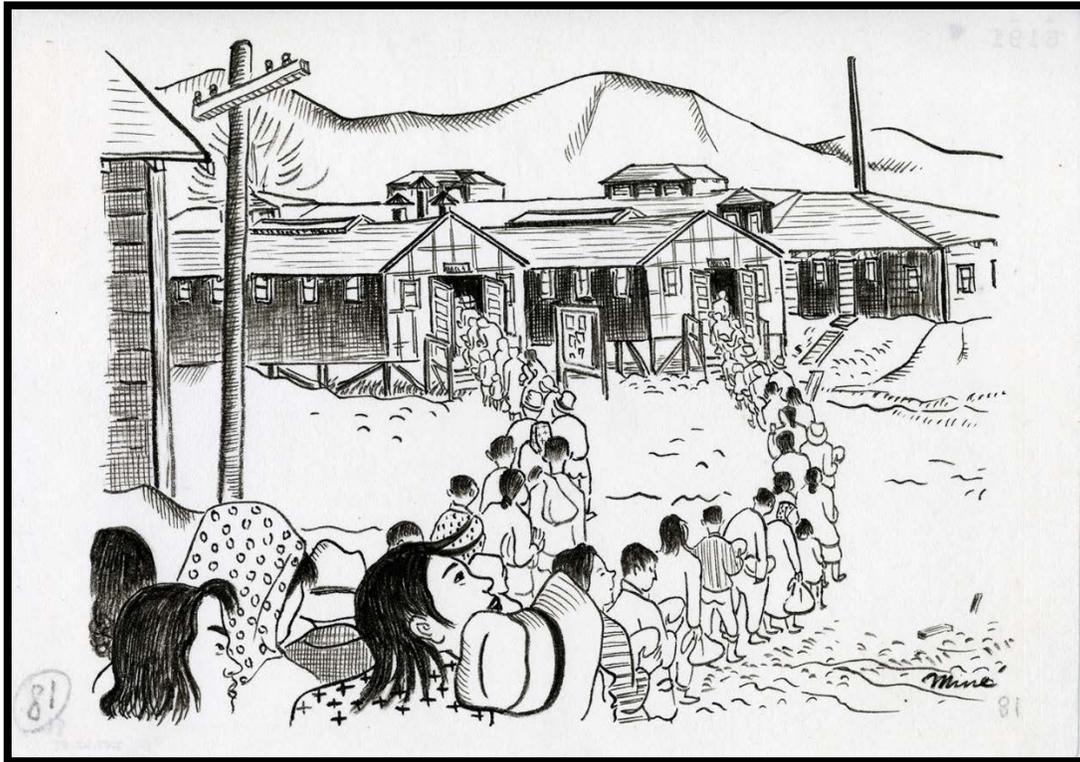
- supporting low readers and promoting memory through pairing of image and text
- modeling concise verbiage for skilled readers
- reinforcing left-to-right sequence
- communicating ideas efficiently

Martin Luther King, Jr. contributed to a comic book titled *The Montgomery Story*, a copy of which can be found in the museum's archive (a related teacher guide can be found [here](http://americanhistory.si.edu/citizenship/pdf/School_MLK.pdf) [http://americanhistory.si.edu/citizenship/pdf/School\\_MLK.pdf](http://americanhistory.si.edu/citizenship/pdf/School_MLK.pdf)). That work inspired Congressman John Lewis to tell his own story of the civil rights movement through comics in the *New York Times* bestseller [March](#). Some famous examples of graphic novels on civil-rights topics are [Maus](#), Art Spiegelman's series about his family's experiences during the Holocaust, and [Persepolis](#), Marjane Satrapi's autobiographical series about her childhood in Iran.

