

NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC

IMPACT
STORY LAB

LOYAL AMERICAN

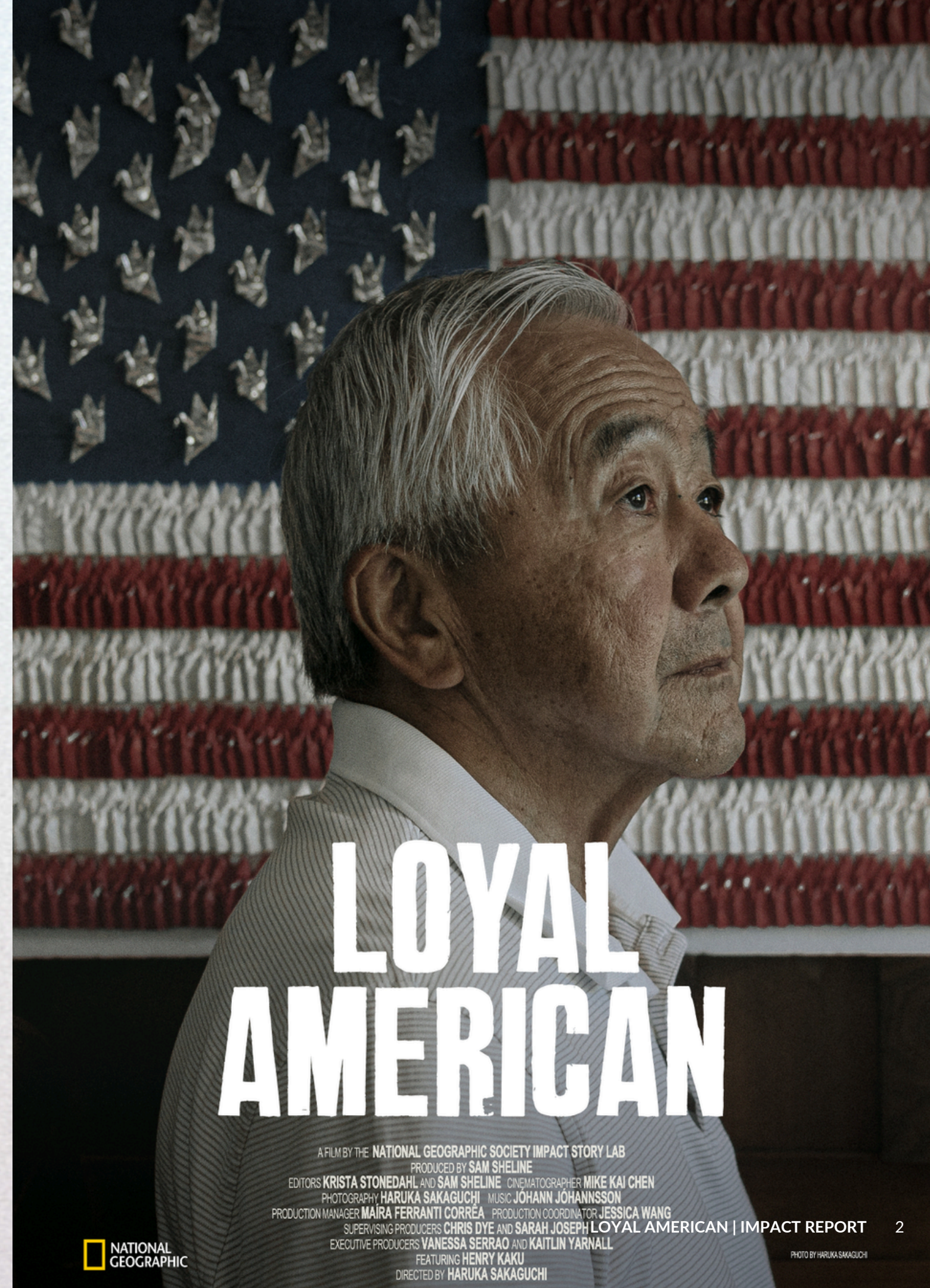
IMPACT REPORT

THE FILM

The National Geographic Impact Story Lab and Explorer Haruka Sakaguchi created the short film *Loyal American* to generate conversation and educate audiences on an important chapter of American history.

Keige Kaku, a Japanese American who had proudly served in the U.S. Army, faced these so-called “loyalty questions” after being abruptly discharged following the Pearl Harbor attacks and imprisoned in a concentration camp. Outraged by the injustice of his treatment after serving his country, Keige refused to answer the questions. His defiance led to his transfer to the Tule Lake concentration camp, where he made the life-altering decision to renounce his U.S. citizenship and was ultimately deported to Japan, where his son Henry was born. Eighty years later, Henry embarks on a pilgrimage to Tule Lake to retrace his father’s footsteps.

