

## **IN SEARCH OF *NO-NO BOY*: CLASSROOM EDITION**

### **Lesson 2: One Path to Loyalty?**

*There's a false sense that the government seems to have imposed on the community: that there are loyal and disloyals, and there is only one path to this loyalty.*

(Gail Nomura, University of Washington)

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# **IN SEARCH OF NO-NO BOY: CLASSROOM EDITION**

## **One Path to Loyalty?**

### **OBJECTIVES**

- Students will understand how the terms “loyalty” and “disloyalty” can be given distorted meanings during times of war.
- Students will understand how government action can create classes of so-called “disloyals” during times of war.
- Students will understand the term “no-no boy” and will be able to distinguish between no-no boys and draft resisters.
- Students will examine the concept of civil disobedience, and the consequences for a Japanese American resisting the draft on principle in World War II.

The middle school and high school assignments for these lessons are built around guiding questions from *Washington State Social Studies Classroom-Based Assessment: Constitutional Issues*. The assignments include rubrics and bridging documents.

#### Middle School Guiding Question

[\(Washington State History\)](#) *What are the various perspectives on the role of Washington in the internment of Japanese Americans? How is this event related to our democratic ideals and how does it involve our responsibilities?*

#### High School Guiding Question

[\(Challenges to Democracy and Human Rights 1900-present\)](#) *What are the implications of different definitions of human rights and civil rights? How does this issue relate to our democratic ideals and how does it involve our rights and responsibilities?*

This lesson uses video clips from **In Search of No-No Boy: Classroom Edition** and quotes from the novel **No-No Boy**.

### **PREREQUISITES**

This lesson is designed to be integrated into existing study of the novel **No-No Boy**. As such, it is assumed that students are reading or have read the novel.

Review the *Introduction* for background information and prerequisites before starting this lesson. Instructors may wish to introduce students to the underlying themes in this lesson by first reviewing *Lesson 1: A Search for Identity*.

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### **INTRODUCTION: COMPLIANCE and RESISTANCE**

Americans of Japanese ancestry faced two choices when confronted with military orders evicting them from their homes on the West Coast: comply or resist. Acting as a community spokesman, leaders of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) urged cooperation with expulsion as a demonstration of their loyalty to the U.S., with the hope of getting more favorable treatment for families in the camps.

*Declaration of Policy of the Japanese American Citizens League.*  
<http://www.densho.org/learning/spice/>

The JACL later lobbied the government for the right of the Nisei to volunteer for the Army from camp, as another visible demonstration of loyalty. JACL opposed test cases in court, and condemned the Constitutional challenge brought by the draft resisters.

John Okada in *No-No Boy* exposes the entire range of Japanese American response to the question of "loyal" or "disloyal."

#### **Ask students:**

- Do you internalize the policies of the JACL to comply and cooperate in order to be accepted as "loyal?" And if compliance is equated with loyalty, does protest or resistance equate with disloyalty?
- Emi's father and brother-in-law Mike ask to be expatriated to Japan, which Okada makes it clear was not an expression of loyalty to Japan but an emotional reaction to injustice in America. Does that make you loyal or disloyal?
- And if you are a young man of 18, still in high school but of draft age, what if you choose to stand on your Constitutional rights and protest your incarceration by refusing the draft? Are you loyal or disloyal?

### **VETERANS and RESISTERS**

In 1942, Secretary of War Henry Stimson declared the Nisei undraftable by reason of their ancestry. All Nisei were reclassified from the draft-eligible "1-A" to "4-C," or aliens ineligible for the draft, and most Nisei already in the Army were discharged or assigned menial duties.

In 1943, however, Stimson at the urging of JACL restored the Nisei right to volunteer for service and created a segregated Army unit, the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team, which was later joined with the 100<sup>th</sup> Battalion from Hawaii. Of 14,000 single men of draft age in the ten camps, only 1,200 volunteered.

By January 1944, Stimson reinstated normal selective service for the Nisei "as a step toward regaining full citizenship," including the Nisei imprisoned in camp. Many welcomed the chance to be drafted, reasoning that it was the restoration of one of their civil rights. Others rejected the idea they had to prove their loyalty to regain rights with which they were born.