In addition, graphics and illustrations have a long tradition in Japanese art, including scroll paintings, anime, and manga (literally "random sketches" or doodles, but now used to refer to comic books or illustrated entertainment). See [this video](http://pulverer.si.edu/node/184) [<http://pulverer.si.edu/node/184>] from the Smithsonian's museums of Asian art on the evolution of Japanese graphic art. Comics were also a method for Japanese American incarcerated in World War II to express their experiences. Most famous among these artists was Miné Okubo, who was incarcerated in the Topaz War Relocation Center in Utah during World War II. Okubo's drawings take the reader through her time at the Tanforan Assembly Center in San Bruno, California, and eventually the Topaz camp. Her artwork inspired her book [Citizen 13660](#), which was published in 1946.



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Drawing, Mine Okubo [Waiting in Lines at Tanforan Assembly Center, San Bruno, California, 1942].  
Courtesy of the Japanese American National Museum (Gift of Mine Okubo Estate, 2007.62).

Teen participants in the National Museum of American History's Youth Civic Engagement Program collaborated with Evan Keeling, an artist and exhibits fabricator from the Smithsonian Exhibits, and teens at the Hirshhorn Museum's ARTLAB+, to create this series of original comics on the Japanese American experience during World War II. The comics represent oral histories from survivors of Japanese American incarceration camps.

Use these comics to introduce this period in history to students or to prepare students to view and participate in the [National Youth Summit on Japanese American Incarceration](http://americanhistory.si.edu/nys/national-youth-summit-japanese-american-incarceration-world-war-ii) [<http://americanhistory.si.edu/nys/national-youth-summit-japanese-american-incarceration-world-war-ii>]. As an assessment for this or other topics, use the comic template included here to allow students to create their own comics based on their studies, including examining primary sources such as oral histories. Find oral histories and other primary sources on Japanese American incarceration at the [Densho Digital Archive](#).

\*The vivid imagery in comics and graphic novels may cause concern among some parents, so graphic novels should be carefully chosen and discussed with parents and administrators.



Smithsonian  
National Museum of American History  
Kenneth E. Behring Center

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## Resources

Norman Mineta: <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/04/26/us/washington-talk-friendshipsheat-war-welds-bond-that-endures-across-aisles-years.html>

Yuri Kochiyama: [http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Yuri\\_Kochiyama/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Yuri_Kochiyama/)  
[http://www.democracynow.org/2006/2/21/civil\\_rights\\_activist\\_yuri\\_kochiyama\\_remembers](http://www.democracynow.org/2006/2/21/civil_rights_activist_yuri_kochiyama_remembers)

Fred Korematsu: <http://www.korematsuinstitute.org/fred-t-korematsu-1/>

Chizu Iiyama: <http://www.tellingstories.org/internment/ciiyama/index.html>

Masaru Kawaguchi:

<http://www.tellingstories.org/internment/mkawaguchi/index.html>

Paul Ohtaki: <http://www.tellingstories.org/internment/pohtaki/index.html>



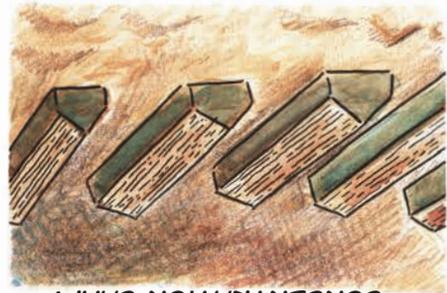




WE FIND THE INTERMENT OF JAPANESE AMERICANS TO HAVE BEEN A MILITARY NECESSITY



FRED TOOK HIS CASE ALL THE WAY TO THE SUPREME COURT.



...ORDERED TO SPEND SEVERAL MONTHS AT TANFORAN ASSEMBLY CENTER BEFORE HE WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE TOPAZ CONCENTRATION CAMP.



DESPITE THEIR EFFORTS, ON SEPTEMBER 8, 1942 FRED WAS CONVICTED OF DEFYING EXECUTIVE ORDER 9066 AND SENTENCED TO FIVE YEARS PROBATION AND...



..WE WERE WONDERING IF YOU WOULD GO TO COURT FOR US TO CONTEST WHETHER EXECUTIVE ORDER 9066 IS UNCONSTITUTIONAL.



FRED, I'M ERNEST BESIG, THE DIRECTOR OF THE SAN FRANCISCO CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION...



