ALLEGIANCE
A NEW MUSICAL INSPIRED BY A TRUE STORY
From George Takei
Dear Students and Teachers,

My name is George Takei. You may know me from the TV and Movie series STAR TREK as Mr. Sulu, or perhaps, from Facebook and Twitter. I am honored you are attending the Los Angeles premiere of Allegiance, a musical theater piece depicting the Japanese American WWII experience from 1941-1945. This story reflects my own personal history as an American whose childhood was spent “evacuated and relocated” behind barbed wire in an American “internment camp” because I, and my fellow Japanese Americans, happened to look like the people who bombed Pearl Harbor. I was happy to sit down and answer questions regarding this experience and discuss my decision to create this show. It had long been my dream to give back to society this “legacy project,” and now, it is my sincere hope the struggles and triumphs of my community helps you make better sense of a quickly changing modern world full of challenges and opportunities. In this respect, be mindful to preserve your heritage, but peacefully live in the present while keeping an eye on building for a sustainable future. I ask that you, too, “pay it forward” by sharing your “takeaway learnings” from this piece with three of your friends—and remember, Allegiance is as much for you as it is for me.

Love,

George Takei

Please laugh, cry and consider the important dispositions theater gives us all: empathy, compassion, and an ability to embrace a basic human decency.

Students: Why did you bring Allegiance to Los Angeles?

George: Bringing the show to Los Angeles is an exciting prospect because LA is my birthplace. I grew up here, love its diversity and learned first hand from Los Angelenos ‘how to’ embrace all people for who they are, and not simply for what they represent. This is the city that I love and this will be the city where I am buried. However, the fact that the show is coming here has more than personal ramifications for me—it is an actual opportunity to frame a conversation amongst and between all residents of Southern California.

In the greater Los Angeles region we have the largest concentration of Japanese Americans in the entire USA—of whom a good number have direct family linkages to the WWII internment experience. Through Allegiance, we are honored to share this history with the direct descendants of the “relocation and internment” experience. We aim to engage all Los Angeles as a springboard source for rich discussion and a common ground for mutually respectful, cooperative learning-focused discussions.

As we are mindful to learn from the past, in the hopes of living in a brighter future, we highlight the importance of live theater to “stimulate and simulate the feelings and experiences of the characters portrayed in this American immigrant story. Please laugh, cry and consider the important dispositions theater gives us all: empathy, compassion, and an ability to embrace a basic human decency.

For us, in theater arts, we inherit the promise, the best humanity has to offer—an ethic of common care for all living beings. Bringing Allegiance to the 880 seat JACCC Aratani Theatre has allowed us to embrace all of Southern California and present a uniquely important show at “Broadway” scale to local and regional audiences and agencies. More than a money maker, sharing Allegiance is as much for you as it is for me.

George: As an American it’s important to tell this American story to all Americans of all backgrounds. While I believe it’s important for all of us to embrace the greatness of the idea of American democracy, it’s also important for us to never presume we are free of the responsibility of modeling what that ideal is in our own actions. Being aware of the mistakes that we made in this chapter of WWII history reminds us to respect not only America’s diverse tapestry, but to “set an example...that people from all around the world can embrace.” For us, the dark and harrowing chapters of historical error must not be repeated again—this is a simple basic human imperative.

For Students
Dear Students,

Welcome to Allegiance! We are happy to share the story of the Kimura family and their community with you. With the enactment of Executive Order 9066, Japanese Americans were forced to evacuate—leaving behind homes, farms, businesses, friends, classmates and pets—to be detained and then incarcerated in camps located across the nation. Japanese Americans were racially profiled because they were considered enemy aliens, regardless of their citizenship. While thousands of people of Japanese ancestry were interned—including Japanese Mexicans, Japanese Latin Americans and Japanese Canadian—the experience of wartime internment affected people in different ways. Some Japanese Americans joined the military; some held their sadness inside, others protested, and most did what was necessary to survive. Allegiance tells the story of the fragility of democracy and how each of us have the agency to make a difference. Today, we continue to see mistreatment, inequality and challenges to our democracy. We hope after watching Allegiance you can reflect on how you might respond to these ongoing issues, and see that you play an important role in creating social change.

