

Lesson Title: Cambodian Americans – Deportation Breaking Families Apart

Grade Level(s) 9-12

Ethnic Studies Values and Principles Alignment

Principles 1-7

Standards Alignment

HSS Content Standard 10.9.3, 11.9.3, 11.11.7

Literacy Standards for History/Social Science: [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.6](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.7](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1](#)

Lesson Purpose and Overview

Overview: Cambodian Americans, are a sub Asian American group that are experiencing numerous deportations as a result of a repatriation act passed in the 1990s. This act focuses on deporting Cambodian Refugee felons for petty crimes even after they have served their time. Over 700 mainly Cambodian American males have been deported back to Cambodia to live in a society that is unwelcoming to them. They are culturally American yet they are barred from ever returning to the U.S. Many of them have wives and children in the U.S. These family separations are causing generational trauma to the wives, children and parents. They are forced to live in a “borderland” as they are also not treated as equals in Cambodia. This criminalization of Cambodian male youth mirrors the experiences of Chicanx and Latinx youth with the added Cambodian U.S. Repatriation Act. Fortunately there are organizations recognizing this is a human rights issue and are making this issue known.

Background information:

Refugees from Cambodia were the last large group of refugees to arrive in the United States following the end of the U.S. war in Southeast Asia. Most were not able to leave

Cambodia until the overthrow of the Pol Pot dictatorship in 1979 and many had to spend years in Thai refugee camps before they were allowed to come to the US.

By the time Cambodian refugees finally arrived in the U.S., some local communities were facing economic challenges and were even less welcoming to the Cambodian refugees than they had been to earlier refugee groups. Government assistance programs were harder to qualify for. Cambodian refugees were often resettled in some of the most challenging American neighborhoods with issues of poverty, crime, and violence.

Adults who dealt with post-traumatic stress issues from surviving the Khmer Rouge genocide, which killed 1.2-2.8 million people, which is 13 percent to 30 percent of the Cambodian population (Heuveline), were not trained in the detailed steps they needed to take so that they and their children could become fully naturalized US citizens. Family members at times experienced discrimination and hatred.

Some young people growing up in rough neighborhoods got involved in youth gangs and crime. When a young Cambodian refugee was arrested their parents were not familiar with the U.S. justice system. The arrested youth were often advised to take a plea deal, plead guilty sometimes in exchange for a reduced sentence. In the years after the 9-11-2001 terrorist attack, these young refugees who had already completed their prison terms, even decades earlier, faced deportation to Cambodia since they had not become naturalized U.S. citizens.

Most of those young people facing deportation do not remember Cambodia, they had spent most of their lives in the United States. Some of those facing deportation to Cambodia had never been there, they had been born in Thai refugee camps. Many of them had already moved on with their lives, gotten jobs, formed families and had US citizen children, bought homes. Over 700 Cambodian refugees have been deported, the numbers of annual deportations have decreased and increased under different Presidential Administrations.

Content Objectives

- Understand the history of how the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War drew Cambodia into political turmoil leading to the killing fields forcing many Cambodians to flee to the U.S. as refugees.
- Understand the specific issues that Cambodian Americans face, high poverty rates, high incarceration rates, and high rates of deportations.
- Understand the impact of these deportations on the Cambodian American community.

Language Objectives

Students will do research on the essential questions using a variety of sources, including videos and articles to learn about the Cambodian American Deportation issue in an Expert Home Groups Jigsaw where each student will become an expert in their question and then report back to their group to answer the question with evidence from the source they

Key Terms and Ethnic Studies Concepts

Cambodia – Southeast Asian country that got caught in the Vietnam War due to the secret bombings

Immigration Naturalization Act – This law defines who can immigrate to the U.S. and causes for deportation.

U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War – During the Cold War era, the U.S. became militarily involved in the Vietnam War to stop the spread of communism. The war spread to neighboring Southeast Asian Countries like Cambodia and Laos causing instability, chaos, death, destruction and a refugee crisis.

