

An Inspiring True Story

**HOLD THESE
TRUTHS**

By JEANNE SAKATA

Directed by Jessica
Kubzansky

Nov.14—Dec.8, 2019

In the Lyceum Space
Theatre

*"A gripping story about
a shameful chapter of
our history, when the
US Government looked
at its own people and
saw the enemy."*

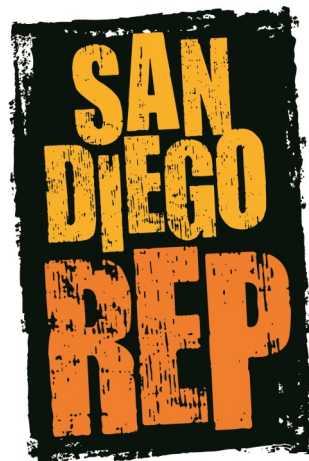
—The New York Times

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The Curious Report

An inside look at

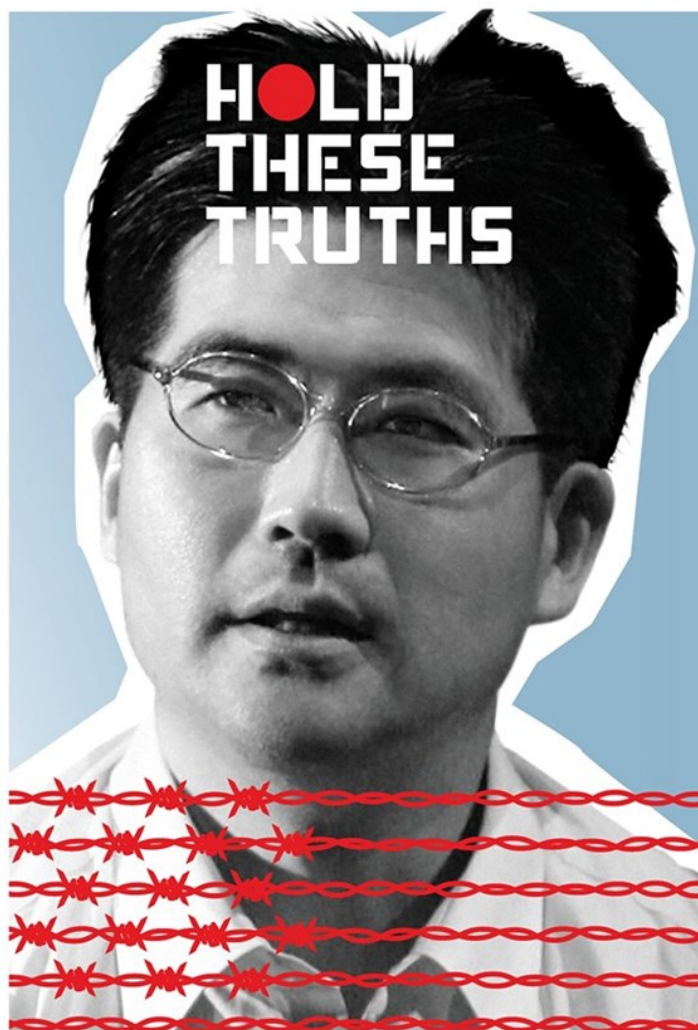


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This In-Depth Guide was prepared by Rosa Sanchez, Alli Thiss, Maya Greenfield-Thong and edited by Literary Manager Danielle Ward.

Hold These Truths Cover Art by Studio Conover.

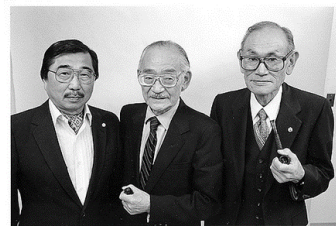
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We are excited about...

Highlighting a little known American hero. Too many of the history books we read are missing the stories of everyday heroes who greatly impact the way our country works and/or defines itself. Gordon Hirabayashi, Minoru Yasui and Fred Korematsu are three examples of men who embodied the American ideals of equal rights for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness when they questioned the 1942 order to report to government internment camps. Hirabayashi's provocative story of peaceful resistance is exactly the type we at San Diego REP like to call attention to, especially now. Hirabayashi's story as a social justice crusader holds renewed relevance given our current political climate.



We are equally excited about seeing actor Ryun Yu portray over 30 characters throughout history in order to tell the personal story of a charismatic and kind man by the name of Gordon. It is amazing to watch Ryun bring each person to life with the subtle nuances and shifts in his mannerisms. He expertly commands the room. Director Jessica Kubzansky has successfully taken this show all across the nation. We are excited to welcome her and her talented team of designers (Ben Zamora and John Zalewski) to our intimate Lyceum Space Theatre. Together, this team of creatives will transport you back in time to witness an act of bravery that deserves the spotlight.

We hope this play inspires you to think about what it means to be a patriot, even when it is unpopular; what our founding fathers envisioned for our future; or, maybe, what our civil-rights struggle still needs moving forward. After all, as Gordon Hirabayashi himself said, "Unless citizens are willing to stand up for the [Constitution], it's not worth the paper it's written on."

This Curious Report a way to dive deeper into the history covered in *Hold These Truths*. We hope you enjoy!



San Diego Repertory Theatre produces intimate, provocative, inclusive theatre.

We promote an interconnected community through vivid works that nourish progressive political and social values and celebrate the multiple voices of our region.

San Diego Repertory Theatre feeds the curious soul.

The Future Belongs to the Curious...

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Interesting Tidbits

Gordon Hirabayashi posthumously was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

"This country is better off because of citizens like him who are willing to stand up."

