

THIRD ACT

A Film by Tadashi Nakamura



[KEY IMAGES](#) | VIDEO CLIPS

91 minutes // English // Color // USA // 2025

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WORLD PREMIERE!



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THIRD ACT | Synopsis

LOGLINE:

Generations of artists call Robert A. Nakamura “the godfather of Asian American media,” but filmmaker Tadashi Nakamura calls him Dad. What begins as a documentary about his father’s career takes a turn with a Parkinson’s Disease diagnosis, and evolves into an exploration on art, activism, grief, and fatherhood.

SYNOPSIS:

Generations of artists call Robert A. Nakamura “The Godfather of Asian American film,” but his son, Tad, calls him Dad. As the filmmaking son of a filmmaking legend, Tad uses the lessons his dad taught him to decipher the legacy of an aging man who was a child survivor of the WWII incarceration of Japanese Americans, a successful photographer who gave it up to tell his own story, an activist at the dawn of a social movement—and a father whose struggles have won his son freedoms that eluded Japanese Americans of his generation. As Parkinson's Disease clouds his memory, Tad sets out to retrieve his story—and in the process discovers his own. The two have made films together, with Robert always by Tad’s side. THIRD ACT is most likely the last.

LONG SYNOPSIS:

Generations of artists refer to Robert A. Nakamura as “The Godfather of Asian American Media,” but his filmmaker son, Tad, sees him simply as Dad. As the filmmaking son of a legendary figure, Tad uses the lessons his father taught him to explore the legacy of an aging man who endured the traumatic experiences of a child survivor of the mass WWII incarceration of Japanese Americans without due process. Robert’s life is marked by his success as a photographer, which he ultimately abandoned to tell his own story. He was also an activist at the forefront of a burgeoning social movement, and a father whose struggles won his son freedoms that were denied to Japanese Americans of his generation. As Parkinson's disease clouds his memory and a growing threat to American democracy casts a shadow over his life's work, Tad embarks on a mission to preserve his father's story—and, in the process, discovers his own.

During World War II, Robert was forcibly removed from his home and imprisoned with his family behind barbed wire for three years, along with 120,000 Americans and permanent residents of Japanese ancestry who were denied due process and citizenship rights. While much of the U.S. was unaware of the unconstitutional round-up, Robert sought to make sense of the trauma through his work. Despite finding success as a photographer, he felt isolated in a field dominated by white colleagues, and even his widely praised work left him with a sense of meaninglessness. In his mid-thirties, Robert pivoted to filmmaking and teaching, using his art to grapple with the emotional scars of his community’s wartime

detention. His media activism during the social upheaval of the 1960s and '70s played a crucial role in shaping the Asian Pacific American consciousness.

In many ways, Robert's story mirrors his son's. As his father's Parkinson's diagnosis progresses, and as Tad begins to understand the depth of the emotional scars left by the country's betrayal, he is confronted with the long-term effects of historical trauma, the anxieties of aging, and the role-reversal between father and son. The two have made films together, with Robert always by Tad's side. *THIRD ACT* will likely be their final collaboration.

THIRD ACT | Director Statement

My father is called the “godfather of Asian American media” for his pioneering work in the field, but it took me years to see him as such, because to me he was just Dad. At first, I thought people called him that because he was old. He was 44 years old when I was born, twice the age of most of my friends’ fathers.

When I finally grasped how much he has done, I was more intimidated than proud. Perhaps if I hadn’t followed in his footsteps – the fledgling filmmaking son of a bona fide filmmaking legend – I wouldn’t have been so petrified. I remember after making my first film, my mother – who has written and produced many of my father’s films – introduced me as “the new and improved Robert Nakamura.” She meant that as a compliment but I was mortified. How could I ever live up to what he has done?

It has taken me awhile – over the course of making four films of my own – to realize that I don’t have to be him. He taught me better than that. Like the others he mentored over thirty years of teaching, he helped me develop my own voice, my own vision. He has passed on two things: the privilege, as well as the responsibility to tell our own stories – he, his generation’s, and me, I realize, my own.

In many ways, his story is my story. When I was just three weeks old, I made my film debut as a crying baby boarding a bus bound for a WWII concentration camp in his feature film, “Hito Hata: Raise the Banner”. As an undergraduate, I learned to make my own films in his film class, and later served as his teaching assistant.

As a documentary filmmaker, I credit him as my most trusted guide. Synchronistically, my father made a film about his father when he was the same age I am now – almost 50 years ago. In an Asian American culture that eschews outward gushes of affection as obsequious, he said maybe that was how he hugged his father. And, with THIRD ACT, I am hugging mine.

