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English 580 Final Project

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Art, Empathy, & Incarceration: Experiencing American Concentration Camps  
through Graphic Narratives

Introduction

In this project I explore the connections between art and text in graphic novels depicting Japanese Incarceration in American Concentration Camps. For this study, I have chosen Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660*, George Takei's *They Called Us Enemy*, and *Displacement* by Kiku Hughes. These three works each center the author as the protagonist of the narrative, and while each novel differentiates itself in both artistic style and substance, they are uniformly honest in their depictions of Japanese Incarceration, its trauma and legacy.

Okubo's seminal work *Citizen 13660* details her time just before and during Japanese Incarceration during WWII. Her novel stands out as the first published record of Japanese Incarceration by an internee. Additionally, *Citizen 13660* is notable for its historical placement as one of the best records of life at Tanforan Assembly Center and Topaz Internment Camp. Similar to *Citizen 13660*, Takei's *They Called Us Enemy*, documents his time as a child in the Japanese Incarceration camps. While Takei's incarceration is detailed, I have chosen this work because of his choice to frame the narrative around his contemporary reflection on the past and the connections of Japanese Incarceration to present racist exclusionary practices in the United States. Takei's narrative is bookended by his present position as a celebrity and social activist. This positionality alters the way he views his incarceration and impacts his current views and vocal support for minority and marginalized peoples. Shifting away from firsthand experiences,

Hughes' *Displacement* explores the legacy of trauma left to Japanese Americans in the wake of their incarceration. Like Takei, Hughes links the history of Japanese Incarceration to the Civil Rights Movement, the unrest, and racist practices of the 1970s, and racist exclusionary policies enacted during the Trump presidency.

These three works provide a broad view of Japanese Incarceration. More poignantly, *Citizen 13660*, *Displacement*, and *They Called Us Enemy* are all constructed in the form of the graphic memoir, allowing an examination of both text and image as well as the abstraction and ambiguity created in their interaction.

In section one I explore the graphic novel, or perhaps more poignantly the graphic memoir, as a form. This section seeks to educate on *how* to read the graphic novel and introduces Miné Okubo and her work in *Citizen 13660*. In the later sections I place Okubo's *Citizen 13660*, Kiku Hughes' *Displacement*, and *They Called Us Enemy* by George Takei in conversation with Scott McCloud's theory of "Masking" in graphic novels to investigate how the form of the graphic novel creates space for critical empathy. Specifically, I contend that the form of the graphic narrative allows readers a space to experience trauma and its generational aftereffects, in a manner that prose novels do not.

In the final two sections, as Okubo's work precedes that of Takei and Hughes, I argue that *Citizen 13660* paved the way for the exploration of generational trauma in the graphic narrative form, influencing not only the content of *Displacement* and *They Called Us Enemy*, but the choice of form by their authors. And finally, I contend that Hughes and Takei, in writing from a contemporary viewpoint, center their narratives not only around their protagonists' time in American Concentration Camps but also in their experiences of racist propaganda, exclusionist policies, and institutional racism in the United States. Allowing the narratives of

*Displacement* and *They Called Us Enemy* to connect Japanese Incarceration with present day anti-immigration and racist exclusion practices in America.

The song currently playing is from the *Allegiance Original Broadway Cast* recording, which is based in part on George Takei's life. Entitled "Gaman" it translates to Perseverance, and is sung by Kei Kimura, played by Lea Salonga, when the Kimura family first comes to the Heart Mountain Relocation Center. I have chosen this song as a means to frame the initial way in which Japanese and Japanese American peoples faced their unlawful incarceration. However, I also include this short section to note the way in which many peoples across the United States continue to endure in the wake of generational trauma and continued racism, both institutional and interpersonal.

Gaman,

Matthew Hernandez

The Lyrics to this section are as follows:

It will all be alright

There's a way through this night

Stay strong

On this long road

We bury our pain

There's a word we will say

To help get through each day

We will bear any nightmare

With a simple refrain

Gaman, Gaman

### Art as Chronicle

The graphic novel (also referred to as the graphic narrative and graphic memoir in this project) exists in a liminal space between the traditional form of the novel and that of the comic book. In the preceding video I presented Michael Chaney's argument that graphic narratives offer us the unique position to see the social, or the ability to view the individual in "proximate relationships to depictions of community."<sup>1</sup> This positionality is especially useful when examining graphic narratives of Japanese Incarceration, as the prevalence of community is fundamental when considering both the immediate and lasting impacts Order 9066 had and continues to have on Japanese Americans. In examining Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660*, this proximate relationship to community allows for the representation of shared grief and trauma through the interplay of words and text. It is this interplay, or more specifically the ambiguity created by the relationship of Okubo's art and captions, that invites readers and scholars to consider the seen/unseen and said/unsaid in the novel, as well as the implications of those dichotomies, more deeply. In framing a story of Japanese Internment in the guise of a graphic narrative (or perhaps graphic memoir, though neither of these terms existed when *Citizen 13660* was published), the novel is able to represent not only the spoken, but the body language of the speaker, bringing in a further layer to the interpretive dynamic of the book.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Chaney

This marriage of art and text in *Citizen 13660*, for instance, allows for the depiction of gestures of resistance by Japanese American internees described by Vivian Fumiko Chin in her research on the Okubo's work.<sup>2</sup> Without the art of *Citizen 13660*, Okubo's comment that she is "not bitter" could be accepted as genuine. However, when paired with the sketches of Okubo glaring or sticking her tongue out at guards, the meaning of her 'non-bitter' attitude is altered. By using the *graphic* space of the graphic narrative, Okubo augments her captions with gestures that illustrate "a spirit of endurance that served to help internees withstand the experience of internment camp[s]... [while also] expos[ing] language as utilitarian, not necessarily as a medium for conveying truth".<sup>3</sup> In this way, graphic novels, and *Citizen 13660* in particular, are able to showcase honest depictions of community and personal resistance through art, while in the same instance, connecting that art to text that is both seemingly passive and subtly defiant.

These, at times, ironic relationships between art and text in graphic narratives are integral to Chaney's argument, as they trouble the construction of identities, positioning the protagonist as both inside and separated from their community, both as an observer/documenter and an unwilling recipient of the trauma being detailing in the novel.<sup>4</sup> The liminal space occupied by the author-protagonist in works like Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* or Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660* and other later works depicting Japanese Incarceration (such as *Displacement* and *They Called Us Enemy*), allow their readers to connect emotionally with the protagonist's position, while still maintaining some distance from the trauma being depicted. This connection is deepened by what Scott McCloud calls "Iconic Abstraction" (see video for definition).<sup>5</sup> In choosing the graphic

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<sup>2</sup> Chin, Vivian Fumiko. "Gestures of Noncompliance: Resisting, Inventing, and Enduring in Citizen 13660"

<sup>3</sup> Chin, Vivian Fumiko. "Gestures of Noncompliance: Resisting, Inventing, and Enduring in Citizen 13660"

<sup>4</sup> Peacock, James. "My thoughts shifted from the past to the future: Time and (auto)graphic representation in Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660*"

<sup>5</sup> McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*

form, the audience is more easily able to accept the authority of the author-protagonist, and further, readily see themselves in the narrative being told.

Through this use of art, or more specifically the abstraction of the human form through art, the graphic novel opens up a space for critical empathy. That is in part due to the positioning of the author-protagonist in relation to the reader. However, in creating an inroad for the audience to see themselves in the narrative, the graphic novel straddles the temporalities of identity, time and space, stymieing total immersion in any of them; the audience is constantly aware of the past and present, while the abstraction of the author-protagonist forms a bridge for their performative spectatorship.<sup>6</sup> This is especially true for *Citizen 13660*, where in so much of Okubo's commentary is at odds with her visual depictions.

Okubo's interplay of text and image is often ironic in *Citizen 13660*, forcing the reader to examine each page as a dialogue between the drawings and the captions. This means that one cannot accept either the image or the text at face value, and instead must question how the two complicate each other. It is this dialogue between visual and textual that makes the depictions of emotion: grief, pain, loss, bitter-irony, even humor, so affecting.<sup>7</sup> Existing independently, Okubo's words and images could be taken at face value, but when sharing the page, the reader must consider how the two coexist, and what meaning they make separately and as a whole. That said, in choosing the graphic narrative form, Okubo and later authors, are choosing to complicate their messages, augmenting the meaning of their words and images through the interplay of the two. And, as the iconic abstraction of comics invites the reader to fully immerse themselves in the world of the narrative, they must also reckon with this ambiguity, forcing the reader to

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<sup>6</sup> Roxworthy, Emily. "Revitalizing Japanese American Internment: Critical Empathy and Role-Play in the Musical *Allegiance* and the Video Game *Drama in the Delta*"

<sup>7</sup> Stanutz, Katherine. "Inscrutable Greif: Memorializing Japanese American Internment in Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660*"

consider the seen and said alongside the unseen and unstated. By positioning the author-protagonist as the bridge for this immersion, the reader is able to examine these ambiguities from arm's length, as the author-protagonist creates a temporal distance of time and space – the reader is aware that the graphic novel they are reading is a retrospect, being told from a space beyond the events in the book – however, as they are also being pulled into the narrative through the iconic abstraction of the image, this distance is muddied, forcing the audience to both feel the pain of the novel empathically and consider the disparities of their own feelings with those of the textual/graphic interplay.

