



Mrs. Judo

Be Strong, Be Gentle, Be Beautiful

—A Film by Yuriko Gamo Romer—

Discussion Guide

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Table of Contents

Introduction to the Discussion Guide & Film Synopsis	1
Discussion Questions.....	2
Suggested Classroom Activities.....	6
Timeline.....	8
Glossary of Japanese Terms	12
Resources.....	15

Message from filmmaker Yuriko Gamo Romer

From the moment I saw Fukuda-Sensei at her dojo in the Noe Valley neighborhood of San Francisco, I could sense a presence, one that commanded attention. She invited me to tea at her home and as we conversed in Japanese, she began to share her remarkable life with me. I was amazed by the clarity and conviction that came through her gentle candor and gracious presence. It became clear to me that I was destined to make this film on her life.

As you watch the film, I hope that the power of Keiko Fukuda’s judo aspirations and who she strove to be as a person will inspire you. Through her 99 years, she has left a lasting impression as a cultural legacy for women, for judo, for the United States and Japan—a tiny iconic five-foot presence for the world to take notice.

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Acknowledgements

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Film by Yuriko Gamo Romer

Flying Carp Productions, Inc.

Producer of Outreach and Engagement: Jill Shiraki

Associate Producer of Distribution and Outreach: Melissa Bernier

Educational Distribution Consultant: Andy Moore

Photos on cover (top): Kodokan All Japan Tournament 2009, Keiko Fukuda at Touch of Class hair salon in San Francisco, 2009, Kagami Biraki Annual New Year's Celebration started in the U.S. by Keiko Fukuda; (bottom): Keiko Fukuda demonstrates judo with Eiko Shepherd, Keiko Fukuda playing shamisen, Farewell for Keiko Fukuda at Narita Airport 2009. Photo credits: Flying Carp Productions.

Introduction to the Discussion Guide

Mrs. Judo: Be Strong, Be Gentle, Be Beautiful includes not only factual information about judo and the life of Keiko Fukuda but also includes many important concepts that lend themselves well to discussion points. This discussion guide is recommended for secondary school, college and university students, and for a general adult or intergenerational audience. The suggested discussion questions can be used in classroom settings, community venues, theater or other film-viewing settings.

Discussion facilitators can choose among the questions based on the audience and time available for discussion. A brief personal history of Keiko Fukuda is provided as a reference. Several key concepts with possible discussion questions follow.

Keiko Fukuda is the highest-ranking woman in judo history. In July 2011, Fukuda was awarded the 10th degree black belt, judo's highest honor. She was the last living disciple of Jigoro Kano, judo's founder.

In 1934, Fukuda was preparing for marriage like most young women in Japan. But when she met Jigoro Kano, her life's path was radically altered. She gave up marriage, family, and her homeland to pursue her life destiny—spreading judo around the world.

In 1966, Fukuda immigrated to the United States as a single woman, hoping to make a living by teaching judo. With the help of American women's rights activists and her judo students, Fukuda began her struggle up the male dominant ladder of judo. Judo's traditional ranking system, which once limited women to the 5th degree black level, was challenged and changed due to Fukuda's efforts. Fukuda died in 2013.

Film Synopsis

Mrs. Judo: Be Strong, Be Gentle, Be Beautiful documents the inspiring life journey of Keiko Fukuda who would defy thousands of years of tradition, choose her own path, and become judo history's only woman to attain the pinnacle 10th degree black belt. Accepting an invitation by judo's founder Jigoro Kano, Fukuda joins the newly formed women's division of the Kodokan in 1934. Over 30 years later, she embarks on a journey to teach judo in the United States. Captured on film, Fukuda returns to her homeland to pay homage to her past and acknowledges her humble solitary life devoted to the art of judo.

Discussion Questions

1. Life Choices

Keiko Fukuda states that she chose judo over marriage. What are some other key life choices she made?

How would these choices be viewed today compared to the early 20th century?

What are some key life choices that you have had to make or will have to make?

Does one's culture or family traditions inform or influence these choices? If so, how?

2. Japanese History and Judo History

What does the film tell us about Jigoro Kano (1860–1938) and his role in the establishment and promotion of judo?

