

**Robert H. Jackson Essay Contest Entry:**

Robert H. Jackson by Gail Jarrow

**Essay Contest Theme: How did Robert H. Jackson's life show us how to protect the civil and human rights of others?**

How could a man born on a farm in 1892, raised in a small town in upstate New York in a house built by his great-grandfather who never even heard of a PC or an I-Pod make a lasting impression on a girl born in China in 1996, raised in a building in New York City who spends hours on her computer or listening to music? It's simple. I learned that Robert H. Jackson and I share many of the same ideals- hard work, fair play, love of family and the importance of justice for all. His life was an example of how a person can live their ideals.

Robert H. Jackson believed that citizens have rights guaranteed to them and that to have meaning these rights must be allowed to be exercised in their daily lives. He decided a case called West Virginia v. Barnette, where two students were suspended from school because, as Jehovah's Witnesses, they refused to say the Pledge of Allegiance. He wrote that the Constitution protected people's religious and free speech rights, even when they were in the minority, and the girls did not have to say the pledge.

Justice Jackson views were often unpopular. Because of the attack on Pearl Harbor, all Japanese-Americans were stereotyped and sent away to camps on the West Coast. In Korematsu v. US, Robert H. Jackson said that the Constitution did

not give the government the right to detain and move groups of people because of their race. Even though many people disagreed, he remained true to his beliefs.

This case is very important especially since September 11, 2001. The lives of Muslim-Americans changed after the terrorist attacks. The hatred of Muslims spread quickly throughout the United States, but anyone who reads Justice Jackson's decision will recognize the importance of protecting everyone's rights. It has kept the Muslim-Americans safe from labeling by the government.

Justice Jackson also was the Chief Prosecutor at the Nazi trials after World War II. At a time when many in our country wanted revenge, Justice Jackson demanded justice. In his opening statement, he said, "We must never forget that the record on which we judge these defendants today is the record on which history will judge us tomorrow. To pass these defendants a poisoned chalice is to put it to our own lips as well." He knew that fair trials were absolutely necessary. He believed that there must be justice for everyone, all the time, everywhere.

Ms. Jarrow's book is really important to me personally. I learned that a person from a humble background can make a huge impact on the world as long as they have faith in their beliefs and what they want to do with them. The life of Robert H. Jackson demonstrates how success does not come from wealth, but rather from working hard and believing in the dignity of others. His life has strengthened my decision to become a lawyer and to speak up for everyone's rights.