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"Name Her Reiko!": The Ikemiya Diaspora

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“Name Her Reiko!”: The Ikemiya Diaspora



(My sisters and I going to Obon. Source: Leigh Ikemiya)

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Senior Capstone
Writing & Rhetoric
Creative Project
Professor Umi Vaughan
School of Humanities and Communication
Spring 2019.

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Capstone Proposal: Creative Project

- i. Morgan Ikemiya, Writing & Rhetoric
- ii. Project Description: My project will be made up of creative nonfiction short stories, poems, and letters. I am focusing on my Japanese cultural identity and my experience as a Japanese-American. I have a plethora of memories involving Japanese culture from my childhood that I believe will be enriching subjects to write about.
- iii. Alignment with “Diaspora”: Speaking about my relationship with Japanese culture relates to the Japanese Diaspora because had my Japanese ancestors not participated in the Japanese Diaspora, I would not exist.
- iv. Purpose: I aspire to enlighten my readers with my stories of Japanese culture. I am also planning to inform readers about cultural practices in Japan and why they are significant.
- v. Format: I am planning on beginning my project with a few creative non-fiction short stories from my experiences growing up as a Japanese-American. I want to include a letter to my grandmother to emphasize the importance of passing down one’s heritage. Lastly, I am planning on including poems about aspects of Japanese culture that I find intriguing and important to my life.
- vi. Working Title: “Name Her Reiko!” -- When I was born, my mother told me that my grandmother held me in her arms and excitedly asked my mom to give me the

- vii. name Reiko as my middle name. Reiko is my grandma's name. It translates to "beautiful child."
- viii. Working Summary: This collection of creative non-fiction short stories, letters, and poems weaves my childhood memories with my Japanese culture. I include short stories about the Japanese internment camps and my grandparents' experience in them. Additionally, I touch on the successes and struggles my family faced while farming in Central California. With stories of ideas, food, and practices, my project elaborates on the culture created by the Japanese Diaspora.
- ix. Expectations: I expect to have multiple creative pieces that express the Japanese culture brought into my life through the Japanese Diaspora. Each piece is to tell a different story about my life and heritage that I recall from my memory, photos, and conversations with my grandmother and my parents. I may need to ask my family members for heirlooms, art, and photos to help with my stories. Historic accounts for certain ceremonies and events may help with my creative pieces, as well. I expect to write a page of my train of thought every few days to get ideas flowing. I expect to write poems and stories throughout the semester so I can practice and perfect my pieces for the final project.
- x. Specific Skills Required: I took a Creative Writing class (HCOM 339S) that taught me how to write effective short stories. The class also allowed me to explore different styles of writing creative poems and monologues. I learned that poems can be in almost any format the writer pleases and it can aid in the overall meaning of the poem. Additionally, visual aids can strengthen creative pieces by

- xi. prompting the reader to use another one of their 5 senses. My Creative Writing class allowed me to comfortably experiment with different writing styles that may be helpful in the creation of my project.
- xii. Next Steps: I will need to look through photo albums and talk with my family to jog my memory for ideas I can use in my pieces. Letting myself do “quick-writes” or “free-writes” will allow me to write down my train of thought which can be helpful in the process of creation. Looking at scholarly sources for a different perspective on ceremonies and events can be helpful when I am writing poems or monologues. As I stated earlier, writing poems and stories here and there will help me practice and perfect my pieces for the final project.
- xiii. Timeline: February 24-March 3: Collect photos and family conversations and scholarly ideas about Japanese ceremonies and practices
March 4-10: Quick-writes, write poems, short stories, and monologues for draft
March 11-17: Project draft due 13th; select pieces to include
March 18-24: Write more potential pieces to add to project
March 25-31: Peer critique; edit pieces based on peer advice
April 1-7: Peer critique; edit pieces based on peer advice
April 8-21: Polish and perfect project to be turned in on April 22



(Fig. 1, My ancestors circa 1920 in central California. Source: Jeff Ikemiya)

Ike's Best

Central California has my roots
My great grandfather dug the holes
His brother planted the seeds

Orange blossoms sprouted on the trees
The Ikemiya Dream set in motion
Each blossom a possibility for success

Day in and day out
Tilling the soil, planting the seeds
Every day closer to living the Dream

Each bite of sweet pinkish-orange flesh
A reminiscent reminder of home
Nothing like the *daidai* but it will do

The orchard is thriving
Their roots firmly planted
Waiting for the blossoms to reappear