...AND TAKEN TO A SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY JAIL.



ON MAY 30, 1942, FRED WAS ARRESTED IN SAN LEANDRO, CALIFORNIA...

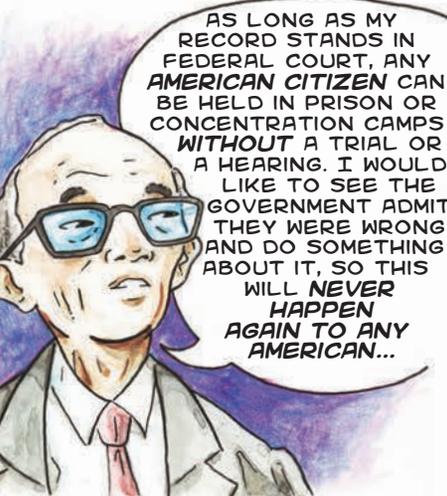
IN 1980, A PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION FOUND THE INCARCERATION OF JAPANESE AMERICAN UNCONSTITUTIONAL. THIS ALLOWED FOR FRED'S CASE TO BE RE-OPENED.



ON NOVEMBER 10, 1983 JUDGE MARILYN HALL PATEL OVERTURNED FRED'S CONVICTION IN CALIFORNIA.



THIS HOWEVER DID NOT OVERTURN HIS CONVICTION IN THE U.S. SUPREME COURT.



AS LONG AS MY RECORD STANDS IN FEDERAL COURT, ANY AMERICAN CITIZEN CAN BE HELD IN PRISON OR CONCENTRATION CAMPS WITHOUT A TRIAL OR A HEARING. I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE GOVERNMENT ADMIT THEY WERE WRONG AND DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT, SO THIS WILL NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN TO ANY AMERICAN...

FRED STARTED LOBBYING THE U.S. GOVERNMENT FOR A BILL THAT WOULD GRANT A FORMAL APOLOGY AND COMPENSATION FOR THE SURVIVING JAPANESE AMERICANS WHO WERE INCARCERATED.

HIS GOAL WAS REALIZED IN 1988 WHEN PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN SIGNED THE CIVIL LIBERTIES ACT. IN 1998 FRED WAS AWARDED THE PRESIDENTIAL MEDAL OF FREEDOM. HE PASSED AWAY IN 2005.



HIS WORK IS CARRIED ON BY HIS DAUGHTER KAREN KOREMATSU, FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE FRED T. KOREMATSU INSTITUTE

Smithsonian Institution  
[HTTP://AMERICANHISTORY.SI.EDU/GETINVOLVED/YOUTH-CIVIC-ENGAGEMENT-PROGRAM](http://americanhistory.si.edu/getinvolved/youth-civic-engagement-program)

# FRED KOREMATSU

I'M NOT GOING TO LET THEM PUT ME INTO A PRISON! I'LL CHANGE MY NAME!

INSTRUCTIONS TO ALL PERSONS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY

FRED DEFIED THE POLICE AND REFUSED TO GO TO THE INCARCERATION CAMPS



THEY ARE LETTING POP COME HOME, BUT THEY ARE SENDING A NURSE WITH HIM.

JAN. 20, 1942



I KEEP BEGGING FOR THEM TO SEND HIM TO A HOSPITAL. HE NEEDS CARE!



MOM, COME HOME! THE FBI JUST TOOK POP!



THAT'S MY FATHER. HE'S JUST GOTTEN BACK FROM SURGERY.



SEICHI WAS RELEASED TO A HOSPITAL WHERE HE WAS SURROUNDED BY SERVICEMEN OF WAKE ISLAND.



THEY ARE HOLDING YOUR FATHER BECAUSE HE IS A FISHERMAN AND MIGHT BE HELPING THE JAPANESE.



WHAT'S GOING ON?



IS THERE A SEICHI NAKAHARA LIVING HERE?

WE ARE FROM THE FBI.

THE NEXT DAY



I'M SORRY, BUT MR. NAKAHARA HAS DIED.

