

2013

## Yearning to breathe free : the quest for unalienable rights

Layne M. Clifton  
*California State University, Monterey Bay*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps\\_thes](https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes)

---

### Recommended Citation

Clifton, Layne M., "Yearning to breathe free : the quest for unalienable rights" (2013). *Capstone Projects and Master's Theses*. 4.

[https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps\\_thes/4](https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes/4)

This Capstone Project is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ CSUMB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Capstone Projects and Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CSUMB. Unless otherwise indicated, this project was conducted as practicum not subject to IRB review but conducted in keeping with applicable regulatory guidance for training purposes. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@csumb.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@csumb.edu).

# Yearning to Breathe Free: The Quest for Unalienable Rights



Layne M. Clifton  
Senior Capstone  
Division of Humanities and Communications  
Spring 2013

# Yearning to Breathe Free: The Quest for Unalienable Rights



The Statue of Liberty with an American flag backdrop. Image courtesy of Shutterstock. "Yearning to Breathe Free." Big Think. Photographer, Unknown. <[http://assets1.bigthink.com/system/idea\\_thumbnails/42223/headline/statue%20of%20liberty.jpg?1327943513](http://assets1.bigthink.com/system/idea_thumbnails/42223/headline/statue%20of%20liberty.jpg?1327943513)> May 3, 2013.

Layne M. Clifton  
Senior Capstone, Literary and Film Studies  
Creative Project, Dr. Cecilia O'Leary  
Division of Humanities and Communications  
Spring 2013

# Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank/acknowledge the following people in the creation of this project:

Mom and Dad, I couldn't have done this without you. I owe you life. You have always been nothing but considerate, loving, supportive and giving. You have always put me first, respected my choices (good and bad) and have allowed me to grow into the man I am today. "Thank you" does not even come close to the gratitude I feel.

Heather Clifton...what can I say. You are the yin to my yang. Your science kept me grounded when my head was in the philosophical clouds. You are my biggest critic and my biggest supporter. No one could ask for a better big sister.

Dr. William "Doc H." Hotchkiss: You taught me that writing is a possibility, and that there is wonder within words. You will be missed.

Bridgett Pulskamp, you are the love of my life. I am forever grateful for having you as my traveling companion in this journey called life.

1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Jared M. Landaker is a hero and the reason I wanted to be more than just a clerk at a grocery store. I think about you always. Whenever I found myself in doubt, I try to remember WWJD: What Would J-Rod Do?

Christopher Moore. You are a genius and my inspiration. Thank you for your irreverent humor and obscene wit.

Trevor, Travis, Benny and Jakestyle are the greatest friends a guy could have. Thanks for holding my hair back, even when it was blue, red, dreadlocked or shaved.

To my professors at Sierra Community College and California State, Monterey Bay: Thanks for not failing me. Oh yeah, and for teaching me a bit about some stuff along the way.

To the State and Federal Government: Thanks for ponying up the dough to put me through college. I apologize for the liberal arts degree.

And for those that feel I should thank you but I didn't. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to neglect you, it's just that there are so many people who have enhanced my life throughout the years, and this page is only so long.

# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements .....	i
Creative Project Proposal.....	1
A Note from the Author.....	4
“Harlem is Heaven” .....	5
“Sakura Blossoms” .....	14
Sources Referenced: Stories .....	22
Reflective Essay .....	24
Final Synthesis Essay .....	27
Sources Referenced: Essay .....	30

# Creative Project Proposal

1. Layne Michael Clifton, Human Communications – Literary and Film Studies.

2. Through the composition and compilation of short stories, the author will exhibit to the reader the various stages of American freedom throughout the history of the United States of America. Characters will be selected from marginalized groups of society including African Americans and Asian Americans. Each will be paired with an appropriate history showcasing the oppression that faced these groups.

3. The collection of writings will show the struggle for justice, equality, freedom and liberty which has been pursued since the conception of the United States of America. By setting the reader in eras of specific turning points in American freedom, a closer examination of the sentiments and politics of the American people will be achieved.

4. The purpose of this project is to enlighten the reader regarding the oppression and struggle to achieve freedom and participate in democracy that various facets of our society have striven for, while entertaining the reader by using creative writing conventions studied and practiced by the author while attending CSUMB.

5. The use of creative fiction writing will exhibit the writing techniques taught by the faculty of the Human Communications department, as well as an understanding of the importance of culture and equity in our society. The research of each historical setting will demonstrate authority of knowledge of these eras. Combined, the project will show a creative and critical view of the progress of American freedom which will entertain and inform the reader.

6. *Yearning to Breathe Free: The Quest for Unalienable Rights*

7. Preceded by an historical evaluation of the respective eras, each story puts the reader in the time and minds of the characters. The first story, “Harlem is Heaven,” follows Jack, a mulatto, as he struggles with the recent death of his brother during the Chicago race riots of 1919. He travels to Harlem in hopes of finding acceptance during the Harlem Renaissance, but instead gets caught up in the fast life of speakeasies and the mob. Tragedy ensues after he finds comfort in the arms of a white woman, reflecting the sentiments regarding interracial relationships of the time. In “Sakura Blossoms,” the reader follows the experiences of Takeshi, a young Nisei (Japanese American) as he is evacuated from the west

coast into an internment camp, despite his citizenship status as guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment.

8. It is expected that the author completes all deliverables on time as is outlined in the timeline below, including rough and revised drafts, and a final revision of all writings prior to the final portfolio deadline. Author will meet with Human Communication faculty members who show expertise in the themes (i.e., African American literature, Asian American studies, and Creative Fiction Writing) needed to complete the project after completion of rough drafts and at the faculty member's convenience. These meetings will ensure effective and appropriate use of histories and writing techniques. The final project will demonstrate the author's competency with writing, research and liberal studies, while contributing a unique work to the focus of Human Communications and the study of American freedom and democracy.

9. As a transfer student, some skills were initially developed during the author's studies at community college. An Introduction to Creative Writing course as well as an intermediate Creative Fiction Writing class were completed with high marks in each prior to arriving at CSUMB. Areas of focus in these classes included flash fiction, playwriting, and poetry. While at CSUMB, the author gained intensive research skills, studied the writing and histories of non-canonical authors, and furthered his creative writing aptitude with another Creative Fiction Writing course. Through the successful completion of three creative writing courses; History According to the Movies; Race, Colonialism and Film; and other historical and literary analysis classes; the author has demonstrated command of all techniques required for the project.

