

Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies

Sample Lesson 2: Col. Young Oak Kim—War Hero, Public Servant, Identity

Theme: History, War, Humanitarianism, Community Service, and People

Disciplinary Area: Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies

Ethnic Studies Values and Principles Alignment: 1, 2, 4

Standards Alignment:

HSS Content Standard 11.11.1

CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy: RH.9–10.1, 2, 3, 7; W.9–10.1; SL.9–10.1

Lesson Purpose and Overview:

Overview: Col. Young Oak Kim was a renowned war hero who served during World War II and the Korean War. Col. Kim helped lead the mostly Japanese American Nisei unit, the 100th/442nd Regimental Combat Team. Although he was Korean American, Col. Kim stressed that color lines and racial divides had no place in the United States. Born in Los Angeles, CA he attended Belmont High School and became a humanitarian after retiring from the U.S. Army in 1972. Col. Kim helped shape the landscape of Los Angeles through his humanitarian work by creating, establishing, and participating in the formation of several nonprofits still in operation today. He helped to create the Koreatown Youth and Community Center, Korean Health Education Information and Research Center, Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles and helped battered women by founding the Center for the Pacific Asian Family. He also helped children through other nonprofits. His work has left lasting change in California still palpable through the organizations he helped establish and which continue to operate today.

He was the first minority to lead a combat battalion on the field during the Korean War. Col. Kim is an exemplary individual whose life embodies what it means to be living in

multiracial America and the challenges he faced and overcame is part of the history of California that should be recognized. This lesson uses videos, interviews of Col. Kim from the USC archives, books, and articles to illustrate how Korean Americans navigate the multiethnic landscape of California and the United States.

Key Terms and Concepts: Korean Americans, War Heroes, Humanitarians, Los Angeles, World War II, Korean War, Asian American, ethnicity, U.S. Army, multicultural, multiethnic.

Lesson Objectives (Students will be able to...):

- Better understand the Korean American experience and multiethnic America through the lens of Col. Young Oak Kim's life as a war hero and humanitarian who helped shape the landscape of Los Angeles.
- Write an essay, report, or create a video about the life of Col. Young Oak Kim. In doing so, students will gain key skills in how to develop and structure their essay writing skills and learn how to use video presentations, which is an essential skill to have in the online learning platform.

Essential Questions:

1. How did World War II and the Korean War change how Asian Americans are viewed and treated in the United States.?
2. Why is it important to study the stories of individuals like Col. Young Oak Kim in ethnic studies?
3. Col. Young Oak Kim's story demonstrates how racism permeated even the U.S. military. Yet, Col. Kim overcame the racial divides. What lessons can we learn from his story when it comes to racism?

Lesson Steps/Activities:

1. The teacher makes a note of telling the class, “If anyone has any experiences that can contribute to the understanding of racial inequalities and ethnic divides, feel free to add to our discussion.”
2. The teacher tells students they are going to learn about Col. Young Oak Kim and his Korean American experience. The teacher has students focus on the three essential questions (read essential questions 1–3 aloud).
3. The teacher presents some basic information about Col. Kim and the Korean American community. The teacher asks students if they have questions about the Korean Americans and their role in Los Angeles and other California communities, and writes them on the white board.
4. The teacher leads a read aloud of the Quick Fact Sheet about Col. Young Oak Kim and the Korean American community in the U.S. Alternate choral reading – teacher reads one fact, the whole class reads the next fact, teacher walks around the room as students and teacher read the facts – Quick Fact Sheet attached.
5. The teacher asks which of the essential questions have been answered by the information presented. Go through the questions and answers.
6. The teacher leads a deeper discussion about racism and immigration in the U.S., focusing on the essential questions. The teacher plays an audio recording interview of Col. Young Oak Kim. The teacher asks students to think about how racism is not just something that happens on the streets but permeates even the military like how Col. Kim experienced it. Also, the teacher asks students to think about how Col. Kim overcame racial divides and became a humanitarian after retiring from the U.S. Army:

“Col. Young Oak Kim” short video on who the hero/humanitarian was created and published by the Council of Korean Americans. The video is a succinct narrative about Col. Kim and his experience in the U.S. Army and how he looked passed ethnic divides and became a war hero and humanitarian.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KvmoNQS6GOc> (4 mins and 30 seconds).

7. The teacher shows plays two interviews of Col. Young Oak Kim talking about his early life, his parents' immigration experience to the United States, and later about his personal life and the founding of the Go For Broke Monument in Los Angeles. As students listen, they should think about how Col. Kim developed his Korean American identity and overcame ethnic boundaries and racism. developed their identity as being Hmong American. As students watch, they should consider what it is like to be a Korean American/minority struggling through racial barriers like Col. Kim did. Source: "Col. Young Oak Kim Oral History: Segment 1 and Segment 2."

