

2018 HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE ESSAY, PERFORMANCE, & VISUAL ARTS CONTEST



Go For Broke National Education Center is dedicated to providing educational opportunities on the World War II Japanese American veteran story. Our student essay, performance, and visual arts contest gives students around the world the chance not only to learn more about that story, but to connect with it on a personal level. By engaging students with this history, we ensure the next generation remembers the courage and sacrifice of the World War II American veterans of Japanese ancestry.

This year's prompts included:

- (1) The Japanese American WWII veteran experience is still relevant to our society today. Explore one of the ways this is true.
- (2) The Japanese American WWII veteran story is now more than 70 years old. Discuss your ideas on preserving the Japanese American WWII veteran story for future generations.

CONTEST JUDGES

The 2018 High School and College Essay, Performance, and Visual Arts Contest would not be successful without the generous support from our contest judges. We thank each judge for their time and expertise!

Essay Contest Judges

Karen Ageno
Mary Jane Fujimori
Kris Ichori
Audrey Ishimoto
Jo Ann Kaba
Clarice Miyamoto-Kim
Nancy Sagawa
Jo Ann Takemoto
Aileen Willoughby

Visual Arts and Performance Contest Judges

Alan Hino
Philip Hirose
Kari Kadomatsu
Greg Lew
Kevin Lew
Kent Marume
Randy Masada
Nicole Sato

CONTEST PRESENTING SPONSOR



PACIFIC GLOBAL
Investment Management Company

CONTEST SUPPORTING SPONSORS

Ken and June Shimabukuro

**Anonymous donor in memory
of WWII veteran Masao "Mas" Takahashi**

2018 HIGH SCHOOL & COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY
ESSAY, PERFORMANCE & VISUAL ARTS 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 generosity 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.



MASAO 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.



Congratulations to all 2018 Student Contest Winners!

ESSAY

High School

First Place: **Sara Aoki**
Second Place: **Joseph Vega**
Third Place: **Vincent Ooi**

College

First Place: **Kahlil Kochiyama**
Second Place: **Aodhan Ozawa-Burns**
Third Place: **Thao Nguyen**

VISUAL ARTS

High School

First Place: **Sarah Ando**
Second Place: **Kea Kamiya**
Third Place: **Mira Hirabayashi**

College

First Place: **Aislinn Ozawa-Burns**
Second Place: **Caitlyn Takeda**
Third Place: **Kayla Yoshitake**

PERFORMANCE

High School

First Place: **Paiton Gleeson**
Second Place: **Kira Gatiuan**
Third Place: **Michael Eberlein**

College

First Place: **Hope Fa-Kaji**

High School Essay Winners



First Place: **Sara Aoki**
Miramonte High School, Orinda, CA
Grade: 11 (2017-2018 academic year)

Sara has been fascinated by both the role of the storyteller and as a member of the audience. This love is what prompted the late night conversations with her grandparents; their experiences as Japanese Americans during World War II are what inspired Sara to write an entry for this contest. Not only is the Nisei soldier story an important part of U.S. history, it is also something that she is deeply proud of in respect to her own history and role as a young Japanese American.

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My Grandfather's Stories and the Digital World

I grew up on carefully crafted musubi, California sunshine, and my grandparent's stories. We bartered at the dinner table, a detailed description of my days in pre-K for one of my Oji-chan's upbringing in the internment camps. I would fall asleep cradled in the folds of his stories, enveloped in reminders of my family's rich history. But my generation may be the last to hear these stories from the people who lived it; we are the grandchildren. We are the storytellers of the future. But as the future, we are tasked with the responsibility of preserving the past. My great-grandfather's story is the Japanese American WWII story, one composed of a childhood spent at Tule Lake and witnessing young men in his community hardened after joining the U.S. Army. I learned about these stories at the dinner table, my cousins and my parents learned the same way. But these stories lose the authority they claimed when they are not told straight from the source; they lose their touch of verisimilitude to transition into a series of murky memories. So, routes other than oral storytelling must be explored in order to preserve these stories.

