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### U.S. actor, activist George Takei speaks out on lifetime of championing social justice

George Takei has achieved numerous unrivaled successes during his life, from a stereotype-busting role as space ship helmsman in the Star Trek TV series in the 1960s -- when most roles for Asians in the U.S. were still based upon offensive typecasting -- to his present iconic status on the Internet, where he has over 7 million Facebook followers.

So great is the power of Takei's voice, in fact, which combines his signature blend of seriousness and humor, that his endorsement lends critical weight to online social and political campaigns -- most recently, those associated with championing the rights of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) individuals.

The 77-year old Japanese-American actor and activist, who is openly gay, has just concluded a speaking tour of Japan and South Korea that was organized by the U.S. State Department as part of LGBT Pride Month. Speaking in Tokyo on June 5, he told the 100-some attendees stories from his fascinating life, which has also included deeply painful experiences including his own government's violation of his Constitutional rights as a child, as well as later having to keep his sexuality a secret for much of his life.

Takei was five years old when his parents woke him and his brother up very early one morning -- and soldiers soon afterward marched up the driveway of their Los Angeles, California, home with bayoneted rifles and ordered them out. The Takei family would spend the next four years in internment camps, where the U.S. government sent those of Japanese descent who were living along the Pacific Coast when WWII broke out -- regardless of the fact that many, like the Takeis, were American citizens.

"The image of my mother coming out of the house that morning carrying my baby sister and a duffel bag, with tears streaming down her face, will be burned onto my memory forever," said Takei, who explained that the family spent the following four days and three nights sitting on a wooden bench inside a train, with armed soldiers at both ends.



George Takei speaks to a crowd of attendees at the American Center Japan in Tokyo's Minato Ward on June 5, 2014, with an image showing him together with his husband, Brad Altman Takei, in the background. (Mainichi)

拡大写真



George Takei speaks during an interview with The Mainichi at the American Center

Takei explained that 120,000 people of Japanese descent were rounded up with no access to the U.S. justice system, and sent to be incarcerated in a total of 10 camps in the most desolate places in America, including the blistering hot desert of Arizona and the sweltering swamps of Arkansas.

Takei recalled that the U.S. was "swept up in war hysteria, with suspicion, fear and hatred"

#### Mainichi Weekly



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#### おすすめ情報

Japan in Tokyo's Minato Ward on June 5, 2014 (Mainichi)

拡大写真

being directed toward Japanese people simply because they happened to look like those who bombed Pearl Harbor. It was only years after his internment experience that he understood the bitter irony of reciting the U.S. pledge of

allegiance -- which concludes "with liberty and justice for all" -- from behind the camp's barbed wire fence.

Later finding nothing in his school textbooks about the internment, Takei began engaging in long and intense discussions with his father about U.S. democracy.

"My father told me that democracy is dependent upon good people being actively involved -- or else others would manipulate things to their own advantage," Takei told the Tokyo audience. He explained that he went on to join political campaigns, as well as social justice movements advocating issues such as civil rights, an end to the Vietnam War, and redress for the wartime internment -- the latter of which he testified about in Washington regarding his own personal experience.

Still, however, despite his passionate outspokenness on other issues that he cared about, Takei remained silent about a different matter that he says was in fact the closest to his own heart: equality for gays and lesbians. When boys at school started talking about the girls they liked, Takei recalled, he knew that he did not share those feelings -- but he also knew that it was not acceptable to openly disclose his attraction to the same sex.

Takei explained that his father's teaching him to never be ashamed of his identity as a Japanese-American in turn translated into self-acceptance of his own sexuality. Since he had subsequently become an actor and landed his starring television role on Star Trek, however, he was forced to remain silent. Coming out as a gay man, he said, would surely have spelled the end of his career.

"Having to live a double life was very, very painful," Takei told the audience. "You have to be on guard all the time. I lived with that kind of tension for most of my life."

He explained that police would sometimes raid gay bars, and everyone there would be fingerprinted and have their name put on a list -- and that people risked losing everything if the information got out. "It was terrifying," he said. "These were people who were doing nothing wrong. It was just like the experience of my childhood."

Even when the Stonewall riots raged in New York City in 1969, after the community had reached the limits of its tolerance for the police raids -- sparking a gay liberation movement nationwide -- Takei felt that he still could not speak out about his sexuality, lest he endanger his livelihood.