10. It is imperative that the author begins the conception of the writings immediately, including the construction of plot outlines and research of each historical period. The author will compose a work of writing and revise it as is outlined by the following timeline. Following the completion of the rough drafts, the author will meet with the appropriate faculty member to ensure accuracy of histories and techniques utilized.

11. Timeline:

Progress:	Date:
Project Title and Abstract or Summary	3/6/13
Rough Draft – First Story	3/15/13
Creative Project Progress Report	3/25/13
Revised Draft – First Story	4/5/13
Rough Draft – Second Story	4/12/13
Creative Project Progress Report	4/15/13
Revised Draft – Second Story	4/26/13
Meet with Faculty Members	5/3/13
Final Revisions, Reflective Essay and Bound Portfolio	5/8/13
Festival Rehearsal	5/15/13
Capstone Festival	5/17/12

## A Note from the Author

Included herein are two short stories written by the author, Layne M. Clifton, each preceded by an historical analysis – also written by the author – of the time periods in which they take place. The stories, although heavily steeped in the factual history of the United States of America, are completely the works of the author, and in no way are meant to represent actual people who endured these events of our history. In other words, they are fictional. The purpose of these stories is to exhibit the conditions one may have experienced, had they lived in the time periods in which the stories are set. Every effort was made to ensure accuracy of the historical background, while maintaining creative liberties which emphasize the importance of freedom and democracy in our society.

While today we may think that society has evolved beyond racism, classism and sexism, history reminds us that the struggles of Americans to achieve equality has been long, arduous, and perhaps still present. The following stories are just two examples of how “the land of the free” is subjective, and it is our duty and privilege to continue our social evolution, to ensure that we indeed live in the greatest nation in the free world.

# Harlem is Heaven

Harlem is vicious  
modernism. Bangclash.  
Vicious the way it's made.  
Can you stand such beauty.  
So violent and transforming.  
- Amiri Baraka

The Roaring Twenties...

The Harlem Renaissance, also known as the New Negro Movement, was a period of artistic and cultural expansion during the 1920s in which African Americans – who had recently found increased educational and employment opportunities due to the end of slavery following the Civil War – wrote plays, poetry, music and other artistic expressions.<sup>1</sup> Although announced free by the Emancipation Proclamation, the U.S. Supreme Court still segregated African Americans, creating a diaspora which encouraged and strengthened their culture. For the first time in history, African Americans achieved middle class economic status, but due to the gentrification of midtown New York, were still isolated to outlying areas, and between 1900 and 1920, the amount of African Americans calling Harlem home nearly doubled. The area was soon known as “the Black Mecca” and became the center for the nation’s brightest African American minds to coalesce and share their works with one another.<sup>2</sup> The focus of the essayists, playwrights and poets was “to reconceptualize ‘the Negro’ apart from the white stereotypes that had influenced black peoples’ relationship to their heritage and to each other,” allowing African Americans to develop their own identities unbiased by the hegemonic view of white America.<sup>3</sup>

The era was also a time of intense racism and moral battles. Prohibition of alcohol was in effect as mandated by the Eighteenth Amendment, and individuals found themselves in jazz clubs, speakeasies and brothels, searching for an outlet to realize individual freedom, concealed from the increasing control of the government.<sup>4</sup> Although the amount of alcohol consumed did decrease, it opened doors for crime syndicates to capitalize on America’s desire for consumption as well as “made criminals out of casual drinkers, turned clergymen into cheats, encouraged doctors to practice deception and sowed the seeds of the Mob.”<sup>5</sup> Anyone who wished to purchase alcohol at this time simply endorsed and funded the gangs supplying the masses with the Demon Drink, and law enforcement was rendered impotent. It was simply not possible to detain everyone found in violation of prohibition.

The Temperance movement – dedicated to the reduction and prohibition of the consumption of liquor – was not alone in its quest to purify America of immoral behavior. The Ku Klux Klan also reemerged during this time, speaking out against and violently attacking those guilty of “violating prohibition, labor union membership, Sabbath breaking, immodest dress, bobbed hair, and all forms of unconventional sexuality,” expanding their focus from African Americans to include “Roman Catholics, Jews, and immigrants of all backgrounds” – essentially anyone they deemed to not be 100% American.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, the racist sentiments of the Ku Klux Klan was not confined to their ranks. The hegemonic view of America that blacks and whites should not coexist was reflected in Jim Crow laws and general contempt for interracial relationships.

Harlem became not only an artistic center for African Americans to find community and culture, it was an oasis from racism and the intrusion into their privacy legitimized by the government and executed by vigilantes who devoted their lives to cleansing America not only of alcohol, but of immigrants and people of color.

The Harlem Renaissance is considered to have ended with the onset of the Great Depression. As more people found themselves out of work and without a means to support themselves or their households, art and culture made way for simple survival. But the Harlem Renaissance did not leave without a legacy; the artistic expression developed during that time paved the way for others to continue to seek freedom of identity and the continuance of writing and musical innovation persisted through African American culture, and essentially led to the Civil Rights Movements of the 1950s and 1960s, proving that African Americans had indeed created a new identity separate from the expectations of white America.



It had been 14 months since Billy died – since Billy was murdered – during the race riots of 1919. They called it the Red Summer. As the cool winds of autumn swept into Chicago, Jackson Hunter Walker, Jr. remembered how his brother was taken from him. Jack had just turned seventeen three weeks before the Red Summer started, and in his blissfully unaware mind, he had no idea that in a few months he would lose his only brother, his idol,

his protector, in the riots which ravaged the streets where they grew up. Jack heard the body count was in the dozens, but only one mattered to him. He had no mother – she died when he was ten – and his father hadn't been seen since Jack's mom was in the second trimester. Still, his mother decided to name him after his ghost of a father, just in case he came back. "It's what he would've wanted to call you," she would tell Jack.

That was nearly all Jack new of his father – he wasn't around, his name was Jackson, and he was white. The fear of creating a child with a Negro was enough to send him running. If anyone had known, the three of them would have been lynched for sure. And probably Billy for being guilty by association. Billy knew his father – albeit briefly – but he had stayed in Virginia when Jack's mother decided to move north. There were better opportunities in Chicago, where she found work as a meatpacker in the South Side. Jack didn't entertain the notion of a half-brother, even though his appearance was strikingly different than that of Billy who was ten years his senior. Billy was as dark as a moonless night, with a head full of nappy hair that could tear the teeth out of a steel comb. Jack, however, was a cream mocha, with curly locks that coiled around his ears and fell down his forehead like a wayward spring if he didn't cut it for a few months. But "half-brother" seemed to lessen his relationship with Billy, the only family he had left – until they took him away from Jack.

