

LOOK TOWARD THE MOUNTAIN, EPISODE 1 TRANSCRIPT

ROB BUSCHER: Welcome to *Look Toward the Mountain: Stories from Heart Mountain Incarceration Camp*, a podcast series about life inside the Heart Mountain Japanese American Relocation Center located in northwestern Wyoming during World War II. I'm your host, Rob Buscher. This podcast is presented by the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation and is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

ROB BUSCHER: The inaugural episode titled "Who We Were Before," will explore the stories of Issei Japanese immigrants, and the communities they and their American born children established on the west coast prior to WWII.

INTRO THEME

ROB BUSCHER: Through the course of this series we hope to shed light on the lesser known chapters of the Japanese American incarceration experience, a terrible disruption to the lives and livelihoods of over 110,000 persons of Japanese ancestry who during the Second World War were forcibly removed from their homes on the West coast of the United States and mass incarcerated in American concentration camps – prisons located in the interior of the country.

ROB BUSCHER: Like much of history, the past is closer to the present than most of us realize, and the events of WWII still have an impact today. The Japanese American incarceration left an indelible impact on the lives of those who lived it

and their descendants. Moreover, their stories serve as a cautionary tale for all Americans to remember what happens when racial prejudice and legislation intersect.

ROB BUSCHER: Heart Mountain Japanese American Relocation Center, as it was called by the War Relocation Authority or WRA, was home to nearly 14,000 people during the three and a half years it was operated. Located between Cody and Powell, Heart Mountain would become Wyoming's third largest city overnight when people began arriving there in August 1942.

ROB BUSCHER: Most incarceration survivors remember this period with shame and humiliation. Families lost their homes and businesses on the West Coast, profiled on the basis of race alone for mass incarceration in one of ten prison camps operated by the WRA. Many of the Issei would never recover financially from the losses they incurred during this time.

ROB BUSCHER: Those who went to camp as children often have fonder memories. They remember their friends, going to school, and being surrounded by many other Japanese Americans. For some this would be the first and only time they resided in a community composed of a Japanese American majority.

ROB BUSCHER: But why did the Japanese come to the United States in the first place? What were their lives like before the war? And what instigated the conflict between the US and Japan?

ROB BUSCHER: Millard Fillmore, 13th President of the United States, is mostly forgotten by history. But during his two-and-a-half years in office from July 1850 to January 1853, after the death of President Zachary Taylor, Fillmore turned the nation's focus towards Asia, specifically Japan. Amid the widespread colonization of Asia that European empires were engaged in at that time, the United States sought to expand its own overseas holdings. China being the grand jewel of the East Asia trade, the US was entering an already crowded field in the decade between the first and second Opium Wars.

ROB BUSCHER: By comparison to the sophisticated Qing Dynasty China, who prior to European intervention had amassed the largest empire in Modern East Asian history, Japan was viewed as a backwater island nation governed by an outdated feudal style of government. Japan's military government, the Tokugawa shogunate, kept an ironclad control on Japanese society through its strict class based social hierarchy. With the exception of the highly regulated trade port of Dejima, a small island off the coast of Nagasaki where Dutch merchants were permitted limited trade on necessities that were not locally produced, Japan was completely isolated from the outside world for over two centuries.

ROB BUSCHER: President Fillmore believed access to Japan would provide a new market for the United States' growing manufacturing industries, and a toehold in the Asia trade. In November 1852, he dispatched Navy Commodore Matthew Perry with a squadron of four ships to persuade Japanese leaders to open their nation to trade.

ROB BUSCHER: Eight months later in July 1853, residents of the city of Edo, current day Tokyo, noticed the silhouettes of four ships on the horizon in the bay. Described by those who saw them as “black ships of evil men,” Perry’s squadron had arrived. Perry carried a letter from Fillmore, who at that time was no longer president.

PRESIDENT MILLARD FILLMORE VOICE OVER: Great and Good Friend: I send you this public letter by Commodore Matthew C. Perry, an officer of the highest rank in the navy of the United States, and commander of the squadron now visiting your imperial majesty’s dominions. I have directed Commodore Perry to assure your imperial majesty that I entertain the kindest feelings towards your majesty’s person and government, and that I have no other object in sending him to Japan but to propose to your imperial majesty that the United States and Japan should live in friendship and have commercial intercourse with each other.

ROB BUSCHER: Fillmore’s message urged Japan to drop its old laws preventing trade between the two nations.

