



## **CIVICS LESSON**

### **Simone Biles**

#### **Triumph of Spirit over Stature**

Simone Biles is small in stature: 4 feet eight inches; 104 pounds. Yet Biles is big in athletic achievement — she's the most decorated U.S. gymnast of all time.

This same formula worked for another trailblazing athlete — Miki Gorman. Gorman was born Michiko Suwa in 1935 in occupied China, where her father served in Japan's imperial army. During her childhood Gorman's diet consisted of soybeans and rice. And she had to walk six miles each way to attend school. She described one of the challenges of her upbringing:

*My father returned from the military looking like a skeleton. Well, we all looked like skeletons. We were always hungry.*

Gorman's family moved to Tokyo but during World War II. She and her younger twin brothers took flight from the city before it was fire-bombed. She survived her troubled growing up years and emigrated to the U.S. when she was 28.

Living in Pennsylvania in the 1960s, Gorman worked as a nanny then enrolled at a secretarial college. She eventually married and settled in Los Angeles. Gorman was only 5 feet tall and weighed 87 pounds. She reflected on her challenge:

*I was embarrassed that I was so small. My husband helped me go to the gym where he was a member, and I began to run.*

She didn't gain weight but she conquered her uneasiness about her small size by running, and she just kept running. The more she ran, the less sheepish she became and the faster she got. Gorman emerged as a women's marathon pioneer, winning both the Boston and New York City marathons twice; she is the only

woman to have won both marathons twice as well as the first of only two woman runners to win both races in the same year. Gorman also set the world's fastest time by a woman in a certified marathon race in 1973.

No matter your size, your commitment to excel is more important. Like Biles and Gorman, the strength of your spirit will triumph over the smallness of your stature.