Hold These Truths
Production Guide 2020
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This Production Guide was created by People’s Light Education staff, and includes adaption of dramaturgical materials produced by Gina Pisasale and East West Players. Please reach out to discuss any specific needs for your classroom or group; we always are happy to help.

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Using the Video and this Guide

The Spring 2020 People’s Light production of *Hold These Truths* is available as a video resource.

Some groups may not be able, or will not prefer, to watch the entire performance in one sitting.

The following recommended segments may be useful to organize your viewing and discussion:

**Start—24:15.** Gordon introduces himself, his outlook, his family, and his youth: mixed experiences of both opportunity and discrimination.

**24:15—46:10.** Pearl Harbor is attacked by Japan. When Americans of Japanese ancestry face curfew and later are relocated from their homes, Gordon resists and is arrested.

**46:10—1:10:50.** Gordon’s fight in the courts begins. While his case is tried and then appealed, Gordon passes time in jail, later hitchhiking to serve in a work camp in Arizona. During the same period his family is incarcerated at Tule Lake, except when subpoenaed to testify against Gordon at his trial.

**1:10:50—end.** Gordon’s case is finally reviewed by the Supreme Court. After the verdict, he returns to his life and studies, begins a family, and follows along with the verdicts in other similar cases until his own case is finally revisited.

This guide draws heavily from first person quotations, including passages from Gordon Hirabayashi’s autobiography, *A Principled Stand*. Depending on whether you are approaching this play with an emphasis on social studies, language arts, or other goals in mind, you will find different segments of this guide most useful. **It is not necessary to study all the information provided in order to enjoy the producton.**

**Not sure where to start, or don’t have much time?** The playwright’s notes on pages 4 & 5 provide a good general introduction to the play and its themes.

If you need assistance focusing your studies, please do not hesitate to contact any member of the People’s Light education team.

*Above: Steven Eng plays Gordon Hirabayashi in the 2020 People’s Light production. Photos by Charles T. Brastow; also on pages 10 and 11.*
From the Playwright, Jeanne Sakata

When I first heard of Gordon Hirabayashi in the late 1990’s, I was enthralled -- and shocked. Shocked that I had never heard of his story before. Born and raised in a thriving Japanese American community in the Bay Area of California, I had studied Japanese American history as a college student and later became actively involved in the Asian American community as a theater artist.

And yet Gordon Hirabayashi’s fascinating story was entirely unknown to me. Gordon was only a 24-year old college student during WWII, when he defied and legally challenged US government orders to mass incarcerate all people of Japanese ancestry on the West Coast, including thousands of American citizens – Americans like my own father and aunts and uncles and cousins, who, as children and teenagers, had been forcibly removed from their homes and schools, and penned up behind barbed wire during WWII.

My family never spoke about those years, as it was such a traumatic experience. But as I grew up and became fully aware of what had happened to them, I absorbed that pain as well.

So when I discovered Gordon’s story -- so full of heartbreak, but also his irrepressible humor and zest for life -- it was a life-changing experience. I knew I had to try to bring his story to the American stage, not just as an act of healing for myself, my family, and my community, but also to inspire and give hope to any American citizen who has been denied equal treatment under the law promised by our Constitution because of factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and who must battle constantly to make those promises a living reality.

The more I researched the story, the more intrigued I became. I was fascinated by this unique, riveting and deeply American story, which I found both timely in its political significance, yet timeless in its spiritual themes. Here was an unassuming Japanese American Quaker college student, who took the words of the Constitution deeply to heart and attempted to rec- oncile its pronouncement that "all men are created equal" with the ugly reality of his country's betrayal during WWII. And who, in so doing, embarked on a journey of spiritual enlightenment, full of unpredictable twists and turns as tragic and devastating as they were humorous and uplifting.

I hope people will leave the play with a deeper, more personal sense of what the true meanings of patriotism and citizenship can be. I hope they will leave with a heightened recognition that our country's painful and torturous struggle to make the words of the Constitution a living reality depends on each of us making the Constitution "a personal matter." But I also hope that people will come away quietly inspired by Gordon's story, with a sense of what true inner liberation of the spirit means---and with a renewed awareness that great leaps toward political liberation and spiritual enlightenment are made up of a thousand smaller steps of everyday individuals who simply and irrevocably decide to take a step in the right direction.