ROB BUSCHER: Many in Japan wanted to resist this gunboat diplomacy, but the extent of the US Navy and its superior military technology were unknown, leading the Tokugawa shogunate to sign an unequal trade agreement in 1854 that opened two Japanese ports to US merchants. A later treaty in 1858 expanded US trade to an additional four ports, allowing foreigners to live in these Japanese cities, and even ceding some extraterritorial rights by allowing American nationals to be tried by the laws of their own nation in the event that they committed a

crime in Japan. In the decade that followed, Great Britain, France, and other European powers negotiated similar unequal treaties with Japan.

ROB BUSCHER: The sudden influx of foreign currency undermined Japan's economy, and unequal trade tariffs led to the Japanese market being flooded by overseas goods. The Japanese public, and particularly the mercantile aristocracy who had grown increasingly wealthy and powerful during the Edo period, began to question the ability of their Shogunate government to guarantee the safety and prosperity of the Japanese people amid ongoing imperialist incursions.

ROB BUSCHER: In 1868, the aristocracy orchestrated a popular revolt against the shogun, ousting the Tokugawa government and instating 16-year-old prince Mutsuhito as Emperor Meiji, the new and undisputed ruler of Japan. Having functioned as a spiritual figurehead while the military leaders of Japan held true power for many centuries, the restoration of an emperor would cause a fundamental reshaping of Japanese society. Trade and industrialization became more important as Japan began exploring its own imperialistic ambitions in an attempt to stave off Western colonization. Amid these sweeping changes, traditional agricultural society became unmoored, and Japan soon had more idle young men than jobs.

ROB BUSCHER: One of those men was Shotaro Hamachi, who lived in a small village outside Fukuoka, a city on the southern Japanese island of Kyushu. Shotaro's family was poor and had few prospects of things getting better. His son, Ted, a future incarcerated at Heart Mountain remembers:

TED HAMACHI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Yea they lived in sort of a hillside village. And I was fortunate to be able to visit the home, and saw pictures of where he was born. They had straw roofs. And if the roof leaked, they tied on more straw mats for the roofing. And the floor was dirt. When my sister went back to visit, she happened to see our numerous family photos hanging in this particular hut-like building. I would call it a hut because it wasn't very big.

ROB BUSCHER: By the late 1860s, young men began to seek new opportunities outside Japan. Inheritance laws in Japan were patrilineal with property and estate rights given to the eldest son. Many of the younger sons had few prospects at home. Others fell on hard times because of the devastating drought and crop famine that plagued parts of Western Japan in the 1870s and 1880s.

ROB BUSCHER: The main destination for these emigrants was Hawaii, which was then still a sovereign kingdom. White settlers, mostly from the United States, began moving to Hawaii in the 1830s and built large plantations that grew sugar cane, pineapples, and coffee. By the 1880s it was the white plantation owners who held the power in Hawaiian society and they began recruiting more overseas workers to come settle the islands.

ROB BUSCHER: Labor contractors from Hawaii traveled to Japan to persuade the imperial government to let people leave if they wanted to work there. In 1885, the Meiji government relented, and the wave of Japanese immigrants to Hawaii began.

ROB BUSCHER: One of those immigrants was 22-year-old Chotaro Ito, who left his home near Fukuoka in 1893 to board a ship for the Hawaiian island of Maui, and started work at one of its many sugar plantations. Ito worked in the cane fields for 10 years before following the footsteps of many Japanese immigrants before him. He boarded another ship, this time bound for California. Eventually, Ito became the head gardener at the Mission Inn in Riverside and started a nursery business. His son James, would become one of the leading farmers at Heart Mountain.

ROB BUSCHER: Hatsuzo and Ino Okamoto were also part of the wave of immigrants from Yamaguchi-ken to Hawaii, where they settled on the big island in the 1880s. Their son, Kiyoshi, would move to California in 1928 and work as a botanist throughout the state. He would later be incarcerated at Heart Mountain and become one of the leaders of the resistance movement known as the Fair Play Committee.

ROB BUSCHER: As a result of increasing anti-Chinese sentiments by white nativists in California and elsewhere on the West coast, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 stemmed the tide of immigration from China. California initially welcomed Japanese immigrants as a new source of inexpensive labor. The majority of these immigrants came from four regions: Hiroshima, Yamaguchi, Wakayama and Fukuoka - hailing from both Kyushu and the southern part of Honshu, the main island of Japan.

ROB BUSCHER: Yosaburo Yoshida was one of the few Japanese immigrants to enter American academia at the beginning of the 20th Century. His article for the

Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science spelled out many of the reasons for the growing numbers of immigrants and where in Japan they came from.

YOSABURO YOSHIDA VOICE OVER: Generally speaking, the people of the Sanyodo, where the districts of Hiroshima, Yamaguchi and Okayama are situated, were warriors in the feudal ages; and, the districts being along the coast, the people were accustomed to go to sea, and were venturesome and eager to satisfy new wants.