The fruit hangs on the trees
Hand-plucked into the basket
Their livelihood, their Dream

A family of farmers
A tale of Japanese success
Truly, Ike's Best

Daidai

Some of the best childhood memories I have involve eating fruit. Specifically, the fruit my dad would cut up and present to my sisters and me. The fruit was always sweet like candy because my dad knew how to pick the best fruit. For oranges, you pick the heaviest ones because that means they have more juice. Pineapples, a simple smell test will do. For watermelons, you tap the rind and if a hollow sound reverberates, you've got a good melon. My dad was patient with the fruit he picked. He would let it sit on the counter for days until it was perfectly ripe. "Not ready yet," he would say monotonously to me. I'd put the melon down and walk away, no questions asked. My dad is the master of fruit.

I am a descendant of orchard farmers who take pride in their fruit. My favorite fruit from my family's orchard is the Cara Cara orange - sweet, barely acidic, pink in color, and a comfort for my tastebuds. When my grandfather died a few years ago, my uncle drove down from Reedley, California with a trunk full of Cara Cara oranges. As a way to provide comfort and solace, everyone received a bag of oranges from my uncle's orchard. Oranges hold a special place in my heart because of the memories I have attached to them.

When I was younger, my grandma would carefully prepare orange cups for us. She would slice the orange in half and peel the flesh away from the skin. She'd chop up the orange into bite-size pieces and put them back in the hollowed skin. Then, she would give us a toothpick to eat it with. I loved the presentation of it; I asked my grandma to show me how to do it. I can remember

following her steps on my own piece of fruit when I got home, but it didn't turn out as good as hers. Her's were perfect.

Fruit has a significant meaning in Japanese culture. Some pieces of fruit indicate a special holiday, others a tradition. Oranges are often exchanged during the holidays as a gift and is well-received in Japanese culture. During the New Year, it is Japanese tradition to construct a Kagami Mochi decoration. This decoration consists of two big pieces of mochi (pounded rice), and a *daidai* orange on top. This orange is special in Japanese culture because if they aren't picked, these oranges can stay on the tree for years. They symbolize longevity: the word *daidai* means "several generations" in Japanese. This orange is resilient, long-lasting, and mysterious. It is no wonder that the Japanese value it so highly.

I think of my family who takes pride in growing oranges and I wonder if they have any special ties to the orange. I wonder if my great grandfather whom I never got to meet chose to grow oranges for the meanings they hold in Japan. Did he grow them as a reminder of his homeland? Did the taste of orange juice comfort him the way it comforts me?



(Fig. 2, My grandma Reiko (child) with her family in San Francisco. Source: Jeff Ikemiya)

Leaving

Dad dug a hole in our backyard
The same grass he meticulously cut last week
His hard work destroyed by his American-made shovel

Mom silently stacked documents and letters
The Kanji characters piling up on one another
I watched Obachan's voice disappear note by note

She lit a match to the papers
Dad chose the items to bury
I sat and watched, too afraid to speak

Heirlooms soon covered in dirt
Dad whispered softly to mom
We will be back to unearth them soon, like treasure

We each packed a suitcase
Mine filled with fear and uncertainty
My parents' stuffed with shame, unable to clasp shut

My mother wept, I turned around
There was a lump in my throat
And our lives buried in a hole in the backyard.

When Will We Go Home?

We got off the train
Funneled into a horse stall
This was our new home

Discomfort all day
Sun blistering, without shade
Wind, icy at night

We can't speak our tongue
We whisper in Japanese
Waiting to be free

Aren't we citizens?
Aren't we people who need love?
Where is the justice?

Gichan is silent
Japanese is all they know
Bachan disappears

Growing up in camps
Kids learning to read and write
Horse stall turned classroom

Christmas is quiet
A gift of another day
Santa missed a stop

Sadness grows within
Captive in our own country
When will we go home?

The days are too long
We are losing so much hope
The future is dull

The time has arrived
To pack up and go back home
But where is our home?

Spray paint everywhere
JAPS ARE NOT WELCOME
On my bedroom wall

Glass is shattered there
The piano is destroyed
Our books are shredded

Mom's garden is gone
Dad is staring silently
What do we do now?

Start over from scratch
American Dream is gone
Life here must go on

We are Japanese
We are American, too
Strong and capable

Pick up the pieces
Assimilate: we must do it
Prove our worth to you

Keep our traditions
Speak English in public space
Hide our heritage

Soon enough, it shows
We are human just like you
Worthy and trusting

Our children will grow
And the next generation
Will forget it all.



