

Name _____

Date _____



Yuri Kochiyama

Today we're going to talk about Yuri Kochiyama...in just a minute.

Born on May 19, 1921, Yuri Kochiyama grew up in California with her parents and two brothers, Peter and Arthur. She attended San Pedro High School, where she served as the first female student council officer. She also taught Sunday school and wrote for a local newspaper.

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese Empire bombed Pearl Harbor. The anti-Japanese policies and sentiment that followed affected thousands of Japanese American families, including Kochiyama's. Shortly after she returned home that day, she witnessed her father being arrested by FBI agents as a potential threat to national security. Even worse, he was ill from a recent surgery, so he died the day after he was released.

That same year, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, forcing Kochiyama and her family to leave their home and live in an internment camp for three years. Although times were tough for her, she would later become empowered by this experience to work for change.

Kochiyama did not always consider herself an activist for social change. But during a protest in 1963, she met and became friends with Malcolm X. He inspired her to fight for equal rights for all Americans. Her passion and courage helped lead to reparations for Japanese Americans after World War II. She also campaigned for Puerto Rican independence, nuclear disarmament, and against the Vietnam War.

Yuri Kochiyama died on June 1, 2014. Even though her story ended, her legacy lives on.

What does activism mean to you?