2016 Contest Honorees

We are pleased to announce that Pacific Global Investment Management Company is once again the Presenting Sponsor of this year’s contest. Their generous contribution is made in memory of long-time community philanthropists and business leaders Manabi Hirasaki and Sig Kagawa. The contest has also been made possible by the generous support of two Supporting Sponsors: Ken and June Shimabukuro, and an anonymous donor in memory of Masao Takahashi.

Manabi Hirasaki
522nd Field Artillery Battalion, C Battery

“I just figured I was doing my share…I was proud to be with the 442nd.”

Manabi Hirasaki knew the power behind the 100th/442nd/MIS story. A group of young men battled both the enemy and American prejudice, emerging successful and providing a shining model for future generations. That is why, after fighting in World War II, Manabi battled for decades to ensure that his fellow soldiers’ legacy was never forgotten.

Sig Kagawa
Community Philanthropist and Business Leader

A strong leader with a lasting mission – getting others involved and invested.

Siegfried “Sig” Kagawa devoted his life to philanthropy and to helping others. A long-time supporter of Japanese American causes, he energetically promoted lasting education to keep the story of his community alive. To him, it was vital American history for all future generations.

Mas Takahashi
100th Infantry Battalion, C Company

Keeping his buddies’ memories alive.

Masao “Mas” Takahashi never spoke about himself. He fought heroically in the 100th Infantry Battalion during World War II, yet he preferred to speak about his fellow soldiers. Always humble, Mas dedicated his life to keeping the memories of his buddies alive. Mas passed away July 2015, but will forever remain deep in our hearts.
Students, veterans, and supporters:

Go For Broke National Education Center is committed to providing educational opportunities on the World War II American veterans of Japanese ancestry story. The purpose of this essay contest is to challenge the next generation of leaders to find connections to the courage shown by Japanese American WWII soldiers still relevant in their own lives. Engaging students in this story preserves this history and ensures it does not repeat.

This year we welcomed the category of poetry. We received 62 outstanding poetry entries which express the author’s connection to the Nisei veteran story. The number of video entries this year doubled as did scope of our contest. Entries this year came from across the United States including Hawaii, Illinois, Guam, Minnesota, Florida and Washington. We also received an essay from Israel truly making our contest international. Overall we had a total of 204 entries.

Go For Broke National Education Center would like to thank our sponsors for making this contest possible. A special thank you to Pacific Global Investment Management Company for continuing to be Presenting Sponsor this year. Their generous contribution is in memory of long-time community philanthropists and business leaders Manabi Hirasaki and Sig Kagawa. The contest is also made possible by the generous support of two Supporting Sponsors: Ken and June Shimabukuro, and an anonymous donor in memory of World War II veteran Masao Takahashi. Without our sponsors we would not be able to provide this opportunity for students.

This book contains the essays, poems, and links to the videos of the first, second, and third prize winners. Congratulations to the winners and all authors for submitting their personal connection to the Japanese American WWII story. I urge you all to read these essays and poems and view the winning videos on our YouTube channel. Thank you for your continuing support for Go For Broke National Education Center.

Sincerely,

Michell T. Maki
Interim President/CEO, Go For Broke National Education Center
Contest Judges

The 2016 High School & College Essay, Poetry, and Video Contest would not be successful without the generous support of our contest judges. Each of our judges gave their time and expertise to make this contest a success.

Karen Ageno
Mary Jane Fujimura
Kris Ihori
Audrey Ishimoto
Jo Ann Kaba
Terri Mayeda
Clarice Miyamoto-Kim
Nancy Sagawa
Jo Ann Takemoto
Bob Taniguchi
Jane Taniguchi
Aileen Willoughby
Linton Yee
2016 High School & College Student Essay, Poetry, and Video Contest
Complete List of Winners

**First Prize, Essay, College/University**
Lindsey Sugimoto
University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA

**First Prize, Essay, High School**
Jeffrey Seidl
Livermore High School, Livermore, CA

**First Prize, Poem, College/University**
James Kei Ozaki
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, IL

**First Prize, Poem, High School**
Josephine Lin
Moanalua High School, Honolulu, HI

**First Prize, Video, College/University**
Mark Frederick
Penn State University of Altoona, Altoona, PA

**First Prize, Video, High School**
Kaitlyn Chu
Orange County High School of the Arts, Orange County, CA

**Second Prize, Essay, College/University**
Satomi Rabottini
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, IL

**Second Prize, Essay, High School**
Derek Morimoto
West High School, Torrance, CA

**Second Prize, Poem, College/University**
Joan (Joni) Yamagishi
California State University, Los Angeles, CA

**Second Prize, Poem, High School**
Todd Potter
West High School, Torrance, CA

**Second Prize, Video, College/University**
Salvatore Angrisani
University of California, Merced, Merced, CA

**Second Prize, Video, High School**
Lyndon Defoe
University High School Academy, Southfield, MI

**Third Prize, Essay, College/University**
Alessandro Luna
Stanford University, Stanford, CA

**Third Prize, Essay, High School**
Zachary Ishimoto
Palos Verdes Peninsula High School, Rolling Hills Estates, CA

**Third Prize, Poem, College/University**
Nicole McIntyre
Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX

**Third Prize, Poem, High School**
Kelly Baird
Calaveras High School, San Andreas, CA

**Remaining Top Thirty Finalists**

**Essay**
Alexandra Cormier, Cerritos College, Compton, CA
Emily Yang, Kalani High School, Honolulu, HI
Jay Narimatsu, Mid-Pacific Institute, Honolulu, HI
Nicolette Rohr, University of California, Riverside, Riverside, CA
Paloma Nakamura, Santa Fe High School, Santa Fe, NM
Samantha Hirata, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA

**Poem**
Alyssa Minami, West High School, Torrance, CA
Keiko Friar, Le Jardin Academy, Kailua, HI
Natasha Ishaq, Franklin High School, Somerset, NJ
Niki Borghei, New West Charter High School, Los Angeles, CA

**Video**
Kaitlyn Janse, Guam High School, Guam
Kayla Sera, Glendora High School, Glendora, CA
Natalie Mukai, South Bay Faith Academy, Redondo Beach, CA
Taylor Riedley, Simi Valley High School, Simi Valley, CA
Study hard,” my grandpa cautioned, his delivery steady with intent. “Okay, grandpa,” I acknowledged in a tone of the perfect combination of annoyance and conceit. Throughout childhood and into adulthood, this traditional farewell from my grandpa seemed tediously homogenous. To me, “Work hard” was interchangeable with “Get good grades” and comparable to “Get into a good college”. In elementary, middle, and high school, I seemingly had a permanent spot on the honor roll. The same said for college. Understandably, such an overplayed lecture infuriated me—no matter what grades I received or college I attended, my grandpa would still instruct me to “Work hard”. It has been years since he passed, but the weight behind his cryptic, yet insightful proverb based on his experience in the war charges my fervor.

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, compelling the United States to declare war on Japan. American citizens of Japanese descent, like my grandpa, were accused of being spies for the Japanese and bereaved of basic human rights, forced into desolate, unsuitable internment camps. As a result of my grandpa and the Nisei generation’s unwavering allegiance, the government granted them the ability to serve in the military. My grandpa committed himself to learning the Japanese language so that he could join the United States Military Intelligence Service, seeing it as a chance to change his life trajectory. Such a philosophy of relentless perseverance and unhesitating endurance created opportunities for my grandfather, as well as for the broader Japanese-American community.

Insight in such a sinister chapter of American history helps me to enshrine my grandpa’s lesson: “Work hard.” In hindsight, the grades I received and college I attended was of negligible importance to him. Rather, he wanted to convey the importance of persistence in light of adversity. Grasping on to the Japanese American story of injustice, as well as my grandpa’s determination, motivates me to help the progression of my community and fuels my desire to attend law school. With the blasphemous precedent of Korematsu v. U.S. that the government could in the future intern a minority group during wartime, leaves me with a pervasive feeling of anger mixed with passion. By “working hard”, I can take on cases that will help to further safeguard the Japanese American community and other less represented minority communities. Accordingly, as I continue on my journey, my grandpa’s motto, “Work hard” will continue to propel my career objectives in the field of law by reminding me of the bare necessity, but also the volatile nature of the law. It will also remind me to show my appreciation for the achievements of my grandpa and the Nisei soldiers, by working to provide for the future of the community.

In the mornings when I leave for work, my parents now say “Work hard”. I smile and reply “Okay”, in a tone absent of the ignorant demeanor I once emitted.
I plan on majoring in International Relations at UC Davis and minoring in Japanese. I have a deep interest in history and current events, and I also enjoy playing bassoon and piano, tennis, creative writing, and spending time with my family. In 8th grade, I participated in an exchange program through the Livermore Yotsukaido Sister City Organization (LYSCO), and since then, I have founded and led the LYSCO Club at my High School and served as a LYSCO Japanese language tutor. Writing my essay, I was inspired by both the strength of Japanese Americans, as well as the sacrifices they made during WWII.