“Masking” in *Citizen 13660*, *Displacement*, and *They Called Us Enemy*

In the previous section, I argued that the form of the graphic narrative creates spaces of interplay and ambiguity that invite readers to immerse themselves in the world of the novel, forcing them to consider both the seen/unseen and the said/unsaid, which in turn encourages critical empathy in their audiences. However, when accounting for the space of critical empathy created by graphic novels, Scott McCloud's theory of “Masking” must be considered.

McCloud's theory argues that the form of comics allows for the consideration of interplay between the artistic style of the subject and that of the background. Within this interplay, the audience is invited to identify with the character due to the simplicity of the art, especially when the background is rendered in more vivid detail.<sup>8</sup> At work in McCloud's theory is an idea of authority attributed to the character in the graphic narrative. In the case of graphic memoirs, this authority “becomes even more layered and complex and its claims to objective

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<sup>8</sup> McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*

[autobiographical] “truth” even more qualified.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, iconic abstraction lends authority to the character in question – the reader is more apt to connect to the character because of their artistic rendering. However, in the case of graphic memoirs, that connection is deepened through the Masking of character and background image, lending a further authority to the author-protagonist in these works – we as readers are more willing to take the character’s, or in the case of *Citizen 13660*, *Displacement*, and *They Called Us Enemy*, the author-protagonist’s words as true. This air of credibility then, existing in many forms of the autobiographic narrative, is strengthened through the use of art in the graphic memoir.

Additionally, later scholars have expanded upon McCloud’s theory, suggesting that works with photorealistic characters can serve as guides within graphic worlds that seem foreign, strange, or upsetting.<sup>10</sup> Christiane Buuck and Cathy Ryan use Shaun Tan’s *The Arrival* to illustrate this point, as the character drawings in the book are rendered in photorealistic detail, however the backgrounds are often abstract and, at times, troubling. Tan’s book is devoid of text, and rather than researching the abstraction of text and image in the work, Buuck and Ryan explore these ambiguities in the relationship of character art to background rendering in *The Arrival*.

Alternatively, Masking in a work such as *Citizen 13660*, can be seen as an interweaving of both McCloud’s and Buuck and Ryan’s theories. That is to say, while Okubo’s sketches for *Citizen 13660* never include characters rendered in photorealistic detail, her drawings often abstract the backgrounds, at times rendering them in detail and at others reducing them to much more simplified drawings (see fig. 1).

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<sup>9</sup> Peacock, James. “My thoughts shifted from the past to the future”: Time and (autobio)graphic representation in Miné Okubo’s *Citizen 13660*”

<sup>10</sup> Buuck, Christiane and Cathy Ryan. “Looking beyond the Scenes: Spatial Storytelling and Masking in Shaun Tan’s *The Arrival*”





(Figure 1. Okubo [1946] 2014, 99 & 161)

In the first panel, Okubo renders the garden and lake created by the incarcerated at the camp in detail, capturing the shadows and primary light source, as well as ripples on the water, either connoting current or wind. However, in the second panel we see that the background has been simplified to show only the outlines of the buildings and people, leaving space and open-ended lines, and providing little definition of the figures. One way to theorize this artistic choice is Katherine Stanutz's idea of "Inscrutable Grief", Okubo leaves the reader with no solid interpretive direction, instead constructing "Japanese American subjectivity around an objectless gaze; that is the reader sees only the external understanding of his or her interiority."<sup>11</sup> This form of masking, departs somewhat from McCloud, Buuck and Ryan, and instead focuses on the disparities within Okubo's art choices from panel to panel. Rather than examining the overall novel, focusing in on these subtle shifts in style illustrates for the reader what can be and cannot

<sup>11</sup> Stanutz, Katherine. "Inscrutable Greif: Memorializing Japanese American Internment in Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660*"

be known to them. The inscrutability of the other people in camp is conveyed by abstracting their figures along with the background in the image, however feelings of grief are carried throughout the book through the choices of what, or who, to abstract in each image. In this way, Okubo uses the authority inherent in McCloud's understanding of Masking to showcase that, although the reader can comprehend the author-protagonist's interiority by examining the interplay of text and images, the interior feelings of the other internees will always remain somewhat beyond the audience's grasp. Further, as we have established masking's creation of empathic space and authority for the author-protagonist, we must also consider how this authority is used.