As I come to realize how his life and career have been shaped by coming to grips with the mass incarceration of WWII, I realize that I have inherited the legacy of that governmental betrayal, the historical trauma, which is intergenerational. Our shared stories. And yet, as we both encounter the anxieties of old age and illness, and the role-reversal between father and son, embedded within or just outside of every personal frame, the story is universal: how do a father and son let go of each other? THIRD ACT is the culmination of our relationship. I have made every one of my own films with my father – the “godfather” - at my side. THIRD ACT is most likely the last.

- Tadashi Nakamura

THIRD ACT | Filmmakers



TADASHI NAKAMURA (DIRECTOR/PRODUCER)

Tadashi is an Emmy-award winning filmmaker and the Director of the Watase Media Arts Center, a production company of the Japanese American National Museum. Tadashi was named CNN's "Young People Who Rock" for being the youngest filmmaker at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival. Now with over 20 years of filmmaking experience, his films include NOBUKO MIYAMOTO: A SONG IN MOVEMENT (2024), MELE MURALS (2016), JAKE SHIMABUKURO: LIFE ON FOUR STRINGS (2013), A SONG FOR OURSELVES (2009), and PILGRIMAGE (2006). He is currently working on THIRD ACT, about his pioneering filmmaker father, Robert A. Nakamura, and his current battle with Parkinson's Disease. Tadashi has an M.A. in Social Documentation from UC Santa Cruz and a B.A. in Asian American Studies from UCLA. He made the DOC NYC '40 Under 40' list in 2019 and was a 2020-2022 Firelight Media Documentary Lab Fellow and a 2022-2023 Sundance Asian American Fellow. He is currently a mentor for the 2024 CAAM Fellowship and recipient of the 2024 Rockwood Documentary Leaders Fellowship.



EURIE CHUNG (PRODUCER) Eurie is a documentary producer focused on elevating Asian American stories. Leading Flash Cuts with Walt Louie, she has supported filmmakers for nearly 20 years in all areas of production and post. Her work includes ASIAN AMERICANS, a five-part PBS docuseries (2020 Peabody Award), PLAGUE AT THE GOLDEN GATE (American Experience, 2023), the digital series PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF ASIAN AMERICA (2020), MELE MURALS (2016), and recently directed the documentary short I CAN'T KEEP QUIET. She is a 2024 Sundance Producers Lab fellow.



VICTORIA CHALK (EDITOR) Victoria Chalk, ACE is a European-Asian film editor with over 15 years of post-production experience. Her recent work includes 2 episodes of the Peabody-winning PBS documentary series ASIAN AMERICANS and A DECENT HOME by Sara Terry for which she won the 2022 Karen Schmeer Excellence Award in Documentary Editing. Victoria is a DOCNY 2020 40 under 40 honoree, the 2019 Karen Schmeer Editing Fellow and runs Across The Cut, an intersectional edit roster, along with 3 fellow editors.



DIANE QUON (EXECUTIVE PRODUCER) is an Academy Award-nominated producer who worked as a marketing executive at NBC and Paramount Pictures in LA before moving back to her hometown of Chicago. Diane has produced many documentaries including: Oscar and Emmy nominated, Peabody award-winning film, MINDING THE GAP (Hulu, POV); Emmy-nominated FINDING YINGYING (MTVDocs); Emmy-nominated WUHAN WUHAN (POV); 2022 Oscar-shortlisted BAD AXE (IFC FILMS); BREAKING THE NEWS (Tribeca 2023, Indie Lens) and AKA MR CHOW (Telluride 2023, HBO). She is developing a fiction film based on a New York Times bestseller. Diane is an AMPAS and

PGA member, a recipient of the Cinereach Producer Award, and is a Sundance Creative Producing Fellow and Film Independent Fellow.

SPENCER NAKASAKO (EXECUTIVE PRODUCER) Spencer has over three decades of experience as an independent filmmaker. He won a National Emmy Award for A.K.A. DON BONUS, the video diary of a Cambodian refugee teenager that aired on the PBS series P.O.V. and screened at the Berlin International Film Festival. KELLY LOVES TONY, a video diary about a Lu Mien refugee teenage couple growing up too fast in Oakland, California, also aired on P.O.V. His third film in his trilogy about Southeast Asian youth, REFUGEE, aired on the PBS series Independent Lens, and garnered major awards at the Hawaii International Film Festival and Hamptons Film Festival. He also wrote the screenplay and co-directed a feature film in Hong Kong, LIFE IS CHEAP...BUT TOILET PAPER IS EXPENSIVE with Wayne Wang. is a producer of independent films, television and digital media based in New York City.

