

"...sheds light on a vital piece of American history..." - Matt Fagerholm
RogerEbert.com



"I was so moved by this story from the first images to the end." - Steven Poster, ASC

A man in a military uniform is kneeling in a field of tall grass. He is holding a rifle vertically in front of him, with his hands clasped around the barrel. The background is a soft-focus field of tall grass under natural light.

nisei

written and directed by
DARREN HARUO RAE

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION
Best Live Action Short Film - 96th Academy Awards®

PRESS KIT

LOGLINE

'Nisei' (2nd generation) follows the journey of two brothers through WWII, Minoru and John Miyasaki, who are stripped of citizenship, imprisoned, but still volunteer to join the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, an all Japanese-American regiment and the most medaled unit in the history of the US military. Torn between country and family, they must face the enemy overseas along with adversity back home.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Title	Nisei
Genre	Action/Drama
Language	English
Country of Production	United States
Director/Screenwriter	Darren Haruo Rae
Cast	Jonathan Tanigaki, Brent Yoshida Shiro Kawai, Darin Cooper
Production Company	Roann Films
Producers	Jessica Olthof, Nick Martinez
Completion	2023
Running Time	20 min 38 sec (including credits)
Screen Ratio	1:85:1
Format	4k 5.1 mix



In the 1920s, my great grandfather immigrated to the Pacific Northwest. Wanting a better life, he left Japan and started a family in America. Little did he know, war was on the horizon and that my family's fate was forever changed.

My grandfather, born and raised in America, was placed in an internment camp along with the rest of my family. Without hesitation, he volunteered for the Army, prepared to sacrifice his life for the very country that betrayed him.

As a kid, I would listen to his stories, not fully comprehending what it meant to be Japanese-American during WWII. It wasn't until I got older that I realized the horrors and sacrifice that an entire generation went through.

THE STORY

Many people don't know about the internment camps. At most, it was a paragraph in a history textbook in school.

My film is not only meant as a reminder of America's atrocities, but also a celebration of the Japanese-American community. To continue to fight, even when everyone has turned their back on you. To be proud of who you are.

I am fortunate to be able to make films for a living, but with that comes great responsibility. My film gives a voice to people that need to be heard. It champions the stories that I grew up with and introduces it to new audiences.

The story is about my family, but it is more than that. It represents the Japanese-American community and shows the world of our bravery and resilience.

- Darren Hauro Rae



AWARDS & ACHIEVEMENTS

(April-October 2023)

KEY AWARDS

GRAND JURY PRIZE FOR BEST NARRATIVE DRAMATIC SHORT

Cinequest International Film Festival

BEST DRAMA SHORT

Poppy Jasper International Film Festival

AUDIENCE CHOICE FOR BEST DRAMA SHORT

Poppy Jasper International Film Festival

GRAND JURY PRIZE FOR BEST SHORT

Highland Park Film Festival

EMERGING CINEMATOGRAPHER AWARDS

The International Cinematographers Guild

2023 Honoree - Connor Van Bodell

KEY OFFICIAL SELECTIONS

Indy Shorts International Film Festival

LA Shorts International Film Festival

Newport Beach Film Fest

HollyShorts Film Festival

Catalina Film Festival

Milan Shorts Film Festival

Silicon Valley Asian Pacific FilmFest

New York Japan Cinefest



Q & A WITH FILMMAKER DARREN HARUO RAE

1. IS THERE ANY TYPE OF MESSAGE OR EMOTION THAT YOU HOPE THE VIEWER TAKES AWAY FROM WATCHING THIS FILM?

I hope when people watch our film, they will feel a sense of pride. That even through adversity, good people can still prevail. It is important to look at these stories of the past and learn from them. Understanding the past means we won't make the same mistakes in the future

2. WERE THERE ANY CHALLENGES IN MAKING THIS PROJECT?

Our film is a period piece, so right away there were a lot of logistical challenges. Finding a 1940s bus, locations, WWII uniforms, and period-correct weapons was ambitious to fit within our small budget. It was our responsibility to put in the effort and research to justly portray this time period and community to the best of our abilities, with the resources we had.

3. WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START MAKING FILMS?

My inspiration to make films came from my father. He had a huge laserdisc collection when I was a kid and some of my fondest memories are of us sitting down and watching movies. He taught me the importance of storytelling and the power a film can hold. It wasn't just watching to escape, it was a way to challenge myself, to ask hard questions, and to face unpleasant truths. Now, as a filmmaker, I hope to channel the same values and morals that he taught me from the first time I sat down to watch a film.



T E A M



DARREN HARUO RAE

Writer + Director

Instagram: @darrenhrae

Darren Haruo Rae, a Japanese-American producer/director based in Los Angeles, co-founded the boutique production company Roann Films.

Rae's directorial debut, *Park Arcadia*, garnered Best Screenplay at the 2014 International Film Festival Cinematic Arts in Los Angeles. His latest film, *Nisei*, inspired by his Japanese-American grandfather's WWII experiences in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, earned Best Drama and Audience Choice at the 2023 Poppy Jasper Film Festival and continues its festival circuit, screening at Indy Shorts by Heartland Film, LA Shorts International Film Festival, HollyShorts Film Festival, and Cinequest Film Festival.

Currently, Rae is the series producer for the MasterClass G.O.A.T. Original Series and is producing the feature film *Surrender*, starring Andrea Bang. *Surrender* was selected as one of Film Independent's Fast Track fellowship program's top 10 narrative fiction features and is slated for production in 2023.