Gordon's story is a vitally important American one that all of us can draw hope from, and his tenacious quest for freedom echoes those of all who hunger and fight for justice -- who "hold the truths" of the Constitution -- and refuse to let go.

You can learn more about Jeanne and her work at www.jeannesakata.com.
History Becomes a Play

Playwright Jeanne Sakata provides notes in the opening pages of the *Hold These Truths* script.

**WRITING PROCESS AND CONTENT**

This play is based on a true story, inspired by many hours of interviews I conducted with Gordon Hirabayashi and several of his friends from the 1940’s, by numerous letters written by Mr. Hirabayashi during his imprisonment, and by contemporary articles written by and about Mr. Hirabayashi. It is a work blending historical fact with fiction, and certain actual events have been compressed or altered in terms of chronology or content for dramatic purposes.

**SETTING AND STYLE**

The play travels in time from the 1980s backward to Gordon’s youth and college days, including the period from 1942-1943 leading up to his appearance before the U.S. Supreme Court.

The play is written so that one actor also portrays all the other characters—37 in total—who are described in Gordon’s story.

**CHARACTER DESCRIPTION: GORDON HIRABAYASHI**

A Nisei college professor in his mid-60’s, who, while reflecting on his childhood years, “becomes” his younger self—a freshman college student from a devoutly religious Japanese immigrant farming family. His polite, quiet demeanor masks a passionate, idealistic, adventurous spirit. Shy and reserved as a child and teenager, now coming into his own at the University of Washington, Gordon begins to discover his strengths as a student leader and organizer, and also begins to define his spiritual and political identity as a Quaker and a conscientious objector. Painfully aware of the limitations that 1940’s America places on him because of his Japanese ancestry, he longs to escape the bigotry, but seems to accept his status as a second-class citizen—that is, until the bombing of Pearl Harbor leads to the mass incarceration of all people of Japanese ancestry on the West Coast, and forces Gordon to take a stand against what he feels is a violation of his constitutional rights as an American citizen.

Costume Designer
Katie Yamaguchi’s research board for Gordon’s look in the 1980’s
American Dreamer: In His Own Words

_Hold These Truths_ takes its audience through historical events and political and legal arguments. However, this play is constructed to portray a personal journey, and most audiences will find their way into the story by getting to know Gordon as an intriguing individual and underdog hero for whom we all want justice.

We encourage students to get to know him through his own words in the following pages.

**ON RESPONSIBILITY**

I was born in 1918 in Seattle, the second son. After we moved to our Thomas farm in 1919, my brother Paul, who was two years older, had an accident while riding on his bicycle. The medical care in those days was not good, and Paul died from damage to his kidneys. I then became the _chonan_ – eldest son – destined to be the family heir, and received special training. “It’s your responsibility,” I was told.

**ON HIS PARENTS**

To an outside observer, it would seem as if my mother made all of the decisions. She was the articulate one, publicly. Dad didn’t try to dominate. Mom excelled in her oral articulations – he supplied calmness. My father was the quiet and solid foundation, with his unostentatious dedication to the oneness of belief and practice. My mother was the fire, providing warmth and sometimes intense heat. She was an activist, outgoing, articulate, and feisty. This, by the way, was such a contrast to the norms of conduct in the Japanese community. There, the mottos were sayings like “Don’t rock the boat” and “Don’t do anything to attract attention, for right or wrong; you’ll suffer for it.” So Mom was the fire; fire produces light. Dad was the anchor, the Rock of Ages, complementing the light.

**USEFUL JAPANESE VOCABULARY**

_Issei_ refers to the first generation of Japanese immigrants to the United States, born in Japan. Gordon’s parents are the _Issei._

_Nisei_ refers to the second generation, born, raised, and educated in the United States. Gordon and his peers are the _Nisei._

_Sansei_ refers to the third generation, the children of the Nisei.

_Chonan_ describes the firstborn son.

**FOR DISCUSSION**

In what ways can birth order influence a child’s sense of duty or responsibility within a family? Is an oldest child often treated differently? Are there typical attitudes or expectations about firstborn children? How do you think becoming the eldest after his brother’s death may have affected Gordon differently than if he had been the eldest from birth? Is birth order significant to other characters in literature or real-life figures you have studied? Is it significant in your family?

When is responsibility a quality Gordon displays in this play? To whom or to what does he feel responsible?