In examining *Citizen 13660*, Okubo often uses her positionality as author-protagonist to interject her own feelings toward a situation by placing them within the ambiguities between image and text. James Peacock does a wonderful job analyzing this in his article on Time and (autobio)graphic representation. So, I will turn liberally to his work to showcase this interaction between authority and textual/graphic ambiguity:



ON January 29, 1943, President Roosevelt announced that volunteers would be accepted in a Japanese American combat unit. A recruiting team came to the center, and a printed form was submitted to all men of military age. It contained 28 questions to determine loyalty and willingness to fight. Question 28 read: "Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese Emperor or any other foreign power or organization?"

At the same time, the War Relocation Authority, yielding to increasing pressure, decided to conduct a general registration of all persons in the camp seventeen years of age or older. To determine their loyalty, Question 28 was used. It brought about a dilemma. Aliens (Issei) would be in a difficult position if they renounced Japanese citizenship and thereby made themselves stateless persons.

(Figure 2. Okubo [1946] 2014, 175)

A member of the "recruiting team" stands upon a stage in the Topaz centre, clutching

a handkerchief and emotively proclaiming to an audience of internees his “loyalty and willingness to fight” (Okubo [1946] 2014, 175). To exaggerate the air of theatricality, many of the audience are shedding tears, visibly moved by this performance of patriotism [Figure 2]. Okubo, in contrast, does not reprise the tears she shed on departing her California home: she holds her nose in disgust and stares not at the performer, but at the reader. The alienating effect invites the reader to consider dispassionately the politics at work and not to be swayed by the emotive rhetoric.<sup>12</sup>

In this section of his article, Peacock is exploring the performativity at work in some of the panels of *Citizen 13660*. I bring this in, not to introduce performativity, but to illustrate how Okubo utilizes the authority of the graphic form by interjecting her attitudes toward the recruitment team and the notorious Questions 27 and 28 of the Loyalty Questionnaire, through her self-depiction, rather than through the accompanying text.

Masking’s effects then, are multifaceted in the form of the graphic memoir, having an impact on the relationship of the reader to the novel: through the abstraction of art and text, the rendering of character and background, the change in style choice from panel to panel, and finally in the establishment of the authority of the author-protagonist. These aspects combine to grant the reader and area of understanding through abstraction, and beyond this, the ability to access and process trauma through spaces for critical empathy. The audience can both see and read about the events happening in the camps, however in the ambiguity or abstraction between image and text, they are able to feel the affect of these events in relation to the author-protagonist.

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<sup>12</sup> Peacock, James. “My thoughts shifted from the past to the future”: Time and (autobio)graphic representation in Miné Okubo’s *Citizen 13660*”

### Exploring Trauma in Graphic Novels

In telling the story of Japanese Incarceration and American Concentration Camps, trust between author and reader is paramount. Through the graphic narrative form: masking, iconic abstraction, textual/graphic interplay, and the ability to see the social, Miné Okubo, Kiku Hughes, and George Takei invite their readers into their personal lives (and those of their families) to experience these traumatic events alongside them. Due to the inherent authority, and space created for critical empathy, in graphic memoirs, readers gain the ability to immerse themselves in a narrative world where they are guided by author-protagonists through their processing of trauma and grief. Rather than a benign remembrance, these narratives consistently provide their narrators with a self-determined and critical perspective that is truthfully shared with their audiences.<sup>13</sup> In choosing the form of the graphic novel, Okubo, Hughes, and Takei, make stories of Japanese Incarceration accessible to a vast swath of readers from disparate age groups and social backgrounds.

This is especially true as comics are often connected to childhood and adolescents, a fact that Hughes and Takei are well aware of and note in their interviews. However, beyond the connection between comics and youth, graphic narratives offer a surrogation process, where in the author-protagonist “serves as a bridge for recognizing not only the humanity of the (Japanese American) Other, but also for recognizing that the traumas of the past and those of the unfolding present might be coterminous race-based policies.”<sup>14</sup> It is here that the exploration of trauma in *Citizen 13660*, *Displacement*, and *They Called Us Enemy* takes on a deeper and farther reaching significance.

