

DISTANT VOICES SCRIPT

By Julie Nishimura and Danny Peak
Based on the personal diary of Hiroaki Nishimura

Assign the following three roles:

Reader 1: Hiroaki Nishimura
Reader 2: the main narrator
Reader 3: other voices (politicians, reporters, etc.)

This drama is divided into five parts:

Part I: Introduction
Part II: Hiroaki's Evacuation in May 1942
Part III: Heart Mountain Concentration Camp
Part IV: Tule Lake Concentration Camp
Part V: The Deportation Order

Part I: Introduction

R2. April 29, 1942...

R1. The day is finally come. It has been very busy for three months since evacuation order. From today now on, I loose my given name and become number 14786. I carry only two suitcases, a bag with my tableware... a plate of dish, a drinking cup, a spoon, a table knife, and a fork. I attach small freight tag of number 14786 to each load to take into camp. And I attach tag number to my coat. From this day on... I am number 14786. I am Dangerous Enemy Alien.

R2. Hiroaki Nishimura: *Nihonjin* (Japanese), *Kibei*, American.

R3. In 1890, according to the U.S. Census, 2,039 Japanese are living in America.

R2. Born in Sacramento, California 1922. Left United States at the age of two to be formally educated in Japan.

R1. Returned to America in 1940.

R2. Began five year program at San Francisco Commerce High School.

R3. In 1900, 24,326 Japanese are living in America.

R2. He wrote short stories.

He was a self-taught sketch artist.

He was a self-taught violinist.

Asked what his lifelong ambition was, he would say...

R1. ...to become a journalist.

R3. In 1920, 110,010 Japanese are living in America.

R2. His favorite sports were baseball, tennis, and ice skating. His favorite foods were New York Cut Steak and Ice Cream... Strawberry. His favorite music, Beethoven's 6th Symphony.

R1. He would have a favorite movie star, but as of 1940, he hadn't seen any movies.

R2. His favorite holiday was the 4th of July.

R3. In 1924, Congress passes the National Origins Act. From this moment on, Japanese are no longer eligible to immigrate to the United States.

R2. Hiroaki Nishimura. Nihonjin, Kibei, American Citizen.

R3. In 1940, 126,947 Japanese are living in America.

R1. Over 79,000 are American citizens.

R2. But soon, before the close of 1941, Hiroaki Nishimura's well-ordered world would change completely, would change forever.

R3. On August 7, 1942, the Japanese population living on the West Coast: 0.

Part II: Hiroaki's Evacuation in May 1942

R3. Western Defense Command and 4th Army. Instructions to all persons of Japanese Ancestry. It is hereby ordered that from and after 12:00 noon, Friday, May 1st, 1942, all persons of Japanese ancestry, both alien and non-alien, will be evacuated from Military Area No. 1.

R1. At 10:30 am, I arrived with tag number on my coat to appointed assembly place. There were so many Japanese on line waiting for bus that carry them to camp. Each bus, two soldiers standing by. I understand no Japanese on north side of Sutter Street except us, the last departures. And no Japanese can cross from south side. So no Japanese comes to send us off.

R3. Any person subject to this order who fails to comply with any of its provisions or who is found in the above area after 12:00 noon, Friday May 1st, 1942, will be liable to the criminal penalties provided by Public Law No. 503.

R1. At 12:40, we, the last departures were led to police wagon. We sat crowded on both sides of bench. We glanced a last look of San Francisco. A lone soldier with gun stands in back. Baby faced young soldier. When the wagon came up on the smooth Bayshore Highway, our minds calmed down a little. I told him with my broken English, "We are seemed like prisoners going to jail."

R2. It is better than going to jail...

R1. ...he answered me smiling. We were so relaxed by his words and our fear disappeared. It seemed like we were on the way to picnic. Then the Police wagon came up to the main gate and stopped. Two soldiers with guns rushed out from both sides of main gate and we were let off the vehicle. Tanforan Assembly Center...

This was first day of number 14786 without a precious freedom! I was confused... fearful and fateful days ahead, but I had to take it as my fate!

R3. From the editor...

R2. Japanese leaders in California who are counseling their people to co-operate with the Army in carrying out the evacuation plans are offering the best possible way for all Japanese to demonstrate their loyalty to the United States...

R1. We arrive at Tanforan today April 29, ten minutes past one. Right after we are off wagon, we were led to physical exam in small building. Young doctor checked us after strip off our pants. This was first time I used my number of 14786 instead of my name.

R2. Although their removal to inland districts outside the military zones may inconvenience them somewhat, they must certainly recognize the necessity of clearing the coastal combat areas of all possible saboteurs.

R1. Then we were led to our living quarters under grandstand. There were hundreds of canvassed folding beds... After we found our beds to sleep first night, we went to pick up our baggage dumped by gate. We had hard time to find our own. I brought my belongings to side of bed. When I looked around hall, I saw everyone on bed, just sit staring.

R3. Food and shelter will be provided to the extent they are not able to provide it themselves. They will be furnished with plenty of entertainment and recreation...

