

# George Takei: Leading Man

PHOTO CREDIT: WARNER BROS.



*George Takei, an activist for human rights, "Why I love a country that once betrayed me."*

*-TED.Com, June 2014*

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*"From the Japanese American internment to gay rights, the role of Asian Americans in acting, and the humor of Facebook, he has mastered the art of projecting his words, not only across the stage, but across a broad array of audiences and mediums. As a leader for civil rights and a creative activist for justice, he speaks to the ideals of democracy and equality for every person."*

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*“Our democracy is a people’s democracy.  
It can be as great as the people can be,  
but it’s also as fallible as the people are.”*

*– Takekuma Norman Takei (George’s father)*

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## *George Takei: Leading Man*

JULIA SHU

### *Voice for Change*

Perhaps the most distinctive thing about George Takei is his deep, sonorous voice. Look him up on YouTube and listen to a few videos. It’s a voice that can turn simple statements and questions into the most profound, meaningful insights. Once, my parents saved a voicemail recording of him gracefully declining a Thanksgiving dinner invitation for at least a year, thrilled that the amazing voice of George Takei was preserved on the answering machine. So it is not surprising that during the course of his lifetime, George Takei’s voice has emerged as a prominent rallying cry for various issues for many communities, and always with the same grace and gravity. From the Japanese American internment to gay rights, the role of Asian Americans in acting, and the humor of Facebook, he has mastered the art of projecting his words, not only across the stage, but across a broad array of audiences and mediums. As a leader for civil rights and a creative activist for justice, he speaks to the ideals of democracy and equality for every person.

*The Takei family, forced to abandon their work and property in Los Angeles, was sent to Rohwer, an internment camp in Arkansas [in 1942. George was 4 years old.] ... The family was relocated again to Tule Lake Segregation Center, a harsher prison, for [challenging the internment policy.]*



PHOTO COURTESY OF FORGOTTEN HISTORY | INWADG

## ***Injustice of History***

Takei was born in 1937 to Japanese American parents in Los Angeles, his young life marked by the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. An injustice born out of racism, wartime hysteria, and plain greed, the internment resulted in lost livelihoods and broken communities. In 1942 when President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, about 120,000 Japanese Americans across the western states (not including Hawaii) were required to relocate, first to civilian assembly centers, then to ten different internment camps across California, Utah, Arizona, Arkansas, Wyoming, Colorado, and Idaho. Internment camps were prisons where Japanese Americans were watched constantly by military guards, surrounded by barbed wire fences and surveillance towers, and considered enemy aliens of the United States. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the US government rationalized that anyone of Japanese ancestry constituted a direct threat to the country, that loyalty was determined by race, and that some Japanese Americans were spies and infiltrators working for the

Emperor of Japan. The internment created tragedy in the lives of approximately 120,000 people. Although Takei was a young child at the time, this moment in history would later shape his goals and aspirations.

The Takei family, forced to abandon their work and property in Los Angeles, was sent to Rohwer, an internment camp in Arkansas. George's memories were those of a young child – playing games with friends and a family trip outside the camp grounds as a special privilege for his father, who took on leadership roles. “My real memories of the time we were in camp were fun memories. I remember the barbed wire fence, the sentry towers, the machine guns pointed at us, but they were just part of the landscape,” he says “You get used to the routine of lining up 3 times a day to eat in a noisy mess hall, to go to the showers [...] that became normality. In reality, it’s grotesquely abnormal,” he says. And although the Takeis adapted to living in the camp, the realities of war and the terrible oppressions being inflicted on Japanese Americans always resurfaced. In 1943, the internees faced an impossible decision, the Loyalty



PHOTO COURTESY OF GEORGE TAKEI

*A kindergarten photo of George in the Rohwer Internment Camp, Arkansas.*

Questionnaire. The questionnaire was a requirement imposed by the U.S. government, with some critical questions for internees: #27: “Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty wherever ordered?” and #28: “Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor or any other foreign government, power, or organization?” How could a people betrayed by their country swear to fight in its armies? And if one abandoned loyalty to the Emperor of Japan, wouldn’t that imply there was some conflicting allegiance to begin with? Many internees cooperated, answering “yes” to both questions out of a desire to prove their trustworthiness, out of steadfast patriotism, or out of fear of the consequences of defiance. For Takei’s parents, the questionnaire was a life-changing moment. Both answered “no” to questions 27 and 28. The family was relocated again to Tule Lake Segregation Center, a harsher prison for “No no’s.”