An essential component to the preservation of the Japanese American WWII veteran legacy is to ensure that the youth will remember these stories. While Go For Broke is about celebrating our history, it is also important to take embrace technological advances. I understand that the Go For Broke Foundation opened an interpretive exhibition in Los Angeles. However, I think that for those who are only able to read about the Japanese American experience during WWII, it is harder to connect to the Japanese American WWII veteran story. In order to enhance this connection, the interpretive exhibition should incorporate a virtual reality exhibit. This would allow anyone to become fully immersed in the time period, they could watch from behind barbed wire as family members marched out to war or feel the sense of brotherhood, bravery, and hope that the 442 Regimental Combat Team felt as they were thrust into war. Essentially, this exhibit would bring the Japanese American WWII veteran story to life. In addition, Go For Broke should capitalize on the range of people accessible through social media. By creating an Instagram page dedicated to sharing one veteran's story each day, Go For Broke would be able to reach hundreds of people with one post. This digital space would attract people of all ages and from all parts of the world.

There was $\frac{3}{4}$ of a page in my AP American History textbook dedicated to the Japanese American experience during WWII. At no point in the book did it discuss the achievements of the 442 Regimental Combat Team, of the incredible bravery and strength shown in the face of death, discrimination, and bigotry. These are the messages that should be passed down to future generations; this is what being American is and this is a chapter in the American Story that deserves to be remembered.



Second Place: **Joseph Vega**
North Torrance High School, Torrance, CA
Grade: 11 (2017-2018 academic year)

Joseph is of half Japanese and half Mexican heritage. He embraces creativity and loves the art of filmmaking, wishing to pursue a career in the industry. Joseph entered this contest to honor his great uncle Joe Sase who was in the 442nd RCT. Hearing the stories of his great uncle and other Nisei soldiers endure a period in time in history full of prejudice and adversity has inspired him to persevere in achieving his dreams

.....
Excerpt from *Yabo*

“Those who are inspired by this historical part of American history should speak out and encourage school districts and teachers to teach and acknowledge the most highly decorated regiment of World War II. The Japanese American veterans are historical examples of determination and patriotism that grasp the morals and beliefs the United States still upholds today. These men and their stories are highly impactful and must be passed down to future generations and further educate the U.S, and more importantly the world a powerful message these men behold.”



Third Place: **Vincent Ooi**
Mid-Pacific Institute, Honolulu, HI
Grade 11 (2017-2018 academic year)

Vincent Ooi is an upcoming student at UC Berkeley interested in a career in ophthalmology and as an entrepreneur in online education. He entered the contest to provide a technological based idea of preserving the Japanese American WWII veteran experience. The Nisei soldier story inspires him because of how they exemplified courage and patriotism in times when their families were subject to incarceration.

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Excerpt from *Preserving Japanese American WWII Veteran Story with Augmented and Virtual Reality*

“The usage of both augmented and virtual reality will assist nonprofit organizations, such as the Go for Broke National Education Center, in providing a first and third person view of the Japanese American WWII veteran story. The computer-generated immersive environment of virtual reality can help patrons and future generations understand the story through a first-person narration or walk through experience of what a Japanese American veteran faced throughout World War II. In addition to virtual reality, using technology that superimposes a computer-generated image on a user’s view of the real world can provide a composite third person perspective of the Japanese American WWII veteran story. Augmented reality has the ability to introduce prominent information on the Japanese American veterans using sophisticated, modern technological methods that can sufficiently grasp the attention of millennials.”

College Essay Winners



First Place: **Kahlil Kochiyama**

University of California, Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, CA

College Junior (2017-2018 academic year)

Kahlil Kochiyama is pursuing a degree in Environmental Studies with a Professional Writing concentration. He hopes to continue the legacy of his Grandpa Bill Kochiyama and all the other valiant Japanese American WWII veterans' legacy through his work with his school's Nikkei Student Union, and even after graduation as he hopes to incorporate his heritage and identity into his future endeavors.

Big Combat Boots to Fill

As a kid, I reached into my family's closet and discovered an old army coat. I threw it on and immediately drowned in thick fibrous fabric. As the mirror reflected a men's jacket turned child's trench coat, I puffed my chest and told myself, "I'll grow into this someday." Little did I know that in addition to the coat, I also had big shoes to fill.