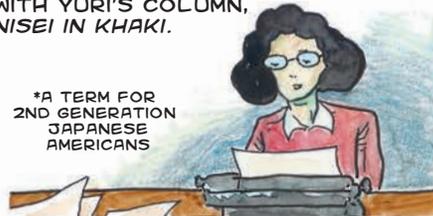


NOW THEY ARE PUTTING US ALL IN PRISON!

YURI'S EXPERIENCES LED HER TO BECOME A LIFELONG CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST. SHE FOUGHT FOR ASIAN AMERICAN RIGHTS, PUERTO RICAN INDEPENDENCE, AFRICAN AMERICAN RIGHTS AND THE RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS...

WHILE INCARCERATED YURI ORGANIZED WELCOMING PARTIES FOR NEW ARRIVALS AND A GROUP CALLED THE CRUSADERS THAT WROTE LETTERS TO NISEI\* SOLDIERS. THE JEROME CAMP NEWSPAPER SHARED SAMPLES OF THE LETTERS WITH YURI'S COLUMN, NISEI IN KHAKI.

\*A TERM FOR 2ND GENERATION JAPANESE AMERICANS



AND FAMOUSLY CRADLED MALCOLM X'S HEAD AFTER HE WAS SHOT ON FEBRUARY 21, 1965.

APRIL 2, 1942



INSTRUCTIONS TO ALL PERSONS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY

Smithsonian Institution

YURI KOCHIYAMA

CAN I HELP YOU?



HTTP://AMERICANHISTORY.SI.EDU/GETTOWN/WEB/YOUTH-CIVIC-ENGAGEMENT-PROGRAM



HE WAS ARRESTED, AND WE WERE MOVED TO MANZANAR. A MAN DISCOVERED THAT OUR RATIONS WERE BEING SOLD OUTSIDE THE CAMP.



ONE DAY A RIOT BROKE OUT AT MINIDOKA.



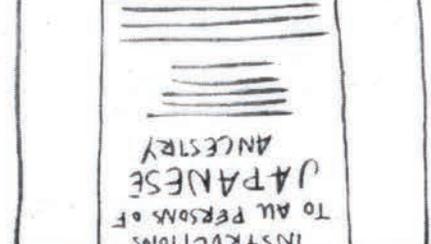
DAYS WERE LONG AND BORING. WE PASSED THE TIME WITH BOARD GAMES AND SPORTS.



THEY HAD UNFINISHED BARRACKS WAITING FOR US. WE HAD TO FINISH BUILDING THEM.



WE TOOK ALL WE COULD FIT IN TWO SUITCASES.



THEY PUT UP POSTERS.



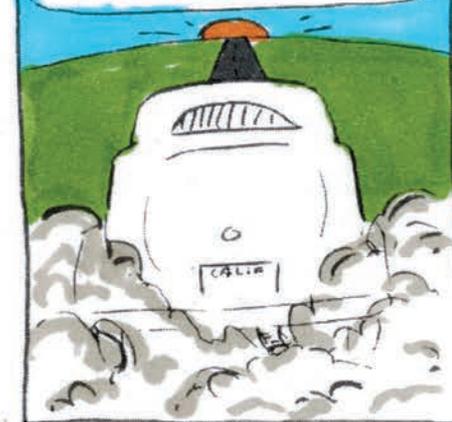
...THEY SEARCHED OUR HOMES. BUT THEN THE FBI CAME...



WE THOUGHT NOTHING WOULD HAPPEN TO US.



A SUGAR FARM RECRUITED SOME OF US, AND... I NEVER LOOKED BACK.



LAND OF THE FREE? I DON'T THINK SO.