Tule Lake in Northern California, like a few other internment camps, is now open for visitors. Since his childhood, George has gone to visit the inner prison area that internees were forced to build. “There was graffiti written on the wall, and brown, aging splashes – people were bashed against the concrete wall. Horrific things were done there, a prison within a prison,” he recounts. In 1946, after WWII ended, George’s family finally left Tule Lake and returned to Los Angeles, to rebuild their lives.

Despite this gruesome history, it wasn’t until his teenage years that George really began to learn about the internment, a process that informed his political awareness. Through conversations with his father and involvement with the Civil Rights Movement, a part of history that had previously been mere childhood memories became a significant example of hypocrisy and failed ideals. “It was unjust. People lost everything. And how can they talk about the ideals of this country?” he asks. Japanese Americans had been sent away with no trials, no due process, no civil rights. During this time George’s conversations

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PHOTO COURTESY OF GEORGE TAKEI

**George at memorial to Japanese American veterans at Rohwer cemetery.**

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*According to his father, the internment had in part succeeded because the Japanese American community lacked leaders engaged with politics and society outside the largely immigrant group.*

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with his father began to form the opinions and ideals that would later inspire him to use stories from the past to fight for justice and equality. Takekuma Norman Takei believed that “Our democracy is a people’s democracy. It can be as great as the people can be, but it’s also as fallible as the people are”. With his father’s encouragement, George got involved in student elections, and volunteered with the political campaign of Adlai Stevenson, an early participation in government and politics that foreshadowed his later activism. According to his father, the internment had in part succeeded because the Japanese American community lacked leaders engaged with politics and society outside the largely immigrant group.

George’s new generation would not be caught in the same position.

As a youth, George lived with his family in Los Angeles. They ran a dry cleaning business in East Los Angeles. He later attended UC Berkeley to study architecture in 1956. However his interest in acting and theater, at first a side project, soon overtook his academic pursuits. After spending a summer taking

an acting class and working as a voice actor, the drive to study acting grew, and he soon transferred from UC Berkeley to UCLA to become a theater student. George’s parents supported his ambition, despite warnings that being an Asian American actor would have limited prospects. “There were very few opportunities, and the few opportunities that there were, were unattractive characters – the villain, the servant, or the buffoon...and it was very difficult to get roles where we were human beings,” he remembers. Still, he was determined to follow his passion. George started off working on Japanese monster films being dubbed for American audiences. He also had a memorable role as a Japanese soldier in *Playhouse 90*, a distinguished live TV drama; the role raised his profile as an actor and opened new opportunities. In a TV pilot called “Where No Man Has Gone Before,” George played Hikaru Sulu, an officer aboard a space ship, the USS Enterprise. In 1966, this pilot became the science fiction hit series *Star Trek*, and Hikaru Sulu became a role that defined George’s career and catapulted him to international fame.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GEORGE TAKEI



Student council at Mt. Vernon Junior High School, Los Angeles. George, standing in the center, was the student body president.

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*George’s generation would not be caught in the same position.*

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## Tule Lake Segregation Center

Tule Lake Segregation Center was known as the harshest and most repressive of the Japanese American internment camps. After the divisive Loyalty Questionnaire separated out the “No no’s”, Tule Lake received an additional 12,000 prisoners, including Takei and his family. The camp was converted into a maximum security segregation center, 1,000 military police and tanks were added, and an eight-foot high double fence was built around the perimeter. Prisoners lived with poor, unsanitary housing and unsafe working conditions. The prisoners organized work stoppages, demonstrations, and unrest over food supply. Martial law was imposed in late 1943 for several months. After martial law was lifted, draft notices were issued to young Japanese American men, yet another insulting demand. Twenty-seven men resisted the draft and were tried for violating the Selective Service Act. Their charges were dismissed by U.S. District Judge Louis Goodman in the case *United States v. Masaaki Kuwabara* in 1944. Judge Goodman wrote, “It is shocking to the conscience that an American citizen be confined on the ground of disloyalty and then, while so under duress and restraint, be compelled to serve in the armed forces, or be prosecuted for not yielding to such compulsion.”