My mother raised me with terms such as *gaman*: the dignified endurance of the unjust and unbearable. To have *gaman* is to be limber and flexible. When situations sour or plans fail, one with *gaman* keeps his/her cool and does not complain. He/she takes it with dignity and deals with it as a mature adult. In my mind, it is the greatest courage one can attain in a lifetime.

In response to Imperial Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor, Executive Order 9066 was issued, ordering the relocation of all those of Japanese descent from the western United States to internment camps. As the majority of those relocated were loyal American citizens, the order was a blatant violation of the rights granted by the Constitution. They were forced to give up their property and family belongings for unfair prices, and their careers, educations, and dreams were put on hold. But despite the injustices they faced, Japanese Americans obeyed the order peacefully and with dignity. Some might mistake this for timid complacency, but in reality, the Japanese Americans’ response was that of a serene stoicism: a true embodiment of *gaman*.

Equally admirable was the Japanese American’s continued patriotism and loyalty to America, despite having their rights trampled upon. After having been interned for several months, Japanese American men were asked to fill out a loyalty questionnaire. In it, they were asked if they would be willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States and if they were loyal to America. As an observer from today, the questionnaire seems like an insult. Why would one wish to serve the country that betrayed them? But even still, most Japanese Americans said that they would be willing to serve. Many of the men also volunteered to serve in the U.S. army in Japanese American regiments (100th and the 442nd), and they went on to become among the most decorated divisions in American history. By the end of the war, not a single Japanese American had betrayed America for Japan.

From internment to service and sacrifice, the Japanese American experience during WWII taught the nation what it is to be a true patriot. When the government does wrong, it is not the duty of the citizen to tear it down. Instead, it is the citizen’s duty to prove it wrong and change it. In spite of xenophobic sentiments and policy, Japanese Americans stayed true to America and made the ultimate sacrifice for it, demonstrating to the country that they loved America just as much as any other American. As stalwart patriots, the fact that they were wronged did nothing to change their feelings. They proved that the American spirit lies not with race, but with one’s ideals and dreams. If anything were to be gained from Japanese American internment, it would be this priceless lesson. If we truly understand its value, we must continue to remember it and teach it to those who follow us.
As an enthusiastic student of film and history, I find the trials and triumphs of the Japanese American experience in World War II a compelling tale. The story illustrates perseverance and teamwork – traits that can still inspire young people today. This contest allowed me to share my knowledge and passion with others. Additionally, I participate in World War II reenacting and enjoy traveling to historical sites. These interests inspire me to learn and appreciate our national past.

Watch Mark’s video online on the Go For Broke National Education Center’s YouTube Channel using the link or QR code:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-UqSdYoWl0O85JAx3u0m1A
Kaitlyn Chu
Orange County High School of the Arts, Orange County, CA
Junior (2015-2016 Academic School Year)

I am so excited to be a senior at the Orange County School of the Arts! I love making a positive impact in my community through my art. I enjoy spending time with my friends, studying history, and running my hand designed iPhone case business, Love Chu Designs. I was first introduced to the Go for Broke Education Center when I volunteered there with my Yonsei Basketball Team. I feel privileged to share Stanley Hayami’s dreams and drawings through my video!

Watch Kaitlyn’s video online on the Go For Broke National Education Center’s YouTube Channel using the link or QR code:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-UqSdYoWLl0O85JAx3u0m1A
I am currently studying Communication with a growing interest in intercultural communication. I spend much of my time on music, and this past year I founded the first Christian A Cappella group on campus called Unseen. This contest gave me the opportunity to put the Nisei story into an art form and share it, hoping that it would speak to the connection between the past and present generations. Growing up with grandparents that openly spoke about their WWII experiences, I have been wholly impacted by the Nisei’s powerful display of character, striving to give what I can every day, recognizing its importance and impact.

**Day Today**

17 and already facing incarceration. What did I do?
I have Japanese blood, hated by the red, white and blue.

First, moved to Santa Anita Racetrack; smelled like poo.
Lesson 1: Horses are more valuable than me and you.

Transported to the desert, had to build our homes too.
What about the neighbors? We always know what and whom.

Not only surrounded by barbed wire fence and a barren view, but also the intent of taking away our legal process due.

I don't know if my future will hold anything new, but with my chance, I will volunteer for the four-four-two.

Camp Shelby, with guys from camp and Honolulu, same face, cultures different, pidgin or proper, something about to brew.

