

PRISONERS' STRUGGLES

Special Thank You and Dedication to Yuri Kochiyama

We extend a special thank you to Yuri Kochiyama whose life exemplifies the revolutionary spirit and whose dedication to freedom inspires us to keep on dreaming, to keep on fighting and to keep on believing.

Yuri Kochiyama has been a revolutionary for more than four decades.

Born Mary Nakahara in San Pedro, California, her parents were both Japanese immigrants. Growing up in a Japanese immigrant family in California during the 1920s and 1930s, she was active in sports, school and church. She was both unquestioningly patriotic and largely unconscious of race and racism in the United States. At the outbreak of World War II, her father was imprisoned in a federal penitentiary and died shortly after his release. Her family was forcibly removed and incarcerated at a detention camp at Jerome, Arkansas throughout the war. Experiencing the fear and ignorance caused by racism, she saw this as a direct parallel to the way African-Americans were treated in the segregated South. Her commitment to eliminating racism became a driving force for the rest of her life.

Married shortly after leaving the camp, her husband, Bill Kochiyama, was a veteran of the 442 Regimental Combat Team. They moved to New York City and, in 1960, with their six children, chose to settle in the Harlem projects amongst the Latino and Black families. It was here that she began a new activist career. In these new surroundings, at the age of 40, she joined neighbourhood parents in a grassroots movement for safer streets. In 1963, Yuri was arrested while demonstrating for construction jobs for African-Americans and Puerto Ricans. While in court, she had the opportunity to meet Malcolm X. They developed a close friendship that included an active mail correspondence during his pilgrimage to Africa and Mecca. She later joined his "Organization for Afro-American Unity" and became a follower of his internationalist concept of human rights and nationalism based on self-determination and self-reliance. On February 21, 1965, in the Audubon Ballroom, she cradled Malcolm X in her arms as he lay dying from assassins' bullets. His assassination intensified her commitment to work for the dignity and equality of all people of colour. She has spent much of her life working across racial lines to build multi-racial support for the end of South African apartheid and the war in Viet Nam, for redress for Japanese-Americans and equality for Asian-Americans, and for Puerto Rican independence, Black Liberation and Cuban solidarity.

Yuri Kochiyama's life has inspired generations. At the age of 84, she was nominated for the "1,000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize 2005". Revolutionary activist, writer and one of the many political children of the Yuri style of revolution, Diana Fujino has written the first biography of the courageous champion of freedom, Heartbeat of Struggle: The Revolutionary Life of Yuri Kochiyama. It is published by the University of Minnesota Press.



Yuri Kochiyama

YURI KOCHIYAMA FUND FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS (YKFPP)

The Yuri Kochiyama Fund for Political Prisoners is established based on Yuri's belief that "political prisoners are the heartbeat of struggle".

Eddy Zheng is facing deportation for criminal convictions from 20 years ago. He served 19 plus years of a seven-to-life sentence for a robbery he committed at 16. He is currently being held in Yuba County Jail in California. He is an avid writer, and he organized the first poetry slam at San Quentin State Prison. This is Eddy Zheng in his own words. More information at <http://www.eddyzheng.com>

According to the committee of the YKFPP, funds will be utilized to help political prisoners who have urgent needs, including health care and finances. The YKFPP will send \$25 commissary funds to, and correspond with, four prisoners each month.

Diana Fujino, author of Heartbeat of Struggle: The Revolutionary Life of Yuri Kochiyama, will donate the book royalties to support YKFPP. Contact Diana Fujino at: fujino@asamst.ucsb.edu.

Anyone who shares Yuri's belief and vision can help by buying Fujino's book or contributing funds to YKFPP:

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