R1. After breakfast I go up to grandstand. I sit there all day watching cars go back and forth on highway, the white planes that some time fly up into the sky, hazy mountains across bay, and floating white clouds.

R3. They may be arranged in temporary quarters until permanent ones can be provided for them. But during the summer months that does not mean they will be unduly uncomfortable...

R1. Today, we relocate to stable. I now have three roommates. We had to clean up before we open our luggage because the place is so dirty and smell horsey. But dirt comes up between cracks in wood always. We can do nothing.

R2. The least act of sabotage might provoke angry reprisals that easily could balloon into bloody race riots. We must avoid any chance of that sort of thing.

R1. We put two beds where horse sleeps, and one where horse dines. We put our tableware where horse is served fodder. U.S. Government must see Japanese as horse.

R3. The most sensible, the most humane way to insure against it is to move the Japanese out of harm's way.

R2. The San Francisco News.

R1. Two years ago today, I was detained in Angel Island for six days when I returned from Japan. My number at that time was 8-1. But now my number is 14786 and nobody knows when we will get released. I have to leave my fate to All Mighty.

Part III: Heart Mountain Concentration Camp

R2. September 15... (1942)

R1. I am in Heart Mountain now for almost three weeks. Camp is made up of 469 barracks, 38 mess halls, 21 warehouses, surrounded by fences and guard towers. It is a big camp with many

people. Population here is 11,890 Japanese. Next to Cheyenne and Casper, Heart Mountain became third big city in Wyoming.

My quarter is better than stable at Tanforan. My floor is built little higher off ground to protect from winter cold. Each apartment has a small room and two doors. In middle of apartment there is a big iron stove. Around stove are five iron folding beds with thin mattress and two thin khaki blankets... nothing else. On walls there is one little squared window.

The foundation of camp is made of powdered clay. Even a little breeze will make powder fly and cover whole camp. We can not keep our eyes open in it. Ticks are most dangerous. When it snows at night, we hear the howl of coyotes in distant. I have never seen real one. When I go snow hiking, I saw kayos' (coyotes') footsteps left on snow.

This plateau was a battlefield of Indian and American pioneer. When you see the sagebrush roll by with sandstorm, you think Indian's spirit. When you hear wind blow, you think Indian's death cry.

I am long way from California.

R2. September 18...

R1. 3:00 in morning I was waked by shout of roommate. He must be so happy seeing first snow fall. I didn't feel any cold even though I wore only sweater. It was a strange weather this morning with comparing to yesterday's hot.

R3. September 26...

R1. I have wanted desk now for long time. Today they say lumbers are free. I rushed right away to place where scorched lumbers are. Men and women were already taking lumbers to their living quarter. At side of lumbers though were new lumbers. I thought such lumbers would suit my new desk fine. I took two brand new 2 by 4's and one long board and hurried to my quarter. I knew police would come soon for the new lumbers. After hammering nails I finished within twenty minutes. In evening police came to the door to take back lumbers. I told him this table is what he is looking for and that he could take it back. He made bitter face at me and left empty-handed. Tonight, I have new desk.

R2. October 26...

R1. Since September it becomes colder and the snow falls. The feeling of the snow is like summer sandstorm. When it hits your face it pains. Snow is not soft here. In early morning four places of the underground pipe at Block 7 froze and broke. It has come fearful cold for all evacuees from California. Nobody thought of the fearful winter 6,000 feet high. We have no place to go from here though the earth breaks down or the heaven falls. The fierce cold winter of November, December, January, and February to come. Nobody speaks of fear ahead.

R2. November 5...

R1. Finally supplies of winter clothes. But not enough to keep cold out. I now have a U.S. Navy overcoat and World War I army trousers. This can not prevent cold here. Without winter cap, without ear cover, boots, and gloves, we can not go to mess, shower, or toilet in the below zero temperature. Now, we have to buy from catalogue of Sears and Roebuck. I don't know who is cheating us, army or Japanese self govern committee, or both.

R3. December 1942...

R1. We made ice rink. First try was unsuccessful. As soon as we put water from shower down, the water froze unevenly. Later we find that we have to use hot water so water spread from corner to corner like pond and freeze in a minute. Result of ice rink built, many ice skaters fell and injured. Today, hospital very busy.

Snow falls every day. When we go from shower to quarter, towel freezes in a second and become like stick. We can not walk against cold wind. Our lips freeze every time and we have to battle to keep our eyes open.

R2. Christmas Day...

R1. We have first Christmas in snow storm. We can not see an inch ahead. Everybody said that Santa Claus must be lost in storm. Each of us gets Christmas present from Charity Society of outside. A small, very tiny unglazed vase, too small for flower but everyone feels happy. In room, I place it on my desk. I look back over Christmas of last year. In San Francisco, people were uneasy about war, but I heard Christmas songs from somewhere in dark.

R2. New Year's eve...

R1. The day seemed passing so quickly. Every day we meet same face, same person. We eat free meal, free living quarter. Our life is simple here. But it's very sad when we think about future. There is no hope for the camp life. Since Tanforan, Pomona and here, it's been very busy and no time to feel sadness. Just now I am having it at the end of year.

