

LOOK TOWARD THE MOUNTAIN, MOFA EPISODE 2, SOMETHING LOST AND SOMETHING FOUND TRANSCRIPT

ROB BUSCHER: Welcome to *Look Toward the Mountain*, 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.

ROB BUSCHER: Thanks to the support of the Embassy of Japan in the United States, the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation is presenting a special three-episode series exploring the Japanese American experience beyond Heart Mountain, and our relationship to Japan.

ROB BUSCHER: This second episode explores the postwar resettlement of Japanese Americans. Some kept their heads down and tried to assimilate into the broader society while others turned to activism that would birth the pilgrimage movement, that would ultimately help fuel a national reckoning with the injustice of wartime incarceration.

INTRO THEME

ROB BUSCHER: Japanese American incarceration survivors wanted to put their wartime ordeal behind them and try to rebuild their lives as best they could. The Issei had lost virtually everything they worked for in the decades they spent in the United States prior to their and their families being thrown behind barbed wire. They were ashamed and depressed. Some committed suicide.

ROB BUSCHER: Many of their Nisei sons had gone to war to fight for their dignity and prove they were as patriotic as any other American. Other Nisei in the camps did what they could to support the war effort from afar, despite the fact that the US military and federal government were entirely at fault for sending their lives on a detour. Among the Nisei draft resisters and Japanese Americans who were deemed disloyal because of their No-No responses to the Loyalty Questionnaire, many found themselves isolated from even their own Japanese American community in the postwar era.

ROB BUSCHER: Regardless of how they spent their war years in camp, Nisei had been ousted from their early career jobs, colleges, and grade schools. Many lost the only home they had ever known as they resettled elsewhere around the country. Some younger Nisei who were able to return with their families to their pre-war homes on the West Coast resumed school and tried to fit in as best they could.

ROB BUSCHER: Many Japanese Americans actively pursued assimilation into the white majority society, as they were encouraged to do so by the War Relocation Authority. But assimilation came with a price: many Nisei lost their sense of identity, and most of the Sansei or third-generation who followed became disconnected from Japanese language and culture. As the Model Minority myth began to take shape in the mid-1960s this obscured the many challenges related to mental health and long term financial instability that many Japanese Americans faced as a result of the wartime incarceration.

ROB BUSCHER: Most among the Nisei quietly persevered according to the adage of their Issei parents - *Deru kugi wa utareru* - the nail that sticks up gets hammered down. Struggling with the legacy of their unresolved trauma, many Nisei spoke euphemistically little, if at all, to their Sansei children about the wartime incarceration. But as the Sansei grew into adolescence they began to question what happened during the war. Members of the Baby Boom generation born in the years after the war's end, Sansei entered a society in which the United States towered over all other nations as a global superpower.

ROB BUSCHER: Sansei also came of age at a time of unprecedented social upheaval in the historically conservative American society, when many established traditions and social hierarchies began to change. The legislative victories of the civil rights movement awakened many in the Sansei generation to what might be possible for Japanese Americans. This would eventually manifest as the pilgrimage movement, where Japanese American incarceration survivors and their descendants make annual pilgrimages to their former sites of incarceration.

ROB BUSCHER: The first known pilgrims to visit the former sites of War Relocation Authority camps in the postwar era were two Los Angeles-based men of the cloth. Santoku Maeda was a Buddhist priest who had been incarcerated at Manzanar in California's Eastern Sierras during the war. Shoichi Wakahiro was a Christian minister who had also been incarcerated at Manzanar.

ROB BUSCHER: During the war, they administered last rites to the nearly 150 people who died at Manzanar. After the war, these men of different faiths would make the trip from Los Angeles to Manzanar each year. Maeda and Wakahiro made their annual pilgrimage to the Manzanar cemetery, and cleaned the “soul consoling tower” - an obelisk that was built there by incarcerated stonemason Ryozo Kado.

ROB BUSCHER: Warren Furutani, one of the founders of the first official Manzanar pilgrimage that took place in 1969, said Maeda and Wakahiro helped expose the government’s lies about those who died at Manzanar. The government also said that all of the bodies in the cemetery had been exhumed for burial elsewhere, usually somewhere closer to where the family members had resettled after the war. But on their trips to Manzanar, Maeda and Wakahiro discovered that some of the bodies remained in the makeshift graves dug for them during the war. They tended to the graves of the six individuals whose remains were not reinterred elsewhere after the war during their annual pilgrimage.

ROB BUSCHER: The 20 years after the end of World War II was a period of tremendous social change that culminated with the passage of the country’s first major civil rights legislation. Largely instigated by African American soldiers returning from the war in which the United States was supposedly fighting for liberty and justice for all, these men were confronted with the inequity of institutional white supremacy - particularly in the Deep South where Jim Crow laws legally segregated public facilities. As a result of their advocacy along with the allyship of their brothers in arms, President Harry Truman passed Executive

Order 981 in July 1948, that formally abolished discrimination and segregation in the military. Although the scope of this law was limited to the military bases themselves, this opened a window of opportunity for African Americans and others wishing to end the “separate but equal” ideology that was practiced by the United States government at that time. But elsewhere throughout the country anti-Blackness also continued as part of the status quo.