ROB BUSCHER: Many of the Labor contractors who previously recruited immigrants from these regions to work in Hawaii, began doing so for businesses on the West Coast, including farms and railroads, industries that had previously relied on Chinese immigrant labor.

ROB BUSCHER: Some people in Japan heard about opportunities in the United States from friends and family who had already made the journey. Others read books like *How to Succeed in America*, or heard about immigrant success stories like George Shima, the “Potato King” of California whose farm in 1909 produced more potatoes than any other in the world.

ROB BUSCHER: Iyekichi Harada lived in Saga Prefecture on the island of Kyushu. He already emigrated from Japan to Peru, but returned home after experiencing the harsh labor conditions. He left again, this time for California under a new last name – Higuchi – which was the surname of his mother’s family who had no male

heir. The Higuchis settled in Santa Clara County, where Iyekichi became a sharecropper on rented land.

ROB BUSCHER: Iyekichi's granddaughter, Shirley Ann Higuchi, is now the Board Chair at Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation. Shirley recalls how her grandparents worked hard to carve out a living on their farms.

SHIRLEY ANN HIGUCHI INTERVIEW: Life was hard for the Issei immigrants and my grandfather's life was no exception. Toiling away as a sharecropper, in one year he lost everything when a terrible storm hit San Jose and washed away all of his crops for that year. It was a very tedious process because after picking the fruit, and growing them, he had to dip them in a lye solution to dry them.

ROB BUSCHER: Isaburo Yoshinaga also came from Kyushu to the United States. His son, George, said his father immigrated to work on the railroads. By 1906, 13,000 Japanese immigrants were working on US railroads, including members of my own family.

ROB BUSCHER: Isaburo wondered how long he would stay in the United States. His son remembers,

GEORGE YOSHINAGA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: He came here to work on the railroad and decided to go back to Japan after a couple years. And they were on the ship going back and then when he got to Hawaii, he got off and said, "What

am I going back to Japan for?" So, he got on the next ship and came back to the mainland.

ROB BUSCHER: Isaburo also found his way to Santa Clara County.

ROB BUSCHER: Bill Hosokawa's family shared a similar pathway into the country. Bill would later become the editor of the Heart Mountain Sentinel, the newspaper for incarcerated in camp. He remembers his father, Setsugo, left his home near Hiroshima when he was 16 for a job working on the railroads.

BILL HOSOKAWA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: My father had been in this country only a day or so when he was shipped off to Northern Montana to work on the railroad. And that was the reason he came to this country. The recruiter had come to the village where my father lived and apparently the recruiter was well-known in that area because he rounded up a number of farm boys and brought them to the United States to work on the railroad. My father liked to tell about how he and a friend were arguing during working -- their working day about whether the white stuff on the mountain over there was salt or snow. And the foreman became very angry and upbraided them. And my father, being a spunky young fellow, said, "The hell with it," and he set out for California from Northern Montana. He had no knowledge about the geography of the United States. He had no money to travel. So, he walked the, along the railroads and rode the freight cars and wound up in Sacramento.

ROB BUSCHER: Although they were initially welcomed as a better alternative to cheap Chinese labor, the Japanese immigrants would soon face growing anti-Asian racism on the West Coast. Like the Chinese before them, who helped build the transcontinental railroad, Japanese laborers were forced to work longer hours for less pay. Farm owners, factory bosses, and other business leaders used immigrant labor to drive down the wages of white workers, causing tension between these groups and leading many of the white labor leaders to call for an expansion to the Chinese Exclusion Act.

ROB BUSCHER: Another source of tension was the false belief that Japanese immigrants were bringers and spreaders of diseases. During the bubonic plague scare of 1900, President William McKinley authorized the California Surgeon General to, “forbid the sale or donation of transportation to Asiatics or other races particularly liable to the disease.” Japanese and Chinese were refused the right to leave the state without certificates of vaccination, scapegoated as carriers of disease.

ROB BUSCHER: After Japan’s undisputed victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905, opposition to the Japanese became more layered. Japan’s victory cemented their dominance in the Korean peninsula, leading to their formal annexation in 1910. This added Korea to a growing list of Japanese territories including Taiwan, which Japan had incorporated into its empire after defeating Qing Dynasty China in the First Sino-Japanese War of 1895. Japan would use its Korean colony to stage later military actions in Manchuria, drastically shifting the balance of power in Japan’s favor, compared to other European empires with interest in the region.

Furthermore, prior to the Russo-Japanese War no Asian country in modern history had defeated a European nation in war. This startling upset resulted in a resurgence of Yellow Peril anti-Asian sentiments in the American popular press.

ROB BUSCHER: The San Francisco Chronicle was the most influential newspaper on the West Coast at that time. It soon launched a full-throated crusade against Japanese immigrants who they charged as taking away jobs from “real Americans.”

