



# Saving Mo, Saving Me

**A 2ND STORY STUDY GUIDE**  
INSPIRED BY THE ORIGINAL STORY BY CONNIE SHIRAKAWA



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**ACTIVITY:** Have your students start writing and sharing the stories that are living inside them.



# How to Use this Guide

Welcome to our study guide.

Before we dive in, a little bit about us. We are a collective of story-makers and story-lovers committed to building a more empathetic world by sharing one great story at a time. We are twenty years old, and we believe in the unique power of sharing one's personal story.

This guide takes a closer look at one such story. Connie Shirakawa's *Saving Mo, Saving Me* is a story of one woman's commitment to protecting her friend while examining it through the backdrop of her family's history.

We have crafted this guide to serve you and your classroom. Within its pages are activities, an interview with Connie, and a timeline comparing Japanese internment camps of World War II with the United States' "Muslim Ban" of 2017 and 2018. This guide can be used as a single-day lesson or a multi-week unit. On our website you can find additional resources and learning standards achieved.

To use this guide in any capacity, please start by listening to *Saving Mo, Saving Me*, available on the 2nd Story website at [2ndStory.com/intheclassroom](https://2ndStory.com/intheclassroom).

Thank you for bringing us into your classroom.

2nd Story



# Start Talking.

2nd Story uses first-person, true stories as an entry-point for conversation. After listening to Connie Shirakawa's story *Saving Mo, Saving Me*, use the following questions to have a rich conversation with your students.

## **GROUP AGREEMENTS**

When sharing personal narratives, stories, and sensitive information, we begin by establishing the following agreements with participants. Before beginning your discussion, we recommend going over the following group agreements with your students. When finished, ask them, "Do you agree?" and then have them collectively and vocally respond with "I agree."

- 1.) What is learned here leaves here. What is said here stays here.
- 2.) Take care of yourself.
- 3.) Practice equity (share the floor).
- 4.) Stay curious.

*\*This exercise can also be done (either for the first time or again) when you have your students share their stories.*

## **GUIDING QUESTIONS**

- 1.) How do our past experiences guide how we walk through the world? How do the experiences of the people who raise us impact how we are raised?
- 2.) What clues do you have about your family history? What kind of conversations would you need to have in order to find out what the family stories are?
- 3.) What parallels do you see between the past and present in Connie's story? What about in your own life?
- 4.) How does Connie channel her fear into action?
- 5.) Does action always have to be big in order to be meaningful?
- 6.) Connie talks about fighting back against things that feel unfair to her. What are things that feel unfair to you? How might you fight back (in small or large ways) against these things?
- 7.) How do you see the characters in this story choose to lean into (or away from) fear and worry? How do their choices impact their actions?
- 8.) What are the invisible rules that guide your life, or that have implications for your life? Are there rules that guide the lives of others that don't impact you? Or rules that impact you and not your peers? Where did you learn these rules from?



# A Conversation with Author Connie Shirakawa

BY MAX SPITZ, 2ND STORY COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

## **What role does story play in your personal and professional life?**

Stories have the power to connect us to ourselves and, more importantly, to each other. Stories open our eyes to others and their experiences.

## **Have you always been a writer?**

As a child, I made up poems, words and ditties swam around in my head, and I talked too much. For me, words and sounds spring from a soft spot or bruise that I never knew was there. 2nd Story pushes me to find that place, live there, and to reveal those stories. As a listener and as a teller, I hunger to hear others and to connect with them.

## **What inspired you to write this story?**

In 2017, the 75th anniversary of America's concentration camps, the Alphawood Gallery presented a photography exhibit in Chicago called, THEN THEY CAME FOR ME. Since my parents never

talked to me about their time in the concentration camps, I had never been especially interested in them. That show had a profound effect on my psyche. I saw a life-sized photo of my parent's friends lined up along a railroad track, guarded by U.S. soldiers with rifles. I was outraged that our constitution failed to protect U.S. citizens who were innocent and had done nothing wrong.

## **Can you tell me a little about your writing process for this story?**

At first, I just wanted to pass on stories to my two nieces after their father (my brother) passed away. I tried to write down our Chicago history and about our lives here but could not do it. I was unable to find that spot inside of me where my stories live. 2nd Story helped me dig down deep and locate that place.



