



## **Rose Ochi, trailblazer for civil rights and Japanese American causes dies at 81**

Rose was an educator, civil rights/social activist and reformer. She is also one of among a few credited with reminding President Reagan of his own linkage to the Japanese American WWII experience, when he was deciding whether or not he would sign the 1988 redress legislation, the Civil Liberties Act of 1987

(H.R. 442), which provided an official letter of apology and a check for \$20,000.00 to every surviving Japanese American who suffered the humiliation of the WWII incarceration at the hands of the US government.

Rose sent Reagan an article about his attendance and public address on behalf Staff Sgt. Kazuo Masuda, F Company, 442nd RCT, who was Killed In Action (KIA) but was initially refused burial at the Westminster Memorial Park, in Orange County. Upon hearing this Gen. Joe Stilwell read the local officials the riot-act and decided to fly to California to personally present the DSC (Distinguished Service Cross) to Masuda's mother.

Mrs. Masuda was so angry that she refused to accept the medal, and General Stilwell pinned it on Masuda's sister Mary. Later that day, Capt. Ronald Reagan was addressing another gathering and said, "Blood that has soaked into the sands of a beach is all of one color. America stands unique in the world, the only country not founded on race, but on a way—an ideal

Not in spite of, but because of our polyglot background, we have had all the strength in the world. That is the American way. Mr. and Mrs. Masuda, just as one member of the family of Americans, speaking to another member I want to say for what your son Kazuo did—Thanks"

*Written by Robert M. Horsting, Oral Historian*

LA Times Obituary

<https://www.latimes.com/obituaries/story/2021-01-05/rose-ochi-trailblazer-civil-rights-japanese-american-causes-dies>