In this passage and in the play, Gordon describes two very different temperaments in his parents: a calm strength from his father and an outspoken intensity from his mother. As you watch the play, how do you see either or both of these sides in Gordon himself? Does one dominate? Which do you think may have been most important to him as he faced the challenges shown in this play?

Gordon was a small child during the Great Depression, and his parents made their living as farmers. How could those experiences have shaped their ideas of success for Gordon? Why might his ideas be similar or different?
ON AMBITION & GETTING INVOLVED

About half of my grade-school classmates were Japanese. When I went to high school in Auburn, the proportion of Japanese dropped, but we were still a large visible minority in the valley. In school, we participated in various activities, especially sports and other groups as well, but our numbers were not large. [...]

An important part of my teen years was participation in the local Japanese American social clubs, religious fellowship groups, Japanese American Christian conferences, and Nisei sports and church leagues. I subscribed to the Nisei Courier newspaper to keep up on community affairs. Through the Boy Scout's leaders’ conferences, I learned to participate in interethnic circles beyond my high school environment. It was kind of a springboard for my inclination to take first-class citizenship seriously in spite of the knowledge of second-class status of Japanese in the prewar days.

As a Nisei growing up in America, I was increasingly incorporating Western values, goals, and styles into my life. My early Japanese values – hard work, modesty, delaying gratification – would be adapted in interesting ways to strengthen the achievement of my increasingly Western goals. Moreover, the group approval I had begun to seek was that of the non-Japanese circles where my success more and more was being measured by achievements in school, work and play circles, and the community at large.

So I began to tell myself that first-class citizenship was a viable objective. I chose this to be a reality that I could live for. I realized that I might not immediately get it, but I could live for it. Now if I’m going to keep that with some integrity, I’ve got to say that rejection was something that might happen, but things are going to change. And I’m not going to accept second-class treatment, and I’m going to try to live like an American, regardless.
Japanese Immigrants, Discrimination & Exclusion

Ever since their arrival in the United States in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Japanese immigrants to the United States and their offspring faced discrimination. The main reason for the unfriendly welcome was that white workers viewed Japanese workers as unwelcome competition. Anti-immigrant politicians, spurred on by nativist organizations, enacted a series of discriminatory laws.

The first of these laws was the Naturalization Act of 1870, which prevented Japanese immigrants (and other Asians) from becoming naturalized American Citizens. The Immigration Act of 1924 put an end to virtually all Japanese immigration to the United States. The Alien Land Act, in effect from 1913 to 1948, forbade Japanese nationals from owning land in California (the state in which the majority of Japanese immigrants and their families lived.)

Throughout the Great Depression anti-Japanese sentiment escalated. Along with other immigrants and people of color, Japanese American were blamed for the economic collapse. Anti-Japanese sentiment reached a frenzied pitch on December 7, 1941, when Japan bombed the naval station at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii (this act drew the United States into active participation in World War II, 1939-45).

White Americans exacted revenge for the bombing on Japanese Americans. People of Japanese ancestry were beaten on the streets; Japanese parents considered it too dangerous to send their children to school. Individuals, civic organizations, and local governments accused all Japanese Americans of being enemy sympathizers and called for mass arrests.

Immediately after the bombing, a series of restrictions were placed on Japanese Americans. Several hundred were arrested. Japanese Americans were fired by public and private employers, forced to observe a curfew, and fingerprinted. U.S. service men of Japanese descent were discharged from the military and Japanese-language newspapers were banned.

"The Japanese are starting the same tide of immigration which we thought we had checked twenty years ago.... The Chinese and Japanese are not bonafide citizens. They are not the stuff of which American citizens can be made.”
~ San Francisco Mayor James Duval, 1900

“I think the thing that we felt the most was that the people who stopped in at our store thought maybe we should close it up. For our safety. But my husband said, ‘No there’s no need to do that. We’re American citizens.’ But as things came out in the newspaper and on the radio as the days went by, it really got worse.” ~ Emi Somekawa

(cont. next page)
On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, thereby authorizing the mass removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast. Roosevelt’s directive led to the eventual internment of 120,000 Japanese Americans in camps from 1942-1945 (in some cases through March 1946).

In early 1942 Japanese Americans began receiving their evacuation orders. The orders typically gave a person less than seven days to report to a relocation processing (or assembly) center. There were twenty relocation processing centers along the West Coast, most of them set up in fairgrounds, racetracks, abandoned military facilities, migrant work camps, and stockyards. The evacuees were only allowed to bring those possessions they could carry, and had little choice but to sell their property, often for a mere fraction of the property's value.

