

Kazuo Masuda: A Hero's Story

Handout 3-A (3)

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1. How old was Kaz Masuda when he was drafted?
Kaz Masuda was 23 years old.
2. Explain what the word "Nisei" means.
"Nisei" is a Japanese word meaning "second generation." A person who is Nisei is a person of Japanese descent who was born in America.
3. What was the regimental slogan of the 442nd? What does it mean?
The regimental slogan of the 442nd was: Go for Broke. It is a Hawaiian slang phrase meaning "give it your all," or "give it everything you've got." Broke is a reference to money indicating you should use up everything you have to the point of being "broke."
4. Where did S/Sgt Kaz Masuda fight in Europe? What is the shape of this country on a map?
S/Sgt. Masuda fought in Italy. Italy is shaped like a boot.
5. Where was S/Sgt Masuda's family living while he fought in Europe? Why?
S/Sgt Masuda's family was put into camps in Arkansas and Arizona. Like all west coast Japanese Americans they were ordered to dispose of their property and belongings before being sent to camp.
6. Summarize in one or two sentences what General Stillwell thought of S/Sgt Kaz Masuda.
General Stillwell thought that S/Sgt Kazuo Masuda was an American hero. He believed that Kaz Masuda was a better man than most and should be honored.
7. Why did the cemetery refuse to bury S/Sgt Kaz Masuda's remains?
The cemetery refused to bury S/Sgt Kaz Masuda's remains because he was of Japanese descent.
8. If you wanted to honor S/Sgt Kazuo Masuda as an American hero, what would you do?
Answers will vary. It would be nice to see a major Hollywood movie depict what happened to Japanese Americans.
9. Can you guess which American President in the 1980's signed a bill to redress persons of Japanese descent for their confinement during WWII?
President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988.
10. Write a 5 sentence paragraph on what you believe makes a human a hero. Use the other side if necessary.
Answers will vary.

Letter from June Masuda Goto

Handout 3-B (1)

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November 19, 1987

President Ronald Reagan
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Reagan:

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

Perhaps you recall a very special day for our family, December 9, 1945, in Santa Ana, California, when General “Vinegar Joe” Stilwell awarded a posthumous Distinguished Service Cross medal to my brother, Kazuo Masuda. He was killed in action on the banks of the Arno River in Italy on August 27, 1944, while serving with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

You were then Captain Ronald Reagan, and joined General Stilwell after his 3000-mile flight from Washington. All of you came, I feel, not only to honor Kaz, but to help calm great hostility in Orange County to Japanese Americans. People at the time did not accept us as Americans, even after my brother’s death. The local cemetery, for example, refused to accept my brother’s body for burial. The presence of you and General Stilwell greatly affected the community, and led to a better life for our family.

After General Stilwell pinned the medal on my sister in front of our farmhouse (I have enclosed a photograph), there was a ceremony at the Santa Ana Bowl. General Stilwell said: “The amount of money, the color of one’s skin do not make a measure of Americanism. A square deal all around; free speech; equality before the law; a fair field with no favor; obedience to the majority. An American not only believes in such things, but is willing to fight for them. Who, after all, is the real American? The real American is the man who calls it a fair exchange to lay down his life in order that American ideals may go on living. And judging by such a test, Sgt. Masuda was a better American than any of us here today.”

You then rose, and said the following words: “The blood that has soaked into the sand is all one color. America stands unique in the world, the only country not founded on race, but on a way—an ideal. Not in spite of, but because of our polyglot background, we have had all the strength in the world. That is the American way. Mr. and Mrs. Masuda, just as one member of the family of Americans, speaking to another member, I want to say for what your son Kazuo did—Thanks.”

Many times I have been asked to speak at the Kazuo Masuda middle school. I speak to all the history classes, and quote your words to the students.

I bring this up to you because our family feels that what you and General Stilwell said in 1945 are as true and important as ever: the ideals for which all good Americans should be willing to fight and die. My brother did both,

Letter from June Masuda Goto

Handout 3-B (2)

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even though his parents and family were stripped of all their American rights, and placed in an Arizona internment camp.

The words also express why so many of us in the Japanese American community so deeply support redress legislation now pending in Congress. If the legislation comes to you, I hope you will look upon it favorably. All of us in our family—I believe Kaz as well—would be greatly honored if you would. I also believe that America, through you, would honor itself.

Yours truly,

June Masuda Goto

How Racial Discrimination Feels

Handout 3-C (1)

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An activity designed to help students understand the pain and humiliation of discrimination to Japanese Americans when they were singled out for different treatment because of ancestry, race, and religion.

5 minutes

Allow students to pick a ballot from a hat. The ballots will have been prepared before class and indicate several different categories. See attached reproducible page of ballots. Or if you wish to reflect your own community's population more closely, adjust the balance. Ask students to read the information on their ballot and to act accordingly throughout the exercise.

5 minutes

Have students line up at the back of a classroom. Aisles between seats may be used, or desks may be pushed against the walls, or even a corridor used for this activity. Use a mix of the ballots.

Teacher will read a series of instructions. Instructions should be read slowly enough that students can consider their own exercise status and react accordingly.

15 minutes

TEACHER: Listen carefully. The first individuals who reach the front of the classroom will “win.” A move is one or two steps at a time, depending on what I tell you. In order to observe the results of this exercise it is important that everyone follow the instructions and remain where they land. Remember, this is a demonstration exercise. Whatever role you have drawn you must follow, and for purposes of this exercise consider yourself 18 or older.

How Racial Discrimination Feels

Handout 3-C (2)

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Activity Instructions

1. Everyone who is living in the U.S. take one step forward.
2. Everyone who was born in the U.S. take a step forward.
3. Everyone who has full citizenship rights take a step forward.
4. Everyone who has money saved in the bank take one step forward.
5. Everyone whose savings and bank accounts have been frozen, take a step backwards.
6. Everyone who can vote, and who use that privilege, take one step forward.
7. Everyone who is a high school graduate take one step forward.
8. Everyone who is a college graduate take two steps forward.
9. Everyone who speaks English take a step forward.
10. Everyone whose ethnicity is connected to an AXIS power (Germany, Japan, Italy) take one step backward.
11. Everyone who is patriotic and believes themselves to be an American take a step forward.
12. Everyone who owns land and/or a home take a step forward.
13. Everyone who speaks English and one other language take a step forward.
14. Everyone who must be in by curfew, and who is limited to travel within 5 miles of where they live, take a step backward.
15. Everyone who must report to an assembly point in under a week, take a step backward.
16. Everyone who is of Asian descent take a step backward.
17. Everyone who is of Asian descent, but not Japanese, take a step forward.
18. Everyone whose religion is some form of Christianity take a step forward.
19. Everyone who was forced to turn in their radio, camera, binoculars, and/or knives take a step backwards.
20. Everyone who believes in equality and justice take a step forward.

20 minutes

Assignment: Students will be partnered or grouped and discuss the following issues:

1. Who was happy with how far they moved? Why?
2. Who was not happy with how far they moved? Why?
3. What problems were raised by the way people were treated?
4. Can you think of any present examples of similar treatment?
5. Do you think all of the people were treated equally? Why or why not?