

Closing the Gap

When we meet someone, often the relationship takes time to develop because our first impressions, where we are, what we're doing, and how we behave combine to create a shallow representation of each of us. What we see of each other in that moment is only one "story" of each person. Wouldn't it be wonderful to know multiple stories about people we're with so we have a truer picture? It would open up a deeper understanding and expand relationships beyond initial judgements and perceptions we might have.

George Takei, a Japanese American, was once viewed as having only one story. You might recognize him now as Mr. Sulu in the original Star Trek (his whole insightful story can be found here on [Ted Talks](#)) but when he was five years old and living in the U.S., being Japanese American was the only story that mattered for him and all Japanese Americans living here. When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and hysteria fell upon our country, the U.S. President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, rounded up all of the Japanese Americans and sent them off to prison camps in 10 different desolate locations in the United States without any due process of law. They were not able to take any of their valuables and lost everything.

This single story also did not allow any Japanese Americans to fight for our country when they first tried to enlist. Later, when more soldiers were needed, all enlisting Japanese Americans were put in one military unit called the 442nd and a second story began for them....

The Germans had secured a large hill and had been keeping the allies at bay for six months when the 442nd was called to help. These brave, patriotic soldiers scaled the back of the cliff, a sheer rock face 1000 feet high, with some falling to their death during the night climb. They were able, however, to take the hill and unsuspecting Germans in 32 minutes at sunrise. The 442nd, all Japanese Americans, were the most decorated and honored division during the war, each with more than one story to define them.

Today, there are many immigrants in the world who are viewed as having only one story. Considering the fact that our country was built and made strong by immigrants living in and contributing to our communities, don't they have the right to more than one story?

When we allow a second, third, fourth, and fifth story, we are offered a much fuller reality about people. By opening our hearts and minds to others, we cease to be confined by whatever story is presented in the moment.

If we all look for more depth in our relationships by listening as well as sharing (don't we also have more than one story?), we make our world a little smaller, a little closer, and a little more connected.