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# Land of the Free

## THE STORY OF PAUL OHTAKI

YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM  
[HTTP://AMERICANHISTORY.SI.EDU/GETINVOLVED/YOUTH-CIVIC-ENGAGEMENT-PROGRAM](http://americanhistory.si.edu/getinvolved/youth-civic-engagement-program)

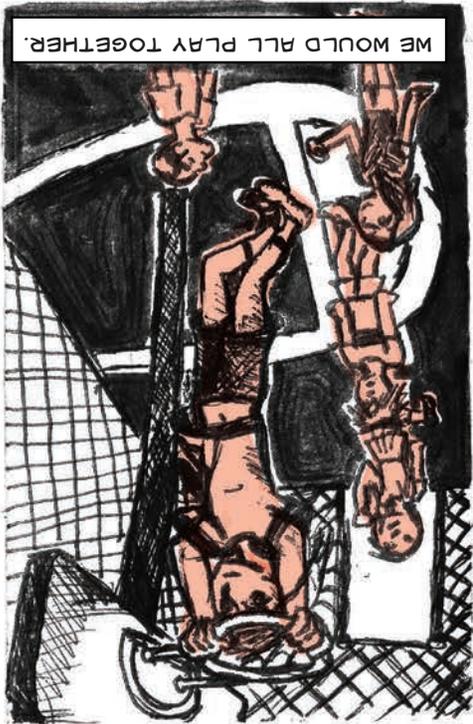


EVERYTHING WAS FINE WHEN WE WERE YOUNG...

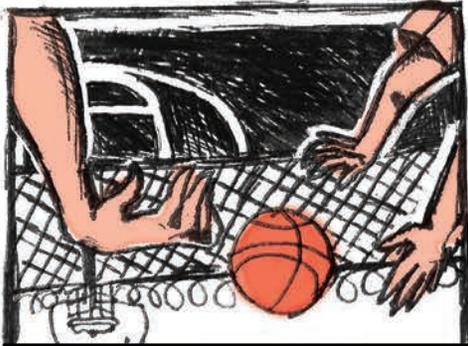


I FELT ILL BEFORE THE BOMBS DROPPED. JAPS\*BOMB PEARL HARBOR.

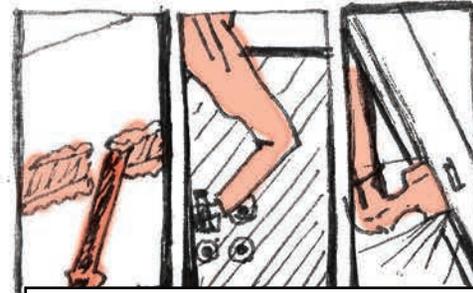
\*A NEGATIVE RACIAL EPITHET.



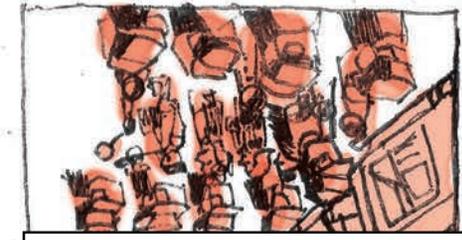
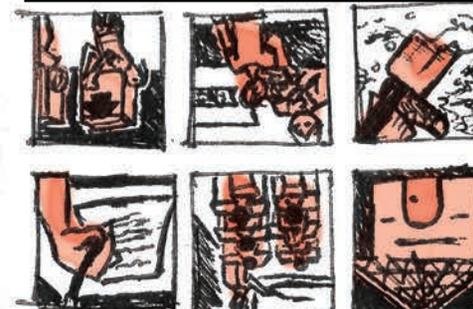
WE WOULD ALL PLAY TOGETHER.



...I WOULD PLAY BASKETBALL WITH THE OTHER CHILDREN ON THE COURT WE MADE OURSELVES.



THERE WAS A NEW SCHOOL. THE GUARDS GAVE US NEW CHORES, BUT THEN EVERY DAY WHEN I'VE FINISHED MY WORK...



IT LOOKED MORE LIKE A PRISON.



I HEARD FROM THE OTHERS THAT WE WERE BEING TAKEN TO A CAMP.

