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- [Home](#)
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- [This Week](#)
 - [The Region](#)
 - [China](#)
 - [Innovation](#)
 - [Money](#)
 - [Currents](#)
- [Top Interviews](#)
- [Special Reports](#)
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- [Contact Us](#)

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- [Intelligence](#)
- [Regional Briefs](#)
- [China Briefing](#)
- [The 5th Column](#)
- [Shroff](#)
- [Economic Monitor](#)
- [Loose Wire](#)
- [Travellers' Tales](#)
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LEGACIES OF WAR: I

Iva Tells Her Tale

She was pardoned by a president for a crime she never committed. Yet Iva Toguri's name remains synonymous with the treachery of 'Tokyo Rose.' Now she's hoping a film will set the record straight

By Erling Hoh/CHICAGO

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CLARIFICATION

In **Iva Tells Her Tale [June 26]**, we implied that the charges against Iva Toguri were based in part on her alleged use of the phrase "orphans of the Pacific" to describe U.S. troops. In fact, the phrase was in widespread use at the time. What Toguri was alleged to have said was: "Orphans of the Pacific, you really are orphans now. How are you going to get home now that all of your ships are sunk." The error was introduced in editing.

George Stephanopoulos: Remember, even Tokyo Rose only got six years.

Cokie Roberts: Well, and . . .

George Stephanopoulos: I don't think he [John Walker Lindh] is going to get the death penalty.

Cokie Roberts: . . . George brought up Ezra Pound. Ezra Pound pleaded insanity and ended up serving more time than Tokyo Rose and all the rest of them combined . . .

--This Week, ABC Television, December 9, 2001.

THE ORIENTAL GIFTSHOP sits on West Belmont Avenue in northern Chicago. A cavernous store, it's filled with Japanese records, lacquer Kleenex boxes, futons, Japanese wrapping paper and Fukagawa

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porcelain. A faint trace of incense lingers in the musty air. Young people from the neighbourhood browse among books on Zen Buddhism and buy belts for their taekwondo classes.

Few of these shoppers probably realize that the store belongs to the family of Iva Toguri, the woman dubbed "Tokyo Rose," who in 1949 was convicted of treason against the United States during World War II and sentenced to 10 years in jail. Fewer still understand that her story represents probably one of the most remarkable miscarriages of justice in American legal history.

"She doesn't come into the store any more," says Joanne Toguri of her Aunt Iva. "She is very private." Aged 86, Iva Toguri lives quietly by herself in Andersonville, the city's old Swedish enclave. "She doesn't say anything, and we don't ask anything," adds her oldest nephew, William. Her family and friends all guard her privacy with the same care.

Yet for more than a decade, the Hollywood producer Barbara Trembley has been fighting to bring Iva's story to the silver screen. And late last week, the director Frank Darabont, with movies such as *The Green Mile* and *The Shawshank Redemption* to his name, announced that he will be doing precisely that. "This is a stunning true-life story," said Darabont, who is in talks about a screenplay with Christopher Hampton (*Dangerous Liaisons*, *The Quiet American*). "It's about enormous personal courage and integrity in the face of rabid public sentiment, media villainy, cultural and racial hatred, and startling judicial injustice."

A Hollywood movie could be Toguri's last chance to set the record straight. "I don't want what happened to me to happen to anybody else," she said in a statement. "When this production comes to pass, it will clear the air resulting from the weight of the myth and name 'Tokyo Rose'."

Perhaps, but despite an unconditional presidential pardon from President Gerald Ford in 1977, Toguri's link to the mythical Tokyo Rose lives on in the minds of many. When National Geographic marked the 20th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War, it sought out Trinh Thi Ngo, alias "Hanoi Hannah,"



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and compared her treasonous broadcasts with those supposedly made by Tokyo Rose. Even respected TV commentators regularly group Tokyo Rose with some of America's most infamous traitors.

"Myths die hard," says Ron Yates, the Chicago Tribune's correspondent in Tokyo from 1974-77, and one of the few journalists to interview Toguri. "People always want to believe fiction before fact. Others simply cannot believe that the U.S. government could have been so cruel and calculating as to rig a trial with witnesses who were forced to lie."

Those witnesses were George Mitsushio and Kenkichi Oki, two Japanese-Americans who collaborated with the Japanese during the war and renounced their U.S. citizenships. In interviews with Yates in the mid-1970s, they confessed that they had been coerced into lying about Toguri by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Justice Department. Yates's articles were instrumental in bringing about Toguri's 1977 presidential pardon. "Of all the stories I have done, this has to be the most satisfying," says Yates today. "Because it was journalists who got her into trouble in the first place."

One of the top stories on every reporter's list after Allied forces landed in Japan in August 1945 was an interview with Tokyo Rose, the siren of the Pacific who, according to legend, had taunted American GIs with her sultry, seductive voice. The only problem was that Tokyo Rose didn't exist. Whereas Mildred Gillars, alias Axis Sally, was a real person whose virulently anti-Semitic broadcasts from Berlin were amply documented, Tokyo Rose was a myth--a composite fantasy assembled out of the several women who had broadcast for the Japanese during the war.

