

Oyama v. California: Confronting Alien Land Laws

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Individual Website

Junior Division

Student Composed Words: 1,200 words

Multimedia: 2:12 minutes

Process Paper: 499 words

Process Paper:

After hearing that about this year's theme of Breaking Barriers, I thought that doing a court case would be the best way to connect with it. When looking for a topic, my teacher gave me a folder of potential historical topics to choose from and I did some short research on the ones I thought sounded interesting. I came across *Korematsu v. United States*, which I already knew a little about and decided not to choose it as my topic because I felt like I would slack off after a while. I figured I wanted my topic to be related to Asian American civil rights or something similar. I Googled for Asian American civil rights court cases and came across *Sei Fujii v. California* which led me to, *Oyama v. California*. I chose the case because I've never heard about it and thought it would be a learning experience.

To start my research, I did a basic search about *Oyama v. California* on databases, like Gale Research in Context, and Google. After figuring out a rough draft about the contents of my paragraphs, I started doing more in-depth research on topics that would be beneficial in writing my paragraphs. The most valuable sources I found were two journal articles and the California and Supreme court decisions. They were detailed and long, giving me a better understanding of my topic. Throughout working on my project, my comprehension and knowledge of *Oyama* grew very much. I started off knowing little to nothing about *Oyama* to being able to explain it in detail. I'm now able to understand the reasoning of both sides of the case and make connections about it.

I decided to do a website because court cases usually have quite a lot of information that goes into them, so the 1,200 word count would be quite useful. I made my website using the NHD website builder. My teacher recommended that I draw out a rough layout first, but I decided not to because I already had one in mind and thought doing so would be a waste of time. I decided to go onto the program and played around with it, trying to build a rough layout. Doing so helped me get a better grasp of how the program worked and gave me a better visual representation of my website.

Oyama v. California fits this year's theme of Break Barriers because despite being unable to directly break the barrier posed by the California Alien Land Law, it was an important contributor to the fight of removing legal barriers that prevented Japanese-Americans from owning land. Its decision did make it possible for Japanese Americans citizens to own land and eventually aid in the decision of *Sei Fujii v. California* that declared the Alien Land Law unconstitutional. *Oyama v. California* would also play an important role in laying the foundation of the strict scrutiny doctrine that would be the U.S. Supreme Court's approach for cases dealing with racial issues.