Although my grandfather passed away before I was born, I've always looked up to him. Growing up, pop culture supplied little to none Asian American role models; never courageous, always weak, and maybe the uncool sidekick at best. My grandfather and the Japanese American WWII veterans defied them all. Beyond the copious accolades and undeniable acts of heroism and bravery, the level of courage they exhibited is monumental. They endured a barrage of racism and prejudice. Their civil rights were shot and dragged through the mud. Essentially, Lady Liberty stabbed them in the back, creating multi-generational wounds with many purple hearts to show for it. But despite all this, they enlisted. As "go for broke" personified, they fought to preserve the same American values in which they were stripped of; all while simultaneously carrying the weight of their communities on their shoulders.

Today, the fight continues; just with a new focus. As other groups are being targeted, it's clearer than ever that the Japanese American WWII veteran experience is not an isolated incident, but rather an ongoing battle for equality. Just like the veterans 70 years ago, members of these groups are also enlisting; just in different ways. Trading guns for picket signs, grenades for policy changes, they are fighting tooth and nail for the same civil liberties that our veterans risked everything for. It is essential to draw parallels from events of the past to today's society to ensure the preservation of their stories. This adaptation will not only highlight the relevance of our veterans' experience, but honor it as well. By building these bridges into other communities, it allows for their memory to be spread and remembered for future generations. In addition, adapting the presentation of their stories is also important to their preservation. It's our duty to integrate them into popular forms of media. It can be as small as producing simple and shareable social media content to spread awareness of their legacy, or as big as supporting Asian American filmmakers who creatively display these stories that appeal to a broader audience. By infiltrating the same sources of pop culture that propagate the demeaning stereotype of Asians, we can celebrate the JA WWII veterans, while flipping the script on the misrepresentation of our people.

Although I have grown enough to fit my grandfather's old coat, he and the other JA WWII veterans set a bar that I strive to reach every day. The shoes I aim to fill are combat boots that courageously trekked the battlefield of a fight for respect and justice; I hope to grow into them someday.



Second Place: **Aodhan Ozawa Burns**
University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA
College Sophomore (2017-2018 academic year)

Aodhan’s grandfather, an MIS veteran, was quiet. Yet he possessed an unshakable demeanor through times of hardship that reflected a culture future generations will forever associate with honor, dutifulness, and bravery. Aodhan’s contest entry thanks the many WWII JAs for their service and celebrates a model for refuting claims that one’s Americanness can be measured by the color of their skin.

.....
Excerpt from *Veterans of Prejudice*

“Stories of the Japanese American veteran experience— like my grandfather’s— remain relevant to our society today because their central theme— fighting prejudice to prove one’s belonging— is incredibly pertinent to current events. The Japanese American veterans demonstrated, before, during, and after their service, a resistance against racism in hopes of proving their Americanness. Their stories reemphasize a critical point: it is through our ability as a nation to reflect on our history, embrace our successes, and, more importantly, criticize our mistakes that we are able to preserve a society that exists for Americans of all colors, creeds, and religions.”



Third Place: **Thao Nguyen**
California State University, Dominguez Hills, Carson CA
College Junior (2017-2018 academic year)

Thao Nguyen is pursuing a career in History, with a specialization in modern Viet Nam, to research and teach at a higher education institution. As a U.S. Army veteran and History major, his identities have informed his motivation to enter the essay contest; ultimately, to propose an enduring method via Wikipedia that may preserve and broadcast the stories of Nisei soldiers for future generations.

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Excerpt from *Preserving in the Digital Age*

“The Japanese American veteran story – that of the individual, their respective units, and their larger world influence and reach – should expand beyond the Go For Broke National Education Center and link to the more widely-known and accessed realm of Wikipedia. As our society increasingly intertwines with technology to create additional virtual spaces, Wikipedia can assist in bringing forth the stories of Japanese American veterans for future generations. Teaming up with classes to complete these projects would also create opportunities to further connect younger generations to this history and involve them directly in its preservation.”