What were some key historical events during Keiko Fukuda's lifetime?
Some examples include her Samurai roots during the Tokugawa period, 1923 Kanto Earthquake, World War II, the Allied Occupation of Japan, and the 1964 Tokyo Olympics.

During World War II, Keiko Fukuda was the only teacher at the Kodokan. Why might this have been the case?

3. Judo Philosophy

What insights can we gain about Japanese culture through judo?

What are some of the spiritual, philosophical, and sociological tenets of judo?

Discuss the following statements that Keiko Fukuda makes at the end of the film.
What insights do they provide the viewer about judo?

Through judo training you become a good person. Be strong, be gentle, be beautiful. In judo, you need strength of body, mind, and soul. The gentleness is derived from the Japanese character, jū, which means flexibility, softness... beauty, not only in the external sense, one who is compassionate, willing to help others. Inner beauty, I believe this is true beauty.

4. Women's Issues and Empowerment

How does the film address women's issues in general? How does it address women's issues in judo specifically?

What is a male-dominant culture? What were some gender inequality issues that Keiko Fukuda faced in her life?

Who are other women in history (not only in sports) who have broken barriers? What does it mean to empower someone?

Discuss some of the following quotes.

Keiko Fukuda

- *In my day, young girls prepared for marriage.*
- *The belt ranks for women were very old fashioned and sexist. There was nothing above 5th degree for women.*
- *I chose judo over marriage.*

Kaori Yamaguchi

- *At a time when women didn't show their legs, Master Kano had women in judo uniforms...being aggressive and throwing each other around. He was way ahead of his times. Most men of the Kodokan could not see past old constructs and refused to embrace any change for women.*
- *In competition, there may be no difference, but there is a big difference when you become a coach. We are expected to have children and raise them which gives us more responsibilities.*
- *I'm compelled to further Fukuda Sensei's work, for women to be able to strive and excel.*

Katsuko Umetsu

- *Japanese men didn't like their wives to do judo. Either I had to choose work to keep judo in my life, or choose marriage and give up judo.*

Eiko Shepherd

- *Sensei [Keiko Fukuda] has told me with no family, no children, she gets very lonely. She reminds herself that she married judo... Women of your generation married and kept house, that was the norm. I think it was very brave and a wise decision to walk your own true road.*
- *She told me the three 10th degree men began judo ten years after herself. This 9th degree was a victory, not just for her [Keiko Fukuda] but for all women in judo.*

Toshihiko Koga

- *The women [in judo] seem to be passing the men up and have all the enthusiasm.*

Dr. Shelley Fernandez

- *Why is it that Fukuda Sensei cannot move on to another degree? ... Why can't she be moved up to the next level? And then they all said the same word, Onna desu, which means "she is a woman." When I heard that, I was really upset. Here I am fighting all of these causes for women's rights...*

5. Immigration to the United States

Discuss the following sentence: "Many wider opportunities were availed to Keiko Fukuda through her immigration to the United States." Do you agree or disagree?

Why do people immigrate to other countries?

What are some push-pull factors concerning immigration (past and present) to the United States?

6. Bridge Across the Ocean

Discuss the quotes below. How do they illustrate a "bridge across the ocean"?

Keiko Fukuda

- *I never imaged my destiny teaching in foreign lands and living a solo life... Judo's founder, Master Kano, wanted to spread judo all around the world. At first others were interested. But in the end, I was the only one who did.*

Hal Sharp

- *I was like a Japanese kid [during the Allied Occupation of Japan] with blue eyes.*
- *When the war was over, we were like two fighters shaking each other's hands and what I found through judo, the sensei [teachers] there were trying to build a bridge across the ocean through friendship, through a sport. I felt a lot of privileges that I was able to have more than the Japanese student... I sensed that part of it was really this thing of the countries coming together, friendship; the bridge across the ocean... so when I came back [to Japan] I felt almost like a spiritual obligation to do the best that I could to help judo grow.*

Toshihiko Koga

- *I went to meet her [Keiko Fukuda] in America to feel her judo spirit. And brought it back to Japan so I can pass it on.*

Describe Keiko Fukuda's friendship with her woman judo friend in Hawaii. How did she help Keiko after the end of World War II?