(Fig. 3, My father. Source: Myself)

Growing Up Japanese-American: My Father's Monologue

“Growing up Japanese in America... California... Gardena. Is a lot different than growing up Japanese in Tennessee, or, South Carolina, or, Minnesota. Once you understand Gardena or Torrance area, and how much Japanese culture, influence, and people are here... you don't realize until you *leave* the area. So growing up Japanese you just sort've take it for granted that culturally what you have, you -- you have stores that are selling Japanese products, um, selling Japanese food, markets that sell Japanese food, you know. It's all around you so you don't really understand what you're missing till you leave here. And... once you *realize* that, you understand how much Japanese you actually are and not “White America.”

Going to elementary school, middle school, high school -- it was predominantly Japanese-American. You're talkin' 50 percent of the student body was Asian-American. Um, so if you think about me going to Orange County, which was predominantly White, I felt... like the

outsider. I felt very small compared to those people. So when I would go to Japanese school, it's all Japanese people! It's all my friends from school, we would go everyday after school to Japanese school. So it wasn't like anything different. You went to American school with these people, you went to Japanese school with these people, you went to baseball practice, basketball practice, it was all with the same people. Right? You don't know any different... Until you go to college, where I went to Upstate New York.

I was the only Asian-American that I knew of at that school. Everyone else was foreigners, international students. So everyone else would think I would talk with an Asian accent and I didn't. And they sorta are confused, because they didn't have Asian people in their lives. So you have this guy that *looks* Asian, but he's talkin' like you. *Ha!* And it sorta threw people off. I think going to New York for college was... a good experience because I see myself being very different from the people I grew up with who stayed here. It's a different perspective. Our families were most comfortable around other Japanese because of a safety factor, a comfort factor. Especially after World War II. You have to sorta trust your own for awhile there, and uh, but... I think the Japanese-Americans overcame that -- that fear of being Japanese. They assimilated very well into American culture.”



(Fig. 4 and 5, My sisters and I going to Obon (I'm in the middle in both photos). Source: Leigh Ikemiya)

Obon Festival

My mom pulled the wagon my sisters and I sat in as we walked through the gates of the Buddhist Church. My sisters got out of the wagon to go dance to the music, but I sat idly by until my mom picked me up. I buried my face into my mom's shoulder, refusing to participate in the festival. *No mommy, I don't want to walk. Please don't make me walk!* So in the wagon I sat, eating my Milky candy, watching my dad and sisters dance in the Obon circle, waiting for the song to be over so they could come back to keep me company.

The taiko drum was loud and the girl playing it, even louder. Her arms swung overhead and slammed the wooden sticks down onto the drum. She simultaneously shouted sounds I did not understand. *What are those words? Why did she seem angry?* People danced around the taiko drum in unison, using their fans as a dancing instrument as well as a method of keeping the heat away. Almost every dancer looked the same wearing kimonos of different colors, carrying a fan in one hand, a kachi kachi in the other, and a small backpack on their backs. I looked down and realized: I looked just like them, except my kimono had butterflies all over it.

In my yellow backpack I had my Milky candy, Pikachu fan, and my kachi kachi. I continued to sit and observe the dancing, watching my sisters and dad smile and dance one behind the other. My mom danced as well, sticking out like a sore thumb with her blonde hair and denim shorts. But she kept up with the dance moves mimicking the person in front of her. I listened to the various clacking sounds of the kachi kachi and the taiko's deep, thunderous song. I warmed up to the idea of dancing with everyone because I was beginning to feel left out. I waited until my mom came back over to me and I got up to dance. I took my Pikachu fan out of my backpack, put my backpack on, and walked over to the circle with my mom. I couldn't believe it -- *dancing was fun!*

I jumped and waved my arms to the beat of the taiko and followed my mom's dance moves. My backpack bounced on my back, my fan slicing through the air. I clicked together my kachi kachi by bringing my thumb and forefingers together. The wooden instrument's sound wafted through the air and collided with every other dancer's kachi kachi. The song finished and the circle broke, people scattering to their families and to the food booths. My mom picked me up and carried me back to our chairs and wagon. I wasn't shy anymore and kept my eyes on the festival, the crowd, and the food. Soon enough, my dad was walking towards us cradling different paper plates of food in his arms. My face lit up as I saw what my dad carried in one hand: the Okinawan dango, the best sweet snack of the summer. *Give me a dango!*

I shoved the sweet, fried dough ball in my mouth, a taste I was associated with Obon. It was a special treat because it was only available once a year during Obon festival weekend. Corn on the cob, watermelon slices, yakisoba, and musubi filled my stomach. By the time I was finished eating, it was time to dance again. We walked out on the hot asphalt as the sun began to

set. It was the last dance of Obon festival and everyone wanted to participate. Once the music began flowing out of the speakers, the taiko drummer began rhythmically pounding the drum and flocks of people gathered to form a circle. I never know who began the dance or if every dancer was familiar with the steps; I just followed the person in front of me.

