



## TITLE

# HELEN ZIA AND THE ORIGINS OF MODERN ASIAN AMERICAN ACTIVISM

GRADE LEVEL: ELEMENTARY TO HIGH SCHOOL

**SUBJECT:** History, Social Science

**THEME:** Activism, Civil Rights, Identity and Culture

**STANDARDS:** United States History Content Standards: See Era 10, Standard 2: Economic, Social, and Cultural Developments in Contemporary United States. The Roadmap - Educating for American Democracy: see 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?

### CLASSROOM TIME:

1 - 2 Periods

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LAST UPDATE: *JAN, 10TH, 2024*



## BACKGROUND:

This lesson plan is about 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.

## ACTIVITIES:

### 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

(<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Coo71icVL3qI0DbD9P5a25V2NTmQf9hKn86rOz3Rzts/edit>) 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 ([https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WtmgsXiWwyczlrITPLKkqGc-yKJjb\\_HdRNQJM y6vtOM/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WtmgsXiWwyczlrITPLKkqGc-yKJjb_HdRNQJM y6vtOM/edit?usp=sharing)).

### Closure

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



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### 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.

### SOURCES:

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

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ckCuXO1pFXSQFlp3PDpNDYKF7SSXmC8?usp=sharing>



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