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<sup>13</sup> Chin, Vivian Fumiko. “Gestures of Noncompliance: Resisting, Inventing, and Enduring in *Citizen 13660*”

<sup>14</sup> Roxworthy, Emily. “Revitalizing Japanese American Internment: Critical Empathy and Role-Play in the Musical *Allegiance* and the Video Game *Drama in the Delta*”

Graphic novels have long served a place as a way to process trauma and grief, or in some way memorialize a traumatic event. With the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of *Citizen 13660* a year in the past (as of the completion of this project) and the Pulitzer Prize winning graphic novel *Maus* reaching over one million copies sold, the genre of graphic memoir, or graphic trauma narrative, is one that reaches and impacts people across the globe. This is perhaps because as long as racism exists, so too will the ideas of racialized citizenship. Throughout *Citizen 13660*, *Displacement*, and *They Called Us Enemy*, the disparities on who is, or what makes, a ‘citizen’ are called into question. Chief among these, is the idea that citizenship should not be racialized or in any way denied based on race, religion, sexual preference, or appearance. By presenting these ideals, and the historical failings of the United States to live up to them, Okubo, Hughes, and Takei are opening up their personal and generational traumas to the world at large. Specifically, by using the form of the graphic narrative, these authors are contextualizing their trauma by offering not only their interiority through words and images, but also the outward perceptions of that interiority. While it may seem like a small detail, the ability to both view the outward appearance of these author-protagonists as well as discern the abstractions between their interior thoughts and feelings, and their outward facing actions, words, and masks, provides a space for the reader to recognize trauma’s effects not only in the moment but for generations to come.

The ability to see both the outward face and disparate inward reality of Japanese Incarceration in these graphic novels takes on an even greater aspect when considering the absence of much of this history from the core cannon of classroom texts in the United States. Further,

If there is no outlet through which Japanese Americans can process or even speak the injuries and losses brought upon them, grief is eliminated as a mode of interpreting and conceptualizing Japanese American experience in the 1940s. As such, this forbidden emotion becomes unreadable in the dominant modes of the time... [these] texts thus disrupt representational paradigms of Japanese American subjectivity, experience, and emotion, creating different affective modes that alter the terms of perception.<sup>15</sup>

In point, these narratives exist as an answer to the long absent ability for Japanese Americans to process the generational trauma of American Concentration camps. And while *Citizen 13660* has been in print for more than seventy-five years, it remains a work often overlooked in classrooms across the United States. To combat this, Hughes' novel, *Displacement* seeks to acknowledge the great contribution Miné Okubo and *Citizen 13660* made not only in documenting Japanese Incarceration, but also to the processing of trauma and grief for Japanese Americans. As Hughes, as well as many other Japanese American authors and artists will attest, Okubo's work was well ahead of its time, and the echoes of *Citizen 13660* can still be seen and heard throughout narratives of Japanese Incarceration, as well as the entire form of the graphic memoir.

### Echoes

According to Kiku Hughes, author of *Displacement*, Okubo's work in *Citizen 13660* provided an important primary source, which documented the construction and appearance of Japanese Incarceration camps, as well as detailed the events that took place in the Tanforan Assembly Center and Topaz Internment Camp. Subsequently, Okubo's work has unknowingly

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<sup>15</sup> Stanutz, Katherine. "Inscrutable Greif: Memorializing Japanese American Internment in Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660*"

influenced a generation of writers, as currently, the first work dubbed a graphic novel (of which the graphic memoir is considered a sub-genre) is *Bloodstar* published in 1976 by Richard Corben and Robert E. Howard. Having come out thirty years after *Citizen 13660*, it is hard to attribute so much of the genre's success to Corben and Howard, especially as the graphic memoir has continued to rise in popularity, both in size of readership and in choice of form. This is not meant to belittle the significance of *Bloodstar*, as its popularity among the mainstream of comics opened up the form to a generation of authors who have adapted it for narratives both personal and fantastic. Though, because of the personal nature and enduring legacy of *Citizen 13660*, its impact on authors who center personal or community trauma in their graphic narratives, can still be seen.

