

# Free essay on asian american power yuri kochiyama

[Politics](#), [Civil Rights](#)



Most Asian American came to the America after the emancipation and release of the black slaves. This means that cheap and free labor was no longer available for the white population at that time. As a result, white Americans wanted to close this vacuum of cheap labor through shipping another type of race, Asians, into the United States (Kochiyama, 2004, p. 26). The Asians who were shipped in America were treated with hostility and faced a lot of racism from the white people. This is because the white population was dominant in the US and thereby, became a minority. As a minority group, they were segregated and marginalized (Fujino, 2005, p. 83). This means that both the African Americans and Asians received harsh treatment and were oppressed by the white population. As a result, both of these groups formed an activist group that would enable them to achieve freedom and equity despite one's phenotype. One of the Asian-America activist that stood out during the struggle for equity between Asians and Whites is Yuri Kochiyama (Kochiyama, 2004, p. 26) . She was a Japanese activist who became an Asian American activist to fight for civil and human rights in the 1960s. This paper will look at how Kochiyama took part in the civil right movement and how the bombing of the Pearl Harbor affected the Asian people especially the Japanese.

Yuri Kochiyama was born in 1921 in California after her immigrant parents came into America and settled (Jennings, 1994, 23). Her parents settled on the West Coast where her family owned a food store that supplied food to the US Navy off the Pacific shores. Kochiyama is said to have been brought up in an upraised area in the community that was mainly considered for the whites only. This is because, as an immigrant family they had to try hard to

fit into the American system (Jennings, 1994, p. 43). Since her both parents were from the Japanese decent, she learned how to speak Japanese and learned more about her culture despite being away from their mother land. In her home “ they ate Japanese food and was expected to behave as a proper Japanese kid, including her siblings (Fujino, 2005, p. 1-3).” This means that her parents valued their decent and their traditions such that they wanted to teach their kids the importance of Japanese way of life. However, Kochiyama writes that away from home she was “ an All-American girl (Fujino, 2005, p. 3-4).” This was because she had been integrated into the American social life and had to fit among her peers with ease if she embraced the American way of life.

However, Kochiyama’s world was all good till the Japan Empire bombed Pearl Harbor stirring havoc among the Asian Americans living in the US.

Kochiyama’s father was one of those convicted on the West Coast to be questioned of giving any Intel to the Japanese government so as to help them in bombing the US (Fujino, 2005, p. 76-79). This means her father was tortured because of his ethnicity. Kochiyama’s father was later released but died after a few days due to his medical condition. Many Japanese Americans faced a lot of antagonism from other races due to the incident (Kochiyama, 2004, p. 25). The whole country was hysterical and filled with malice against any Asian-looking person as the dominant race blamed them for the Pearl Harbor terrorist attack. Kochiyama writes how there was “ an outbreak of war, faced with racial integration (Fujino, 2005, p. xxii).” It is at this point that Kochiyama learned that her race would be incarcerated by the white Americans despite the fact that they did not know what had happened. This

is when she knew the depth racism was deep rooted among Americans and the social injustice that were pertained in the American society. The bombing of the Pearl Harbor became her racial awakening of the American system. In a few months, Kochiyama and her family were bound to leave their home into concentration camps where all Japanese people living in America were put (Kochiyama, 2004, p. 94). The main reason why the US government did this was because they believed that Japanese Americans were in one way or another connected to Pearl Harbor bombing. Most Japanese Americans were incarcerated in concentration camps where there were bad living conditions such as next to a swamp or placed in a desert land (Kochiyama, 2004, p. 99).

Kochiyama was placed in one of Mississippi concentration camps where she devoted her life into helping others. However, while she stayed there she observed how the minority were treated brutally by the white people. These experiences transformed Kochiyama's view of being 'color blind (Fujino, 2005, p. 51).' She could not believe how much one's phenotype played an integral role in how one is treated. People of color were seen as inferior and subordinate to the white community (Fujino, 2005, p. 50). Discrimination among racial formation was evident especially in the south where people were predominately white. Kochiyama learned that the white community was filled with hatred toward the minority groups and as a result, they were degraded. Due to these keen and prevalent racial formation especially in the South, Kochiyama was interested in joining the civil rights movement that was fighting for equality and freedom of the black people at that time (Jennings, 1994, p. 140). She knew that what the black people experienced

as being the minority, the Japanese Americans had been exposed to the same type of ignorance and brutality.

Kochiyama became a political activist of the civil rights of the minority in the US. Kochiyama was greatly influenced by the ways and ordeals of Malcom X who was a great African American activist in the civil rights movement (Jennings, 1994, p. 47). However, after the death of Malcom X, she became infuriated and self-determined in to fighting for freedom and equal rights for the minority. After the death of Malcom X, she knew it was time that the minority made a movement that acted out of self-defense when attacked by the white population (Kochiyama, 2004, p. 167). Kochiyama joined the 'black power' in Mississippi so as to continue her fight for freedom and equality (Fujino, 2005, p. 176). This indicates that Kochiyama played a fundamental role in the Civil Rights Movement that acclaimed for human rights for all despite one's race or ethnicity.

In conclusion, it is clear that people of color were treated brutally by the white population as they believed they were the superior race to the others. Kochiyama who was a political activist in the civil rights movement faced the wrath of the white population after they were moved from their California home into concentration camps that were in bad living conditions. She observed that all races in the minority group faced the same issues and this made her determined to fight for freedom and equality for all. Kochiyama participated in the bus movement in Mississippi where the minority were discriminated against and treated harshly because of their phenotype. Thus, Kochiyama was a key facet in ensuring that civil rights movement fought for the rights of the minority.

## **References**

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