Directed by photographer and National Geographic Explorer Haruka Sakaguchi, and made in collaboration with the National Geographic Society’s Impact Story Lab, this short film follows Henry’s journey as he reflects on the painful choices his father faced and contemplates the question: What does it mean to be a Loyal American?



LOYAL AMERICAN

A FILM BY THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY IMPACT STORY LAB
PRODUCED BY SAM SHELINE
EDITORS KRISTA STONEDAHL AND SAM SHELINE CINEMATOGRAPHER MIKE KAI CHEN
PHOTOGRAPHY HARUKA SAKAGUCHI MUSIC JOHANN JOHANSSON
PRODUCTION MANAGER MAIRA FERRANTI CORRÊA PRODUCTION COORDINATOR JESSICA WANG
SUPERVISING PRODUCERS CHRIS DYE AND SARAH JOSEPH LOYAL AMERICAN | IMPACT REPORT
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS VANESSA SERRAO AND KAITLIN YARNALL
FEATURING HENRY KAKU
DIRECTED BY HARUKA SAKAGUCHI

THE TEAM



The Impact Story Lab is an award-winning creative unit that combines world-class storytelling with social and behavioral science in order to drive positive change for our Explorers.

COLLABORATORS

PICTURE MOTION Picture Motion develops and implements effective marketing and purpose campaigns that will maximize the power of your storytelling to ignite audience engagement and real world social change.

Picture Motion executed a grassroots screening campaign in partnership with National Geographic Society Impact Story Lab

EXPLORER SPOTLIGHT



Haruka Sakaguchi is a freelance photographer based in New York City. Her work focuses on cultural memory and intergenerational trauma.

Haruka's projects have taken her around the world, from documenting atomic bomb survivors in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to photographing former incarcerated and descendants of America's concentration camps, to making satirical portraits of Hollywood actors who get typecast in culturally stereotypical roles.

“Loyal American was created to uplift the stories of Japanese Americans whose lives were upended during World War II. As we approach the 250th anniversary of the United States of America, my hope is that the film continues to spark conversations and a commitment to safeguarding civil rights for all. I’m grateful to survivors and descendants like Henry who trusted me with their memories.”

EXPLORER AS CREATOR

Loyal American was a novel project for National Geographic Society Impact Story Lab. This project allowed for the featured Explorer to sit in the director's chair and help guide the creative vision.

Haruka Sakaguchi came to the project as a renowned photographer and journalist, with a personal connection to this story. *Loyal American* built upon her existing multimedia project *The Camps America Built*, which documents the camps today and the families who journey back to them. Through personal letters and photographs of over 80 former incarcerated and descendants, we explore a key question: what does it mean to be American?



PHOTO CREDIT: MIKE KAI CHENI

IMPACT IN NUMBERS

3000+

Views on YouTube and X viewers on Picture Motion's digital screening room

600+

Audience members at community screenings at schools, museums and more

25+

Downloads of the Loyal American lesson plan and X number of clicks to the National Geographic Society education page

