

AIR WAR COLLEGE

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STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP
SENATOR DANIEL INOUE

by

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Hawaii's Senator Daniel K. Inouye began his service to the country of his birth on December 7, 1941. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Daniel Inouye was a high school student who volunteered with the Red Cross assisting wounded and training other volunteers. The child of Japanese immigrants, Daniel K. Inouye's dedicated service, steadfast integrity and ability to build consensus molded him into a nationally recognized leader and the most senior member of the U.S. Senate in 2010. When given the opportunity to serve his country, he joined the United States Army with second generation Japanese Americans, known as "Nisei." They formed the 422 Regimental Combat Team, and this regiment of a "bunch of Japs" shipped out in May 1944 to the European Theater and became a highly decorated combat unit.¹ During the war, Inouye received a battlefield commission and lost his arm to a grenade; as a result, he earned the nation's highest award- the Medal of Honor.²

Inouye's service to the citizens of Hawaii began upon his return from World War II. He returned to the University of Hawaii, changing his major from medical to law due to his wartime injury. While a student at the University, he worked with other citizens of Hawaii in their attempts to "rehabilitate the Democratic Party of Hawaii."³ At the time, the Republican Party of Hawaii, representing a small minority of the citizens of the territory of Hawaii, effectively controlled the territorial legislature. They controlled the lives of the citizens of Hawaii at all levels of local government. The young Inouye and his colleagues viewed the political landscape of Hawaii as unequitable and unbalanced. A change was needed-- a change that would empower the working-class, labor unions, and the children of immigrant families in Hawaii. The political tide changed in the mid-1950s when young Democrats achieved a majority in the Territorial House and Senate. Inouye was their leader, assisting with the shift in Hawaii politics. Once Hawaii became the 50th State of the Union, Inouye was elected to the United States House of Representatives. In 1962,

Inouye became the first Japanese-American elected to the United States Senate, representing the pinnacle of his political life.

While serving in the United States Senate, Inouye's integrity was unwavering, a quality required by effective strategic leaders. As a member of the U.S. Senate Watergate Committee, Senator Inouye won national recognition and admiration for his "patient but persistent" questioning of White House aides and members of the Nixon Administration.⁴ In 1987, he was selected to chair a controversial Senate hearing due to his reputation of being a leader with a high degree of integrity, consistently providing honest advice and consultation. The Senator's words were reflective in his work, and he was true to his word. His integrity empowered him to gain the trust of others and develop teams of professionals. A quality not readily observed in recent years at the national level.

Indeed a liberal Democrat from a small state, Senator Inouye worked diligently to build consensus during his tenure in the U.S. Senate. He formed a bipartisan relationship with Senator Ted Stevens, a Republican from Alaska, and together they found "common ground" in order to tackle the serious work of the U.S. Senate. Their relationship continues to be a model of collaboration and teamwork current leaders within the Capitol aspire to achieve. As a ranking member of the U.S. Senate Ways and Means Committee, Senator Inouye understood the process of working with both parties in order to pass major legislation needed to fund the United States Government. During his 49 years of service in the U.S. Senate, his legislative accomplishments were numerous; these were achieved through continued collaboration with members of both parties.

Similarly, a relevant vision is vital for a modern strategic leader. According to Ms. Jennifer Sabas, Senator Inouye's former Chief of Staff, some of his proudest legislative achievements were

those that “corrected injustice.”⁵ Consequently, the Senator focused on addressing the dignity of those he served. Indeed, President Johnson’s Great Society, the legislative agenda addressing economic inequality and racial discriminations, received unceasing support from the Hawaii Senator. The Filipino World War II veterans, reparations for Japanese Americans held in internment camps during WWII, Native American Indians, Native Hawaiians, and many other indigenous peoples benefited from the legislative leadership of Daniel Inouye. Equality and justice was always at the forefront of the Senator’s efforts for the United States and the international community. Yet while he was always aware of the importance of the strategic vision for the United States, the Senator remained grounded in Hawaii and the role his state could play in national security.

