From Coast and Camp to the Inland Empire
Japanese-American Relocation and Evacuation to Eastern Washington during World War II

Track 1 "Introduction"

Yesterday, December 7, 1941, a date which will live in infamy, the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the empire of Japan. (Franklin Roosevelt Speech)

On December 7, 1941, Japan bombed American ships and planes at the Pearl Harbor military base in Hawaii. Over 3,500 servicemen were wounded or killed. The next day, December 8, President Franklin Roosevelt declared the United States at war with Japan, and America entered into World War II.

We had attended Sunday school, had gone to worship service, and then we were downstairs fixing our lunch. And then I don't know who announced it, but they said, "They've bombed Pearl Harbor." And everyone said, "What?" "And Japan—There's going to be—There's a war." And we just all started screaming and we just all flew home. And some girls went home and their fathers were already gone.(Toki Sekijima)

As America focused on the war effort, young Americans of Japanese descent struggled to understand the discrimination and prejudice that surfaced after December 7. As the second generation children of Japanese immigrants, these young people are known as Nisei. Their parents are known as Issei or the first generation. Because they were born in the United States, Nisei are American citizens.

I think I was a sophomore, junior in high school when Pearl Harbor came along. I sat in the very front row Monday morning after Pearl Harbor came—happened. I had a bunch of high school friends that I always sat with, ate with in the cafeteria. I lost a couple of friends because of my race. And, oh yeah, we still talked to each other, but my mind kind of goes back to December 8, Monday morning, the coolness that I felt from some of these guys, just a couple of them.(George Yamada)

For these young Americans, the four years of World War II reflected how the rights promised to all citizens of the United States in the Constitution could be compromised. People of Japanese ancestry living on the west coast were forced to leave their homes, some to relocate inland, and 120,000 to be incarcerated in internment camps.

[T]he Columbia River was the dividing line. All people who lived east of the Columbia didn't have to--be interned, but all those west of the Columbia did. (Ada Honda)

Two-thirds of those interned in camps were American citizens. Less than ten percent of people of Japanese ancestry were allowed to remain outside the camps. This is their story. The story of Nisei who were able to escape long periods of internment by voluntarily moving or relocating eastward. It is the story from outside the camps.

Track 2 "Issei: First Generation Immigrants"

During the late nineteenth century, Japanese immigrants began coming to the U.S. In Japan only the eldest son could inherit the family land and business. Therefore, many younger sons immigrated to the United States.

And the oldest son would inherit that big farm. But he had all these other—three other—let's see, four other boys. So he had to provide for them, so he came to America, and then he called them up one by one. And he settled his three sons here. (Anonymous)

Issei worked in back-breaking jobs on railroads, on farms and in people's homes as servants.

They came and they were used mostly for hard labor work, like working on the railroads or on the farm. In California we have what we call harvesting salt. And that's all backbreaking job. And that's what they were hired to come here. (Tom Kitayama)

Issei expected to earn their fortunes and return to Japan. However, expectation was not always reality.

I think they came like a lot of other Isseis, you know, Isseis, the first-generation. And my dad came over thinking he'll come over…., he was going to earn money so he could go back and finish his schooling back in Japan. Well, he got over here and he didn't make that kind of money. So he never got back, back to Japan. And in the meantime, I guess, they decided he should get married … And then they started having kids and then they found out they probably would never be able to go back to Japan again. And the first two of my sisters have Japanese names, and then there's Lillian and me. They knew by the time we came along, they weren't going back again. And so they gave us American names. (Ellen Kubokawa)

As soon as they arrived in America, Issei adjusted to a new culture and way of life. They ate different foods, wore different clothing, and spoke a different language than they had in Japan. Listen to a humorous anecdote about an Issei man trying to "look like everyone else":

…[W]hen he took the public company's streetcar, or whatever was …there in those days, he noticed that all of the people would have newspapers … so he'd buy a newspaper and get on the bus, or streetcar, I think it was. But then he'd hold the paper and he didn't know if it was right side up or upside down. (laughter) But he wanted to look like the rest of those people. (Seiko Edamatsu)

Because there were few Japanese women in the United States, Japanese men wrote home to their families in Japan to arrange a marriage with a "picture bride." The man and woman exchanged pictures and the marriage was organized by a match-maker. Picture brides went through a marriage ceremony before leaving for America. The bride and groom had another ceremony in the U.S.

Like their husbands, Issei women adjusted to a new way of life in America.

But she had a difficult time because her father sent a lot of beautiful kimonos with her. You know, that's the only thing she wore over there…. So she found out that it was very, very inconvenient to be wearing Japanese kimonos over here. So it took quite a thing to change to wearing American garments. But she came as a picture bride. (Seiko Edamatsu)

The Issei, and Asian immigrants in general, were not always welcome in the United States. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 prohibited Chinese immigration. Later, the National Origins Act of 1924 barred the immigration of Japanese. In addition, Asian immigrants could not become citizens because they were considered non-whites. This meant they could not own land, vote, or have any of the rights associated with citizenship.

It's hard to understand nowadays, but back then there was so many laws against Asians. It went into the hundreds, you know, before the war. Like, you couldn't own land, or you couldn't intermarry, or you couldn't become citizens. (Sam Mitsui)

… [A]ny Asian was not eligible to become a naturalized citizen. So, you know, regardless of how long they had lived here, they were still Japanese. And so there was always this. It was not a stigma, but they recognized that their state was still tenuous. (Fred Shiosaki)

White Americans saw Asians as threatening their jobs and financial security. Many Asians were unable to find jobs other than as laborers or servants, even those with college degrees.

And those days, we Japanese did not have a choice. We women didn't have a choice of all these different vocations we could go into. So there was either nursing or go into business, you know, be a secretary, or teaching. (Anonymous)

Track 3 "Nisei: Second Generation Citizens"

It was in this environment that the Nisei, who were American citizens by birth, were growing up as grade-schoolers, high-schoolers, and college students before the beginning of World War II. Some Nisei grew up in city suburbs, while others lived in the inner cities and still others grew up on country farms. Some of these areas had a lot of ethnic diversity, such as the Seattle neighborhood this Nisei woman grew up in.