This is in part due to the abstraction and ambiguity of the art and text discussed in earlier sections. That is to say, the relationship between art and text in *Citizen 13660* creates ambiguities of meaning, which allows their significance and interpretation to change over time: “what is ungrievable in 1946 gradually becomes grievable in the 1970s and 1980s. Okubo's memoir helps create a future in which redress is possible via its public, textual memorializations of Japanese American losses,” and it is that evolution that has brought about works like Kiku Hughes' *Displacement* and George Takei's *They Called Us Enemy*.<sup>16</sup> These ambiguities of meaning also allow *Citizen 13660* to be revisited time and time again, with each reading imparting new knowledge or depths of feeling. And while it may seem only a limited number of scholars and artists draw inspiration from Okubo directly, many more are indirectly influenced by her work.

We can see Okubo's reach by taking a moment to recognize the achievements of George Takei and Kiku Hughes. Hughes has worked on several short form and web comics to critical

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<sup>16</sup> Stanutz, Katherine. “Inscrutable Greif: Memorializing Japanese American Internment in Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660*”



acclaim and has also written and drawn stories for the incredibly popular *Avatar: The Last Airbender* series of comics as well as its related projects *Avatar: Kora*, and *Avatar: Kyoshi*. George Takei, best known for his role as Sulu in the *Star Trek* franchise, has published a bestselling novel, originated and starred in a role on Broadway, and was voted the most influential person on Facebook in 2012, edging out even President Obama. I list these accolades to note that Okubo's influence on their work has been recognized by both Hughes and Takei, and through them and many others, Miné Okubo's influence continues to be felt.

### Resurrections

In the wake of Miné Okubo's bravery in writing and publishing *Citizen 13660*, Kiku Hughes and George Takei seek to connect their stories of Japanese Incarceration with the ongoing struggle for equity and respect for all peoples, regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, ability, or appearance in the United States. Okubo herself expressed her mix of fear and hope about this in the 1983 introduction to *Citizen 13660*, "I am not bitter. I hope that things can be learned from this tragic episode, for I believe it could happen again."<sup>17</sup> Okubo's awareness of this possibility, is taken up in the text and art of *Displacement* and *They Called Us Enemy*, as well as the statements made by their authors in their many online interviews. Takei, in particular, has been a vocal advocate for equality and equity both in minority and queer issues. Through their narratives and activism, Hughes and Takei insist on remembering the trauma of Japanese Incarceration, specifically in relation to contemporary racist exclusionary policies enacted by the U.S. Government. Their attitudes towards these policies are actively engaged through their personal lives as well as in the work they produce.

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<sup>17</sup> Okubo, Miné. "Preface to the 1983 Edition", *Citizen 13660*.

Additionally, as Hughes and Takei are writing from a contemporary space, they utilize their platforms as authors to push back against the racist propaganda of Donald Trump's candidacy and subsequent presidency, advocating for the alliance of minority and marginalized peoples in response to these statements and policies. This is emphasized in the close of each of their narratives, wherein the author-protagonists engage in civil disobedience, activism, and protest. The recurring theme presented by Hughes and Takei as author-protagonists in their respective narratives, can be summed up as "Never Again" – referring to Japanese Incarceration and present-day instances of similar events, such as the Muslim Ban and the separation of children from their parents at the Mexico/U.S. border. This idea, "that historical experience can speak to our collective present struggles suggests that our society must learn to respect objectified Others and cultivate critical empathy – or risk making the same mistakes all over again."<sup>18</sup> Hughes and Takei utilize the form of graphic narrative to create space for this critical empathy and reflection. And, as comics and graphic novels have historically been marketed toward children and adolescents (though there has been an evolution of that marketplace with the advent of titles marketed to adults like *Watchmen* and *The Dark Knight*), the message of remembrance and insistence that the United States never again engages in something akin to Japanese Incarceration, seems aimed at both our contemporary moment and future generations.

Simply, because the graphic narrative encourages critical empathy, allowing readers to immerse themselves in the narrative, and promotes re-readings through the evolution of meaning and abstraction within the novels, it would seem that Takei and Hughes have chosen their mediums well. Additionally, as Takei notes, directing these narratives toward young adults, and presenting them in a manner that is accessible to a myriad of readers, allows stories of Japanese

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<sup>18</sup> Roxworthy, Emily. "Revitalizing Japanese American Internment: Critical Empathy and Role-Play in the Musical *Allegiance* and the Video Game *Drama in the Delta*"

Incarceration to be passed on for generations to come, so that we, as a society, can enact change and ensure that the United States never “replaces one gravely wrong decision with another.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Takei, George. *They Called Us Enemy*

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