Lacking knowledge we're put in camp for acts we didn't do, mutual understanding, our bonds became tight as glue.

16 weeks of training begin the beginning Nisei story that will someday ring true, 13 days on the sea 'til we reach World War II.

I'm a foreigner, now in foreign land, made a foreigner in the home I once knew.

For Japanese Americans to have a life in the US, we will fight until death.
Go four-four-two!

Never been in gun fire, but I'm not scared 'cause all I feel is my tire.
Every moment on the battlefield is urgent and dire. People are dying, our lives hang by a wire.

What are we fighting for? The United States. A nation we believe to be so great.
December 7, 1941. That was our fate.
How were we treated? We were made the bait.
Some joined just, "To get out of camp," 'cause they didn't want to wait. Others, "To prove that we are loyal Americans!" Yes, we will also fight for and against the hate.

Like Mama used to say "shikata ga nai." Nothing can be done. Of course, 'til this battle has been won. And it won't matter that our blood is of the rising sun, Because we will all be viewed as one.

The war ends, camps are evacuated, time to return. Though, some of my closest friends will become back in an urn.

Shigata ga nai! Shikata ga nai! Shikata ga nai! Mama's words echoed. All I can do, accept what's happened and say, "hai."

Time to get on with life, no time to dwell on woe. My sister has gone Midwest, with 25 dollars, I relocate to Chicago.

I work hard, go to school, become an educator, get married, raise a family, and let them know: about the injustice, the experience, and the $20,000 which they owe. Will our future generations reap what we sow? Unfortunately, as it stands, the answer might be no.

Ashamed, we didn't want to be Japs, we wanted to be American like the rest. Psychological damage instilled to the next generation, yes. We didn't know - our family structure broken by camp. What a mess. Our Japanese American identities, we think of less and less.

But we have stories, archives, and artifacts to connect us to the part of us that's been lost. No matter how hard we are oppressed or silenced, we will not be tossed.

We will raise our voices, no matter what the cost. And we will continue to love, despite being crossed.

Modern day: This is what I can only imagine what could have been, If I was him, my grandpa Sam Ozaki, and I am proud to be his kin. From grandpa, I've learned to love even those, who against me, sin. That sometimes, that is more important than getting the win.

Some people want to make America great again. Black lives matter, profiling Muslims, building a wall; Taking away their freedom as a citizen. Has nothing changed in 7 years times 10? Stop! Will we ever know when? Was it any different back then? Or are we doomed to forget what's been written by the pen?

About me - my dream is to sing. But stereotypes say Asians don't sing, and money I won't bring. Also, been a victim of cast typing. An Asian man: emasculating; Model Minority: stimulating But the 442nd showed me that I need to be fighting Down the path their sacrifice has been paving With my voice, loud, clear and ringing. I need to be the one who's going to do the changing.

"Go for broke." They understand. How it feels to be caught in hate's sinking sand. How hard you have to fight to walk free on this land. That you might even end up losing a hand. And one day we'll all fall to justice's demand.
I am currently starting my sophomore year at Moanalua High School in Honolulu, Hawaii where I am lucky to have amazing teachers and programs that encourage us to expand our horizons. During school, I am often intrigued by freelance writing pieces, science labs, and world history. When not focusing on my academics, I enjoy reading, graphic designing, photography, playing the violin, air rifle, archery, swimming, and watching movies. The reason I entered this contest was because here in Hawaii, a significant part of our history ties in to the Nisei soldier story. The infamous Nisei soldier story inspires me because they were able to put their extremely troubled past behind them and join forces with the very people that were thought to be their enemies and the ultimate cause of their suffering, something which many people today, can never do.

True Courage:

They were removed from their homes,
And still they fought for what they believe in.
They were thrown in the desert, left to fend for themselves,
And still they fought for what they believe in.
They were insulted, left with little livestock and broken treaties,
And still they fought for what they believe in.
When the time came to rise against the enemy,
They joined us, voluntarily.
They rose from the past and stood beside us.
They fought for what they believed in.
This is true courage.
The courage to stand up and fight for what you believe in,
The courage to overlook the past,
The courage to join hands with those who wounded you and threw salt in the still healing sores,
The courage to protest against claims of disloyalty against those who injured you,
The courage to save those who would only save themselves,
The courage to stand up and fight for what you believe in.
That is what true courage is.
Courage

As I grew up in a Japanese-American community that held to their in Japan while embracing the land and culture of America, I’ve had many a conflict as to which side I should consider in the great battles of World War II. I’ve realized that while nobody is allowed to point fingers, there were conditions of undeniable courage that were laid by the Japanese Americans, allowing families such as mine to live peacefully in this beautiful nation called America.