Another injustice of Tule Lake came with the passage of Public Law 405, signed by President Roosevelt in 1944. The law was written for Japanese Americans imprisoned at Tule Lake, and allowed American citizens to renounce citizenship during wartime. According to information from the Tule Lake Committee, 5,589 Japanese Americans renounced their citizenship. The vast majority of those who renounced citizenship were prisoners at the Tule Lake camp, where 70 percent of adult citizens did so. This included Takei’s mother, Fumiko Emily Takei. While reasons varied for renouncing citizenship, many Japanese Americans had family members who were not citizens, and feared separation by deportation. Some wanted to protest their unfair confinement and mistreatment while others feared being drafted. However, after the war ended, families realized what they had given up when the government moved to deport those who had renounced. A civil rights lawyer named Wayne Mortimer Collins fought for decades to restore their citizenship in the class action *Abo v. Clark*, arguing that the decision to renounce had been made while Japanese Americans were imprisoned, and therefore could not stand. Again, Judge Goodman ruled in favor of Japanese Americans and civil rights, but a later court decision required each person’s case to be pursued individually. Collins spent 20 years fighting these individual cases, winning back the citizenship of Japanese Americans who had renounced these rights while interned.

The injustices that occurred at Tule Lake often go unnoticed, partly because of the shame and accusation placed on the “No no’s” for resisting the Loyalty Questionnaire. Intense pressure to conform to American demands of unconditional loyalty and military service caused divides in Japanese families and communities, along with the physical pressures of imprisonment and poor living conditions. But Tule Lake among all the internment camps shows just how far the abridgement of American civil rights proceeded, fueled by racism, xenophobia, and wartime fear.

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*An injustice born out of racism, wartime hysteria, and plain greed, the incarceration resulted in lost livelihoods and broken communities. In 1942 President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, about 120,000 Japanese Americans across the western states... were required to relocate... to ten different internment camps across [the U.S.]... Japanese Americans had been sent away with no trials, no due process, no civil rights.*

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Source: [tulelake.org](http://tulelake.org) and the Tule Lake Committee

*“...the few opportunities that there were, were unattractive characters – the villain, the servant, or the buffoon...and it was very difficult to get roles where we were human beings.”*

-George Takei

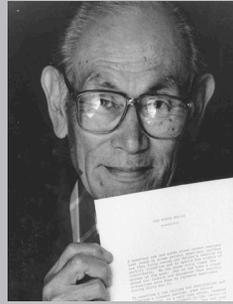
## Best Driver in the Galaxy

**S**tar Trek, which also became a movie series, promoted an expansive, imaginative and diverse view of humanity’s future. Hikaru Sulu, played by George, was an officer on board the USS Enterprise, a space ship with the mission “to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no man has gone before.” And Sulu himself was the kind of Asian character not yet seen on TV, a space officer who fences, pilots the ship, and is far from the one-dimensional villain or funny sidekick. In an interview with *Mother Jones*, George said, “I knew this character was a breakthrough role, certainly for me as an individual actor but also for the image of an Asian character: no accent, a member of the elite leadership team” (Pasulka 2012). He went on to joke that in spite of the stereotype about bad Asian drivers, he was playing the best driver in the galaxy.

PHOTO CREDIT: PARAMOUNT TELEVISION



George played Hikaru Sulu, an officer aboard a space ship, the USS Enterprise in Star Trek. Hikaru Sulu became a role that defined George’s career and catapulted him to international fame.



Fred Korematsu holding a letter from the U.S Government apologizing for its unjust internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

## Fred Korematsu

The Japanese American responses to the forced internment were varied. Although the Japanese American Citizens League advised families to follow the law and demonstrate loyalty through good behavior, not all took this path. Some bravely fought in the armed forces, for example the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Fred Korematsu courageously fought the internment through the US court system, taking his case all the way to the Supreme Court.

Read more about his struggle at [AdvancingJustice-LA.org/Korematsu](http://AdvancingJustice-LA.org/Korematsu)



PHOTO COURTESY OF GEORGE TAKEI

Benson Fong, Beulah Quo and George Takei in a scene from a “My Three Sons” episode titled “My Fair Chinese Lady”. 1964.

## Beulah Kwoh

East West Players is a theater group based in Los Angeles with the mission of providing Asian American artists with roles beyond the stereotypes of Hollywood and telling stories about all aspects of the Asian American experience. Founded in 1965 by a group of ambitious actors and actresses, East West Players continues to showcase plays and musicals with talented artists and to provide educational opportunities for those starting their acting career. One of Takei’s friends, actress Beulah Quo (stage name for Beulah Kwoh), was instrumental in the founding of East West Players.

