



# *The Nuacht of Baltimore*

## **Americans Of Japanese Heritage At Goucher College In Baltimore**

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By Richard McDonough  
Civic Journalist



This is the former Bennett Hall and Annex at Goucher College. Located at 2300 Saint Paul Street in Baltimore, the structure is now known as the “Weaver Building” and serves as the headquarters of the Maryland Geological Survey.

(The photograph is the public domain and was provided courtesy of Eli Pousson, December 4, 2017.)

The United States of America has acted in ways unbecoming through the years. Against a wide range of ethnicities, races, and faiths, among other groupings. One of these times was during the 1940s. The Federal government imprisoned approximately 112,000 Americans of Japanese heritage at that time. Most stayed in prison for approximately three years. Two-thirds of the individuals incarcerated were American citizens. None of the individuals had been charged with any crimes. None were individually suspected of any crimes.

No, they were imprisoned because the Federal government considered them a threat to our country. Most elected officials endorsed the incarcerations. Few leaders spoke out against the actions of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The U S Supreme Court ruled that it was constitutional for the Federal government to take the freedom of these individual people.

The vast majority of those “relocated” – Federal-government-speak for imprisonment – were living in four western states: Arizona, California, Oregon, and Washington State. While a number of Japanese Americans in Eastern States were able to avoid imprisonment, they could not escape the overall climate of the times.

Fear, prejudice, discrimination, and hatred had coalesced into actions considered perfectly legal to deny Americans the liberties enshrined in the U S Constitution.

Africans Americans know that experience.

Among those that stood against this evil was Goucher College, then located in what is today known as the “Old Goucher Neighborhood” in Baltimore.

Three Japanese American women were able to come to Baltimore to get an education.

### **Eiko Oshima**

Eiko Oshima came to Baltimore from Hilo, Hawaii. She had been born in that American territory (Hawaii was not yet a state) in 1923. As a child, she was recognized as an accomplished pianist. She studied at Goucher College for two years from 1941 through 1943. Miss Oshima then went to further study music at the Julliard School of Music in New York City.

She moved back to Hawaii and then married Nelson Doi, a Hawaii County Deputy Attorney, in 1949. Together, they raised two children. As Mrs. Doi, she continued to enhance her skills as a pianist and worked as a school teacher. Nelson Doi became a prominent political leader, eventually serving as Lt. Governor of Hawaii from 1974 to 1978.

Eiko Oshima Doi died at the age of 86 years in 2010.

### **Mitsuko Takami**

When Mitsuko Takami came to Baltimore, she had already been honored by the Brooklyn Friends School for her tennis and basketball athletic activities. At Goucher College, she continued participating in sports in field hockey. She was a daughter of Dr. Toyohiko Takami. He was the founder of the Japanese Mutual Aid Society, an organization that evolved into The Japanese American Association of New York (JAANY). According to the JAANY, Dr. Takami was a key leader of Japanese Americans.

She was a member of the Class of 1943 at Goucher College. Miss Takami returned to New York where she married Roy Kurahara. He had been born in California, and lived in New York for years. Her husband died at age 44 in 1968.

Mitsuko Takami Kurahara died at 89 years of age in 2011.

### **Gloria Teru Noda**

Gloria Teru Noda was the third Japanese American student at Goucher College. She was born in 1924, and came to Baltimore from Long Island in New York. Miss Noda attended school here beginning 1942 and graduated in 1945. She married Mr. Yamaoka (unsure of his first name) and they raised three children. According to a statement from Florence Drafts Mann in 1987, Mrs. Yamaoka "...was a designer's representative for *Vogue*, Bill Blass, and Harvey Nichols, wrote for the *Herald Tribune*, and had her own agency...[She was well known] in the fashion worlds of Tokyo and New York."

Gloria Teru Noda Yamaoka died at the age of 62 in 1986.

## Summary

Leadership comes in many forms. In the early 1940s – when it was not popular, when it was not acceptable for many – Goucher College in Baltimore stood for justice.

It's a lesson that many could find worthwhile today. Do your best. Stand for justice. Help all those striving to make this a more perfect union.

*The Nuacht of Baltimore* is a news column that details life and activities in Baltimore. (“Nuacht” is “News” in Irish.)

Please contact Richard McDonough at [newsaboutamerica@gmx.us](mailto:newsaboutamerica@gmx.us).

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