After Billy was killed by the riotous mob of white men who were angry over the lack of jobs, declining economy and influx of migrating African Americans into the informally segregated city, Jack had struggled to support and defend himself. Even Chicago's finest refused to see him as one of those they were sworn to protect and serve. He was merely a tragic mulatto, just another n– who lied, cheated and stole in their city. He was an alien, a pest, a goddamned plague on civilized society.

While walking back to the rundown room he rented above the neighborhood grocer, Jack saw a man ranting on a street corner. Well, he heard him first. Jack could hear him for two blocks before he saw the man, nearly as dark as Billy was, dressed in a suit covered in holes and patches, wearing loafers that threatened to turn to dust at a moment's notice.

"Harlem is heaven!" the man cried. "Come to Harlem – and take me with you. The Negro is free in Harlem!"

Jack knew of Harlem, the neighborhood in New York where jazz was the soundtrack to freethinkers and poets, where the streets were lined with gilded signs of cabaret shows and cinemas, where everyone had their own spacious apartment and booze flowed from the tap. He thought the hype was simply a ploy to evict him from a city where he was no longer wanted. The ravings of this mad man solidified the ruse.

“Tell me, mister. Why the hell would I go all the way to Harlem?” Jack asked as he passed the frenzied orator.

“To be free, my son. To bask in the glory of Duke Ellington. To drink the sweetest whiskey sour you have ever tasted. To make love to the most beautiful woman your half-blood eyes have ever seen.”

Jack’s eyes widened. His jaw tightened as he inhaled the hatred of the lunatic through his flaring nostrils. In his mind, he could already hear the crack of the man’s skull as it hit the concrete step behind him, the man crumbling like an old brownstone – Jack’s fist would be the wrecking ball. The man could see the rage emitting from Jack and instinctively took a step back in an effort to be a few inches away from the reach of retribution.

“Calm down, boy. Calm down,” the man begged, throwing his hands up. “Even a man with a uniquely daring origin such as yourself is welcomed in Harlem.” A smile crept across the raver’s face, exposing more vacancy than teeth.

Jack spun on a heel and continued his trek down the hostile street, leaving the man and a desire to assault behind without a word. *Welcomed in Harlem*, he repeated to himself. As he rounded the next corner, he heard a plea come from behind him: “And take me with you!”

Six days later Jack disembarked the train at 125<sup>th</sup> Street and Lenox Avenue. In the light of day, it seemed no different than Chicago’s South Side. Sure, there were more theaters, but what did Jack care about that. He didn’t even have enough money for a sandwich, let alone a show. As if on cue from the Almighty, a voice, whispered into his ear:

“Hey, boy. You looking for work?”

Spinning like a forty-five, Jack turned to face a white man, maybe as old as Billy would have been. His suit was stunningly starch and his shoes nearly blinded Jack with the reflected sun. His speech was tinged with Ireland, smoke, stress, and success.

“Maybe,” Jack hesitated. “Who’s offering?”

“The name’s Owney Madden. I’ve got a personal interest in a club just up the street. We could use a boy in the kitchen. Dishwashers don’t tend to stick around long.”

“Nah,” Jack protested. “I don’t think I’m your guy.”

“Ah, but I think you are son. Someone with your...err, unique makeup...you’d fit right in.”

Jack tensed up again. His fists balled, ready to speak his enmity for him. But, unlike the street preacher, Owney didn’t retreat.

“The club’s down on 142<sup>nd</sup>,” Owney continued without a beat. “It’s owned by Jack Johnson. You heard of him? He’s a boxer I have a...err, close connection with. He’s a Negro too, boy. But, the clientele is more like me, if you buy what I’m selling. More like your other half.”

“What’s the pay?” Jack asked. He was still incensed, but he was even hungrier. And working for a black man couldn’t be so bad. As long as this white joker wasn’t in charge, it might work out.

“More than anyone else will offer you. And that’s the God’s honest truth. So you in, boy?”

\*\*\*

Six months went by and Jack never saw the boxer. Mr. Madden was there every day, but kept out of the kitchen. He spent most of his time surrounded in a cocoon of smoke and other sharp-dressed young men; downing bootlegged liquor like prohibition was coming to an end. Every week, Jack was handed an envelope by the kitchen manager with \$35 in it. Billy used to only bring home \$12 from the meatpacking plant when he looked after Jack in Chicago. Jack could pay his rent, lease a girl every weekend, and drink enough to kill the Devil. He even bought a suit and a gold chain like Owney would wear for the nights he would take his rented companion to the moving pictures show or the Apollo. There were even days he forgot about Billy. Life was good.

One night, while scrubbing burnt cheese off an old casserole tray, another dishwasher of the club, James, abruptly dropped his scourer into the water and turned to Jack.

“You ever read Du Bois?” he asked, resting his hands on the edge of the basin.

“Nah,” Jack replied, not stopping from his work.

“Never?”

“I stay pretty busy,” Jack justified.

“Damn, man. You got to read that cat. He’s got some pretty righteous stuff. You know Du Bois went to Harvard? He says that we got a ‘twoness’ about us. Being a Negro and being an American. We got this ‘dogged strength’ that keeps us proud, even when the white man tells us we ain’t worth the spit in their mouths.”

“Sounds like the kind of stuff that will get a man lynched.”

“Nah, man. This is Harlem. This is *our* city.”

“Tell that to Mr. Madden. Seems to me that this is his city,” Jack retorted.

“That guy ain’t nothing,” James huffed, then changed the subject. “Have you seen his sister, Mary?”

“Man,” Jack shook his head. “You talk too much. I’ve seen lots of girls around Mr. Madden.”

“Well, stay away from Mary. That girl's trouble.”

The next weekend, instead of taking another professional to the Apollo, Jack decided to head to a bookstore on 125<sup>th</sup>. He bought *The Souls of Black Folk* – he finished it that night, and again the next morning. His mind became flooded with thoughts of oppression, struggle, triumph, and community. The next day at the club, he rushed James.

“Man!” Jack said breathlessly. “You weren’t fooling. “The equality in political, industrial and social life which modern men must have in order to live, is not to be confounded with sameness. On the contrary, in our case, it is rather insistence upon the right of diversity.””