-President Obama



U.S. CONSTITUTION FACTS

- It took one hundred days to actually "frame" the Constitution.
- The U.S. Constitution has 4,400 words. It is the oldest and shortest written Constitution of any major government in the world.
- When the Constitution was signed, the United States population was 4 million. It is now more than 327 million.
- The word "democracy" does not appear once in the Constitution.

DID YOU KNOW?

Around 200 Mexican Betabeleros (beet pickers) and 1,000 Japanese Buranke Katsugi (blanket carriers, so named for their itinerant lifestyles) united. They formed the Japanese-Mexican Labor Association (JMLA), one of America's first multiracial labor unions.

Communicating through interpreters, this multilingual group successfully negotiated a strategy for action. On February 11, 1903, workers walked off the job in what would become the "first successful agricultural strike" in Southern California.

Thought-Provoking Item 1:

“We Hold These Truths to be Self-Evident”

Brief excerpt of an interview between playwright Jeanne Sakata and Victoria Moy, contributing writer to Huffington Post, from June 23, 2017.

To read the full interview, visit https://www.huffpost.com/entry/hold-these-truths-playwright-jeanne-sakata-on-truths_b_594cd936e4b0326c0a8d0769

VICTORIA MOY: The title “Hold These Truths” refers to the passage of The Declaration of Independence, “we hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.” Can you talk about your thoughts on this as it applied in World War II for Japanese Americans, and how this might apply now?

JEANNE SAKATA: I think it would have been very difficult for most of the WWII Japanese American community members to “hold the truths” of their constitutional rights during that period of wartime, so rife with fear and hysteria and racial hostility, and to defy the government orders as Gordon did.

Many went into the camps, hoping that by cooperating with the government’s orders, they would win the trust of the American government, and also the trust of their fellow Americans. Culturally, many were not brought up to resist the group dynamic, as Japanese culture emphasizes the group over the individual, and putting the group’s needs first. That’s why Gordon’s defiance dismayed and shocked so many in his own community.

Today, if the government ordered Americans of Asian ancestry into concentration camps, I think the reaction would be very different – I think there would be much more active and impassioned resistance, because we have been able to absorb the lessons of our parents’ suffering.

Thought-Provoking Item 2:

Ichi, Ni, San! From Generation to Generation

By Rosa Sanchez

The terms Issei and Nisei refer to first and second generation of people living in the United States of Japanese descent. The names come from Japanese numbers ichi, ni, san, yon, go, roku—one, two, three, four, five, and so on. Issei refers to first generation of Japanese people that were born on the Japanese mainland and emigrated to the rest of the world. *Hold These Truths* focuses on American Issei and Nisei, although at the turn of the 20th Century, Japanese people mass migrated to places other than the US, including Brazil, Peru, and Canada.

In the United States, many migrants settled in Hawaii and California where many took up jobs as farmers. The Issei generation faced prejudice and racism living in the United States, as some American citizens were wary of their cultural differences and perhaps envied their work ethic and successful crops. This racism spilled over into the political arena in the form of legislation and agreements.

One of the first of these was the Gentleman's Agreement of 1907, which was an unofficial agreement between President Theodore Roosevelt and the Japanese government that segregated Japanese students from white students in public schools and also prevented Japan from issuing most passports (excluding business passports) to migrants heading to the United States. This way, the Japanese mainland could maintain its world image of being “pure Japanese” and “untainted” (a vestige of the more than 200-year period when Japan had a policy of closing itself off from the rest of the world). At the same time, the US could appease those who were involved in raising racial tensions in mixed communities. Not so gentlemanly an agreement, Mr. President!

Another piece of legislation that hurt American Issei was the California Land Law of 1913, which specifically targeted Japanese people, but also included other groups including Chinese, Indian, and Korean communities. This law made “aliens ineligible for citizenship,” therefore preventing them from owning any land. Some were able to work around this by having their land registered in their Nisei's names. This law did not affect European immigrants, making it a racist law, intent on targeting Asians.

Despite all these hurdles, the Issei generation did their best to build Japanese communities and live comfortably. Between 1861 and 1940, according to the website for Densho: The Japanese American Legacy project, approximately 275,000 Japanese immigrated to the US without a way to become citizens. It was not until after WWII in 1952 that immigration reform allowed Issei to become citizens of the country that many had lived in for decades.

The experience of the Nisei generation was quite different. They lived in two worlds-- the Japanese cultural world within the walls of their own homes and the American world they encountered first in public schools and continuing through daily life,. Issei had stronger ties to the Japanese mainland, while Nisei adapted to almost all aspects of American life and were often more comfortable speaking English than speaking Japanese.

Thought-Provoking Item 3:

Japan 101

By Rosa Sanchez

Japan is made up of 6,852 islands, 430 of those are inhabited. The country is mostly recognized for its four main islands: Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, and Shikoku (listed from largest to smallest).

The Japanese written language consists of three different kinds of figures:

- Kanji, which are logographic symbols, rooted from Chinese figures that can range from 2,000 to 85,000 depending on which dictionary you're looking at, but you truly only need around 2,000 to be fluent.
- Hiragana is the phonetic alphabet of Japan, strictly used for the native Japanese language that consists of 46 characters
- Katakana is another phonetic alphabet that consists of another 46 letters, which is used for foreign words.

The two largest religions in Japan are Shintoism and Buddhism:

- Shinto is as old as Japan itself and honors spirits known as kami that represent aspects of nature such as the sun, rain, earth, trees, wind, etc. Family members that have passed are also known as kami and are respected as such by their loved ones. Shinto respects the good and imperfections in everyone.
- Buddhism was introduced to Japan in the 6th century. Initially it was a difficult religion to take hold because of its complex ideologies but in time it gained a great deal of popularity. Fast forward to today: Buddhism now has 90 million Japanese followers.

