Tokyo Rose Biography

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Biography

Ikuko Toguri D'Aquino was born on July 4, 1916, in Los Angeles, California. The daughter of Japanese immigrants, Toguri was raised in a predominantly white neighborhood and taught to speak English at an early age. She graduated from the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) with a zoology degree in June of 1941.

A few weeks after graduation, her mother's sister was taken ill in Japan, and Toguri was chosen to represent the family at the aunt's bedside. When war broke out between Japan and the United States on December 7, 1941, Toguri was classified as an enemy alien by the Japanese government and suspected of disloyalty by the U.S. government. She asked Japanese authorities to imprison her with other American nationals, but they refused.

Instead the Japanese military forced Toguri to work for Radio Tokyo, joining more than a dozen other English-speaking women who broadcast Axis propaganda to Allied soldiers in the South Pacific during World War II. The Allies' collective nickname for these female propagandists was "Tokyo Rose." Toguri was the only civilian at Radio Tokyo who chose not to renounce her U.S. citizenship, and yet, ironically, she became the only Tokyo Rose arrested by U. S. authorities.

Toguri was brought back to the United States in 1948 and indicted for treason. She was tried in a San Francisco federal district court the following year. The prosecution's case hinged on the testimony of two witnesses who said that they had worked with Toguri at Radio Tokyo during the war and remembered watching her broadcast Axis propaganda about the loss of U.S. ships. The jury deliberated for four days before returning a guilty verdict on one count of treason. Toguri was sentenced to ten years in prison and given a $10,000 fine. She was released from a federal penitentiary in 1956. In 1977 President Gerald Ford pardoned Toguri after the prosecution's two key witnesses recanted their testimony.