When California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed a bill that would have allowed same-sex marriage in 2005, however, Takei knew he could no longer remain silent. It was his intense anger at this veto that led him to come out, Takei said -- and to remain an outspoken LGBT activist ever since.

In 2008, Takei went on to marry his partner Brad Altman, with whom he had been in a relationship for 21 years. Fittingly, the couple held their wedding at the Democracy Forum of the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, which Takei helped found. "Democracy is what made our marriage possible," he explained.

Takei told the audience that he was greatly inspired by being able to meet those



U.S. actor and civil rights activist George Takei is seen with U.S. Ambassador to Japan Caroline Kennedy and Japan's first lady Akie Abe at a reception held in honor of LGBT Pride Month at Ambassador Kennedy's official residence in Tokyo's Minato Ward on June 5, 2014. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Embassy)

拡大写真



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知っておきたいマナー情報

\* \* 大阪 10月5日資産活用セミナー参加者  
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working on behalf of LGBT rights in Japan during his speaking tour, including members of the Pink Dot advocacy group in Okinawa, PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) in Osaka, and Rainbow Pride Week in Tokyo -- the latter of which brought together numerous grassroots groups this past Golden Week for 10 days of workshops, film screenings, artistic exhibitions, and other events designed to raise community visibility and celebrate LGBT culture.

Following the talk, Takei attended a reception held at Ambassador Caroline Kennedy's official residence as part of events marking LGBT Pride Month, which was officially announced by President Barack Obama in June 2009 -- the 40th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising.

Speaking to the press prior to the reception, Takei noted that U.S. society is changing rapidly. "Young people now embrace LGBT equality, and find it normal and natural," he said, adding that many children are now being raised by same-sex couples, who will in turn grow up and create a more open society. "I am very hopeful for the future," he said.

Takei also urged LGBT communities in Japan to continue to be vocal in pressing for their social and political rights --by getting angry, if necessary, which he said is what finally helped opened the door to change in the United States.

Minata Hara, a reception attendee who works with the All Japan Sexual Minorities Support Network (JASMIN), which lobbies for LGBT rights policies while supporting individuals through a telephone hotline, told the Mainichi that the Japanese government needs to understand LGBT community needs such as poverty and mental health issues -- and to allocate more resources for this purpose. "Someone needs to be doing outreach and working on LGBT issues in every local council nationwide," Hara said.

Speaking at the reception was First Lady Akie Abe, who recently participated in the Tokyo Rainbow Pride parade. She noted that the gay rights movement in the U.S. helped make more people embrace diverse sexual orientations worldwide, and emphasized that there should be no social discrimination based upon whom one loves.

Ambassador Kennedy also addressed attendees, pointing out that LGBT individuals around the world continue to face bullying, suicide and isolation -- and that respecting their rights is the first step toward creating welcoming societies.

She mentioned additionally that an entire generation of people who grew up in 1960s America, herself included, had been captivated by the Starship Enterprise aircraft controlled by George Takei's Pan-Asian character Hikaru Sulu in the Star Trek series -- which is set in the 23rd century, after Earth has resolved its past regional conflicts.

Takei, speaking next, commented that the Starship Enterprise represented "our Utopian future; a metaphor of Starship Earth with all of its diversity: not only the diversity of race, culture and history, but also the unseen diversity of orientation."

Speaking separately with The Mainichi regarding the future of LGBT organizing in Japan, Takei said, "I think the fact that you're getting organizations together is a very promising sign."

"The first lady participating in the rainbow pride parade is very significant," he added. "It's a very powerful endorsement." (By Kimberly Hughes, Staff Writer)

June 10, 2014(Mainichi Japan)

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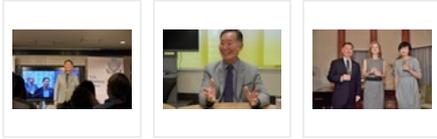
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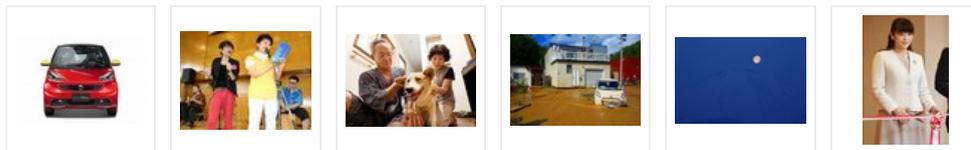
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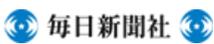
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