



Impact Statement

Sandy Yeo, Grade 6

Fighting for Freedom and Justice, 2026

Acrylic on canvas, 16 x 20 inches

Art Room 101, Fort Lee, NJ

Unsung Hero: Mitsuye Endo

I believe Mitsuye Endo is an Unsung Hero who deserves to be much more widely known. She was born in 1920 in Sacramento and grew up like many other first-generation Japanese American children. She went to public school, worked hard in her studies, and later attended secretarial school. After that, she got a clerical job with the California state government. At first, her life seemed ordinary, and she followed the path of a responsible young American citizen.

However, everything changed during World War II. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, many Japanese Americans were treated unfairly because of fear and suspicion. Even though Mitsuye Endo was a loyal citizen of the United States, she was forced to leave her home and was placed in a relocation camp without being charged with any crime. She lost her job simply because of her background. This was not only unfair, but also against the basic rights promised in the Constitution.

Instead of accepting this injustice, Mitsuye Endo chose to stand up for what was right. She asked an important question: how could the government take away someone's freedom without a trial, just because of their nationality? She bravely filed a writ of habeas corpus, which is a legal action that asks the court to determine whether a person is being held unlawfully. At first, the government denied her petition, but she did not give up. Her determination showed great courage, especially during a time when many people were too afraid to speak out.

Her case eventually reached the United States Supreme Court. In a historic decision, the Court ruled that the government could not continue to detain citizens who were considered loyal to the United States. This decision helped bring an end to the unjust detention of many Japanese Americans. Mitsuye Endo's bravery made a real difference, not just for herself, but for thousands of others who were also treated unfairly. Mitsuye Endo is a true unsung hero because she stood up for justice when it was difficult and risky. She did not fight with violence, but with courage, determination, and belief in fairness. Her actions remind us that one person can create change, even against a powerful system.

Today, her story is still important. It teaches us to respect people of all backgrounds and to protect the rights of everyone, whether they are citizens or immigrants. As an Asian American student, I feel especially thankful for her courage. Because of people like Mitsuye Endo, we are reminded that fairness and equality must always be protected. That is why I believe she should be recognized and remembered as a true hero.