*The 1944 Nisei draft at Heart Mountain, Wyoming*  
[http://www.pbs.org/itvs/conscience/resources/for\\_teachers/college\\_guide.pdf](http://www.pbs.org/itvs/conscience/resources/for_teachers/college_guide.pdf)

Ichiro as a character never gives a clear reason why he refused to be drafted from camp, but Okada gives voice to others who said they would be happy to serve once their rights were restored and their families released from camp:

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*"Please, judge, said the next one. I want to go in your army because this is my country and I've always lived here and I was all-city guard and one time I wrote a composition about what it means for me to be an American ... All you have to do is give us back our home and grocery store ... That's all, a little thing. Will you do that for one good, loyal American family? We'll forget the two years in camp." (pg 33)*

### **THE VETERANS**

Okada puts the points of view of several veterans in *No-No Boy*, including himself, as the nameless veteran in the *Preface* to the novel.

He creates two other characters as well:

Kenji Kanno is a decorated veteran who returns from combat with one leg amputated. The government has symbolically given him mobility in the form of a specially-equipped new Oldsmobile. However, he dies from the creeping infection in the stump of his leg.

Eto Minato is still wearing his Eisenhower jacket and army fatigues on the streets of Seattle when he confronts Ichiro and spits on him when he realizes Ichiro is a draft resister. We later learn that Eto wrangled a medical discharge after only six months in the Army. (pg. 48)

The sacrifices of Japanese American soldiers in World War II are well-documented, especially those of airman Ben Kuroki and the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team.

### **THE RESISTERS**

Two draft resisters appear in *No-No Boy*: Ichiro Yamada and Freddie Akimoto.

#### **Who were the real draft resisters?**

At the camp at Heart Mountain, Wyoming, 63 young men insisted that as American citizens they were being denied equal treatment under the U.S. Constitution. They refused to report for their draft physicals in order to challenge the constitutionality of the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans based solely on their race.<sup>1</sup>

They organized under the banner of the Fair Play Committee to say they would be happy to serve once their rights were first restored and their families released from camp. They typed bulletins, held meetings and elected officers.<sup>2</sup>

*(4:31) "The government stripped us of our constitutional rights, reclassified us enemy aliens and put us in camp, and now when they needed more men they impose the draft into the camps and the draft resisters thought that was wrong." (Frank Emi, Fair Play Committee leader)*

*(4:46) "And I just couldn't see myself going along with that." (Jim Akutsu, model for the character of Ichiro Yamada)*

By deliberating breaking a law in order to create a test case, the resisters were committing **an act of civil disobedience.**

<sup>1</sup> "Maybe I was naive but I felt we had a very strong case. Article One in the Bill of Rights says that if the government denies you the right of American citizenship, that you have the right to redress it. And nowhere in the Constitution does it say that good public image is more important than Constitutional rights". (resister Mits Koshiyama)

**Conscience and the Constitution (1:33:51)** <http://www.pbs.org/itvs/conscience/resistance/>

<sup>2</sup> "We feel the present program of drafting us from this concentration camp is unjust, unconstitutional, and against all principles... Therefore, we members of the Fair Play Committee hereby refuse to go to the physical examination or to the induction, if or when we are called, in order to contest the issue."

**Conscience and the Constitution (1:22:53)** <http://www.pbs.org/itvs/conscience/resistance/>

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### **CONSEQUENCES OF RESISTING THE DRAFT**

In all, 315 Nisei resisted the draft from eight of the 10 camps. Sentences ranged from three years in prison for the Heart Mountain and Minidoka resisters (with time off for good behavior) to dismissal of the charges by the judge who presided over the trial of the resisters from Tule Lake.

*(4:53) "The sentence for refusing to go was three years, three months, and a \$200 fine". (Gene Akutsu)*

*(5:00) "They told me that there's a chance that I may get killed or beat up y'know if I go to jail. We were going to be put in a federal penitentiary where there's a lot of pretty rough character. So I tell 'em that's the chance I'm taking." (Jim Akutsu)*

President Harry Truman issued a blanket pardon for all World War II draft resisters in 1947, but the Japanese American community was not so forgiving, and it is this world that is captured in ***No-No Boy***.

*(10:34) "So many veterans tell me how many of their friends were killed, did not return, and in their minds someone that did not serve resisted -- were one and the same with cowards that could have served and maybe their friends would be alive." (Gail Nomura, University of Washington)*

**Ask students:** If you had chosen to resist the draft to challenge the Constitutionality of continued incarceration based on race, would you have the courage to follow your convictions, even if it meant being shunned by your community? What do you imagine their life was like when they finally came home?

### **WHAT IS A "NO-NO BOY?"**

Despite its title, neither the novel or the documentary centers on the so-called "no-no boys." The central character, Ichiro Yamada, is a **draft resister**, not a no-no boy.