In the silent, in the cold midnight, I will not complain to my fate.

Part IV: Tule Lake Concentration Camp

R3. Tule Lake, California... November 5...

R2. United States soldiers in full battle dress today controlled this camp where thousands of disloyal citizens of Japanese ancestry are concentrated, their revolt throttled by military might.

R3. The soldiers marched into the camp last night when an estimated 500 Japanese hoodlums attempted to take control from the War Relocation Authority officials and beat one of the white civilian guards.

R2. The citizens of Tule Lake were openly overjoyed at the action of the army in moving decisively to control the restive Japanese, whose presence has been a cause of alarm to the community for weeks.

R3. November 6...

R1. From yesterday, camp very dangerous place. Army has invaded. Soon after I arrive to Tule Lake, Japanese working in camp warehouse, found that the foods such as sugar, meat, butter, eggs are stolen by War Relocation Authority workers and sold to black market. Then, a young detainee was killed in accident from driving unsafe truck. When Japanese stayed home to protest, WRA brought in workers from outside to replace us. Any detainee that protests is arrested. The camp has become very uneasy. Hayashi and I talk of the dangerous times... we do not know what will happen...

R3. 16 days later... November 22...

R1. Camp under military control now for three weeks. When Hayashi and I saw the jeeps with machine gun, we become so scared. Even tanks have come into camp. Food is now carried to mess halls each day by armed jeeps. We elected representatives to negotiate with authority, but they arrested also. Situation between authority and Japanese very uneasy.

R2. November 24...

R1. Today Hayashi saved me from soldiers. I was visiting barrack where Mikuni and Hayashi live. Other friends in room also. Around 3:00 in afternoon we heard jeep stopped in front of door. As soon as I heard knocking, I realized situation and jumped into Hayashi's bed to cover myself with blankets. Two soldiers started the roll call of names. At that, Hayashi came back from outside to get sweater, saw me hide in bed and threw extra blanket over me and smiled. They were then arrested and taken away. We do not know why they were detained. We do not know how long they will be detained. We can only wait.

R2. 4 weeks later... December 26...

R1. We have waited for news for Hayashi and others now since past month. Today we received it. At lunch time, block manager made unbelievable announcement. He told us that Hayashi has been dead for ten or more days. A social worker found his ashes this morning and informed our block manager. Nobody knew his death, when or how. I went around camp to tell sad news to other acquaintances. No one could believe. He was my friend. I remember to times I share paints with him. Now I regret I shared too little. I remember to times a month ago Hayashi hide me from soldiers. I remember his smile at me. We knew not that this was his final day among us. May he rest in peace...

...It is day after Christmas.

Part V: The Deportation Order

R3. February 10, 1946... (Tule Lake)

R1. It is now 4 months since I heard I may soon be deported. But so far no news. Yesterday, the recent Department of Justice lists 300 more people to leave camp. I could not find my name.

The noises of camp disappear day by day after people leave to go back to homes... or Japan. We, the maintenance workers, become busier and busier each day to clean up the empty barracks. Each apartment has a history where Japanese once lived. Some apartments had many flyers of propaganda scattered on floor. Quarters of the members of pro-Japan group. Another has gallons of jars under floor ... former occupants were moonshine makers of *sake*. One apartment, the wife became insane and crashed her son on head when she heard she was to be deported. Someone forgot to take ashes of dead child when she left. Block manager just dumped it as trash.

R2. February 15...

R1. This morning, 13 additional persons announced on Justice Department list to be deported. I found my name. I am to leave in month.

R2. February 20...

R1. In afternoon, I registered with Justice Department to be removed from United States. It may be any day when I must leave. But there is still some hope. From my attorney, Wayne Collins, he

says I may stay in country until my appeal is heard by Government. He is helping hundreds of us enemy aliens to stay in America. He is good man and I owe him much. But my fate is still in hands of Justice Department.

R2. March 14...

R1. This morning, I was interviewed by Department of Justice official to determine if I should be deported. He was young man who could not understand. He could only focus on my renouncing American citizenship. He ignored how they treated us, putting us into an internment camp, taking away my position, what he do if previous freedom was denied him... he would not answer me. At this point, I decided to fight them from now on, whatever cost, however long it takes. My second world war started on this date. Today, I fight for my freedom.

R2. On March 20 at 5:20 pm, Hiroaki leaves Tule Lake for Crystal City, Texas internment camp.

R3. On March 24, he arrives at Crystal City to wait the outcome of his appeal to the Justice Department.

R1. On March 29, Tule Lake officially closes.

R2. In the entire course of the war, ten people were convicted of spying for Japan... all of whom were Caucasian.

Distant Voices Task Sheet

As a group, choose one of the following tasks to complete. Your work will be posted in the classroom upon completion.

1. Write a critical review of the performance of *Distant Voices*.
2. Design a poster advertising this performance.
3. Choose one of the five parts of the account. Assume the role of Hiroaki, and write a series of journal entries (5–6 paragraphs) describing what's happening to you and your response to the events taking place.
4. Create a newspaper front page based on one of the events described by Hiroaki Nishimura.