“You got it, friend. I told you he’s righteous.”

“I still think it’ll get a man lynched. But not in *our* city!”

Jack was in a cloud of euphoria. His dogged strength had gone off-leash, and he felt he was no longer just a tragic mulatto, a goddamned plague on civilized society. He wasn’t just a Negro. He was a black man, an American. A citizen in one of the greatest countries the world had ever known. His skin tone was not who he was, but it was what made him who he was. He would no longer be defined through the eyes of another. His father may have been scared of what others thought about blackness, but Jack would not abide any longer.

Three hours into the shift, Jack went out the back door – the only door he could use – for a cigarette. Halfway through his smoke, a white girl drunkenly staggered around the corner of the alley, cigarette dangling from her lips as she focused all her concentration rummaging through her purse. She flinched when she finally looked up and caught Jack’s inquisitive gaze.

“Oh!” she gasped. “You wouldn’t happen to have a light, darling?”

“Sure thing, miss,” Jack pulled a match from his pocket, lit it and studied her lips as she sucked the flame to the tip of her cigarette.

“Thanks, darling,” she exhaled. “You’re cute.”

Her eyes sparkled green like the ocean off the shores of the emerald isle, deep enough to swallow worlds whole. Strawberry blonde hair teased out from under her Cloche hat. Her lips were a deeper red than the sweetest cherry Jack could remember ever gracing his tongue.

“Sorry, ma’am,” Jack hurriedly stubbed out his cigarette. “I’ve got to get back to work. The boss is pretty strict.”

“Who? Owney?” Jack hadn’t heard anyone but Mr. Madden call him Owney. “Don’t worry about him,” she continued.

“Sorry, ma’am,” Jack repeated. “I’ve got to get back...”

His breath stopped as she grabbed his arm, keeping him from turning towards the door.

“Stay,” she commanded. “It’ll be fine. If Owney says anything, have him talk to me. I’m Mary,” she said, extending her hand as if completing a business deal.

“Jackson,” Jack responded in kind.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, Jackson.” She grasped his hand, giving it two quick, matter-of-fact pumps.

\*\*\*

The affair was slow at first: clandestine meetings in the alley during cigarette breaks, sneaking around on days off to speakeasies that Mary insisted were free from the prying eyes of Owney’s cohorts. But within weeks she was accompanying Jack back to his apartment,

spending days at a time there with neither ambitions to leave nor clothes concealing her alabaster figure. At times, Jack would simply sit and stare at her, lounging on his Davenport like a Titian Venus.

High off the taboo love he just left in his apartment, Jack whisked into the kitchen through the back door, singing “Avalon” by Al Jolson. He was met with wide-eyed stares as the steel door slammed behind him.

“You better get out of here,” James whispered in warning. “I told you she was trouble.”

At the exact moment Jack’s mind began to consider what James was talking about, the door to the dining room swung open. Standing like a Greek titan was Owney. His brow was furrowed, squinting his eyes as sharp as a straight-edge.

“You, boy,” Owney pointed directly at Jack. “Come here.”

Jack lurched forwards as Owney snapped his fingers, drawn further into the kitchen.

“Yes, sir,” Jack squeaked. He knew the jig was up. “What can I do for you, sir?”

“I got a job for you. There are some friends of mine waiting for a package down by the docks, south of River Bank.” He tossed an innocuous brown parcel across the kitchen at Jack. Eyes followed the box as it floated, almost suspended by an invisible string, through the crowd of scrubbing dishwashers, sweating line cooks, and hurried waiters. Jack was surprised by the lightness of it as it landed in his cradled arms, conflicted with the relief of his stay of punishment, but still wary of the peculiarity of Mr. Madden’s request.

“The docks. Now,” Owney barked.

Jack turned and left out the back door, which was still coming to a close.

He arrived at the docks twenty-five minutes later. The sun had just begun to set as Jack approached the black Rolls Royce Silver Ghost parked near the water. Three men in trench coats got out of the car to meet him.

“You Jack?” one of the men asked.

“Yes, sir. Mr. Madden sent me to give you this.”

As he stretched out his arm, package in hand, Jack saw another man reach into his coat. Closing his eyes, Jack remembered the words of the man on the streets of Chicago. *Harlem is heaven*, he thought to himself. And, for a brief time, it was.

\*\*\*

There was no investigation of the body the New York Police Department found at the docks the next day. Perhaps it was due to the parcel they found containing \$200 and a note which simply said, "To the coppers." Perhaps it was because it was the sixth murder that morning. Or, perhaps it was because that to the police, it was just another dead mulatto, just another n— who lied, cheated and stole in *their* city; an alien, a pest, a goddamned plague on civilized society.

# Sakura Blossoms

“Blossoms are scattered by the wind and the wind cares nothing,  
but the blossoms of the heart no wind can touch.”

– Yoshida Kenko

A Date Which Will Live in Infamy...

At 7:55 a.m., December 7, 1941, three hundred fifty-three Japanese military aircrafts launched an attack on Pearl Harbor, an American military base in Oahu, Hawaii.<sup>7</sup> In less than two hours, nearly 2,500 Americans were killed with over 1,000 more wounded.<sup>8</sup> Within hours of the attack, Federal Bureau of Investigations agents conducted searches and arrests of 1,212 *Issei* immigrants in both Hawaii and on the mainland; all prominent Japanese community leaders such as teachers, priests, organization officers and journalists. These prisoners were relocated to United States Justice Department internment camps in New Mexico, Texas, North Dakota and Montana. Few were released, and only after receiving official clearance from the Enemy Alien Hearing Board.<sup>9</sup> On December 8, 1941, President Roosevelt declared war on Japan, and America’s entry into World War II was guaranteed.<sup>10</sup>

The following months were met with paranoia and racial hatred, as descendants of Axis nations faced government sanctioned restrictions on travel, social gatherings and even the amount of work hours. President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942, “Authorizing the Secretary of War...whenever he or any designated Commander deems such action necessary or desirable” to create areas in “which any or all persons may be excluded” for the “protection against espionage and against sabotage to national-defense material, national-defense premises, and national-defense utilities.”<sup>11</sup> 11,000 German and 3,000 Italian descendants were interned, but the overwhelming majority of internees were of Japanese ancestry. Between March 24 and November 3, 1942, over 110,000 ethnic Japanese were stripped of property and displaced with nothing more than the items they could carry and the clothes on their backs. Over 60% of Japanese internees were *Nisei* and *Sansei*, American citizens by birth as guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment.<sup>12</sup> However, being deemed alien enemies by the order and upheld as such by the United States Supreme Court, they no longer retained any civil rights or American freedoms, and remained incarcerated behind barbed wire fences, their every move monitored by armed guards.<sup>13</sup>

