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ENGL 466W

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The Prisoner – Fred Korematsu

Fred Korematsu: outcast, activist, prisoner of war. Korematsu pushed against the grain to fight back where few others were willing to. The American government saw him as troublesome, a problem to be dismantled. On the flip side, he was often “stigmatized within Asian American communities.” Misunderstood and assumed that he thought he was somehow better than those like him. But Korematsu did not let this defeat define him. And as the new generations came about and realized the horrors that their parents had endured his “power of courage and redemption” helped fight against the state-sanctioned violence that had been imposed on him. Korematsu worked with others to “unbind the acts of oppression that led to their imprisonment.” And even though the original ruling was not overturned, Korematsu’s actions both then and now have helped to bring “visibility to the stigma of imprisonment and expose the racialized injustice present” within the United States and her policies.

The hope is that those that carry on Korematsu’s fight will someday help “dismantle oppression on multiple levels and utilize lived experience for social evolution.” Even Korematsu could not have foreseen how relevant his fight would be in the later part of the 20th and early 21st centuries. Like the prisoner tarot, the events “foreshadowed incarcerations to come,” with the unfair imprisonment of men and women following the war with Iraq and the 9/11 attacks. Others as they have learned about their parents’ and grandparents’ experiences have realized the

importance of making sure no group of people suffers this same inhuman and unconstitutional fate. By remembering Fred Korematsu and others like him, the fight is kept strong and relevant in everyday social and political events within the United States and beyond.

The Ghost - Comfort Women

I am your history, smuggled across the ocean with you. Your ancestor and shadow, a not so distant echo to a memory. Akiko brings with her not just her physical self, but the ghosts of her past, of other souls otherwise lost to the violence of time. And even though it may initially seem as though Akiko is tormented and held back by these ghosts, Beccah eventually sees her mother's true demons. She comes to understand that these spirits of the past who always walk along with her mother are likely the only reason she could survive the horrors she was pushed into. In the end, Beccah is forced to understand how the force of history and of her mother's ghosts have brought her to the present. She learns that the borders between reality and the history of her mother and father's past is but an illusion; that real events have relevant meaning on her life even now.

The ghosts of *Comfort Women* echo far beyond the pages and into our own consciousness. Beccah become a part of our own troubled border, reminding us how close the horrors of man lurk just around the corner, waiting for their opportunity to torment us with old demons and cruel godlike injustices. Our own ghosts linger around us, carefully reminding us of the past. A past we want to disregard, but perhaps are not capable of removing. An important lesson that should not be forgotten. The ghost is a reminder that history will always have lingering evidence. That even when we try to erase the horrors we'd rather forget, does not erase the fact that these realities occurred. And when we accept these ghosts, these memories smuggled to us, we can finally find peace and strength in their messages.