Japan has many sports that are widely celebrated. Some of their traditional sports include:

- Sumo wrestling, which originated from Shinto in order to appease the kami. Whoever steps out of the ring or hits the ground first loses.
- Judo, which translates to "the gentle way" that focuses on training the body and mind to unbalance your opponent and use their strength against them.
- Kendo, means "the way of the sword" and originated with the samurai. Athletes are strictly self-disciplined in order to develop stamina, strength, agility, and flexibility.
- Kyudo, meaning "the way of the bow" is Japanese archery. It's often taught in Japanese schools. Considered to be highly dangerous, only mature athletes are taught how to wield a bow and arrow.

Thought-Provoking Item 3:

Japan 101 cont.

By Rosa Sanchez

Japan also has a very rich theatrical traditions:

- One of Japan's oldest forms of theatre is Noh theatre. Translated literally, Noh means "skilled." It tells stories of supernatural experiences through masked actors and music. The goal is to have an almost spiritual connection with the audience. Noh theatre was typically exclusively performed for people of wealth and power, like the Samurai.
- Kabuki is a revolutionary form of theatre that is highly stylized in its use of costumes, makeup, music, and exaggerated acting. Kabuki plays often tell melodramatic stories of heroes and villains. Actors are adorned from head to toe in different fabrics and use black, white, red and blue makeup to exaggerate their emotional expressions. This type of theatre was made for the common person and allowed audiences to be loud and boisterous in expressing their support for the protagonist!
- Bunraku is a traditional form of Japanese puppetry that requires a high level of skill and years of practice. Teams of three puppeteers work in concert to animate one single puppet. One person is in charge of the feet, another in charge of the left arm and the torso, and the most experienced puppeteer is in charge of the right arm and head. Although it is a puppet show, Bunraku isn't intended for children because the plays often deal with serious themes such as suicide.

Thought-Provoking Item 4:

What are Friends for? Who are the Quakers?

By Alli Thiss

The Religious Society of Friends, or the Quaker Movement, was founded by George Fox in 1640s England. England was in turmoil at this time and many people either sought reform in the Church of England or established churches of their own. Spurred by this, young George Fox left home in hopes of embarking on a spiritual journey. Throughout his travels, he met other religious wanderers. He came to a belief that the presence of God was not found within the walls of a church but, rather, in every person. Despite serving jail time for blasphemy and facing a society that, overall, rejected his beliefs, he carried on sharing his beliefs with people and finding those who wanted to join him—his future wife, Margaret Fell, among them.

“Quaker” was originally a derogatory term used to refer to Fox and his fellow believers. Eventually, the believers decided to embrace the term, and referred to themselves as Quakers or Friends—in line with the group’s official name, The Religious Society of Friends.

In this era, some Quaker beliefs seemed quite radical. One of these ideas was that men and women were spiritually equal. Women were even allowed to speak out during worship. The worship itself was also nontraditional. Quakers didn’t have the classic ritual, or even a pastor, present during their worship. They didn’t feel the need to use honorifics. These so-called “meetings” were mostly silent, save for the interjections of inspired individuals among the congregation. The Friends’ interpretation of the Bible and their core belief that everyone has the Light of Christ in them set them on a pacifist course. Even so, many Quakers were persecuted and jailed for their beliefs. A few were even executed in Massachusetts as they made their way through the colonies in the mid-1650s, following their first US missionary, Elizabeth Harris. William Penn used the land that King Charles II gave him in 1681 to eventually found Pennsylvania as a safe and tolerant place regardless of someone’s religious affiliation. This, of course, brought more and

more Quakers from Britain to the American colonies. In the 18th Century, the group realized the difficulty of staying true to their values while being embroiled in the politics of the land soon-to-become the United States of America.

The Quakers were sympathetic to quite a few social justice causes. They sought to protect Native Americans’ rights. They were counted among the early ranks of abolitionists and were completely barred from owning slaves. Both Lucretia Mott and Alice Paul were committed Quakers and leaders in the Women’s Suffrage movement.

Today, there are more than 300,000 Friends around the world. Like many religions, Quakerism has branched a bit. Some attend “programmed” worship, services which are led by pastors, and may refer to their congregation as “church.” Some continue the “unprogrammed” style of worship, which is the same, mostly silent meeting with no pastor leading a service.

The name Quaker might call to mind images of very plainly dressed individuals rejecting modernization. This is because Friends are often confused with the Amish. In the United States, both the Quakers and Amish have roots in Pennsylvania. However, unlike the Amish, Quakers have embraced technological innovations and have progressed along with the rest of US society. They continue their nonviolent quest for well-being all around us.

There are active chapters of Quakers in La Jolla and San Diego. You can find out about Quakers in our area at: <http://lajollaquakers.org/> and <http://sandiegoquakers.org/>

“THE WAY, LIKE THE CROSS, IS SPIRITUAL: THAT IS AN INWARD SUBMISSION OF THE SOUL TO THE WILL OF GOD, AS IT IS MANIFESTED BY THE LIGHT OF CHRIST IN THE CONSCIENCES OF MEN, THOUGH IT BE CONTRARY TO THEIR OWN INCLINATIONS.”

—WILLIAM PENN, 1644-1718

Thought-Provoking Item 5:

Japanese Quakers—The Mukyokai

By Rosa Sanchez

The foundation of the Quaker religion is the belief that one can achieve a connection to God through Jesus, and that *all people* have the spiritual potential to achieve this connection, regardless of one's race, ethnicity, or background. The humanitarian principles underpinning the religion are strong reasons why the Quaker faith was attractive to Japanese Issei and Nisei who had settled in the US in the early part of the 20th Century. Many Issei and Nisei felt alienated within the United States and found a profoundly welcoming community among the Quakers.