While a handful of individuals were found guilty of espionage and spying for the Axis powers, none of them were Japanese.<sup>14</sup> On January 2, 1945, the exclusion order was

rescinded with Public Proclamation No. 21 and internees were allowed to return to the areas they once called home.<sup>15</sup>



Takeshi had just finished his *tamagoyaki* when they arrived. The three staccato bangs at the front door evoked a wide-eyed gasp from his mother, who cupped her face to prevent the last remaining rice grains of her breakfast from escaping her now agape mouth. Tsukiko, Takeshi's sister, happily continued to play with her *natto* as if the disturbance was merely in their minds. There was no way for her to realize that her fifth birthday would not be spent in the only house she had ever known. Mr. Sato shot an unemotional glance at his wife as he rose to answer the front door.

Mrs. Sato stood a few moments later and began to collect the dishes and put them in the sink. Her mouth was now tight, but her eyes remained as wide and white as the saucer beneath Takeshi's teacup. The voices at the front door were muffled by her labored breath and the clink of the flatware against the porcelain basin. Preparing the excuse of collecting his books for the impending school day, Takeshi slunk into the hallway to see who the visitors were. Over his father's nodding head, Takeshi could see an olive drab helmet, and a bayonet seemed to jut from the side of his father's neck, protruding from the rifle the soldier carried at port arms.

"I understand," Mr. Sato told the soldier. "We will comply." Mr. Sato closed the door and turned to see Takeshi standing motionless in the hallway.

"You will not be going to school today," he told his son. "Go upstairs and pack a suitcase. Just one. We are leaving tomorrow morning."

"Where are we going, Pa?" Takeshi asked. He hoped it was to accompany his father on another 'fact finding mission' as he liked to call it.

Mr. Sato was the chief editor of the local community newspaper for Japanese Americans. It had been months since he had traveled around the bay for interviews, and it used to be that Takeshi was sometimes permitted to go with him as long as he kept his

grades up. School was tedious for Takeshi and being out in the real world, talking to real people, seemed a greater education than his teachers could provide. But the look in Mr. Sato's eyes dashed Takeshi's hopes that this was just another interview. Still, Takeshi was glad to not go to school. It would be one less day for the kids at the other school to chase him home with pop guns and sticks, utilizing the 'Jap hunting licenses' they made during recess. Takeshi lunged upstairs, taking two at a time, and packed his suitcase as his father commanded.

The next morning, Takeshi's mind wouldn't let him finish his breakfast. He still wondered where they were going and why they were leaving. The teachers at school had told him about the Japanese bombers in Hawaii, but that was across the ocean. It couldn't have anything to do with Monterey. And the Japanese wouldn't bomb his family; his father was Japanese too. Maybe the soldiers were just being cautious. Maybe everybody had to leave just in case the Japanese did bomb California.

After nobody except Tsukiko finished their breakfast, they loaded up the car with a suitcase each. Wherever they were going, it couldn't be for long. *Otherwise, we would have packed more*, Takeshi thought.

"Where are we going, Pa?" Takeshi asked again. His father still hadn't answered the first time, yesterday.

"Salinas."

"Why?" Takeshi asked. He had broken his father's silence. Mr. Sato had taught him that the key to an interview is to keep the person talking, about anything. Once they are talking, then you could get your answers.

"We must."

"Why?" Takeshi hadn't played this game since he was Tsukiko's age.

"We will know more when we get there."

As they arrived, Takeshi could see more soldiers carrying rifles and a large fenced off area where people lined up to get inside. Mr. Sato had grown silent again and unloaded the car without even a look at his family. He motioned for Takeshi to grab his suitcase and take his sister's hand, and they joined the people in line. All of them looked Japanese.

"Is this because of the war, Pa?" Takeshi asked. His father remained silent. "Where is everyone else? Is Tyler's family here too?"

“No. No Tyler. No *baijo*.” Takeshi had never heard that word before. But his father often said Japanese words Takeshi didn’t know. But the tone of his voice told him that whatever it meant, it wasn’t nice.

As they approached a soldier behind a table, Mr. Sato took the suitcases and opened them up for the man to dig through. A scowl developed on Mr. Sato’s face as the soldier raked through underwear and pictures. He lifted Mr. Sato’s camera out of the bag.

“No cameras,” he said tersely and tossed it into the trashcan next to him. “Proceed to the next line. They’ll tell you where to go next.”

Mr. Sato zipped up the suitcases, handing Takeshi’s back to him and followed the soldier’s orders. Takeshi trudged after him, Tsukiko in hand. He looked up at his mother who looked like she had just chopped an onion.

\*\*\*

The next two month’s Takeshi slept on a pile of hay in the horse stable reserved for his family. There were only two cots, one of which his father occupied almost all day, while his mother and sister slept in the second at night. During the daylight hours, Takeshi would try to nap next to his father while his mother would take Tsukiko to the communal laundry area and bathhouse. It rained nearly three times a week, and the stench of rotted hay had to be cleaned daily out of their clothes. The food in the mess hall was unseasoned and overcooked, and Takeshi wished he had asked for one more *tamagoyaki* that morning which seemed like a distant dream. Suddenly, soldiers informed them that once again they would have to go. Takeshi knew that asking his father where to would warrant no response, and instead he kept silent and repacked his suitcase.

They boarded the train hand in hand. The blackened windows reminded Takeshi of the photos of Europe his teacher had shown him. Those times at school seemed so long ago and far away. *Maybe the Germans won the war*, he thought as he settled into the seat. What did she call the cities – Outwits and Dashcow? Takeshi strained to remember more of what his teacher taught them about the war. There were pictures of men in uniforms who looked like they were dancing, legs straight and high as they marched in file. He remembered a man with a funny little mustache who always seemed to be waving. The trains. He remembered the trains as crowded as the one he was on now. None of the people in the pictures looked Japanese, though. *Why did Japan send planes to Hawaii?* He also remembered how sad the teacher looked when she showed the pictures and told them there was a war going on. Then he remembered how he would get bored and look out the window towards the other school, wishing he was with Tyler playing cowboys and Indians. “Ask your parents,” the teacher

would say when an older boy would ask questions about the cream the Not-sees gave the Chews.