Source: "Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians" in American Civil Rights: Primary Sources. Engelbert, Phillis and Betz Des Chenes, eds.

“Swarms of people came daily to our home to see what they could buy. A grand piano for $50, pieces of furniture, $50... One man offered $500 for the house.”
~Henry Yoshitake

It is difficult to describe the feeling of despair and humiliation experienced by all of us as we watched the Caucasians coming to look over our possessions and offering such nominal amounts knowing we had no recourse but to accept whatever they were offering because we did not know what the future held for us.”
~ Yasuko Ito

“Herd ‘em up, pack ‘em off and give ‘em the inside room in the badlands. Let ‘em be pinched, hurt, hungry, and dead up against it.... Let us have no patience with the enemy or with anyone whose veins carry his blood.... Personally I hate the Japanese.
~Henry McLemore,
The San Francisco Examiner.
FROM KING COUNTY JAIL
July 4, 1942

Today, in our remembrance of the Day of Independence, there is a dark shadow signifying our shortcomings. Through hysteria and the spread of war psychosis, 113,000 people of “Japanese descent, but alien and non-alien” are confined behind bars as prisoners of war. Notice how they are classified – “both alien and non-alien” – a total and deliberate evasion of the recognition that over 60 percent of those confined are native-born American citizens of respectable standing. Descent has taken priority over citizenship. American citizens are being held prisoner by their own government. They are told that to be prisoners is the patriotic thing to do. What a shattering of their democratic vision, what a jolt to their social and psychological status as citizens. Tragedy of tragedies, their only crime is that of descent.

But even though this is America, these things happening today are not American. They are the results of misinterpretations, mis-emphasis concerning the right thing to do, hysteria, and shortsightedness. It is us up to those of us who feel a wrong has been committed, that we have fallen short, to bear witness to that fact. It is our obligation to show forth our light in times of darkness, nay, our privilege.

GORDON’S TIMELINE

April 23, 1918
Gordon Kiyoshi Hirabayashi is born in Seattle to Shungo (father) and Mitsu (mother).

1937 - 1942
Gordon attends University of Washington in Seattle. While enrolled, he becomes an active member of the campus YMCA, joins the Society of Friends (Quakers) and registers as a conscientious objector.

February 19, 1942
President Franklin Roosevelt signs Executive Order 9066, giving orders to military commanders to exclude Japanese Americans from the West Coast.

March, 1942
Gen. John DeWitt issues Curfew and Exclusion Orders. Shortly after, Gordon (in his senior year drops out of college and begins work with the Quaker American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), helping internees move to the Puyallup assembly center.

May 16, 1942
Gordon presents the Seattle FBI with a four-page written statement entitled “Why I Refused to Register For Evacuation” and is arrested. He spends five months in King County Jail awaiting district court trial while his family reports to Pinedale Assembly Center (and later, Tule Lake Concentration Camp).

October 11, 1942
Brought from camp prior to their son’s trial, the prosecution jails Gordon’s parents for 11 days alongside their son. Shungo is housed with his son while Mitsu is housed in the women’s jail.

October 21, 1942 – February 1943
Convicted of wartime curfew violation, Gordon appeals and spends another four months in prison. Released to Spokane for work with the AFSC, Gordon awaits his appeal.

June 1943
The Supreme Court rules unanimously in favor of the government and against Gordon.
July 1943*
Because it is against his principles to pay his way to prison, Gordon is allowed to hitchhike to a Tucson, Arizona federal work camp.

August 1943*
Gordon arrives at work camp and is freed after 90 days to return to Spokane, WA to continue with the AFSC.

July 1944
Gordon marries Esther Schmoe shortly before he is convicted and jailed for failing to comply with Selective Service orders.

Education: BA 1944, MA 1949, PhD 1952
Gordon completes his education in sociology at the University of Washington.

1981
Congress creates the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC), tasked with investigating the damage and recommending appropriate remedies for those who were relocated and detained during the war. Attorney and legal historian Peter Irons uncovers suppression of evidence by U.S. officials in the Justice and War departments, and intentional misinformation presented to the Supreme Court in the Korematsu, Hirabayashi, and Yasui cases.

1983
CWRIC delivers its report, Personal Justice Denied, calling for a variety of actions including 1.5 billion dollars to provide payments of $20,000 to each surviving internee.