Quakers were some of the first to fight against slavery in the United States during the 18th and 19th Centuries. They were also very active before, during, and after World War II, where they fought German inhumanity against the Jewish people by providing shelter and food to Jewish refugees. Quakers are pacifists, meaning that during wartime service, they took only non-violent roles that involved nursing, cooking, providing helpful information to immigrants, and condemning Nazism.

A group in Japan that closely resembled the Quakers were the Mukyokai, also known as the Non-Church Movement, which was founded by Uchimura Kanzo in 1901. Mukyokai is a form of Japanese Christianity that rejects all established Christian institutions like the organized church and the clergy, focusing solely on the teachings of Christianity. Like Quakers, they are often involved in social justice movements and are not afraid to speak out against injustice in Japanese communities. The Mukyokai found themselves at odds with both broader Christianity and mainstream culture. Established Christians didn't accept their unwillingness to conform to church traditions, and society's rigid cultural structure didn't comport with their practice of civil disobedience. Nevertheless, the Mukyokai accepted this alienation as a form of independence from institutions created by people, and instead embraced their dependence on God.

Gordon Hirabayashi's parents were Mukyokai and Gordon was a Quaker.

Thought-Provoking Item 6:

Power and Panic: The United States During WWII

By Alli Thiss

In his book, *War and the Rise of the State: The Military Foundations of Modern Politics*, Bruce Porter states that

“a government at war is a juggernaut of centralization determined to crush any internal opposition that impedes the mobilization of militarily vital resources. This centralizing tendency of war has made the rise of the state throughout much of history a disaster for human liberty and rights.”

There is no question that a governing body must do what is necessary to ensure the safety and security of those it governs. However, defining “what is necessary” is the tricky part that often seems to evade governments on a war footing.

Robert Higgs, in his article *How War Amplified Federal Power in the Twentieth Century*, notes some of the many human rights violations in the United States during World War II. Almost 6,000 conscientious objectors were imprisoned because they wouldn’t comply with the draft laws’ service requirements. The number of FBI special agents jumped from 785 to 4,370 in just six years during this period. Censorship was suffocating newspapers, press reports, radio broadcasts and personal mail, and news from the government and military authorities was spun a certain way. One of the most shocking violations was the “relocation” of about 112,000 innocent people of Japanese ancestry to concentration camps, sans due process, following the attack on Pearl Harbor. What began as a mandated curfew became orders to uproot and be confined on the basis of race. In Executive Order 9066, dated February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt gave the green light for the Japanese American relocation. This order granted the military the power to ban any Japanese American citizen from the area stretching

from Washington state to California and into Southern Arizona. It also allowed the transport of these civilians to assembly centers built and controlled by the military in California, Arizona, Washington state, and Oregon. Even when some were released, they remained heavily under surveillance.

**“...THE RIGHT OF
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SHALL BE
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WHATEVER
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THE SECRETARY
OF WAR OR THE
APPROPRIATE
MILITARY
COMMANDER
MAY IMPOSE IN
HIS DISCRETION.”**

**—PRESIDENT
ROOSEVELT,
EXECUTIVE
ORDER 9066**

Thought-Provoking Item 7:

What Makes an American?

A brief excerpt from an article by Raoul de Roussy de Sales in the March 1939 issue of *The Atlantic*. Read the full article at <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1939/03/what-makes-an-american/309021/>



To become an American is a process which resembles a conversion. It is not so much a new country that one adopts as a new creed. What makes an American? How does it feel to belong to this nation?" These questions will naturally sound absurd to an American, and he might retort, "Well, how does it feel to be a Frenchman?" But that is just the point—most Frenchmen can tell you quite clearly what makes them conscious of being French, but I have found it very difficult to obtain from my American friends or from my reading a comprehensive definition of the American nationality.

First of all, it is obvious that the sense of nationality is not less developed in Americans than in any other people. It is quite as real and quite as visible in all its manifestations. But the fact that such expressions as "Americanism," the "American way," the "American outlook," and so forth, have had to be coined seems to indicate that Americans are the first to feel the need of qualifying themselves when they say, "I am an American." More than that, the American consciousness gives an impression of growth. It is not static, and one feels that it still contains tremendous possibilities of expression.

For the moment, however, there is a very important trait in the make-up of the American nationality which does not exist, I believe, in any other. And that is the fact that America is a permanent protest against the rest of the world, and particularly against Europe.

This attitude has both historical and psychological reasons. Most Americans believe today the following facts concerning their nation: (1) that this continent was peopled by men who rebelled against the tyrannies of Europe; (2) that these men dedicated themselves, from the very beginning, to the purposeful establishment of a kind of freedom that should endure forever; (3) that they succeeded, by a "revolution" in breaking away forever from the oppressive domination and the cupidity of European imperialisms; (4) that in establishing a democratic government they determined forever the course of political perfection, and that whoever followed another course was on the road to damnation; (5) that although European nations were becoming progressively harmless in relation to the increasing power and resources of the ever-growing America, they remained a potential danger to the integrity of this great nation on account of their deplorable habit of wandering away from the true path of civilization, which is democracy, the pursuit of material comfort and more happiness for everybody on this earth as soon as possible.

An Englishman may have doubts regarding the British Empire, a Frenchman may be discouraged concerning the future of France. There are Germans who are not sure that they represent a superior race. All of them, however, remain thoroughly English, French, or German in spite of everything.

Continued on next page...

Thought-Provoking Item 7:

What Makes an American? Cont.

The type of American who does not accept America as it is and has misgivings about it—such as Henry James, Edith Wharton, T. S. Eliot, and some others—belongs to a past generation. Today one seldom meets an American skeptic, for the reason that nothing is more assuredly unAmerican than to entertain any doubt concerning the fact that somehow or other this country will come out all right.

