

### Inquiry Design Model (IDM) Blueprint™

<b>Compelling Question</b>	Why did Yuri Kochiyama take civic action to strengthen democracy?		
<b>Standards and Practices</b>	<p>D2.Civ.2.3-5. Explain how a democracy relies on people’s responsible participation, and draw implications for how individuals should participate.</p> <p>D2.His.3.3-5. Generate questions about individuals and groups who have shaped significant historical changes and continuities.</p>		
<b>Staging the Question</b>	Show <a href="#">a picture of Yuri Kochiyama</a> and ask students if they know who she is. Use the primary source analysis tool from the Library of Congress, <a href="#">Observe, Reflect Question</a> , (similar to “ <a href="#">I see, I think, I wonder</a> ”) to generate questions about her life and work.		
<b>Supporting Question 1</b>	<b>Supporting Question 2</b>	<b>Supporting Question 3</b>	
What happened to Yuri Kochiyama and her family after Japanese forces bombed Pearl Harbor?	How did Yuri Kochiyama’s move to New York influence her views on civic participation?	In what ways did Yuri Kochiyama and her family use civic action to express solidarity with other marginalized groups?	
<b>Formative Performance Task</b>	<b>Formative Performance Task</b>	<b>Formative Performance Task</b>	
Create a captioned drawing of Yuri’s experience(s) after Japanese forces bombed Pearl Harbor.	List key details from the sources that describe what happened when Yuri Kochiyama moved to New York.	<p>Create a diagram that shows how Yuri expressed solidarity with other marginalized groups. (e.g., Venn Diagram, flow chart, timeline).</p> <p>Note: these are suggested diagrams, teachers may add their own ideas to the list.</p>	

Featured Sources	Featured Sources	Featured Sources
<p>Note: Multiple sources are offered for consideration. Teachers are encouraged to explore them all and decide which will work best in their particular contexts.</p>	<p>Note: Multiple sources are offered for consideration. Teachers are encouraged to explore them all and decide which will work best in their particular contexts.</p>	<p>Note: Multiple sources are offered for consideration. Teachers are encouraged to explore them all and decide which will work best in their particular contexts.</p>

<p><b>Source A1:</b> <a href="#"><u>Excerpts from <i>Passing it on: A memoir</i> (Kochiyama, 2004)</u></a></p> <p>Note: use of excerpts (e.g., which parts to use and how to use them) is up to teacher discretion.</p> <p><b>Source B:</b> <a href="#"><u>Then Came the War</u></a></p> <p><b>Source C:</b> <a href="#"><u>Behind the Wire (Library of Congress)</u></a></p> <p><b>Source D:</b> <a href="#"><u>WWII Incarceration Part One: A community grows, despite racism</u></a></p> <p><b>Source E:</b> <a href="#"><u>WWII Incarceration Part Two: Looking like the enemy</u></a></p> <p><b>Source F:</b> <a href="#"><u>WWII Incarceration Part Three: American concentration camps</u></a></p> <p><b>Source G: Suggested picture books linked to YouTube read alouds</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Baseball saved us</u></a> (Mochizuki, 2018)</li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>The Bracelet</u></a> (Uchida, 1996)</li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>So far from the sea</u></a> (Bunting, 2009)</li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>A place where sunflowers grow</u></a> (Lee-Tai, 2012)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Source A2:</b> <a href="#"><u>Excerpts from <i>Passing it on: A memoir</i> (Kochiyama, 2004)</u></a></p> <p>Note: use of excerpts (e.g., which parts to use and how to use them) is up to teacher discretion.</p> <p><b>Source B:</b> <a href="#"><u>Yuri Kochiyama remembers first becoming aware of racism directed at African Americans</u></a></p> <p><b>Source C:</b> <a href="#"><u>Yuri Kochiyama describes meeting Malcolm X</u></a></p> <p>Note: Students will need background knowledge on Malcolm X. The children’s book <a href="#"><u>Malcolm Little: The boy who grew up to be Malcolm X</u></a> could help. (Read aloud linked.)</p> <p><b>Source D:</b> <a href="#"><u>Raise your voice painting (image)</u></a></p> <p><b>Source E:</b> <a href="#"><u>Rehire the waiters immediately (image)</u></a></p> <p>Notes on Sources D and E: The sources to analyze are the images in the linked articles. Source D is an art installation and Source E is a photograph. Teachers may choose to use text from the articles, as well, if it would work in their contexts.</p>	<p><b>Source A3:</b> <a href="#"><u>Excerpts from <i>Passing it on: A memoir</i> (Kochiyama, 2004)</u></a></p> <p>Note: use of excerpts (e.g., which parts to use and how to use them) is up to teacher discretion.</p> <p><b>Source B:</b> <a href="#"><u>Our own people</u></a></p> <p><b>Source C:</b> <a href="#"><u>A mural celebrating the West Harlem community</u></a></p> <p><b>Source D:</b> <a href="#"><u>Rehire the waiters immediately (image)</u></a></p>
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Summative Performance Task	<b>Argument</b>	Why did Yuri Kochiyama take civic action to strengthen democracy? Construct an argument (captioned drawing with 5+ detailed sentences as the caption, list with 5+ detailed items, or diagram) supported with evidence that addresses the question of why Yuri Kochiyama engaged in civic action to strengthen democracy.
	<b>Extension</b>	Express these arguments artistically. Consider creating a mural or collage of relevant images. Display the finished products around the classroom and/or school to teach others about Yuri Kochiyama’s legacy.
Taking Informed Action	<p><b>Understand:</b> Identify other Asian American activists. (See incomplete list provided below.) Generate questions about them.</p> <p><b>Assess:</b> Select one to focus on and research their story using library books and websites. Take notes on their important contributions. As more is learned, add to the list of questions already started.</p> <p><b>Act:</b> Create ways (e.g., podcasts, public service announcements, posters, pamphlets) to teach others about their valuable contributions to society. (Note: These formats are suggestions. Students would need prior experience to implement them here. Format options are left to teacher discretion.)</p>	