One of them was Iva Toguri, a Japanese-American born in California who had become stranded in Japan after travelling there to visit a sick aunt just before the December 1941 Pearl Harbour attack. At the time, many Japanese-Americans in Japan renounced their U.S. citizenships, but Iva refused. To make ends meet, she worked as a typist at the Danish embassy, a piano teacher, and later as a typist at Radio Tokyo. It was there that she was ordered by the Japanese to work as a

radio announcer on the programme Zero Hour. The show was produced by Maj. Charles Cousens, an Australian prisoner-of-war who, after threats, had consented to broadcast for the Japanese, but was surreptitiously trying to sabotage the country's propaganda effort. He had selected Iva for two reasons: she stood on the Allies' side, and, in Cousens' words, had a "gin fog" voice.

The content of her broadcasts, which Iva presented under the name "Orphan Ann," were innocuous, and none of the accusations levelled against her--including the claim that she notoriously referred to U.S. troops as "orphans of the Pacific"--were ever substantiated by the Americans' own monitoring of her broadcasts. Furthermore, there were several Japanese-American women broadcasting for Radio Tokyo at the time, all of whom had renounced their American citizenships. One of the many cruel twists in Iva's story was that, by remaining loyal to her country, she opened herself to the accusation of treason against it. Several more bad decisions and tragic turns were to follow.

Even before the Japanese surrender in 1945, the U.S. Office of War Information had stated that "there is no Tokyo Rose; the name is strictly a GI invention . . ." But for the press pack the hunt was on: At Radio Tokyo, the reporters Clark Lee and Harry Brundidge were pointed in Iva's direction. When they met her at the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo on September 1, 1945, they offered her a contract for an exclusive interview with *Cosmopolitan* magazine worth \$2,000, and asked her to sign a document identifying herself as "the one and only 'Tokyo Rose'." Iva, lured by the large sum and unaware that Tokyo Rose would become the symbol for everything hateful the Japanese had done during the war, signed the contract and gave the interview.

She never received the \$2,000: *Cosmopolitan* told the reporters that they would not pay a traitor. In October, 1945, she was imprisoned for one year at the Sugamo Prison in Tokyo, before the U.S. Attorney General's office finally concluded that "the identification of Toguri as 'Tokyo Rose' is erroneous."

In 1948, the newborn child of Iva and her husband Filipe d'Aquino died and, later that year, Iva was arrested again and sent back to

the U.S. to stand trial. D'Aquino was allowed to enter the country to serve as a witness for his wife's defence, but had to post a bond guaranteeing his return to Japan. The two remained married until 1980, but never saw each other again.

For the trial, which began in July 1949, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover effectively wrote a blank cheque to have Toguri convicted. At a total cost then of \$750,000, the trial was the most expensive to date in U.S. history. Scores of witnesses were flown in by the prosecution to testify against Toguri. She was defended on a shoestring by Wayne Mortimer Collins, a San Francisco lawyer who had made his name fighting for the underdog.

"My father did not believe that whispering in the ears of power or accommodating belief to the needs of popular opposition movements were true guarantors of civil liberty or human dignity," says Collins' son, Wayne Merrill, who after his father's death continued the fight that led to Toguri's presidential pardon. "It was this that allowed him to stand against the current with the beginning of the war, when patriotism ran rampant and Japanese internment, citizenship denaturalization proceedings against German-Americans and prosecution of religious conscientious objectors became the order of the day."

When, after 13 weeks, the jurors announced they couldn't reach a decision, Judge Michael Roche did not rule it a hung jury, but instead reminded the jurors of the length, expense and importance of the case, and urged them to reach a verdict. Finally, based on Oki and Mitsushio's perjury, Iva Toguri was declared guilty on one of the eight counts of treason. She was fined \$10,000, and sentenced to 10 years in prison. Upon her release on parole in 1956, she was served with a deportation notice for being an undesirable alien, despite the fact that the establishment of her citizenship had been crucial to her conviction. Collins successfully challenged the deportation order.

Given her first fateful meeting with journalists, it's hardly surprising that Iva Toguri has since maintained a Greta Garbo-like silence. In the past 40 years, she has granted only a handful of interviews. "She comes out of an era when there was an enormous hatred towards the

Japanese," says Ron Yates, who interviewed Toguri in 1991. "She doesn't want publicity, but she wants her story told."

"The story Iva wants to tell is the story of the heroism of the people who stood up for the truth," adds Dafydd Neal Dyar, a retired U.S. Air Force technical sergeant in Seattle who has proposed a monument in Iva's honour with this dedication: "To the loyalty and courage of Iva Ikuko Toguri. She never changed her stripes."



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