7. Reconnecting to Cultural Roots

What are some examples of Japanese culture that have been transmitted from Japan to the United States? Some examples include religion (Buddhism, Shinto), festivals (e.g., Cherry Blossom Festival in San Francisco's Japantown), foods (e.g., sushi), music (e.g., koto, shamisen, taiko).

What are some examples of cultural continuity and change in the Japanese-American community through the generations? If some traditions have changed through the generations, how have they changed? Is this positive or negative? Or both?

What are homelands? What are diasporas?

What are some examples of other Asian culture that have been transmitted from Asia to the United States? What are other examples? Why are ethnic communities created in the United States? What purpose(s) do they serve? San Francisco's Nihonmachi (Japantown) is an example of an ethnic community in the United States. What are others that you are aware of? (e.g., Little Italy in New York City, Little Saigon in Los Angeles, etc.)

8. Anniversaries

Keiko Fukuda was invited to the 50th anniversary (1932) of the Kodokan Judo Institute's founding in 1882. She also participated in a family reunion.

What purposes do reunions serve?

What are some examples of anniversaries? What are some examples of anniversaries that have been controversial? Can anniversaries be commemorated differently by different communities and/or countries? If so, how? What are some examples?

9. Japanese Culture

The film includes numerous glimpses into Japanese culture. What are some of these?

Some examples are: calligraphy, Japanese garden/carp, visiting graves, serving tea, traditional Japanese instruments: shamisen, koto, shakuhachi, taiko; religions: Buddhism and Shinto; other: food, dress (kimono), Japanese bride

10. Documentary Filmmaking

B-roll footage is the supplemental or alternate footage intercut with the main film. Archival footage is footage that may or may not be custom shot for use in a specific film. How does filmmaker Yuriko Gamo Romer utilize b-roll, archival footage, and historical photos in the film?

What might be some challenges to treating historical subject matter in film?

What approaches were effective in telling the story of Keiko Fukuda?

What image or quote will you remember or associate with the film?

Suggested Classroom Activities

The following list of activities offer a variety of ways students can consider themes and topics such as the history of judo, life choices, and women in sports that are addressed in the film. The timeline and discussion questions may be helpful in providing context and focus for the activities.

1. Write a letter from Jigoro Kano to Keiko Fukuda.
2. Write letters to the editor of a Kodokan Judo Institute newsletter. The letters should focus on your thoughts on Keiko Fukuda.
3. Design a birthday card for what would have been Keiko Fukuda's birthday on April 12, 2013, or design an anniversary program for a future event that honors Keiko Fukuda.
4. Develop lyrics for a song about Keiko Fukuda.
5. Develop a comic strip or political cartoon based on one or more of the key concepts in the film, e.g., women and equity, immigration, transmission of culture, gender roles.
6. Write a film review of *Mrs. Judo: Be Strong, Be Gentle, Be Beautiful*.

7. Craft haiku (17 syllables in a 5-7-5 phrase format) based on something you learned about judo in the film.
8. Craft poetry based on the notion of identity, conflict, or key life choices.
9. Referencing some of the quotes from the film, craft a 2–3-minute reader’s theater of two or more people in the film speaking. Work with two or more of your classmates to present this.
10. Develop a short 3–5-minute video about a sport or hobby that is of interest to you.
11. Write an essay based on the prompt, “Should any ethnic group be entitled to an ethnically-named community in the United States? Why or why not?”
12. Research your family’s immigration history. Develop a timeline of your family’s history in the United States.
13. Visit one of the judo websites listed on page 15 and write a research paper on Jigoro Kano and judo.
14. Write a research paper on one of the following topics:
 - a woman who managed to break a barrier
 - comparison of judo with another sport
 - World War II and its effect on professional sports
 - some aspect of Japanese culture depicted in the film



Keiko Fukuda begins teaching at Mills College, circa 1966. Courtesy of Shelley Fernandez.

Keiko Fukuda Judo Kata Camp, 1976. Courtesy of Soko Joshi Dojo.