…[O]ur neighborhood was pretty diversified. There was a Serbian on one end, and then a Russian family. They had twins. And then a Caucasian—more like a English type. And then ourselves. And then the stairs that went up. And then there was this Black family. We called them colored at that time. And then there's another family, Portuguese, and they had the store across the street. (Heidi Kitayama)

In contrast, another Nisei man recalls few ethnic groups in the Seattle neighborhood he grew up in.

The make up was quite interesting.…[C]lose to fifty percent were the Sephardic people and the rest were made up of Chinese, Japanese and a handful of the African Americans. (Bill Nishimura)

In Washington State's urban areas, such as Seattle and Spokane, Japanese people tended to live close to each other in sections known as Japan Towns. Listen to this description of the Japan Town in Spokane in the 1920s and thirties.

And there used to be sort of a Japan Town. Laundry, restaurant, lots of hotels, run by Japanese. And we used to play—our playground, so to speak, was Trent Alley, where we grew up. (George Yamada)

Nisei grew up concerned with the same issues as other Depression-era Americans: games, toys, school, and friends. Listen as these Nisei remember growing up in Seattle.

We all skated on the sidewalk. The kids played games and baseball on the street corner. It was safe everywhere. It was very nice in that respect. We played hopscotch and jacks on the sidewalk in front of our home. … [M]y friends and I … we just played in our neighborhoods, played on our lawns, under the tree with our dolls. We only had one doll… (Toki Sekijima)

…[R]ight up the corner there used to be two telephone poles and they had lights on. We used to make our own backboards, climb up—borrow a ladder from someplace and nail up a basket. And then instead of, you know, these fancy hoops they have now, we had—we just got a hoop from a barrel or something and then we used that and we'd shoot baskets down there, play basketball. And then they had manhole covers on all four corners so we'd play baseball and use those as bases. (laughs) (James Mizuki)

In some urban areas, Nisei grew up with many other Japanese friends and neighbors, and there was not much mixing among Japanese and other races.

[M]ost of my friends were all Niseis until I got to high school and then it was a mixture, Caucasians and Niseis. (James Mizuki)

Japanese mission churches, Japanese social clubs, and Japanese language schools supported many activities for Issei and Nisei.

…[B]ut we did have a lot of picnics because people from the different areas in Japan they had clubs, you know. … [T]here might be two picnics going on at the same time at the park, you know, different areas of the park. So the children would go and race in different ones. And then our churches would have picnics,…. (Seiko Edamatsu)

Like many other immigrants to America, Issei wanted their children to attend language schools to learn their native language and customs, so they would not lose their heritage in America. After attending public school all day, Nisei attended Japanese language schools.

They wanted us to learn how to read and write and speak. But to me, personally, it was a chore. (Dan Matsumoto)

[W]e had the local Isseis teach Japanese. I guess they really had to pound it into us, but I don't regret it. (George Yamada)

[M]y mother used to talk to us in Japanese and we'd reply in English. My father talked to us most of the time in English, so consequently, my Japanese was rather limited. (laughs) (James Mizuki)

The issue of language school for Nisei illustrates a tension in many Japanese families between traditional values and American culture. Listen as one Nisei tells about the conflict between language school and school sports as he was growing up in Seattle.

And we used to have to go to Japanese school after grade school. …[S]o we didn't particularly care to go to school all day, … so when the war started in December, they had to close all the Japanese language schools down, so my brother and I were really happy about not having to go to school, Japanese school, after grade school.… [T]hen when I was in high school I turned out for organized sports at the school,… it gave me more time to do that. But if I'd had to go to the language school, then I couldn't turn out for sports after a regular school day. (Dan Matsumoto)

In contrast, some parents did not send their children to language school as this Nisei woman, who grew up in Seattle, remembers.

… [W]e lived not even a half a block from one, but my father said that we're living here in America and so he thought that the English language was enough. But part of it was, I think, the expense.…[I]t was expensive to go to school. (Seiko Edamatsu)

However, many Issei dreamed of sending their children to Japan for a traditional Japanese education. They wanted their children to retain Japanese values and traditions.

They had, in fact, envisioned that they would, as soon as I graduated from grammar school, that they would send my brother and I back to Japan for some education, for, like, during the high school years…. But I really dreaded having to. (Dan Matsumoto)

Nisei who did go to school in Japan and returned to the U.S. were called Kibeis. Anti-Asian immigration laws made it difficult for Kibeis to return to the United States, even though they were U.S. citizens. Listen as one man remembers being kept in the jail-like immigration station in Seattle when he returned to the U.S. after his schooling in Japan.

In fact, I think I was only about fifteen years old and was thrown in with seven other adult[s] and it was a dangerous situation… And after about the third day, I wanted to get out there. "You have to put me back on the boat and send me back. This is not right." …And why I was there, I don't know, because, you know, I had citizenship….. They go through, the Kibeis all gone through that, I understand. (Ed Tsutakawa)

For Nisei who were not sent to school in Japan, the transition from grade school to high school was also eye-opening, as this woman remembers from her youth in Seattle.

When we were in elementary school, it was just everyone was just one student body. We functioned that way. But soon as we went to Garfield High School, races segregated, and we had our own activities, we had our own organizations.… We had everything kind of by ourselves, because it was kind of an unwritten law. (Toki Sekijima)

Outside of school Nisei continued to participate in Japanese community events. Nisei sports teams from around the Northwest traveled to cities like Seattle for basketball, baseball, and judo tournaments with other Nisei teams. These tournaments were important events for the Japanese community because it brought together Japanese from many areas of the Northwest.

…[T]he people from different areas would have their teams and then they'll have a tournament in Seattle. And so the teams from outlying areas—well, from Spokane and from Yakima Valley and then this team from Idaho—they would come in and they'd have the tournaments…. So it was really a happy time, you know, when all these young men and their followers would come in. (Seiko Edamatsu)

Conferences sponsored by the Japanese Christian churches also brought young Nisei together for yearly conferences. The connections made at these conferences would become valuable after the Pearl Harbor attack and the declaration of evacuation.