3

Japanese American organizations who have used the film in their work

5

Official selections at film festivals around the country

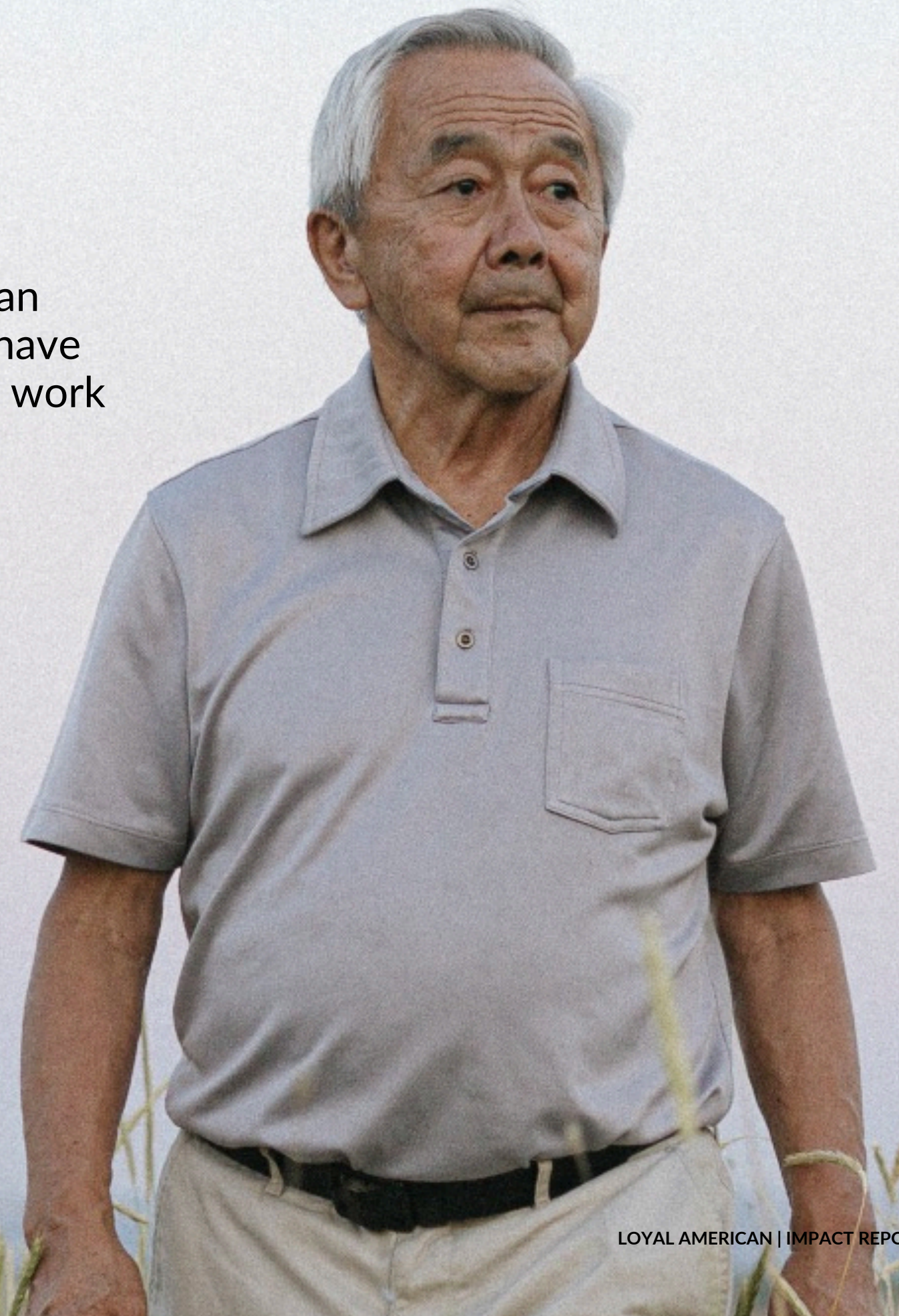


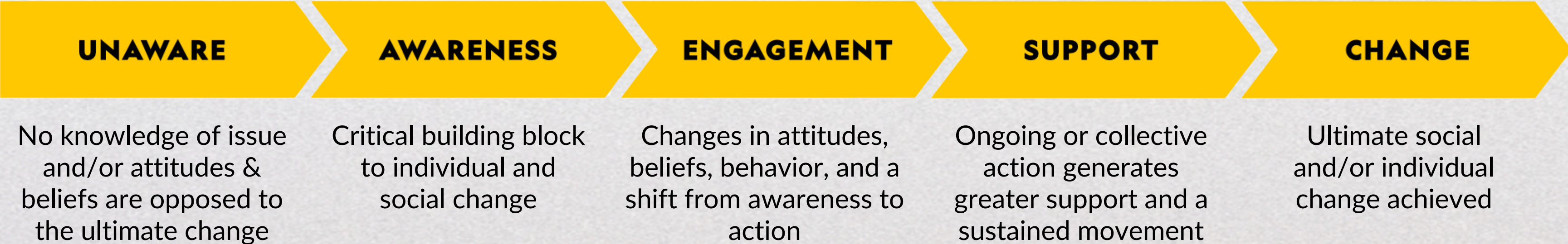
PHOTO CREDIT: HARUKA SAKAGUCHI

SCIENCE-LED IMPACT

As part of the Impact Story Lab's commitment to science-led strategies, our media projects work to move audiences and collaborators along a continuum of awareness and engagement toward becoming change-makers. This outcomes-oriented approach to storytelling is at the heart of every Impact Story Lab project.



The Impact Story Lab moves audiences along this continuum toward action.



IMPACT OVERVIEW



The impact strategy for Loyal American focused on raising awareness, education, and community building with the target audiences of students and Japanese Americans.

The campaign aimed to uplift themes from the film to educate (and remind) audiences of an important and dark time in American history. Haruka and the film were featured on National Geographic Society Education's site with educational materials and a curriculum to encourage inclusion in classrooms.

