

Message from the TODOS President TODOS July 2022 Enews

As we prepare to take on roles in our schools and institutions, we know that we as individuals advocate for students who are underrepresented in the field of mathematics. In my view, so many systems were not built to be 'inclusive' - I often say that universities, schools, and so many other 'systems' were actually built with particular humans in mind - and the humans were not the diversity of humans we understand today - gender, sexual orientation, race, linguistically, neurologically, and physically. We, educators, who belong to organizations such as TODOS: Mathematics for ALL see the diversity in all of its ways and believe that the systems such as school and classrooms and content area should be inclusive.

Sometimes we feel like we are facing an uphill battle. This spring I was feeling particularly 'beaten down' in the advocacy work that I do on a daily basis - and in that time I learned about a Japanese proverb that says something like "The nail that sticks out gets hammered down."

I learned about the proverb in the context of a play, written by [Jeanne Sakata](#), about the life of the late Dr. [Gordon Hirabayashi](#). Gordon Hirabayashi was a resistor of, and openly defied, the internment of Japanese-Americans during the Second World War. Gordon would hear this proverb from his family because they did not want him to be a resistor - they wanted him to stay safe and conform to the laws. When Gordon finished his prison sentence, his family added a piece to the proverb, "The nail that sticks out gets hammered down; but it [the nail] might also break the hammer."

Dr. Hirabayashi immigrated to Canada in 1959 and was a Sociologist at the University of Alberta till his retirement in 1983. I did not have a chance to study with Dr. Hirabayashi when I was a student at the University of Alberta but I have since learned about his life and the work that he did to advocate for the rights of indigenous peoples. His story inspires me because not only did he resist the internment of Japanese-Americans he also advocated for Indigenous peoples' rights in Canada, in the province of Alberta, and at the University of Alberta.

We not always 'see' the efforts of our advocacy work or we may not 'see' the impact of our advocacy work - so while we might feel like we are "The nail that sticks out gets hammered down" in the advocacy work we do, that "the nail" might also break the hammer." Dr. Hirabayashi did not live long enough to see the results of his resistance to the internment of Japanese Americans; nor did he live long enough to see the efforts of his advocacy for the rights of Indigenous peoples.

But in 2012, just a few months after he passed, Dr. Hirabayashi was recognized posthumously with the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2012 for his advocacy for the rights of Japanese Americans. I've come to realize that I, as a young Indigenous women in 1976, had a space in post secondary education because of the advocacy of Indigenous elders and community members and non Indigenous professors, like Dr. Hirabayashi, who were working at the University of Alberta.

I share this experience with you as I hope you are finding the time you need to re-generate and find your voice in the advocacy work that we as individuals and as a collective need to do to ensure that ALL students; ALL learners in all of their 'diversity' find a place in mathematics classrooms and in the study of mathematics. This is the mission of TODOS: Mathematics for ALL - together our individual and collective actions might be the "nail that breaks the hammer."

I invite you to find the story of an inspiring advocate; and keep their story with you as you engage in your advocacy work.

Yours in advocacy,

Florence Glanfield, President
TODOS: Mathematics for ALL