“What are Not-sees?” Takeshi asked over the rattle of the train.

“Be quiet,” his mothered hushed. “Don’t bother your father.”

“They are the reason we are here,” Mr. Sato answered.

“But at the horse place, you said we were here because of the Emperor,” Takeshi recalled. “And the President. You said that they don’t like each other and they were scared of us.”

“It’s complicated,” Mr. Sato said. “We are here because we are from Japan.”

“But, I’ve never been to Japan, Pa.”

“Your mother and I are, and that is enough.”

Mrs. Sato’s eyes began to look like she was cutting onions again. All the questions in Takeshi’s mind began to fade as he tried to remember the last time they ate onions. He wished he could be young like Tsukiko again. He was her age when she was born. His parents’ looks never worried him then. Maybe they were never scared before she came. He felt his ears grow hot as he watched her play with a book on the floor of the train.

“I don’t want to go anywhere anymore!” Takeshi screamed. “I want to go home! I want to go to school! I’ll be good. We can all be good. Tell the President he doesn’t have to be scared. We will be good!”

“Quiet!” Mr. Sato barked. Takeshi tried to look through the painted windows as his vision muddled with tears.

\*\*\*

Takeshi didn’t know why they called it a camp. There were no trees for climbing, no streams for fishing, no campfires or marshmallows. It was just like the horse stables in Salinas, only bigger – and with a lot more Japanese. Three layers of barbed wire fence, dotted with watch towers, enveloped the campers as tanks circled and parked around the perimeter. The bathhouse was larger too, which made Takeshi feel even smaller. The food was just as bad, and even though he always ate every last grain, it seemed that Takeshi constantly left the mess hall hungry. After a few months his father began to talk more, sitting with other men his age and speaking in hushed tones in the native tongue Takeshi never learned. Mrs. Sato

grew skinny and her days were spent sweeping the one room they called home while Tsukiko drew pictures of houses in the dust.

When it wasn't mealtime, the mess hall was turned into a school and a gathering hall. The teacher would teach them geography – they were in Utah – and she would teach them how to speak Japanese. The only times Takeshi saw his mother smile was when he returned home. “*Konnichiwa, haba,*” he would call out the moment he entered the room.

“You are getting so smart, *musuko,*” she replied. “How was school?”

“Boring,” he exhaled as he flopped onto her cot. “When are we going home?” It had been over a year since he saw Tyler.

“Soon. Very soon.”

“You know what day tomorrow is Ma?” Takeshi asked. He hoped she did.

“Hmmm, let's see. Today is Monday, so tomorrow is...”

“My birthday!” he exploded.

“So soon? Didn't you just have a birthday?”

“That was last year Ma. Remember, we went to the beach and saw crabs. Does dad remember what tomorrow is?”

“I'm sure he does.”

“He hasn't said anything about it. He's always with the old men. What are they doing, Ma?” Takeshi asked.

“They must be planning something special for you,” she replied, resuming her sweeping. The smile faded off her face. “Take Tsukiko to the bathroom for me, please. I need quiet.”

Mrs. Sato placed the broom delicately in the corner and sat on the other cot as Takeshi picked Tsukiko up out of the dust and carried her outside.

On the way back from the bathrooms, Takeshi saw his father and six other men talking behind the mess hall. Putting his finger to his lips, he signaled for Tsukiko to be quiet as they snuck around the other corner to listen in on their conversation. He wished he knew more Japanese, but through the many words he did not know, he was able to hear his father

say *asu* – tomorrow – and *odoroki* – surprise. *He didn't forget*, Takeshi thought excitedly. He skipped home, dragging Tsukiko behind him as her little legs struggled to stay underneath her.

The next morning, Takeshi awoke in manic elation. After a disappointing breakfast of steamed rice and miso, he hauled himself to school and restlessly waited for the lesson to be done. The moment they were excused from school, he darted out the door. His legs couldn't move fast enough as he sprinted home.

“Ma! I'm home. I mean, *Konnichiha, haba*,”

“*Konnichiha, musuko*,” she replied without looking up from her sweeping.

“Where's Pa? Is he coming home for my birthday?” Takeshi asked.

“He is with his friends. He will be home after dark.”

Takeshi felt a lump develop in his chest. Dropping onto the cot, he heard the rustle of papers underneath him.

“What are these?” he asked his mother, holding up the papers.

“They are for your father. You are too young to worry about them.”

The papers had questions on them. It reminded Takeshi of some sort of test. He didn't think his father was in school. Maybe that is what he was doing with the other men all the time. As he looked through the questions, he noticed his father had filled in most of the answers, but stopped at question twenty-seven.

“What's allegiance mean, Ma?” Takeshi asked, reading the next two questions.

“It's your father's business, Takeshi. Take your sister to the bathroom.” Mrs. Sato never stopped sweeping.

On the way to the bathroom, Takeshi looked around every corner for his father and the other men, but he couldn't see them anywhere. He couldn't see anyone anywhere. *If my father doesn't swear, than neither will I*, he said to himself as they entered the bathroom. Normally there would be a half-dozen or more men, women and children in the bathhouse at this time of the day, but it was completely empty. Takeshi placed his sister near the toilet and went to the sink to wash his face. Three staccato bangs echoed from outside. They were loud and close. Then, Takeshi heard women screaming and men yelling.

Takeshi rushed out the front door leaving Tsukiko behind. He saw a group of men – his father’s friends – marching towards the guards at the front gate. Three more staccato bangs rang out as the guards fired their rifles into the air. The group of men continued to march towards the soldiers, and Takeshi saw his father in the front of the group.

“Pa!” Takeshi cried out, running in their direction. His call could not be heard over the yelling of the men and the orders of the soldiers.

“Stay back!” A disembodied voice warned the marching men over the loudspeaker. “Return to your barracks. Violators will be shot.”

“Pa! PA!!” Takeshi called out louder. His father was being grabbed and choked by the soldiers. Another man was hit in the head by the butt of a rifle. A third man screamed, his face distorted as he spun around clutching his arm, now soaked red where a bayonet sliced through the muscle.

“PA!!!”

Another staccato bang pealed through the camp. Suddenly, everything was quiet.