Read more about her life at [AdvancingJustice-LA.org/BeulahKwoh](http://AdvancingJustice-LA.org/BeulahKwoh)



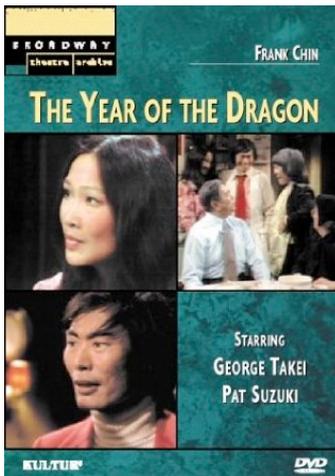
PHOTO CREDIT: WARNER BROS.



PHOTO CREDIT: MGM



PHOTO CREDIT: WARNER BROS.



Various Roles: *from top*, With Richard Burton in a scene from *Ice Palace* in 1958. George's first movie. *Second*, With Frank Sinatra in a scene from *Never So Few*. Released 1959. *Third*, With Rosalind Russell a scene from *A Majority of One*. Released 1961. *Fourth*, George Takei, Pat Suzuki, *The Year of the Dragon*, a play written by Frank Chin, 1974.

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*“The arts humanizes the human condition, and that is a powerful tool in both education and understanding.”*

*-George Takei*

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## **Breaking Boundaries**

**S**tar *Trek* remains incredibly popular. In 2009 a reboot of the movie series launched with a new cast, debuting John Cho as Sulu. George continues to entertain millions of fans (or “trekkies”), online, at conventions, on TV and in movies. But since his days as Sulu, his fame has grown to many other arenas. As a force for diversity in theater and media, he serves on the Council of Governors of East West Players, an acclaimed Asian American theater organization based in Los Angeles. Takei believes we need more Asian American actors and actresses to drive narratives on stage, TV, and in movies. “We need to get to where we’re playing lead roles in TV series and future films, so that it’s not just the visibility, but the vantage point, the perspective,” he points out “We have regulars to go on these TV series, but they become the token Asian detective, or the token Asian doctor, or token Asian criminal.” Breaking the boundaries of tokenism, out of stereotypical roles, continues to be a challenge – but he is optimistic about positive change in the future, citing African American actors like Denzel Washington and Will Smith who now command as much star power (and thus, production power) as white actors. The progress of Asian American actors and actresses is crucial not only for the sake of accurate representation, but because media can serve as a powerful tool for change. Stories told on TV are the stories the public learns about, the characters are the ideas the public sympathizes with, and the settings are the scenes the public comes to expect. “The arts humanizes the human condition, and that is a powerful tool in both education and understanding,” Takei says. This is important not just in broadening racial representations in TV and movies, but representations of LGBT people as well, another community Takei has been active in supporting.

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PHOTO BY DARIA KROUPDEROVA



*“Takei ... has served as one of the most highly recognized advocates for LGBT rights ... he has championed equal rights for all people, regardless of sexual orientation.”*

Seattle Pride Celebrity Grand Marshal George Takei and his husband, Brad Takei. *Northwest Asian Weekly*, July 3, 2014

## Representing LGBT Communities

In 2013, I watched from the sidelines as Takei and his husband Brad waved from a slow moving car in San Diego’s Pride Parade. Through thick crowds and the clamor of frantic cheering, it seemed as if he was looking straight at the spot where my parents and I stood, and waving in recognition. Later, he confessed he hadn’t seen us at all, and we hypothesized his actor’s skills must have tricked each person into believing they had received a personal wave and smile. But openly taking part in a Pride Parade was not always an option for Takei. “When I was a young man and I wanted to be an actor, you knew that if you want to be able to live a normal life, you have to keep a part of your life hidden,” he says. Although some friends knew that he was gay, it was not until 2005 that he decided to take a public stand. That year, former Governor of California Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed a bill allowing same-sex marriage, another move against the struggle for LGBT equality. Consequently, Takei decided to publicly announce his sexual orientation in an interview with *Frontiers*, an LGBT community magazine. “You know, it’s not re-

ally coming out, which suggests opening a door and stepping through,” says Takei “It’s more like a long, long walk through what began as a narrow corridor that starts to widen” (Cho 2005).

