

# Miye Nakashima: A President's Plight

*By Ronny Liu*

Before Miye Nakashima ever came to UCLA, she didn't want to. She wanted to avoid becoming a shadow of her father, Martin, who had attended UCLA in his youth. Growing up in Walnut, California, Miye's developing worldview was heavily influenced by her father. The suburban city, located in Eastern Los Angeles, was rated one of Money magazine's top 50 places to live in America in 2013.<sup>1</sup> The magazine described the Walnut community as "a diverse and affluent suburb." Neither of those words could be used to describe where Miye's father grew up.

Martin Nakashima was raised in Inglewood, California. In many ways, Inglewood is a polar reflection of Walnut. Inglewood is home to above average crime rates and is a hub for numerous gang related activities. Demographically, Miye's father belonged to the super-minority. The 2010 U.S. Census reported a mere 1.4% of Inglewood's population as Asian.<sup>2</sup> Undoubtedly, it was daunting to grow up in such an environment where a minority status meant being subject to prejudice. This upbringing lead to a general distrust of people; Martin always saw the bad before the good. Growing up, Miye was exposed to her father's perception of people, and she dreaded the thought of becoming close-minded and judgmental of people.

Anyone who's ever met Miye would tell you that she is a pragmatist, someone who doesn't blindly believe all the world is kind. In her younger years, Miye developed a strong distrust of people. She attributed this partly to her father, who formulated a disdainful view of the world through his experiences growing up.

"I believed that if you show any weakness, [people] are going to destroy you."

In other words, she wholeheartedly believed that people suck.

While Miye's adolescent period had its ups and downs, it was not without some laughter. In her early schooling days, she was one of those kids who would be cracking jokes and offering comedic relief among her friends. But back at home, things weren't always dandy. Her brother and father would fight, and Miye became witness to an unsettling feud. When she tried to confide in her friends, Miye quickly realized that they were there simply for the good times, but didn't wish to dabble in more serious matters. This created rifts in her early friendships.

So, as kids are wont to do, Miye turned to extracurricular activities for a form of release. Ballet was her hobby of choice, and her ballet teacher became a mentor figure.

"He was crazy in a good way. He made me feel confident."

After a period of time, Miye's ballet teacher became hard to deal with. He had personal issues that translated to his personality, making him unpleasant to be around. So Miye quit, and sought another teacher.

A number of people are aware of the fact that Miye participated in ballet activities for a number of years. However, most people don't realize that up until she joined Alpha Phi Omega and had to dance for Airband, Miye hadn't danced for a very long time. This was due to her experiences

with the new ballet teacher, who embraced a gritty, tough style of teaching. The teacher would constantly yell at Miye and make unpleasant remarks. Miye felt ashamed and began to resent her teacher.

“To this day, I can’t watch myself dance. I see it through my teacher’s eyes.”

Miye subsequently took up other hobbies, such as piano. For her, it became an accidental way of expressing herself. She began composing her own music. In high school, Miye would take up martial arts, which granted her physical release as well as emotional release from the rigors of life. All of it was purely busywork. The mind is prone to wandering if left idle too long.

Now in her third year at UCLA, Miye has learned much about herself, and continues to learn more. Despite whatever first impression you may have formed of Miye, underneath the lingering thick skin she is just another human being. She has sad moments, and she has happy moments. During Alpha Kappa term, Miye watched a Digimon movie with her pbros.

“For some reason, I just really got into it.”

Miye got so into it that she watched the first season of the Digimon series the following summer with Rachel Belyea and Brian Martin. As Miye recounted, they were very touched by it.

“Afterward, we just kind of sat outside and soaked in a bittersweet and nostalgic sadness.”

At a party one night, I thought I saw someone I recognized at the other end of the room. I curiously glanced over to see a girl seated in a chair, casually doing math homework. It was none other than Miye. This is the same girl who once pulled out a Dostoevsky novel during downtime at a rush event.

For Miye, reading is much more than the mundane, assigned task that most college students abhor. For her, it’s about gaining perspective. In particular, the symbolism attached to literature draws Miye in. When asked why she likes to read, she responded with the notion that the words mean something, that the dialogues and the actions are full of substance. She perceives that in the real world, people don’t attach much meaning to things anymore. People can randomly throw out the words “I love you” and have them not bear much meaning. In books, there is a purpose behind every word.

When asked what her favorite quotation is, Miye responded with one from *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*.

“Sons of Gondor, of Rohan, my brothers! I see in your eyes the same fear that would take the heart of me. A day may come when the courage of men fails, when we forsake our friends and break all bonds of fellowship, but it is not this day. An hour of wolves and shattered shields, when the age of men comes crashing down! But it is not this day! This day we fight! By all that you hold dear on this good Earth, I bid you stand, Men of the West!”

When asked what that means to her, Miye paused for a second. A faint smile formed on her face.

“It means that even in complete despair, and nothing seems worth it, you stand up and fight.”

## Notes

1. "Walnut, CA Is One of the 50 Best Places to Live." Time. Accessed March 6, 2015. <http://time.com/money/2791467/49-walnut-ca/>.

2. "United States Census Bureau." Inglewood (city) QuickFacts from the US Census Bureau. Accessed March 6, 2015. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/0636546.html>.

**\*Disclaimer\*** Any and all opinions, including areas of positive or negative portrayal, were made through author interpretation, and do not necessarily represent the views of Miye Nakashima.