\*\*\*

Mrs. Sato and Tsukiko spent two more years in the camp before they were sent home to Monterey. Mr. Sato would join them two years after that, having spent the time incarcerated in prison for failure to swear allegiance to the United States and for inciting a riot while interned. That spring they gathered at the beach for Tsukiko’s ninth birthday. In one more year she would be Takeshi’s age. She would start to ask questions about the boy in the photos that rested on the shelf, a boy who would remain forever young, a boy who fell like sakura blossoms. *Mono no aware.*

## Sources

1. Reuben, Paul P. "Harlem Renaissance: A Brief Introduction." *Perspectives in American Literature*. <<http://www.csustan.edu/english/reuben/pal/chap9/9intro.html>>.
2. "BIO Classroom." *Bio.com*. A&E Networks Television.  
<<http://www.biography.com/tv/classroom/harlem-renaissance>>.
3. "Harlem Renaissance." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*.  
<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/255397/Harlem-Renaissance>>.
4. "The Rise of Speakeasies."  
<[http://www.albany.edu/~wm731882/speakeasies\\_final.html](http://www.albany.edu/~wm731882/speakeasies_final.html)>.
5. Drehle, David Von. "The Demon Drink." *Time*.  
<<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1989146,00.html>>.
6. "Racism in the 1920s." *Suite101.com*. <<http://suite101.com/article/racism-in-the-1920s-a90186>>.
7. Parillo, Mark. "The United States in the Pacific." *Why Air Forces Fail: The Anatomy of Defeat*. Ed. Robin Higham and Stephen J. Harris. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky, 2006. 287-288.
8. Mullins, Mike. "Full Pearl Harbor Casualty List." USSWestVirginia.org.  
<<http://www.usswestvirginia.org/ph/phlist.php>>.
9. "FBI Raids." *Exploring the Japanese American Internment*. The National Asian American Telecommunications Association.  
<<http://caamedia.org/jainternment/ww2/fbi.html>>.
10. Kluckhohn, Frank L. "U.S. Declares War, Pacific Battle Widens." Editorial. *The New York Times* 8 Dec. 1941. *On This Day*.  
<<http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/1208.html>>.
11. United States of America. The White House. President Franklin D. Roosevelt. *Executive Order 9066*. 1942. *Transcript of Executive Order 9066*. Our Documents.  
<<http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true>>.

12. "Overview." *Exploring the Japanese American Internment*. The National Asian American Telecommunications Association. <<http://caamedia.org/jainternment/ww2/fbi.html>>.
13. *Korematsu v. United States*. U.S. Supreme Court. 18 Dec. 1944.
14. Mickey. "Living Conditions of Japanese American Internment Camps." Period 3's LA Wiki. <[http://la8period3.pbworks.com/w/page/25942447/Living Conditions of Japanese American Internment Camps](http://la8period3.pbworks.com/w/page/25942447/Living%20Conditions%20of%20Japanese%20American%20Internment%20Camps)>.
15. "U.S. Approves End to Internment of Japanese Americans." History.com. A&E Television Networks. <<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/us-approves-end-to-internment-of-japanese-americans>>.

# Reflective Essay

The history of the United States is sated with stories of individuals struggling to obtain freedom. From our forefathers' battle against the British to recent Supreme Court cases regarding marriage equality, Americans have fought to conceptualize, create and conserve freedom and democracy. While much of the factual history is printed in text and reference books, often the humanity of those entrenched in the conflict is omitted; their emotions, perceptions and reactions are replaced with dry specifics of events and effects. It was my purpose in this creative project to touch upon the humanity of those on the front line of this issue, exposing – through the creative writing process – how they have been affected by freedom, or lack thereof.

This project has been informed by the shared topic of the capstone seminar due to the subject of freedom and democracy and struggle to achieve an egalitarian society. Through the study of Eric Foner's book *The Story of American Freedom*, chronicling the progress of freedom in America, specifics have enlightened me on how freedom did not happen overnight, but rather has taken hundreds of years to develop and is still being debated and fought for. The importance of the struggle is that while America boasts about being the land of the free, many have been neglected in the progress of our society. These groups have had nearly no voice within the white patriarchy of our country, and even today are glossed over in history books and classes. This project, through the aesthetics of creative writing, will bring lesser known truths of American freedom to light and inform the reader that the struggle for freedom is everyone's fight.

The important aesthetics of this creative writing project are the craft elements of imagery, dialog, detail, scene and setting, rhythm, voice, and character development. Imagery allows the reader to grasp dense and abstract themes and issues in a tangible way through the use of metaphors and similes, as well as evokes emotions of the reader to ensure an effective impact of the stories. Dialogue provides not only important communication between the characters within the stories, but allows efficient progress of conflicts and character development as well. The details of scene and setting puts the story in a realistic environment providing a sense of authority, and character development allows the reader to identify with the characters within the stories – both of which are essential in order for the reader to connect themselves with those of our history. Use of these aesthetics will grant the reader a heightened understanding, not only of the events, but how history affected those who lived through it.

Many Americans have extremely basic understanding of the history of the United States. Many primary education institutions only touch upon the impact of our progress towards freedom as it relates to minorities. This project offers an opportunity for the reader to enhance his or her knowledge regarding the oft-omitted events in our history. Through the medium of this project, the reader will become enlightened regarding oppression and the struggle to achieve freedom and participate in democracy that various facets of our society have striven for, while being entertained by the use creative writing conventions I have studied and practiced while attending CSUMB.

The process of this project was both critical and creative. I was obliged to do sufficient research to ensure that the conditions of the characters are accurate and believable. This was then incorporated with my creative writing abilities, which must continuously be honed. The most problematic aspect of the project was the question of if I can accurately represent the characters, many of whom belong to other genders, races or classes than I. However, this is also the most important aspect of the project, as the final product is meant to not only enhance the understanding of the reader, but increase the education of myself as well.

This project aligns with the theme of freedom and democracy by showing the struggle for the freedoms that we enjoy today. While freedom is constantly evolving and progressing, the freedoms we utilize today came about not solely because of our forefathers, but by those who were not included in the original view of equality. Without the war waged by those who were oppressed, America would not be as free as it is today. Unfortunately, these freedom fighters are often forgotten and it is the objective of this project to reinforce the importance of their plight in regards to our current social and cultural position through the ancient craft of storytelling.