### An incomplete list of Asian American activists to support Taking Informed Action.

Please note, some links take you to Amazon to purchase a particular book. Checking in school or public libraries is always an option. This list is simply a starting point.

- Go to this site for a collection of suggestions [Asian American Activists](#)
- *Grace Lee Boggs*: author and human rights advocate ○ [Grace Lee Boggs: My itty bitty bio](#)
- Helen Zia: Chinese American author and activist for racial and LGBTQIA rights ○ [Interview on USA Today from August 28, 2020](#)
- [Larry Itliong](#): Filipino American labor leader who organized farm workers ○ [Journey for Justice: The life of Larry Itliong](#) (read aloud) ○ [Larry Itliong: My itty bitty bio](#)
- [Fred Korematsu](#): an American civil rights activist who resisted internment during World War II.
- [We are inspiring: The stories of 32 inspirational Asian American woman](#)
- [Yes we will: Asian Americans who shaped this country](#)

- For more on Kochiyama, Iltiong, Zia, and Boggs, [see Kessler, M.A. & Darolia, L.H. \(2022\). Civic action and solidarity: Teaching about multiracial and intersectional Asian American activism. \*Iowa Journal for the Social Studies\* \(30\)2, 295-319.](#)

### **Suggested resources to enhance teacher background knowledge**

- For guidance in how to modify primary sources: [Wineburg, S. & Martin, D. \(2009\). Tampering with history: Adapting primary sources for struggling readers. \*Social Education\*, 73\(5\), 212-216.](#)
- [Passing it on: A memoir \(Kochiyama, 2004\)](#)
- Explore the [Densho Project](#) website. Search Yuri Kochiyama’s name.
- Learn about the important use of language and how it can be used to downplay atrocities. The Library of Congress uses the term “internment” and this is problematic, as “incarceration” is more accurate.
  - Daniels, R. (2005). Words do matter: A note on inappropriate terminology and the incarceration of the Japanese Americans. In L. Fisnet & G. Nomura (Eds.), *Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest: Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians in the twentieth century* (pp. 183-207). University of Washington Press
  - Japanese American Citizens League. [The Power of Words](#)
- Browse [Asian American History Curriculum](#) from Noreen Naseem Rodriguez’s website.
- [SmithsonianAPA’s Yuri Kochiyama Digital Exhibit](#)

### **Supplemental resources for the classroom**

- [Asian American and Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Children’s Books](#) (Social Justice Books)

## Introduction

I was born Mary Yuriko Nakahara on May 19, 1921, and raised in San Pedro, California, a predominantly white working-class neighborhood. Aside from my twin brother Pete, I also had an older brother, Arthur, whom we called "Art." My parents were Issei (first-generation Japanese) so our home life was traditional in that we spoke Japanese and ate Japanese food and were expected to behave as proper Japanese children. Outside our home, though, I was very much an "all-American" girl. As a teenager and young adult, I volunteered at the YWCA, the Girls Scouts, and the Homer Toberman Settlement House that served the Mexican community in San Pedro. I taught arts and crafts, tennis, first aid to teenagers at the Red Cross, and Sunday School at my local Presbyterian Church.

The day Pearl Harbor was bombed—December 7, 1941—changed all of our lives. Every American, of whatever background, was affected. Before the war, I was seeing America with American eyes. What happened to Japanese Americans after Pearl Harbor made me see the world and America with entirely new eyes—Japanese American eyes. In many ways, this marked the beginning of my political awakening and development.

What follows are my memories, reflections, and beliefs about some of the major events of my life, people I have encountered, and movements I have supported and been involved in. Although I focus mainly on the many people I have encountered, befriended, and learned from since I left San Pedro, my political convictions had already taken root while growing up in my hometown. I must admit that my passion and zeal to address human and social injustices were already taking shape within me as a young girl.