Timeline

The following timeline of key historical events related to Japan and the United States and biographical events of Keiko Fukuda can serve as a useful reference for students who view the film. Some of the events are mentioned in the film, but the listing is not meant to be comprehensive.

1603–1868	Tokugawa period or Edo period
1853	U.S. Commodore Matthew Perry arrives in Japan which marks the beginnings of trade negotiations.
1856	First U.S. Consulate opens in Shimoda, Japan.
1860	First Japanese Embassy to the United States
1868	Meiji Restoration; ends Tokugawa period
Late 19th century	Japanese immigration to the United States and Hawai'i (annexed by the United States in 1898 as a territory) begins.
1870	First Japanese consular office opens in San Francisco, California.
1907	Gentlemen's Agreement; informal agreement between the United States and Japan that restricts Japanese immigration to the United States
1913, April 12	Keiko Fukuda, the granddaughter of Hachinosuke Fukuda, is born in Tokyo, Japan. H. Fukuda is the first teacher of jujitsu for Jigoro Kano, the founder of judo.
1924	Immigration Act; bans nearly all Japanese immigration to the United States.
1935	Keiko Fukuda begins studying judo at the Kodokan Judo Institute in Tokyo. She meets lifelong friend Peggy Osumi Tanaka from Hawaii.
1938	Jigoro Kano, Keiko Fukuda's mentor, dies.
1939–1945	Keiko Fukuda teaches judo in Tokyo during World War II.
1941	Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor; United States declares war on Japan.
1942	Executive Order 9066 signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt that begins the forced removal and incarceration of people of Japanese descent from the West Coast of the United States.

1945	End of World War II
1945–52	Allied Occupation of Japan
1951	San Francisco Peace Treaty and Security Treaty between the United States and Japan
1952	Security Treaty between the United States and Japan goes into effect.
1953	Keiko Fukuda's first official visit to the United States (Hawaii and California), followed by tours teaching judo in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the Philippines
1959	Hawai'i becomes 50th U.S. state.
1960	Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan
1964	Keiko Fukuda performs <i>Ju-no-kata</i> demonstration of women's judo as part of the introduction of judo at Olympic Summer Games in Tokyo, Japan.
1965	Immigration and Nationality Act; national origins quota system abolished.
1966	Keiko Fukuda's second official visit to the United States Keiko Fukuda establishes Soko Joshi Judo Club in San Francisco, and begins teaching at Mills College and San Francisco City College.
1967	Keiko Fukuda becomes Technical Advisor of the United States Judo Federation (USJF) Women's Division.
1972	Ryukyu Islands, including Okinawa, reverted to Japanese control.
1972	Keiko Fukuda attains 6th degree after Dr. Shelley Fernandez campaigns both the Kodokan Judo Institute and the USJF to end the policy of not allowing women to advance beyond the 5th degree.
1973	Keiko Fukuda publishes <i>Born for Mat: Ju-No-Kata Textbook</i> .
1980s–early 1990s	U.S.- Japan trade tensions
1981	Keiko Fukuda becomes a member of the U.S. Kodokan Committee.
1982	Keiko Fukuda becomes Chief Technical Advisor of the USJF Kata Committee.

