

# TWO FACES



Nina Wolpe

Gordon Hideaki Nagai

## IN PRAISE OF *TWO FACES*

This book is great. Detailing the struggles of what people with Japanese ancestry went through after the attack on Pearl Harbor, is both heartwarming and serious. I couldn't put it down!

Eliana Koller, sixth grader, Traverse City, Michigan

Far too often, history is written from the viewpoint of governments and the decisions of people driving these institutions. The historical record shows the uglier side of the human endeavor, here the incarceration of citizens based on their race. This federal action was officially known as the Japanese Evacuation and Internment. We know much about these activities from the records of the War Relocation Authority (WRA), which was responsible for the arrest and incarceration of grandparents, parents, and children.

The archives tell the story from the perspective of the oppressor, not the experiences of the victims. We still know little from the internee perspective. Oral histories exist but they were captured decades too late for precise recall, or the adult generation had already passed.

In *Two Faces*, Nina Wolpe and Gordon Nagai were close school friends when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, a friendship they maintained all their lives. They have produced a unique book of personal narrative around this historical event. Their own memoirs about the war and its impact on their personal lives intertwine with their frequent letters back and forth. It is a highly engaging and uplifting work about a cross-racial friendship at a time of global conflict when such friendships were frowned upon and even prohibited. Gordon Nagai's narrative provides especially unique details about internment life, much of which has never been told. This engaging story fills a deep gap in the books written about this dark chapter in American history.

David de Lorenzo, Director, Special Collections, University of Oregon

*Two Faces* is a refreshing perspective on how war divides not only on the battlefield but on the home front. After the bombing at Pearl Harbor, the friendship of two children is threatened by a fence built of fear—every nail hammered home by a world of distrust in which they are caught. Their refusal to acquiesce to the status quo of hate and suspicion serves as a testament to the power of the human spirit. A highly recommended read.

Bob Welch, author of *Saving My Enemy: How Two WWII Soldiers Fought Against Each Other and Later Forged a Friendship That Saved Their Lives*

*Two Faces* by Nina Wolpe and Gordon Hideaki Nagai offers a unique perspective and look at a friendship that stood the tests no child should have to face. Set in the time of World War II, we learn about the heart-wrenching experience of Gordon's family being taken without cause from their home and imprisoned in a Japanese Internment camp, while Nina's letters weave together her own journey as her father heads off to war.

As a third-grade teacher and parent, it is rare to find texts about such sensitive topics told in a way that allows young readers to engage, connect and learn. *Two Faces* does just that. Written with interwoven letters between Nina and Gordon, readers young and old are pulled into the true story of these two friends, a friendship that required grit, perseverance, faith and trust. during a time of isolation and loneliness. The way the authors have collectively built the story around their own experience is touching, informative and meaningful.

The photographs and resources in the appendix also provide a wonderful resource to giving young readers a way to connect to the history that unfolded over 80 years ago.

I appreciate the vulnerability of Nina's and Gordon's writing and the gift this story will be for readers of all ages in the years to come. Christine Gough, third-grade teacher, Letitia Carson Elementary School, Corvallis, Oregon

As Americans, we have experienced obstacles and painful moments since we began as a hopeful new nation 250 years ago. The authors of *Two Faces* show us how to work together in healing and in joy. As an educator I can't think of a better culturally responsive way to teach students about our forced imprisonment of American citizens and its impact on our society during World War II.

Sarah Campbell, sixth-grade teacher, Meadow View Middle School, Eugene, Oregon

For three long years, American citizens of Japanese descent suffered an unthinkable fate at internment camps. *Two Faces* is the story of an ugly chapter in American history, told with the charm and clarity of two youngsters who lived through it. Their story will inspire rich conversations among all who have the good fortune of reading their account. This book is an opportunity for young readers to learn from the past, and to prevent history from repeating itself.

