

shows how the Japanese integrate change and reinvent their own traditions. The viewer learns about haiku, sumō, *yūzen*, and Kabuki, and sees how traditions are preserved and passed along from one generation to the next. At the same time, advances in technology and global communications, especially television, demonstrate how new ideas are adopted. I highly recommend this film for use in middle school Global Studies and Geography classes and also for cross-disciplinary courses on cultural identity. The accompanying Teacher's Guide contains exemplary lessons that will reinforce current best practices for classroom teaching. ■

As the high school companion piece to *Tune in Japan: Approaching Culture Through Television*, this film is unique in its frank portrayal of how the Japanese are attempting to solve contemporary social problems. Each problem is discussed openly,

and direct reactions from Japanese teens provide viewers with a unique, personal understanding of the effects of both the problems and solutions. The greatest strength of this film is its ability to evoke in the viewer a sense of how Japanese solutions draw from Japan's traditions and cultural experiences. In addition, viewers can assess how America's solutions to some of the same problems are based on our own traditions and cultural experiences.

The forty-five-minute program is divided into four segments that may be used separately or together. The segments include discussion about creating a personal identity while maintaining allegiance to a group, preserving community and national security, implementing recycling programs, and increasing global communications through such activities as exchange programs and the Internet. While the film could be used effectively in a Global Studies course, individual segments could easily be applied

in environmental studies, geography, sociology, political science, psychology, and a unit on post-World War II Japan in world history courses.

I would recommend the first two segments particularly for their candid portrayal of such problems as *ijime*, or bullying, and *murahachibu*, the practice of excluding people from the community so that they receive no help of any kind except in emergencies such as fire or death.

While these segments refer to the increase in petty crime, drug use, truancy, and drop-outs among Japanese teens, the film reflects the recent efforts of the Monbusho to reduce bullying in schools. Additional issues focus on the effect of immigration on a relatively homogeneous culture, Japan's rice importation policy, and the cautious reactions from Japan's neighbors as to the use of Japan's self-defense force.

The third segment investigates Japan's environmental efforts to improve recycling, land reclamation, and the use of alternative

energy sources. The final segment on global communications will be of interest to students and schools wishing to engage in dialogue with Japanese teachers and students using the Internet.

The Teacher's Guide contains several effective teaching/learning activities suitable for high school students, and the opportunities for independent work, such as using the Internet to exchange ideas, provide potential real-world applications for further research and study. The film *Tune in Japan: Global Connections* and its corresponding Teacher's Guide make excellent resources for inclusion into a high school curriculum. ■

Henry Kiernan

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## From a Different Shore

### *The Japanese American Experience*

FILMS FOR THE HUMANITIES AND SCIENCES  
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800-257-5126  
1996. 50 MINUTES. COLOR

Some of the images are compelling: a sea of Japanese American faces pledging allegiance to the American flag; a small child sitting patiently on a pile of his family's belongings; a grocery store whose owner, going out of business, has posted a large sign in the window proclaiming "I AM AN AMERICAN."

Asian Americans in America are Americans, not Asians. That's one point of *From a Different Shore: The Japanese*

*American Experience*, a video in the series on *An American Identity* from Films for the Humanities. The other point is that this particular group of Americans had a particularly unjust experience during World War II, at least on the Western seaboard.

Poignantly, against archival photographs and current images of the stark American West, Japanese Americans tell the story of their current achievements while their parents tell the story of their internment at Manzanar

and other camps during World War II. Home movies of an earlier generation show American children with Japanese faces celebrating birthdays, eating ice cream cones, wearing Boy Scout uniforms. Videotape of a recent Japanese festival parade in Los Angeles, on the other hand, shows Japanese American children in traditional Japanese dress reenacting a culture they are trying to reclaim.

In these episodes from *The Japanese American Experience*, this video—made for The Open University of the British Broadcasting Company and directed by Jeremy Cooper—tells us little about Asia, little about Japan, but quite a lot about America. It tells us about the desire of the poor to make a good life in a new environment, of the urge to assimilate and

be accepted, of the inescapable barrier of ethnic appearances, of white Americans' perhaps unconscious tendency to think of non-Caucasian, non-African Americans as foreign.

Through the generations represented, we see pride in Japanese American family achievement and assimilation contrasted with the very different experiences of contemporary Japanese business people in the same area, Los Angeles. One group is American, speaks English as a primary language, prefers American food; the other is Japanese, speaks and reads Japanese, prefers Japanese food. Racial origin and culture are not the same, though typical American students may have more trouble seeing the distinction when the faces are Asian.

Of course, the video's most

## FILM REVIEWS



Photo courtesy of Films for the Humanities, Inc.

striking subject, at least for my North Carolina college freshmen, is the experience of internment during the war. Many of my students did not know about this part of our history at all, and others had mostly misinformation. Wanting to make the situation black or white, they rush to outrage and miss the moderating points made by the film.

The moderating points are damaging enough, as the U.S.

courts later acknowledged in awarding damages to those interned, but the film gives a variety of voices from the interned generation and makes clear that a kind of community emerged from their experiences. The soft-spoken Harry Kitano, a professor at UCLA, describes entering the camp at fifteen and finding it, at first, like summer camp, though “we missed regular aspects of American life like hamburgers

and ball games.” The countryside was beautiful, with fruit trees, but the camp was surrounded with barbed wire fences and, he says, “That was a very sobering aspect of it.” Another interviewee, Kay Komai, says plaintively, “They said it was for our protection, but they had these guard towers, and the guns were pointed at us.”

Mrs. Komai articulates the most damaging point about the internment experience, more damaging than the loss of goods and livelihoods: that is, the loss of civil liberties. “We were Americans,” she says, “and we thought the Constitution would protect us. And the Constitution didn’t work. Why didn’t it work? We were American citizens. We didn’t think of ourselves as Japanese.”

Comments like these make the subjects very human, very sympathetic, very appealing characters. Though some students express surprise that the Japanese Americans don’t seem more visibly angry, the very gentleness of the speakers wins their sympathy, whereas anger might have put these viewers on the defensive. Because the film is not overly polemical, it is persuasive. “Never again” is the point. Although for years they avoided talking about the camps, the older generation tells the story now to their children and to the viewers because, as one son says, “they want us to know so that we know it could happen to anyone.”

The subject is compelling, the video a little less so. It barely touches on how the culture of the Japanese Americans evolved in this country, on what daily life was like in the camps, on how people used to a working life made use of their time and energy there, on what aspects of Japanese culture persist among them today. The younger people interviewed in *From a Different Shore* have accommodated so well that they give little sense of

that different shore. While my students were moved by the words of the older generation, this younger audience wanted to see the faces and hear the voices of the younger generation. They wanted more footage of the camps, more images from current lives, more clear delineation of the experiences of individuals and their families. They wanted music to enhance the drama. They wanted clearer delineation of the various families and family members—perhaps by a different use of the settings—so they could keep the characters straight.

Nevertheless, these quibbles reveal their curiosity. For a composition class like mine, an American history class, a multicultural literature class, a political science class in high school or college, the video is an excellent introduction to a subject few American young people know much about. It is a subject that is not foreign to them, but goes to the heart of what it means to be an American. When Mrs. Komai says, “You don’t know what freedom is till you have lost it,” they hear her plainly.

Even though the film may not clearly depict how authentic Japanese elements survive in this culture, *From a Different Shore* is a gentle invitation to look in a fresh way at the universal immigrant experience and the experience of difference in American society. ■

Elizabeth Addison

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