ANSEL ADAMS, "SUFFERING UNDER A GREAT INJUSTICE":  
ANSEL ADAMS'S PHOTOGRAPHS OF JAPANESE-AMERICAN INTERNMENT AT MANZANAR

*"I was eager to accept responsibility. I told an Iranian friend that I would help her in any way that I could."*

**In this story you talk about your parents' time in the US Internment Camps; did they tell you much about their internment?**

The few times that I overheard my parents talking about the internment camps, I just thought, as a child, that they had been at a summer camp on vacation.

My parents were so obedient to this travesty. The U.S. government told them that they had to be invisible, not stand out, and to fit into the cities where they were shipped.

My parents (and other Japanese Americans) peacefully went to the camps, the men volunteered to serve in all branches of the U.S. military during World War II, and just accepted that their property, savings, and dignity were taken away or stolen from them when they were uprooted on short notice and put on trains going to strange prisons where they knew no one.

**Your story weaves together narratives of the past and present.**

When President Trump stated that there is a precedent for putting people in concentration camps in this country, I lost it.

I was ready to go down and register as a Muslim-American in an effort to clog the system. I was eager to accept responsibility. I told an Iranian friend that I would help her in any way that I could.

And I did. But with hilarious results, as it turned out.

**Do you see history repeating itself?**

Lessons learned are probably never permanently in place for all time. I think that we can only try to prevent ourselves from rolling through the same stupid morass over and over again by chipping away at hate, injustice, and bigotry while we are here.

# KEY MOMENTS IN US HISTORY

Connie's story focuses on two key moments in the history of the United States: the Japanese Internment Camps of World War II and the present-day travel ban, enacted by the Trump Administration beginning in 2017. The timeline below provides some additional historical context about these two key moments. Please note that this is not a comprehensive timeline.

## DECEMBER 8, 1941

**President Franklin D. Roosevelt** calls for a **declaration of war** with Japan; Congress makes the declaration official within an hour.

## JANUARY 28, 1942

**The Roberts Commission** presents to Congress making vague references to Japanese espionage. Despite evidence that Japanese Intelligence agencies tended to recruit agents of non-Japanese ethnicity, American martial officials use the Roberts Commission to defend their racial prejudices towards Japanese Americans.

## FEBRUARY 19, 1942

President Roosevelt enacts **Executive Order 9066** that allows military personnel to designate anywhere deemed necessary as "military areas...from which any and all persons may be excluded." Over time, approximately one-third of the country would be designated as such, with anyone considered an "enemy alien" being forced out of those areas.

## FEBRUARY 23, 1944

The **Renunciation Act of 1944** is enacted, which allowed citizens to renounce their status as American citizens. About 5,500 detainees chose to do so under the impression it would lead to freedom from the camps via deportation to Japan. However, the vast majority of citizens who renounced their status were simply relocated to Tule Lake: a maximum-security camp for those deemed the highest risks.

## DECEMBER 1944

President Roosevelt **suspended Executive Order 9066**. Incarcerated Japanese Americans were released, often to resettlement facilities and temporary housing, and the camps were shut down by 1946

## DECEMBER 7, 1941

Japanese Naval Air Service launches surprise bombing on the American naval base, **Pearl Harbor**, in Hawaii. Over 2,000 American soldiers stationed at Pearl Harbor are killed in the attack.

## DECEMBER 7 - 13, 1941

A violent altercation, known as the **Ni'ihau Incident**, occurs between native Hawaiians and Hawaiians of Japanese descent when a Japanese pilot crashes on the island of Ni'ihau and is taken prisoner in the wake of Pearl Harbor. This incident is considered the catalyst for the shift in public opinion regarding the loyalty of Japanese-American citizens and immigrants.

## JANUARY - FEBRUARY, 1942

A series of **Presidential Proclamations** name all immigrants of Japanese, German, and Italian nationality to be enemy 'aliens' and must report any change of address, name, or work employment to the FBI at penalty of imprisonment for the duration of World War II.

## MARCH 2 - MAY 3, 1942

A series of laws and proclamations further restrict the freedoms of Japanese "aliens." This includes freezing the finances of those designated aliens while simultaneously ordering them to relocate to specific zones. Not relocating also carried a large fine and prison sentence, ignoring the financial impossibility of relocating a family with frozen assets. **Approximately 120,000 people** with some degree of Japanese ancestry, two-thirds of whom were American citizens, were forcibly placed in concentration camps throughout the American southwest.