The courage of the Japanese Americans who had fought alongside America is nothing but a small text, unnoticed in the minds of many when it comes to the men who fought for America in World War II. I’m impressed by those same men, who sacrificed every bit of their life in war, despite the lack of recognition from America that they, too, were one of them. For example, The MIS, or Military Intelligence Service, and its job involved high levels of intellect and secrecy. The Japanese American MIS in World War II served as a key player in the translation of works of the then Japanese enemy, resulting in “the Allied victory in the Pacific War and the peaceful Occupation of Japan” (MIS NorCal). It is only evident how such a group of people can aid in the wars fought against Japan. Their language ability assisted in deciphering communication amongst the Japanese. The more important their role was, the more at risk they were, and that was one side of courage that the Japanese American men displayed.

The conditions in America that were anti-Japanese also showed their courage. “Here I’m in uniform…and they take my family…I kinda felt that, ‘What the hell is going on?’” Kan Tagami reflects on the situation, after President Roosevelt went through with Executive Code 9066, which “incarcerated” all of those with Japanese ancestry into “detention camps…” (MIS NorCal). These men undoubtedly felt anger and sadness at the unfair situation, but they continued to fight with America. The mere idea of cooperating with someone who may consider you to be an enemy is truly courageous and powerful; One has to overcome overpowering feelings of betrayal and resentment, replacing them with loyalty.

Every time I think of such heart-breaking conditions, I cannot express enough words of gratitude and awe for those who took responsibility as an American despite the treatment they faced. I feel personally grateful for their courage, as I am able to proudly be a Japanese-American without much conflict at all. The courage of the Japanese American is powerful, not only in the impact that it made in aiding the war, but in the way it overcame the terrible conditions the Japanese Americans as a whole were receiving through their love for the American nation. Courage comes in all shapes and sizes, and it often is neglected, but, still, courage seeks the greater values in life and finds its way in order to reach a greater goal.
I enjoy math and science and hope to major in environmental engineering in college. My hobbies include playing tennis and the alto saxophone, as well as volunteering in the community. I am thankful that my English teacher encouraged me to enter this contest because it gave me an opportunity to learn more about my grandfather. His inspirational story illustrates what many others had to endure in the camps, how they persevered through those hardships, and how they rebuilt our communities by laying a solid foundation for future generations.

Fight On!

Mina birds chirped on an ordinary morning on the island of Oahu, Hawaii. Residents awoke to the salty ocean breeze and fresh morning dew, and leisurely went outside to grab the Honolulu Star Bulletin while drinking their Kona coffee. Suddenly, on this 7th day of December, 1941, at 7:55 A.M., Japanese B-17 bombers attacked Pearl Harbor, killing about 2,400 Americans and wounding over 1,200. On this catastrophic day, the United States entered World War II. Ten weeks later, President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, forcibly relocating people of Japanese ancestry living on the West Coast into internment camps.

Faced with wartime hardship, over 110,000 people, including my Grandpa, possessed courage to persevere through adversity. Grandpa, a second year dental student at the University of Southern California (USC), was among those suddenly forced to abandon their homes and relocated to the Santa Anita Assembly Center. Horse stalls smelling of pungent manure served as their cramped shelters. Grandpa distinctly remembers the days he nearly starved because the “prisoners” were sometimes given only one pork sausage to last the day. Numerous times, they waited exhaustingly in the sweltering heat for hours, resulting in many of them, including Grandpa, to faint from dehydration. Chores for the “prisoners” included constructing camouflage nets, all while military police patrolled the barbed wire perimeter of the grounds.

Fortunately, a judge from his hometown of Tacoma, Washington, wrote a letter on Grandpa’s behalf, allowing him to complete his degree at the University of St. Louis. However, USC refused to transfer his units, forcing him to start over as a first year student. He did so without complaining and eventually earned his dental degree. But as a minority in an unfamiliar city during wartime hysteria, he endured much fear and intolerance. He later returned to Los Angeles, where he and others worked to reestablish Little Tokyo and rebuild their community. Grandpa believed in supporting the community to create a culture that would endure for generations. Now 95 years old, he mostly sleeps, is legally blind, and hearing impaired, yet still manages to reiterate what he told us years ago: to give back to the community. He maintains that regardless of the circumstances, we should always participate in our community because it is the foundation that provides us strength.