There are many who will find such a statement too sweeping, and say, for instance, that President Roosevelt is destroying the national ideal, that he is leading the country to ruin, decadence, anarchy, and so forth. But even those objectors are not skeptical about the future of their country. Even they feel that faith in America is what makes them Americans. All their irritation would be assuaged if Mr. Roosevelt were removed, all their confidence restored. This kind of skepticism is skin-deep. It does not affect the soul of Americanism.

This faith, like all faiths, does not engender a passive attitude towards the rest of the world. Americans are tolerant to all creeds and to all convictions, but few people express their distrust and indignation with more vigor whenever some of their beliefs are offended. Few people are more conscious that ideas may be more destructive than guns. And rightly so, because if any unorthodox creed really implanted itself in America—if the day came when an American citizen could really feel that his country was not following the right course and that a change was due—the political disunion thus produced would have unforetold consequences. The one serious crisis of this kind that America has known, the Civil War, showed the frightful results of a real political conflict. It nearly made two nations out of one. But this experiment in dissension seems to have served as a lasting lesson. It is difficult to believe that it would be repeated. Unity on the fundamental principles of politics is indispensable to

the life of this country. The presence of even a small minority who would question the validity of Americanism would attack at the very core the concept of American nationality itself.

Thought-Provoking Item 8:

The Science and Psychology of Courage

By Alli Thiss

Courage is an age-old virtue. But what exactly is it? In the face of fear, what happens that drives an individual to stand their ground? Dr. Andrew Huberman Ph.D., a neuroscientist and Professor in the Department on Neurobiology at the Stanford University School of Medicine, shared his thoughts on the Neurohacker Collective's podcast:

*...it's like a switchboard, where basically the structure is integrating sensory information [...] and then making decision about, okay under these conditions where there's this certain amount of threat, **what am I gonna do?** What's the best outcome? Am I willing to take on some risk? And it turns out that the forebrain is making that assessment, and so this is what it's really about. It's not about going into a heightened level of arousal to the point where you lose your cognition, it's about maintaining clear cognition under heightened state of arousal.*

Dr. Huberman describes an experiment that hoped to pinpoint certain pathways in the brain that, when activated, trigger a reduced fear response and increase courage. The pathway that was discovered was the xiphoid to forebrain areas of the brain involved in cognitive processing (specifically, the prefrontal cortex). The pathway of the xiphoid to amygdala, a threat detection center, on the other hand, did the exact opposite—increased fear and decreased courage.

In an article for Psychology Today, Dr. Leon F Seltzer Ph.D. discusses the complexity of

courage as an emotion. He notes that courage cannot exist without fear, and although courage is often considered heroic, it is morally neutral, ambiguous, and sometimes even negative. He lists several quotes that speak to the paradox that is courage:

"Some say courage is triumphing over fear, some say it's being driven by it. Is an action still courageous if it is driven by the fear of not acting courageously or the fear of what people will say about you? Courage is morally ambiguous. The virtue of it lies in what it's 'in the service of'."

We know that neuroscience supports the cognitive responses of the brain. We know that people stand up with courage. The last piece of the puzzle – and one to continue to think about – is *why*.

What are you standing up for, and why?

Thought-Provoking Item 9:

Other Unsung Heroes

By Maya Greenfield-Thong

Like Gordon Hirabayashi, many have dedicated their lives to pushing for equal rights for minorities. Here are some other often unsung heroes from American history:



Bayard Rustin

Bayard Rustin was an African American, radical pacifist who worked with Martin Luther King Jr., King's "I Have a Dream" speech was the largest demonstration of its time with 250,000 people present. Rustin was not only the one who pulled the entire event together he was also the one who taught Martin Luther King the way of non-violence and civil disobedience.

Rustin's accomplishments were mostly lost to time. he was gay, and therefore forced to work in the background as a ghostwriter and coordinator for MLK. However, his work on gay rights, foreign policy, and civil rights helped shape the foundations of our society today.

Claudette Colvin and Irene Morgan Kirkaldy

High school student Claudette Colvin (left) refused to give her seat up when she was going home from school. Colvin said she had paid her fare and it was her constitutional right to sit and ride the bus. After being arrested, Colvin became a main witness in *Browder v. Gayle*, which ended segregation on public transportation in Alabama.



Then, in July of 1944, Morgan Kirkaldy (right) was arrested after refusing to give up her bus seat for a white passenger in Virginia. Her court case went to the Supreme Court, who eventually ruled that segregation on interstate buses was unconstitutional.

Thought-Provoking Item 9:

Other Unsung Heroes cont.

By Maya Greenfield-Thong

Like Gordon Hirabayashi, many have dedicated their lives to pushing for equal rights for minorities. Here are some other often unsung heroes from American history:



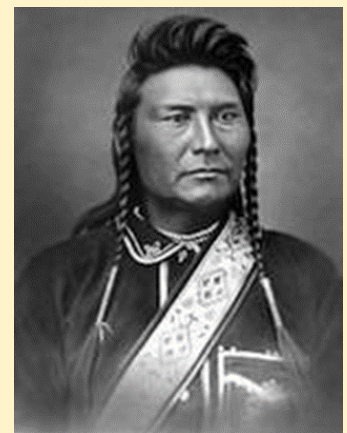
Dorothy Day

"We must talk about poverty, because people insulated by their own comfort lose sight of it."

Dorothy Day was a social and political activist who worked towards many different social causes such as the woman's suffrage movement. She was arrested many times for her involvement in protests and hunger strikes. She worked on the staff of several Socialist publications such as *The Liberator* and *The Call*. After converting to Catholicism, Day became known for her social justice campaigns in defense of the poor, forsaken, hungry, and homeless.