High School Visual Arts Winners



First Place: **Sarah Ando**
El Modena High School, Orange, CA
Grade 11 (2017-2018 academic year)

Sarah has a passion for art and was grateful to receive the opportunity to create a colorful message that passes on the Nisei Soldier story. She believes the stories told from generation to generation affects the Nikkei community to this day and allows us to have great compassion and distinct Japanese American morals.

A Story For Generation (drawing)

A story that is over 70 years strong. A story that has been passed down from historic WWII Japanese American heroes to their grandchildren, happy to sit on their laps. A story that will live on through the future generations to come because of its crucial importance.

As part of the younger Japanese American generation, it is important to keep the history of the 442nd Regiment in the light. If the history was ever forgotten, it would be as if a very part of the Japanese American Identity and culture that emerged from it was lost. The stories that have been told to us by our Ojichans and our Obachans will live on because it will be the stories we will tell our future kids and they will tell theirs. The stories live on through the community, through the JA basketball leagues, the youth groups, the festivals, and more. The community chooses to stay together and as a result remains to tell the story.





Second Place: **Kea Kamiya**
State College of Florida Collegiate School, Bradenton, FL
Grade 10 (2017-2018 academic year)

Kea Kamiya loves drawing, painting, giving speeches and showing animals through 4-H. She decided to enter this contest because her Japanese heritage is a very important part of her life and family's history. Her plans for the future include majoring in social work and studio art.



A Hero's Heritage (painting)
Kea Kamiya



Depth and Colors (watercolor & digital media)
Mira Hirabayashi



Third Place: **Mira Hirabayashi**
Corta Bella Private School (Homeschool)
Grade 10 (2017-2018 academic year)

Mira is a Los Angeles born, second generation, with a Japanese father. Her interests include art, writing, and cultural studies. This contest has given Mira an opportunity to showcase her perspective on the ways of struggling and overcoming the harsh circumstances brought upon Japanese Americans. She finds the Nisei story truly inspiring.

College Visual Arts Winners



First Place: **Aislinn Ozawa-Burns**

University of California, Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, CA

College Junior (2017-2018 academic year)

Aislinn is pursuing a Global Studies degree and has spent time in Berlin studying entrepreneurship, Washington D.C. interning on a Robert Matsui fellowship, and in France studying landscape architecture. She entered the contest to bind her future to her grandfather's past and honor the sacrifices he made during World War II. Aislinn is inspired by the personal honor, quiet sacrifice and loyalty to family and country of the Nisei soldier story...even a country that fell dismayingly short of its ideals in the treatment of Japanese Americans during WWII.



Okage Sama De (photography)

During WWII, my grandfather and his family were forcibly removed from their home in San Francisco and sent to the internment camps. A life surrounded by barbed wire and guard towers in the middle of the desert was certainly not the image of 'freedom' his parents envisioned when they immigrated from Japan. Nonetheless, my grandfather, who was born and raised in the United States, never let go of the great American ideal of freedom. He enlisted in the army and served as an interpreter and translator in the Military Intelligence Service. To him, this was an act of love for his family, his country and the generations of Japanese Americans yet to come.

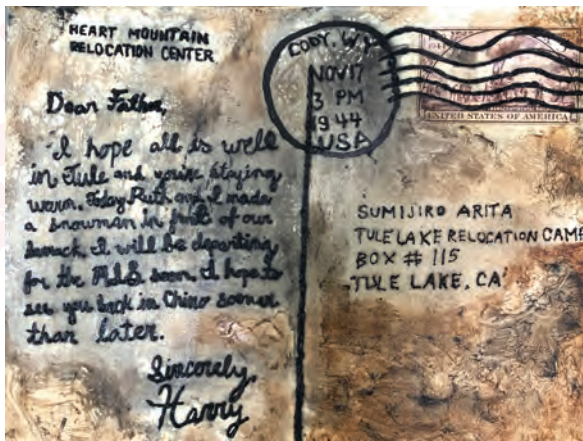
Photographs like this help keep the flame of the Japanese American WWII veteran story alive so that it can be passed down to future generations. This piece captures the love and honor that inspired thousands of Nisei during the war. My grandfather, now ninety-two years old, passes down this golden symbol of the sacrifices and rewards of his life as a Japanese American. The Congressional Medal, once placed around his neck by a U.S. Senator, is a poignant symbol of the Nisei and their valiant efforts in winning the war and preserving the peace for all Americans. His youngest grandson looks up at him with pride and admiration, knowing on some level that the richness of his life is a gift from all the Issei, Nisei, and Sansei that came before him. Okage sama de.