As much as I enjoyed growing up in a friendly cosmopolitan small town, I needed to leave it and grow up, open myself to new ideas, meet new people, learn from life's experiences. My provincial mentality and apolitical ideas needed to change and develop. I needed to leave San Pedro in order to

enlarge my worldview, so that the people and encounters I speak of could become the primary sources from which my political ideas and philosophy have grown.

My family found something I wrote long ago as a teenager. While my religious and political beliefs have changed quite a bit since 1939, my basic personal values and philosophy of life have remained the same.

#### "My Creed. . .22"

What type of person I was, am, or become, or whatever others think of me, I hope to live by this one creed that which, not I alone, but all others I have ever come in contact with, formulated for me. I say "others" because I am only a part of all I have met.

The creed is this:

To live a life without losing faith in God, my fellowmen, and my country; to never sever the ties between any institution or organization that I have been a small part; to never break one link of friendship, regardless of the time or distance that separates me from that friend, even if that friendship is only a memory stored away in my heart and mind.

To never humiliate or look down on any person, group, creed, religion, nationality, race, employment, or station in life, but rather to respect.

To always keep in mind, that any opportunities, achievement, or happiness I have had, I owe to someone else; to be grateful for whatever has come my way through the aid of another, to repay every kindness, but should such a circumstance not arise, to pass it on to someone else.

To love everyone; to never know the meaning of hate, or have one enemy. (An enemy, to me, is only created in one's mind). Should another dislike me or hate me because of some of my weaknesses, my actions, or what I have said, or how I have felt, or through prejudice, I will accept it without resentment, but all the while I will do all in my personality to better my ways and make myself acceptable.

To stay on the same "side of the track" as whoever I am with, but still live within the limits of my own ideals. Regardless of whether my actions seem wrong in the eyes of society, I will do that which I am doing as long as I am not infringing on the happiness of another, hurting another, and as long as I can look at myself without feeling ashamed.

To never harbor a feeling that someone has been unfair to me, but rather to feel in such a case, that I deserved it; to take every disappointment, disillusion,



sorrow, and grief as a part of life; to never expect another to be indebted to help me, but should I be able to help anyone, to be grateful that I could be of use.

To give the advantage, but never to ask for it; to be strict with myself, but not with others; to be humble enough to stoop to any degree as long as it is in service for another.

This creed, that people and experience have made for me, I will sincerely try to keep, for if I fail even one portion of it, and although it will be unknown to them, I will be failing not only myself, but those who are the living part of this creed.

And this creed, I call "twenty-two." It is my philosophy of life.

Dear Heavenly Father—Help me *live* it.

MARY NAKAHARA

1939 (age 18)



Yun speaking at anti-war demonstration and rally in Central Park (circa 1968).

to settle in San Pedro, a seaport town in California not far from Los Angeles. They were located just across the bay from Terminal Island, where a colony of Japanese fishermen and fish cannery people lived. Many wives, and later their children, worked in the canneries. Other Japanese lived in the Palos Verdes Hill area, which back in the pre-war era consisted of tomato farms. Outside the house we were very American; inside we were very Japanese.

The lives of the fishermen and the farmers were much harsher than those of the Japanese in San Pedro proper. We lived a rather staid, comfortable life in a white working-class neighborhood. Our neighbors were Europeans of many backgrounds, predominantly Slovenians and Italians, who were also in the fishing industry. We enjoyed their neighborliness. The parents, being immigrants like the Japanese, did not speak English well either, so we did not feel embarrassed at our Issei parents' language shortcomings. San Pedro seemed void of racism, so while attending school, we did not seem to experience discrimination. Mom did not have to work as did many Issei mothers on Terminal Island and the hill.

By 1918, the year after Mom arrived, my brother Arthur was born on December 23. Art graduated from San Pedro High School, attended Compton College, and graduated from UC Berkeley in 1940. My twin brother Pete and I were born three years later on May 19, 1921. Those days, all the Japanese children in San Pedro were brought into the world through one midwife, Mrs. Tanaka, or Tanaka-no-Obasan. No Nisei (second-generation Japanese Americans born in the U.S.) children of Issei ever went to the hospital. I doubt if Asians would have been accepted in a white American hospital. We just accepted such reality without thinking that it was because of racist institutionalized policies.

Mom was always doing her chores as a housewife. She taught some Japanese language skills to young Nisei and was always available to Pop, whose health was not too strong due to lung problems. In fact, there was a period when he spent time in a sanitarium treating those afflicted with tuberculosis. Art also had asthma while very young.

The bombing of Pearl Harbor changed the life of every American, including myself, my family, and others of Japanese ancestry. The ensuing mass hysteria and fear, and our eventual incarceration, shattered the American dream of Japanese Americans forever. Just days before the bombing of Pearl Harbor in early December 1941, our family was eagerly awaiting a special visit from





The Nakahara family at their San Pedro home, circa 1924.  
Tsuya (left) and Seichi (right) with children Yuri, Peter and Arthur.