Sally Krueger, fifth-grade teacher, Edgewood Community Elementary School, Eugene, Oregon

Against the backdrop of one of this nation's greatest Civil Rights violations emerges a story of love, friendship, patience, patriotism, sacrifice and pure childhood innocence... along with a painful, too-soon, coming of age. The book is powerfully written, yet never preachy, and remains wholly authentic throughout to both its young adolescent viewpoint and the misgivings, mischief and misadventures of growing up. Some of Gordon's lighter memories strongly reminded me of my own kids' experiences in suburban Connecticut in the 1960s... proving that, given half a chance, 'kids will be kids' anywhere. Even behind the barbed wire of a prison camp. And Nina's insights concerning social justice as well as her beloved Daddy's going off to lead a whole new life while leaving her and her mother to pick up the pieces of his inability to cope with war and its aftermath are absolutely stunning.

Olivia Taylor-Young, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, University of Oregon, creative writing facilitator

Authors Nina Wolpe and Gordon Nagai have recreated the times when America responded to the surprise bombing of the Pearl Harbor naval base. As a boy, Gordon Nagai lived, together with his family in a grim camp observed by armed guards and surrounded by barbed wire fences. Throughout his family's incarceration his schoolmate and friend Nina's letters were a hopeful and assuring touchstone. The pages about life in the camp almost shatter as you turn them, yet it is a hopeful memoir. Wolpe's and Nagai's deftly recorded account proves there is always hope for another doorway to open. Precious!

Bill Sarnoff, World War II Navy radioman, U.S.S. Elizabeth C. Stanton

# **TWO FACES**

BY NINA WOLPE AND GORDON HIDEAKI NAGAI

Two Faces

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*Dedication*

*With deepest appreciation to our mothers,  
Mildred Taylor Greenough and Yoriko Ann Nagai,  
and all mothers who collectively preserved a  
nation's childhood.*

*And with deepest appreciation to Mary Dakusaku  
Tsukamoto, educator, author, Civil Rights activist,  
college classmate and friend of Nina's mother,  
who testified before Commission on Wartime  
Relocation and Internment of Civilians in 1980.*



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# **PART I**

## **The War Begins**



## CHAPTER ONE

# “I Don’t Understand”

*December 7, 1941*

---

**MY COLLAR FEELS TIGHT AND MY STOMACH EVEN TIGHTER** as I walk on stage with my fifth-grade class. I am supposed to sing a little solo and I’m so afraid I’ll mess up! We’re at the school auditorium for the annual elementary school holiday concert. I look out into the audience, and it seems like the whole town is here.

Our class sings only one song, so we need to make it good. Honestly, my stomach feels so strange right now I feel like throwing up. That would be awful. I once saw a girl actually do that and she never lived it down.

I’d better calm down. I take a few deep breaths. Our choir teacher nods to me, and I walk to the front of the stage. It’s so quiet, you can hear the “clomp, clomp, clomp” of my shiny black dress shoes. When I get to my spot, I look out at Mama, who is holding sleepy Gene. He’s two. She and Daddy smile at me and so does my little sister, Janet.

I turn my head toward my choir teacher. She smiles, too, and raises her baton. The piano player begins, and I take another deep breath. Here goes!

“On the first day of Christmas my true love gave to me,” I sing softly, “a partridge in a pear tree.” My voice is high and steady. I hit every note!

The rest of the ten-year-olds join in, and we finish the song. I look out and see Mama and Daddy beaming at me. Janet’s making a funny face. Wow! Not so bad. I did it!

After the concert on that cool Sunday afternoon, things quickly turn into a weird day. I don't understand what's going on at first, but it begins to be clear as I overhear things the adults are saying:

"The Japanese attacked our navy base in Hawaii!"

"Those ships in Pearl Harbor were sitting ducks!"

"There was no warning!"

"Our navy had no idea what was coming!"

"The Japs killed hundreds of sailors!"

The parents are shaking their heads, talking in hushed tones. Some walk over and talk with Mama and Daddy, and tell them they'll support them, no matter what happens.