Carolina San Juan, PhD
Arts Education Director, East West Players

Kent Marume
Community Engagement Coordinator, JACCC

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For our Families
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The play centers on the experience of one Japanese American family during World War II. We hope your students can relate to the story’s themes of tradition, patriotism, and assimilation. The play demonstrates how despite disagreements, a home is defined by our families—regardless of where we find ourselves.

Cover: Soldiers with duffel bags getting into the back of a truck
Courtesy of the Japanese American National Museum

This page: Watchtower and Recreation - War Relocation Authority, photographer: Charles L. Mace and Frances Stewart
Courtesy of the Visual Communications Photographic Archives

Note to Educators
We hope Allegiance provides the opportunity for your students to discuss, not only the historical events of World War II, but more importantly, issues concerning civic engagement and social justice. From the Civil Rights, to the DREAMers, to the #MeToo movement, our youth have always led the country’s greatest social movements. We owe a debt of gratitude to you—our teachers for creating the space to think critically about their world and our futures.

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**American Concentration Camps (1942-1946)**

**SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN AMERICAN IMMIGRATION HISTORY**

- **1848:** Acquisition of California from Mexico. Following the Battle of San Pasqual, Mexico ceded to the U.S. the northern territories of Alta California, and Tamaulipas and Coahuila de Nueva Mexico.

- **1896:** Plessy v. Ferguson: U.S. Supreme Court upheld the "separate but equal" doctrine.

- **1913:** Alien Land Law. Prohibited "aliens ineligible for citizenship" from owning and leasing land. Affected Japanese immigrants, known as "Issei." Many families relied on their unused generation children, known as "Nisei," to navigate the anti-immigrant laws.

- **1942:** Japanese Americans were removed from the west coast. "Evacuation Order" affected 110,000 people of Japanese ancestry. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the War Relocation Authority could no longer hold "citizen who are concededly loyal," providing the first legal basis allowing Japanese Americans to leave incarceration camps and return to their homes.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

How are national borders used? Compare how borders are used to protect but also to keep out. What do landmarks signify? Why is it important to know what has happened in a particular area?

Consider the use of borders between what is safe and what is dangerous. Who makes these boundaries? Why?

How are borders enforced? Who has the power to define national, state, local, and community borders?

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**The Local is Political**

**INSTRUCTIONS**

Draw and/or script your journey through Little Tokyo. Do you recognize where you are in this map? List what captured your attention during your visit to Little Tokyo.

**THINGS I FOUND INTERESTING IN LITTLE TOKYO**

- Little Tokyo National Historical Landmark: "Historic site & monument of Little Tokyo Commercial District in Los Angeles during 1920s, and is the largest Japanese community in the U.S.


- Little Tokyo Village Plaza: 150 year old grapefruit tree named Sunny Grapefruit Tree.


- Union Center for the Arts: Pacific Islander multi-media arts center, gallery, museum, and designer, Isamu Noguchi. Rock sculpture by world famous sculptor.

- Ancient site of Koyasan Buddhist Temple - Future Home of Budokan, a multi-purpose sports and activities center.

- The Imperial Japanese Navy - military base at Los Angeles during World War II.

- Go For Broke National Education Center: Established from the top of the Imperial Japanese Navy, a monument commemorating Japanese Americans who served in the United States Army during World War II.

**Left:** American Concentration Camps map reprinted from Japanese Americans in World War II, National Park Services, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Historic Landmarks Program.

Above: TAKACHIZU Map reprinted with permission from Sustainable Little Tokyo (sustainablelittletokyo.org)
**Bearing the Burden**

Given the instructions, "Take Only What You Can Carry" What items would you bring on a long journey knowing that you will never return? What would you leave behind?