… a lot of the conferences were held in Seattle. We had people from Spokane that came. And every Thanksgiving, the weekend of Thanksgiving, we used to have what they called the Y.P.C.C., which was Young People's Christian Conference …. And so we knew a lot of the young people from Spokane and Yakima, Wapato. (Seiko Edamatsu)

While Japanese communities in larger cities provided their residents with activities and support groups, those Japanese in rural areas and smaller towns in Washington State were sometimes the only Asians in their areas. Unlike Nisei who lived in areas with a larger Japanese population, Nisei living in rural and remote areas did not go to language schools, did not have Japanese social groups, and were not exposed to as much traditional Japanese culture. Listen as one Nisei woman describes growing up in Walla Walla, Washington.

…[T]here were only, at that time, three families, three Japanese families. And in our early years, there were people that came and gone, couples that had businesses, or they were single people…. So, … everything that we did was–-with our–-you know, the Walla Walla community. …[T]here was no Japanese ethnic activities of any kind. (Ada Honda)

[W]e had a lot of acquaintances, but socially, I never went to the Caucasian people's homes for, we were never invited to parties—dinner, …I don't know how to explain it, we just lived a very simple life and we didn't know, we didn't know any different, (Ada Honda)

Another Nisei woman who grew up in Kelso, Washington remembers that she and her friends were not concerned with physical differences, even though they all looked very different.

... [Y]ou don't think of yourself as being that different. Even though I knew we had our differences. We had a red head, you know, and then a real dark brown auburn hair, and then the four of us would run around together. And Edith was kind of like a dishwater blond. And then there's me with my black hair. And we all looked different, all looked different. But we just kind of all bonded together. (Ellen Kubokawa)

Though they lived in different places and experienced different childhoods, Nisei living in cities and rural areas were similar in their value systems. They were reminded of their obligation to family honor, a strong value in Japanese culture.

[S]he'd say to us, "Don't you disgrace us." Every time we left the house she would say that. "Don't you bring shame on us." (Mii Tai)

And respect and honor extended beyond traditional ties to Japan. It extended to the country they called their own: the United States. In this poignant memory, one Nisei man tells about the gift his father brought from Japan for his elementary school in the 1930s.

[M]y grandmother, when she was near her deathbed, when I was in grade school, my father went to Japan to see her and he brought back a gift, but the only gift he brought back, not for us kids or folks. He brought back an American flag. Silk. The size of the flag was like you put on the stage and he gave it to Madrona Grade School where my sister and I, at that time, were still attending. (Anonymous)

But acts of American patriotism like this were quickly forgotten when America entered World War II in 1941. Issei and Nisei found themselves labeled as enemies and traitors. Not even citizenship had any effect on the way Nisei were treated during the war by the government and by their fellow Americans.

Track 4 "Pearl Harbor Hysteria"

Immediately following the news of the Pearl Harbor attacks, the FBI began arresting men in the Japanese community who they suspected of having significant ties to Japan.

... [W]hen the FBI came to pick my father up, they—he wasn't there, ... and so my brother—they took my brother—and they went down to find my father. And my brother said, "Oh, he may be over here having coffee." And they said, "Oh, no, he generally has coffee at such-and-such time." In other words, he was being watched before Pearl Harbor. (Anonymous)

Eventually, many of these men were sent to Justice Department camps in the interior for questioning by the FBI.
[A]*nd of course he was in Missoula, Montana, and we didn't have any way of contacting him. There was no correspondence or anything, so we just—I think he was able to write letters, you know, it was censored and so on. But then he could send letters to my mother. And, of course, that's all the correspondence we had with him.* (Jack Hisayasu)

And it wasn't just the loss of their fathers and husbands that was difficult for the remaining Issei and Nisei to deal with. They were faced with the suspicions of people they had once trusted.

[I]t was terrible because, if we ever had felt discriminated … before, we really you know, really found out who your friends were I tell you. (Ada Honda)

And I remember going to the store to buy something, and the fellow that owns the store says, "Yeah, I hear your father is a spy."… And I said, "Well, he's not a spy. They're just putting all the people that go"—he used to go in and out the consulate,…. So I said, "It's natural that they would grab him, you know." … [T]hey said, "Oh, there's got to be something." So I says, "Fine." And I never went back to that store. (Anonymous)

It was not only on the coast that Issei were arrested. Inland, Japanese men were arrested at a wedding reception in Spokane.

The wedding was in the morning and in the evening, they had a reception at the Desert Hotel, in the banquet room. And about midway through the reception, we were descended [on] by the FBI …and the Spokane Police Department. (Anonymous)

They had a whole bunch of Japanese there and they kept them there for hours, you know, the FBIs did. And when they picked up Mr. Kasai, Mrs. Kasai told me later that they came in, wouldn't say a word, and grabbed him and just dragged him right out and wouldn't say where he was going or anything. (Mii Tai)

Even after arresting many men in the Japanese community, the FBI still called into question the loyalty of the remaining Issei.

… I recall that some point they called every Issei parent, or Issei, down to FBI and they interviewed them. I can remember they—we drove, my mother and father—we drove downtown with them and we waited in the car, and they went—I think, probably, the federal building and they were interviewed. (Fred Shiosaki)

In addition to taking their community leaders, fathers and husbands, the government also froze bank accounts in the Japanese community and people were ordered to surrender any weapons and suspicious items.

… I know that when the police came to our house, .. they just totally frightened my mother to death, … they took a lot of her belongings, and she didn't know enough to say that, "why are you taking this, you can't take it, we need a written paper saying that you are taking it so that we can get it back," so none of the things that were ever taken from us was ever returned (Ada Honda)

My brothers were in Boy Scouts and they had homing pigeons as one of their projects they were going to do. …. I remember the FBI coming to the house and telling my Aunt Lois that those pigeons definitely had to go because they were probably sending messages to someone, you know. And we didn't even know any other Japanese or anything, you know, so I don't know who they'd be sending messages to. But it was pretty bizarre. (Suzie Yamada)

In addition to having their property taken, many Japanese lost their jobs because of the curfew laws and the travel restrictions imposed on them after the war began. Issei and Nisei were banned from going near certain buildings and areas, such as post offices, airfields, and public works buildings because the government feared they would commit acts of sabotage and treason.