As we drive home, the radio is on and the announcer speaks in a tone that says this is all serious. He talks about the sneak attack and the sailors killed and wonders if it will lead to war. He says President Roosevelt is meeting with leaders of Congress and is expected to make a speech to the nation tomorrow.

"What's wrong with everybody?" I ask Daddy.

He doesn't say anything at first. Then he looks at me. "Sad day for everyone."

"But what does it mean? Why did Japan drop bombs on our ships, Daddy?"

"Not know why. Not good reason."

Mama stays quiet and looks straight ahead. I have so many questions. I wish they'd talk!

When we get home, Uncle George, Mama's older brother pulls into the driveway and comes into the house with Aunt Kimi. They all sit at the kitchen table and talk quietly but I sit in the corner and hear everything. The radio is on and the announcer keeps repeating the news about Japan attacking Pearl Harbor.

"Why in the world did Japan bomb those ships?" Mama asks

"I have no idea. It's horrible. I cannot believe it!" Uncle George says. "And people are looking at us like we did something wrong! They know us! We're peach farmers!"

Uncle George is right. We are just peach farmers. We live a peaceful

life and Uncle George and Aunt Kimi's farm is just down the county road from us. My Jiichan and Bachan—Mama and Uncle George's parents—live with them. They're old, in their 60s, and can't speak very good English but Jiichan still works on the farm while Bachan cooks for everyone.

We live just outside of Merced, a little California town in the middle of the state. We work hard—I have to do chores every day before and after school. All the farm kids do.

Mama notices me sitting on the floor, trying to make myself small as I listen to them. She makes a "harumph" sound and gets out of her chair.

"You and your sister need to get to bed early tonight," she says. "Now go brush your teeth and jump into bed."

My bedroom is near the kitchen, so I can hear them talk late into the night. I can't hear exactly what they're saying, but I think I hear Mama crying.

The next morning it's more of the same. Mama and Daddy still aren't saying anything to me as if everything is alright. I get ready for school, but I have this terrible feeling that somehow life will never be the same for us.

During breakfast, I ask Mama, "What does what happened yesterday mean for us?"

Mama doesn't answer right away, but her mouth tightens. "It's very bad," she says. "People are angry, and things might be a little tense for us and Uncle George's family for a while."

She looks away, and I can't see her face.

"What do you mean, tense?"

"Well, some people may say terrible things to hurt you. You'll have to try to not let it bother you. You have to try not to worry about it."

"I don't understand, Mama. Just because we look like the people who bombed us?"

She looks at me, and her eyes fill with tears. "Yes, something like that. But it's very complicated, it's very hard." Mama is usually more talkative and tells me stuff when I ask. Now we sit in silence. I hate that she won't say exactly what she and Daddy are so afraid of.

After breakfast I leave the house and walk to the bus stop. I stand and

wait, but nothing feels right. Mama said the president is talking about war against Japan, but what does that mean for us?

As I climb on the bus, Mrs. Davis, the driver, says “Hi” like she always does, but she isn’t her usual smiling and chatty self.

My chest tightens, and my hearing turns razor sharp. I pick a seat a few rows behind her as she pulls out, and it seems everyone stops talking. Usually everyone is talking away and being loud, but now you could hear a paper clip drop.

Then someone behind me whispers, “Jap.”

I know all the kids on the bus, but I don’t recognize who said this because he whispered it. I look straight ahead as if I hadn’t heard, but they know I did, and that makes it worse. I can hear a couple of the older boys, and they’re talking about “the Japs this” and “the Japs that” and now they aren’t trying to hide anything. Mrs. Davis calls them out for it from her driver’s seat in a loud voice I’ve never heard her use before.

“Boys! That’s enough!” and her eyes in the mirror above her head burn a hole through the air to the back of the bus.

They don’t stop but whisper the same things loud enough that I can hear every word they’re saying. Mrs. Davis shoots them another look in the mirror, this one fiercer, and then there’s quiet. It takes forever to get to school.