*(13:19) "'No-No Boy' title is misleading because the main character is not a no-no boy, he's a resister. Maybe it makes a better-sounding title." (Frank Emi)*

Then what exactly is a no-no boy?

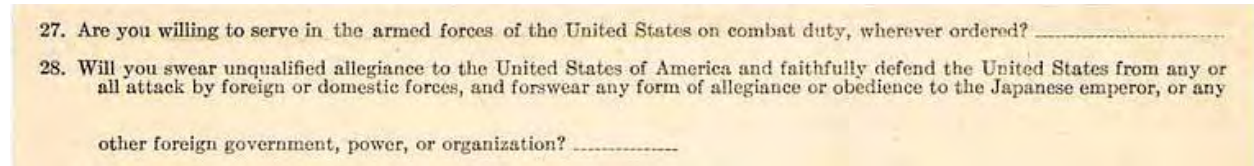
**The term "no-no boy" has a specific meaning:** those young men who answered "no" and "no" in early 1943 to two questions on the government's *Leave Clearance Questionnaire* and were shipped to the Tule Lake Segregation Center on the California-Oregon border.

Over time however, the term "no-no boy" came to be applied to the draft resisters and other dissenters as well.

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### **THE LOYALTY QUESTIONNAIRE**



The government in 1943 attempted to find some means of determining who of the 120,000 incarcerated in the ten camps were “loyal” or “disloyal,” in order to facilitate the release of only the “loyal” to attend colleges back East or resettle in other parts of the country. A *Leave Clearance Questionnaire* was created that ultimately helped create a class of people documented as “disloyal,” whether they were in fact disloyal to the U.S. or not.

*(10:34) “There’s a false sense that the government seems to have imposed on the community that there are loyals and disloyals, and there is only one path to this loyalty.” (Gail Nomura)*

All those in camp over 17 years of age were required to answer the questionnaire. Two questions caused tremendous upheaval and distress among the inmates in camp:

**Question 27:** Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?

Since Question 27 specifies *combat duty* and if one answers “yes”, are you, in effect, volunteering for military service? This question was later modified to accommodate women, the elderly, and the immigrant Issei, who by exclusionary law were barred from becoming naturalized U.S. citizens.

**Question 28:** Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any and all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance to the Japanese emperor or any other foreign government, power or organization?

Question 28 was a loyalty oath, and many regarded it as a trick question. For the Nisei, if you answered “yes,” were you inadvertently admitting a prior allegiance to the emperor for which you could be punished? For the Issei, who by law were aliens ineligible for U.S. citizenship, would signing a statement forswearing the only citizenship they possessed leave them as stateless persons?

More than 12,000 people who answered “no” or gave non-responsive answers to one or both questions were removed from the other concentration camps and shipped to the Segregation Center at Tule Lake, California.

**Ask students:** Pass out copies of Questions 27 and 28 and have students give their own responses to the questions. Remind them that, like those in camp, they can answer only “yes” or “no”, regardless of circumstances. Conditional or qualified answers are not allowed, and written explanations will be disregarded. Any answer other than “yes” will be considered a “no.”

See the Densho resource *A Question of Loyalty* for video clips of Nisei men talking about their responses to the loyalty oath.

<http://www.densho.org/archive/default.asp> (free registration required)

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### **THE REAL-LIFE MODEL FOR ICHIRO YAMADA**

Some of the details of Ichiro's story are based on a real draft resister, Jim Akutsu.

*(9:25) "One piece of his story falls into place while helping out at his father's new business, the Pacific Hotel. There he meets Jim Akutsu, the draft resister who lives in back of a shoe repair shop on the hotel's ground floor." (narrator)*

*"John would ask my brother Jim, what did he do, what was his reason, anything to do with the reason why he had refused to go to the service." (Gene Akutsu)*

*"We do know though that John Okada sat in at Jim Akutsu's shoe repair shop and listened to stories from his contemporaries. And he put these stories in his book." (Shawn Wong)*

*(5:46) "Well actually if you read the 'No-No Boy,' some of that did happen." (Jim Akutsu)*

Jim Akutsu tried to volunteer for the National Guard and the Reserve Officer Training Corps before the war and again immediately after Pearl Harbor, but was turned away three times. Like John Okada, Akutsu was incarcerated at Minidoka, Idaho, where he contacted Frank Emi to learn about the Constitutional stand being taken by the Fair Play Committee. Akutsu decided to take a different approach; he claimed that since the government stripped him of his rights as a U.S. citizen, then he must indeed be an enemy alien and therefore not eligible for the draft. He refused induction and served two years at the federal penitentiary at McNeil Island, Washington, alongside the Heart Mountain resisters.

