



NEWS

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For Immediate Release

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Internment Camp Journalist and Former Columbia University Associate Dean Receives Honorary Degree from the Compton Community College District

Miwako “Monica” (Oana) Miya, who passed away in 2009 at the age of 88, was first introduced to journalism at what was then called Compton Junior College.

Although her studies were abruptly interrupted during World War II when she and her family were sent to an internment camp, Miya eventually went on to become the Associate Dean of Student Affairs at Columbia University’s School of Journalism, where she retired in 1993.

On October 16, Miya will be posthumously awarded an honorary degree from the Compton Community College District during a special ceremony as part of the California Nisei College Diploma project. It’s a statewide effort to provide honorary degrees to Japanese Americans whose studies were forcibly suspended in 1942 when they were ordered into internment camps during World War II. The California Community Colleges, California State University and University of California are all participating in this project.

Miya was born in San Francisco and raised in San Pedro. She started college at Compton Junior College and was studying journalism when she and her family were sent to the Heart Mountain Relocation Center in Wyoming.

At the internment camp, Miya pursued her passion for journalism, writing a “Mo’s Scratchpad” column for the Heart Mountain Sentinel, the relocation center’s newspaper.

It is estimated that more than 2,500 Japanese American students were affected by Executive Order 9066 during World War II, including more than 1,200 students attending community colleges. An estimated 95 Compton Junior College students, including Miya, were forced to leave school for the internment camps. Many of those interned were American-born citizens who were Nisei, which means second generation Japanese Americans.

Midway through the war, Miya was permitted to leave the camp and move to New York, where she continued her education. During her career, she worked at Columbia’s American Press Institute and the Metropolitan Museum of Art before joining the faculty at Columbia University’s School of Journalism.

In 1945, she met and married Tadashi Miya, who died in 1985, and raised two daughters, Ann Christine and Mari.

She lived in New York City until health issues in 2008 forced her to move to Maine to be with family. Although she enjoyed Maine, she was a loyal New Yorker, rooting for the Yankees in a Red Sox household.

Miya was a life-long learner who enjoyed traveling the world, going to museums, reading widely, and experiencing other cultures often through their cuisines. She loved animals, art and art history, wrote poems for her friends, and did pottery for many years.

She especially enjoyed her years at Columbia University where she worked with students in admissions, financial aid and housing. She was a friend to many and is remembered for her warm, generous spirit, keen intellect, and genuine interest in the lives of those around her.

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About the Compton Community College District

The Compton Community College District serves the communities of Carson, Compton, Enterprise, North Long Beach, Lynwood, Paramount and Willowbrook. The District is governed by a state-appointed Special Trustee, who works with the five-member elected Board of Trustees. Board meetings are held the third Tuesday of each month and are open to the public. The District is located at 1111 E. Artesia Boulevard, Compton, CA, 90221.