Over the years, I have followed his footsteps, volunteering for various organizations. I have realized volunteering requires not only courage to make a difference, but commitment, generosity, and a warm heart. Courage is the ability to persevere and demonstrate strength through pain and suffering. Despite the hardships Grandpa endured, he holds no animosity towards the government or USC. In fact, for over 60 years he has remained an avid Trojan football fan, attending home football games every year. Grandpa made the best of the war situation, and his courage to rebuild his life and the Japanese American community serves as my inspiration to continue his legacy of volunteering. He persevered. He succeeded. He is my hero.
Salvatore Angrisani
University of California, Merced, Merced, CA
Sophomore (2015-2016 Academic School Year)

I’m a UC Merced mechanical engineer undergraduate who has a passion for film, and who intends to pursue a career in the film industry after receiving a M.F.A. in Film Studies or Screenwriting. I entered this contest to share an important message that’s deep throughout history - even today - and especially present in the Japanese American experience during WWII. One Japanese American experience stemming from the stories of Nisei soldiers, which hold such great meaning and inspiration. Their stories show such commitment to this country, making me wonder if I can ever pledge my American allegiance to the extent they did. Truly inspirational and I’m truly grateful for their service.

Watch Salvaroe’s video online on the Go For Broke National Education Center’s YouTube Channel using the link or QR code:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-UqSdYoWl0O85JAx3u0m1A
Lyndon Defoe  
University High School Academy, Southfield, MI  
Junior (2015-2016 Academic School Year)  

As a student I am very committed to my education. My ambition fuels my curiosity to find new ways of expanding my knowledge and learning more about the world around me. When I’m not in the classroom I am indulged in another interest of mine, public speaking. From joining the debate team to reciting poetry I have used my passion for speaking to enhance my academic accomplishments: hence why I chose to make a video with a voiceover. What I found most intriguing about the Go For Broke contest was how so many Nisei soldiers were underrepresented for the service, despite their impactful contributions in World War 2. The Nisei stories are prime examples of many soldiers who may not have been recognized for their efforts (like my grandfather), and I felt that by at least telling the story of one soldier, I would be giving a hero his much needed recognition.

Watch Lyndon’s video online on the Go For Broke National Education Center’s YouTube Channel using the link or QR code:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-UqSdYoWI0O85JAx3u0m1A
My name is Joan Yamagishi, but my family and friends call me “Joni”. In my spare time I enjoy playing basketball, swimming, going hiking, and exploring new places. As a marketing major, I have taken a strong interest in print ads and social media campaigns, as these are my creative outlets. Entering this poetry contest was important to me because of what my grandparents went through during WWII. Based on the stories I have heard since childhood, the perseverance and integrity exhibited by my grandparents have provided me with a backdrop to my heritage, and revealed my true appreciation for my cultural identity.

Courage

Fourth generation Japanese American –
They call me Yonsei - just one word,
Often spoken, but rarely heard.
A simple word that encapsulates history,
Important events that live within my family.
Times of courage, integrity, and love –
A combination of all of the above.

Roosevelt felt that Japanese Americans were potentially bad,
So they had no choice but to manage with what they had.
Families and friends surviving in barracks, poorly crafted,
Off to the war, some men were soon drafted.
People came together to educate, farm, and grow.
They held classes, made music, and put on some shows.

Mom, dad, two brothers, and she was the little sister,
Forced out of the familiar
She didn’t know what hit her.
A safe haven, a place to stay,
And hopeful futures taken away.
New places, new faces, and a new situation,
Following a plan that allowed racial segregation.
She made due with what was provided
In a world where people were divided.

Mom, dad, three sisters, and one of two sons,
No way to fight against what was going on.
A star athlete - football player from what I hear,
On his way to Arizona U. within the coming years.

Suddenly he was interned at a camp called Poston,
By order of the wartime civil control administration.
Staying strong and seeing things in a positive light,
Little did he know, he’d meet the love of his life.

Two people, my grandparents, my definition of courage.
Pursuing their dreams and eventually marriage.
“Mits and Mary” was how they were known,
Fearless and brave, together and on their own.
Friday night dances, their song: Moonlight Serenade.
They had each other and were never afraid.

They call me Yonsei.
But what is this today?
It’s four generations of courage, integrity and love,
Preserving the mix of all of the above.
My courage lies in sharing this information
In teaching others and encouraging representation.
This history isn’t taught in every social studies class
And only brought up when someone may ask.
I think it’s unfair and needs to be fixed
As we live in diversity, an eclectic mix
All history should be treated “equal”
Level respect for all groups of people.