SF CHRONICLE EDITORIAL VOICE OVER: There will doubtless be opposition to the exclusion of the Japanese. A little of it will come from emotional people on what they imagine to be ethical grounds, but in the main the opponents of the movement will be those who are perfectly confident of their own ability to sustain themselves under any competition and desire to employ gang labor. Except in household service the Japanese are not yet displacing white labor in cities to any great extent, except as they work upon their own account, as small merchants, cobblers, gardeners and similar occupations. In starting these independent occupations of their own they are far more alert and aggressive than the Chinese. And when they enter an industry the white men have to leave it.

SECOND CHRONICLE EDITORIAL VOICE OVER: Although we get many of the violent and criminal class from Southern Europe, the vast majority of those immigrants are as honest and law abiding as we are. They speedily adapt themselves to our ways of life and their children become excellent Americans. The Oriental remains an Oriental, and in those countries where intermarriages take place, the resulting

mestizos are smarter, but more depraved than their Oriental ancestors. We single out the Japanese because the Japanese coolie is the worst immigrant we have.

ROB BUSCHER: By 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt reached a so-called “Gentleman’s Agreement” with the Japanese government to slow the influx of male immigrants to the United States. Due in part to the Japanese Empire’s new prestige after emerging victorious from the Russo-Japanese War, in return for restricting emigration Japan was able to negotiate special privileges for the Japanese immigrants currently residing in the US, such as allowing their American-born children to attend white schools while Chinese American children remained in segregated Chinese schools.

ROB BUSCHER: The Gentlemen’s Agreement severely reduced the number of new immigrants from Japan, but there remained a loophole that would become known as the Picture bride. The Gentlemen’s agreement allowed Japanese women to enter the United States to marry men who had already immigrated. Many of these men came as bachelors who one day hoped to start families. But the pool of available Japanese women in the United States was exceedingly small, and anti-miscegenation laws forbid interracial marriage in most Western states.

ROB BUSCHER: There were many women in Japan who were willing to marry Japanese immigrant men for the chance to begin a new life in the United States. They learned of these men either through family members or intermediaries called *baishakunin* - matchmakers. Arranged marriages called *omiai* had long been a practice among traditional families in Japan. The only difference in this case was

that the couples would have to agree to marry sight unseen, save for a photograph sent through the mail.

ROB BUSCHER: Often, men would send out-of-date photos that made them look far younger than they actually were. In some cases, they would even mail a photo of their handsome friend. That meant rude surprises for picture brides who sailed across the Pacific expecting to meet a younger man, instead encountering someone much older and in some cases a different man entirely.

ROB BUSCHER: One picture bride who would eventually come to reside in Heart Mountain was Kane Watanabe. She saw a photo of her future husband, Kunisaku Mineta, and they arranged their marriage in 1912. A ship manifest from January 1914 shows her departure from the port of Yokohama and that she and Kunisaku had already completed their marriage documents by mail.

ROB BUSCHER: Kane joined him in Salinas, California, where Kunisaku worked on a sugar beet farm. Together, they would have five children and settle in San Jose. Their youngest, Norman Yoshio Mineta, who was incarcerated at Heart Mountain with his family would later become a U.S. representative and Cabinet member under two presidents, Democrat Bill Clinton and Republican George W. Bush.

ROB BUSCHER: Not every picture bride was as well matched. In San Francisco, Yoshio Saito had arrived in 1918 and sailed back to Japan in 1923 to meet the woman who was arranged to be his wife. His granddaughter, Shirley Ann Higuchi, remembers that the match was not what Yoshio expected.

SHIRLEY ANN HIGUCHI INTERVIEW: Legend has it that my grandfather Saito traveled all the way back to Japan to meet his match in person. That was good for him, because for a merchant he never left anything to chance. When he saw the older sister who he was supposed to marry, he ended up looking at the younger sister and decided she was the one for him. I hope the older sister never found out the impression that my grandfather had was that the younger one was fantastically better looking, so he ended up bringing the younger daughter back with him, who ended up being my grandmother Saito.

ROB BUSCHER: Most of those who would end up incarcerated at Heart Mountain settled in Los Angeles, while others stayed near San Jose. A smaller group lived in San Francisco.

ROB BUSCHER: Life in the agricultural Santa Clara Valley near San Jose was hard. Most farms operated by Japanese immigrants were small and could not rely on machinery to bring in their crops. They struggled to yield good crops amid poor growing conditions. They also had to fight racist legislation such as the 1913 California Alien Land Law, which prevented immigrants from owning the land they farmed. Most Issei would become tenant farmers, renting from white landlords. But in some cases they would buy land in the name of their American-born children.