Takei, since the interview with *Frontiers*, has served as one of the most highly recognized advocates for LGBT rights, often using his acting fame to leverage a wider audience. As a spokesperson for the Human Rights Campaign’s Coming Out Project, as a guest at many Gay Pride Parades around the country, and in his many internet commentaries on current events, he has championed equal rights for all people, regardless of sexual orientation. In 2008, Takei married his long-time partner Brad Altman in a ceremony at the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles. He championed the right of marriage for same-sex couples across the country in a battle that culminated in the Supreme Court’s June 2015 decision affirming that right in all states. On Twitter, Takei wrote, “My eyes shine with tears as marriage equality is ruled the law of the land.” But many struggles remain. In 2007, basketball player Tim Hardaway created con-

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*“My eyes shine with tears as marriage equality is ruled the law of the land.”*

-George Takei

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trovsky with his homophobic views, stating, “I hate gay people.” Takei responded with a widely popular video shown on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* in which he criticized Hardaway’s hateful attitude. The video showed Takei’s usual comedic twists, ending with him admiring Hardaway’s body and cackling, “I love sweaty basketball players!” In 2011, Tennessee considered the “Don’t Say Gay” bill, legislation that would have prevented teachers from talking about homosexuality in the classroom. Takei countered with his own slogan, “It’s Ok to Be Takei!” In a YouTube video, he cheekily encouraged supporters to use his name any time the word “gay” might be banned, even making shirts and buttons with rainbow *Star Trek* logos for the cause.

That video and others are just part of Takei’s internet and social media presence. He credits these forms of communication with creating a spread of

information that changed attitudes about LGBT people. “If you came out back then, you could have come out very quietly. But today, because of social media the world has changed. People now understand that it’s an inborn condition, just like race,” he says “Because of the internet, information is out there. Because of that information, society has changed and it’s easier for people to come out, it’s not as painful”. He believes that as more people from all walks of life come out publicly, the tired tropes about what it means to be gay or lesbian start to crumble. “People have stereotyped views, the wild, flaming drag queens – that’s what they thought gays to be. They never thought of it in terms of sexual orientation, of members of their own family – sons, daughters, cousins, in many cases fathers and mothers,” he says

### **The LGBT Movement and Asian Americans**

For Asian Americans as well as African Americans, Latinos, and other people of color, the push for civil rights and equality for gay, lesbian, transgender, and gender non-conforming people strikes many similarities to the movement for racial equality. Although same-sex marriage recently became legal in the Supreme Court decision *Obergefell v. Hodges* in 2015, laws banning it and laws limiting the mention of homosexuality like the “Don’t Say Gay” bill are remarkably like anti-miscegenation laws which criminalized interracial marriage. Until the case *Loving v. Virginia* in 1967, interracial marriage was illegal in many states, and considered unnatural and sinful. “In another time not so long ago in America, I would not have been allowed to marry a white man. This is a civil rights issue, just as that was,” said Mary Li to the ACLU. Li, a Chinese American woman, married her wife Rebecca Kennedy in one of the first same-sex marriages in Oregon in 2004. Along with other same-sex couples, she challenged the state in the case *Li v. State of Oregon* for the right to marry. Li’s and Takei’s participation and leadership in fighting for LGBT rights also highlights the diversity of the movement. A Pew Research report in 2013 counted 34 percent of LGBT survey respondents were non-white. But too often, a homogenous, white face is put on LGBT activism. Addressing this whitewashing is key because, while marriage equality was a considerable victory, LGBT people, especially people of color, still face many injustices. Tragically, the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs states that a staggering 72 percent of victims of hate violence homicides in 2013 were transgender women, with the majority being transgender women of color. Transgender people of color are also six times more likely to suffer police violence than white, cisgender people due to a confluence of transphobia and racism. This example is just one way in which LGBT people of color continue to live with discrimination and fear.

Sources: Pew Research, National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, “Seeing Loving in Gay Marriages: Parallels of Asian American History and Same-Sex Marriage Debates” by Bryant Young, *Amerasia Journal* 32:1 (2006): 33-44  
ACLU link: <https://www.aclu.org/news/basic-rights-oregon-and-aclu-congratulate-first-same-sex-couples-married-oregon>

*“I use my childhood incarceration and these internment camps as a metaphor. We were imprisoned behind very real barbed wire fences, but there’s another group of Americans, the LGBT community, that’s imprisoned by legalistic barbed wire fences. You can’t see them as fences, but there are sharp, hard barbs of discrimination and lack of understanding, ignorance, in the laws.”*