Hinmatóowyahtqít (Chief Joseph)

Chief Joseph was a leader of the Wallowa band of Nez Perce, a Native American tribe in the U.S. He is now renowned as having been a humanitarian and peacemaker. His tribe—coerced by the federal government into giving up their land—was forced to the Umatilla Reservation in Oregon. During his time as chief, he worked hard to keep the tribe from retaliating against violence inflicted upon them by the U.S. military. In 1873, Joseph peacefully negotiated with the government to let his people stay on their land in the Wallowa Valley. However, about 3 years later, the government reversed its policy and the military threatened to attack if the Wallowa band did not relocate to a reservation in Idaho. In the remaining years before his death, Chief Joseph spoke out against the injustices toward his people and remained hopeful that freedom and equality might one day be offered to Native Americans.



Thought-Provoking Item 10:

Interview with Playwright Jeanne Sakata

Interview by Dr. Henrik Eger

This article is from the website “Drama Around the Globe” by Dr. Henrik Eger. The website features original plays, articles, interviews, reviews, poems, and stories, which also investigate conditions of humanity throughout the world – hence, the name Drama Around the Globe. This article, titled “However Painful the History: Interview with Jeanne Sakata, playwright of Hold These Truths,” was first posted on February 13, 2015 and is reprinted here with permission. Visit www.dramaaroundtheglobe.com for more.



One of the most shameful chapters in modern US history took place during World War II, when large numbers of Japanese-American citizens of all ages, including babies, were forced to leave everything behind and move into internment camps. Traumatized, many Japanese-Americans didn't dare to talk about the subject for decades. One of the few exceptions was Gordon Hirabayashi (1918-2012), a young pacifist and student who defied the order and took the case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Many decades later, in 1987, Hirabayashi's convictions were overturned. In 2011, the Acting Solicitor General officially admitted the error. In May 2012, President Obama awarded Gordon Hirabayashi posthumously the Presidential Medal of Freedom, America's highest civilian honor.

*Jeanne Sakata, a prominent Japanese-American actor, met and interviewed Gordon Hirabayashi, and spent years writing and fine-tuning **HOLD THESE TRUTHS**, a creative docudrama about the life of the courageous, yet unassuming, young hero of the Japanese-American community.*

Henrik Eger: Which experiences of your childhood and adolescence influenced your career choices the most?

Jeanne Sakata: I loved to read when I was a kid, and I always had my nose buried in a book. One Christmas, I remember that someone gave me a children's adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*—I think I was in second grade—and I just buried myself in that book and fell in love with Jo and wanted to grow up and be a writer.

So it's nice that that's actually happened finally. I never seriously entertained the idea of being an actor until college. I was an English Literature major when suddenly I fell in love with many of the performing arts—singing, dance, storytelling, puppetry, acting. I started taking classes in all of them, and then realized that the theater was a place where I could make use of all these things I loved, as well as immerse myself in great dramatic literature.

Thought-Provoking Item 10:

Interview with Playwright Jeanne Sakata cont.

Interview by Dr. Henrik Eger

Eger: When you grew up as a young person of Japanese-American descent, did you have any negative experiences—either personally or through what you read or heard in the media?

Sakata: I grew up in a small farming town just south of the Bay Area, but it had a large and prominent Japanese American community, so I didn't experience overtly negative attitudes on a daily basis, but of course I noticed that there weren't a lot of faces that looked like mine in the media—on TV, in the movies, or in magazines. I certainly was aware that there were racist people out there in the world, though, and that my family had experienced that racial hostility in the past, but I didn't know the specifics until later in life.

Eger: Was there a defining moment when you first strongly identified with the plight of Japanese-Americans?

Sakata: I had a wonderful Asian American Studies professor at UCLA, Yuji Ichioka [1936–2002, American historian and civil rights activist who coined the term "Asian American" to replace the widely used and derogatory term "Oriental"]. He was an exciting, fiery, passionate mentor. Yuji's class was definitely a seminal moment for me in terms of really digging into my family's history, and by extension, the history of Japanese Americans, as he assigned us to write a personal history of a Japanese American and set it against the larger backdrop of Japanese American history.

I chose to write about my paternal grandfather, Harry Kyusaburo Sakata, and I'll always be grateful to Yuji for that assignment, because that was the beginning of my full realization of what had happened to my family and the Japanese American community during WWII. Also, there was a huge Asian American student movement that was happening in the 60s and 70s, and that served to educate me as well.

Eger: When you initially heard about the internment camps in the US during WWII, what was your response?

Sakata: As I grew up, I learned that my family on my father's side had been in the Poston, Arizona, camp during WWII, but my father, aunts and uncles never talked about the camp experience. I'm sure because they were too traumatized by it and just wanted to bury the past as best they could. As I started to learn the details of the forced removal during my college years, of course, I was angered and shocked over what had happened, as well as very sad.

of mouth.

Thought-Provoking Item 10:

Interview with Playwright Jeanne Sakata cont.

Interview by Dr. Henrik Eger

Eger: What were the most shocking, but also the most moving discoveries that you made about the plight of Japanese Americans being forced to live in internment camps during WWII?

Sakata: The most shocking thing I learned was that the US government demanded that even babies in orphanages who were of Japanese ancestry be sent to the barbed wire camps, and that included babies who were of mixed blood. That still takes my breath away.

Eger: As a result of the “Loyalty Questionnaire,” the Japanese-American community split into two opposing groups—“loyal” and “disloyal”—during and after WWII. One side cooperated with the American government, renouncing all ties with Japan and fighting as American soldiers. The other side refused to renounce their Japanese heritage and refused to fight in the U.S. Army. “No-no status was stigmatized after the war, and many have remained reluctant to tell their stories,” according to the Densho Encyclopedia. Is it true that only Japanese-Americans who refused to give up their Japanese loyalty were interned, or did all Japanese-Americans located on the West Coast live under the threat of internment during WWII?