ROB BUSCHER: When Iyekichi Higuchi saved enough money to buy a 14-acre farm in San Jose, he drove to San Francisco to meet with a lawyer who helped him put the farm in the name of two of his sons, James and Kiyoshi.

ROB BUSCHER: While many Japanese Americans lived on farms throughout Santa Clara County, inside the city of San Jose grew a thriving Nihonmachi - Japantown. Much of San Jose's Nihonmachi bore the imprint of two Issei brothers; Shinzaburo and Gentaro Nishiura. In 1910, they designed the Kuwabara Hospital, which served the growing community. Devout Buddhists, the brothers built temples throughout San Jose. They helped define the spiritual life of their community, as they would later during their time at Heart Mountain.

ROB BUSCHER: By 1942, when Japanese Americans were forcibly evicted from their homes, the community in Los Angeles was the nation's largest. However, in the early decades of the 20th century most immigrants settled in Northern California around San Francisco. After the 1906 earthquake devastated San Francisco, many Japanese immigrants moved south toward Los Angeles, where they started farms or clustered in the ethnic enclave east of downtown known as Little Tokyo.

ROB BUSCHER: One of the first arrivals in Los Angeles was Sadagoro Hoshizaki, who came in 1899. He started a food import business that still exists today as the Mutual Trading Company. Sadagoro had long urged his younger brother, Keijiro, to join him. Keijiro graduated from college and wanted to work in Japan, but his first job was in the Chinese province of Manchuria, working for a Japanese mining

company. The work was boring and the conditions miserable. Keijiro accepted his brother's offer and moved to Los Angeles in 1919.

ROB BUSCHER: After a few years working for his older brother, Keijiro set out on his own, as his oldest son Takashi remembers,

TAKASHI HOSHIZAKI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: I think my, my uncle was a little disappointed that he decided to strike out on his own, 'cause apparently you have a company and you have a person there working away and suddenly that person says, "Well, I'm gonna go become independent." So I guess my uncle wasn't too pleased, but later on there was support from him on that. And the store he started in the Hollywood area was Fujiya, and with other symbol behind it was cash and carry grocery store. Guess in the Depression he wouldn't go much on credit.

ROB BUSCHER: Despite the prevalent racism and discriminatory laws meant to make life difficult for them, Japanese immigrants and their families thrived. Children who were born in the United States were called the Nisei, or second generation. They desperately wanted to assimilate into the larger society - and many did, becoming doctors, lawyers, and teachers.

ROB BUSCHER: Despite their best efforts, Japanese Americans remained a community on the margins of society. Perceived by many as perpetual foreigners who were too different from white Americans to assimilate, Japanese Americans were frequently associated with the deeds of their overseas cousins.

ROB BUSCHER: Having previously served as Undersecretary of the Navy during World War I, President Franklin Roosevelt distrusted Japan and its competing imperial interests in the Pacific. Prior to the start of formal hostilities between the US and Japan, the FBI had already compiled lists of Japanese Americans whose connections to Japan were viewed with suspicion.

ROB BUSCHER: After Japan invaded China in 1937 tensions grew between the United States and Japan. In December 1937, Japanese forces destroyed the Chinese capital of Nanking, killing upwards of 200,000 civilians and raping at least 20,000 Chinese women. As a result of this and other atrocities committed by the Japanese imperial army in China, public sentiment in the United States turned against Japan. By the middle of 1941, the U.S. government had placed an embargo on oil sales to Japan, which threatened to cripple the Japanese economy and bring their war in China to a halt.

ROB BUSCHER: The Japanese government concluded the best way to consolidate its gains in the Pacific and minimize U.S. interference was to destroy the Pacific fleet based at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Their plan included simultaneous actions on other key military outposts in US Pacific territories including the Philippines, Guam, and Wake Island, also striking British held Hong Kong, Malaya, and Singapore.

ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR NEWSREEL AUDIO: On December 7, 1941 Japan like its infamous Axis partners struck first and declared war afterwards. Costly to our

navy was the loss of war vessels, airplanes, and equipment. But more costly to Japan was the effectiveness of its foul attack in immediately unifying America in its determination to fight and win the war thrust upon it. And to win the peace that will follow. The Japs copied their German masters in striking hard at airfields. Hickam Field northwest of Honolulu and the full island naval plane base were the first objectives of Japan's treachery. Scores of planes were bruised and battered by the Japs' aerial bombs. Many of these were demolished beyond repair. Here at the naval air station is grim and positive evidence of Jap treachery. Here foul blows were struck while Jap diplomats were talking peace in Washington.