U.S. secret bombing of Cambodia – From 1969 to 1973, under the Nixon administration, the U.S. airforce secretly dropped bombed in Cambodian near the border of Vietnam to try to destroy the Ho Chi Minh trails that the Viet Cong used to travel down to South Vietnam to attack.

Pol Pot – The communist leader who fought the U.S. backed Cambodian government who took power and tried to weed out anything that had any U.S. or western influence as a reaction to the

bombings. This caused a period of time called the Killing Fields in which 1.2-2.8 million people which is 13 percent-30 percent of the population at the time was killed. (Heuveline)

Killing Fields – genocide in which the Cambodian government killed any person suspected of siding with the U.S. and/ or the West or being influenced by the U.S. and/or Western Doctors, teachers, anyone educated was killed.

Refugee – a person forced to leave their home country for fear of losing their lives, or of suffering.

Khmer Rouge – Pol Pot’s political organization, that was staffed with youth, child soldiers

Genocide – mass murder of an entire group of people.

Trauma -a deeply distressing or disturbing experience that causes negative psychological effects, i.e. depression, anxiety, etc.

Unit Essential Questions

1. What is the history of Cambodian immigration to the U.S? Why and how did they come to the U.S.?
2. Describe the Cambodian American community today, and in particular the issue of deportations that they are dealing with.
3. What impact are these deportations having on Cambodian American families and why are advocacy groups calling it a human rights issue?
4. What are the similarities in experiences faced by the Latinx families dealing with deportations of family members?

Lesson Steps/Activities

Day 1

1. Ask the question – How many people know where Cambodia is on the world map? If a student raises their hand, ask them to come point out where it is on a world map or globe. Also project a picture of the Cambodian Flag on the screen if you are able.

2. Today we are going to learn about Cambodian Americans, their history of immigration to the U.S. and what issues they are facing today. (read essential questions 1-3 aloud).
3. In pairs, bring up the source: “Cambodian Americans” <http://www.asian-nation.org/cambodian.shtml#sthash.G7I688Ox.dpbs> And answer the questions on the handout “Cambodian Americans – Immigration and Experience in America”.
4. Have students work in pairs to answer the questions on the hand out. They can take turns reading to each other and listening. Turn it in at the end of class.

Day 2

5. Jigsaw Export/Home groups – break students into groups of 4, number them 1-4. Tell them they are currently in their home groups, and that each number is going to become an expert on a source that will give them more information about the deportation issue within the Cambodian American community.
6. Before they break into the expert groups – Discuss the deportation issue with your class, give a short 5-10 minute lecture on why and how are Cambodian Americans who were born in refugee camps, have green cards and have lived in the U.S. the majority of their lives are now at risk of being deported.

Mini Lecture – According to the NPR article, “The U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act outlines how non-U.S. citizens may be deported back to their country of origin, even if they're in the country legally. "Violation of law" is listed as a deportable offense.

The U.S. has been repatriating Cambodian immigrants since 2002, when an agreement was made between Washington and Phnom Penh that said Cambodia would accept deportees.

That deal fell apart last year, prompting the Trump administration to impose visa sanctions on some Cambodian officials and families. The two governments eventually worked out a new agreement in early 2018 and Cambodia began accepting Cambodian nationals, this time in

even greater numbers than before.” Many times Cambodian Americans are deported for a crime they committed when they were young and they did their time, they move on with their lives, marrying and having kids. As mature husbands and fathers, they are now being deported for something they thought was a part of their past and dealt with. (Check for understanding)

7. Expert Groups - Tell them they will be given a source to access online through their chromebooks, or teachers can make hard copies and set up video watching stations and that while they are reading and watching to use critical literacy to think about the information they are learning. Questions they should think about while they are analyzing their sources are:
 - a. What is the legal basis for these deportations?
 - b. Why are these deportations unfair?
 - c. What effect are these deportations having on the deportees and the families still living in the U.S?
 - d. What groups are doing something about the deportations and what are they doing?

