



TITLE

TSURUJA MIYAZAKI: A VIRGINIA STORY OF JAPANESE AMERICAN INCARCERATION

GRADE LEVEL: MIDDLE SCHOOL TO HIGH SCHOOL

SUBJECT: History

THEME: Bias and Stereotype, Civil Rights, Identity and Culture, Immigration, and International Affairs
World War II

STANDARDS: Virginia Standards (2023) and Themes: Immigration (USII.3f&g; VUS9&10); Japanese American Incarceration in World War II (USI.6g; VUS.14b)

OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able to:

- Expand understanding of Japanese American incarceration during World War II using an example from Virginia's past: that the story of incarceration was not limited to the west coast but had implications around the country.
- Introduce more complex elements of a story that personalizes the experience of Japanese Americans and others that World War II affected.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- Why were Japanese Americans rounded up after the attack on Pearl Harbor?
- Under what authority were the rights denied of those who were detained?
- Are there ways for the country to make up for the injustices carried out against its own people?
- Why is it important to tell stories like that of Regina Boone's grandfather and family?

CLASSROOM TIME:

2 to 3 Periods

CONTEXT FOR THE LESSON:

This lesson is based on the story of how Regina Boone, a photojournalist from Virginia, kept a promise made by her father before he died, to learn about his Japanese father (Regina's grandfather) whom he had never really known, having disappeared from his life in 1941 after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

CREDIT AUTHOR AND CONTACT: 1882 FOUNDATION



ACTIVITIES:

1. Hand out the reading “A Vanished Dream” about Regina Boone and her grandfather, Tsuruja Miyazaki, written by Raymond Batvinis. Read the introduction out loud and then have students read the rest on their own or in small groups and complete the accompanying questions to part 1. (see Appendix A)

2. Check on the groups to assess their answers to part 1 to make sure they all understand the basic facts of the story.

3. Have them tackle questions to part 2 for a more extended time. Except for #4, there are no correct answers but it will be interesting to hear what students say. #3 raises the possibility that because of Virginia’s miscegenation laws, Letha and Tsuruja chose not to wed, even though marriage between Asians and Blacks were not subject to the laws (only Whites intermarrying with other races).

You may also discuss the use of the language with the class associated with the story: Relocation, Internment, and Incarceration; Alien Property Control Section; Alien Enemy Hearing Board. What do the words mean? What might they suggest to the American public about Japanese Americans?

4. Show the film, A Vanished Dream. While they’re watching, have students fill in the missing parts to the story, noting especially what happened to Miyazaki during the course of the war and afterwards. <https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/ondemand/video/3016040/>

Epilogue: The film makes a brief mention of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 that provided reparations to the survivors of the camps and which also offered an apology to Japanese Americans for violation of their civil liberties. The Act set in motion other apologies or expressions of regret from Congress since then to Native Americans, African Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Asians barred from the U.S. by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and subsequent legislation. The Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed in 1943 during World War II.

ASSESSMENT:

Before beginning a writing exercise, have them reflect and speak about what they have learned from the film and how their views of that time period may have changed. Ask students to write for 10-15 minutes about one of the following prompts:

Is there someone in your ancestry that, if it were possible, you would want to have them answer some questions you have about their life? What do you want to know?

Imagine you are Tsuruja Miyazaki at some point after his arrest. Write a letter home to Letha and tell her what you’re thinking and experiencing.

If you could re-write the history of those early days and months after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, what do you think could have been done to avoid the policies that led to the incarceration of Japanese Americans?



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APPENDIX A:

May 13, 2019 By Raymond J. Batvinis, Ph.D
A Vanished Dream: Tsuruja Miyazaki Case | FBI Studies

A Vanished Dream: Tsuruja Miyazaki Case

This is a sad story but, in its own way, a truly American one. It focuses on what we refer to today as an “undocumented immigrant” victimized by a nation suddenly, and, unexpectedly, caught up in the grip of irrational fear.

My role in the saga began last fall with an email message from a television news producer in Tokyo, Japan. Her name is Miki Ebarra. Miki was traveling to the United States to conduct research and interviews for a documentary which was eventually titled, *A Vanished Dream*. She asked me if I would do an on-camera interview to explain the historical context surrounding this sad event, and I was honored to accept. After some scheduling delays we finally filmed on the morning of February 7, 2019 at the National Law Enforcement Museum in Washington, DC.