Pop's friend, Admiral Nomura, who would be flying into Los Angeles from San Francisco on business. Pop had a great dinner planned for his friend, and the Admiral was expecting to sample *sammas* fish, a special Japanese delicacy. But plans suddenly changed, and the Admiral had to fly directly to Washington, DC. Before boarding the plane, Admiral Nomura sent Pop a telegram that said, "Sorry, cannot meet you for dinner. Regret unable to eat *samma*." Pop was very disappointed that his friend could not try his *samma*, but little did we all know how this innocent telegram would cause so much turmoil.

Within the first few days that followed the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the FBI intercepted the telegram and determined that the word "*samma*" was suspiciously treasonous. Because Pop owned a short-wave radio and outdoor antenna to keep in contact with Japanese mariners, he further aroused the FBI's suspicions. We later learned that the FBI had rented a house directly across the street from our home—at 893 West Eleventh Street—specifically to spy on Pop and plan his arrest.

December 7, 1941 fell on a Sunday, so I was teaching Sunday School that day, as I had done for years. After driving home all the kids I picked up to go

to church, I returned home by late morning. It just so happened that an hour before I got home, Pop returned from the hospital where he had undergone treatment for diabetes and a stomach ulcer. Within the hour, three FBI agents knocked on our door. They identified themselves and asked me if "Mr. Seichi Nakahara" lived there. I said, "Yes, that's my father." They wanted to know where he was, so I told them (Pop was resting in the back), and without saying another word, they rushed in! Although he had just come home from the hospital and was very weak, the FBI pulled him out of bed and apprehended him.

Everything happened within a matter of two or three minutes. I was the only one home, in complete shock, and did not know what to do. They told Pop to put on his bathrobe and slippers, and they took him away. I didn't have a chance to say anything to Pop. As they hustled him from the house to the car, the FBI refused to tell me why or where they were taking Pop.

Mom was down the block at my aunt and uncle's at the time, so I immediately called her. She rushed home and started making phone calls. We didn't know anything for days. Then a lawyer called back to say he located Pop; he was at the Federal Penitentiary on Terminal Island. Mom visited Pop to give him his diabetes medication, but the officials refused to administer the medicine to Pop or even grant Mom visitation rights. Because he was never given any of his medications, Pop became so sick that they had to transfer him to a hospital. He was placed in a large room with wounded seamen from Wake Island, and Mom feared for Pop's life because they were extremely hostile to him. They placed a sheet around his bed that read, "Prisoner of War." Mom begged the authorities to give him a private room, but she was ignored.

The FBI denied all family members access to Pop, but because my brother Pete had just been drafted by the Army and was waiting orders, the FBI allowed him a brief visit. However, since Pop's health was failing due to lack of medical attention, he did not recognize Pete when he walked into the interrogation room where Pop sat. In uniform, Pete identified himself, but Pop, a little delirious, accused Pete—in Japanese—of being an interrogator impersonating his son.

We believe Pop was detained and tortured throughout his entire interrogation. Because the FBI was unsuccessful at substantiating their suspicions, and because they probably realized his deteriorating health condition was becoming terminal, they released Pop. He was brought home in an ambulance

several weeks later. He could no longer talk, and we did not know if he could see, hear, or recognize anyone. His body had become emaciated, and his mind deteriorated dramatically. Lifeless without dignity, he died on January 21, 1942, just a few days after his release. He was only fifty-six years old.

Unfortunately, no Asians, Blacks, or Latinos that I knew of were allowed to be buried in any cemetery in San Pedro before World War II. Instead, all were buried in East Los Angeles at Evergreen Cemetery. Some time after the war ended, Green Hills Cemetery in the Rolling Hills of San Pedro allowed Asians to be buried there, perhaps because so many Japanese American soldiers had died. When the policy changed and Asians could be buried there (the first was a dentist, Dr. Arthur Takii), Mom had Pop's body moved to San Pedro's Rolling Hills. She also bought a plot for herself next to Pop. In 1993, when my husband Bill passed away, I brought not only his urn, but also Billy's (my eldest son) from New York to the same cemetery so that it would be easier for my children to visit them.

Years later, we learned that the FBI had Pop under surveillance for many years prior to WWII. This was shocking to us because we had always been such patriotic Americans. I will never forget what happened to Pop. I saw what the American government did to him with my very own eyes. As I reflect back on that traumatic event, I see the parallel between the way African Americans were treated in the segregated South and the way Japanese Americans were evacuated and relocated en masse to remote internment camps across the U.S. In each instance there were senseless degradation, brutality, and hatred wrought by fear and ignorance caused by racism. So I remain passionately committed to doing whatever I can and saying whatever I must to eliminate racist assumptions and ideas.