… [A]t the onset of war, all the first-generation, Isseis, were laid off from the railroad, because we were not permitted to walk under the Union Pacific railroad tracks, which was, sort of, a roadway built up, railroad tracks that we had to walk under…. [T]he FBI says, "You aren't allowed to walk under these railroad trestles to get to work," so Great Northern had no choice but to lay off all the Japanese. (George Yamada)

[O]f course we, we felt the discrimination—and we weren't allowed to go near the post offices or the railroad stations… (Ada Honda)

We used to go by the Boeing Airfield …And when December 7 came, I couldn't travel that way because everybody of Japanese ancestry, our travel was restricted. (Heidi Kitayama)

Sometimes Japanese businesses and homes were broken into. But the authorities made no effort to stop these physical manifestations of prejudice, even when they happened to American citizens.

And then what happened with me is we had some problems at the house. A man broke into our house and back into my bedroom. And I woke up and I saw this dark form over me and he had taken my covers off. And I screamed…. So when I woke up and screamed, I could see this dark form walking out of my room, you know, kind of running. … I could barely walk downstairs to tell Dad what happened. And then I said to Dad, I said, "We'd better call the police." And he says, "It's no use. Lot of our friends are having the house broken into. The police didn't even bother to come." Because we were Japanese, we were enemies. And so he said, "There's no need to call." (Seiko Edamatsu)

Even on the streets, Japanese were openly targeted as traitors who were guilty of starting the war with Japan.

And I remember my mother and I taking the bus downtown, and this bus driver he just yelled and screamed and said, "We have two Japanese, good for nothing," you know, and said such mean things to us. But everybody kept quiet. And, gee, we were glad to get off the bus. (Anonymous)

One Caucasian man remembers his father, a policeman, arresting Japanese people at the waterfront in Seattle just after the Pearl Harbor attack.

My father was a policeman in Seattle. There was a lot of prejudice in Seattle. ...Being a policeman, they had to arrest some of the Japanese people that were—He made the claim that they'd find them down on the waterfront waving flashlights in the air, trying to attract, they hoped, Japanese planes. And they'd arrest them. ...From the standpoint of my father being a

policeman, I heard a lot of comments that were negative towards the Japanese. Definitely. (Jack Starrett)

Track 5 "Prelude to Evacuation"

Nisei watched their fathers and uncles being arrested, their parents' property being taken by the FBI, and their own movements restricted by curfew laws. As they observed these events taking place, they felt their worlds changing.

I 'member when—see Pearl Harbor was on a Sunday, that evening, … and my brother says, "You know what? You're gonna have to give up all your friends, the majority of your close friends." I said, "Why?" He says, "We'll probably be asked to leave," …. (Anonymous)

Continuing their everyday activities was difficult. Even going to school was tense and uncomfortable. Listen as one Nisei woman tells about going to school on Monday, December 8, 1941.

I was in high school. I was a junior in high school. And there was an … all school assembly that we had to go into the auditorium to sit…. And it was very icy,… as if we were the ones that caused it. It was very icy. …[T]hat's how it was. But I think we listened to President Roosevelt's speech when we went into the auditorium. And so there was a hush …It was hard to go to school. (Mary Hosoda)

One of the most striking responses to the Pearl Harbor bombing was the reaction of the Chinese community. Fearing that they would be grouped with the Japanese because of their looks, Chinese people set about distinguishing themselves from the Japanese.

[O]ne of the girls said she went to Garfield High School everyday with a Chinese girl friend. The day of Pearl Harbor, December 8, she refused to have anything to do with her….. And she wore "I am a Chinese" button, because she felt so threatened. (Toki Sekijima)

After the Pearl Harbor attack, people of Japanese ancestry were seen as potential traitors and threats to military security. On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which targeted the Japanese by requiring them to leave their homes, businesses and possessions on the west coast and move inland. Although the U.S. was also at war with Germany and Italy, German Americans and Italian Americans on the west coast were not required to move. Listen as one Caucasian woman recalls the rationalization for this difference in treatment.

Well, I know during the World War II there was a lot of prejudice against Germans. But the thing is that they looked more like—they were Caucasians. Whereas Japanese were Orientals and their looks stood out. And besides, Germany didn't declare war on us at the time, whereas Japan did. So that made a difference didn't it? (Joyce Starrett)

National security became more important than civil rights. The exclusion and internment of people of Japanese ancestry was accepted because it seemed vital to national security.

[W]e heard about that. Yes. And we accepted that, at least I did. I could see that it's terrible to happen. But I bought the President's fireside message. "Terrible thing to do, but we have to do it. It's national security and we can't take any chances." (Loren Gothberg)

Because the U.S. feared an attack on the west coast, it was only Japanese living on the coast who were targeted for internment. Those who lived far enough inland were allowed to stay in their homes; they were not considered a high security risk. Washington State was divided into three military zones. The Columbia River was the dividing line between the two zones which people of Japanese ancestry had to leave and the zone where they were allowed to remain.

The state of Washington was broken into three zones. Zone one was here till the Cascades. And zone two was from the east of the Cascades to Moses Lake. And zone three was east of there. So if you were in zone three, why you were free to go any place east of there, clear across the country. Wapato and Yakima were included in zone two, so those people down there had to move, they were interned. (Dan Matsumoto)

Track 6 "Journey Inland: Voluntary Evacuation"

Beginning in February and March 1942, Japanese families living on the west coast were given the option to voluntarily move east. Though this option was called voluntary evacuation, it was expected that all people of Japanese ancestry would be leaving the west coast in a very short time. Out of the thousands of people of Japanese ancestry living on Washington's west coast, 200 voluntarily evacuated to Spokane, Moses Lake, Pullman and other areas of Eastern Washington.

The government said, "If you had any relatives or if you had means of subsistence, as long as you weren't dependent on the government for your board and room and subsistence and so on." We were able to move east of the mountains. ... [W]e decided to go to Spokane. (Jack Hisayasu)

we all evacuated together, because my oldest sister was ill, ... we didn't know what the future was. "Where are we going?" No one knew. "How long are we going to be gone?" No one knew the answer to that. ... Not knowing, my parents decided, well, if there's a possibility of evacuating voluntarily, we'd better take it for the sake of my sister. (Bill Nishimura)

Because they had only a few days to move, Japanese families sold their businesses, homes, and belongings for any price offered. Most people only received a fraction of what their possessions were worth, and left behind family heirlooms that were lost forever.

