

Ira hayes essay sample

War



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Ira Hamilton Hayes was an Akimel O’odham, or Pima Native American, and an enrolled member of the Gila River Indian Community. A veteran of World War II’s Battle of Iwo Jima, Hayes was trained as a Paramarine in the United States Marine Corps (USMC), and became one of five Marines, along with a United States Navy corpsman, immortalized in the iconic photograph of the flag raising on Iwo Jima. On February 19, 1945, Hayes took part in the landing on Iwo Jima. He then participated in the battle for the island and was among the group of Marines that took Mount Suribachi five days later, on February 23, 1945.

The raising of the second American flag on Suribachi by five Marines, Ira Hayes, Rene Gagnon, Harlon Block, Franklin Sousley, and Mike Strank, and a Navy Corpsman, John Bradley. Overnight, Hayes became a national hero, along with the two other survivors of the famous photograph, Rene Gagnon and John Bradley. Hayes’s story drew particular attention because he was Native American. This is now a great monument of them raising the flag. After the war, Hayes attempted to lead a normal life, unsuccessfully. “ I kept getting hundreds of letters. And people would drive through the reservation, walk up to me and ask, ‘ Are you the Indian who raised the flag on Iwo Jima?’”[3] He rarely spoke about the flag raising, but spoke often with great pride about his time in the Marine Corps.

After returning home from the war, Hayes remained troubled that one of his friends, Harlon Block, was mistaken for another man, Hank Hansen. Hayes later hitchhiked 1, 300 miles from his Pima Indian reservation to Ed Block’s farm in Texas, to reveal the truth to Block’s family. He was instrumental in

having the controversy resolved, to the delight and gratitude of the Block family.

Ira Hayes appeared in the 1949 John Wayne film, *Sands of Iwo Jima*, along with fellow flag raisers John Bradley and Rene Gagnon. All three men played themselves in the movie. Wayne hands the flag to be raised to the three men. (The actual flag that was raised on Mount Suribachi is used in the film.)

After the war, Hayes accumulated a record of some fifty arrests for drunkenness. Referring to his alcoholism, he once said: “ I was sick. I guess I was about to crack up thinking about all my good buddies. They were better men than me and they’re not coming back. Much less back to the White House, like me.”