



Vague Charges, Certain Detention

"The Bush administration has already denied each of the Guantanamo detainees one basic right guaranteed in the civilian justice system: a speedy trial. Now it appears determined to deny many more.... Relatives and human rights groups say many [detainees] were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time, or were picked up based on bad intelligence."

—New York Times editorial, August 22, 2003

"The stories collected by Densho have special resonance in times like these when actions taken under the guise of national security threaten to undermine civil liberties."

—Seattle Times editorial, August 8, 2003



Thanks to public education efforts, the story of the War Relocation Authority camps that imprisoned 120,000 Japanese American men, women, and children

during World War II is gradually becoming known. But fewer people have heard of the Department of Justice camps that interned thousands of Issei, or first-generation immigrants. As foreign nationals barred from citizenship by discriminatory laws, the Issei could be treated as enemy aliens the moment the United States declared war on Japan.

Immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor, FBI agents without warrants searched homes and arrested heads of households. They took away influential businessmen, Buddhist priests, and Japanese-language teachers whose names appeared on prewar surveillance lists of "dangerous" individuals. Many people interviewed by Densho, who were teenagers at the time, share indelible memories of their fathers suddenly disappearing:

"The day after Pearl Harbor the FBI came to our house and turned it upside down, looking for contraband, I guess, which we did not have. We had a short wave radio, but it never worked. I distinctly remember them tearing the house apart, throwing over the cushions, going through the books and magazines, peering into the innards of the radio... Then they just put my dad in a car and off he went." —Mas Fukuhara

"The FBI put my dad in a car and off he went."

The arrested men received hearings that were described as a privilege by the Department of Justice and a farce by third parties. Denied legal counsel, the Issei were burdened with proving their innocence. But the government's accusations were often irrefutable: belonging to the local Japanese Chamber of Commerce, visiting relatives in the home country, or fishing near a military installation—and having a Japanese face—was enough to brand a man as a potential saboteur.

"Maybe ten years ago, I got the files. And there were allegations about him belonging to a pro-Japanese organization. He subscribed to a magazine which had the same name as the pro-Japanese organization but was totally unassociated." —Mas Fukuhara

The hundreds of unnamed Guantanamo Bay detainees have been held two years with no promise of hearings. Sixty years ago the arrested Issei received hearings that were more timely, though secretive, perfunctory, and arbitrary. The ruling made little difference: a decision to intern meant a DOJ camp; release meant a WRA camp. Barbed wire or barbed wire.



Issei men arriving at a Department of Justice internment camp, Fort Missoula, Montana, circa 1942. Courtesy of the K. Ross Toole Archives, University of Montana at Missoula.

DEAR FRIENDS,

The key word at Densho these days is "partnership." Because Densho is a small organization with a big mission, we constantly seek like-minded associates to help us achieve our goals. For example, we recently gave hands-on demonstrations of our educational resources for more than one hundred teachers who can in turn reach thousands of students.

We lent interview clips from the Densho archive to the Museum of Jewish Heritage in Manhattan for a newly opened exhibition of World War II veterans' stories.

In the coming year we will train volunteers in oral history techniques at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre in Toronto, and we will partner with the National Parks Service to collect stories for the Minidoka Internment National Monument in Idaho.

Your gifts support these ambitious programs. Our gratitude goes to all of you who have sent contributions. With your help we will pursue the goal of documenting the past for the good of the future.

With thanks,

Tom Ikeda

Executive Director



From the Archive



Japanese American soldiers serving in World War II received 18,143 decorations and took a casualty rate of 300 percent. From behind the barbed wire of the incarceration camps 1,256 young men volunteered for combat. Courtesy National Archives and Records Administration.

Emblematic of what many Japanese American families went through, the Yasutake family of Seattle was broken up by the U.S. government's arrest of prominent Issei on December 8, 1941. "Jack" Yasutake was wrongly deemed potentially dangerous because he was a leader of the Japanese immigrant community. In an ironic twist, he was detained at his place of work—the Immigration and Naturalization Service building—before being sent to a Department of Justice internment camp in Missoula, Montana. His family heard nothing from him until he was allowed to write much later from a War Department camp in Lordsburg, New Mexico.

Jack's son Toshio, who was incarcerated at the Minidoka, Idaho, War Relocation Authority camp with the rest of the family, recalls his reaction to the call for volunteers to an all-Nisei (second generation) battalion in early 1943:

At first I was very happy to hear that we were given a chance to go into the army. But then later, the more I thought of it, the more uncertain I was because they were asking volunteers to form a segregated Japanese American unit. ...I was apprehensive about being in a segregated unit and I thought there'll be discrimination in the way they'd use us. I think at times when we were overseas it did happen. I think that we were the point in any given drive because we were what we were. ...So, many of my friends had already volunteered, but I didn't until the very last day because I was holding out, hoping they'd say they would assimilate us. Finally in desperation, I decided that maybe if I did volunteer, it might help my dad get released a little earlier. So I did volunteer.

In October 1944, Tosh was wounded while serving as a medic in France with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. He modestly downplays the purple heart and bronze star he was awarded because, "It's not something you do because you feel heroic. It's your duty, and you don't think about shells flying all over. When you hear 'medic,' well, you just go." Unaware of her brother's condition, Mitsuye (May) Yasutake successfully petitioned to transfer their father to Crystal City, Texas, the only DOJ camp where families could join their husbands and fathers.

