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Subject: RAD DEI Program: In Remembrance - 79th Anniversary of the Japanese Internment Camps
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Today marks the 79th anniversary of the start of the Japanese Internment Camps. Families in Sacramento, and all over the Pacific Coast, were removed from their homes and their life was forever changed. From 1942 to 1945, it was the policy of the U.S. government that people of Japanese descent would be interred in isolated camps.

During World War II the U.S. Government forcibly removed over 120,000 Japanese Americans from the Pacific Coast. These individuals, two-thirds of them U.S. citizens, were sent to ten concentration camps built throughout the western interior of the United States. The Japanese Americans of Hawaii were not forcibly removed because they were such a large proportion of the territory population. Despite the lack of concrete evidence, Japanese Americans were suspected of remaining loyal to their ancestral land. Anti-Japanese paranoia increased and Japanese Americans were feared as a security risk.

President Roosevelt signed the executive orders below and the start of the Japanese-American Internment started.

Executive Order 9066, February 19, 1942, authorized the military to exclude any persons from military areas without trial or hearings.

Executive Order 9012, March 18, 1942, established the War Relocation Authority (WRA) which administered the concentration camps.

Japanese internment camps are now considered one of the most atrocious violations of American civil rights in the 20th century.

Stories & Experiences:



John Tateishi, UC Berkeley & UC Davis Alumni, says the experience was both humiliating and disorienting. *"We came out of these camps with a sense of shame and guilt, of having been considered betrayers of our country."* He says that after the war most families never spoke about it. *"There were no complaints, no big rallies or demands for justice because it was not the Japanese way."*



Actor George Takei recalled the injustice of being delivered to one of these camps at the age of 5. *"I could see the barb wire fence and the sentry towers right outside my schoolhouse window as I recited the words 'with liberty and justice for all'.* After the war, the people in the camps were simply sent off. *"We lost everything,"* Takei said. *"We were given a one-way ticket to wherever in the United States we wanted to go to, plus \$20."*

In 1942, the Takei family was forced to live in the converted horse stables of Santa Anita Park before being sent to the Rohwer War Relocation Center for internment in Rohwer, Arkansas. The internment camp was in swamplands which was surrounded by barbed wire fences. The family was later transferred to the Tule Lake War Relocation Center in California for internment.



In 1942, Tomoko Ikeda Wheaton and her family lived in East LA. Tomoko at 16 was the oldest child in her family, she had two sisters, 14 & 5, and a brother 11. Her family were sent first by bus to the Pomona Fairgrounds and then by train to Heart Mountain, Wyoming.

When the Ikeda family arrived at the Pomona Fairgrounds, they had to fill mattress ticking with hay to make their own mattresses. The family slept on hard cots with one blanket each and it was very cold at night. After a few months Tomoko and her family were transferred to Heart Mountain. At Heart Mountain, Tomoko vividly remembers being surrounded by 18 manned guard towers and barbed wire. It was hot in the summer and cold in the winter. The barracks had only tarpaper covering open slats in the barrack walls making it impossible to stay warm in the winter. The dust storms were furious; dust got into the barracks and covered everything in their one small room. Often, she and her family were hungry. The food was not good and there never seemed to be enough.

Even at age 85, Tomoka still suffered from the effects of her and her family's incarceration. She told her children, *"I do not want to be forgotten. No one should forget the injustice that we endured."*



Yoshito & Takayo Ota Okada: After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, while the family ate Sunday breakfast, FBI agents came knocking. They searched their rooms and arrested Yoshito, as he was considered a prominent Japanese businessman. He was incarcerated in the Immigration Building near their home. Takayo could bring him food that he shared with fellow Japanese inmates. Unbeknownst to the family, he would be sent to a Federal Detention Center in Missoula, Montana.

Takayo was left to run the business by herself while raising six children. In February of 1942, after Executive Order 9066 was signed, the family was rounded up by the military with only the things they could each fit into a single suitcase. They were sent to the ironically named, "Camp Harmony," at the Puyallup Fair Grounds where they slept in freshly whitewashed horse stalls. Their final destination would be Camp Minidoka in Hunt, Idaho. Yoshito was released from Federal Prison to join his family in Idaho

OKADAS:

Camp Harmony, Puyallup WA

Minidoka, Hunt Idaho

Block 28 Barrack 4

YOSHITO & TAKAYO

Yoshitaka, Kozo, Hiroo, Sumio, Yuriko, Tokie

(Robert, John, Roy, Frank, Arlene & Connie)



Atsuo & Yuka Takahara Nakata and their three children, Hiroshi (Harry), Yoshiko (Mary), and Sumio (Smith) were rounded up and sent to the Portland Assembly Center and later shipped off to Hunt Idaho's Camp Minidoka. There, Atsuo worked on a truck, presumably helping with the farming and Yuka worked in the kitchen of the mess hall. They each earned \$12 a

month. Traditional family meals of Japanese food meant being able to sit together as a family to learn the civility and customs of sharing a meal, but this tradition had evaporated in the heat and dust of the desert. Strange new foods, like Mutton and vegetables from tins now appeared on their plates. In 1945 they were allowed to leave the camp. Together, Atsuo and Yuka had come to a new country overcoming the barriers of language, racism and war. They had experienced the worst and the best of what America had to offer.

Camp Minidoka

Block 34

Barrack 9

Atsuo Nakata 09-15-1888

Yuka Takahara Nakata 12-10-1898

To learn more details of the internment:

<https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/japanese-american-relocation>

Regards,

Karen

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“People don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.”

- Theodore Roosevelt, President