We just had forty-eight hours. You just get rid of your business and you do the best you can and discard everything…, when people talk about picture of years back, we don't have any. (Bill Nishimura)

Some people were fortunate to have good neighbors who helped them move or store their belongings.

We had a deadline. We only had, I think, as I recall, three days to move. … Fortunately, our neighbor across the street, … They came over and said, "Just leave everything there. You don't have to pack anything." Later, after we left, they would pack everything up and move it for us; put it in their truck and send it over to Spokane. So all we did was to take whatever we could in the car. And so that's how we left Seattle. (Dan Matsumoto)

Some Japanese had relatives living inland who were able to offer their homes as refuge.

It's my father's brother that had the farm in Spokane, as to where we moved. … I have another uncle. My father's older brother was here with his family. So both families moved to the farm with my uncle in Spokane. So that was the only reason we were able to move. Otherwise there was no choice for us, but to go to internment camp. … Both families left in their family car and then loaded up as much as they could take. And we moved to the farm. And my uncle there took us in. (Dan Matsumoto)

[W]e left everything. And it was just fortunate that my other uncle who lived in Spokane, he had a farm. And so we evacuated to his farm and stayed there until we got established. (Sumio Matsumoto)

Some young Nisei also voluntarily evacuated on their own without their families and without any promise of safety in the places they moved to. Listen as one woman remembers coming to Spokane by herself in 1942.

But it was scary when I first came here, because when I got off the train I didn't know where to go, so I took a cab and asked the cabbie to take me to some nice Japanese hotel. He drove around and around and went back to the one on … Skid Row. … And I took a room. Put my bag in the room and then went downstairs …. And I went down there and went up to one of the hotels and there was girl I knew. …[S]o she called some of my friends and they immediately came and picked me up. (Seiko Edamatsu)

Fortunately, this woman had friends in the Spokane Japanese community who took her in and helped her get started. These were friends she had met in Seattle when church groups came to stay at her father's hotel.

… [S]he greeted me and she found out that I had taken a room at the hotel. She wouldn't even let me go down. She gave the boys the keys…and said, "Check her out and bring the bag." And she said, "You can stay with us." … And I think she was sort of ostracized because she had taken me in. You know, people thought that maybe the FBI's checking on me, and why are they taking me in. (Seiko Edamatsu)

College students from the University of Washington in Seattle, who were able to transfer to a school inland, also braved the unknown and traveled to their new schools, with no family to support them.

But when this thing happened that we knew we had to leave, the Dean of Women called me to her office and told me, you know, "Don't feel bad," and "It'll turn out better." And she says, "And

keep a record of everything that happens. Keep a diary, now." … I said to myself, "My world's coming apart and she's asking me to keep a diary." (laughter) (Heidi Kitayama)

Although some Inland Northwest universities accepted Nisei transfer students easily, there were also problems with quota systems and communities suspicious of Japanese people. One organization, the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council, devoted itself to finding colleges and universities for Nisei to attend. Listen as these Nisei remember the difficult journey from the University of Washington in Seattle, to the University of Idaho in Moscow, and finally to Washington State College in Pullman.

…[W]e were supposed to go to Idaho, originally. (James Mizuki)

…[T]hey were looking for some students, so my sister heard about it and then … I says, "Well, let's go." And then get some money from my father and—he didn't have much. He says, "Well, this is all I can give you guys." And so we went.…[T]here was six of us. We left on April 13, 1942.… And we were assigned different families to stay with and I was with a family—Floyd Trail—and they were living outside of town. (James Mizuki)

… [O]nly three or four of us were going to go to school at University of Idaho—but they thought a whole slew of us were coming,… and some people were against any of us coming,…. (Anonymous)

… [B]ut I know the two gals had to spend a night in jail for protection.…[B]ecause the town folks were threatening us, threatening they were gonna get rid of those guys.… And then I don't know what happened. University of Idaho wouldn't enroll us, so we moved over to Pullman. (James Mizuki)

But voluntary evacuation became more of a problem than a solution. Only a few hundred people of Japanese ancestry volunteered to leave the west coast. This left several thousand people on the coast who were deemed a national security risk. In addition, inland communities, like Moscow, Idaho, feared their towns would be overrun with Japanese. In order to quicken the evacuation process and squelch hysteria, the American government decided to begin forcibly evacuating people of Japanese ancestry to assembly centers and internment camps.

Track 7 "Journey Inland: From the Camps"

In response to the panic and hysteria caused by voluntary evacuation, the government began forcibly relocating the several thousand people of Japanese ancestry living on the west coast to federal assembly centers and internment camps. By May 1942, all of western Washington's Japanese inhabitants had been sent to relocation camps in California, Idaho, and as far east as Wyoming and Arkansas. They were instructed to bring only what they could carry and were forced to sell their remaining possessions for a fraction of their value.

… I was fifteen, I was a freshman in high school when the state patrol came and picked us up and took us to Everett [Washington] and put us on a train to Tule Lake [Internment Camp in

California]. ….[T]hey only gave us a few days and we could only take two suitcases,…. (Sam Mitsui)

One of my household chores was dusting … our furniture. And so right in the morning—we must have gotten up very early—I dusted everything in the house, just for old time's sake. And we shut the door and left…. (Toki Sekijima)

Families also had to leave behind pets, which were not permitted in camps or assembly centers.

[A]nd I remember sitting on the back porch with my pup and saying, "What are we gonna do," that we'd move. I was concerned about my dog. And that's another tragic story, I just couldn't believe. … And so I took him down to Lake Washington, took him down to Lake Washington about a week before we were going to leave and I released him. But he found his way back. That was a long way back. And so the only thing I could do was call the dog pound and they took him…. (Anonymous)

The camps were cramped, dusty, and ill-equipped for the 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry who were housed there. One of these camps, Minidoka, was located in southern Idaho, near Twin Falls. Even while the war was going on, some families and individuals were able to move out of these camps to Eastern Washington. Because it was located in military zone three, Eastern Washington was considered an acceptable area for Japanese to live in.