ROB BUSCHER: The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor upended Japanese American life on the West Coast overnight. FBI agents who had been monitoring the community quickly swooped in to detain community leaders, almost all of them Issei immigrants. They were association leaders, Buddhist and Shinto priests, newspaper editors and teachers - individuals whose absence of leadership would destabilize the Japanese American community in the weeks to come.

ROB BUSCHER: Often their families were not told where they were taken. Some would not learn their locations until months later. Many families rushed to destroy anything in their homes that showed their connection to Japan. Countless heirlooms and cultural treasures were lost in these efforts to prove their loyalty. Ultimately it would have little effect on the mounting hostility towards Americans of Japanese ancestry.

ROB BUSCHER: White residents of the Western states with large Japanese American populations — California, Oregon and Washington — began to suspect their neighbors as potential spies and saboteurs. These sentiments were exacerbated by farm labor organizations like the Salinas Vegetable Grower-Shipper Association. Days after the December 7 attack, Managing Secretary of the association Austin Anson released the following statement in the Saturday Evening Post.

AUSTIN ANSON VOICE OVER: We are charged with wanting to get rid of the Japs for selfish reasons. We might as well be honest. We do. It's a question of whether the white man lives on the Pacific Coast or the brown man. They came into this valley to work and they stayed to take over... If the Japs were removed tomorrow, we'd never miss them in two weeks because the white farmers can take over and produce everything the Jap grows. And we don't want them back when the war ends either.

ROB BUSCHER: Unfounded rumors spread that the Japanese residents of Hawaii had blocked emergency vehicles from responding to the Pearl Harbor attack. In fact, many Japanese Hawaiians were involved in the emergency response efforts. Japanese Americans on the mainland were also accused of sending radio signals to Japanese submarines off the coast of California.

ROB BUSCHER: Soon politicians and newspaper columnists began to demand that Japanese Americans be kicked out of western states, being deported back to Japan, or even forcibly sterilized as Congressman Jed Johnson from Oklahoma called for. In Washington, the debate over the fate of Japanese Americans engulfed the administration of President Franklin Roosevelt. FBI Director J. Edgar

Hoover believed that his agents resolved the security problem when they detained the community leaders in the days after December 7th.

ROB BUSCHER: But General John DeWitt, head of the Western Defense Command based in San Francisco, argued that Japanese Americans had to be removed from the West Coast. DeWitt had no evidence that they posed a security risk, but he believed that anyone with even one drop of Japanese blood could not truly be an American. General DeWitt's February 1942 recommendation presented the following rationale for the exclusion.

GENERAL JOHN DEWITT VOICE OVER: In the war in which we are now engaged racial affinities are not severed by migration. The Japanese race is an enemy race and while many second and third generation Japanese born on United State soil, possessed of United States citizenship, have become "Americanized," the racial strains are undiluted. To conclude otherwise is to expect that children born of white parents on Japanese soil sever all racial affinity and become loyal Japanese subjects, ready to fight and, if necessary, to die for Japan in a war against the nation of their parents. That Japan is allied with Germany and Italy in this struggle is not ground for assuming that any Japanese, barred from assimilation by convention as he is, though born and raised in the United States, will not turn against this nation when the final test of loyalty comes. It, therefore, follows that along the vital Pacific Coast over 112,000 potential enemies, of Japanese extraction, are at-large today. There are indications that these were organized and ready for concerted action at a favorable opportunity. The very fact that no sabotage has taken place to date is a disturbing and confirming indication that such action will be taken.

ROB BUSCHER: One of DeWitt's most diligent aides was Colonel Karl Bendetsen, who argued to have all of the Japanese Americans removed for security reasons.

DeWitt and Bendetsen managed to persuade Secretary of War Henry Stimson and his top deputy, John McCloy, that the risk of sabotage was too great. Together, they persuaded Roosevelt to sign an executive order on February 19, 1942.

ROB BUSCHER: Known as Executive Order 9066, this vaguely written legal document gave the military authority to exclude any persons deemed capable of sabotage from designated military zones on the West coast of the United States. Although it did not name Japanese Americans specifically, EO 9066 would set the legal precedent for General DeWitt's evacuation orders in March and April of 1942.

ROB BUSCHER: The government used Census Bureau documents to determine where the Japanese Americans lived. Officials then began a systematic removal of Japanese Americans from each area along the Military Zone 1. They were told to bring only what they could carry as they prepared to leave for unknown locations where they would be held for an undetermined period of time.

ROB BUSCHER: In Los Angeles, Keijiro Hoshizaki had to close his market. The family's African American neighbors, the Marshall family, agreed to watch over their home. Takashi Hoshizaki remembers what happened next.

TAKASHI HOSHIZAKI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Well, we gathered up at the Hollywood Independent Church, which was just about two miles north of where we lived, and then we got on the bus. We didn't know where we were going, but then eventually we ended up at the Pomona fairgrounds.

