



Global Voices Information Sheet

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

CNMI History

- The CNMI is a commonwealth in political union with the United States, located in the western Pacific Ocean.
- During World War II, the U.S. Military invaded the Islands. One of the islands provided the take off point for the Enola Gay, the plane that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.
- After Japan's defeat, the islands were administered by the United States as part of the United Nations Trust Territory of Pacific Islands. This means that defense and foreign affairs are the responsibility of the United States.
- Rather than seeking independence, the region entered into negotiations for territorial status. It became a Commonwealth in political union in 1975.
- The CNMI does not have representation in the U.S. Senate but is represented in the House of Representatives by a delegate who may vote in committee but not on the house floor.

U.S. Territories

- A United States territory is a region under the jurisdiction of the federal government of the United States.
- Traditionally, the U.S. claims sovereign rights for exploring, exploiting, conserving and managing its territory.
- U.S. Congress has the power to set territorial governments within the territory.

Key Terms

deport – to expel from a country; banish

exempt – to free from an obligation or liability to which others are subject

quota – a proportional share, as of goods, assigned to a group or participant

Global Voices Elementary Educator Resources

Note to Educators:

The following activities are designed to stimulate a current events discussion. Generative in nature, these questions can be a launching point for additional assignments or research projects. Teachers are encouraged to adapt these activities to meet the contextual needs of their classroom.

In some cases, reading the article with students may be appropriate, coupled with reviewing the information sheet to further explore the concepts and contexts being discussed. From here, teachers can select from the questions provided below. Activities are structured to introduce students to the issues, then allow them to explore and apply their learnings. Extension and conclusion activities are included to challenge students and finally, encourage them to reflect on the issues at hand.

Since these activities are designed as discussions rather than formal lessons, assessment strategies are not included.

Note to Teachers:

- The column presents a current social issue related to the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) – a commonwealth in political union with the United States. Students may be more familiar with regions that have affiliations to the United States including Porto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands or Guam. As an introduction to the column, prior knowledge and/ or historical background may be helpful.
- If this column is presented in a civics class, prior knowledge of “rights of citizenship” would also be helpful to review. Pre-reading questions are designed to introduce philosophical issues related to this concept before considering the context of the case study.
- Refer to the information sheet for geographical reference as well as background on the history of the region and its relationship with the United States.

Pre-Reading Questions:

Before reading the Global Voices column, please consider the following questions with your class:

1. What are possible reasons a person would be deported from a country (i.e., sent back to their country of origin)?
2. If a person without legal status gives birth to a child while in that country, what do you think “*should*” be the legal status of the child?
3. If you work in a country and pay taxes to its government, what rights *should* you be entitled to while you live in that country?

Post-Reading Questions:

Read the Global Voices column. Afterwards, consider the following questions with your class:

1. What did you find surprising about the column?
2. What questions do you have about the content?
3. Are there additional points of view on this issue not presented? If yes, make a list and attempt to locate other opinions as research extensions (i.e., U.S. government position on the region).
4. Why is the mother in the column being deported?
5. What do you think should happen to the 13-year old boy? What do you suspect will happen to him?
6. What do you think motivated this woman to leave her homeland to live in the CNMI in the first place (i.e., what was she promised and by whom)?
7. Other than low wages, what types of dangers did people experience while working in sweatshops?
8. What would motivate the United States to allow this relationship to form in the first place (Note: This can also be follow-up research on the history of the union)?
9. Why do the authors of the column believe the “Made in U.S.A.” label is deceiving?
10. What caused the garment industry to leave the region?
11. What is the human side of the issue being discussed in the column (i.e., breaking up families, contributions made to the region, etc.)?
12. What is at issue for the people who have been working in the CNMI (i.e., legal, moral, rights, contributions made, taxes paid, etc.)?

Written Assignment Suggestions/Extensions:

- In the role of lobbyists, create persuasive arguments for why these workers in the CNMI should be granted legal status (Note: This can be written in small groups and presented in a panel format).
- If a country like the United States enters into a relationship with regions that involve making them “territories,” what should the responsibilities be to the people living and working there? Or, who should make up the laws that govern that region?
- Take on the role of the United States Congress, what questions would you need answered before responding to the lobbyists?
- Based on your knowledge of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, what do you believe is in the *best interest* of the children of the workers?
- Job loss and economic hardships are huge issues facing the United States. Discuss the implications for the CNMI situation.

- Present alternatives for the 5,000 U.S. citizen children discussed in the column (Note: Encourage students to be creative and present options that may allow them to stay in a country that may/may not involve financial aid from the U.S. government).