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

What do we need to survive?

What items help us survive? What items help us thrive?

Why do families immigrate to the U.S?

Describe the immigration story of someone in your family?

What is the difference between forced (slavement) and voluntary (economic, amnesty) immigration?

What is the connection between our labor needs and immigration policies?

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**Things I MUST bring:**

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**Things I MUST leave behind but will miss:**

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**Wearing your pride**

Think about the costumes in the show and the preliminary design sketches below. Note any similarities and/or differences.

Which character do you identify with, Kei, Frankie, or Sammy?

What characteristics do you share with them?

What aspects of themselves do they share through their wardrobe? Why?

How do you share aspects of yourself, your personality, your beliefs, your interests, through how you dress? Why?

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

What does it mean to “dress” someone or something up?

Discuss the use of costume and dress to disguise and to identify elements of oneself.

What words do you use to describe someone’s fashion or style choices?

Share what you discovered about how you want others to “see” you.

Consider the use of costumes in other forms of entertainment (film, television, music videos). How and why are costumes chosen? What messages are reinforced or challenged?

What is significant about choices made in theatre and other forms of entertainment?

How has and how do you imagine your wardrobe will change throughout your life?
ACTIVITY

Using ONLY the words from the song “Gaman”, create your own poem that tells a story about survival, grit, and the power and inspiration that you use in your daily struggles and challenges. Words may be used in any order and as many times as you want.

**Remix Poem**

**Gaman**

It will all be alright
There’s a way through this night
Stay strong
On this long road
We bury our pain
There’s a word we will say
To help get through each day
We will bear any nightmare
With a simple refrain
Gaman, Gaman

Hold your head high, carry on, Gaman
This life up on high
Looking down
See how I have lost
Am exhausted, weak, and ashamed

[KEI & HANNAH]
Little baby, don’t cry
Hear a sweet lullaby
Have I failed to protect you?
Am I to blame?

We know that there’s no turning back
[KEI & HANNAH]
Gaman
If we hold together
There’s nothing we lack
And our people will know
That wherever we go
Together we ever remain
Gaman, Gaman

Sturdy and sure, keep faith and endure
We will carry on
Gaman

Dignity, pride
As we stand side by side
Even when all hope seems gone

—GAMAN

**Message in the Music**

Consider the role that music plays in your life and in Allegiance.

What songs help you express your thoughts and feelings?
What song best describes who you are today?
What songs comfort you and/or encourage you into action?
How do the songs in Allegiance help the story?
Do the songs help you understand the different characters?

**REMIX POEM**

**ACTIVITY**

Using ONLY the words from the song “Gaman”, create your own poem that tells a story about survival, grit, and the power and inspiration that you use in your daily struggles and challenges. Words may be used in any order and as many times as you want.

**Dignity, pride**
As we stand side by side
Even when all hope seems gone

—GAMAN
Why did they feel it was necessary to participate in such activities behind barbed wire? What kind of activities did people do to pass the time while the portraits and images presented here.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
How do you imagine the daily lives of the people in these portraits?

Think about the images you capture and post on social media. To mirror the life they left prior to the outbreak of war.

In Rohwer, Arkansas, where George Takei was held as a child, the wood swamps were humid and the heavy rains made the"land fluid." The photos you see are of people trying to make the best of a difficult situation. Japanese Americans, while imprisoned, worked to build a community with schools, libraries, farms, and places of worship. They organized sports, music, and theater events to mirror the life they left prior to the outbreak of war.