Storytelling is older than history. For generations, mankind has told stories both orally and in writing to educate the next generation of their history as well as ethics. This medium is human nature. Even today, many Americans would rather read, hear or watch a story than read a history book. By injecting history into the storytelling process, authors and orators have been able to educate the masses in an exciting and captivating way. It is my hope that this project will have the same effect, and entertain as well as inform.

Within the text and between the lines, these stories are steeped in this struggle for freedom – freedom from unwarranted persecution, freedom of identity, and freedom to live, love and laugh. Though often ending in tragedy, this quest for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness has the potential to augment and improve freedom for those who follow.

Sacrifices have been, and will continue to be made in order to realize the dream of a truly free republic, where all of humankind is seen as created equal.

# Final Synthesis Essay

If you wish to see a college student at California State University, Monterey Bay break down into a blubbing, anxious shell of fear and stress, simply mention the word “Capstone.” I am by no means exempt from this rule, as simply thinking the term fills my mind with tortured screams as if someone had just mentioned the secret word in Pee-wee’s Playhouse. Fortunately for all of us graduating seniors, an immense safety net was created with the assistance of a faculty advisor as well as the other students enrolled in the seminar. While the faculty advisor’s purpose was mostly to aid in the completion of the final project and enhance our understanding of the class theme, often they could be seen assisting students with other classes and even general questions about life. The students also supported each other, whether collaborating on discussion questions or simply voicing individual opinions in order to further our understanding of issues which arose during the course of our studies.

During the seminar sessions, I always came fully prepared – chapter readings accomplished and homework completed. This allowed me to contribute fully during discussions as well as ensure my availability to support my fellow classmates should they have questions or concerns regarding the material. There were even points when the discussion would begin to ebb – whether due to apathy or stage fright, I do not know – and I would always be willing to raise my hand and contribute more in order to keep the dialogue active. Even if my viewpoints strayed from the hegemony, I would not be scared to give them voice. Fortunately, my classmates were always respectful of differing opinions, mine as well as others. Often, when I spoke my thoughts on prisoner rights, voting, immigration reform, and even the modern use of drone planes for reconnaissance, this would spur a counter argument which would create a respectful and informative argument which enhanced not only my own understanding, but the understanding of the other arguer and the spectating classmates.

It was during these argumentations that I would see the benefit of working collaboratively. By tackling an issue from multiple sides, we would unearth deeper issues within the text and dialogue, allowing for larger comprehension of the material. One specific discussion was centered on the rights of freedom and democracy as it concerns the prison system. When someone is incarcerated for felonious acts, many rights are stripped away. This includes the right to vote. This particular right is very important to prisoners, especially when the issues are in regards to their treatment while incarcerated. At the beginning of the discussion, I saw no need for prisoners to maintain this right. They made a choice, and all of

our choices have consequences. It was my belief that if the right to vote was something they held dear, they should not have acted in such a manner that would deny them this right. As my classmates voiced a concerted belief that prisoners should have a say in the democratic decisions being made, I openly disagreed. Respectfully, a few classmates informed me that there are varying reasons for why a person may be incarcerated, and a bad act does not always equal bad person. Through this dialogue, I realized that reform does need to happen within the prison system, especially as it pertains to the decisions made for the prisoners, without considering the voice of the prisoners. A major part of a democratic society is to have a say in the issues which concern you.

By giving a voice to the voiceless, many great things have been done to further freedom and democracy in our nation. Eric Foner's text, *The Story of American Freedom*, exposes many instances of this, as I discovered while combing the pages for an answer of what freedom means. One major turning point in American freedom was the idea of free labor. Servitude, both enslavement of African Americans as well as wage slavery, severely hampered the pursuit of freedom. It is an American's right to "choose his livelihood and bargain for compensation."<sup>1</sup> This benefitted all Americans, of both European and African descent. During the course of our study of African American rights is when I decided one of the short stories in my creative project should reflect the struggle for autonomy outside the expectations of hegemonic, white America. Although freed by the Emancipation Proclamation and the Thirteenth Amendment, guaranteed citizenship by the Fourteenth Amendment and given the right to vote with the enactment of the Fifteenth Amendment, African Americans still faced a lack of freedom and democracy with segregation and a general view as the inferior race well into the twentieth century. By placing my characters within the Harlem Renaissance, I was able to show that although there were tremendous strides culturally and artistically, African Americans continued to combat racism, long after the Constitution declared them to be among the men who were created equal. Jack, the character in my story "Harlem is Heaven," is suffering from the loss of his brother during the race riots of 1919 in Chicago. He travels to Harlem, where he hears that he can truly be free. However, racism is also rampant in the Big Apple, and he cannot escape the lack of freedom which plagued African Americans during this time.

African Americans were not the only facet of American life who struggled against racist oppression. After the attack on Pearl Harbor during World War II, Japanese Americans saw all American rights stripped away from them. Of the over 110,000 persons of Japanese ancestry interned following Executive Order 9066, nearly 80,000 were born in America, and like African Americans, guaranteed citizenship by the Fourteenth Amendment. Although "the federal government bent over backward to include German-Americans and Italian-Americans in the war effort...on a case-by-case basis...it assumed that every person

of Japanese origin was a potential spy.”<sup>2</sup> Even the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the need to protect against potential threats during wartime outweighed the rights of Japanese Americans in the case of *Korematsu v. United States*. I knew that this important time in the history of freedom and democracy must be expanded upon in the second short story of my compilation, and young Takeshi, an American citizen, reveals the horrors of the internment camps, drawing parallels to the treatment of the Jewish people by the Nazi party that was occurring in Europe at the same time.

Through the use of short stories, I was able to delve deeper into the evolution of freedom and democracy throughout American history. We may think we live in the greatest nation in the free world – and perhaps this is true – but it has been a long journey and we are far from achieving a truly egalitarian society. The stories expose that the phrase “all men are created equal” has not always been true, and even our history books neglect to exhibit the true effects of systemic racism and the discretionary attitude towards people of color throughout our short history as a nation. My purpose was to bring these events out of our text books, and give them humanity. The people of the past are not simply numbers and facts; they are human beings who love, hate, fear and hope. When we prick them, they do indeed bleed. When we incarcerate them within ghettos and behind barbed wire, they yearn to breathe free. All of us, regardless of race, gender, creed or class are created equal and are endowed the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

## Sources

1. Foner, Eric. "Liberty of Contract and Its Discontents." *The Story of American Freedom*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1999. 122. Print.
2. Foner, Eric. "Fighting for Freedom." *The Story of American Freedom*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1999. 240-241. Print.