Since they will be the only person reporting back to their homegroup on their source, they really need to pay attention and take good notes. (All of these directions are on the two page handout – make hard copies for every student).

8. Home Groups – Tell students to return to their home groups and report to their groups their findings from their sources. They take turns from 1-4 presenting their facts, quotes and evidence while the rest of the group takes notes from listening to the expert. At the end of the time period, all of their quadrants should be filled out completely.
9. Assessment –
 - a. Reflect on your learning:

What effects are these deportations having on the Cambodian American community?

Why are advocacy groups calling these deportations a human rights violation?

10. Action:

To show evidence of your learning from this lesson you can choose one of the three options below:

- Write a letter to or call your congress person to advocate and end to these deportations as well as to the deportations of undocumented immigrants from the Latino community.
- Join one of the organizations that is working towards helping these families that are dealing with a loved one being deported and report back how you are participating.
- Create a public service announcement that educates others about this issue and post it on instagram or facebook. It must include a way for people to get involved.

Lesson Modifications/Accommodations for Students with Diverse Needs

1. As an alternative, instead of jigsaw expert groups, you can show the videos and read the articles as a whole class and then have students take notes in groups.
2. Use sentence frames to help students access the assessments (writing a letter to their congress person).

Materials & Resources

Dunst, Charles, “Cambodian Deportees Return to a 'Home' They've Never Known”, The Atlantic, 16 Jan 2019. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/01/america-deports-cambodian-refugees/580393/>

Couture, Denise, “U.S. Deports Dozens More Cambodian Immigrants, Some For Decades-Old Crimes”, NPR, 18 Dec 2018. <https://www.npr.org/2018/12/18/677358543/u-s-deports-dozens-more-cambodian-immigrants-some-for-decades-old-crimes>

“Deported from U.S., Cambodians fight immigration policy” PBS Newshour, 7 May 2017
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQMuGOXc-i4>

“Deported: Forced Family Separation (Part 2 of 5) | NBC Asian America”, NBC News, 16 Mar

2017 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dULdy78KOLU>

“Cambodian Americans”, Asian Nation, Asian American History Demographics and Issues

(This article is an edited chapter on the major historical events and contemporary

characteristics of the Cambodian American community, excerpted from *The New Face of*

Asian Pacific America: Numbers, Diversity, and Change in the 21st Century, edited by

Eric Lai and Dennis Arguelles in conjunction with AsianWeek Magazine and published

by the UCLA Asian American Studies Center.)

<http://www.asiannation.org/cambodian.shtml#sthash.G7I6880x.dpbs>

Sullivan, Meg, “UCLA demographer produces best estimate yet of Cambodia’s death toll

under Pol Pot”, UCLA Newsroom, 16 Apr 2016 [https://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/ucla-](https://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/ucla-demographer-produces-best-estimate-yet-of-cambodias-death-toll-under-pol-pot)

[demographer-produces-best-estimate-yet-of-cambodias-death-toll-under-pol-pot](https://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/ucla-demographer-produces-best-estimate-yet-of-cambodias-death-toll-under-pol-pot)

Cambodian Americans – Immigration and Experience in America

Using the source: “Cambodian Americans”, Asian Nation, Asian American History

Demographics and Issues (This article is an edited chapter on the major historical events and

contemporary characteristics of the Cambodian American community, excerpted from *The*

New Face of Asian Pacific America: Numbers, Diversity, and Change in the 21st Century,

edited by Eric Lai and Dennis Arguelles in conjunction with Asian Week Magazine and

published by the UCLA Asian American Studies Center.)

<http://www.asiannation.org/cambodian.shtml#sthash.G7I6880x.dpbs>

Lesson handouts

Essential Question: What is the history of Cambodian immigration to the U.S? Why and how did they come to the U.S.?