<http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/search/field/filena/searchterm/KADA-Youngoakkim01;KADA-Youngoakkim01.wave>

http://www.goforbroke.org/learn/archives/oral_histories_videos.php?clip=047A12

8. After the videos, do a Think, Write, Pair/Share, Group Share exercise: Let students think about the question you have written on the board (How Col. Kim describes his parents' experiences as immigrants in America?) for one minute in silence, then write for two to three minutes, and then share their written thoughts with a partner.

Some important things to point out in the discussion:

- Being caught between two worlds, as a Korean born in America, Col. Kim learned to find his identity in the military and in civilian life by understanding he is both identities and bridging the cultural gap meant embracing both identities.
- The frustration Col. Kim felt being told he would be transferred out of the 100th battalion because of ethnic conflict between Japanese Americans and Korean Americans. All Col. Kim wanted to do was fight for freedom and look beyond the racial paradigms.

- Feeling proud to be a Korean American who looked past racial divides and overcame discrimination and succeeded in the military and as a humanitarian.
 - How Col. Kim learned to embrace his heritage and culture and earn the respect and trust of his military unit and of community.
 - How Col. Kim realized the importance of humanitarian work and creating a bridge between Korean, Japanese, and Americans through the Go For Broke monument construction in Los Angeles.
9. Have students read an excerpt from “Unsung Hero: The Story of Col. Young Oak Kim.” As they read this excerpt, students should think about a similar question: What it is like to be a young Hmong American male? (pages 360-368, Chapter 28, “Candlelight” by Woo Sung Han. Translated by Edward T. Chang).
- a. As students read the excerpt, give them the annotation chart and direct them to annotate as they read. (Adding a symbol next to a sentence that corresponds to their thinking or feeling about the text – annotation sheet attached.) Tell the students to be ready to answer the essential questions and any questions that may have come up during discussion using evidence from the text.
 - b. Hold a reflective class discussion: According to the author, Woo Sung Han, what contributions did Col. Kim make to “not only the Japanese American community, but ultimately to the progress of civil rights of all racial minority communities in the United States?”
 - c. Some important things to point out in the discussion:
 - i. Asian Americans were often looked over and seen as “Model Minorities” and yet Col. Kim was visible, strong, and courageous as a war hero and humanitarian.

- ii. The invisibility of Asian American and Pacific Islander groups regarding their contributions to society and in war needs to be studied to better understand how ethnic minorities are treated in the United States military and as civilians.
- iii. Korean Americans are not discussed enough in Asian American studies and yet individuals such as Col. Kim played a huge and important role in the U.S. military and in the community for Asian American civil rights, social justice, and advancement.
- iv. Implicit bias against Asian Americans as docile, passive, or too small of a community to care about by political leaders and as demonstrated by Col. Kim's story, by U.S. military leaders, must be discussed to show how racism and discrimination is systemic.

Making Connections to the *History–Social Science Framework*:

Chapter 14, page 310 of the framework includes a section on Ethnic Studies and asks these important questions:

How have race and ethnicity been constructed in the United States, and how have they changed over time?

How do race and ethnicity continue to shape the United States and contemporary issues?

The story of Col. Kim falls in line with the chapter's definition of Ethnic Studies which is an interdisciplinary field of study that encompasses many subject areas including history, literature, economics, sociology, anthropology, and political science. It emerged to both address content considered missing from traditional curriculum and to encourage critical engagement.

As a field, ethnic studies seeks to empower all students to engage socially and politically and to think critically about the world around them. It is **important for ethnic studies courses to document the experiences of people of color in order for students to construct counter-narratives and develop a more complex understanding of the human experience**. The afore mentioned sentence is exactly where the lesson of Col. Young Oak Kim can be applied. Through ethnic studies, students should develop respect for cultural diversity and see the advantages of inclusion.

10. Assessment – To show evidence of what you have learned the teacher can choose one of two assignments:

- a. Write one-to-three paragraphs of 5–10 sentences answering each essential question using the evidence from the sources we used, or
- b. Discussion group exercise where students are paired in groups of two or three. Each group writes a paragraph about what they learned, and which addresses the essential questions. The group chooses a presenter and they read their work aloud. Then a larger discussion can be held addressing their thoughts about the topics.

Assessment, Application, Action, and Reflection: See Step 10 above.

Materials and Resources:

Go For Broke National Education Center. Hanashi Oral History Archives. “Young Kim: Tape #12.” Film dates 1999 and 2001.

http://www.goforbroke.org/learn/archives/oral_histories_videos.php?clip=047A12

USC Korean American Digital Archive Files. “Col. Young Oak Kim Oral History: Segment 1 and Segment 2.”

<http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/search/field/filena/searchterm/KADA-Youngoakkim01;KADA-Youngoakkim01.wave>

Woo Sung Han and translated by Edward T. Chang, “Unsung Hero: The Story of Col. Young Oak Kim”, YOK Center for Korean American Studies, 2011. Pages 360-368.