This is history that needs to be spread and flourished
As my grandparents are the roots of my courage.
Their WWII story serves as a promising case,
Of the courage it takes to go after the dreams we chase.
My name is Todd Potter and I'm in 11th grade at West High school. I enjoy English. In my free time, I write poetry, listen to music, and participate in the youth group at my church. The Nisei story inspires me because it shows tremendous courage and is deeply personal because my great-uncle, George Buto, actually was a soldier in the 442nd Regiment.

We went for broke recklessly, Never looking back, Sure of a love that transcends War's brokenness, A love that sustains and mends.

We went for broke For our family, our friends, Even people we've never met, To show that courage Is faith in the next generation, Knowing that when they would see Our triumphant reintegration And an end to discrimination, They might find the source Of peace that sets us free.

And even today, we go for broke, Because now we know That it surely takes More courage to die for a cause Than to kill for one, That it's more difficult to love Our enemies Than it is to hate,

It's challenging to fight, But peace requires more determination, Division, although easier, Is defeated by reconciliation.

Therefore go as we go, Go for broke, Show love in spite of brokenness, Show peace that comes With unconditional openness, Show faith in the next generation, So that we may see each other Face to face, Sharpened by the sense That nationality, gender, Sexuality, and race Do not define or render People, but instead, how we love, How we break our lives open, Overflowing others With unquantifiable blessings Is what makes us sisters and brothers, A family with the courage to love Despite all we have seen and heard, Despite the pain of war that has occurred.
I am an undergraduate student studying human performance and nutrition, ultimately studying to be an orthopedic surgeon. I am an avid weight lifter and foodie, and I practice judo at Stanford as our Team President, working on a documentary film exploring the culture, science, and nutrition of judo. I entered the GFBNEC contest to show how courage is the thread that which strengthens bonds and brings people closer together, exemplified by the Nisei fight for freedom on all accounts.

Amidst wartime hysteria, intense suffering, and xenophobic sentiment, 120,000 Japanese Americans underwent mass incarceration under Executive Order 9066. Nearly one-third of these people were children.

Children who did not understand why they lived in remote camps surrounded by armed guards and barbed wire. Children who dealt with barren dinner tables and alienated houses. Children who looked to their guardians for strength and found the bleakness of livelihoods destroyed.

These “relocation centers” feigned liberty and democracy for outsiders looking in; inside the camps, the family unit slowly degraded from communal imprisonment. Large families were crammed into small hovels.

When I was twelve-years-old my own family of six was breaking at its seams. We lived in a one-room apartment out of financial necessity, and our future was uncertain after lost jobs and rising medical bills for my mom’s chemotherapy. To support my three younger siblings, I had to grow up very fast.

So too did the young Nisei, whose minds and souls matured before their physicality, onset by the shock of a situation completely out of their control. The War Relocation Authority established schools and recreational activities for them, but the reality of hardship remained.

In a different way my family was severely tested, and I decided to fight back. During winter my brother and I trudged waist deep in snow as we shoveled out neighbors’ cars and cleared out entire parking lots. We received $800 for our hard earned efforts. A few weeks later, we gave our snow-shoveling money to our parents. Groceries and hospital fees were a priority.

The Japanese-Americans fought back too. Inmates worked hard to make a living and improve their surroundings. When they came of age, some volunteered to join the 442nd Regimental Combat Team: others were drafted. At war’s end, in President Truman’s words, “You fought not only the enemy, but you fought prejudice — and you have won.” The 442nd Regimental Combat Team became one of the most decorated units in U.S. military history.

Japanese-Americans in camps and on front lines were courageous in every sense of the word. They endured extraordinary pain and battled oppression, and the children live on today. All six members of my family are with me today as well. We persevered and overcame obstacles together, growing up in strength and spirit.

Courage bridges the defining line between tribulation and triumph; it is our ability to champion tenacity and strive for prosperity rooted in the foundations of resilience and valor. When our lives present us with challenges that have no clear way out, courage gives us the clarity to see them through.
I am not the best writer, nor have I won any contests in my life. So, when I was notified that I won a student essay contest on “How I Would Preserve the Legacy of the Japanese American (Nisei) Soldier of World War II,” I was speechless. Not only did I finally win something, I would get the chance to meet World War II Nisei veterans at a gala. At the reception, I met the Nisei veterans and their wives and listened to their stories. The heroes that I researched and wrote about now stood in front of me. As I shook their hands and thanked them for their service, I felt an immense sense of pride for my Japanese American heritage. I was impressed with the deep-rooted traits of these men: optimism, resiliency, strong family values and a rigorous work ethic. They represented who I aspired to be. I also learned the true definition of sacrifice, courage and heroism.