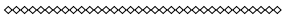




## CHAPTER TWO

# We Interrupt This Broadcast

*December 8, 1941*



**ON THIS SCHOOL MORNING**, I press my fork down into the stack of my mom’s yummy pancakes. My dad pinches off a piece of bacon and slips it under the table into Colonel’s waiting mouth. Suddenly, the radio’s morning news blares out a replay of a special announcement:

*Moments ago, President Roosevelt announced the attack by Japan on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, by air. The attack was also made on all military and naval activities on the principal island of Oahu and many American lives have been lost....*

We sit stunned, silent as stones, listening to the entire broadcast. We’d been with family friends for our annual weekend together in Yosemite Valley. We’d missed any news of this. Mom reaches over to the radio and turns it off.

At this second, I want all the puzzle pieces of that radio newscast to fit together.

“But Dad, why did they bomb our ships? Why did they fly all the way from Japan to bomb our bases in Hawaii? What did WE do that made them so mad?”

“Nina, dear, you and Mom have to go to school. I have to get to the office,” Dad says. “We’ll learn more as the day goes by.”

“But Dad! Mom! This is so horrible. We should all stop our everyday work and find out what made Japan do this. Then we can try to help somehow. We can...”

Mom leans toward me and holds me in a long hug. I know her trick. She is trying to calm me. And, well—OK, I admit it—her closeness helps. I take a deep breath, even though this radio news about Japan is so horrible. Sinking our ships! Killing our American sailors!

“But why did this happen?” I ask.

“Nina, dear one,” Mom says, her words against my cheek. “First, we will learn more about this at school and at work. Next, we will hear about plans from our government. Plans for what each of us can do in the coming days.”

She gently turns my face toward hers and looks me in the eye. “You are right. We all have many questions. I promise we will soon learn more. Then we can think about ways we can help each other...how we can help our country be safe again.”

She kisses me on the forehead. “Now, take another deep breath. Finish your breakfast. Put your dishes in the sink. Go brush your teeth. Get your coat and lunch and books. Meet me at the car in ten minutes.”

I want more time with my mom and dad. I am worried and upset and frustrated. But I stuff three more bites of pancake and bacon into my mouth and gulp down some milk.

I march down the hallway, questions stomping around in my head. Had we done something terribly wrong to the people in Japan? Will they drop bombs on us in California? Maybe my teacher, Mrs. Fisher, will help us all learn more. I bet Ernest will have some answers, too. I’m so jealous of his amazing brain. He always knows things from the news and facts about history and government. His skull must be

stuffed with facts. I bet it will be all stuffed up with no more room for facts by the time he's eighteen.

Maybe we all can eat lunch together and talk together about this horrible news.

Oh, nooo! And what about Gordon! And his family!! What must my dear friend be feeling and thinking?

But then, maybe, Gordon will have some better answers. He's heard the radio news, too, and his parents have talked to him. I bet they've heard more than Mom and Dad and I have.

Back in the kitchen, I grab my coat and books, pat Colonel's soft head and neck, and fly out the front door.

Halfway along the walk, I remember my lunch. I scurry back inside and grab it from the fridge. I pat our German shepherd and slam out the front door again. I run toward Mom and the car and hope that I can talk to Gordon before the school bell rings.



## CHAPTER THREE

# My Stomach Hurts

*December 8, 1941*

---

**AS I GET OFF THE BUS** Mrs. Davis says, “You have a good day,” and she smiles. Then she comes up and takes my arm and says, “Tell you what, I’ll walk you to class,” and she gets off with me. We stand near the bus door with a group of other students waiting there as five or six older kids jump down out of the bus and run past us yelling something and laughing.

My stomach hurts from the earlier name calling, and now I’m embarrassed that she wants to walk me to class in front of the whole school.

“Mrs. Davis, I can walk to my class by myself. You don’t need to go with me.” My voice cracks as I struggle to get the words out.

“Oh, I know you can, dear, but I want to make sure you’re going to be okay,” she says, resting her hand on my shoulder.

“You don’t need to...” My voice trails off.