(The subjects of this picture are Koji Ozawa, my Nisei grandfather, and my youngest brother Cevan Ozawa Burns, a Yonsei.)



Second Place: **Caitlyn Takeda**
Brown University, Providence, RI
College Sophomore (2017-2018 academic year)

Caitlin Takeda is studying biology and visual art. She is pursuing metalsmithing and jewelry-making as an art practice. Caitlin is a member of the New England Chapter of the JACL and Brown/RISD's Gendo Taiko. Her grandfather, Harry Arita, who was an incarcerated at Heart Mountain and a soldier in the MIS, inspired her to enter this contest and continues to inspire her goal to protect human rights in the 21st century.



Postcard from Harry (oil on canvas)
Caitlin Takeda



Timeless (drawing)
Kayla Yoshitake



Third Place: **Kayla Yoshitake**
Biola University, La Mirada, CA
College freshman (2017-2018 academic year)

While growing up as a Japanese American whose grandfather was born in Manzanar, the story of the Nisei soldiers has always resonated with Kayla. She deeply appreciates their sacrifice in fighting for our country and people, especially in light of what they faced as Asian Americans. Participating in the contest has provided her a way to show that appreciation and bring to light a story and topic that she is passionate about.

High School Performance Winners



First Place: **Paiton Gleeson**
The Thacher School, Ojai, CA
High School senior (2017-2018 academic year), current: Stanford University

Paiton loves studying the environment, specifically how it is affected by the government and laws. She is also very passionate about horses and has been riding for 10 years. Paiton feels that it is her duty to keep the Japanese-American narrative alive, as her generation will soon be the one to uphold its legacy. She entered this contest to share a project that is very important to her in addressing the fact that Nisei stories are being forgotten.



I Would Like to Know (spoken word)
(accompanied text)

Over 70 years have passed since the Japanese-American Internment. Many who fought are no longer with us. Therefore, much of this episode in American History is being forgotten.

Last summer, I worked with the amazing team of professionals at the Heart Mountain Pilgrimage to create this spoken word video. Knowing that younger generations rely heavily on social media to acquire information, we used YouTube to spread our thoughts.

I hope we can use YouTube as a platform to share the importance of the 442nd in an audio-visually stimulating manner. My original video about my grandmother and grandfather, who was a part of military intelligence for the 442nd was a step toward being able to connect to wider audiences - to show stories, not just tell them. There's nothing stopping us from spreading the 442nd's story in an equally powerful way.

In today's polarized political climate, we must recognize that issues are neither black and white, nor exclusively red vs. blue. It's therefore important to revive the story of the 442nd in order to illuminate the complexity of current events like Executive Order 13780 (the travel ban), and how they affect large communities that the U.S. Government should be protecting.

The 442nd astonished the world with their loyalty to the U.S., proving that Executive Order 9066 was wrong. Our duty now is to explain the relevance of the 442nd to hold our government accountable for its actions and to ensure we don't make more mistakes like Executive Order 9066.



Second Place: **Kira Gatiuan**
Myron B. Thompson Academy, Honolulu, HI
High School junior (2017-2018 academic year)

Kira enjoys playing tennis, reading, writing, and spending time with family and friends. She entered this contest to explore the history of and be a voice for, her family and mentors who experienced the internal and external conflicts brought by Pearl Harbor, as a Japanese American and citizen of Hawai'i herself.

.....
Excerpts from *Righteous Might* (song)

“Don't you know that I too cried?
See past the angle of my eyes.
I saw the pearl ash on the sea.
It's only in looks that I'm the enemy.
...When fingers point with eagerness
And easy comes the bitterness,

Time will pass but never forget
Loyalty endures more than sweat
...Ignorant voices are background
Hold integrity they'll come around.
Country first in every stroke
You'll find it's worth it to go for broke.