Gordon Hirabayashi’s 1942 conviction, among others, is overturned.

January 2, 2012
Gordon Hirabayashi dies in Canada.

May 29, 2012
President Barack Obama presented the Presidential Medal of Freedom posthumously to Hirabayashi for his principled stand against Japanese-American internment.

*These items are out of sequence in the stage adaptation; this play makes Gordon's journey to the Arizona work camp part of the waiting period for his appeal process to reach the Supreme Court.

FROM HITCHHIKING
In central Utah, I was given another ride, this time by a sheriff. When he asked how far I was going, I replied that I was headed for the Tucson prison camp to serve a sentence. The sheriff bolted upright, nearly drove us off the road, and skidded the car to a stop. As the dust and gravel settled, I quickly told him not to worry because I have a letter authorizing the trip and showed it to him. Although somewhat puzzled by my unusual mode of travel to prison, he finally decided to keep on going without taking me into custody and take me as far as he was going.

On a lonely road in southern Utah, a farmer in a truck picked me up. He said, “You’re a Chinese aren’t you?”

I said, “No, I’m an American.”

“I knew that,” replied the farmer, “but you are a Chinese American, aren’t you?”

I answered, “My parents came from Japan; therefore I’m an American of Japanese ancestry.”

After a few moments, he said, “If I had known that, I wouldn’t have picked you up.”

Trying to be a good Quaker, I said, “Well, I don’t want to get a ride under false pretenses, so if you’ll stop the truck, I’ll get out.”

He thought that over and said, “Well, I picked you up, so you can stay.”

With time on hand, I explained to him why I was hitchhiking to prison to serve time for a wrong constitutional decision. When we reached his house, he made me go upstairs to take a bath, fed me dinner, put me back in the truck, and drove me to a well-traveled crossroad. A minor victory, but a moral one!
The Arguments: Hirabayashi v. The United States

FROM LOCAL TO NATIONAL

The question facing the U.S. Supreme Court in 1943 was:

Did the President's executive orders and the power delegated to the military authorities discriminate against Americans and resident aliens of Japanese descent in violation of the Fifth Amendment?

Since legal arguments are unfamiliar to many of us, you may appreciate reviewing the following passage from the Hold These Truths script, either before or after watching the performance.

GORDON:

My attorney, Harold Evans, stands to state the facts of my case and argues unlawful delegation of power. If America had been invaded, and martial law declared, Congress could grant the President power to limit citizens' liberties. But that power may not be granted, when the area in question is not under martial law.

“The question has been raised whether this country could wage a new war without loss of its fundamental liberties at home. Here is one occasion for this Court to give an unequivocal answer to that question and show the world that we fight for democracy and preserve it too.”

And now the government gets their shot. U.S. Solicitor General Charles Fahy stands and argues:

Military necessity. “They all need to go. Every last one. To keep America safe.” And that's what Charles Fahy must prove today to justify the government's orders.

He starts with a tour of the Pacific battlefront, declaring the war “the most serious threat that has ever faced the United States.” He stresses “the importance of West Coast defense facilities,” “the dire need to protect them against ‘espionage and sabotage.’ The vast number of Nisei living near those facilities, who held dual citizenship granted by Japan, who attended Japanese language schools, schools in Japan, belonged to Japanese social clubs. Vast numbers of Issei who had never become American citizens”—somehow forgetting to mention they were forbidden by law to do so.

“During time of war, it is not enough to say, ‘I am a citizen, and I have rights.’ One must also say, ‘I am a citizen, and I have obligations.’ Therefore due process must give way to the military's ‘reasonable discretion.’”

And now the Justices deliberate. Justice William Douglas begins:  

(cont. next page)
“We are engaged in a war for survival against enemies who have placed a premium on barbar-ity and ruthlessness. Self-preservation comes first. The United States wages war to win.”

But then Justice Frank Murphy responds:

“But it does not appear that any serious effort was made to isolate the disloyal. Instead, 70,000 American citizens are deprived of their liberty because of a racial inheritance...”

The Justices bear down on Murphy:

“Japanese Americans have maintained here a racial solidarity which has tended to prevent their assimilation as an integral part of the white population...”

(Murphy) “This is so utterly inconsistent with our ideals....that I cannot lend my assent.”

“I compare the orders with the military draft. A nation which requires the individual to give up his freedom and lay down his life...certainly can demand these lesser sacrifices from its other citizens.

