

From the Director: Tom Ikeda

Last week I gave a talk at the installation banquet for the Seattle Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL). The theme of the event was, "Our Nisei, *okage sama de*," or "We are who we are because of you, the Nisei." It felt really good to show gratitude to the Nisei who worked hard and took risks to confront individuals and institutions to help our community. In particular I acknowledged Henry Miyatake and Cherry Kinoshita, Seattle superstars of the redress movement.

I also want to express gratitude to the emerging younger generations of Japanese Americans for their energy, smarts, and commitment to making our world better. Geoff Froh, Densho's Director of Information and Technology for over eight years, fits this description. Geoff is an incredibly smart Yonsei (4th generation Japanese American), who created Densho's innovative technology platform. Geoff is leaving Densho to join Health Alliance International (HAI) as their new Chief Information Officer. He will help HAI create a world with universal access to quality health care. Good luck, Geoff, and thank you from a grateful community!



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From the Archive

Frontier Colonies or Concentration Camps? Euphemisms for the Incarceration

"Minidoka is not a concentration camp. But we remember the words of one young colonist as we left the relocation center: 'I'm a free-born American, accused of no crime. Why must I remain here?'"

-- "Minidoka: Preliminary Report in a New Frontier Community," WRA report, c. 1942

Anyone who speaks about the treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II faces a linguistic predicament. Do you use the benign terminology adopted by the U.S. government at the time? Were over 110,000 individuals of Japanese descent "evacuated" from their homes and businesses, as would be said of people saved from a natural disaster? Is "assembly center" an apt term for the compounds of barracks ringed by barbed wire and guard towers that held these displaced people for months? Were the permanent camps built further inland, also secured by barbed wire and sentries, accurately called "relocation centers"? Or do you choose blunter language that might court confusion and controversy?

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Densho News

Executive Director Meets Japanese Diplomats

Our executive director, Tom Ikeda, recently returned from a trip to Washington, D.C., where he and 35 other Japanese American



leaders from around the country met with a group of Japanese diplomats posted in the United States. The Japanese ambassador to the U.S. and 13 Japanese consuls general explored opportunities for Japanese Americans to help strengthen U.S.-Japan relations. Tom gives details of the meetings in a Densho Blog entry.

>> [Read the Densho blog](#)

A New Chapter for Key Densho Employee

In a few days, I will leave my position as Director of Technology and Information at Densho to move on to another nonprofit organization. For many people, a job is simply a job. Over the last eight years, I was fortunate to have a job that was much more. My time at Densho has been immensely fulfilling, both intellectually and personally.

Densho's work in documenting the Japanese American community is on the cutting edge of humanities practice. We have delved into issues of memory and collective interpretation in our oral history work, and have examined the tension between immigrant cultures and conceptions of American identity. In the post-9/11 world, the stories of our narrators and the primary sources in the archive provided a stark lesson about the fragility of civil liberties in times of crisis. While not all of these areas of study are new, we have been able to apply technology to both find novel connections within the body of work and to make our materials available to a vastly larger audience than was ever possible before. To play a role in crafting that work was exciting and challenging.

But more important, my job at Densho afforded me a personal journey into my own heritage, a history I had not really explored. When I watch the interviews in the archive, I see the faces of my family, my aunts and uncles, and my mother. I wonder what my grandfather Toru and grandmother Miye thought as they arrived at Tule Lake, younger than my wife and I are today. I never had the chance to ask them; but I am a bit closer to their experience through the stories of our narrators.

Densho was an extraordinary part of my life, and I will always feel gratitude towards the people who made and continue to make the work possible. My thanks to Densho's supporters everywhere -- in the schools, in the community, and across the country. But I owe the most to my family at Densho, all of the talented, dedicated staff members I have known over the years. Virginia, Dana, Patricia, Naoko, and Tom, I will see you again, but will still miss working with you every day.



Densho Poll: How Do You See Us?

This month we invite eNews readers to participate in a "customer" perception survey. As we commence this year's work, we decided to pause and ask how our constituents view the organization that is Densho, our mission and achievements to date, and how we can improve what we offer to our various audiences. Your input will help us describe Densho to potential collaborators, funders, and users of our resources. Please be candid -- your answers are anonymous. Whether you are a former detainee, a teacher, or an amateur historian, we value all our supporters' thoughts about who Densho is and what we provide. It will help us plan for the future.

Thank you to those who took last month's survey on the contents of the eNews. We learned that our readers are most interested in news of historic preservation, the World War II experience of Japanese Americans, and recommended resources (we will continue to suggest good books, films, and exhibitions in future editions). Our readers want to see more photos and interviews from the Densho Digital Archive. Readers also told us that their favorite eNews features are the message from the director and the "From the Archive" articles. One survey taker suggested the topic of this month's "From the Archive" article: euphemistic language the government used to hide the ugly reality of the camps.



>> [Click Here to take survey](#)

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Archive Feature

Look Inside the Archive: A Minidoka Teacher

This week we lost another voice preserved in the Densho Digital Archive. Helen Amerman Manning passed away on January 30 in Fremont, California. During World War II she taught school in the Minidoka, Idaho, incarceration camp. There she discovered the cruel irony of teaching American values to uprooted young students whose country treated them as decidedly less than American, only because of their ancestry. Her experiences with Japanese Americans led Manning to work in the field of race relations after the war. In her 2003 interview for Densho, she shared memories of the camps from a sympathetic employee's perspective. We are grateful to Helen Manning for enriching the chorus of voices in the Densho collection of oral histories.

>> [See the featured sample from the Densho Digital Archive](#)
>> [Register for the free Densho Digital Archive](#)
>> [Read the obituary](#)



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National News and Events

Pinedale Day of Remembrance Observance

This month Japanese American communities around the country observe February 19 as the anniversary of President Franklin Roosevelt's signing of Executive Order 9066. That infamous order authorized the forced removal of over 110,000 people of Japanese descent from the West Coast in 1942. On February 15 and 16, the Pinedale Assembly Center Memorial Project Committee is holding a dinner and a dedication ceremony for a planned fountain memorial to the Pinedale temporary detention facility (artist rendition seen here).

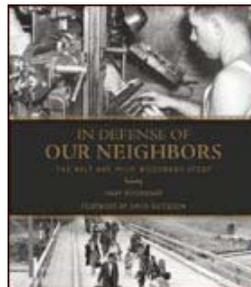
>> [For more information](#)
>> [Other Day of Remembrance events](#)



Book Event: *In Defense of Our Neighbors*

On February 19, the Beacon Hill branch of the Seattle Library presents Mary Woodward, author of *In Defense of Our Neighbors: The Walt and Milly Woodward Story*. Woodward's parents, Walt and Milly, owned and edited the community newspaper *Bainbridge Island Review*. In their editorials they objected to the injustice of exiling the Washington island's Japanese Americans, the first to be removed under Executive Order 9066. The Woodward's stance was both courageous and exceptional, as major national newspapers called for forcing all Japanese Americans from the coast without due process of law. This is the story that inspired the bestselling novel *Snow Falling on Cedars*, by David Guterson.

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