National Geographic Society Impact Story Lab partnered with Picture Motion to conduct a screening campaign aimed at Japanese American cultural institutions and organizations, with the goal of sparking dialogue and community building.

IMPACT GOALS

Leveraging this **National Geographic Society Impact Story Lab** science-led process, the film identified three core goals around which the film’s narrative and the campaign’s tactics were designed and implemented.

IMPACT GOAL 1

Educate middle and high school students about an often-overlooked part of American history through an engaging firsthand account, in order to build empathy and reduce othering of different cultures and identities.

TACTIC: Build educational materials that can easily be incorporated into a classroom and organize screenings with educators.

IMPACT GOAL 2

Generate dialog among the Japanese American community around the effects of wartime incarceration—like hyper-assimilation and cultural amnesia—by telling a universal story of resilience in the face of intergenerational trauma.

TACTIC: Screening the film with Japanese American community organizations and connecting the film to Haruka Sakaguchi’s bigger *Camps in America* project.

PICTURE MOTION CAMPAIGN

In support of *Loyal American*, Picture Motion designed a targeted impact campaign to extend the film's reach through **educational and community engagement**. Beginning May 2025, the campaign connected educators, nonprofits, and cultural institutions with the film and its discussion resources, including the lesson plan, resource directory, and Haruka Sakaguchi's project materials.

Through direct outreach and digital promotion, Picture Motion engaged with:

- **Schools & Libraries:** Reached high school and college educators in history, social studies, civics, and Asian American studies, with an emphasis on communities outside major urban centers.
- **Teacher Associations:** Partnered with national networks to share resources and promote the film across newsletters, social media, and professional communities.
- **Cultural & Civic Organizations:** Collaborated with museums, historical societies, and groups such as the Japanese American Citizens League and the Japanese American National Museum to host screenings and discussions.



CAMPAIGN GOALS

- **Increase Awareness and Engagement:** Promote *Loyal American* through grassroots and educational screenings, digital access, and community events to encourage viewing and reflection on Japanese American incarceration during WWII.
- **Facilitate Screenings and Discussions:** Support partner organizations in hosting screenings for their communities, including arranging post-screening Q&As or guided discussions with the filmmaker or subject matter experts.
- **Target Key Audiences:** Identify and engage diverse audiences—including educators, students, cultural institutions, and advocacy organizations—to drive organic support, participation, and dialogue around the film.
- **Provide Educational Resources:** Distribute the Discussion Guide, Resource Directory, and lesson plans with actionable prompts to foster meaningful post-screening conversations and civic reflection.
- **Leverage Community Networks:** Collaborate with national and local organizations to extend the film's impact, encouraging audience members to take action, engage in historical reflection, and support civic learning initiatives.

**PICTURE
MOTION**

CAMPAIGN RESOURCES

Resources were created to increase the impact of the film and make it an easy tool for educators and organizations to bake into their work. This included a Picture Motion created Toolkits, *The Camps America Built* lesson plan ([link](#)), and a private branded screening room for *Loyal American*. Each resource was designed to maximize outreach, support meaningful conversations, and amplify the film's themes of resilience, civic reflection, and historical understanding.

The screenshot shows the National Geographic website for the film 'Loyal American'. At the top left is the National Geographic logo. To its right are navigation links for 'Loyal American - Home' and 'Loyal American - Watch', and a 'Log in' button with a user icon. Below the navigation is a large video player showing a man in profile looking at an American flag, with the title 'LOYAL AMERICAN' overlaid in large white letters. To the right of the video player is the title 'Loyal American' in bold, followed by a paragraph of text: 'After Pearl Harbor, Keige Kaku was discharged from the U.S. Army, imprisoned in a Japanese concentration camp, or so-called "internment camp", and deported. Eighty years later, Keige's son Henry retraces his father's footsteps to confront the question: What does it mean to be a Loyal American?'. Below this is another paragraph: '*Loyal American* is a short film by the National Geographic Society Impact Story Lab and photographer and National Geographic Explorer Haruka Sakaguchi.' At the bottom of this section is a yellow button labeled 'WATCH NOW'. Below the video player and text is a section titled 'ADDITIONAL RESOURCES' with three columns. The first column has a thumbnail of hands holding a small white object, with text: 'Teach the film with educational materials and lesson plans, visit the camps, explore the Camps America Built photo project, and more.' Below this is a yellow button labeled 'TAKE ACTION'. The second column has a thumbnail of a woman's face, with text: 'Visit Haruka Sakaguchi's Explorer Profile to learn more about Henry's story and the history of WWII.' Below this is a yellow button labeled 'EXPLORER PROFILE'. The third column has a thumbnail of a gazelle, with text: 'ISL is an award-winning creative unit that combines world-class storytelling with social and behavioral science to drive positive change for our Explorers.' Below this is a yellow button labeled 'IMPACT STORY LAB'.

