

George Hosato Takei Citation

Wednesday 28 September 2022 at 12:30pm

Officiator: Ms Pauline Carr, Chancellor

Award being conferred: Doctor of the University (DUniv)

Citation delivered by: Professor David Lloyd, Vice Chancellor and President

Chancellor, the University of South Australia confers the Honorary Award of Doctor of the University to a person of eminence who has made a distinguished contribution to public service, or a field of academic endeavour or artistic pursuit. It is my pleasure to present George Hosato Takei for the honorary award of Doctor of the University, in recognition of his distinguished service to the community.

George Takei is an actor, social justice activist, social media mega-power, *New York Times* bestselling author.

He is, however, best known for his portrayal of Hikaru Sulu in the acclaimed television and film series *Star Trek*.

Star Trek was Gene Roddenberry's utopian vision of space pioneers from varied backgrounds working together in harmony. Their vehicle was a star ship, the USS Enterprise, which was tasked with a five-year mission of space exploration.

The series was cancelled after just three.

However, what was originally a funky little program about space exploration grew into a massive franchise with conventions, an animated series, 13 motion pictures, and five TV spin-offs. And turned George Takei into a cult icon.

The first six Star Trek movies featured George Takei as the helmsman of the star ship USS Enterprise until finally getting promoted to captain of his own star ship in the 6th and final movie of that original series.

Although most famous for his role as Sulu, Mr Takei's acting career has spanned five decades, with more than 40 feature films and hundreds of television guest-starring roles to his credit.

George Takei spent ages 5 to almost 9 imprisoned by the U.S. government in Japanese American internment camps. A relentless optimist, he believed the shameful legacy of incarcerating an estimated 120,000 Americans during World War II would never be forgotten or duplicated.

He has since become a spokesperson for former Japanese American internees and the \$20,000 reparation cheque he received for his own incarceration he donated to the Japanese American National Museum for which he founded and serves as a trustee.

Now a community activist, he serves as chair of the council of governors of East West Players, the nation's foremost Asian Pacific American theatre. He is also a member of the Human Rights Campaign, the largest national lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender political organization. Mr Takei is Chairman Emeritus of the Japanese American National Museum's Board of Trustees; a member of the US-Japan Bridging Foundation Board of Directors; and served on the Board of the Japan-United States Friendship Commission under President Bill Clinton. In recognition of his contribution to the Japan-United States relationship, in 2004, Takei was conferred with the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette, by His Majesty, the Emperor of Japan.

He even has had an asteroid between Mars and Jupiter named in his honour -7307 Takei - for his role in Star Trek and for his work for the Japanese American Citizens League and the Human Rights Campaign.

Mr. Takei was inducted into the Hollywood walk of fame for his work in Television in 1986.

In 2007 he was given a Lifetime Achievement Award by the San Diego Asian Film Festival.

In 2012 he was given a LGBT Humanist award by the American Humanist Association.

In 2014 he was given the GLAAD Vito Russo award, which is an award presented to a LGBT media professional who has made significant differences in promoting equality for the LGBT community.

In 2015 he was honoured with the Distinguished Medal of Honor for Lifetime Achievement and Public Service by the Japanese American National Museum.

Mr Takei has been a significant influence on LGBT rights in America as an activist on both social media and in political movements. His decision to come out was inspired by the then-Governor of California's veto against granting marriage equality. He then became one of the few outspoken gay actors at the time.

Mr Takei has witnessed his country change, often for the better. "When I was growing up," he told the Washington Post, "I couldn't marry a white woman due to anti-miscegenation laws. And now I'm married to a white dude!"

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