## DECEMBER 18, 1944

**Korematsu vs. United States** is a landmark case in which the United States Supreme Court sided with the government and President Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066, which ordered Japanese Americans into internment camps during World War II, regardless of their citizenship.

## MARCH 20, 1946

The last of the camps to close, **Tule Lake**, stayed active for much longer than the other camps. Those held within were considered the highest-risk or had renounced their American citizenship. However, many who renounced their citizenship were reinstated after the camps' closing, when the courts considered the duress of imprisonment.

## STUDY TIP



The lessons and activities in this study guide can be used in English classes, as well as Government and History classes, for all high school classrooms. As always, please begin with listening to Connie's story.

### 2006

The T. Don Hutto Residential Center (originally the T. Don Hutto Detention Center) was founded to hold non-criminal families of non-USA citizens awaiting decisions regarding their USA residence. This facility began the practice of founding detention centers specifically to house undocumented immigrants with unclear immigration statuses.

### JUNE 16, 2015

Donald Trump officially announced his campaign for President of the USA. In his announcement speech, he attacked Mexico and Mexican immigrants saying, "They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists." This rhetoric quickly became a cornerstone of his campaign.

### JANUARY 27, 2017

Seven days after his inauguration, President Trump signed **Executive Order 13769**, known as the "Muslim Ban," which sought to restrict travel from seven countries: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. Shortly after its signing, protests take place in airports across the country.

### MARCH 15, 2017

United States District Judge Derrick Watson of the United States District Court for the District of Hawaii issued a temporary restraining order preventing **Executive Order 13780** (a revised version of Executive Order 13769) from going into effect. President Trump called the ruling "an unprecedented judicial overreach."

### JUNE 2018

Though previously established in 2014, the **Ursula Detention Center** became notorious in 2018 as one of the main locations for detaining immigrant children after separating them from their families. This Center held the children in large chain-link cages, with sleeping mats placed on the floor.

### SEPTEMBER 2018

As of September 14, 2018, 12,800 immigrant children were being cared for by the Health and Human Services Department.

### 2002

As part of the **Homeland and Security Act of 2002**, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was created. This department states its purpose is "to protect America from the cross-border crime and illegal immigration that threaten national security and public safety." This includes "illegal movement of people and goods" across USA borders.

### 2003 - 2007

During this period, approximately 107 deaths in detention centers were reported in ICE Centers. Despite apparent mistreatment and cover-ups by ICE officials, there have been no official change to ICE practices as of 2018.

### NOVEMBER 8, 2016

Donald Trump was elected the 45th President of the United States, winning 304 of 538 electoral votes but losing the popular vote.

### JANUARY 28 - 31, 2017

Almost immediately, Executive Order 13769 faced legal challenges. Between January 28 and January 31, almost 50 cases were filed in federal courts. In response, the courts issue a nationwide temporary restraining order (TRO) that barred the enforcement of major parts of the executive order.

### APRIL 2018

The Trump administration enacted a strict **Zero-Tolerance Policy** to detain any non-citizens/residents found crossing the USA-Mexico border, even at lawful entry points. This included separating families by placing parents in federal jails and sending children to detention centers.

### JUNE 20, 2018

President Trump signed an executive order to end his policy of separating families; this required ICE and Border Control agents to detain families together. Although expected to begin the process of reuniting children with their parents, it is revealed that ICE and the Trump Administration did not have a concrete plan to reconnect the 3,000 imprisoned minors with their families.

### NOVEMBER 2018

This guide is published and our history continues.

# Put the pen to paper.

At 2nd Story we believe that sharing first-person, true stories has the power to change hearts and minds, and we want to know what stories are living inside of you.

We invite you to share your story. Below are several writing prompts that you can use to share a story from your own life that parallels the themes and ideas in Connie Shirakawa's real-life story. Select a prompt and begin writing on the next page!

## Share a time when you:

- were worried about a friend*
- had to fit in to be safe*
- stood up for your self or others*
- said "not on my watch!"*
- were afraid of the unknown*
- were stubborn*
- assumed the worst*
- had the opportunity to be a hero*





"I have always wondered about myself. When it came right down to the line, would I help someone who needed to escape persecution in this country?"

CONNIE SHIRAKAWA



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