Some of the kids getting off the bus behind me are whispering things, but I avoid looking at them. Other kids, some who I thought were my friends, join in. The older boys who were harassing me earlier are shouting, but I try to ignore them. Mrs. Davis gives them the evil eye and waves them off. Mrs. Davis is kind of like Bachan, my grandmother. She isn’t that old, at least she doesn’t seem that old, but you feel safe around her and you know she’ll take care of you.

Out of the corner of my eye, I see Nina coming across the yard. She waves and I wave back. It’s good to see a friendly face. Then she’s gone.

I can't see her in the crowd of kids as they arrive. Mrs. Davis and I walk across the schoolyard. That's not like Nina. She would have come to say "Hi," especially after what happened yesterday. Mrs. Davis and I continue to the school door.

When I first see my locker, I feel like I've been hit in the face. Someone scribbled "Jap" and "Go back to Japland" across the door in black crayon. Mrs. Davis puts her hand on my arm and says, "I want you to be strong now. We'll go to the office, and they'll take care of this for you."

I look around to see who might have done this, but everyone seems to be minding their own business. No one is even looking in this direction.

I feel hurt and angry, and my eyes start to tear up. I feel ashamed and don't understand why. I didn't have anything to do with yesterday.

When I eventually get to my class, our principal, Mr. Bancroft, announces on the school PA system that the school board met in an emergency meeting and decided that due to the seriousness of what happened in Hawaii yesterday, school will be closed for a few days. He guesses that many businesses and government offices will close, too.

Mrs. Crenshaw takes me aside and asks how Mama and Daddy are doing with all that's going on.

"They're pretty upset," I mutter, "but they don't say much around me."

"Please tell them I'm thinking of them," she says. "And how about you? How are you doing?"

"I guess I'm okay." I lie.

"There are going to be some children who might be mean to you, and you have to be strong."

"That's what everyone is saying, 'I have to be strong.'"

"I'll do what I can to help make things alright for you." She looks me in the eye, and her face is calm. She gives me her usual smile.

Mrs. Crenshaw walks to the front of the class and talks in a tone I've never heard her use before.

"You heard what the principal said. What happened yesterday was very serious. Japan dropped bombs on our ships in Hawaii and killed hundreds of sailors. We don't know why Japan attacked us, but it could very well mean war.

“Now I want all of you to listen carefully. I expect you to treat your fellow students with respect—no matter where they were born or where their parents were born. Name calling of any kind will not be tolerated.”

After that, no one says anything bad to me. Most are friendly and treat me okay. Some just stay away from me, but at least they don't say anything—at least in class.

Then at recess, I overhear a couple of kids yell “Jap” out in the yard when I'm not looking. When I turn around, no one is watching me. I wish I could stop jerking around when they do that, but I can't help it.

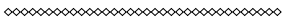
Why can't I look the same as everyone else so this stops happening?



## CHAPTER FOUR

# Kill the Japs! Fight the Japs!

*December 8, 1941*



**MOM DROPS ME** at the usual spot in front of the school.

“Kiss.”

“Kiss.”

“Love you.”

“Love you, too.” I turn to look for Gordon.

The school bus carrying Gordon and his neighbors has just pulled up to the curb. Kids step out of the bus into our crisp December morning air.

Hmmm. Five or six of the older boys seem so...so angry. They are yelling what sounds like a garbled football cheer. When I finally make out their words, I can't believe what they are chanting.

They move together toward the playground door into the school, their fists punching the air over their heads. “FIGHT THE JAPS! KILL THE JAPS! FIGHT THE JAPS! KILL THE JAPS!”

Other children leaving the bus huddle quietly at the foot of the bus steps. There is Gordon, my neighbor and dear friend, in that second group.

He looks strange. Puzzled? Angry? Frightened? I wonder how a face can show all those feelings at once. My heart

thuds. Were those same kids chanting those same horrible words on the bus and he yelled back?

Then I notice Gordon's bus driver is getting off the bus, too, her hand holding Gordon's arm. I flap my arm to get their attention, my lunch bag wagging in my hand.