The War Relocation Authority's Photographic Section (WRAPS) took thousands of photos to document the events surrounding wartime incarceration. These images captured the emotional experience of Japanese Americans as they prepared for, lived in, and later left incarceration camps. Photographers, including Toyo Miyatake, Ansel Adams, and Dorotha Lange, took pictures of the landscape, harsh living conditions and extreme weather. Many facilities were located in the desert where winters were freezing and summer temperatures would reach over 100 degrees. In Rohwer, Arkansas, where George Takei was held as a child, the wooded swamps were humid and the heavy rains made the land fluid. The photos you see are of people trying to make the best of a difficult situation. Japanese Americans, while imprisoned, worked to build a community with schools, libraries, farms, and places of worship. They organized sports, music, and theater events to mirror the life they left prior to the outbreak of war.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
Think about the images you capture and post on social media in your daily life. How do these images shape your identity, relationships, and reality? As you watch Allegiance, consider the portraits and images presented here.

How do you imagine the daily lives of the people in these portraits?

What kind of activities did people do to pass the time while behind barbed wire?

Why did they feel it was necessary to participate in such activities?

Degree workers in Manzanar. Photo by Ansel Adams.

Alleluia

Portraits and Images

This story reflects my own personal history as an American whose childhood was spent evacuated and relocated behind barbed wire in an American internment camp because I... happened to look like the people who bombed Pearl Harbor.

—GEORGE TAKEI

Early Release

The National Japanese American Student Relocation Council (NJAARC) was an important organization of educators and citizens concerned about the removal of Japanese-American college students from west coast schools. Formed in May 1942, the organization’s initial focus was to re-locate and re-enroll Japanese American college students to schools outside of the designated “military zones.” However, as the war continued the organization fought to allow students the right to leave incarceration camps if they were admitted into a pre-approved college. Students could not access federal aid and relied on private organizations to assist with tuition. Once enrolled in colleges, many Japanese American students were bullied by their peers who saw them as too similar to the enemy and were suspicious of their early release. Despite these challenges thousands of Japanese Americans completed their college degrees while their families remained incarcerated.

Returning Home

On December 18, 1944 the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision on the Ex parte Mistsura Endo case ruled that the War Relocation Authority (WRA) could no longer incarcerate Japanese Americans against their will. Less than a month later the order barring their return to the West Coast was also lifted, allowing Japanese Americans the right to leave incarceration camps and return home. Japanese Americans were relieved to no longer be imprisoned, however, they also felt a great deal of fear and uncertainty. Many families lost their jobs and homes, and had no place to return. Families that needed to take care of young children and the elderly faced challenges with finding employment, housing and health care. To further complicate issues the WRA encouraged Japanese Americans to not “cluster” and persuaded people to live in new cities in the Midwest and East coast. Some young professionals left their parents to attend college and found employment away from friends and family. Despite the WRA’s message, however, many Japanese Americans returned to the West Coast and relied on community support services to rebuild their lives. The WRA provided trailer parks to aid with their transition, however, the conditions were similar to incarceration facilities with unsanitary communal bathrooms, leaking boilers and piles of garbage. Facing challenges, people leaned on one another, living in hotels, churches, temples and in one another’s homes until they could afford to live on their own.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
How did access to college affect Japanese American students during WWII?

Beyond a college degree what did these students gain by going to college?

Review the following passage found in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program:

Individuals who meet the following criteria can apply for deferred action for childhood arrivals:

• are under 31 years of age as of June 15, 2012;
• came to the U.S. while under the age of 16;
• have continuously resided in the U.S. from June 15, 2007 to the present; if purposes of calculating this five year period, brief and innocent absences from the United States for humanitarian reasons will not be included;
• entered the U.S. without inspection or fell out of lawful visa status before June 15, 2002;
• were physically present in the United States on June 15, 2012, and at the time of making the request for consideration of deferred action with USCIS;
• are currently in school, have graduated from high school, have obtained a GED, or have been honorably discharged from the Coast Guard or armed forces;
• have not been convicted of a felony offense, a significant misdemeanor, or more than three misdemeanors of any kind; and
• do not pose a threat to national security or public safety.

What are similarities between the DACA policy regarding a college education and the experience of Japanese American college students during WWII?

What is the definition of family? How do you define family?

