

**Exposing Injustice:
Dorothea Lange and Ansel Adams Take
Stands For Interned Japanese Americans
During World War II**

Cailin Templeman
Junior Division
Individual Website

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I love photography and wanted to incorporate it into the theme “Taking a Stand.” My teacher suggested I look into Dorothea Lange’s Depression photographs but it was her Internment photographs and those of Ansel Adams’ which really interested me. I started researching their experiences at Manzanar and discovered Lange’s photographs were impounded by the government, while Adams’ were publicly exhibited and nationally published. Learning that Lange had advised Adams on how to photograph Manzanar, I became fascinated by their pictorial contrasts and perspectives on incarceration. I had found my topic!

After reading biographies on both and locating their photographs in the National Archives and the Library of Congress, I used the *Densho: The Japanese American Legacy Project* website for primary source newspaper articles, photographs, and relocation documents. My primary source interviews were crucial, providing differing perspectives on the photographers’ perspectives of Manzanar. Dixie Dixon, Lange’s daughter-in-law, and Michael Adams, Adams’ son, expressed strong views about the photographers’ reactions to the injustice of the Internment. Mary Alinder, who worked with Adams on his autobiography, spoke about her personal conversation with Adams about the imprisonment of Japanese Americans. Two camp survivors, Akiko Uchida and Maya Miyamoto, recounted their forced relocation experiences, which recalled Lange’s photographs, as well as their lives in the camps. Two secondary source interviews highlighted the current controversy over Lange’s photographs and criticisms of Adams’ book. After reading *Impounded*, I interviewed co-author, Gary Okihiro. Jasmine Alinder, Mary Alinder’s daughter and author of *Moving Images*, discussed her own research on Lange and Adams.

I organized my website chronologically. I created separate pages for Lange’s 1942 photographs and Adams’ 1943 photographs of Manzanar. I compared three sets of photographs

that I felt best illustrated their differing perspectives on the realities of Internment. After my visit to Manzanar, where I experienced the same dust-filled winds depicted by Lange, I added a “Remembering Manzanar” page which included my photographs in comparison to some taken by Lange and Adams.

My topic relates to this year’s History Day theme because both Lange and Adams took stands for Japanese Americans and the injustice of the Internment. Lange approach was unvarnished, wanting to expose the “intolerance and prejudice...the disease” inflicted upon the internees. Adams’ sought to emphasize the 10,000 internees as loyal, American citizens, no different from us, who were born free and equal, for whom “Manzanar was a detour to American citizenship.” Through the publication of *Born Free and Equal* and his exhibitions, Adams’ stand was more successful in helping to change political opinions. The harsher realities portrayed by Lange only recently came to light as her impounded photographs were rediscovered in the National Archives. They underscore the gross injustices done to American citizens whose basic civil rights were taken away, as was finally acknowledged by President Bush in 1990. My topic is relevant today because the treatment of Muslim American citizens is being compared to the racial profiling, discrimination, and loss of civil rights experienced by Japanese American citizens during WW II.