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# THE STORY OF



# MASARU KAWAGUCHI

YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM  
[HTTP://AMERICANHISTORY.SI.EDU/GETINVOLVED/YOUTH-CIVIC-ENGAGEMENT-PROGRAM](http://americanhistory.si.edu/getinvolved/youth-civic-engagement-program)

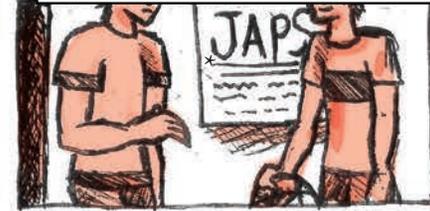
1941.  
 MY NAME IS MASARU KAWAGUCHI.



EVERY DAY AFTER SCHOOL, MY FRIENDS AND I WOULD GO TO THE BASKETBALL COURT.



BUT ONE DAY, I NOTICED A SIGN



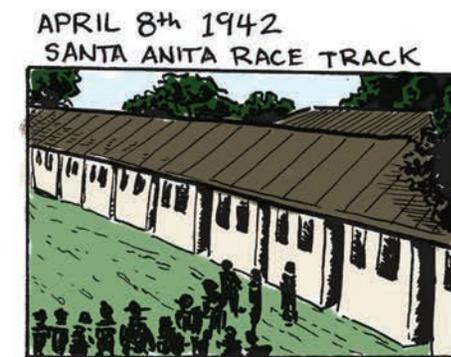
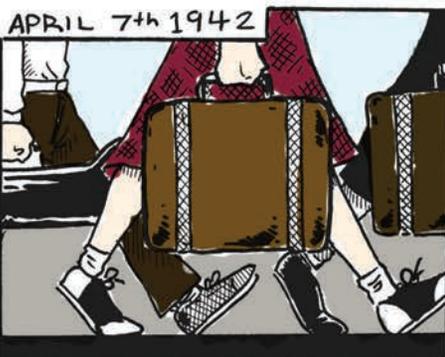
\*A NEGATIVE RACIAL EPITHET.

I SAW THE POSTER. WHAT'S GOING ON?



PACK YOUR THINGS WE HAVE TO LEAVE TOMORROW MORNING

WHY? WE'RE NOT SURE. IT HAS TO DO WITH THE WAR.



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DECEMBER 7th 1941

**Chizu Iiyama**

EXTRA! EXTRA! THE JAPS\* BOMB PEARL HARBOR!

LOOK WHERE THEY ARE PUTTING US.

YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM  
[HTTP://AMERICANHISTORY.SI.EDU/GETINVOLVED/YOUTH-CIVIC-ENGAGEMENT-PROGRAM](http://americanhistory.si.edu/getinvolved/youth-civic-engagement-program)

\*A NEGATIVE RACIAL EPITHET.



I FEAR THAT MUSLIMS  
IN THIS COUNTRY,  
ARE TIED TO TERRORISM.

IT'S EASY TO DISMISS THIS AS AN  
ISOLATED MISTAKE IN HISTORY,  
BUT THE ECHOES OF THE PAST  
STILL HAUNT US

IF YOU HAVE THE FEELING  
THAT SOMETHING IS WRONG,  
DON'T BE AFRAID TO SPEAK UP.

-FRED T. KOREMATSU



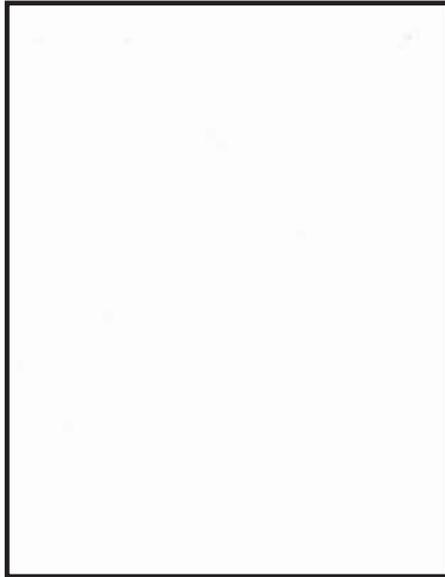
TOGETHER WE NEED TO PROTECT  
CIVIL LIBERTIES FOR EVERYONE.