How do you and your family rebuild after a challenging experience of disagreement or separation?

How do families come together in times of crisis? How do families come together to help each other in times of need?

How do the experiences of Japanese American students during WWII compare to the experiences of students today?
What does Solidarity look like?

It looks like Ralph Lazo, a Belmont High School student, who joined his Japanese American friends at Manzanar concentration camp, because he thought the camps were wrong. In the 1980’s he joined a group class action lawsuit against the United States government for incarcerating Japanese Americans.

It looks like the Mendez family who took care of the Munemitsu farm in Westminster and returned it to the family after they returned from the concentration camp. The Mendez family went on to challenge the segregated school system that prevented minority children from attending schools with white children. They were supported by other groups and won in 1947 - leading to the desegregation of all schools in California.

It looks like the Quakers, a religious group, which spoke out against the incarceration when others did not and brought gifts and basic necessities to Japanese Americans in the camps. They also assisted the Nisei (second generation) in finding jobs and housing in the Midwest so they could finish their education.

Solidarity looks like the many Americans and churches that supported the campaign for redress in the 1980s, calling for an apology and payments for the unjust actions of the United States government during World War II. Because of them and others, Japanese Americans won redress in 1988 when Congress passed the Civil Liberties Act.

It looks like Japanese Americans who spoke out against scapegoating of Muslims and Arab Americans after the attacks on September 11, 2001 and who continued to build bridges and support the Muslim community through programs, like Break the Fast (Ramadan).

It looks like Nikkei for Civil Rights & Redress (NCRR) and the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) which created a program called Bridging Communities so that Japanese American and Muslim youth could build a relationship based on understanding of each other’s values and communities.

It looks like the thousands who came together at vigils in the spirit of love and who have gone to the airports to challenge the travel ban and protect people’s rights to enter this country and seek refuge.

It looks like the people who have stood with the Dreamers, gone on hunger strikes to push for a “clean” immigration bill that gives legal status to DACA youth and keeps families together.

Most importantly, solidarity looks like you!

You can make your school a welcoming place for all people with door hangers and posters that say, “Muslims and Immigrants are Welcome Here! All People are Welcome Here!”

You can speak out against bullying and hate language against people based solely on their religion, ethnicity or gender preference.

You can step out of your comfort zone and get to know people different from yourself – visit a mosque on “Open Mosque” day in October and learn more about Islam and Muslims.

You can help educate yourself and classmates with “Know Your Rights” information that protects not only immigrants but all of us.

"Solidarity is a Verb" so find a way to take action.
Executive Order: An official directive from the U.S. president to federal agencies.

detained: the process when a state or private citizen lawfully holds a person by removing his or her freedom of liberty at that time.

incarcerated: the restraint of a person’s liberty, for any cause whatsoever, whether by authority of the government, or by a person acting without such authority.

detained: the process when a state or private citizen lawfully holds a person by removing his or her freedom of liberty at that time.

enemy aliens: Any native, citizen, denizen with which a government is in conflict with and who are liable to be apprehended, restrained, secured and removed.

democracy: a system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives.

agency: is the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices.

civic engagement: can be defined as citizens working together to make a change or difference in the community.

social justice: is a concept of fair and just relations between the individual and society. Measured by the explicit and tacit terms for the distribution of wealth, opportunities for personal activity and social privileges.

social movements: is the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices.

think critically: is the objective analysis of facts to form a judgment. The subject is complex, and there are several different definitions which generally include the rational, skeptical, unbiased analysis or evaluation of factual evidence.

tradition: a belief or behavior passed down within a group or society with symbolic meaning or special significance with origins in the past.

patriotism: is the ideology of attachment to a homeland. This attachment can be a combination of many different features relating to one’s own homeland, including ethnic, cultural, political or historical aspects.

assimilation: is the process by which a person’s or group’s culture come to resemble those of another group. Refers to foreign immigrants or native residents that come to be culturally dominated by another society.