Sakata: The orders were that anyone of Japanese ancestry who lived in designated Military Zones on the West Coast—including the Nisei [Japanese-language term for second-generation children born to Japanese people in the new country], who were American citizens—had to leave their homes and be imprisoned in the camps, including the elderly, the feeble and sick, and as I said, even babies in orphanages. In Washington state, where a great deal of *Hold These Truths* takes place, the orders were that anyone with 1/16th Japanese blood had to go.

Eger: Gordon Hirabayashi, the central figure in your play, was treated as a second-class citizen—as were most other Japanese-Americans during WWII. It took decades before his actions as a resistered human rights activist were recognized and validated. How were your family members and their friends treated during WWII?

Sakata: Since my father’s side of the family were all living on the West Coast in California, my father, my grandparents, my aunts, uncles and a couple of older cousins all had to suddenly leave their schools and jobs and go live behind barbed wire in Poston, Arizona. My mother’s side of the family lived in Colorado, and so did not have to go through that tragedy, but they nevertheless experienced plenty of racism where they lived.

Thought-Provoking Item 10:

Interview with Playwright Jeanne Sakata cont.

Interview by Dr. Henrik Eger

Eger: Describe the steps you took to research Hirabayashi.

Sakata: In the 1990s, I saw a wonderful PBS documentary, made by John de Graaf, called *A Personal Matter: Hirabayashi vs. The United States*, where I first learned about Gordon's story, and was just enthralled and fascinated. I was determined to contact Gordon and meet him somehow, and as luck would have it, I got Gordon's phone number from a young student who had just interviewed him in Seattle for a paper she was writing, so I called him up and told him I would love to meet him and try to write a solo play about him, and would he consent to a series of interviews?

He was very gracious and welcoming, even when I told him I had never written a play before. He invited me to interview him at his brother Ed's place in Glen Ellen, California, where he was going to be visiting. Then we did another round of interviews in Edmonton [Alberta, Canada], where he was living with his wife Susan. And of course, I read everything I could get my hands on about Gordon, and watched other videos that mentioned his case.

Eger: Hirabayashi acted as an exceptionally mature young person with a great belief in the American Constitution and human rights. He became one of three Japanese-Americans to openly defy internment, writing on his draft registration card: "I am a conscientious objector." He was convicted and served time behind bars. As the government refused to pay for his transportation, he actually hitchhiked to the prison in Arizona. Given the pressure on Japanese-Americans during WWII, what do you think gave him the ability to defy the most powerful decision makers in the US?

Sakata: Gordon always attributed a lot of this to his parents, who were role models for him in that they had already bucked tradition in many ways by belonging to the Mukyokai, a small Japanese religious sect, founded by Uchimura Kanzo, that was pacifistic, democratic, and non-denominational. They were very much like the Quakers, in that they had no religious hierarchies to speak of, no pastor, no "traditional" church setting.

They had their worship services in their living rooms, just sitting together and waiting for the Spirit to move someone to speak or offer up a prayer or passage. That practice would have been very unusual for Christian Japanese Americans of that time, since most of them belonged to the big established churches like the Methodists and Presbyterians. Also, Gordon's mother was a brilliant and fiery spirit who was elected Vice President of the local Japanese Association and for a woman to have that position was almost unheard of. So Gordon always said that his unusual parents and upbringing provided some "icebreakers" that ultimately influenced his own actions during WWII.

Thought-Provoking Item 10:

Interview with Playwright Jeanne Sakata cont.

Interview by Dr. Henrik Eger

Eger: What struck you the most about Gordon Hiyabayashi as a person?

Sakata: Gordon had a tremendous sense of adventure, an enormous appetite for life, and an insatiable curiosity, zest for travel, ideas, and learning. He had a wonderful light within him, too, a kind of spiritual warmth that you could feel even when you were on the phone with him. He had a keen and incisive intellect, and a marvelous sense of humor and irony. And he was a great storyteller! You sensed that he had an iron will, which, of course, figures into *HOLD THESE TRUTHS*.

Eger: Becoming a successful actor all over the US is a tremendous achievement. However, to conduct research and interviews demands specialized skills. Few theater artists manage to make the transition from acting to writing. You did. Tell us about the hurdles you had to overcome in the process of writing your first fact-based play.

Sakata: Since *HOLD THESE TRUTHS* was my first attempt at writing a play, I made a lot of attempts at a first draft that ultimately landed in the wastebasket! It was a tremendous challenge to distill all the historical facts of the play and weave them into the personal narrative of Gordon's story. And since I was also pursuing an acting career while I was trying to become a writer, it was a real challenge to juggle the two. I couldn't write very well when I was acting, so I'd put the writing aside when I got an acting job. And then, when I returned to the project, it took a while to get back into the world of the play. And I really didn't know how to be a playwright in terms of the business side of things.

However, I was incredibly lucky to have wonderful mentors who helped me along the way, because they believed so much in the play, like Len and Zak Berkman, Morgan Jenness, Chay Yew, Jessica Kubzansky, and countless others who read the script, gave me invaluable feedback, and helped me shape the play. The same is true for organizations like the Epic Theatre Ensemble, Lark Play Development Center, New York Theatre Workshop, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Asian American Theatre Festival, Center Theatre Group, and the Antaeus Company, who hosted readings or workshopped the play, which led to our 2007 world premiere at East West Players and the productions that happened after.

Eger: During your extensive research and writing phases, how did the sacrifices that you made in terms of time and engagement impact your personal life?

Sakata: I don't really feel it was a sacrifice! Though it was very difficult to write a play for the first time, especially a historical one, and though it was incredibly hard work, the story was such a thrilling one, and one that I was so passionate about, that the hours would just fly by. It was really a labor of love, and I remember feeling incredibly alive when I was working on it. And because of my family's history in the camps, the whole process felt deeply healing and redemptive.