-George Takei

## ***Allegiance: Japanese American Internment***

Few public figures have negotiated fame and publicity with the skill and purpose of Takei. His Facebook page has over 9 million “likes,” and his Twitter account more than 1 million followers. Most days, the accounts are filled with clever memes and puns, often *Star Trek*-themed. He also has several comical YouTube videos on everything from registering to vote, to “Star Peace” – an alliance between *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* fans. This online presence was no accident. “It was a singular purpose,” says George. He was developing a musical called *Allegiance*, which focused on the story of the Japanese American internment, a project very close to his heart but lacking in publicity. Social media seemed the perfect opportunity to

get attention. “I noticed that I get a lot of likes and shares when I make funny comments, rather than serious,” he explains. “So I started concentrating on the funnies”. Soon, an audience that began with *Star Trek* fans familiar with Captain Sulu had expanded to people who had never seen the show. Next, George added another fan group to his audience. “There is an overlap between sci-fi geeks and nerds and the LGBT community,” he notes. For George, LGBT issues are just one facet of the fight for justice and equal rights. “I use my childhood incarceration and these internment camps as a metaphor. We were imprisoned behind very real barbed wire fences, but there’s another group of Americans, the LGBT



PHOTO CREDIT: SARAH KRULWICH/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Seattle Pride Celebrity Grand Marshal George Takei and his husband, Brad Takei. Northwest Asian Weekly. July 3, 2014

community, that's imprisoned by legalistic barbed wire fences. You can't see them as fences, but there are sharp, hard barbs of discrimination and lack of understanding, ignorance, in the laws". He began to mix in his advocacy for LGBT civil rights, drawing even more virtual attention. "Then I started to talk about the internment, because LGBT people know about discrimination, and that grew it some more," he says. Although not a commonly discussed history topic, soon "people now were educated about internment; they not only were interested, but they were enthusiastic". He then introduced *Allegiance* to his massive online audience, drawing on the support he had carefully amassed.

The musical debuted at the Old Globe Theater in San Diego in 2012, where it took in \$2.23 million in ticket sales, a record-breaking success for the theater. *Allegiance* tells the story of a Japanese American family sent to an internment camp, all unfairly treated and torn apart by the conflicting loyalties and decisions on how to respond, forced on brothers, sisters, and parents. George wrote the script and plays the role of the grandfather of the family, as well as the main character Sam Kimura in the future, as an aged man. He stars alongside Telly Leung and Lea Salonga, a Tony Award-winning actress. The musical is unique in its topic, a production telling a story which still remains unknown to many Americans, which focuses on the Japanese American community in a way no other story can. In fact, some older Japanese Americans who experienced the internment are reluctant to discuss the traumatic period. But George's strategic efforts in gaining support online, through legions of fans from a myriad of causes and interests, made the debut a tremendous victory. In 2015, the musical opened on Broadway in New York, bringing the story to an even wider audience.

## Artist as Advocate

“The arts are a powerful, powerful medium of both information, but also understanding and uplift. And they play an important part in communicating the human element in issues,” George says. His work on stage and on screen continues to show this immense impact, especially in communicating the deep emotions around the Japanese American internment. But George's creative persistence in gathering support and funding for *Allegiance* spawned one of his most recognizable public faces today – his

presence in social media via Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. This achievement shows the great power that comes from not just physical performances, but virtual and online communities as well.

In 2013, George launched a web video series called “Takei's Take,” in which he talks about new technology, pop culture, and current trends. He won a Webby Award for an episode on Google Glass. In late 2014, a documentary on George called *To Be Takei* opened in theaters. Jennifer Kroot, the director of the film, says the complexity of his life was hard to convey. “It was a challenge to create the structure, especially with the range from very serious topics like the internment to lighter pop culture elements and even the outrageous comedy of George's work on *The Howard Stern Show*” (Silverstein 2014).

Today, George Takei has become a famed actor and leader in many areas for his social justice work. The seeds planted long ago – the experience of internment, the support and influence of parents, and a love of theater combined to grow a myriad of projects and passion, which keep him at the forefront of several contemporary causes. George doesn't believe the different social causes he fights for are separate issues. Rather, he believes “They're all the same; it's a matter of equality, and matter of justice, a matter of what's there.” Not only is he one of the country's most successful Asian American actors, but he uses this success and recognition with great skill in gathering attention and support. Whether he is speaking out for LGBT rights, talking about diversity in acting, or singing on stage, there is no question. George Takei is a leading man.



George Takei takes the Ice Bucket Challenge to raise money for ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis). Youtube.com. 2014



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