But as I drove home from the gala, something bugged me. Why was I one of the few to hear this impactful story in person? My generation needed to see and hear these American heroes firsthand, not only through textbooks. The veterans’ stories empowered me to do something to carry on their legacy. The next week, I spoke with our principal and arranged to have a veteran speak at our high school.

At 90 years old, Mas Takahashi walked slowly with his cane into our auditorium. He was a war hero from the 442nd Regimental Combat Team — the most decorated unit in the 238-year history of the U.S. Army. This team was not an ordinary infantry. They were made up entirely of Japanese American soldiers who fought for their country even though many of their family members were incarcerated in American internment camps. Everyone was silent and eyes became teary as vivid images were painted about the grim hardships of war and the loyalty each of the soldiers displayed. Students’ perspectives changed as they gained a greater understanding and appreciation for the sacrifices these soldiers made for our country.

Mas’ story of sacrifice and perseverance through the harsh realities of war has inspired me to get involved in causes that I am passionate about and to pursue my goals with purposeful determination. Whether it’s raising funds for pancreatic cancer research or volunteering at Keiro Japanese nursing home, I vicariously fight my battles through the trenches. The soldiers’ legacy must be preserved and shared, not only for immigrants and minorities who struggle to find their place in America, but to also remind Asian Americans of the difficult struggle for equality that cost them many lives.

Mas’ strength and character has left an impression on me that I want to share with others. I am inspired to act now to start taking small actions of selflessness to build the community that we need in order to push for policy reformation in the future. By perpetuating his legacy in my role as an educator, community advocate, and a proud Japanese American, I hope to impassion my generation to revere our war heroes and to become their own heroes as well.
My name is Nicole McIntyre and I am an 18 year old Junior at Texas Tech University. I am majoring in English Literature, and one of my greatest passions is writing. Since high school, I have always been very inspired by stories of war veterans, and now especially like those of Nisei Soldiers. I am very thankful to The Go for Broke National Education Center for giving me this opportunity to write something for the heroes that our nation holds dear.

For some, the war was like a window.
Some children could look past it to a future that was better.
The bad that they saw was far from them and when they grew, they’d hardly remember

For others, the war was like a mirror.
The children were, themselves, the war and the future never came.
Because their childhood was gone, they’d grown, before they were free from blame.

For some, the war was fearful.
While others—they were feared.

For some, the war is a memory.
For others: it may still be here.

Now, the children, are all adults the same—though some saw lots of happiness, while what others saw was pain.
Perhaps some are looking through a window, even after all these years.
While for others, the mirror is perfect to see what is actually here.

And from those children of back then, the men and women of today, The Children of the War see us, and will make sure our futures remain.
Courage is a challenge met.

My grandparents were sent away as children, shipped out of their homes because their parents were dangerous, unamerican, would-be spies.

Their farm rotted as they bloomed in the desert, in the cracks of the sidewalks, in army uniforms heavy with responsibility. Prove them wrong.

They carried me, the future; the promise of all the good that was to come. They carried their families. They carried themselves. You wonder how they fit it all into their suitcases, handbags, trains, camps.
Courage is larger than a shuddering box of wood on an iron rail, than a piece of land surrounded by a barbed wire fence. Their fathers smuggled seeds wrapped in their sun-shorn clothes, planted gardens where bitterness might have grown. Their mothers taught them to love to make do and hold their glasses to the light half-full.

The doctor says, after five minutes of conversation, You are sick and I am putting you on medication. So, so, I see my future shift, twist off-kilter; split like a wishbone at Thanksgiving dinner,

I see what they must have when they were told to take only what they could carry. Oh, boy, this is bad; this is very bad. But we are going to have to go through it anyway. This is courage. This is going through it anyway. (It doesn’t have to be graceful, but you’re doing it and you’re doing it well) This is proving them wrong. This is my grandmother as she married my grandfather after he came home from Italy, this is her cousin going to college, this is me smiling again. This is taking hatred and setting it aside. This is blooming.

I cannot put words in the mouths of my grandparents, but I can say that they were happy with their lives.

So, so
I am a nation
I am the peace that comes after war.
I am the past,
I am a battle cry
I am my grandfather coming home to his family
I am his head held high
I am the future
I am a building scraping the sky
I am a sense of pride, the high tide
I am a refusal to die.

Courage is a challenge met.
I like to think we met it
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