In 1943 we relocated to Spokane…. [M]y father went to Lamona [Washington] to work for the Great Northern.…It's just east of Spokane…. And so my mother and father and my youngest sister and brother lived at home, and my older sister and I lived in Spokane, so that's where I went to school, at Lewis and Clark. And I graduated from there. (Sam Mitsui)

College-aged Nisei were able to attend schools in the Inland Northwest through sponsorships, the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council, and family friends and relatives. A government sponsorship program allowed students to leave the camps, but only under the observation of the police and the supervision of a sponsor.

I guess you could release somebody if they got a sponsor, and you're on probation. It's just like a criminal that's just on probation but he has a sponsor (Anonymous)

Some students were able to attend Gonzaga University in Spokane.

… [M]y mother was so worried of us being in the internment that she had said that, "We're gonna go to waste here." And so she approached Father Tibesar and Father Tibesar had the president at Gonzaga University sponsor me, … I believe it's in October, I was allowed to leave to attend Gonzaga University.…[L]ike I said before, I was on probation … so every month I used to have to go down to the police station and get an "Okay Slip" from the president. I was on probation. But that's why I got out so early. (Anonymous)

Others attended Washington State College in Pullman. But with their strict quota system, the college would only allow so many Nisei into the school.

And they would only let so many Japanese Americans in, Niseis in.… I couldn't get into Washington State, because their quota was filled. So then I applied to Whitworth and was accepted, and I just went there for one year. (Ellen Kubokawa)

Whitworth College, in Spokane, also accepted Nisei students. It's president, Frank Warren, had been a missionary to Japan in the 1920s.

There were quite a few Japanese Americans going there at the time, during the war. So I knew every one of them. (Dan Matsumoto)

Due to the housing shortage, four female Japanese American students were crammed into one of the dorm rooms on Whitworth's campus.

They put us all in one small room, you know, it was really only for two people, but they put four of us in there. And our closet space was no more than about twelve inches …. We didn't have very many clothes in the first place, but, my goodness, that isn't much space for your clothes. And that's all we had, divided up four ways. (Ellen Kubokawa)

By 1944, ten percent of Whitworth's student body was Japanese American, including nearly half of the basketball team.

Track 8: "Inland Japanese Anxiety"

As they heard about the evacuation and internment of Japanese on the west coast, the Japanese living east of the Columbia River feared they would also be evacuated.

My dad was wondering what we should throw out and what to bring and he was thinking already in that terms. (Mii Tai)

All of us Japanese here in town…thought we would be evacuated. They were talking about evacuation. So we prepared for that. Then stories drifted out, somewhere in the mid-part of the state of Washington would be the cut-off point for anybody living in the interior. They would not be evacuated. (George Yamada)

Much of the same discrimination toward the Japanese, and minorities in general, existed in Spokane and inland cities as it did on the west coast.

I used to walk into restaurants and they'd wait on me. I used to see signs on these restaurants, couple of them here in town, "No Colored" signs.…[A]lthough we went to eat a lot of Chinese food, couple of these places indicated that they were not interested in having, serving, Japanese, Niseis or the Japanese population. And the stories used to go around town that… if they ever came into a restaurant, they would spit into our food. (George Yamada)

With more and more Japanese moving inland, especially to Spokane, the native Japanese community worried that the increased population would cause the government to evacuate them, too.

…[A]nd the people on the coast had an opportunity to evacuate, to voluntarily relocate, and they moved into Spokane. And …, I think my mother and dad were talking, "I don't know why they're moving here. They're liable to move them out of here again." So there was this kind of concern. (Fred Shiosaki)

[A] lot the people felt that, when we came from Seattle, that the Japanese here were kind of afraid that they might be evacuated, too, if too many of us came. So they weren't too glad to see us here. (Seiko Edamatsu)

Although there was worry that the evacuees would bring more attention to the inland Japanese community, the evacuees and the native inland Japanese became intertwined through the activities they participated in and the mutual friends they made during the war years in Eastern Washington.

Track 9 "Starting over in the Inland Empire"

Issei parents started over in the Inland Empire by opening businesses, such as hotels and restaurants, in towns like Spokane.

My father met a realtor … who really helped us…. So this person said, "At least, you know, you open a little café, you won't starve." You know, you'll have something to eat everyday. So the two brothers, you know, opened a little café there on Main Street, between Bernard and Washington. And that was, I think, it was started in 1943 sometime…. It was called Matson's Café. (Dan Matsumoto)

Matson's Café became a popular hang out for the African American service men stationed at Geiger Field and Fort George Wright near Spokane and Farragut Naval Base in Idaho. These men, too, were on the margins of the predominantly Caucasian population of the Inland Empire.

And then we had a lot of service people coming. You know, at that time, Geiger Field there was Air Force and Fort George Wright was the army and Farragut Naval Base in Farragut, Idaho. They would come in on weekends—Well, most of the people coming in were Blacks, you know, the service men. And they didn't have a place to go, really, when they came to town. So they used to come to our café. Weekends they were packed in there. (Dan Matsumoto)

According to one Nisei man, Matson's Cafe caused concern among the Caucasian population because it welcomed African American servicemen.

First three or four years, the restaurant was a real going concern… Saturday nights (laughs) the jukebox used to be roaring with noise. (Sumio Matsumoto)

The distress over African American servicemen in Spokane was not the only issue during the 1940s. For many Spokane city officials, the influx of Japanese into Spokane was alarming. Listen to what happened to one woman's father who wanted to lease a hotel in 1943.

[W]hen all the Japanese that were running hotels in downtown Spokane, even if they had a lease, their lease was taken away from them.… So quite a few Japanese hotel owners were losing their hotels. So my father was looking for another place.… So he got the license… and this commissioner, his name was Colburn… he was the safety commissioner on the city council. He sent his deputies down to retrieve the license…so we went and appeared before the city council.…They told them about my dad's background and everything, and they all felt there was nothing illegal or unpatriotic about my dad running the business. So… this whole city council agreed, except this safety commissioner Coburn who had retrieved the license. He said that, "We don't want anymore Jap money in downtown Spokane." And that's what he said. (Seiko Edamatsu)

In fact, the city council received a petition protesting the leasing of property to Japanese. The petition contained 249 signatures from Spokane citizens.