The bus driver keeps walking along beside Gordon, her hand now on his shoulder. I run forward to catch up with them, raising my hand and still clutching my lunch bag.

"Wait! Wait up, Gordon!" I shout. Gordon spots me and waves back.

Suddenly, my lunch bag tears open and everything flies across the dried-up grass and dirt. My sandwich and chips, cream cheese-filled celery, peanut butter cookies, waxed paper. Everything!

"Ooh, snakes and snails and puppy dog tails! Noooo!"

While I'm bending down to clean up the mess, Gordon and the bus driver disappear through the school's front doors. The morning school bell rings, moving everyone into their classroom lines.

I spot Ernest and Shirley in line and run toward them.

We walk to the classroom. Mrs. Fisher stands at the classroom doorway, warmly greeting each one of us just like she does every morning.

I sit down at my desk, flip up its lid and put my books inside. I take out my reading glasses and wipe them clean. Bobby, slouched in front of me, tucks one shoulder down so that he can whisper back to me over his shoulder, "Mornin', Miss Four Eyes."

I poke the eraser end of my pencil against his shoulder.

"Ouch!" he says, wincing and putting on a smirky grin. He jerks to attention as Mrs. Fisher raps her chalk against the blackboard.

We all stand to say the Pledge of Allegiance and to sing *Oh Beautiful, For Spacious Skies*. Then we sit down for roll call.



Flora Tanaka and Marian Tsumi are absent this morning. Shirley and I swivel our heads, staring messages into each other's eyes, thinking about the two girls and Pearl Harbor. Whispers fill the room like a roll of soft fog.

We all turn toward the front of the classroom when we hear the crackle from the public announcement system. The principal comes on to speak to all of the school about the news of the Pearl Harbor bombing. He says that there will be no school for the next few days. Usually, we'd cheer, but now there's a heavy silence.

"A terrible event has occurred, as you just heard," Mrs. Fisher says. "If any of you would like to ask a question or say what's on your mind, please raise your hand."

Eighteen hands fly up. Sam bolts out of his chair and yells, "KILL THE JAPS!"

Gasps, then shocked silence fills the room. All eyes are glued on Mrs. Fisher's face.

"Sam," she says, keeping her voice low and calm. "In this room, we will use normal inside voices and make peaceful comments. Think before you express your views. Everyone is welcome to say something, but it will not be mean or ugly or negative about anyone of Japanese descent."

"But Mrs. Fisher," Sam loudly protests, rising out of his chair.

"Sam, we have the great privilege in this school and in this nation to learn facts, to look up information and to share our ideas, our solutions for problems, and to be courteous to everyone."

"But Mrs. Fisher, my daddy says that Japs..."

"Sam, I am going to interrupt you just one more time. Class, there will be no back-and-forth discussion today. Just share a comment or a question politely."

Sam says his piece. "My dad says that those Japs...oh, yeah... those Japanese guys came over and attacked us, and now we

have to show them they can't do that. We have to wipe them off the map."

The next four or five students say pretty much the same thing.

Linda's hand goes up. Her dad has been elected to be on something called the county commission. I think he helps solve county problems, like fixing potholes and cracks in bad roads and taking care of the parks. Mom doesn't like some of his ideas very much, but Dad does.

Linda says, "My dad thinks that some Japanese living in America helped the Japanese to know when to bomb us. Maybe they're spies. Maybe they are bad people."

I fly out of my chair.

"Linda, you are saying that Flora's and Marian's parents could be spies? That they could be bad, dangerous people. You've been to birthday parties at their houses. You've eaten the special foods they've brought to school. Do you think my friend, Gordon, is a spy...your enemy? How--"

Linda stands straight up, stomps her Buster Brown shoe hard, and balls her hands into fists on her hips. But Mrs. Fisher breaks in.

"Nina, you and Linda will stay in the room for a few minutes with me when the other children go out for recess."

She turns to the rest of the class.

"Class, we will stop this sharing now. I know that more of you want a chance to say something. But for now, please take out your math books and turn to page forty-six."