"They were asking volunteers to form a segregated Japanese American unit."

Before leaving for basic training in spring 1943, Tosh Yasutake, with his sister May, received permission to visit Jack Yasutake at the Lordsburg internment camp. They noticed more guards and higher barbed-wire fences than at the WRA camp where they were incarcerated. When their father was brought in, Tosh and May were shocked to see not the "short, round" office worker they remembered but an "old, wizened" man.

"I wanted to tell him why I volunteered."

It seemed like Dad was trying to make light of the situation. He was talking about mundane things like the weather. Small, very small talk. I think it's just that he was trying to put us at ease, not to worry about him.... He knew I was going into the army, but we just didn't bring this up. He didn't bring it up, and we didn't bring it up.... Yeah, I wanted to tell him why I volunteered, but I decided not to.... And the last word was, he says, "Well, Tosh, be sure to take it easy. Don't do anything foolish." I think he just meant for me to not get myself killed. To come back alive. Then we just sort of hugged, and I guess, well, to keep from breaking down, we didn't say anything.



AUTHOR'S TALK: *JUDGMENT WITHOUT TRIAL*

Tetsuden Kashima, University of Washington Ethnic Studies professor, will speak about his latest book at the Densho offices (1416 South Jackson Street, Seattle) on Thursday, November 20, at 7:00 p.m. The product of years of research, *Judgment without Trial: Japanese American Imprisonment during World War II* (University of Washington Press) reveals that long before the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, the U.S. government began planning to incarcerate people of Japanese ancestry.

As opposed to the more widely known incarceration camps run by the War Relocation Authority, the author discusses the less familiar Justice and War Department camps that held internees of Japanese, Italian, and German descent. Drawing on newly released sources, Kashima brings an array of players to life: people whose actions were based on misinformed fears and racial animosities, others who tried to remedy the inequities of the system, and the prisoners themselves. Without rhetoric or emotionalism, he portrays a government that failed to protect thousands of individuals for whom it had forcibly assumed total responsibility.

The event is free of charge, but space is limited. Please contact Densho at 206-320-0095 or info@densho.org to reserve a space. Our thanks to the Elliott Bay Book Company for assisting at this event.

New Look of Densho Website

Over the summer the Densho website (www.densho.org) assumed a new look. The home page has been redesigned to more clearly delineate the offerings: a section on the causes of the incarceration, the digital archive, educational resources, and organizational information. The home page now highlights changing video excerpts from the archive as well as the latest addition: *In the Shadow of My Country: A Japanese American Artist Remembers*, voted Outstanding Website by WebAwards. This multimedia bilingual website showcases artwork by Roger Shimomura that was inspired by his grandmother's journals and his childhood memories of incarceration at Minidoka. Enriched by journal entries, an interview with the artist, memories and photos from the Densho archive, and teaching resources, the site engages visitors with art, music, and voices while encouraging tolerance for cultural differences.

Web page from *In the Shadow of My Country*, with artwork by Roger Shimomura.



2003 Golf Tournament and Dinner Auction

Rain didn't dampen the spirits of the golfers who assembled on September 10 at The Golf Club at Newcastle for the 2003 Densho golf tournament. This year, lively bidding on more than 200 items in the silent auction and nearly 30 live auction items raised nearly \$200,000 in vitally needed funds for Densho's preservation and educational work. Co-chairs Scott Oki and Brenda Handley dedicated tremendous energy and creativity toward making the event a success. We are grateful to all the sponsors, donors, bidders, golfers, and volunteers—too large a group to name here. Densho thankfully acknowledges the event sponsors: Bear Stearns & Co., Northwest Suites & Housing Services, United Airlines, Jeff Brotman, Preston Gates Ellis LLP, Westriver Capital LLC, Club Car, Lexus of Bellevue/Toyoto of Kirkland, Segway LLC, and the John Y. Sato and Reiko E. Sato Foundation. Leslie Arai and Jill Ohara ran everything smoothly from beginning to end. Join us next year for the event of the season!

Grants Awarded

Densho has received two Civil Liberties Public Education Program grants totaling \$48,000 from California and Washington. To broaden the perspectives represented in the archive of visual histories, we will interview individuals who assisted or resisted the World War II incarceration, including European Americans, and we will document the lives of women whose experiences are less often recorded. A \$5,000 corporate foundation grant from Qwest will go toward our education efforts. We are also pleased to announce that the Paul G. Allen Charitable Foundation has awarded Densho a \$15,000 capacity-building grant to support strategic planning.



THE PAUL G. ALLEN CHARITABLE FOUNDATION



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Preserving the past, informing the future

Denshō is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization founded in 1996 with the mission to educate, preserve, collaborate, and inspire action for equity. Densho (meaning “to pass on to future generations”) is building a digital archive of life stories and historical images that document the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. The archive and related curriculum on the public website (www.densho.org) promote respect for the civil liberties of all people.

Congratulations to board member Mari Horita for receiving the 2003 Professionalism Award for community service from the Washington State Bar Association Young Lawyers Division.



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