## 4 After the War: Marriage, Parenthood, and New York

Only two weeks after arriving in New York City to be with Bill, we got married on February 9, 1946, at one of the Riverside Church chapels; Reverend Akamatsu officiated. Bill's father, who initially stopped our wedding in 1942, attended the small wedding. There was just a handful of people there because it was too far away for my family in California to attend. I can only remember four other people, one of whom was my close friend since childhood who I asked to be my Matron of Honor, Monica Miya (she herself had recently gotten married and settled in New York with her husband). There were also Bill's best friend, Ken Hayashi, who was his Best Man, and Bones and Yuri Taono, with whom I worked in Mississippi.

Newlywed and newly resettled, Bill and I found ourselves living in rooms to rent, moving almost monthly. All the rooms were rat holes: dark, dank, and cockroach-infested places you wouldn't even dare to cook or eat food. There were no private toilets or baths; everything was "shared." We used to take our towel and soap and ask friends if we could "shower up" at their apartments.

Before I came to New York, I had never met many Black people, as there were not many living in San Pedro. My first encounter with Blacks was in early 1946, soon after my arrival to New York City. My first job was with Chock Full O' Nuts, a New York City restaurant chain that primarily hired Blacks. Anyone living in New York during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s would be familiar with "Chockies," as it was endearingly called. They were located all over Manhattan in busy areas—34th Street, 42nd Street, 72nd Street, etc. I worked at the 23rd Street restaurant near Park Avenue.



Bill's dad Yutaka, Billy, Yuri, and Bill (circa 1948).

All the Chockies restaurants were known for their cleanliness and good service. They were also praised for their delicious wheat doughnuts (which were only seven cents), as well as their hot dogs and cheese-nut sandwiches which were an unbelievable twelve cents each. I found out that two of the men who worked there also trained during WWII at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, where Bill trained. I told them that I used to work at a USO in Hattiesburg but recalled that no Black soldiers came to our USO, and I wondered why. They asked, "Where was the USO?" When I said, "222 Pine," they said, "Well, no wonder. . . No Black soldiers, even in uniform, could walk any major street in Southern towns."

I knew that the South was racist, but I had no idea that life was so unfair and discriminatory for Blacks, that even Black soldiers in uniform would be derogated in such a manner. Mississippi was certainly the hell-hole of the South. How glad I was to have had the opportunity to work at Chockie's and have my first experience working with Black people. I enjoyed it a great deal, and I learned so much about the South and the racism there since many of my co-workers were from the South.





The Kochiyama family opened its home to the Nisei-Sino Service Organization on Friday nights (early 1950s).

Hawaii, and West Coast friends, and GI's. Friday and Saturday nights eventually became an open house. On Fridays, we started the Nisei Service Organization to offer assistance and a place for GI's in town from Hawaii. We eventually changed the name to Nisei-Sino Service Organization when we started meeting many young Chinese. Saturday nights were set aside for anybody and everybody else: foreign students, aspiring actors and actresses, singers and dancers, professional athletes, out-of-town visitors and neighbors. From a dozen people, we often drew crowds of fifty jammed into a small apartment, to 100 people who would be out in the halls and down the stairwell.

In 1958, nine Black high school students, known as the famed "Little Rock Nine" who were credited with desegregating Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, came to New York to be feted by many different civil rights groups, including the NAACP, for their courageous stand against racism. The leader who won national recognition at that time was Daisy Bates, the president of the NAACP chapter in Little Rock. Through the efforts of Juanita Andrade, a neighbor from the Amsterdam Houses, I had the good fortune to meet Daisy Bates and also see Carlotta Walls (Juanita's niece)



again. I first met Carlotta when she was about seven years old. She later grew up to be a civil rights activist.

It was after my meeting Daisy Bates that I began to take a serious interest in the civil rights movement. I kept my eyes on the newspapers as civil unrest and demonstrations erupted all over the South. By the close of the 1950s, the Southern civil rights movement was active in almost all of the Southern states, including Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South and North Carolina, Tennessee, Florida, and Virginia. This set the stage for what would become a significant time period for the Kochiyama family.

A rare gathering of all the Nakahara/Kochiyama families in San Pedro, 1955, visiting Mori/Grandma for Mother's Day.



## 5 Raising Six Children in the Sizzling Sixties

The 1960s was an amazing and exciting decade to be in Harlem, a community thriving with so much activity. Socially, politically, and culturally—Harlem was on fire and we got swept up in the whirlwind. All of our children began marching with my husband and me at civil rights events, in addition to doing the normal things of their age. I am proud of how much my children have in their own way come to understand the importance of justice and to stand up on behalf of others.

In December 1960, we moved to a new housing project in Harlem—the Manhattanville Houses on 126th and Broadway. It was a low-income housing project surrounded by Latino and Black families, and it was in this new neighborhood that at the age of forty, my political activism began to take shape. Moving from our five-room apartment at Amsterdam Housing Projects in central Manhattan to Harlem was indeed memorable: it was a very cold and windy December day with a blizzard storming up. Because we did not own a vehicle or have the money to rent one, we moved by subway from midtown to Harlem, going back and forth from 62nd Street to 125th.