JESSICA OLT Hof

Producer

Instagram: @jessicaolthof

Jessica Olthof, a versatile producer based in Los Angeles, began her career as a camera assistant before transitioning to the production space and ultimately producing. In the past five years, she has coordinated over ten feature films, including *Palm Springs*, starring Andy Samberg and JK Simmons, and *The Starling*, directed by Ted Melfi and featuring Melissa McCarthy, Chris O'Dowd, and Kevin Kline. Her portfolio also includes *LA Units for Next Goal Wins*, *The Banker*, *Voyagers*, *Molly's Game*, and *Greenland*.

In 2023, Olthof produced the award-winning short film *Nisei*, which claimed Best Drama & Audience Choice at the Poppy Jasper Film Festival and screened at Indy Shorts by Heartland Film, LA Shorts International Film Festival, HollyShorts Film Festival, and Cinequest Film Festival. She is currently producing her first feature film, *Surrender*, starring Andrea Bang from *Kim's Convenience*, with support from Film Independent and The Gotham Film & Media Institute. A passionate advocate for gender equality in the industry, Jessica is an active member of Women in Film.

T E A M

NICK MARTINEZ

Producer

Instagram: @nickmartinez00

Nick Martinez began his career producing independent features in the Bay Area. He produced twelve feature films that received distribution on Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Hulu.

After moving to Los Angeles, Martinez has been directing narrative films and commercials. His ability to combine high-end action with serious drama recently won him "Best Direction" at Los Angeles Indie Film Festival for his film "American Muscle." His latest work is an adaptation of John Steinbeck's "Breakfast" from the Long Valley. His commercial clients include Cisco Systems, Airbnb, Uplift, and Western Digital.

BARNABY DALLAS

Executive Producer

Instagram: @barnabydallas

Barnaby Dallas is the Director of Production for Film and Theatre at San José State University, the Director of Film Production for Spartan Film Studios. He also teaches screenwriting and story development for DreamWorks Animation and is a consultant with Nine Yards Entertainment.



PRINCIPAL CAST



JONATHAN TANIGAKI

Role: Minoru Miyasaki

Instagram: @jonathantanigaki

Jonathan Tanigaki was born in New Jersey outside of New York City, the son of a Japanese father and Taiwanese mother. Recognizing his boundless energy, his sister unknowingly signed him up for a high school musical his Freshman year. He immediately fell in love with acting. In his senior year in high school, he was nominated for his acting abilities and as a Rising Star at the renowned Paper Mill Playhouse. He continued his study at the American Musical and Dramatic Academy in New York and graduated in 2017. He recently appeared on NCIS Hawaii as a guest star showcasing his dramatic acting range.



BRENT YOSHIDA

Role: John Miyasaki

Instagram: @brentyoshida

Brent Yoshida is an actor driven by experiences, creativity and individuals of various backgrounds uniting for a common goal. He hopes to encourage others to discover their unique path and pursue their biggest dreams. From the age of five, Brent unknowingly took his first steps towards an acting career by participating in various programs including martial arts, school theater and piano.

In November of 2018, Yoshida followed his heart and went into acting full-time. He is a versatile actor who looks forward to collaborating to share captivating stories.

PRINCIPAL CAST



SHIRO KAWAI

Role: Jinkichi Miyasaki

Instagram: @shiro.kawai

Shiro Kawai a freelance programmer and actor known for *Go for Broke* (2018), *Under the Blood-Red Sun* (2014) and *Running for Grace* (2018). He was fascinated by programming a hand-made Z80 board computer when he was a kid, and fell in love with acting while in the high-school drama club. After finishing his graduate degree in Tokyo, Shiro moved to the US to work as a programmer on projects such as the video game series *Final Fantasy*, and the full-CG film "*Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*".

Alongside the programming, he takes acting classes and auditions, and has appeared in films and on stage.



DARIN COOPER

Role: M.P. Tony

Instagram: @darincooper_official

Darin Cooper was born in the rural town of Oakley, Kansas. He attended Fort Hays State University before transferring as a senior and graduating from Kansas State University with a Bachelor's of Fine Arts degree. He immediately moved to Los Angeles and began a career in graphic design. Bored with working in offices, Cooper attended a commercial workshop and quickly picked up an agent. Not able to get off for auditions he quit designing and became a bartender on the Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica for most of the 1990's. From 1993-1997 he diligently studied with the legendary acting teacher, Larry Moss. He has been working consistently since his first role on *J.A.G.* as a young Terry O'Quinn and in film such as *Gone Girl*, *Ford v. Ferrari*, and *The Social Network*.

KEY PRODUCTION CREDITS

CREW

written and directed by DARREN HARUO RAE
 produced by JESSICA OLTHOF & NICK MARTINEZ
 executive producer BARNABY DALLAS
 director of photography CONNOR BODELL
 production designers ANDREA BECHERT & JOHN YORK
 original score by YUICHIRO "SIXTWO" OKU
 edited by CALEB WHEELER
 costume designer RACHEL DAGDAGAN
 sound design by NICK BOZZONE
 hair and makeup ELIZABETH FOX & JOSIE RODRIGUEZ

CAST

Minoru Miyasaki JONATHAN TANIGAKI
 John Miyasaki BRENT YOSHIDA
 Jinkichi Miyasaki SHIRO KAWAI
 Jimmy Tanaka JABEZ SKY ARMODIA
 Kenny Amano ALFRED HSING
 Sgt. Kenji Suzuki JASON JIA
 Nakamura JASON LOY
 Private Hall MATT MCTIGHE
 Harry Miyasaki HUDSON NARUO
 Little Girl MILA SHELTER
 M.P Tony DARIN COOPER
 Bus Driver MATT KAUFMAN

CONTACT

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SUPPORT



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