THIRD ACT | Credits

Directed & Produced by
Tadashi Nakamura

Producer
Eurie Chung

Editor
Victoria Chalk, ACE

Featuring
Robert A. Nakamura
Karen Ishizuka
"Prince" Paulo Nakamura

Executive Producer
Spencer Nakasako

Executive Producer
Diane Quon

Executive Producers
Carrie Lozano
Lois Vossen
Donald Young

Supervising Producer
David Eisenberg

Consulting Producer
Noland Walker

Co-Producers
Lou Nakasako
Alexandra Margolin

Written by
Victoria Chalk

Tadashi Nakamura

Cinematography
Tadashi Nakamura
Lou Nakasako
Jess X Snow
Justyn Ah Chong
'Āina Paikai
Evan Kodani
Akira Boch
Quyên Nguyen-Le

Composer
Miles Senzaki

Associate Producers
Gena Hamamoto
Lailanie Gadia

Story Consultant
Spencer Nakasako

Consulting Producer
Ursula Liang
Marty Syjuco

Production Sound
Jon Oh
Kevin Rosen-Quan

Assistant Camera
Aaron Hunt

Sound Design & Dialogue Editor
Jon Oh

Re-recording Sound Mixer
Joe Milner

Post Production Services
Flash Cuts

Graphics & Animation
Travis Hatfield

Additional Title Design
Azusa Oda

Color

MOM&POP
Digital Intermediate Colorist Sam Zook
Executive Producer Ali Reed

Lead Assistant Editor
Lou Nakasako

Assistant Editor
Set Hernandez Rongkilyo
Brandon Soun

Archival Rights and Clearances
MW Archival

Music Clearances
Nancy Meyer
Bates Meyer, Inc.

Archival Producer
Alexandra Margolin

Consulting Archival Producers
Austin Wilkin
Mariah Yamamoto

Additional Archival Research
Anna Louie

Archival Coordinators
Genevieve Troudy
Kimi Engelbrecht

Archival Assistants
Justin Martin
Genevieve Geoghan
Raymond Young
Josaen Ronquillo
Crosley Wong

Production Counsel
Isaac Hager

Fair Use Counsel
Jaszi Butler PLLC
Brandon Butler
Peter Jaszi

Fiscal Sponsorship

Little Tokyo Service Center
Visual Communications

Narration Coach
traci kato-kitayama

Additional Writing
Sean Miura

Grant Writer
Julie Mackaman
Patricia Kim

Funding Trailer Editor
Lou Nakasako

Music
"Yamarawau"
Performed by Jussell, Prymek, Sage, Shiroishi
Written by
Courtesy of

"Da Da"
Performed by Hiroshima
Filmed at Embassy Auditorium, Los Angeles, CA
Written by Dan Kuramoto, Peter Hata
Little Tiger Music (ASCAP)
Courtesy of Visual Communications Photographic and Media Archive

"Tide"
Performed by Fergus McCreadie
Written by
Courtesy of

"Cactus Impromptu"
Performed by Chilly Gonzales
Written by
Courtesy of

"Summer Rain"
Performed by Jake Shimabukuro Trio
Written by
Courtesy of

"Without The Threat Of Punishment There Is No Joy In Flight"
Performed by Patrick Shiroishi
Written by

Courtesy of cached.madia

“Gentle Threat”

Performed by Chilly Gonzales
Written by
Courtesy of

“Meischeid”

Performed by Chilly Gonzales
Written by
Courtesy of

“Armellodie”

Performed by Chilly Gonzales
Written by
Courtesy of

“Ellis Eye”

Performed by Chilly Gonzales
Written by
Courtesy of

“Bermuda Triangle”

Performed by Chilly Gonzales
Written by
Courtesy of

“Blue Roses Falling”

Performed by Jake Shimabukuro
Written by
Courtesy of

Archival Materials

Robert A. Nakamura Archive
Tadashi Nakamura Archive
Densho
Fox Archives
Japanese American National Museum
Library of Congress
Ron and Don Rundstrom
Third World Newsreel
Visual Communications

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Gus Checel

Ximena Amescua Cuenca

Saenah Boch

Eseel Borlasa

Ann Burroughs

James Q. Chan

David Checel

Jude Chehab

Aram Collier

Chico Colvard

Francis Cullado

John Esaki

Abraham Ferrer

Robie Flores

Czarina Garcia

Iliana Garcia

Sarah Garrahan

Stephen Gong

Clement Hanami

Su Kim

Glen Komatsu

Dan Kuramoto

June Kuramoto

Keoni Lee

Asuka Lin

Walt Louie

Kenyon Mayeda

Juan Mejia

Hajnal Molnar-Szakacs

Carrie Morita

Walter Morita

Erich Nakano

Gabriela Nakashima

Monika Navarro

Theresa Navarro

Quoc Ngo

Rick Noguchi

Wendell Pascual

George Payapilly

Sultan Pirzhan

Adan Pulido

PJ Raval

Sue Rundstrom

Peggy Saika

Sapana Sanya

Grant Sunoo

Renee Tajima-Peña

Antonia Thornton

Jason Tiangco

Sierra Urich

Doug Van Kirk

Ana Verde

Juli Vizza

Daryn Wakasa

Chloë Walters-Wallace

Eugene Yi

Zaferhan Yumru

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Fellowship

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