The screenshot shows a video player for the film 'Loyal American'. The video player has a dark background with a play button in the center. Above the video player is a title bar with the text 'Loyal American: Revealing the lasting impact of Japanese Incarcerat...' and a 'Copy link' button. Below the video player is a large white title 'LOYAL AMERICAN' and a 'Watch on YouTube' button. To the right of the video player is a section titled 'WATCH THE FILM' with a paragraph of text: 'Haruka met Henry Kaku, a descendant of the camps, while developing *The Camps America Built* project. Henry's story inspired *Loyal American*, a short film made in partnership with the National Geographic Society Impact Story Lab, that explores the history of Japanese American concentration camps through Henry's father's imprisonment. Eighty years later, Henry retraces his father's footsteps to confront the question: What does it mean to be a Loyal American?'. Below this text are three buttons: 'TEACH THE FILM', 'VISIT THE CAMPS', and 'DONATE'.

SCREENINGS

The film was screened to fellow storytellers via networks like ADoc and The Nonfiction hotline, to educators at institutes like The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, to students at middle and high school, and to the Japanese American community through organizations like the Japanese American Citizens League.



States in the U.S. Reached



Total Cities Reached



National Screening Events



International School
Los Angeles
Lycée International



SCREENING SPOTLIGHTS

VIRTUAL SCREENING: GILDER LEHRMAN INSTITUTE

VIRTUAL | 47 ATTENDEES | JULY 20-24, 2025

The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History partnered with *Loyal American* to host a special virtual screening during their WWII and Great Depression teaching seminar, held **July 20–24, 2025**. A private screening window was made available from **July 1–31, 2025**, allowing the **~47 participating educators** to engage with the film as part of their professional development experience. The screening created space for educators to deepen their historical understanding and explore how the film can serve as a teaching tool in the classroom. Picture Motion supported this partnership through strategic outreach and coordination, ensuring seamless access to the film and its accompanying educational resources.



SCREENING SPOTLIGHTS

EXCLUSIVE SCREENING: GLOBAL PEACE FILM FESTIVAL

IN-PERSON | 94 ATTENDEES | SEPTEMBER 18, 2025

Loyal American was an official selection of the Global Peace Film Festival in Orlando, FL, held September 16–21, 2025. The screening drew 94 attendees, including 70 students, highlighting the film’s resonance with younger audiences. Among those present was the Mayor’s Senior Special Assistant and Liaison to Orange County’s AAPI community, who expressed deep appreciation for the film’s message. Audience feedback underscored the film’s emotional power, with one festival attendee reflecting:



Global Peace Film Festival 2025

Sept 18. 5:00pm
Tickets on sale now
peacefilmfestival.org



Rollins College Bush Auditorium

SCREENING SPOTLIGHTS

EXCLUSIVE SCREENING: INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF LOS ANGELES

VIRTUAL | 65 ATTENDEES | SEPTEMBER 15-17, 2024

Loyal American was screened at the **International School of Los Angeles** from **September 15–17, 2025**, with approximately **65 students and faculty in attendance**. Following the screenings, **Haruka** joined a **virtual discussion with** students on **September 26**, offering additional context and insights that enriched the classroom experience. This event not only introduced the film to new audiences but also reinforced the educational mission of *Loyal American And The Camps America Built*, fostering deeper engagement and classroom dialogue.



**International
School**
Los Angeles
**Lycée
International**

“ Again, thank you so much for your time this morning. I have had a chance to debrief with some of the students, and they loved hearing your perspective and have already brought up some of the things you said in class. Your projects have provided a fantastic new perspective into our unit and have elevated the students' experience.”

— TEACHER, INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF LOS ANGELES

SCREENING SPOTLIGHTS

VIRTUAL SCREENING: ASIAN AMERICAN DOCUMENTARY NETWORK

VIRTUAL | 3,000+ SUBSCRIBERS | SEPTEMBER 20-30, 2024

Loyal American was featured in the **Nonfiction Hotlist** screening window from **September 20 – 30, 2025**. The campaign generated strong digital engagement, with over **3,500 email opens** from their industry-facing list, alongside multiple Instagram reposts that amplified visibility among filmmakers, producers, and executives.

The **Nonfiction Hotlist** is a collective of acclaimed nonfiction storytellers, producers, and executives. It was created to spotlight exceptional nonfiction projects that deserve greater attention and support. By curating and amplifying a vetted list of films, the Hotlist ensures powerful stories like *Loyal American* reach champions who can help bring them to broader audiences.