Consequently, he continued to be a proponent for a “Pacific focus” in the US National Strategy, decades ahead of the decision makers and the Washington elites. As in the past, Senator Inouye worked closely with Senator Ted Stevens, other political leaders, and military leaders throughout the Pacific region to highlight Hawaii’s strategic importance. As early as the mid-1990s, Senator Inouye began advocating for a focus on Humanitarian Assistance / Disaster Relief (HA/DR) in the Indo-Asian-Pacific region.⁶ The “comprehensive approach” of Senator Inouye enabled him to work with government agencies, military officials, private businesses, and representatives from the University of Hawaii.⁷ Today, the United States Pacific Command dedicates a substantial amount of resources to Humanitarian Assistance / Disaster Relief within the region. It was Senator Inouye who championed this strategic approach and worked meticulously with others, to witness its fruition.

Through it all, Senator Inouye recognized the significance of maintaining a “connection” with the citizens of Hawaii.⁸ He understood the importance of the media and how it assisted in

“telling stories.”⁹ Yet, Senator Inouye was not a national figure constantly on the national media. As a prominent leader of the U.S. Senate, he could have decided to participate in the ongoing public debates on the cable news networks. Rather than embrace a national audience, Senator Inouye elected to focus on the Hawaii’s media networks. According to his former Chief of Staff, the “local media” was always a priority for the Senator. It was his way to ensure he remained connected with the people of Hawaii and ensured they understood his work and intent.

A lifetime of dedicated service to the State of Hawaii and the United States of America best describes Daniel Inouye’s public life. Ethann Oki, President of the Young Democrats of Hawaii, reflected on the Senator and “the stories of his steadfast patience and determination to fight for the minority or the under-represented,” a relevant for the next generation.¹⁰ Yet, Senator Daniel Inouye’s greatest gift to the next generation is the example he set and his continued service. As a young Democrat, Ethann Oki reaffirms the influence of Senator Inouye, “We honor him and his work by continuing to do our part here in the State of Hawaii by being involved, fighting for the little guy, and always remembering where we can from.”

President Barack Obama made the following comments during his eulogy for Senator Daniel Inouye on December 21, 2012: And so we remember a man who inspired all of us with his courage and moved us with his compassion, that inspired us with his integrity, and who taught so many of us, including a young boy growing up in Hawaii, that America has a place for everyone.¹¹ I am sure, Wasaburo Inouye could not have imagined 118 years after his departure from Japan, his great-grand son would be an inspirational leader for so many in the United States. The family name of a Japanese immigrant, who left his native country in 1899 to work in the plantations of Hawaii, became the name associated with Democratic leadership, integrity, and faithful service. A combat veteran of World War II, Daniel K. Inouye’s political

accomplishments are numerous; however, his legacy is rooted in his integrity, his ability to foster collaboration among various groups, and his dedicated service. A true visionary, Senator Inouye dedicated his life to the service of others. An authentic strategic leader is one who serves those around him, and Daniel K. Inouye did just that.

¹ Stories of Daniel Inouye's life were captured in his book. "GO FOR BROKE" a condensed version of the book "Journey to Washington" first published in 1967.

Senator Inouye recalls the U.S. Army officers assigned to the 442 Regiment in his book. Most of the officers were not happy to serve with the Japanese American unit.

² In 2000, President Bill Clinton upgraded Daniel Inouye's Distinguished Service Cross to the Medal of Honor. The result of a study of how and to whom the US Military awarded service during WWII.

³ The Republican Party of Hawaii was a Party of the Rich, missionary descendants

⁴ [Hhttp://www.achievement.org/autodoc/page/inoobio-1](http://www.achievement.org/autodoc/page/inoobio-1) Academy of Achievement Website.

⁵ Phone interview Jennifer Sabas. Sept.20, 2015.

⁶ Phone interview with Jennifer Sabas. Sept. 20, 2015.

⁷ Richard Hughes, Charles Palus, Chris Ernst, Georege Houston, and John McGuire, "Boundary spanning Across Leadership Cultures: A Leadership Strategy for the Comprehensive Approach" (paper presented at the Second International Transformation conference, June 2011) 2-23.

⁸ Meghan Decker, *Becoming a Leader: The Art and Science of Influence*.

⁹ Ibid. Decker's Emotional Connection.

¹⁰ Ethann Oki, Written Questionnaire Sept. 25, 2015.

¹¹ Transcript of President Obama's Dec.21, 2012 Eulogy for Senator Inouye.