ROB BUSCHER: In San Jose, the Mineta family had white friends who looked over their home, but Kunisaku Mineta's insurance business had to close. Elsewhere in San Jose, the Higuchis debated what to do with the family's raspberry farm. Their neighbors, an Italian immigrant family, offered to buy it from them at a reduced price. But the farm was held in the names of two of the Higuchi sons — James and Kiyoshi. Kiyoshi lived at home and was able to sign the sale, but James was a doctor in the U.S. Army stationed in Arkansas. He had to get leave from his base to go into town to sign away his share in front of a notary.

ROB BUSCHER: After being forcibly removed from their homes, Japanese Americans were deposited in one of 17 temporary assembly centers located in California, Oregon, Washington, and Arizona. The government searched for sites that were large enough to house a rapid influx of people. The only existing infrastructure capable of holding them were county fairgrounds and horse-racing tracks.

ROB BUSCHER: The largest of the assembly centers was the Santa Anita racetrack, located 12 miles east of downtown LA. Famous for being the track where thoroughbred Seabiscuit won many of his races, Santa Anita was never meant to house people, let alone 18,000 of them uprooted from their homes and businesses. The first incarcerated were forced to sleep in horse stalls, just as they were at the assembly centers at nearby Pomona, the site of the Los Angeles County fair, and the Tanforan race track south of San Francisco.

ROB BUSCHER: The older generation of Issei incarcerated were horrified by the conditions they confronted at Santa Anita. Even if they were spared the indignity of sleeping in the horse stalls, they still had no bathrooms or running water in the hastily built barracks that were set up in the track's infield and parking lot. Prisoners had to use group showers with their new neighbors and use public toilets without partitions between them. For the Issei whose Japanese culture valued cleanliness and privacy, these conditions were unbearable.

ROB BUSCHER: Assembly centers also forced people from different Japanese American communities, who had interacted with each other infrequently before, into the same isolated environment. The young people from Northern California encountered a faster, sometimes rougher, crowd from Los Angeles. George Yoshinaga remembers.

GEORGE YOSHINAGA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: When I got there it was really an experience, not just being in camp but being thrown together with people from Los Angeles, and people from Los Angeles were a lot different from those of us from places like Mountain View and San Jose.

ROB BUSCHER: Children had a different experience. Childhood incarceration survivors remember a new world filled with people who looked like them. They played games. They ran under the grandstands. They showered where Seabiscuit

had been washed down. Bill Shishima recalls the games they would play with the camp searchlights.

BILL SHISHIMA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: We used to play games with the sentries at Santa Anita. I say play games because in the evening, when we had to go use the latrines, the spotlights would pick us up and follow us wherever we go. So, if we went into the latrine, they follow us there and waited for us to get out. So, as we got out, we used to play games with them, hide behind the barracks, so they couldn't follow us.

ROB BUSCHER: Another childhood incarceration survivor, Donald Yamamoto, also remembered the searchlights.

DONALD YAMAMOTO RECORDING FROM DENSHO: The searchlights were situated on top of the grandstand and we used to play games at night when you're walking to the bathroom or some. If the light hits you as you're between the barracks, used to run, run into the shadow of the barracks just to see what the guy would do. And he would searchlight to the next opening to see if you showed up there, and I just stayed in the shadow until they went away.

ROB BUSCHER: Mary Oyama Mittwer was a Nisei journalist who was sent to Santa Anita with her husband and two young children. In an essay titled "This Isn't Japan" that was published in the Autumn 1942 edition of the camp magazine Common Ground, Mary writes.

MARY OYAMA MITTWER VOICE OVER: This is Santa Anita Assembly Center, in itself a paradoxical anomaly. Here thousands of Americans with Japanese faces, evacuated from their Pacific Coast homes, are taking internment in stride and managing despite many inconveniences and hardships, to maintain their sense of humor and "Yankee" fortitude. Along with their parents, who have been technically classified as "enemy aliens," these Americans of Japanese ancestry comprise a good-size town (about 18,500) of Oriental-faced inhabitants who speak English, sling American slang, jitterbug according to the most streamlined 1942 tradition, who prefer to sing "Dip in the Heart of Texas" to some minor-keyed Japanese folk-song, and who worry - down under the surface - as to their future status in this country that is also theirs. When these American Nisei boys and girls walk down the street romantically, holding eachothers hands or chummily arm-in-arm, the older generation, the Issei do not know whether to look discreetly away or to be nonchalant and simply look on. They are not yet accustomed to this typically Occidental phenomenon of frank display of affection between the sexes. Something unheard of in Japan. They are embarrassed at the unembarrassed-ness of their Nisei children. But now, they are gradually becoming accustomed to it, like anything else.

