

SISTERS MATSUMOTO

NOTES FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT AND DIRECTOR

PLAYWRIGHT NOTES

This play was inspired by several sources. The main inspiration is my mother's life that mirrors closely the return of the Matsumoto sisters to their rural home in Stockton, California. This, after being incarcerated for two years in one of America's World War II Relocation Camps.

It also draws inspiration from Chekov's works as well as a movie by Kon Ichikawa, *The Makioka Sisters*, based on a novel by Jun'ichiro Tanizaki.

In my own work I have always been drawn to the small intimacies we must negotiate in our daily lives. Not necessarily the big spectacle or the large heroic act but those every day braveries and failures that cumulatively define a life lived.

The *Sisters Matsumoto* is one such work. I hope you enjoy.

Philip Kan Gotanda 3-24-17. UC Berkeley.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Last February, artistic director Michael Butler invited me to direct Philip Kan Gotanda's beautifully wrought narrative that celebrates the resilience of three Japanese-American sisters and their families. This invitation and this play, which I first read over 15 years ago, written in 1999, and set in 1945, felt historic on multiple levels. Not only was the piece rooted in my heritage, it was written by a founding Asian-American voice and artist who has been a mentor and now colleague to me for the last decade.

As an artistic director and freelance director dedicated to developing new plays, it seemed strange to direct this story set in what felt like the distant past...

None of us imagined that the incarceration of 120,000 Japanese-Americans (70,000 of whom were American citizens) in 1942 could be a precedent for growing sentiment about Muslim-Americans in 2017.

This production is about the present. It is a courageous appeal to our greater human compassion towards understanding the plight of neighbors who are forced to suffer flagrant violations of their civil liberties. It is an act of remembering and acknowledging a history we must not forget and we must learn from.

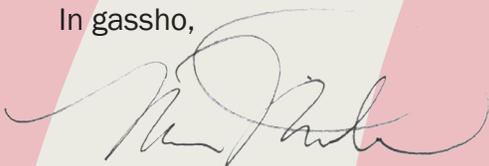
"Never Again" is a call to action from the Japanese-American community to all of us upon the 75th anniversary of Executive Order 9066. Military intelligence determined that not a single act of espionage or sabotage had occurred within the Japanese-American community (Hawaii included), or was likely to occur. However, thousands of Americans lost their homes, jobs, and dignities, even after demonstrating unwavering patriotism at home and abroad in the form of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, which included 4,500 Nisei (2nd-generation Japanese-Americans), and became the most decorated unit in U.S. military history. This unit liberated Dachau camp in Germany, even as their families continued to be incarcerated in the United States.

And to all of us visitors (immigrants and those forced to immigrate to this land that belonged to a whole people before us) let us recall the American Dream that carries so many people here: "That dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement ... a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position" (James Adams). And our very own Declaration of Independence, which states, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

These beliefs are the fabric of our national mythology. It is the promise that the Matsumoto family, and so many of us depend upon. Let us uphold this promise, together.

Thank you for sharing this time with us and supporting the arts, which make up the soul of our civilized nation. #supporttheNEA

In gassho,



Mina Morita