I twirled my fan, hopping on one foot and then the other, spinning in a circle, and following the beat of the drum. My sisters and I danced and giggled with the sleeves of our kimonos fluttering in the summer breeze. We clicked our kachi kachi together without a sense of rhythm. The warmth of the sunset melted on my face and I forgot about the skepticism I had toward dancing from earlier in the day. *Why didn't I dance sooner?* My belly was full of my favorite festival treats, I was dancing with my sisters, and the music filled my head with the song of my ancestors. Obon festival was coming to an end, but in a year it would be back at the Buddhist Church and we could dress up, dance, and eat once again.



(Fig. 6, My ancestors outside of a Japanese hotel in California. Source: Jeff Ikemiya)

My Diaspora

On a sheet of notebook paper lay the most accurate knowledge of my family's diaspora from Japan. A feeling of pride ran through my bloodstream as I read the family history my grandfather had written by hand. Accompanying my grandfather's note were photocopies of the documentation of the first Ikemiyas to arrive in the United States. With their names, arrival dates, and ethnicity all perfectly legible, it was as if the information appeared more real and truthful. My great-great-great grandparents arrived in San Francisco in 1886 by boat. It took nearly two months to travel from the island of Japan to the coast of the United States. And according to my grandpa and the family stories that were passed down to him, my family members were passengers on a boat that was chased by a German U-boat. I was shocked to find a relatability between my family and the issues I had only read in History textbooks in high school. It was as if my grandpa's writing was a sacred text, proof that Allies and Central Powers *did* exist.

Suddenly my curiosity about my family tree turned into a history lesson. My grandpa wrote that several years later, my great-great grandparents arrived in America before the Immigration Act of 1924 was set in place. My family was lucky enough to arrive in the United States before this historic act was implemented. Their diaspora was successful due to pure luck. *What would have happened if my family had not immigrated?* I could not wrap my head around the idea that my ancestors were courageous enough to relocate their lives to a country where the language was foreign to them and their futures foreign, too. From the photos and written histories my grandparents passed down to my father, I noticed that my family assimilated to the American lifestyle in ways that other Asians could not. Photos of my ancestors smiling and standing next to their Ford car wearing high-waisted jeans and hats -- they *looked* American! My dad reflected on our diaspora as well, hinting at my family's willingness to assimilate to American culture:

I look at my cousins up in Fresno. They *always* drove American-made cars. I remember my uncles up there would drive American-made, the *kids* would drive American-made as they grew up. But now, now that they're older and have their own families, they necessarily don't. So I think it just depends on where you're at.

In my experience growing up Japanese-American, I have never felt as if I needed to assimilate to a certain culture. And as my dad said, now that his cousins (my uncles) have their own families, they don't *need* to buy Fords or Chevys because there is no dire need to assimilate. They are already American. Yet, they are still carrying the family orchard farming business into the next generation. Several of my cousins are in the process of getting degrees in agriculture in order to upkeep the Ike's Best orchard. And in a way, I feel guilty. It is as if I am so far removed from my ancestral roots while other family members are basking in our family's history: living in the

same area my ancestors settled in when they arrived and continuing the family business. What was my purpose? Am I living up to my ancestors' expectations? Am I supposed to be a farmer, like my cousins in Fresno?

My mind began to wander. I thought of the story my parents told me when I was born: My grandma struggled to hold me in her arms (I weighed over 10 pounds) and she excitedly urged my mom to give me her name as my middle name. My grandma said, "Name her Reiko! Name her Reiko!" It just sounded right to my mom and she agreed. Not only did I have Japanese blood in my veins, my name was a reminder that I was a piece of the Japanese Diaspora, as well. I was branded with my grandmother's name *Reiko*: "Beautiful Child." Even if I am not on the path to become an orchard farmer like some of my cousins, I know that as long as I stay true to my heritage and remember my Japanese roots, I will be successful; I will be what my ancestors had dreamed of becoming when they arrived in San Francisco in 1886.