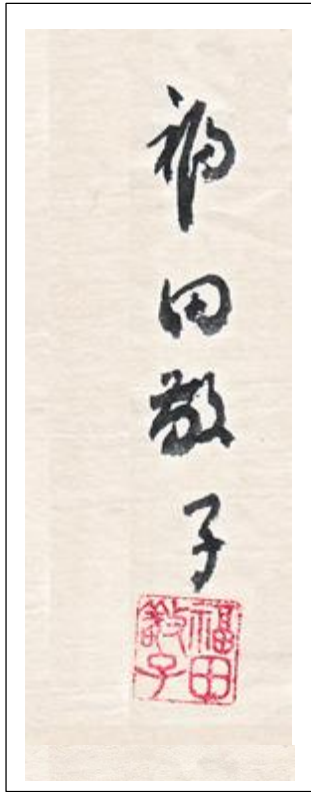
- 1984 Keiko Fukuda attains 7th degree.
- 1985 Keiko Fukuda becomes Judo Seminar Teacher's Institute Technical Advisor USJF/USA.
- 1988 Women's judo is introduced at Olympic Summer Games in Seoul, Korea.
- 1989 First Annual Keiko Fukuda International Kata Competition held. Keiko Fukuda becomes instructor for judo seminars in France and Norway.
- 1990 Keiko Fukuda is Recipient Medal of Honor from the Government of Japan and the Order of Sacred Treasure, Gold Rays with Rosette.
- 1991 Keiko Fukuda has a heart attack and triple-bypass surgery and within days, two valves occlude (collapse) causing a second heart attack. Without having another surgery, she recovers.
- 1992 Keiko Fukuda is the guest instructor of the judo seminar in France and recipient of Medal De la Ville De Paris from the city.
- 1992 [More than 50,000 members of the U.S. Armed Forces are stationed in Japan.](#)
- 1993 Keiko Fukuda becomes United States Judo Institute (USJI) and USJF Technical Advisor.
- 1994 Keiko Fukuda attains 8th degree red belt from both the USJF and the Kodokan Judo Institute.
- 2000 Keiko Fukuda attends the International Kata Competition at Orlando Florida as International *Nage-no-kata* Judge.
- 2001 U.S. Judo Federation awards Keiko Fukuda a 9th degree red belt, the only woman in the world to hold the title.
- 2004 Keiko Fukuda publishes second book, *Ju-No-Kata: A Kodokan Textbook*. She also writes an introduction to *Judo: History, Theory and Practice* co-authored by Russian Prime Minister and former President of Russia Vladimir Putin, Vasily Shestakov, and Alexey Levitsky.
- 2006 Keiko Fukuda attains second 9th degree red belt from the Kodokan Judo Institute in Japan.

- 2007 Peggy Tanaka, a good friend of Keiko Fukuda from Hawaii for more than 70 years, passes away.
- 2010 Keiko Fukuda is honorary Grand Marshal of Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival Parade.
- 2011 [Japan is the fourth largest trading partner with the United States.](#)
- 2012 Premiere of film *Mrs. Judo: Be Strong, Be Gentle, Be Beautiful* is held at the Castro Theater in San Francisco.
- 2013, February 9 Keiko Fukuda dies.
- 2013 A memorial for Keiko Fukuda is held at Herbst Pavillion in San Francisco.



Keiko Fukuda demonstrates *ju-no-kata*.
Circa 1979. Photo credit: Cathy Cade.

Glossary of Japanese Terms



This list is not meant to be comprehensive, but is a reference to Japanese terms and words used in the film. Macrons (as in *Tōkyō* 東京) are not used in the film. They are not used in this guide when the Japanese words appear in English sentences, e.g., Tokyo is the capital of Japan. [Illustration: "Fukuda Keiko" signature in Japanese calligraphy.]

Judo Terms

<i>kata</i> 形	forms, choreographed patterns of movement
<i>jū-no-kata</i> 柔の形	forms of gentleness; designed to teach the fundamental principles of judo
<i>randori</i> 乱取り	free sparring
<i>uke</i> 受	person "receiving" a technique

Japanese Words

Amerika
アメリカ United States of America

arigatō
ありがとう 有り難う thank you (informal)

dōmō arigatō gozaimasu
どうもありがとうございます
どうも有り難う御座います thank you (formal)

banzai
万歳 literal meaning is "10,000 years"; long life; often used in celebrating an accomplishment

dō
道 the art; the way

dōjō
道場 a formal training place for any of the Japanese arts such as karate and judo