Thought-Provoking Item 10:

Interview with Playwright Jeanne Sakata cont.

Interview by Dr. Henrik Eger

Eger: When writing your play, you dealt with literally hundreds of different documents and information from interviews—a huge task. What criteria did you use to cut it down to the size of the play that is now being performed?

Sakata: This is where a terrific mentor steps in and helps you, if you're lucky! I had this huge 3 ½ hour rough draft and had no idea how to shape it. One of my mentors, Len Berkman [professor of theater at Smith College], suggested I put two words up on my refrigerator: "Gordon's actions." He said that if what was on the page reflected Gordon being active and driving his story forward in a dynamic way, that's what I should keep. And if that wasn't happening, I should look for cuts in those parts. And that was just incredible advice, and once I understood, I started whittling away and began to see the play emerge.

Eger: Did all the organizations and individuals that you contacted support your work, or were there some closed doors?

Sakata: As with any written work, you get rejections, and I certainly got my share when I was trying to shop the play around. However, I was incredibly lucky in that once we had our premiere with East West Players, and with each production after that, there was always someone who came up to me or contacted me and said, "I loved the play and I want to recommend this play to so-and-so," or "I want to help bring it to my city." And that's how the journey of the play has been—people bringing it to their theaters, largely on the strength of word of mouth.

Before and After

Timeline related to U.S. Attacks

1897-1898

A [joint resolution](#) to annex Hawaii passes both the House and Senate. When the [Spanish–American War](#) broke out, many leaders wanted control of Pearl Harbor to help the U.S. become a Pacific power and to protect the West Coast. In 1897, Japan sends warships to Hawaii to oppose annexation. The possibility of invasion and annexation by Japan make the decision even more urgent.

December 7, 1941

The [Imperial Japanese Navy](#) attack [Pearl Harbor](#), killing almost 2,500 people and sinking 18 ships, the main American [battleship](#) fleet. Fortuitously, the four Pacific [aircraft carriers](#) were not in port and escaped damage. Hawaii is put under martial law. Roosevelt declares war against Japan on Dec 8.

1942

In the summer of 1942, the Japanese try to invade Pearl Harbor—U.S.' main forward base for the Pacific War—but are defeated at the [Battle of Midway](#). Hundreds of thousands of American soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen pass through on their way to the fighting.

1940

U.S. imposes trade sanctions, followed by an embargo, aimed at curbing Japan's military aggression in Asia after Japan invades Northern China.

1941

Joseph C. Grew, the U.S. ambassador to Japan, wires Washington that Japan is planning a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, but no one believes him. U.S. intelligence officers continue to monitor Japanese secret messages. In November, Tokyo sends an experienced diplomat to Washington to assist Ambassador Kichisaburo Nomura, who continues to seek a diplomatic solution, but they are unsuccessful. On Dec 6, U.S. Intelligence decodes a message about aggressive Japanese action on Sunday. It was 4 hours before attack, but information was not forwarded to commanders at Pearl Harbor.

February 19, 1942

President Roosevelt authorizes the internment of Japanese Americans in the United States during [World War II](#), forcing about 120,000 people of [Japanese ancestry](#)—most of whom lived on the [Pacific Coast](#)—into [internment camps](#) in the [western interior of the country](#). Sixty-two percent of the internees were [U.S. citizens](#). Also in Hawai'i, more than 4,000 Okinawans, Italians, German Americans, Koreans, and Taiwanese, are held at the Honouliuli Internment Camp.

Before and After Cont.

Timeline related to U.S. Attacks

The 442nd Regimental Combat Team, a U.S. Army infantry regiment, was composed almost entirely of second-generation American soldiers of Japanese ancestry—many from Hawai'i. The regiment fights primarily in Italy, southern France and Germany, becoming the most decorated unit for its size and length of service in American history. In total, about 14,000 men serve, earning 9,486 Purple Hearts. .

1959

Hawai'i becomes the 50th State.

2001

On September 11, the World Trade Center Bombing occur in New York, killing nearly 2,600 Americans. Al-Qaeda, an Islamic terrorist group, claim to have organized the attack.

2002

The Department of Homeland Security is created. Following the attacks of 9/11, citizens or nationals 16-years-old and above, from predominantly Arab and Muslim nations are required to register with the Department of Justice. As a result 14,000 people are placed into detention and deportation proceedings.

1944

Martial Law ends in Hawai'i in October. By December, internment camps close after the Supreme Court rules that the War Relocation Authorities could no longer hold "citizens who are concededly loyal"

1952

Immigration Act of 1952 passes allowing an immigration quota for Japan while also allowing Issei to become citizens.

1988

Civil Liberties Act: Signed by President Reagan, the federal act granted a formal presidential apology and \$20,000 in compensation for surviving Japanese Americans who were wrongfully incarcerated during World War II.

October 7, 2001

The War in Afghanistan begins when U.S. and British forces initiate aerial bombing campaigns targeting Taliban and al-Qaeda camps and later invade Afghanistan with ground troops of the Special Forces.

2017

President Trump signs an order to lower the number of refugees entering the U.S. His Executive Order 13769 Muslim Travel Ban targets Syrian refugees and bars citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the country for 90 days.

Food for Thought Questions

1. What does it mean to “be an American?” What are some traits that come to mind when you think about being an “American?”
2. Do you think that the United States of America would ever decide to round up American citizens and send them to internment camps again? Why or Why not?
3. Have you ever stood up for something you felt was unjust? What was it and what action did you take?
4. How do you and your family rebuild after a challenged experience of disagreement or separation?
5. Who is a hero of yours? What did they do that earned them that title?