Reflective Essay

My creative nonfiction project is based on my family's diaspora to the United States and the obstacles and successes of being in the hostland. A major element that I use throughout my project is the element of scene and setting. The area of the country where my family first set foot in is important to my family's history and gives an explanation for their chosen career paths. My ancestors first arrived in San Francisco in the late 1800s and branched out to central California to farm. Farming has been a piece of my family's history that still carries on today, so it was pertinent that I wrote about it. It is also interesting that I still have cousins that live in central California who are keeping up with the family business of orchard farming. I have a few pieces written about each generation of my family and the things they dealt with being Japanese-American based on scene: assimilating to American culture, participating in the American workforce, and being forced into internment camps during WWII. The element of detail helped organize my thoughts and create a strong layout for my project. By writing pieces in chronological order, I hoped to convey a timeline-like history of my family's diaspora. I paid special attention to the pattern of short stories and poems throughout my project to make sure I did not exhaust one or the other. Voice is another element that I used in my project. For one piece in particular, I utilized my grandmother's voice to convey the emotional hardships faced by Japanese-Americans when they were forced to move into internment camps and leave everything behind.

The goal of my project was intended to inform my audience about Japanese culture and the my family's diaspora. Surprisingly, the Japanese internment camps are a historical piece of the United States that are not often taught about in schools or acknowledged by the country. There are few commemorative landmarks or plaques signifying the internment camps. Rather, the land that once housed thousands of Japanese-Americans is left desolate without any notion that it was a massive part of our country's history. Because of that, I aimed to inform my audience about the internment camps by speaking about it through the voice of my grandmother.

Additionally, the number of Japanese farmworkers in the United States is something that is not talked about. My family built their lives off of their farmwork and I know many Japanese-Americans who share a similar story. I hoped to inform my readers that not all Japanese people are their stereotypes: we are not all doctors or surgeons. I also wanted to inform my audience about my own experience of being Japanese-American through the memories I have of growing up in a predominantly Japanese community. Going to Obon festival is just one example of growing up Japanese in America. Dedicating an entire weekend to a celebratory festival was a special occasion for me and the Japanese community I was apart of. It allowed me to consume Japanese culture and all of its components: dance, dress, language, and food.

I had many ideas for my project which made it difficult to decide what I wanted to do. Initially, I wanted to base my entire project on my own diaspora and the obstacles I face being a Japanese-American woman. In order to do that, I realized I needed to talk about my ancestors, the people who were courageous enough to uproot their lives and start over in a different country. I asked for advice from my father who gave me snippets of information about our ancestors. It

inspired me to write about our family history in a creative way. Because my ancestors are no longer here to provide me with their own insights, I had to decide what was the most pertinent information to include in my project about my ancestors. It was a lot of deleting, rewriting, and deleting again that made my project what it is in its final stage. Not only that, the information my father gave me was intriguing and sparked the idea of including a monologue in my project.

The Japanese diaspora is a diaspora I was unfamiliar with, mainly because I was not taught about it in school. I was not taught much about it from my family as well, mainly because my Japanese family members have assimilated to American culture and do not associate with Japan as much as they used to. By doing my own research, I found that many Japanese people left their homeland in search of creating more fulfilling lives for themselves. Farming was a popular job that persuaded Japanese people to leave their homeland. Many Japanese arrived in both North and South America to farm. This explains why there are large amounts of Japanese-Americans in California as well as in countries like Brazil and Peru. Another major key to the Japanese diaspora were the internment camps. Thousands of people were forcefully removed from their homes based on an idea constructed around their ethnicity. In turn, many Japanese-Americans attempted to go back to their homeland, where they were pushed away and called traitors to their country. This resulted in yet another movement of Japanese people back to America -- a second diaspora.

I enjoy reading short stories because they often express a magnitude of power in a short amount of writing. Andrew Lam's book *Perfume Dreams* inspired me to write my short stories because his stories are powerful, inspirational, and educational all at the same time. I took to his

style of writing which inspired me to write the poems about my ancestors as well as my story about Obon festival. I aimed to strike heavy emotion in my audience with my short stories and poems, like Lam had done. Additionally, I chose to include my father's monologue because I felt it was more powerful than writing a short story about his growing up Japanese-American. I liked the idea of using a person's voice, raw and unaltered, to express the idea of diaspora and personal experience. Also, I chose to write a lengthy poem using the haiku, a Japanese-style poem, because I wanted to tie in my heritage to my writing in a different way. Adding haiku was my way of including another piece of Japanese culture into my project aside from my family's history and their photographs.