Track 10 "Discrimination and Acceptance in the Inland Empire"

In the Inland Empire, Nisei from the west coast began an uncertain life, with unfamiliar places to live, different friends, and unknown challenges.

…. [Y]ou know, not coming through the grade school system and starting school, it's hard to get to know the kids. If you had come through the grade school and so on, a lot of the kids had gone there, why, you would know 'em. So I really didn't make too many friends. Most of the friends that I had were of Japanese descent that were living in Spokane. And most of them were going to Lewis and Clark, 'cause they lived on the south side.….But living in downtown is something else.….Well, home life is different. It's sort of like, well, if you lived in a hotel room, ... It's a lot different than living in a house. (Dan Matsumoto)

… [W]hen we were in Whitworth, we'd be on the bus or something and I'd see these houses and I just wanted to be invited to someone's home. They didn't have to feed me, I just wanted to sit in their living room, and just be in a home. I remember thinking that. But it was wartime. (Toki Sekijima)

It was difficult for Nisei to find jobs, attend schools, and retain some shred of normalcy in their lives. Discrimination was very apparent to the Nisei women who transferred from Seattle to attend Deaconess Hospital's Nursing Program in 1942.

Like I say, we were naïve, but the atmosphere was very strange, you know, and strained.…. And then there was Dr. Snyder,….And I guess he could not stand the sight of us. And so whenever he was on the elevator and we want to get on, he'll get off. Then if he—came to certain floors and he was waiting—we were in the elevator—he wanted to enter. He won't enter 'cause we're there. And also, he taught some of the science subjects. He would not let us, you know, attend

any of his classes. And then, also, he was the nurses' doctor….. [A]nd he had nothing to do with us, so they had to get another doctor to come look at us. (Anonymous)

Even at other colleges and universities in the Inland Northwest, discrimination was accepted as normal during World War II.

I was in engineering at first. The Dean of Engineering called me in one day, and he said, "Well, Sam, you'd better not go into Engineering, 'cause nobody will hire you." … I don't know, I changed my major and did something else. But I remember that. (Sam Mitsui)

For one grade-school Nisei boy, attending school in Moses Lake, Washington was a daily mental and physical trial.

You have to understand that most of the people who lived in Moses Lake had never seen a Japanese person before, and so you always kind of fear the unknown until you learn about other groups of people. …So when I went to school, it was hard for anybody to accept me as a friend. In fact, there was a situation where a fellow by—I won't mention his name (laughs)—but he was about two grades older than I was and probably a foot or two taller than I was, and he would beat me up everyday at recess. And the people would—the other kids would surround the—watching this happen.…[I]t ended when the teacher found out what was happening,… (Junkoh Harui)

But there were people, like this teacher, who came along-side Nisei and befriended them, helping make their lives more comfortable in the Inland Northwest. For those Nisei who were attending colleges and universities, friends and schoolmates provided the home life they had left behind.

… I got to know some families that invited us during Thanksgiving Break or Easter Break. And we went to Deer Park for Easter Break. And Mrs. Compher served us fried rabbit for Easter dinner. And I'd never had rabbit. I didn't know it was rabbit…. And then we slept in the guest room—Mary and I happened to go there. And we slept on flannel sheets and I'd never slept on flannel sheets, and they were so comfy. (Toki Sekijima)

Neighbors showed their acceptance too.

*But as far as our neighbors, immediate neighbors, they were just wonderful. I remember one Christmas, or during the holidays, Thanksgiving or Christmas, not an immediate neighbor—we became close to them, but they were all Caucasian people—and one neighbor some blocks away came over. He had gone duck hunting and brought duck over—this was Thanksgiving.… So there were the good things, too. (*Bill Nishimura)

On the Whitworth College campus in Spokane, there was even room for humor during the war years.

And Ellen and I were assigned, that first quarter, to—the Air Force was there, and they ate first, so we were assigned to do their dishes.… But that meant getting up real early.… [O]ne day they tricked me. I was sleeping on the upper bunk and someone was below me. And I had gone to

bed early, and I woke up and they said, "It's time. We've got to get to work." So I leaped out of bed and I got dressed. And they hadn't gone to bed yet. (Toki Sekijima)

In addition, the Japanese community in Spokane provided social activities for those Nisei who lived in the downtown area. The Japanese Methodist Church and the Japanese American Citizens League, especially, provided venues for Nisei to meet each other and participate in activities such as dances, sports, and picnics.

We had different churches there. Of course, in the Japanese community, we only had this Methodist Church….But then we had different groups, you know, age groups in the kids that played basketball and so on, so….[B]ut then they used to have basketball games. And then, of course, our Japanese group would play some of their Caucasian people, too…. Basketball and baseball and things like that were quite popular, you know, for the younger children. Of course, we used to go roller skating and things like that. Bowling. But basketball was one of the highlights in the winter time. (Jack Hisayasu)

…[O]f course, we had an organization called the Japanese American Citizens' League….[M]ost of the younger people were members of this organization, this J.A.C.L., they called it. And so they sponsored a lot of different things. Dances and picnics and bingo games and things like that. (Jack Hisayasu)

…[A]nother fellow and I, he was at Gonzaga, we'd organize a dance on a weekend at Manito Park or some other facility,… And I'd line up a fellow at Gonzaga who had a five piece band or something … and we'd do this two or three times a year…. (Bill Nishimura)

But life during World War II for Nisei was not all fun and games. In order to support themselves and save their families money, they worked odd jobs and helped in the family business.

And then I used to work for the summers the Great Northern Railroad. And then there's a ice-making plant. I forgot the name…. North Coast or something like that. We used to make ice and—I did all kinds of work. (Sam Mitsui)

Many Nisei worked on truck farms, which were small vegetable farms where almost all the labor was done by hand.

