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## Florence Sasajima Graduation Address, 1944

Florence Sasajima

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1944

We are proud and happy to be assembled here tonight, knowing that we have completed our high school education. Though the last two years have been rather trying, and at times heartbreaking, we have at long last reached the goal we had set before us four years ago. We are graduating, at this time, under far different conditions than we dreamed possible when we first embarked upon our high school career. There were times during the last two years when we felt like giving up and drifting aimlessly with the tide, not wondering or caring what should happen to us. Certainly, the tarpapered barracks and dust choked rooms were no incentive; but the knowledge that we have seen it through when it would have been so much easier to quit, helps considerably in giving us that much more strength and confidence in our abilities to make a success in the coming future. Though we are graduating behind sentinel towers and barbed wire fences, we have learned that knowledge and friends are not bound by such material things. That knowledge is a free and boundless thing, but once caught becomes a bidding Genie and good friends know no color line or barrier. Some day, when we reminisce about school, all this will come back as not an unpleasant memory, but something that helped us to an understanding of a richer fuller life.

Leaving these halls of formal learning is not an end to our education. Our education is just starting, and we sincerely hope that we are not found lacking. With high school as a base from which to step into maturity we realize that what we have learned here will set a pattern of our adult life to a great degree. We fully realize that our teachers, in spite of limited facilities, have done their best to prepare us for our coming battle, whether we remain in the United States or go to Japan and we are grateful to them.

We must admit that we had visions of looking down from this platform upon a sea of faces of all different colors, knowing that they were all friends and that each of them were hoping and praying for us and our future--Mary Jones, Anthony Tenelli, Ruby Wong-- they were classmates of yesteryear. May we again be classmates, so to speak, in the future years when this war is ended. And when this world is built anew, may it be inscribed in all parts of the world, that there are finer things than hate, intolerance, and greed. That homes with hedges are preferable to homes with barbed wires. That it is more fun to love, live and laugh together.

---Florence Sasajima---

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