\* LIEUTENANT GENERAL JOHN L. DEWITT  
APRIL 13, 1943



"... IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE  
WHETHER HE IS AN AMERICAN  
CITIZEN, HE IS STILL A JAPANESE.  
AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP DOES  
NOT NECESSARILY DETERMINE  
LOYALTY...  
BUT WE MUST WORRY ABOUT  
THE JAPANESE ALL THE TIME  
UNTIL HE IS WIPED  
OFF THE MAP." \*

WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF PEOPLE  
ACTING OUT OF FEAR THAT  
YOU SEE TODAY?

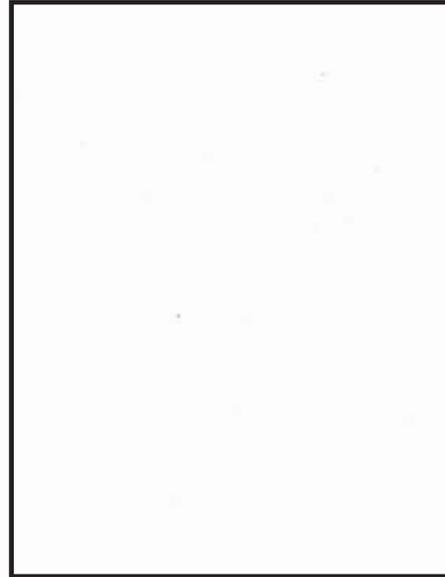


... WHICH GREATLY EXPANDED THE  
GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO  
MONITOR THE DAILY ACTIVITY OF  
ORDINARY INDIVIDUALS



ON OCTOBER 26, 2001,  
PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH SIGNED  
INTO LAW THE PATRIOT ACT...

WHAT SHOULD WE DO  
TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?



YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM  
[HTTP://AMERICANHISTORY.SI.EDU/GETINVOLVED/  
YOUTH-CIVIC-ENGAGEMENT-PROGRAM](http://americanhistory.si.edu/getinvolved/youth-civic-engagement-program)



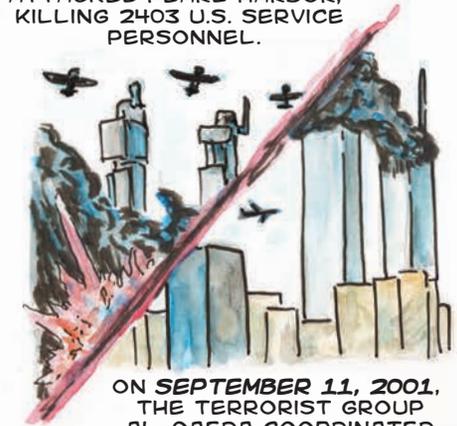
... THE GROUNDWORK FOR THE  
IMPRISONMENT OF APPROXIMATELY  
120,000 MEN, WOMEN,  
AND CHILDREN  
OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY.



ON FEBRUARY 19, 1942,  
PRESIDENT FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT  
SIGNED INTO LAW EXECUTIVE  
ORDER 9066, WHICH  
ULTIMATELY LAID...

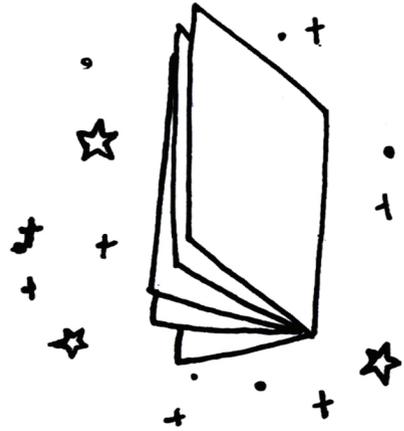
Smithsonian Institution  
**HOW DOES  
FEAR AFFECT  
NATIONAL &  
INTERNATIONAL  
POLICY?**

ON DECEMBER 7, 1941, THE  
IMPERIAL JAPANESE NAVY  
ATTACKED PEARL HARBOR,  
KILLING 2403 U.S. SERVICE  
PERSONNEL.