Oh, it's all bunch-type vegetables. It's stoop labor…. He had celery and carrots and onions and radishes and some lettuce. So we really had to learn how to get on your hands and knees and so on. It was a tough life. (Dan Matsumoto)

However, the shadow of internment and evacuation was not far from Nisei living in the Inland Empire. Listen as one Nisei man remembers trains coming through Spokane carrying people of Japanese ancestry to internment camps in the interior.

And I recall one or even two trains coming in with the shades all drawn and guards on each end of the coaches. And I went in to put in ice into the water tank and also put water in and noticed they were all Orientals, all Japanese. And although it was supposed to be kept a secret of train

movements, I found out it was a—this particular train was headed for Heart Mountain, Wyoming internment camp there. (George Yamada)

Nisei who had evacuated without their parents, and those who had left internment camps, experienced internment first hand when they visited their families in the Minidoka camp at Hunt, Idaho.

Yes, I did go visit them once, but you had to get a permission from the federal government and also from the transportation people. I traveled by—I think I went by train. Then almost every place where the train stopped, they asked for your pass or permits or something that you had, was what you had to show. (Tom Kitayama)

Many Nisei living in the Inland Empire had brothers and relatives serving in the military. However, military service did not change the perception of Japanese from traitors to patriots. Listen to the experience of one Nisei woman who was a nursing student at Deaconess Hospital in Spokane.

I had a brother in the service, and my roommate had a couple brothers in the service. And one time the house mother called me when I was the 2:30 to 11:00 shift. She says, "Well, Senda, you'd better get over here 'cause your roommate just lost her brother." And so I excused myself and went over to the dorm to be with her for a while. And Shizu told me that the only thing house mother told her when she broke the news to her that she lost her brother in France, said, "All I can say is I'm glad he was on our side." And that's all she could say to her. (Anonymous)

Track 11 "Lingering Effects of Exclusion"

In December 1944, the government allowed Japanese evacuees to begin returning to the west coast. The following August, World War II officially ended with the surrender of Japan.

[A]fter the war ended, well, then these people that were, like, in—they had a camp in Twin Falls, Idaho, and those people, they were all coming back toward the coast where they lived before….[T]he camp was already dispersed, but yet you weren't able to come back to Seattle….I'd say fifty percent of them or more stopped in Spokane and they lived there until they were able to come back to the coast. (Jack Hisayasu)

In March 1946, the last internment camp closed in California. Many Japanese had no homes to return to, no jobs waiting for them, and no money to start over with. And the anti-Asian sentiment that had occurred before and during the war did not disappear.

SY: *After I got out of high school, I dated this guy one time and he wanted to take me to dinner….He was a member of the BOF.*
RS: *And what was the BOF?*
SY: *Brotherhood of Friends. And when we went in there, he showed his membership card and everything and the guy said.., "Well, you can't bring her in her." And he said, "Well, why not?" And they said, "Well, because you can't. She's not a member." He*

> *said, "No. She's a guest, my guest." And he says, "Well, I'm sorry, but you can't come here," you know, because—well, he didn't come right out and say it, "Because she's Japanese," but he just,… was adamant about it, which embarrassed this guy all to pieces,but it didn't bother me….* (Suzie Yamada)

[B]ut when we were looking for a house.…[A]nd then we were going to buy a house in his neighborhood on the South side. But they weren't allowed to buy.…They told us we couldn't, we weren't—they didn't say that you weren't eligible, they weren't diplomatic. They just flatly told us we couldn't buy a house. (Anonymous)

It took many years after the end of World War II for Issei and Nisei to receive an apology from the U.S. government. The first step was in 1952, when the Walter-McCarran Act allowed Issei to become citizens.

In 1952 or fifty-three, they changed that alien business. And my mother and father became eligible to become American citizens. And so my older brother, Roy, and I coached my mother and dad on the questions that were going to be asked.… I can remember watching them being sworn in.…It was one of those really feel-good things, you know. (Fred Shiosaki)

Even after they gained full citizenship, Japanese were still discriminated against. Listen as one Nisei woman tells about the difficulties of moving into the Seattle suburbs during the 1950s.

And we got an anonymous call, say[ing] "You are not welcome. Please stay with your own people. Do not come here."… And after our experience of being interned and everything, I didn't want to be held down by that. But I was afraid, too. And then on the other hand, the neighbors in that particular neighborhood got together and they bombarded me with phone calls and said, "This is one party that is doing this. The rest of you [us] want to welcome you. So please come." (Toki Sekijima)

Other minority groups recognized the injustice of Japanese American treatment during World War II. One Nisei man remembers being offered a job after the war ended by a Native American construction foreman who felt sympathetic toward his treatment as a minority.

…[H]e came over to the union hall and needed help and he came up to me and he said, "You want a job?" And I said, "Well, that's what I'm here for." I told him I was just an apprentice. And he said, "Well, that's alright. I'll teach you things."…But he was a partial Indian blood in him. He told me, he said, "I know what you've been through, and I want to help." (Tomeo Mukai)

It wasn't until the 1980s, however, that an official presidential apology was issued and redress was given to those who had been affected by internment. Today, Nisei who lived through the internment and evacuation experience continue struggling to understand why and how internment and evacuation occurred.

I wonder how it would have been if we were older. Sometimes wonder about that. Like—well, Gordon Hirabayashi, he was—he's what, about five years older than I am. And he stood up.

Most of these guys that did resist were a little older than—see, I was, I think I nineteen—eighteen—no, I just turned nineteen…. And if we were all, say, twenty-five to thirty-five, I wonder what difference that would have made on this evacuation thing. We never know. (James Mizuki)

'Cause a lot of times after, even after the war, I'd lay in bed and if someone called me a Jap, you know, what would I say. And when I tried to come up with answers, I know that I wouldn't be able to say anything when it came time, so I always wrote it down. I wrote, not a lot of letters, but to people that offended me. (Sam Mitsui)

There is a saying that history often repeats itself. Today, the experiences of Nisei during World War II are not irrelevant. Their stories reflect the courage of individuals who survived and adapted to an extreme situation. But it is also a story with a warning. Under what circumstances can the Constitution—and the civil rights it ensures for all citizens—become compromised? How can we, as American citizens, remain vigilant about protecting the rights we assume will always shield us from discrimination?

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