(Murphy) “Undoubtedly we must wage war to win, and do it with all our might. But...”

“Justice Murphy, you cannot wait for an invasion to see if loyalty triumphs. A country that ‘wages war to win’ cannot sit in judgment on the decisions of its generals.”

(Murphy) “BUT...it will avail us little to win the war on the battlefield and lose it here at home. We do not win the war, on the contrary, we lose it, if we destroy the Constitution and the best traditions of our country.”

Lights change. The verdict is announced.

GETTING TO THE COURT

You may wish to review how a case makes its way through the appeal process to the U.S. Supreme Court.

This clear, 2 minute video provides a quick overview: How a Case Makes it to the US Supreme Court

THE FIFTH AMENDMENT

No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a pre-sentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensa-tion.

FOR DISCUSSION

Look up or discuss any words or terms that may be unfamiliar. Understanding key points from this page will be helpful for enjoying the play as a whole.

This legal argument weighs the rights of an individual against a responsibility to the larger soci-ety. Are you familiar with any other situation – legal or not – where these two priorities are in conflict?

Justice Murphy disagrees with the others. Choose to argue either with or against Justice Murphy; how can you add to the argument in your own words?

For a concise summary explaining the Court's decision, visit:

www.oyez.org/cases/1940-1955/320us81
Notes on Language: Then and Now

RACIAL SLURS
The text of Hold These Truths includes the use of racial slurs, including the historically authentic use of the term “Japs” to refer to individuals of Japanese heritage. As explained by the Japanese American Citizens League’s Anti-Hate Program:

Words like “jap” have a long and bitter history. When immigrants first began arriving from Japan, the use of “jap” became a convenient expression of contempt and hate. Bigots and racists used the term to exploit the fictitious “Yellow Peril.” Today, even the term “oriental” is considered offensive. The State of Washington has prohibited the use of “oriental” in statutes, codes, rules and regulations. Historically, the term conveyed negative stereotypes of Asians as being inscrutable, untrustworthy, threatening or unable to assimilate. The term “Asia” is preferred.

Taken from the JACL’s 2-page brochure, “Words Can Kill the Spirit”

PROFANITY
In a few instances, the playwright has chosen to accompany the racially charged insults in the play’s dialogue with profanity. This language is not gratuitous, but deliberately included to evoke the deeply negative and hate-filled attacks launched at Japanese-Americans during this period of history.

If you have specific concerns about language, a member of the People’s Light education team can discuss the specific usage in this production.

HISTORICAL TERMINOLOGY
Language is a powerful tool that can be used to represent or distort reality. During World War II, U.S. government and military officials used a number of euphemisms to describe their actions against people of Japanese ancestry in the United States.

Should euphemistic words and phrases from an earlier era be used today? This is an important question for students, teachers, and all people concerned with historical accuracy. [...] Many Japanese Americans, historians, educators, and others use language that they believe provides a more accurate representation of the past. An example would be to use “exclusion” or “forced removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast,” instead of the euphemistic term “evacuation.”

Densho [a non-profit organization with the mission “to preserve and share history of the WWII incarceration of Japanese Americans to promote equity and justice today.”] encourages individuals to think critically about the euphemistic language used during the 1940s by the U.S. government in its treatment of people based on their ancestry. What does “evacuate” mean? What image comes to mind with the words, “assembly center”? In what ways do these words accurately reflect a historical era? In what ways do these words misrepresent historical events and conditions?

Use of Internment and Internment Camp. The term internment is problematic when applied to U.S. citizens. Technically, internment refers to the detention of "enemy aliens" during time of war, and two-thirds of the Japanese Americans incarcerated were U.S. citizens.

Use of Incarceration and Incarceration Camp. After the mass removal, U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry and Japanese immigrants were confined within camps that the government euphemistically called "Relocation Centers." Relocation center, however, inadequately describes the harsh conditions and forced confinement of the camps. In fact, they were prisons—surrounded by barbed-wire fences and patrolled by armed guards—from which one could not leave without permission. These camps fit the definition of "concentration camps": prison camps outside the normal criminal justice system, designed to confine civilians for military or political purposes on the basis of race and ethnicity. Some people have objected to this use of the term "concentration camp," believing it best represents the Nazi camps of World War II. We use "incarceration" to refer to the confinement of more than 120,000 individuals of Japanese ancestry in War Relocation Authority incarceration camps.