ROB BUSCHER: While the children played, and teenagers rebelled, the adults chafed under the many restrictions. The mess halls were crowded and chaotic, and the food was terrible. Families often used contraband hotplates to prepare

meals in their barracks, which was against camp regulations. Authorities routinely inspected barracks and disturbed the occupants while doing so.

ROB BUSCHER: By August 4, the conditions at Santa Anita had gotten the best of many of the incarcerated. Camp administrators encouraged the prisoners to inform on each other for breaking various regulations, which created a climate of distrust and suspicion. One suspect was Harry Kawaguchi, a half Korean, half Japanese prisoner. One day, after the camp police started inspecting the barracks looking for allegedly stolen contraband and Japanese-language phonograph records, a fight broke out in one of the mess halls. An FBI investigation revealed the crowd had beaten Kawaguchi, who was cornered in an office and had numerous items thrown at him, including several typewriters.

ROB BUSCHER: The ensuing riot started just as more than three thousand prisoners, including mess hall workers, makers of camouflage netting, and warehouse workers, went on strike. Separately from these disturbances, two hundred women also converged on the police chief's office, seeking an end to the snap inspections of the barracks, which were mandated in a manual written by Karl Bendetsen, the military officer responsible for many of the conditions in the assembly centers. Military policemen stopped the riot eventually. Soon after the inspections stopped, too. George Yoshinaga was a spectator during the riot. He remembered a community pushed to its breaking point.

GEORGE YOSHINAGA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: There was so many rumors you know, but one of the most prominent rumors was that the government had sent some people in to spy on us. And I don't know how accurate that was, but from what I was told is that they cornered this one person in the barrack and then the word started getting around, we got this guy trapped and actually, there was only a handful of guys that started the trouble. And they were shipped out early.

ROB BUSCHER: A week after the riot, the government informed the prisoners in Santa Anita that it was time for them to go. No one knew where their next destination was, just like they didn't know where they were bound for just months earlier when they ended up at Santa Anita. They were told to gather their belongings and head to the train platform.

ROB BUSCHER: Eventually, they boarded the trains and realized all of the window shades were drawn. None of the passengers could open them, because the authorities did not want residents of any cities the trains passed through to see cars filled with Japanese Americans. The trains were hot, and the seats were hard. No one could lie down to sleep. The toilets overflowed, and confusion reigned among the passengers. Other trains using the tracks had priority over those filled with Japanese Americans, so the journey took even longer than usual. John Nakada remembers his family's trip on the train.

JOHN NAKADA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: So, from southern California to Wyoming it must have taken us over a week to get there. And normally it would only take, you know, two, three days but the war was on and so we were the least

high priority on the train track so we were always on the side of the train track to let the, the main people go... use the main railroad, you know, the soldiers, the construction material, the people that are building tanks, and planes, and guns, and everything else, they were the top priorities. We were the last priorities on the list so we were always on the train track on the side there waiting to get on the main line. So that's why it took us so long. And see, we just sat and ate in a chair, just a chair, in the coach, and that's how we traveled.

JOHN NAKADA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: And even as an eleven year old, I remember having to eat and sleep in a chair for a week. That was terrible I thought, that's the part I really hated is that train ride, oh, I still remember that. And then the soldiers came through all the time to make sure we were all okay. And every time we came to a city we had to pull the shades down because the soldiers said, "We're protecting you because the people outside might shoot you or something." So we had to pull our shades down every time we came to any kind of city, and I still remember that. The only time we could put the shades up was when we were out in the country.

ROB BUSCHER: Nobu Shimokochi was 13 when he and his family rode the train to Heart Mountain.

NOBU SHIMOKOCHI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Yeah, four months later we got on the train. And I guess, about three days on the train, they were all coach seats, so they were kind of hard, uncomfortable seats. Our parents tried to make us as comfortable as possible at their expense. I recall that the... what do you call 'em, stewards, or the waiters on the dining car? They were very unhappy because they

weren't getting the tips. Of course, they didn't understand the circumstances, and we didn't have the money, and we ate a minimum. I don't know if there was any free food provided or not. But anyway, I recalled the waiters being real unhappy about not getting tips, because I guess they were paid dependent on tips.

ROB BUSCHER: Although the predominantly African American porters weren't happy about not receiving tips, Takashi Hoshizaki remembers they were sympathetic to the Japanese American passengers. They too understood the harsh reality of American racism.

ROB BUSCHER: After an average trip of four days, the trains arrived at their final destination – a windy, dusty patch of the northwestern Wyoming prairie sixty miles east of Yellowstone National Park. For many, what the government called the Heart Mountain Japanese American Relocation Center would be their home for the next three years.

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