Final Synthesis Essay

When I initially thought of my personal diaspora experience, nothing came to mind. I felt truly American in the way that I act, eat, and live my life. I believed I did not associate with any un-American cultural practices: I go to the movies, go to school, eat hamburgers, and go shopping. But, digging a bit deeper I realized that I did in fact have ties to diaspora. An article by Kim Butler describes the term “diaspora” as the dispersal of a group of people from its original homeland and thinking of one’s ethnic background. With that in mind, I began to connect my experiences to countries other than America. Things that I do in my everyday life that I do not think are special, are a part of my diaspora experience, such as the foods I eat, the events I attend, and the people I surround myself with. My Capstone class provided examples of the different forms diaspora can take and how every person has a unique diaspora experience.

Throughout the semester in my Capstone section, we were required to read several novels and discuss the chapters in class. I particularly enjoyed the stories from the book *The Warmth of Other Suns* by Isabel Wilkerson. I partook in the class discussion that day with various ideas and opinions, stressing the point that segregation in the United States was not that long ago. I elaborated on sections from the book describing the woes of segregation that I had never thought of. The book opened my eyes to the terrors of segregation and the stress that comes with living in the United States as a Black individual. Simultaneously, the book gave impressive examples of the Great Migration and the idea of diaspora which helped me form a better idea of what a diaspora is.

Going into the class, I thought I knew all about the Great Migration and segregation in the United States, but reading several novels about the Black American experience changed my mind. *The Warmth of Other Suns* and *Americanah* were two novels that gave an in-depth, personalized story for the struggles of being African American in the United States. Additionally, these two novels posed as two great examples of the unique diaspora experiences every person has. Being able to discuss them in class transformed my perspective of diaspora as well as my perspective of the obstacles immigrants face when trying to better their lives. The story in *Americanah* humbled me; I did not realize the hardships people face when leaving their homeland and arriving in a foreign country. People who participate in diasporas are truly courageous.

In addition, I presented on the book *Perfume Dreams* by Andrew Lam and made note of the hardships Vietnamese refugees faced when trying to escape from their communist country in the 1960s. I enjoyed Lam's stories about his diaspora to the United States because it reminded me of my best friend's father's journey to America. During my presentation, I was able to relate a friend's familiar experience of escaping Vietnam in an unfathomable fashion with Lam's own experience of refuge, making the diaspora seem more intimate and personal. Putting yourself in another person's shoes transforms your perspective into something more empathetic.

Collaborating on the presentation with a peer allowed further discussion about the themes in the book. Together, we were able to deconstruct each chapter of Lam's novel and decide what the most important takeaways were. While we had some differing opinions, taking another person's perspective into account can strengthen one's own opinion about the topic. For me, working on the presentation with my classmate helped me form a stronger idea of what diaspora can be.

The two peer reviews for the Capstone project were genuinely helpful because I was able to collaborate with a few classmates about possible ideas for my creative pieces. I believe my formatting is much better in terms of the layout of my pieces and the small things like font and grammar due to the advice from my group members. Being able to exchange ideas with my peers and learn about their diasporic experiences pushed me to think more creatively about the potential paths my project could take. We were able to exchange ideas and enhance the visual appeal of our projects which ultimately helped strengthen our final pieces.

The various readings we had in my Capstone class showed me that a diaspora can take place in many forms. This allowed me to think more creatively about my family's diaspora. Initially, I thought of my family's diaspora as a single migration from Japan to California, but in reality it is much more complex. I decided to include my grandparents' experience in the Japanese internment camps as a piece of diaspora because they were forced to move from their homes to an unfamiliar place. Interestingly, their experience in the internment camps led to another diaspora: one of leaving California to go back to Japan. Ultimately, this diaspora failed for my grandmother and her family because of the poor relations between Americans and Japanese after WWII so they moved back to the United States. If I had not read the books in my Capstone class, I would not have the various examples of diasporic experiences in my head. But, with those examples, I was able to think deeply about my family and our diaspora in its entirety.

Overall, my Capstone class theme of diaspora taught me more about myself, my family, and the ubiquitous experiences people face when moving to a new, foreign place. Diaspora was a term that I related directly to the African slave trade because it was the only instance I had heard

of the term. Now, I am aware that everyone has a story of diaspora and each story can be rich and insightful. It is extremely rewarding to end this course with a final project that encompasses my family history and the meaning it holds in my life. If it was not for my family's initial diaspora in the 1800s, I would not be the person I am today.