Leading questions from the reading

Connecting to history:

1. What secret actions did the U.S. do to Cambodia from 1969 to 1973?
2. What effect did these actions have on Cambodia politically?
3. Describe how the Khmer Rouge ruled over Vietnam from 1975-1979.
4. What effect did the Khmer Rouge have on the Cambodian population?
5. What year did the Khmer Rouge fall? And as a result, how many Cambodian refugees fled Cambodia?
6. How many Cambodian Refugees were admitted to the U.S. by 1980?
7. Why does the Census data not reflect the true number of Cambodians living in the U.S.?
8. What is the poverty rate of Cambodian Americans? Compared to the average U.S. poverty rate of 13-15%.
9. What is the educational level among Cambodian Americans? Why is it so low?

10. Why do you think there is such a high rate of incarceration of Cambodian young men?

(Think of the conditions they faced in Cambodia and in the U.S.)

Write a paragraph describing the Cambodian American community. (Continue on the back of the page when you run out of room).

Deporting Cambodian Americans - Jigsaw Expert Home Groups Directions

Essential Question: What effect are the deportations having on the Cambodian communities?

Break into groups of 4, number 1-4, this is your home group. Each # represents an expert group

Your task: Using evidence from the primary and secondary sources provided. Become an expert on that source. It may be a video or and article with interviews of Cambodian Americans who have been deported or their families that are affected. You can work in your expert groups to help each other read, listen and analyze the source. Be ready to share out with your home group. Remember you will be the only person in your group that will be an expert on your source so be thorough and detailed in your notes. If your source is a video, you can play the video several times, or pause it to take notes.

As you analyze your source, think about these questions:

- What is the legal basis for these deportations?
- Why are these deportations unfair?
- What effect are these deportations having on the deportees and the families still living in the U.S?
- What groups are doing something about the deportations and what are they doing?

Your assigned source:

#1s – Article - “Cambodian Deportees Return to a 'Home' They've Never Known”, The Atlantic, 16 Jan 2019. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/01/america-deports-cambodian-refugees/580393/>

#2s – Article – “U.S. Deports Dozens More Cambodian Immigrants, Some For Decades-Old Crimes”, NPR, 18 Dec 2018. <https://www.npr.org/2018/12/18/677358543/u-s-deports-dozens-more-cambodian-immigrants-some-for-decades-old-crimes>

#3s – Video – “Deported from U.S., Cambodians fight immigration policy” PBS Newshour, 7 May

2017 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQMuGOXc-i4>

#4s – Video - Deported: Forced Family Separation (Part 2 of 5) | NBC Asian America, NBC News,

16 Mar 2017 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dULdy78KOLU>

(Use your chromebooks, ipads or resource stations to access the source)

Expert Groups

Take notes in your quadrant on the handout “Deporting Cambodian Americans”. Make sure to note down the Author, title and date of your source. Take down as many notes as you can, which should include names, quotes and facts.

Home Groups

Return to your home groups of 1-4. Each # take turns reporting out what they learned from their source citing evidence, facts and quotes. As you are reporting out, the rest of your group is writing notes in the appropriate quadrants. After everyone has reported out, each person should have a wealth of notes on their sources.

Deporting Cambodian Americans – Jigsaw Expert/Home Groups – Note Taking Sheet

<p>#1s Source Info: (Author, Title)</p> <p>Notes:</p>	<p>#2s Source Info (Author, Title)</p> <p>Notes:</p>
<p>#3s Source Info: (Author, Title)</p> <p>Notes:</p>	<p>#4s Source Info: (Author, Title)</p> <p>Notes:</p>

Assessment

Reflect on your learning:

Participate in a whole class discussion answering the essential questions:

- What effects are these deportations having on the Cambodian American community?
- Why are advocacy groups calling these deportations a human rights violation?

Action:

To show evidence of your learning from this lesson you can choose one of the three options below:

- Write a letter to or call your congress person to advocate and end to these deportations as well as to the deportations of undocumented immigrants from the Latino community.
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