There is not a happy feeling in the room...and not in me. I feel angry and want everything back the way it was before yesterday. I feel sad, too. There might be a lot of trouble coming between friends and families.

# Afterword

**THIS STORY IS BASED ON THE EXPERIENCES** of two real-life friends whose lives connected around issues of World War II. Nina and Gordon in *Two Faces* reflect our own memories of events, conversations, and people who mattered most in our lives. We also looked at saved letters, memorabilia, photographs, and talked to our family members.

In both real life and this story, Nina and Gordon were born at Mercy Hospital in Merced, a quiet farming town in the San Joaquin Valley of California. Life was carefree but everything changed for us when the winds of war blew across America from Europe.

Nina's father was a social worker for Merced County, her mother a principal in a local elementary school. Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, her father enlisted in the Army Air Corps and was sent to training camps across the country before he was eventually stationed in England.

Just like the story, Nina and her mom traveled by train to be near her father during his training before he shipped out overseas. When he left for England, they returned home to live out the war with her Grand Pop. And just like the novel, Nina's father did fall in love with another woman and left his family after the war.

Divorce was extremely rare in those days, but otherwise Nina's story is typical of millions of families whose lives were forever changed by fathers going to war. Mothers did their best to keep their families together, fed, and feeling safe.

Gordon's parents were well-known farmers in the area. His father, a Japanese immigrant, was married to an American-born daughter of Japanese parents. Because of Pearl Harbor, his family was forced from their farm and taken to an internment camp in Southeastern Colorado. His five-member family lived in a small, one-room living space (with no bathroom or kitchen) behind barbed wire fences. Camp Amache, just outside the town of Granada, Colorado, was one of ten internment camps built to imprison all Americans of Japanese heritage who lived on the West Coast.

Gordon's story dramatizes the evacuation, the humiliation of being identified as an enemy alien, and going to school surrounded by barbed-wire fences and guard towers. Both the real-life and fictional Gordon felt humiliated and embarrassed during this time.

But through it all, Nina and Gordon learned to deal with the minefield of racial prejudice and the power of fear, and together learned the meaning of friendship and the value of family.

Over the years, some memories have remained sharp and true, but others faded. Because of this we elected to write not a nonfiction memoir, but turned to creative remembering to fill in the gaps. In this we have striven to remain true and authentic to our original stories.

We did make two major changes in our combined stories. We changed our age at the beginning of the war from four years old to age ten. Also, in real life, Gordon and Nina met in high school. In *Two Faces* we meet in the second grade and are close friends by the time of Pearl Harbor. Our intent was to give fictional Nina and Gordon a richer awareness of the outside world as they struggled with growing up in an atmosphere of a world gone mad.

# About the Authors

**Nina Wolpe** taught for 20 years in the American Department of Defense base schools in Germany and Japan. During another seventeen years, she taught adult education classes in Montgomery County, Maryland, and taught in Massachusetts, Illinois and Virginia elementary schools. For two years, she taught in multinational classrooms in Nigeria. In the 1980s, she wrote a newspaper column for several Michigan papers, and has a self-published children's book titled *A Forest Of Trees Does Not Grow There In Rows*. Nina was married to the late U.S. Congressman Howard E. Wolpe and has one fabulous son, Michael Stevenson Wolpe.



**Gordon Hideaki Nagai** and his family were forcibly evacuated to an internment camp in Colorado and returned to their family-owned farm in February of 1945 before the end of the war. He graduated from the University of California with a master's degree in social welfare and served 32 years as a social worker, including two years of alternative service as a conscientious objector with the California Department of Mental Hygiene.



Gordon last worked with the Golden Gate Regional Center, which serves clients with developmental disabilities, retiring in 2000. He and his wife now live in Eugene, Oregon, close to their two children and four grandchildren.

Gordon has written eight books of puns, including *The Ultimate Book of Dad Jokes* and *Born to Pun*. You can read his blog at [journeysofabentmind.wordpress.com](http://journeysofabentmind.wordpress.com)