I’m posting some photos taken the morning of the filming along with a link to the film and the complete file on the case obtained from the National Archives and Records Administration at College Park, Maryland.

A Vanished Dream: Wartime Story of My Japanese Grandfather (NHK-World Japan)

To American photojournalist Regina Boone, her paternal grandfather was an enigma. He was a hard-working Japanese immigrant but was arrested on the day of the Pearl Harbor attack never to return home. Regina’s father rarely spoke about him throughout his life. It was only 5 years ago on his deathbed that he asked Regina to find out the circumstances surrounding her grandfather’s disappearance. Our camera follows her quest to uncover the trail of her missing Japanese grandfather.

Tsuruja Miyazaki

Tsuruja Miyazaki, “Mike” as his friends and loved ones knew him, was born in Nagasaki, Japan on December 27, 1897 to a merchant and his homemaker wife. He had three siblings, a sister and two brothers both older and both farmers in the prefecture of Nagasaki.

He came to the United States from France in 1922 where he had lived for years and apparently jumped a ship in Norfolk in which he was a crew member and settled illegally in Suffolk, Virginia for the next nineteen years opening the Horseshoe Restaurant in Suffolk and another in Norfolk. The circumstances of his arrival in the United States in 1922 corresponded with the passage the year before of congressional legislation essentially barring Asians from entering the United States for immigration purposes and this may account for his unexplained internment for the literally entire period of World War II. He had two children by Letha Boone, a black woman living in Suffolk and his restaurant on East Washington Street catered exclusively to the African-American population. Remember this was a time of segregation and “Jim Crow.” His son by Letha was named Raymond Boone and he later educated himself and became a journalist and was the founder of the Richmond Free Press which is still in existence and since his death is operated by his daughter, Regina Boone, a photo-journalist.

Miyazaki was arrested on the night of December 7, 1941 by the Suffolk Virginia Police as part of the Proclamation 2525 signed earlier in the evening by President Roosevelt mandating the roundup of Japanese aliens deemed dangerous to the internal security of the nation as part of the Custodial Detention Program. He was taken into custody and sent immediately to Fort Howard in Maryland under guard which was set aside as prison for arrested aliens. He was one of about thirty in the Norfolk area to be taken into custody. He was taken so fast that he had no time to make arrangements for his businesses which continued to run for three more days before shutting their doors and going out of business. His INS file contains page after page of lists of the items which were sold off by the federal government with the funds held in escrow by the Alien Property Control Section of the Department of Justice.



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APPENDIX A:

US Government Files

- [RG 210 Miyasaki, part 1 \(192 MB\)](#)
- [RG 201 Miyasaki, part 2 \(202 MB\)](#)
- [RG 60 A1 Cor 146-13 Bx604 \(158 MB\)](#)

For information on Raymond Batvinis, see:
[About Author Raymond J. Batvinis | FBI Studies](#)

RESOURCES:

Regina Boone

[A Vanished Dream: Wartime Story of My Japanese Grandfather | NHK WORLD-JAPAN On Demand](#)

[Reporter captures woman's story of finding her Japanese grandfather with Suffolk connections - The Virginian-Pilot](#)

[Who was Tsuruju Miyazaki? - The Suffolk News-Herald](#)

[A Vanished Dream: Tsuruja Miyazaki Case | FBI Studies](#)



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Questions, Part 1: Getting the story straight

1. How did Tsuruja Miyazaki come to be in the United States?
2. How did he earn a living after he settled here?
3. What does the article say about his family?
4. Why was Miyazaki arrested?
5. What happened to him after his arrest? Where was he sent? What happened to his shops?
6. Why, if he was deemed “harmless” in January 1942, was he not released? And when he was “released” in October 1942, where did he go?
7. The writer of this article starts it off in the introductory paragraph with some key words about Miyazaki’s case – “*undocumented immigrant*,” *victimized*, *irrational*. Why does he choose to characterize Miyazaki’s experience this way?

Questions, Part 2: Hmm. What else is going on?

1. What steps do you think Miyazaki took to explain to others how he came to live in Suffolk, Virginia?
2. How do you think his relationship to Letha Boone came about?
3. There is no record of them getting married; why do you think they didn't get married?
4. How was it that he could be arrested and detained for so long even though no charges were brought against him and he never got a trial?
5. Miyazaki ended up at a Relocation camp in Rohwer, Arkansas but never returned to Suffolk. Why do you think he never came back?