After the war Akutsu returned to Seattle's Japantown, where John Okada befriended him and questioned him about his experiences. Akutsu would drop by the war surplus store on Jackson Street where Okada worked, or Okada would take Jim out to drink at the Wah Mee Club, the after-hours club that was the model for the "Club Oriental" in the book. Akutsu's mother took her own life, as does Ichiro's mother.

Ichiro appears to be unaware of the organized resistance at the Heart Mountain camp or their Constitutional stand. The real-life draft resisters disdain Okada's treatment of their story through the character of Ichiro:

*(14:15) "When I first read it, I got so disgusted with the first part of it that I didn't complete it. I When I first read it, I was disgusted. all the resisters that I know would never have reacted the way Ichiro in his novel reacted. I think any of our resisters would have probably hauled off and smacked him." (Frank Emi)*

### **Ask students:**

- Why didn't the author create a protagonist who was more sure of himself and his motives?
- What would you do if you were in the position of a draft age Japanese American man in camp in World War II, and you receive a "Greetings" letter from the Selective Service System ordering you to report for your draft physical?
- Is it a sign of disloyalty to your government to stand up for a principle that you believe to be right?
- Are we free to interpret the Constitution in any way that suits us, like those who claim the federal income tax is unconstitutional?

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#### **PERSPECTIVES OF A “NO-NO BOY” THROUGH AN EXCERPT FROM A NOVEL** (Densho Activity 5-4) <http://www.densho.org/learning/spice/lesson5/5activity5-4.asp>

Densho: The Japanese American Legacy Project has created a teaching unit that makes use of the opening scene from *No-No Boy*.

Densho Activity 5-4 contains suggested writing assignments utilizing three downloadable handouts: the text of the opening confrontation in the novel, a statement of policy from the patriotic wartime Japanese American Citizens League, and a vivid personal statement from a man who answered “no-no” to the two questions on the loyalty questionnaire. Keep in mind that although the first handout identifies Ichiro as a “no-no” respondent, he is more properly characterized as a draft resister.

As the novel opens, Ichiro is stepping off the bus that has brought him from the McNeil Island Federal Penitentiary, south of Seattle. The first person he sees is Eto Minato, an old acquaintance, still wearing his Eisenhower jacket and army fatigues. Part of this opening scene from the novel (pg. 2) is dramatized in the documentary, starting at (5:53). It can also be played as a separate scene from the DVD menu.

*“Itchy!” That was his nickname. “Hey, Itchy!” The caller’s footsteps ran toward him. When’d you get discharged?”*

*“I . . . that is . . . I never was in.”*

*Eto slapped him good-naturedly on the arm. “No need to look sour. So you weren’t in. So what? Been in camp all this time?”*

*“No.” He made an effort to be free of Eto with his questions. He felt as if he were in a small room whose walls were slowly closing in on him. “I’ve really got to be going.”*

*The round face wasn’t smiling any more. It was thoughtful. The eyes confronted Ichiro with indecision which changed slowly to enlightenment and then to suspicion. He remembered.*

*“No-no boy, huh?”*

*Ichiro wanted to say yes. He wanted to return the look of despising hatred and say simply yes, but it was too much to say. The walls had closed in and were crushing all the unspoken words back down into his stomach.*

*(Eto) “Rotten bastard. Rotten, no-good bastard.” (he spits) “I’ll piss on you the next time.”*

#### **Ask students:**

- Why does the author place this scene at the very beginning of the novel?
- Why does Eto still wear parts of his army uniform? We find out later in the book that Eto wrangled a medical discharge after only six months in the army—does this change your perception of the interaction between Ichiro and Eto?
- The true story of the real draft resisters was not openly discussed in the Japanese American community until the 1990’s. Why do you think that was?

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#### **WRITING ASSIGNMENTS for this LESSON**

In a short paper of 200-250 words, answer the following questions.

- Do the rights of citizens change in time of war? Why or why not?
- How would you answer Questions 27 or 28 on the Loyalty Questionnaire? Explain the reasons for your answer.
- If you had chosen to resist the draft to challenge the legality of the forced incarceration, would you have the courage to follow your convictions, even if it meant being shunned by your community?