Source: densho.org/sitesofshame/glossary

If you’d like to explore this topic in more detail, the JACL also has an excellent 14 page educational resource, “The Power of Words Handbook.”
Quaker Faith and Spaces

Gordon Hirabayashi embraced the Quaker faith during his college years, and he speaks of its values throughout Hold These Truths.

The Religious Society of Friends, also referred to as the Quaker Movement, was founded in England in the 17th century by George Fox (mentioned in the play). He and other early Quakers, or Friends, were persecuted for their beliefs, which included the idea that the presence of God exists in every person. Quakers rejected elaborate religious ceremonies, didn’t have official clergy and believed in spiritual equality for men and women. Quaker missionaries first arrived in America in the mid-1650s. Quakers, who practice pacifism, played a key role in both the abolitionist and women’s rights movements.

The message of George Fox and early Friends included:

- Since we are all ministers, we have no need of ordained priests, nor do we need consecrated buildings nor the outward celebration of sacraments.
- Worship is most blest by gathering together in expectant silence to wait for God's guidance, which comes through either the stillness or the word of those moved to speak.

Sources:
www.history.com/topics/immigration/history-of-quakerism
quakerinfo.org/quakerism/Qrelig

FURTHER RESEARCH
It is not at all necessary to be familiar with all the individuals referenced in the play, but you may decide to research these other spiritual and social thinkers Gordon names:

- George Fox
- Rufus (Matthew) Jones
- A. J. Muste
- Norman Thomas
- Bayard Rustin – from nearby West Chester, PA!

What can you learn about any of these individuals. Why might their thinking have had an impact on Gordon?

Review more about Quaker history, including Pennsylvania’s Quaker founder William Penn.

DESIGN INSPIRATION

Playwright Jeanne Sakata says that “Gordon’s journey is about spiritual enlightenment... [that] begins at the dawn of a realization.”

Scenic Designer Se Hyun Oh worked to create a stage space to support Gordon’s realizations — and the audience’s. Rather than presenting a literal recreation of past events, with all the details one might find in a documentary film, the goal was to give the audience an intimate experience of Gordon’s own personal and emotional journey, and to keep the focus on him.

The final set design draws some of its inspiration from the installations of the artist James Turrell. In the 1970s, Turrell began to create a series of “Skyspaces,” enclosed spaces open to the sky. Viewers typically sit on benches all along the room’s edge to see the sky transform with light and time of day. This arrangement is not unlike a Quaker meeting space, where seating is arranged equally around a room, rather than all facing toward an altar or the position of a worship leader.

As it happens, Turrell was a lifelong Quaker, and his notable works include the Live Oak Meeting House for the Society of Friends, “Meeting” at P.S. 1, and “Greet the Light” at the newly rebuilt Chestnut Hill Friends Meeting in Philadelphia.

See more: jamesturrell.com
Writing Prompts

In the first excerpt, consider the metaphor of the nail. Describe why it applies to Gordon's story. Describe how it applies to any of the following:

- A character you know from literature.
- Another historical figure you have studied.
- Someone in current events.
- Someone in your own life.

In the second excerpt, Gordon’s mother argues that even by doing what he believes is right, he may be putting others in danger. **Are there situations when an individual should sacrifice principles in order to help others?** What would you think you would do in Gordon’s situation. How would you convince someone to agree with you? What would you do if it was your family member attempting an illegal protest?

Consider what you know about other cases of civil disobedience or conscientious objectors. Look for an example from another time in history. When has such an individual action prompted larger action or social change?

In the final excerpt, Gordon describes seeing the past, the present, and an ideal for the future. What is your view? Write your own personal essay or monologue about how you see the past, the present, and your ideal for the future ahead. Your view may be on a national, local, or personal issue. **What is your own unique glimpse of “what ought to be”**?

Below: the past meets the present meets the future on social media.

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**GORDON:**
“*Deru kugi wa utareru.*” Dad first said it to me. “The nail that sticks out is the one that gets hit.” It’s an old Japanese proverb. To stay out of danger or harm’s way, one must conform. One must obey. One must be...inconspicuous.


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**GORDON:** (*speaking with his mother*)
Our home is being flooded, she says, flooded with phone calls hourly, from friends, neighbors, relatives, Japanese community leaders. “You’ve got to make him change his mind. You’ve got to make him understand, we have to obey the government, we have to prove our loyalty, look at what they’re doing to us...”