Picture Motion supported this collaboration through targeted coordination and promotion, ensuring the film's presence resonated across both educational and industry communities.



the nonfiction hotlist.

SCREENING SPOTLIGHTS

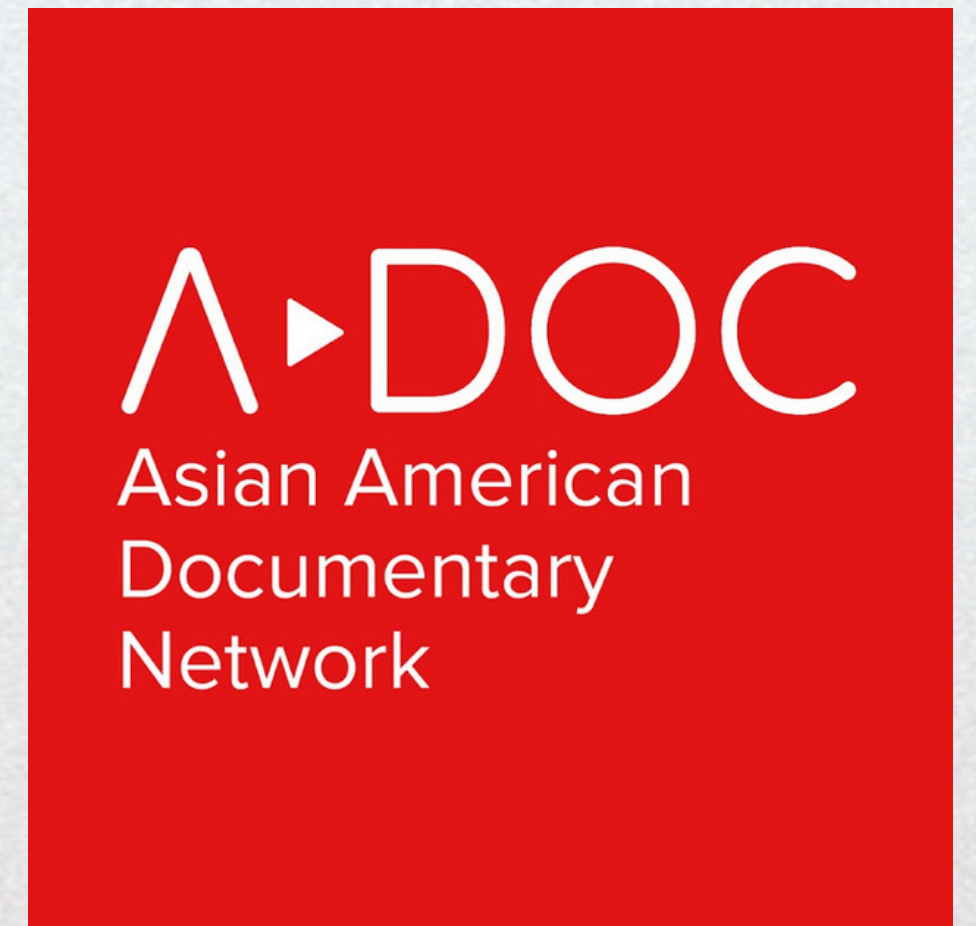
VIRTUAL SCREENING: ASIAN AMERICAN DOCUMENTARY NETWORK

VIRTUAL | 1,874 MEMBERS | SEPTEMBER 1-30, 2025

Loyal American was screened for the **Asian American Documentary Network (A-Doc)** from **September 1–30, 2025**, further expanding the film’s reach within the Asian American documentary community. The partnership highlighted the film as part of A-Doc’s mission to amplify visibility and provide resources for Asian American voices in nonfiction storytelling.

A-Doc is a **national, multi-generational network of Asian American documentary filmmakers** committed to building equity and diversity in the field. Through resource sharing, mentorship, and advocacy, A-Doc strengthens the presence of Asian American storytellers and ensures their work is seen and supported.

By spotlighting *Loyal American* within this screening window, A-Doc fostered dialogue around representation, resilience, and history, aligning the film’s themes with their ongoing efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable documentary landscape.

