

## **The First Battle** - The Battle for Equality in War-Time Hawaii (<http://www.thefirstbattle.com>)

### Lesson I

#### STANDARDS

I. Historical Empathy: Students will learn to judge the past on its own terms and use this knowledge to understand present-day issues and problems.

#### PROCEDURES:

I. Before viewing the first 20 minutes of the documentary film "*The First Battle*" on the DVD:

- A. Ask students to discuss what they know about the mass internment of Japanese Americans on the West Coast during World War II
- B. Ask students to discuss what they think happened in Hawaii
- C. Encourage students to brainstorm: Do you think events in Hawaii were similar to the West Coast or distinctly different? Why?
- D. Discuss these terms: *Community organization, dialogue, resistance*

II. Set the scene for Part I of the film with this introduction:

The simple facts were as follows: While virtually all persons of Japanese ancestry were forced out of the West Coast, then interned, fewer than one per cent were interned in Hawaii. Until "The First Battle," the main explanation has been - if any is given - that the economy of Hawaii needed the labor of the Japanese-ancestry community, which made up nearly 40% of the population (compared to one per cent on the West Coast).

The film "*The First Battle*" produced volumes of new evidence and a new, more complex interpretation: The President's greatest fears of espionage and sabotage centered not on the West Coast but Hawaii. The national pressure to intern was the greatest in Hawaii. In this context, the difference between the West Coast and Hawaii became even more startling.

Part III. Playing the film. At the 20-minute mark, the female narrator concludes her description of the Council of Interracial Unity by saying:

*"The relationship of the martial law government to the citizens of Hawaii was now substantially in the hands of those who, two years earlier, had anticipated the war.*

*"The scene was set for a protracted struggle, between fear and trust, between anxiety and calm, between factual communication and whispered rumor." STOP!*

IV. Follow up discussion around the following questions:

- A. What was the importance of forethought and dialogue about inter-racial unity before World War II in Hawaii?
- B. How was the development of community interacting with prejudice and race-based privilege?