Our children ranged from thirteen years old (Billy) to one year old (Tommy), but the older children all pitched in and helped as much as they could. They carried clothes, bedding, kitchenware, books, canned goods, pots and pans, dishes, and towels. A few of our adult friends, like the Kimizuka family, Al Karvelis, and Hal Gold, had cars so they were able to help with the furniture.

We held many memorable community gatherings in our new home. One such gathering was to hear the words of the Freedom Riders, an interracial group of activists from all over the U.S. who boarded buses headed for the South in order to protest the practice of segregated public transportation. In 1961 several busloads of Freedom Riders from New York left for the South. Some of the buses were overturned in Alabama and set on fire. So when the

Freedom Riders returned to New York, we invited some of the activists to speak at our house gatherings. One speaker was James Peck, one of the most severely beaten Riders. He was kicked, stomped on, and ended up in the hospital with fifty-seven stitches on his face. People up North were realizing what the struggle in the South was about.

In 1962 Bill and I became members of the Harlem Parents Committee, a grassroots movement to get safer streets and integrated education in the Harlem community. On weekends, our children attended the Harlem Parents Committee Freedom School. One day, all the parents were asked to take their children to a designated location (131st and Fifth Avenue). They were to put all their toddlers in the street to protest the number of children being struck down at corners lacking traffic signals. I brought Jimmy and Tommy, who were ages two and four, respectively, and it was their first experience being in a demonstration, even though they were too young to be aware of what was really happening. Because of the cooperation and participation of so many parents, the city responded quickly in installing traffic lights at every block in Harlem.

Given the intense political environment and all that was happening around us, I realize now that the growing-up years flew by much too fast for the children, especially for the youngest—Eddie, Jimmy and Tommy—who were only five, three, and one when we arrived in Harlem. While caring for and raising my children, I became very involved in the immediate needs for better education and housing. The times seemed urgent and demanding. Our family lifestyles and priorities changed. Social gatherings became political gatherings. In retrospect I realize that it was not fair to the three youngest, who missed out on many of the frivolities of childhood and traditional activities around holidays.

The major shift in our family began in 1963 when four little girls were killed in the bombing of a Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. We did not celebrate Christmas that year: no presents for the kids and not even a Christmas tree. But all the children seemed to understand that a horrible racist act of violence could not be taken lightly. Instead, we donated money to the movements in the South. In the summer of 1963, we stopped in Birmingham on the way to California so that the children could visit the church where the four girls were killed. The pictures of the young girls were front-paged in the mainstream newspapers. The younger kids were as concerned and troubled

as the older three. Subsequent holidays were also observed differently from the past (although not as drastically as Christmas of 1963).

Looking back, I wonder if I was much too dogmatic and strict, if the abstentions of customary practices did not hurt our children more than help them to understand the pain of others. Eddie, Jimmy, and Tommy were only eight, six, and four years old in 1963. I feel some remorse and guilt that I denied the younger three many of the fun times that the older children experienced at their age.

1963 was a pivotal year for us in terms of our involvement and education in the movement as a family. That year I took all six children to Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn to join hundreds of demonstrators who were demanding construction jobs for Blacks and Puerto Ricans. It was also the year of the big New York City School Boycott and the year that the whole family enrolled in the Harlem Freedom School located at 514 West 126th Street. Luckily this was just across the street from where we lived (545 West 126th Street). Still very active with the Harlem Parents Committee, our family picketed schools in Harlem to close down until changes took place. It was a wonderful experience interacting with parents from the Harlem community who were fighting to bring quality education to their areas. Soon, there was a citywide effort that spread from the Manhattan Borough to the Bronx, Queens, Brooklyn, and Staten Island. 1963 was also the year that I met Malcolm X.

By the mid-1960s the older kids—Bill, Audee, and Aichi—began showing a strong interest in the Southern civil rights movement, which was becoming front-page news in all the metropolitan newspapers and also featured on the television news broadcasts. The struggle in the South was mostly for voter rights and public accommodations. Young people, mostly college-age, left their universities in the North and ventured into Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi to register Black voters in both the urban and rural areas. They also organized picket lines at public facilities, where Blacks were not allowed to enter restaurants, hotels, theaters, libraries, swimming pools, toilets, and parks or to use drinking fountains. The year after the three civil rights workers were killed in Mississippi in 1964, Audee and Billy made their journey to Mississippi. Instead of attending his high school graduation, Billy took off for Rosedale, Audee to McComb.

Throughout our involvement in various struggles and movements during this period, Audee and Aichi studied ballet, and through the help of friends



quite clever in making his way into the community. So many movement women later said that they saw more of him in their homes than their own husbands. He also knew how to exploit the innocence of children who readily accepted him. We still have pictures of him doing magic tricks at Tommy's party. We should have learned some lessons to be more cautious with people. At the same time, we have to teach children to have faith in people. Very few will turn out to be "lemons."