“Col. Young Oak Kim”, a short video published by the Council of Korean Americans..

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KvmoNQS6GOc>.

Quick Fact Sheet (below)

Think Write Pair/Share Group Share Handout (below)

Annotation Chart (below)

Quick Fact Sheet about Col. Young Oak Kim

- Col. Young Oak Kim is an American war hero of Korean ancestry as well as a great humanitarian activist. Thus, his life can be largely categorized as that of a legendary war hero and a dedicated public servant.
- Col. Kim, born in Los Angeles as a second generation Korean American, fought in Europe during World War II as a US Army officer, of the 100th Battalion/442nd RTC, the prominent Japanese American unit. He became a legendary war hero in Italy and in France. Both countries recognized his service with several high military decorations in 2005, including the highest ones in 1945 (Italy) and in 2004 (France).
- Col. Kim also fought in Korea during the Korean War, and became a legendary war hero again. Korea recognized his service with its highest military decoration. In Korea, he became the first minority officer to command a battalion on the battlefield in US military history.
- Following his retirement in 1972 as a colonel of the U.S. Army, American political and commercial interests relentlessly pursued him to actively support their causes. Col. Kim avoided these attempts and chose to devote his life to public service.
- Four of the five most important non-profit organizations in Southern Californian Korean American community were founded and/or developed under Col. Kim's dedicated leadership: Korean Health Education Information Research Center, Koreatown Youth and Culture Center, Korean American Coalition, and Korean American Museum.
- Col. Kim also left his mark within the Japanese-American community by serving as the Chairman of the 100th/442nd/MIS Memorial Foundation, Japanese-American WWII veterans' organization, and Vice Chairman of the Japanese American National Museum.
- Col. Kim's life has become a catalyst for a progressive future for Korea-Japan relations.
- The Center for Pacific Asian Families is the largest shelter in Southern California for victims of domestic violence. It was also developed under Col. Kim's leadership in the 1990's.
- In summary, Col. Kim's public service activities have concentrated on minorities, women, orphans, the elderly, youth, and the underprivileged.
- As a war hero and public servant, Col. Kim has received numerous military decorations, civilian medals and awards from the U.S., Korea, France and Italy.

Sources:

Go For Broke National Education Center. Hanashi Oral History Archives. "Veteran: Young Kim Unit: 100th Infantry Battalion" oral history interviews. Film dates 1999 and 2001. http://www.goforbroke.org/learn/archives/oral_histories_videos.php?clip=047A12

"Who is Col. Young Oak Kim." YOK Center for Korean American Studies at UC Riverside Pamphlet and website. <https://yokcenter.ucr.edu/youngoakkim.php#:~:text=YOK%20Center%20%2D%20Youn,g%20Oak%20Kims%20Life&text=Colonel%20Young%20Oak%20Kim%20was,named%20after%20the%20late%20Col.> www.mnhs.org/hmong/hmong-timeline

Woo Sung Han and translated by Edward T. Chang, "Unsung Hero: The Story of Col. Young Oak Kim", YOK Center for Korean American Studies, 2011. Pages 360-368.

Think Write Pair/Share Group Share

Essential Questions:

Why is it important to study the stories of individuals like Col. Young Oak Kim in ethnic studies?

Col. Young Oak Kim's story demonstrates how racism permeated even the U.S. military. Yet, Col. Kim overcame the racial divides. What lessons can we learn from his story when it comes to racism?

Think for one minute about how the source had details that answered the essential question.

Write for one minute about the details and facts you can remember from the source which addresses the essential question.

Pair/Share for one minute per person, share out your thinking and writing about the essential question using the sources provided. Be ready to share out the information your partner provided if the teacher calls on you.

Group Share for five to ten minutes. At the end, have the class share out their information, giving students a chance to present to their peers.

Annotation Chart

| Symbol | Comment/Question/Response | Sample Language Support |
|--------|---|---|
| ? | Questions I have Confusing parts for me | The sentence, "...”is unclear because... I don't understand what is meant when the author says... |
| + | Ideas/statements I agree with | I agree with the author's statement that...because... Similar to the author, I also believe that...because |
| - | Ideas/statements I disagree with | I disagree with the author's statement that... because... The author claims that... However, I disagree because... |
| * | Author's main points Key ideas expressed | One significant idea in this text is... One argument the author makes is that... |
| ! | Shocking statements or parts Surprising details/claims | I was shocked to read that...(further explanation) The part about...made me feel...because... |

| Symbol | Comment/Question/Response | Sample Language Support |
|--------|--|---|
| 0 | <p>Ideas/sections you connect with</p> <p>What this reminds you of</p> | <p>This section reminded me of...</p> <p>I can connect with what the author said because...</p> <p>This experience connects with my own experience in that...</p> |