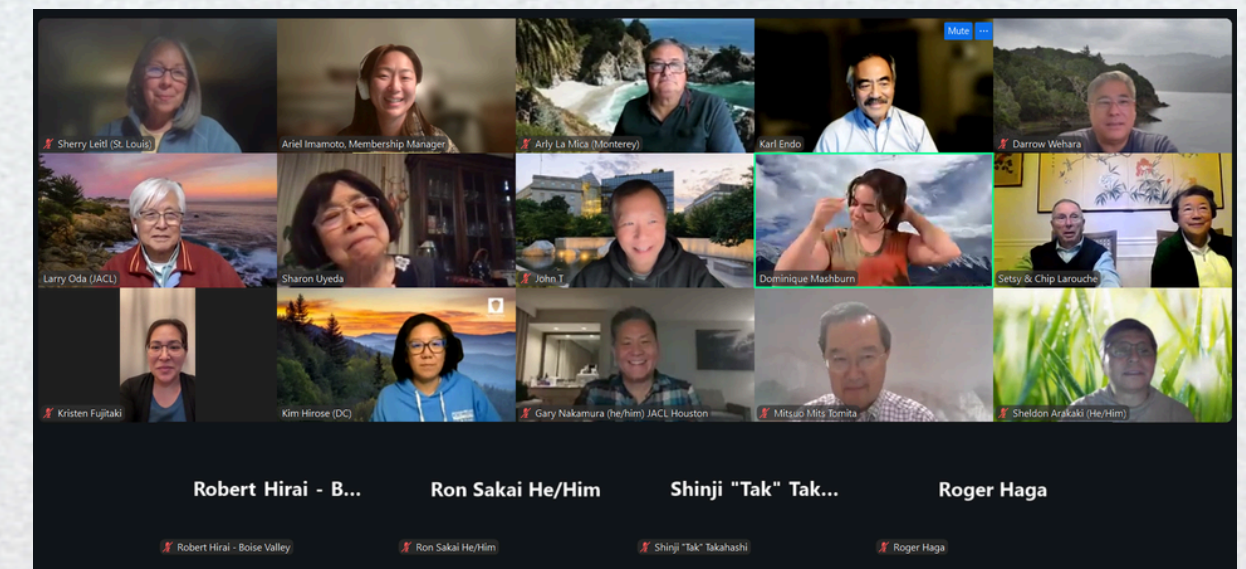


SCREENING SPOTLIGHTS

VIRTUAL SCREENING: JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE | NATIONAL VIRTUAL | 50 MEMBERS | JANUARY 17, 2026

The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) is the nation's oldest and largest Asian American civil rights organization, founded in 1929 to advance and protect the civil and human rights of Japanese Americans and all communities impacted by injustice. As a national organization, JACL leads advocacy, education, and community empowerment efforts grounded in a long legacy of redress and civic engagement.

Loyal American partnered with the **JACL National Chapter** through a dedicated screening initiative from **January 17th, 2026**, expanding the film's reach within Japanese American and broader Asian American communities. The collaboration underscored JACL's mission to elevate historical truth, confront injustice, and support storytelling that preserves memory and advances equity



“ We first showed it at our Monday night committee meeting and everyone enjoyed the film. It was extremely powerful. I will make sure a reminder goes out to complete the survey afterward.”

— ARIEL IMAMOTO, HOST

SCREENING SPOTLIGHTS

VIRTUAL SCREENING: JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE | SAN DIEGO

VIRTUAL | 40 MEMBERS | MARCH 11, 2026

The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) San Diego Chapter gathered community members on **March 11** at the San Diego Public Library for a collective screening of *Loyal American*, creating space for reflection, dialogue, and shared remembrance. As part of JACL's long standing commitment to civil rights, education, and historical accountability, the event connected local audiences to the lived experiences and legacy explored in the film.

The screening was part of *Loyal American's* broader partnership with the JACL, and underscored the organization's mission to elevate historical truth, confront injustice, and preserve memory through storytelling. By bringing the film into a public, community-centered setting, the JACL San Diego Chapter fostered meaningful engagement around Japanese American history and its continued relevance today.



“ This screening inspired me to keep writing about my family's history in incarceration camps.

— ATTENDEE

STRATEGIC PARTNERS

Picture Motion engaged national organizations and regional partners with wide student and educator reach for this campaign.

While some groups were unable to host a screening, several committed to supporting the campaign by sharing the theatrical tour and film with their internal teams and broader communities through email and social media.

[See the full list here.](#)



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
**CENTER FOR
EAST ASIAN STUDIES**



SURVEY SNAPSHOTS

“This film further made me understand what it was like to be a Japanese-American in the internment camps and I also had a further understanding on what is like to be treated with such injustice and intolerance.”

– STUDENT, INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF LOS ANGELES

Growing up Japanese-American, I knew history from what was taught in school, and bits and pieces I have heard from my family members. I have not had direct family members who were incarcerated but were friends with those whose families were... I continue to increase my gratitude and empathy for those who came before me and paved the way for my generation to live in a more welcoming world.