When Jimmy and Tommy were about seven and five years old, I took them to a demonstration in Central Park to commemorate the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. A news photographer snapped a picture of Jimmy and Tommy carrying candles at the march. As a proud mother, I made many photocopies to send to friends and also put it in their scrapbooks. Without these pictures, I thought, they would not remember. But as they grew older, we spoke of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and explained what transpired back then and of the thousands of people who were killed when the atom bomb

Tommy at a demonstration against U.S. military bases in Okinawa.

Courtesy of the Yoni Kosevima Collection, USA



was dropped on those two cities. Around the same time, our family participated in a march against American military bases in Okinawa. Again, Tommy was snapped by a photographer. When it appeared in the newspaper, the caption read, "Okinawa Youth Demonstrating." We smile today, because Tommy grew up to eventually marry a woman of Okinawan descent.

Not too long after this event, our family was involved in visits to the Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York City to see the twenty-five Hiroshima Maidens, as they were called, as they took turns receiving plastic surgery. These twenty-five atomic bomb victims came to the U.S. to receive reconstructive surgery provided by the hospital free of charge. When we learned that Nisei families could have the opportunity to host a Hiroshima Maiden, we volunteered. Tomoko Nakabayashi stayed with us for



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Marchers make their way up Seventh Avenue (l) to a rally in Central Park yesterday in observance of Hiroshima Day. At the rally (r) a flutist plays for the crowd. Story on Page 3.

Tommy (with headband) and Jimmy in a demonstration to commemorate the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at Central Park, August 6, 1971.

one weekend. Tragically, she died several months later on the operating table. She was the only one to die during their eighteen-month stay in the U.S., where over one hundred successful surgeries took place. We still have a picture of Tomoko-san with our children. We did not want them to forget her. We also wanted our children to make the connection with the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and to remember that an American Jewish Hospital gave service gratis for eighteen months of plastic surgery to the young Hibakusha women.

Not too many years later, we had our children participate at another Hiroshima/Nagasaki event, in which the focus was not only on the two atom-bombed cities, but also Nanjing, in China. The theme was "Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Nanjing—Never Again!" so that the children could learn of the



## 6 Malcolm X and the Kochiyamas

One of the moments my family and I will never forget is when Malcolm X came to our apartment in Harlem's Manhattanville Projects on June 6, 1964. This was a year-and-a-half before he was assassinated.

The special occasion was a reception for three writers of the Hiroshima/Nagasaki World Peace Study Mission, who were on a world tour speaking against the proliferation of nuclear arms building. These three *Hibakusha* ("atomic bomb survivors") writers wanted to meet Malcolm X more than any other person in America. Because we lived in Harlem, they asked if we would make a special effort to organize a meeting with him.

We wrote months in advance to Malcolm at his 125th Street office, inviting him to meet with this Peace Mission, but we received no word. People told us he would never come. After all, he did not know us, and the time was dangerous for Malcolm. He had left the Nation of Islam only three months earlier. There were also rumors that Malcolm might be killed, but who would kill him? Who would benefit by his death? The Black movement activists felt the American power structure would benefit, not the Nation of Islam.

Meanwhile, we called on the Harlem Parents Committee to help organize a reception for Malcolm. HPC members were not Malcolm followers; they were a multinational civil rights group. But they responded with great enthusiasm because they also wanted to meet Malcolm. Despite not being sure that Malcolm would really come, we proceeded with plans for cultural performances, a few speakers, and light refreshments. A Black folk singer, Clebert Ford; a Japanese contralto; a Black school teacher, Edwardina Brown; and Isaiah Robinson, head of Harlem Parents Committee, would comprise the program. We also asked my cousin Kathy Muto and her girlfriend Emi Ikemoto to help with the refreshments. News of this reception and that Malcolm might be at our home circulated by word of mouth.

On June 6, 1964, the Kochiyama family waited excitedly. A good friend, Conway Redding, son of renowned writer Saunders Redding, stopped by early and offered to take the younger ones off our hands. He took them to see *Mary Poppins*. Lorrie (as Aichi was called then at age eleven), Eddie, Jimmy, and Tommy went with Conway. We let fourteen-year-old Audree stay and help. We can't remember where Billy was on that day, but he must have been away somewhere very important, as he would never have wanted to miss meeting Malcolm.

On that day the *Hibakusha* writers first visited a Black school and a Black church. Then they decided they wanted to walk around Harlem by themselves and not with their overly protective white hosts who helped coordinate their itinerary. They had lunch at a restaurant called "22" on 135th Street, where Malcolm used to eat. They met some Black nursing students who recognized the *Hibakusha* who were on a television program the night before. Then the group walked all the way to 114th Street. This was Jesse Gray's area, where the "World's Worst Fair" was taking place while the regular tourist-attraction fair was held at Flushing Meadows in Queens. Harlem activists thought of the unique idea of opening up a "Fair" in one of the most impoverished blocks in Harlem so that "tourists" could see how some people in Harlem had to live under the supervision of uncaring landlords and the sanitation department. The *Hibakusha* writers saw some realities of Harlem they would have otherwise missed if they did not go to 114th Street and check out the "World's Worst Fair": living quarters with broken windows, broken-down staircases, toilets that wouldn't flush and clogged-up bathtubs, and garbage piled high on the streets. The *Hibakusha* contingent finally came to our apartment. They immediately thanked us for suggesting that they first visit the "World's Worst Fair."

