

Process Paper

A Population Imprisoned:

Occupying Alcatraz and Taking a Stand for
Native American Rights

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Group Website

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Originally, we wanted to do a scientific topic, but there were not any events that we were passionate about, that clearly related to the theme. We found interesting topics like the Stonewall riots, Liberian sex strikes, and the L.A. Riots. Unfortunately, these topics were either too recent, too broad, or too controversial. Eventually, we realized that we were all very passionate in raising awareness for Native Americans and how much they have had to stand up for, so we chose this topic. Considering that Alcatraz is mainly recognized for the infamous prison, we knew that this would be a unique and intriguing topic.

When we first started conducting our research, we wanted to make sure that we used a wide variety of sources. We started out our research with a trip to Drake Library. From there, we moved on to local libraries. We also used online books, website articles, and various videos and audio clips. One of these videos was a documentary explaining the events of the occupation. It included interviews with the people who were there, footage of the daily events, and an interview with Brad Patterson, who was a member of the Nixon Administration. We also interviewed Ilka Hartmann, a photographer on the island, and Eloy Martinez, a participant in the occupation, to get their perspective. We then viewed news broadcasts from the San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive and interviews from New Mexico Digital Collections.

We chose to do a website because some of our members have worked on a group website before, and all of our members have had previous National History Day experience. A website was conducive to collaboration, which was helpful because we have a large group. We used Google Drive to edit at the same time, and it allowed us to organize all of our information before putting it on the actual website. Also, we frequently communicated via

Skype, which made it convenient for us to come to a consensus with our ideas, and then implement them into the website in a way that everyone agreed upon. We also ended up using many quotes from the numerous sources we found, to help establish opinions and to lay foundation for the story of the Alcatraz Occupation. We had difficulties with getting everyone to work at the same time because of our very busy schedules. When some members were available, there was always someone who was busy. We had to learn how to coordinate our efforts so everyone knew what was going on, as we continued to work.

The theme this year is Taking a Stand in History, and the Alcatraz Occupation was an event that clearly followed it. The Native Americans have been treated unfairly by the government for hundreds of years, so they decided to take a stand against this injustice and occupy Alcatraz Island. Though the occupation fell into disarray, it brought to light the harsh treatment towards Native Americans, succeeded in securing their rights, and fueled the Red Power Movement.