**– AUDIENCE MEMBER,
JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE**

I liked how the video showed a personal experience so we could get the perspective of how a Japanese was treated and how they felt. I feel like having someone who was actually going through this would give me more information and educate me better. I also want to share how I toured to Pearl Harbor in October and I was talking to my grandma the other day about her experience, since she was born in 1944, to see if there was anything interesting that she experienced and witnessed.”

– STUDENT, INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF LOS ANGELES

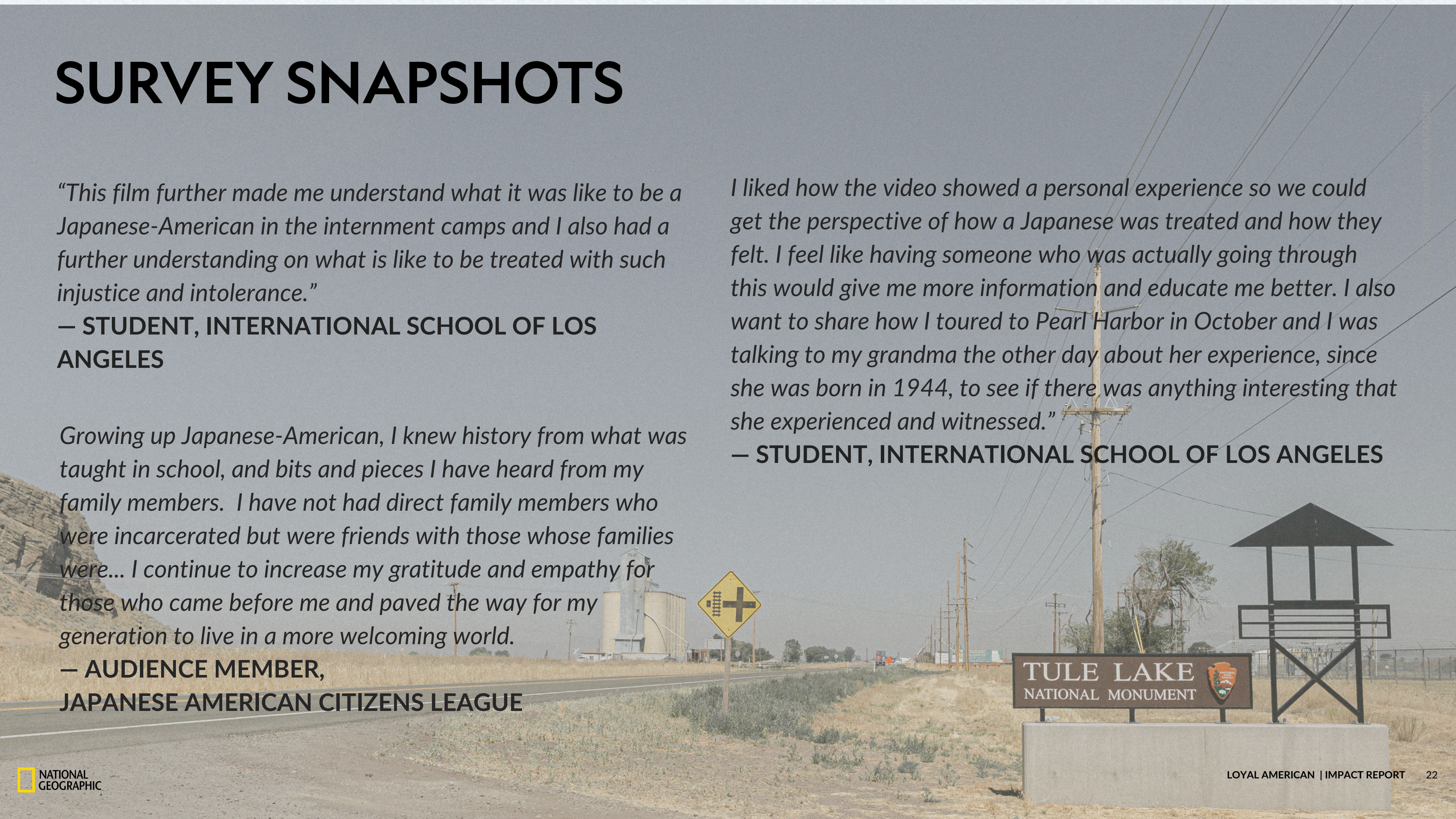


PHOTO: JACOB KUCH



IMPACT
STORY LAB

THANK YOU

To learn more and follow ISL's future projects please visit
www.natgeo.org/impactstorylab