By the time they arrived at our home, the house began to pack up. Everyone was curious to know if Malcolm was really going to come. Shortly after the program began, there was a knock on the door—and there was Malcolm. He had three security men with him, but they blended so well with the crowd that we were not aware Malcolm brought anyone with him. When we later checked the guest book, we saw that three MMI (Muslim Mosque Inc.) men did sign. Upon entering the house, Malcolm first said that he was sorry he hadn't answered any of my letters to him; he did not have my address. He further remarked that should he travel again, he would remember to write to



Malcolm X with Audee and three other teens on June 6, 1964 at the Kochiyama home.

me. He did as he promised, writing me eleven times from nine different countries.

As he walked into the living room, people surged toward him, wanting to shake his hand. He was gracious with everyone. The living room, kitchen, and hallway were crowded. He shook hands with as many people he could reach out to. People were impressed with his warmth even before he began to talk.

Malcolm first thanked the *Hibakushi* for taking the time to go to the "World's Worst Fair." He said something to the effect, "You have been scarred by the atom bomb. You just saw that we have also been scarred. The bomb that hit us was racism." He went on to divulge that he spent some years in prison, where he educated himself. He read everything he could get his hands on, including Asian history, which wasn't too different from the history of Africa. He said that almost all of Asia, like Africa, was colonized except for Japan. But he explained that because Japan did not have the natural resources like

Malcolm X and the Kochiyamas



Malcolm X meeting with Japanese journalists at the Kochiyama home, June 6, 1964.  
 (FROM LEFT) Ryuji Hamai (右端), Nobuya Tsuchida (真ん中), and Akira Mitsui  
 (左端)—delegates of the Hiroshima-Nagasaki World Peace Study Mission.  
 PHOTOGRAPH FROM FAMILY NEWSLETTER CHRISTIAN CHURCH, VOLUME 15 (1964), P. 6.

other Asian countries, Japan was left untouched by European powers. Thus, Japan was able to develop and remain intact until World War II when she was defeated. "But now," he said, "there are American bases there."

He spoke of the People's Republic of China and Mao Tse-tung. He admired Mao because he simultaneously took on feudalism, government corruption, and foreign incursion. He also thought Mao was correct in showing preferential treatment to the peasants rather than the workers because it was the peasants who were feeding such a large country.

He spoke of one other Asian country—Vietnam: "If America sends troops to Vietnam, you progressives should protest. America is already sending American advisors." He also strongly commented that "the struggle of Vietnam is the struggle of the whole Third World: the struggle against colonialism, neo-colonialism, and imperialism." Unfortunately, Malcolm did not live long enough to see the growth of the anti-war movement in this country.







Billy showing Audee, Eddie, Jimmy and Tommy a picture of Malcolm X. From the "North Star" family newsletter, Vol. 1 (1965).

had to decline. So the Ambassador invited Vickie Garvin, a Black woman whom Malcolm had met in Ghana, to visit China. Malcolm's extensive travels made him an internationalist.

His recognition and acceptance everywhere made the U.S.

government feel more threatened. Malcolm began to be followed by

the CIA. He was poisoned while he was in Egypt. Other problems with his own organization brought a rift with his leader, Elijah Muhammad.

On February 21, 1965, Malcolm was assassinated while speaking to his own OAAU and Muslim Mosque followers at the Audubon Ballroom where he spoke weekly. I was in the audience when Malcolm X was assassinated and immediately ran on stage as soon as he fell to the floor. Cradling his head in my hands, I was shocked. Only one of his killers was apprehended. Two others were arrested, but there was controversy over their arrest. His sudden death was devastating for Harlem, for other Black communities, and for the Black liberation movement. However, the movement could not be extinguished. The movement continued doggedly but also in spurts. New faces, younger and more militant, filled the gap of the struggle. The movement mushroomed and become more radical.

In the wake of Malcolm's death, Black organizations flourished. The Black Panthers, the Malcolm X Society, African People's Party, Republic of New Africa, and Malcolm X Grassroots Movement emerged. Young Blacks around the country began emulating Malcolm's strong posture and articulating his ideas against the power structure. Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), a clandestine formation, had already begun a few years prior to Malcolm's death. According to RAM's leader Muhammad Ahmad (Max Stanford), Malcolm himself was a member, but that information had to be kept quiet.

To give some sense of what Malcolm's death meant to me, I share here