Third Place: **Michael Eberlein**
Palisades Charter High School, Pacific Palisades, CA
High School freshman (2017-2018 academic year)

Michael is passionate about math, and after school he greatly enjoys playing for his school's football and volleyball teams. The story of the 442nd regiment serves as an inspiration to Michael in his life because of how selfless and brave the Japanese American soldiers were to serve a country that had wronged them.

.....
Excerpts from *A Story to be Told* (spoken word)

“...Now we visit the museum
and we see
The names of the veterans
Who were not much older than me
Who stood bravely on the front line
Who stood bravely as one
Whose fight was beyond the war
Whose fight had only just begun
...The court had ruled against us

We were cast away
Still we knew if we stood loyal
They would all realize some day
We must remember the injustice
We must remember this fight
We must remind our own children
To fight to make wrongs right”

College Performance Winners



First Place: **Hope Fa-Kaji**
Rice University, Houston, TX
College freshman (2017-2018 academic year)

Hope is interested in majoring in Mechanical Engineering and pursuing a minor in Anthropology. She entered the contest because she had been wrestling with her decision to go out of state for college, a struggle compounded by the passing of her grandpa, a veteran of WWII, during the fall semester. Both of Hope's Nisei grandparents were pillars of strength and inspiration in her life, and she doesn't think she's let enough people know.

Surveyed (spoken word)

For my Grandparents

and a poem on the walls of the Japanese American National Museum

Sometimes I wish the Japanese American WWII Veteran
experience wasn't relevant today

Sometimes it would be so much nicer for the present to
exist outside the past

For the problems of our ancestors to be the stuff of
legends instead of heirlooms

That are willed on to the next generation, and inherited

Sometimes I wish I could say that my people saved the world
That their courage and integrity changed the hearts of a
nation forever

And that their sacrifices weren't in vain

Because other sometimes I get cynical

We are repeating history

We are trying to put more people in camps

And deny their humanity

Because of their skin or their papers or mosque

In these sometimes I can only see the footprints leading
forward

Scattered under the imprints of heavy boots

That are dragging soles back

Sometimes I wish the story wasn't relevant today

But most times

I am thankful that it is.

Because four score minus five years ago

They asked the people in the barracks to choose

Will you side with our country or theirs?

And five weeks plus one day ago they made me choose

They said are you

Chinese,

Japanese,

Korean?

You must be one of the three

And fundamentally so

Because you mustn't really belong here

And you mustn't really be more than one

You must fit in the box we've provided

You must come from somewhere

Just one somewhere

That isn't here

It can't be possible that your parent's parent's parents

Lived across the sea from each other

Because the waters there are hostile

And the people eat from the sea

Like a wave it came back

Things I had tried to forget

Damning stories about the ones I loved

The ones who endured the camps

And fought to prove their loyalty

These were stories about my Jichan and Bachan
Who couldn't tolerate that my mom was Chinese

So, choose, they said

Obviously Japanese and Chinese people cannot become one
Just look at your grandparents

Choose

Check a box

Just one box

They said

But this story matters because no one should have to
choose

Between the country of their past

And country of their present

But four score minus five years ago they did

And five weeks plus one day ago I would have

But the Nisei would not have this as part of my
inheritance

My grandparents were loving

And joyous despite the bitterness they could have come
down with

As its viral infection spread through apple orchards and

The Arizona desert

They were joyous

And loving

From rows of barracks to Minnesota forts to Manila rains
They proved their loyalty
To the same ones who had stripped their humanity

And in the sometimes when all I can see all around me
Is the second class citizenship

That this country gives out as charitably as college
admissions rejections

I refuse

To choose

Between two halves of myself

That are perfectly and inextricably fused,

None of the above,

And mixed.

I refuse because I know the story by heart

And I knew its joyful actors

And I know that they fought back against the virus

They met fever with fervor

And like the 442nd

They were determined

And "Overblown

with hope"

Watch all winning Performance videos online on the Go For Broke National Education Center's YouTube channel
using the QR code:

