

Division I (6-8)
1st Place

Chanel Velasco, 8th Grade
Marina del Rey Middle School
Teacher: Ms. Naomi Roth

Honoring Queen Liliuokalani

Removal

Don't panic my queen,
For now I will honor you,
After your removal.

Royalty will not perish,
They can not remove you from your throne,
You are America's only queen,
The crown a top your head
Signifies, your footsteps in the island's sand.

The sand you were born on,
The same sand I would soon play on,
Bucket and shovel in hand,
I too will conquer,
Beaches filled with your constitution.

Your Deed of Trust,
Sets in puddles of rain,
Like reminders of your
Own brown skin,
In the soggy wet dirt
Where the sugar cane grows.

Your sweet voice over,
The oceans waves.
Aloha Oe,
Echoes in the lava of Kilauea.

The planes landed,
With intent to impeach,
Their own queen.

To insure,
The power of your hands,

Can not alone stop,
Independence from slipping out of your grip.

Removal,
Will not erase you from my pacific islander
Bloodlines.

Imprisonment
Flows through both,
My Filipino and African ancestry,
Like the counterrevolutionary attempt
of your supporters.

If they remove you from
The history you created,
When you alone
wrote a document that would instill
Independence amongst your people,
It is possible for me to continue
Writing poems to acknowledge
Your legacy.

Queen,
Your removal may not succeed,
I am here,
With pencil as sword,
And paper as shield,
I will fight in the battle of poetry,
And you will sit upon your throne,
And you will reign,
And I will bow down to you.

2nd Place

Jacqueline Luna, 8th Grade
Marina del Rey Middle School
Teacher: Ms. Naomi Roth

I am a Fighter

Oh Larry Itliong, my inspiration
My determination
Born October 1913, a self educated man
Thrived to work
Founded the Filipino farm labor union in California
I relate to his roots
Working with Cesar Chavez
Ancestry goes back to me
Yeah I might not be an Asian or Pacific Islander
But like Larry Itliong,
I am a fighter
Fighting for my own rights
Fighting for my education
A man devoted his life to improve the lives of a people
Like my great-grandfather, an immigrant,
he came here to give us the life he never had
Screaming *Si Se Puede!* at the rallies
My great-grandfather, like Larry Itliong,
he wanted to create the opportunities for others he never had
I too, am working harder to give potential
To our future
And I respect that, so I pledge to set a goal
And acknowledge the pride you hold to be true
The pride in being a strong leader
But most of all the pride and courage
Of being a fighter

3rd Place

Jamie Chang, 7th Grade
Harvard Westlake Middle School
Teacher: Ms. Kate Benton

I am Sammy Lee

Sweat running down my face. I could taste the bitter salty taste of the sweat. My turn to compete was yet to come, but I was nervous to the point where my stomach had butterflies. I could hear the crowd screaming and cheering. I thought to myself, would I be the first Asian American to win a gold medal for the United States? Would all my training finally pay off? Would I accomplish this goal that was so close, yet so far? I look all around me; I see my competition. I could see that they wanted this as much as I did. Who would rise up in the end? I knew that if I were to win this I had to use all my strength, mind, and heart. All of a sudden the man on the microphone announces that the men's diving competition was going to begin. My heart stopped for a split second. I couldn't breathe. I was at the point of losing my mind. The few but meaningful words my coach said to me helped me carry on. He told me, "Sammy, you've trained for a long time for this moment. I know better than anyone else that this is who you are, this is your dream, you are the next Olympic gold medal diver. You can do this!" Those words were in my mind as I touched the ladder up to the diving board. I took my steps carefully, thinking about everything I have learned. When I finally step up to the diving board I could see everything; the crowd, the judges, and my coach. The only thing I could think about in my mind was the words, "You can do it!" I take one last look at everything around me. My toes dangling off the edge of the diving board, my heart beating as though it were to explode, and the butterflies in my stomach were all gone. I couldn't hear anyone or anything at this moment it was all about me. This competition was now in my hands. I could either become an Olympic medalist or go home with nothing but memories. I snap back into reality. My body was ready to jump and show the world who I am. I jump off the diving board. I attempt a three and a half reverse somersault with an ending tuck. I manage to get two somersaults, but that wasn't going to win me any medals. On my second and final chance to prove myself to the world I attempt the same three and a half reverse somersaults with an ending tuck. I had not done very well on my first try. I had to execute my routine or I would go home with nothing. Once again I hear the man with that microphone announcing that my second try was to take place. This time I would not mess up. My heart was not beating outrageously anymore, I wasn't as nervous as before. This time I my heart felt that I was going to win. As I climb the ladder for the second time I tell myself to not give up. When I step onto the diving board I was ready to jump. The second before I jumped I look down at my coach's face and saw his smile. This gave me the extra strength I needed. I jumped and to even my own surprise I execute my routine perfectly with no flaws at all. I have tears running down my face from joy. I heard the crowd cheering for me. On the day I truly proved myself to the world. I step out of the pool and am welcomed with a giant hug from my coach. I could see the happiness in his face. We sit down and hold in our joy. We watch all the other competitors. At the end of the diving competition the judges tell everyone their decision. "In first place with

the gold medal.Sammy Lee!" I burst with joy and excitement. I couldn't explain my feelings when I won. It was as if a huge boulder was lifted off my shoulders. I had won! That night at the award ceremony, I couldn't wait for the world to see me. When they called the diving competition I rose up and walked to the winner's platform with great pride and honor. When they announced that I had won the competition and they raised the American Flag I almost cried. As I heard the American anthem being sang, I thought about what had happened. I had won the Gold medal. I accomplished this seemingly impossible goal. I knew that thousands of people wanted to be in my spot. I was the first Asian American to win a gold medal from the United Sates. This was my legacy, this was me. I am Sammy Lee.

Division II

1st Place

Crystal Kumtong, 9th Grade

Sherman Oaks Center for Enriched Studies (SOCES)

Teacher: Dr. Catleen Glaser

Teacher: Steve A. Steward Jr. (Aquatic facility manager of Cleveland Pool)

Sammy Lee's Dream Splash

I can do this, young Sammy Lee thought one summer afternoon in 1932. He stood on top of the diving board and imagined his dive. He took a deep breath and jumped. In the air, Sammy felt invincible. He tucked his arms and legs in and span in the air. *Splash!* Sammy dove into the water. He came up for breath and smiled. That was his best dive he did all summer.

“What have you been doing all day?” Sammy’s father asked sternly as Sammy was coming through the door. He was in the kitchen doing the family’s bills. “You were supposed to come home and study so you can become a doctor.” Sammy remained quiet. He loved to dive and he loved the feel of cool water rushing to his face when he hit the water. But he had to remember that his future remained in medicine; his dad worked hard to support the family. Sammy’s family moved from Korea to America, seeking a better life. They managed a restaurant, and his father saved every penny for Sammy’s future as a doctor. Sammy couldn’t be selfish, so he went upstairs and studied.

Sammy couldn’t dive as often as he would have liked. The swimming pools were segregated and they allowed non-whites inside the pool only once a week. “Hey, look at that little Asian kid over there trying to get in the pool,” someone said. Everyone laughed. Sammy stood outside the pool hanging on the fence, watching the white people swim and splash in the water. *I wish I could go in there*, Sammy thought. He longed to go inside the pool and practice his dives; he did so well last week. But being that he could only go in the pool once a week, no exceptions, Sammy turned around and headed back home.

“Hey! I ordered one simple dish and you give me something that looks like this,” a customer said to Sammy’s father. He held up a piece of long blond hair. It was clear that it was his wife’s hair; no one in the kitchen had blond hair. Some didn’t have hair at all. But instead of arguing, Sammy’s father replied to the rude customer in broken English, “Sorry, sir. No more again.” The customer left without paying for his food.

Sammy was astonished. How could his father tolerate this? He was the most respected man back in Korea. How could he be accepting treatment like this from one lousy customer? Sammy voiced his concern. “Father, why did you put up with that customer? Why didn’t you make him pay for his food?” Sammy’s father smiled and explained. “I acted with honor, the customer didn’t. When you become a doctor, you will get all the respect and honor you deserve.” Sammy finally understood what his dad meant all these years.

Sammy became a doctor in 1946 at the age of twenty-six. His father died three years before. Sammy was devastated, but he wanted to pursue his own dreams. So in between medicine, Sammy practiced diving. *Olympics* whispered in his ears.

“Introducing Sammy Lee, age 28! Member of the U.S. Olympic team, doing the 10-meter platform dive!” The announcer yelled into the microphone. Through all the segregation and all the hate, Sammy finally made it to the U.S. Olympic diving team and into the Olympics.

You can do this. Sammy said to himself. The crowd was silent, anticipating failure. No one wanted a non-white competing in the Olympics, let alone win. Sammy had to prove to the world that he was qualified to dive and to swim in the same pool as everyone else. So with the

crowd silent, his heart thumping, and the judges waiting, Sammy took a deep breath and jumped off the ten-meter platform.

It felt the way it always did. It felt like those summer days when Sammy was still a kid and he had desired nothing more from the world than to be able to dive and make it to the Olympics. *So now I'm finally here. Sixteen years, but I'm finally here.* It all happened so fast. The next thing Sammy knew, he was in the cool and fresh water. It felt good. When Sammy came up for air, the crowd was silent. It wasn't the kind of silence like in the beginning; this was a shocked silence. He turned towards the score board. It was unbelievable. His eyes must be deceiving him.

“Unbelievable! That was three-and-a half rotations in the air! Ladies and Gentlemen, introducing the new diving Champion of 1948, witnessed here in the Empire Pool in Wembley Stadium, London, **Sammy Lee!**” Even as it was announced, Sammy couldn't believe it. *He. Had. Won!* Even as his teammates came rushing over to congratulate him, Sammy was still in a daze. He was beaming when he took the podium. The crowd broke out and cheered. It was the best moment of Sammy's life.

I can't believe this is all happening. I won, I won, Sammy thought over and over. All the hard work, all of the pain and the suffering and the hate that Sammy went through, it had paid off. So in remembrance of his late father and his dream come true, Sammy Lee held up his gold medal for the whole world to see.

2nd Place

Austin Sekil Khym, 9th Grade
Cerritos High School
Counselor: Ms. Melissa Chan

Untitled

(grandfather speaking to his grandson)

Little one, I've worked on farmlands everywhere,
Conditions varying from place to place.
But sometimes it's just hard to bear,
The stress that comes along with work.

The thing that made me strive and fight,
The man that helped me see.
He cleared the endless pouring blight,
That made me think of giving up.

A man that saw through color of skin,
Who aided people like me.
Migrant workers, that work so hard,
Just to support their family.

He fought with Caesar Chavez, side by side,
To improve workers' rights.
Though their races collide,
They worked together to make things right.

A man devoted to a cause,
That helps races alike.
He never takes a moment to pause,
When it comes to doing what's right.

So hear this well, oh little one,
He is a man so pure and clean.
Don't see a person by their race,
But by whom they really are,
For this shall close the gap so big,
In forming unity.

This man who kept me up and going,
And gave me strength when I felt weak.
Whose cause is way far from wrong,
His name is Larry Itliong

The reason I chose the title of “No Name” is because of the fact that Larry Itliong saw beyond the person, but saw him/her as a hard worker. He fought for rights and benefits for these workers despite their race and gender. The grandfather is telling his grandson that by ridding discrimination and racism, through ways that people like Larry Itliong represent the gap of gaining unity for future generations can be achieved.

3rd Place

Islas, Mayra, 10th Grade
Animo Justice Charter High School
Ms. Rachel Seymour

An Angel of Justice

I am pleased to say that Yuri Kochiyama was and still is my best friend. I met Yuri in middle school; we were both thirteen years old. Even though our ethnic backgrounds were different, we lived in the same neighborhood. Yuri's parents were Japanese immigrants, but perhaps they did not mind living among those of us, who were Hispanic and African American. Yuri's parents had come to the United States in hopes of finding better opportunities, just like everyone else living in our community.

Yuri enjoyed a middle-class lifestyle, which was comfortable and virtually free of the rampant racism plaguing many other parts of the United States. Even though Yuri herself was not victimized by racism in our mixed neighborhood, she devoted much of her time to helping oppressed and deprived minorities. She never actually took action, though, until her own life changed.

One "normal" day, during World War Two, when even the sun seemed to be hiding its face, an incident dramatically altered Yuri's life. The Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor changed Yuri's perspective about America forever. Her entire family was relocated to an internment camp; there, tragically, she lost her father. She felt mentally and emotionally abused by American society. I, too, was overwhelmed by grief; I did not know the whereabouts of my lovely friend Yuri. I just knew that, somewhere, she was suffering.

This atrocious experience changed Yuri irrevocably. The indignity of being trapped in her adopted country turned her into a fiery activist, who became deeply involved in a lifelong battle to attain prosperity and justice for all minorities in the United States.

It was not until the 1970s that I met my "sister," Yuri, again. I saw her on television; she was leading a march in the city of New York protesting against the unjust arrest of the Black Panthers and the Young Lords, a Puerto Rican nationalist group, who had shown their discontent against the government's injustice. I was extremely astonished to see that my dear friend was fighting for us; I could not believe what my eyes observed: she was advocating for ethnic minorities' civil rights. She was standing up for my people and for all minority people in general.

Days later, my heart raced with joy when I bought a newspaper featuring Yuri's image on the first page. The headline read, "Yesterday, Yuri Kochiyama, accompanied by the Young Lords, stormed the Statue of Liberty". Yuri was intensely set on liberating

Puerto Rico from U.S. colonization, and while I felt great pride in knowing that my friend was doing something so dramatic to change the lives of the Puerto Rican people, I felt concern that she was putting her life in peril with such a daring fight against the government. That same night, I called and questioned her about her dangerous actions, to which she simply replied, "The only thing I fear, is not freeing these people". Yuri was, without doubt, the most audacious woman I had ever met. Years later, in 1977, she accomplished her quest; Puerto Rico became an independent country.

Yuri has proven, time and again, that she is an extraordinary woman. She has always been determined to overcome any obstacles in her life, and she has never forsaken her goals or the people who need her aid. She has nobly dedicated her life to combat segregation in America; she has demanded civil rights for everyone in our country and has been an activist fighting for peace and justice throughout the world. She has brought happiness, equality, and peace to many minority groups in America, and she has spoken out against the Japanese government's treatment of Korean women and other Asian ethnicities.

I am extremely proud to say that Yuri Kochiyama has been a part of my life. My best friend was and will be the woman, who fought for equality and fairness in our world. She is an incomparable individual, who, because of her conscious efforts, has enabled every one of us to have equal opportunities and to be treated fairly in this country. She is Yuri Kochiyama, the one who, to this day, continues fighting injustice by encouraging people to take action against oppression and imperialism in the world. She should be recognized as one of our world's most admirable Japanese American women, for her endeavors and victories on behalf of minorities are unparalleled.

Division III (11-12)
1st Place

Olga Robledo, 12th Grade
Pueblo de Los Angeles High School
Teacher: Ms. Lisa G. Rodriguez

The Queen's Watchful Eye

From the words of her songs
Composed in captivity
To her life of controversy
She was queen

A woman of prominence
Accomplished and worthy of honoring
A queen seen with love, excitement and joy
To many people she was like a god

A queen of great beauty
From the inside out
"The smarting of the royal ones"
Who stood up for the rights of her subjects

The most powerful piece in chess
Capable of scores of squares
In straight or diagonal lines
Let none stand in her way

She was deposed
For conflicts with the sugar trust
Yet she remained
The last sovereign queen of Hawai'i

Aloha 'oe, Aloha 'oe
Until we meet again
Grant your peace throughout the land
And keep us beneath your watchful eye

2nd Place

Fahiya Rashid, 11th Grade
Hollywood High school
Teacher: Mr. James Carmicle

Untitled
(written in the perspective of Queen Lydia Liliuokalani)

I Come from a Place.....

I come from black dust, yellow hibiscus, and antique cities as perfect as postcards.

Where airy, salty water caresses the smooth sand.

Where children unite with the ocean.

I come from a place where the black, white and yellow flag is our trademark.

Where the Kahili, represents our fierce spirit, flaunting the bond that we share, on the outside.

Crumbling on the inside.

Where there is a perfect balance between heaven and earth; light and dark.

I come from a place where each droplet of sweat equals money and you become an object on the free, animated soil.

Where grandmother cooks Laukaus, MunDoo, and Torikatsu.

Where the finale of each week is celebrated, with an ample feast.

Where grandmother dance to the rhythms of Hula,
their pains just a distant memory now, every Sunday night.

I come from a place where everyone hopes to be alive to see the rising sun of the next day and the setting sun of that very day.

Where happiness was something no one thought about; it was there in half archaic clouds.

Where the trees shelter mangoes so delicious it will liquefy your taste buds as a sweltering skillet melts butter.

I come from a place where, when you look in the mirror you don't see yourself.

You see others,
their sorrow and suffering,
their hate and destruction,
their military boots tearing the soft sand.

Their nostalgia.

At this time I asked:
Why go on living? Why believe?

Then my father answered:
Because this is our Hawaii.
Because you're Queen Lydia Liliuokalani.
Because at prison's door only the keys sing.

I come from a place where a mistake becomes a replica of your very
being and will forever be spoken in the same wording as your name.
I come from Honolulu, Hawaii 1893.

“What is God?” I ask.
“It is stated in the Constitution,” the White-man answered.

3rd Place

Peter Park, 11th Grade
Granada Hills Charter High School
Teacher: Ms. Melissa Mason

The Hero of the Past

As the years go by nothing seems to change
Is there no hope for this hopeless age
My country isn't a country any more
It is a territory filled with foreign men

There was a man who taught us many things
There was a man who believed in a dream
That one day we can be freed
However this seemed futile to believe

The man's name was Dosan Ahn Chang Ho
His belief seemed like a far goal
However he worked hard
To achieve independence by education

He is a man far gone in history
However his belief still lives
Today my country is freed
From the reign of the Japanese

His belief in education has long affected us
His belief in education has long changed us
He is the father of our new land
He is the one that freed us all

We are indebted to this man
For showing us the knowledge that he had
Now we live on with this thought in our mind
That education is all we can depend on

His belief was far ahead of its time
He affected the future with an unconscious mind
Now the world seems to recognize his mind
And the significance of education