<i>jinsei</i> 人生	life destiny
<i>jishin</i> 自身	self-confidence
<i>jū</i> 柔	gentleness; flexibility
<i>jūdō</i> 柔道	“the gentle way”; a martial art from Japan
<i>juijitsu or jujitsu</i> 柔術	a martial art from Japan consisting of grappling and striking techniques; judo was derived from juijitsu
<i>kagamibiraki</i> 鏡開き	a Japanese traditional ceremony which literally translates to “opening the mirror”; the opening of a cask of <i>sake</i> (rice wine) at a party or ceremony
<i>Kantō daishinsai</i> 関東大震災	the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923; Kanto (includes the greater Tokyo area) and is a geographical area of Honshu, the largest island of Japan
<i>kekkon</i> 結婚	marriage
<i>kokoro</i> 心	literally means “heart”; mind, spirit
<i>maru</i> 丸	the word <i>maru</i> meaning “circle” is often attached to Japanese ship names, e.g., Hikawa Maru, the ship that Jigaro Kano rode on
<i>matsuri</i> 祭	festival; Cherry Blossom Festival in San Francisco’s Japan Town is depicted in the film
<i>mikoshi</i> 神輿	portable Shinto shrine; depicted (with men standing on it) in Cherry Blossom Festival scene
<i>miai or omiai</i> 見合い お見合い	arranged marriage
<i>nattō</i> 納豆	fermented soy beans; Toshihiko Koga mentions “natto power” as he lifts a child up with one arm
<i>ogenki de</i> お元気で	stay healthy; take care

<i>onna</i> or <i>josei</i> 女 or 女性	woman
<i>samurai</i> 侍	military nobility of medieval and early-modern Japan; warrior class
<i>sekinin</i> 責任	responsibility
<i>senpai</i> 先輩	a senior, older students, e.g., someone who has practiced judo for a longer period of time than others
<i>sensei</i> 先生	teacher; also used to show respect to someone who has achieved a certain level of mastery in an art form or some other skill
<i>sensō</i> 戦争	war; in this film, the references to war are World War II references
<i>shōgun</i> 将軍	one of the (usually) hereditary military dictators of Japan from 1192 to 1867
<i>sōshiki</i> or <i>osōshiki</i> 葬式 or お葬式	funeral
<i>tamashi</i> 魂	spirit; soul
<i>Tennō</i> 天皇	Emperor of Japan; also more formally, <i>Tennōheika</i> , which is sometimes translated as “His Majesty the heavenly sovereign”
<i>Tōkyō</i> 東京	capital of Japan
<i>unmei</i> 運命	destiny; fate

Resources

Mrs. Judo: Be Strong, Be Gentle, Be Beautiful
a film documentary by Yuriko Gamo Romer
Flying Carp Productions, 2012
<http://www.mrsjudomovie.com/>

Stanford Program on International
and Cross-Cultural Education
Stanford University
<http://spice.stanford.edu>

International Judo Federation
<http://www.ijf.org/>

Kodokan Judo Institute:
<http://www.kodokan.org/>

Soko Joshi Judo Club
<http://www.sokojoshijudo.com>

United States Judo Association
<http://www.usja-judo.org/>

United States Judo Federation
<http://www.usjf.com>

USA Judo
<http://www.teamusa.org/USA-Judo>

About the Filmmaker: Yuriko Gamo Romer premiered *Mrs. Judo: Be Strong, Be Gentle, Be Beautiful* in 2012 at numerous film festivals, both nationally and internationally, and was recently awarded the “best documentary” at the International Sports Film Festival in Moscow. Her past film *Occidental Encounters* won numerous awards at film festivals internationally, among them a Student Academy Award, the Jimmy Stewart Memorial Crystal Heart Award, and a Silver Apple. In 2010, she completed *Friend Ships*, a short historical animation about John Manjiro, the inadvertent Japanese immigrant rescued by an American whaling captain. Yuriko is Japanese American, born in Japan, raised in the United States, and bilingual. She holds a master’s degree in documentary filmmaking from Stanford University and lives in San Francisco with her husband and son.

About the Author: Dr. Gary Mukai is the Director of the Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education (SPICE). Prior to joining SPICE in 1988, he was a teacher in Gunma Prefecture, Japan, and in California public schools for ten years. He received a bachelor of arts degree in psychology from U.C. Berkeley; a multiple subjects teaching credential from the Black, Asian, Chicano Urban Program, U.C. Berkeley’s Graduate School of Education; a master of arts degree in international comparative education from Stanford University’s Graduate School of Education; and a doctorate of education from the Leadership in Educational Equity Program, U.C. Berkeley’s Graduate School of Education.