“They’re terrified you’ll make them suspect too. How can you put them in danger? How can you be so selfish?”

“Mom---when I was just five years old, and we were at the Seattle Sears. And that guard was staring and staring at you, and you said if they accused you of stealing, you’d protest and sue the police. Then when you and Dad lost the farming commune because of the Alien Land Law. And you went to court to fight it.”

“*Maketawa! We LOST!*”

“Yes. But you tried!”

“Do you have any idea what the government could do to you? They might beat you. Torture you. Or leave you to starve and die. They could throw you into a dungeon like The Count of Monte Cristo..... and I may never see you again. *Gohdon, anata wa chonan desu.* You have a responsibility.”

“Yes. I have a responsibility, to live by my own principles.”

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**GORDON:**
I am somewhat aware of what was, and is. I have a glimpse of what ought to be. I seek to live as though the ought to be, is.
Present Day Connections

February 19, 2020 marked the 78th anniversary of Executive Order 9066, which authorized the displacement, evacuation, and internment of over 120,000 people of Japanese descent from the West Coast. Survivors’ experiences in Relocation Centers and the ten Internment Camps during WWII continue to inspire Japanese Americans to emulate Hiranuma’s hopeful civic commitment to the promise of the U.S. Constitution. Many now work to raise awareness and remind their fellow Americans of our society’s dangerous prejudices, so that history does not repeat itself.

On February 22, 2020 the Philadelphia Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) held a Day of Remembrance event in City Hall to memorialize Japanese exclusion and internment. In addition to honoring local internment camp survivors, the event also featured a panel discussion with representatives from the following organizations:

1. **The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR).** Founded in 1994, CAIR works to promote a positive image of Islam and Muslims in America and seeks to empower American Muslims. After 9/11, the continuing War on Terror, and Executive Orders authorizing travel bans (justified in court using the Fred Korematsu Supreme Court decision upholding the constitutionality of Japanese Internment), anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim hate crimes, discrimination, media representation, and general public hysteria more than echoes the treatment of Japanese Americans in the 1940s.

2. **The Sunrise Movement, AKA the Shut Down Berks Coalition.** The Berks County Residential Center (BCRC) is an ICE detention center in Leesport, PA, less than an hour from People’s Light. It is a 96-bed family detention center and one of only three such prisons in the country. The coalition is fighting against the immoral and unjust treatment and separation of immigrant families, the daily trauma imprinted upon children in such an environment, and the dubious legality of BCRC’s license to care for children. Many in the Japanese American community draw a direct line from Internment to our current inhumane practice of immigrant family detention.

**Tsuru for Solidarity.** Tsuru means “crane” in Japanese and symbolizes peace, compassion, hope and healing. Japanese American social justice advocates are helping to organize a march in Washington D.C. to end detention sites and support immigrant and refugee communities. Organizers are hoping to bring 120,000 folded paper cranes to hang on the White House fence to represent the 120,000 Japanese interned during WWII. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the march is in the process of being rescheduled. Meanwhile, the organizers are continuing to advocate for refugees and immigrants in our detention centers, now made even more vulnerable during this coronavirus pandemic.

**MORE RESOURCES**

- [amhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/](http://amhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/)
- **A More Perfect Union:** Focusing on the experiences of Japanese Americans who placed in detention camps, this exhibit is a case study in decision-making and citizen action under the U.S. Constitution. Interactive galleries combine images, music, text and first-person accounts. (Flash required for rich-media version; Select “PRINTABLE VERSION” in order to access many links without Flash installed.)
What’s Next at People’s Light?

Theatre School

- Spring Saturday classes held online will run April 18-May 16 2020
- Classes are offered for four separate age groups, ages 5-18
- Adult classes will return in Fall 2020; please contact us to receive announcements.

Youth Auditions

We will be auditioning youth and teen roles for *A Christmas Carol* (premiering at People’s Light in November 2020).

- “Audition Introduction” resources and sign-up are available online.
- Auditions coming in late May/June 2020.

Youth Playwriting

- People’s Light is aware of several upcoming opportunities for students in grade 6-12 to submit scripts for competitions and festivals.
- Please contact us for specific information and relevant dates.

Interested in any of these offerings? RSVP or share your questions:
ArtsDiscovery@peopleslight.org
610-647-1900 x137