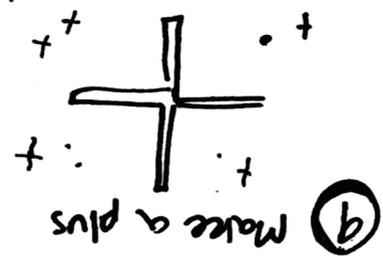
ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2001,  
THE TERRORIST GROUP  
AL-QAEDA COORDINATED  
ATTACKS ON THE U.S.,  
KILLING 2977 PEOPLE.

NOW DRAW!

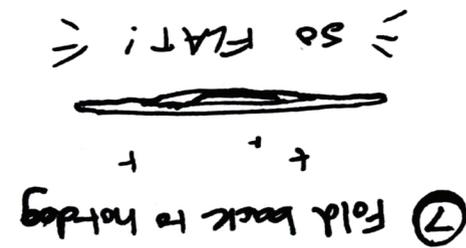
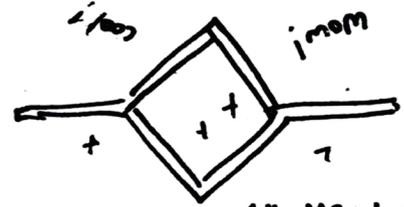


NOW YOU'VE GOT A ZINE!

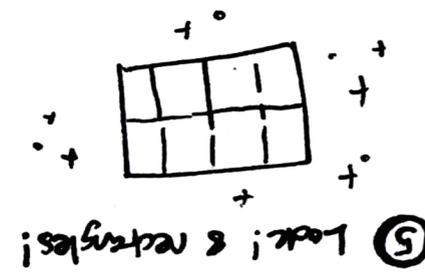
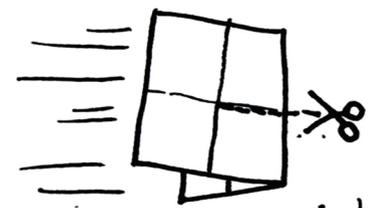
DRUMROLL



(make a diamond)



Fold again (hamburger) and cut along middle



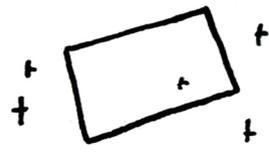
YOU'RE WELCOME.

INSTAGRAM: @bellicose beauty  
TUMBLR: bellicose beauty  
TWITTER: @bellicose beau  
YOUTUBE: /bellicose beauty

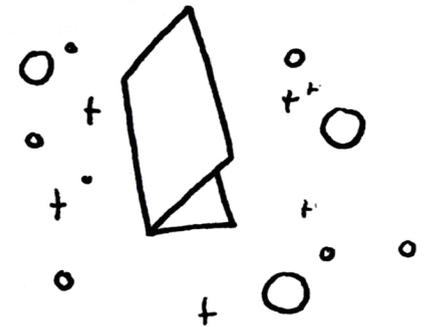
CREATED AT THE HIRSHHORN'S ARTLAB+ PROGRAM. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT: [HTTP://ARTLABPLUS.SI.EDU/](http://artlabplus.si.edu/)



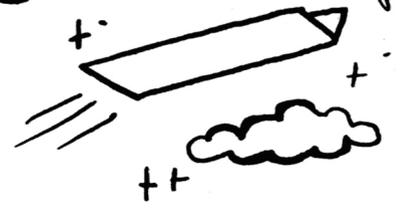
1 Get some paper 8.5 x 11



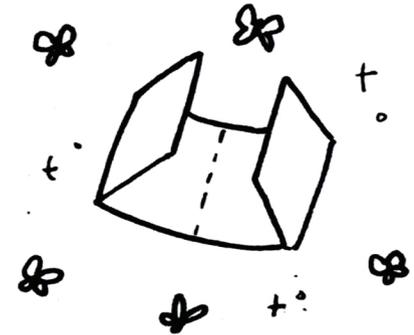
2 Hamburger it



3 Hotdog it.



4 Butterfly it



1)

2)

3)

4)



7)

6)

5)

