

THE RESTORATION OF AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP TO IVA TOGURI

By Clifford Uyeda

During her trial in 1949, Iva Toguri received no support from organized groups. While Japanese Americans may have sympathized with her predicament, they could effectively do very little to help her while their own position in American society was under attack. As their struggle to gain fundamental rights progressed, Japanese Americans warmed up to the idea of supporting Iva Toguri; but it was an excruciatingly slow process.

The general public also had difficulty supporting her during her trial. The repressive period, later known as the McCarthy Era, was dawning in 1949, and most people withdrew from involvement in controversial cases.

For some 30,000 Nisei veterans of World War II, supporting someone charged with a crime against the very country they fought to defend was inconceivable. For other Nisei recently released from mass detention camps, their own problems of survival overshadowed all else.

One wonders what brought about the change in Nisei attitudes toward Iva Toguri. Maturity, economic security, and improved social acceptance into the mainstream of American life were important; but time was the greatest factor.

Thirty years after the end of World War II, anti-Japanese sentiments in the United States were minimal, the civil rights movement was a popular cause, and especially after the Vietnam



Iva Toguri and Attorney Wayne M. Collins. Filing petition for clemency to President Ford, November 1976, in front of the Federal District Court in San Francisco where the 1949 trial was held. Photo by Raymond Okamura. National Japanese American Historical Society Archives.

War and Watergate scandal, Americans were not reluctant to point out mistakes made by their own government.

CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

The first meeting of the National Committee for Iva Toguri was held in San Francisco on the night of April

2nd, 1975. At the first meeting the obvious first question was, "What can we do?" Since the Supreme Court had already reviewed the case and had affirmed the judgement against Iva, legal avenues seemed pretty well closed. The only remaining possibility seemed to be a presidential pardon for Iva to regain her American citizenship.

Throughout the campaign Federal District Court Judge Robert Takasugi of Los Angeles provided sound and friendly advice to the committee. Judge Takasugi's suggestion was to go the "pardon route" and mobilize public support for the campaign. The re-education of the American public about "Tokyo Rose" was the

primary task. Not only the American public but also most Japanese Americans were ignorant of the true story behind the legend of Tokyo Rose.

From the very onset of the campaign, we let both Wayne Collins (son

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her. She had burned them all.

that I did not think of her and think that she was not guilty. And I'm rather sorry that I did not stick to my guns."

Morley Safer seemed surprised at Iva's lack of obvious rancor. "Do you have any bitterness toward this country?"

She replied, "I don't think bitterness is the word. I am kind of disappointed that I had to go through what I did because of some untruths, and that they couldn't separate the myth from facts."

Morley Safer ended the interview with a statement: "This year a pardon application is being filed in her

behalf. A presidential pardon, we remind you, does not bestow innocence on the pardoned person. Nor can it restore the fine nor the years spent in prison. But in Iva's case it would give back something of great value to her, her American citizenship."

The impact of "60 Minutes" was tremendous. A week later not one adverse comment was heard on the follow-up program. Editorials across the nation came to her support. Letters poured in.

Two weeks later on July 4th, the country's two-hundredth and also Iva's sixtieth birthday, Iva mentioned over the phone that her store looked like a florist shop. Brilliantly colored carnations, gladiolas, birds-of-paradise, and potted plants of all shapes and sizes were delivered to her

The break in the campaign came on March 22nd, 1976. The Chicago *Tribune* had published a story from their correspondent in Tokyo, Ronald Yates, under the headline, "Tokyo Rose's Accusers Claim U.S. Forced Them to Lie." The two former witnesses interviewed by Yates were Kenkichi Oki and George Mitsushio. The article went on to state:

"We had no choice. The U.S. Occupation Army police came and told

"I don't think bitterness is the word. I am kind of disappointed that I had to go through what I did because of some untruths, and that they couldn't separate the myth from facts." - Iva Toguri

me I had no choice but to testify against Iva or else."

"We were told that if we didn't cooperate, Uncle Sam might arrange a trial for us too. So we cooperated and we did what we were told and now we have a guilty conscience because of it."

In April, Iva was interviewed by Morley Safer for CBS's "60 Minutes," which was shown on June 20th, 1976. Safer's gentle approach enabled Iva to go through the interview with confidence. The voice of John Mann, foreman of the jury that convicted Iva, was also heard, although he had refused to be filmed: "There was a great deal of anti-Japanese prejudice existing throughout the country, especially here in California. And that had some effect on the jury. Of that I'm quite certain."

Mann's voice went on: "There have been very few months since the trial

of elder Wayne M. Collins) and Iva Toguri know that their wishes would be followed explicitly. Iva indicated clearly that she wanted a "low profile" campaign. We could understand. Iva had a reflex fear of the media, which had played a major role in her indictment and conviction. To give the media a second chance to crucify her was unthinkable to Iva. Her fear had to be respected, but this posed a difficult problem because of the need to build up public support, which could only be done with publicity.

The committee felt Iva must be vindicated by the American

people, not just pardoned secretly by the President. Her story had to be told to the people, and these people had to put pressure on the President. This re-education of the American public was a delicate maneuver.

We knew, of course, that the mood of the country had changed drastically since 1949. We felt confident that if Iva's story was presented carefully, factually, and nonabrasively, Americans would listen and react positively.

Iva Toguri was to later tell us that whenever an article about Tokyo Rose appeared in the press, she would be subjected to unmerciful crank calls. Crackpots had disturbed her so much that she stopped opening mail when she could not identify the sender. Years later she was told that some of the envelopes contained money for

store. Some came from those she knew, but many were from total strangers. "I can't believe it," she said. "It's a 180-degree turn from twenty-seven years ago."

VETERANS REACTIONS

Support for Iva's pardon by former American soldiers was an important part of the campaign. Congressman (later Senator) Spark M. Matsunaga of Hawaii, a decorated veteran of World War II, was the leading advocate of the campaign in Congress.

Some 33,000 Japanese Americans had served in the U.S. Armed Forces during World War II, 6,000 of them in the Pacific Theater. In California there were fourteen Nisei VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) Memorial Posts and two Military Intelligence Service (MIS) Associations. Each was sent an informational packet and a request for support of Iva's case. At first this request was met with silence. The request was then repeated.

Meanwhile we heard from the 41st Infantry Division Association. The 41st was a National Guard division from Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana. Called to active duty in September 1940, it was the first American division to be sent overseas. This division fought its way up from Australia through numerous Pacific islands to the Philippines, and was one of the first units sent to Japan for Occupation duty.

The 41st Infantry Division Association had 3,000 active members, and

had held conventions annually since 1948. At its annual meeting in Dearborn, Michigan, on July 8th-9th, 1976, more than 500 members unanimously agreed to put the Association



Wayne M. Collins, Iva Toguri, and Clifford I. Uyeda. San Francisco, CA. February 7, 1977. Photo by Wes Doi. National Japanese American Historical Society Archives.

on record as being in favor of an immediate presidential pardon for Iva Toguri. In its association publication, *"The Jugleer,"* it declared: "The case is considered a travesty on justice and a blot on our postwar behavior."

Another veterans group, the surviving crewmen of an aircraft carrier, *U.S.S. Gambien Bay*, sunk by the Japanese during the Battle of Leyte Gulf in the Philippines on October 25th, 1944, made a gallant effort to pass a resolution supporting Iva Toguri's pardon. The resolution failed to pass because of opposition from members who were still unaware of the true story behind the legend. Nonetheless, the fact that so many came to Iva's support (led by the Chairman of the organization) was an enormous comfort to us and Iva.

Still, we were unable to get the en-

dorsement of the Nisei 442nd at its 1976 summer reunion in Chicago. We were obviously disappointed.

The break-through for the Nisei veterans came when the Nisei VFW Memorial Posts of Monterey Peninsula, Sacramento, and San Jose (all in California) publicly announced their support during October and November, 1976.

PARDON PETITION

A petition for presidential pardon was mailed on November 17th, 1976 during the press conference held at Seventh and Mission Streets, San Francisco, the site of the Federal District Court where twenty-seven years earlier Iva Toguri had been convicted.

During the press conference, Iva was asked the following question by a member of the media: "How did you manage to survive all these years as a convicted person if you are innocent?"

"Because my conscience is clear. I can sleep nights," replied Iva.

"Do you really think President Ford will pardon you?"

"I have hopes. Times have changed. If the trial was held today there is no way I would be convicted."

At the conclusion of the press conference Postmaster Lim P. Lee accepted the official petition to be mailed to the Pardon Attorney Lawrence M. Traylor at the Justice Department in Washington, D.C.

The year-end holiday season is traditionally a time for pardons. We waited

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