ROB BUSCHER: While some Issei and Nisei showed allyship to the African Americans and got involved in efforts to overturn racially restrictive legislation, many Japanese Americans just wanted to get on with their lives. Many were embarrassed by what happened to them during the war and wanted to avoid any activities that had the potential to bring further scrutiny on their community. One group that was fairly vocal throughout the postwar era was the Japanese American Citizens League.

ROB BUSCHER: During the war years JACL faced widespread criticism by many Japanese Americans for collaborating with the government by encouraging the community to comply with military removal orders and mass incarceration in American concentration camps. JACL’s wartime leadership toed the party line of Executive Director Mike Masaoka, who was a vocal proponent of Nisei military service and helped to establish the segregated all Japanese American 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

ROB BUSCHER: While there is much to be criticized about the JACL's position during the war years, particularly in the stigmatization of Nisei draft resisters and others deemed disloyal, the goodwill that was established between the federal government and Nisei leadership of the JACL would be leveraged throughout the postwar era to help the Japanese American community at-large achieve their advocacy agenda. Of particular note was the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 that finally allowed Issei and all other foreign-born Asians to become naturalized citizens.

ROB BUSCHER: However strong the JACL's relationship with the government was, even they could not overcome certain aspects of the highly conservative Cold War Era. In 1950, Congress passed a law called the Internal Security Act that raised the specter of another mass incarceration, threatening not only the security of Japanese Americans, but any community who was perceived as a threat to American Democracy.

ROB BUSCHER: The Internal Security Act was meant to stop the spread of the international communist movement, but Title II of the bill dubbed the Emergency Detention Act relied on language very similar to Executive Order 9066, which authorized the forced removal of 120,000 Japanese Americans from the West Coast. Title II empowered the attorney general of the United States to issue warrants against anyone suspected of conspiring for espionage or sabotage and hold them indefinitely.

ROB BUSCHER: Congress also proposed the allocation of funds from this legislation for the creation of six detention centers throughout the country that were dismayingly similar to the War Relocation Authority camps from World War II. One of the proposed sites was Tule Lake, California, the location of the segregated WRA camp reserved for the supposedly disloyal.

ROB BUSCHER: Thankfully these detention sites were never built, and the Internal Security Act fell into disregard by the end of the 1950s. But Title II remained on the books. It soon became the focus of an advocacy campaign led by many in the Sansei generation throughout the 1960s. In 1968, the JACL made repeal of Title II its main legislative goal, but prior to that, participated in many of the broader civil rights advocacy efforts of that era.

ROB BUSCHER: JACL worked with Japanese American elected officials who actively supported the civil rights agenda, and even sent an official delegation to the 1963 March on Washington. One week after the march, Hawaiian Congressman Spark Matsunaga made the following remarks at a regional convention hosted in Cleveland by Midwest and East Coast JACL chapters. In his remarks, Matsunaga connects the experience of Black Americans in the Deep South to that of Japanese Americans during and after WWII.

SPARK MATSUNAGA VOICE OVER: Negro Americans will be bruised in nearly every waking hour by differential treatment, or exclusion from public accommodations of every description. From the time they leave home in the morning, en-route to

school or to work, to go shopping or visiting, until they return home at night, humiliation stalks them. Public transportation, eating establishments, hotels, lodging houses, theaters and motels, arenas, stadia, retail stores, markets and various other places and services catering to the general public offer them either differentiated service or none at all.

SPARK MATSUNAGA VOICE OVER: The humiliation and affront to his personal dignity that the Negro is encountering today, not only in the South but throughout too many sections of our country is not unlike the experience of the Japanese American prior to and during World War II. You will recall the case of Sergeant Frank Hachiya, and of Private Matsuda, a combat-disabled veteran of the 100th Infantry Battalion, who at the close of the last war, although garbed in Uncle Sam's military uniform and walking on crutches, was thrown out of a barber shop in Hood River Oregon, because he wore a Japanese face.

SPARK MATSUNAGA VOICE OVER: Even today, as pointed out by Mike Masaoka to the House subcommittee on Civil Rights, with all the vaunted acceptance that is supposed to be that of the Japanese American, there are swimming pools and beaches, motels and hotels, restaurants, and other places of public accommodation that are closed to persons of Japanese ancestry. As a matter of fact – recently – certain Maryland beaches which advertise in the daily newspapers wrote not only American citizens of Japanese ancestry, but also officials of the Embassy of Japan would be denied admittance at these beaches.

ROB BUSCHER: In addition to the advocacy of JACL, Japanese American activists from both the Nisei and Sansei generations participated in the broader civil rights movement that was sweeping the nation throughout the 1960s.

ROB BUSCHER: In 1963 Sansei Ed Nakawatase dropped out of college to join the movement. Leaving his home in the New Jersey farming community of Seabrook Farms and hopping on a Greyhound bus to Atlanta, Nakawatase showed up at the offices of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and asked for a job. He remembers,

ED NAKAWATASE INTERVIEW: It was 1963. There was the march on Washington, and there were demonstrations happening all over the country protesting racial discrimination. It was moving and terribly exciting. It just seemed beside the point to stay in college.

ROB BUSCHER: Nakawatase spent the next few years working with SNCC to document the many incidents of anti-Black violence as reported in the local press throughout the South.

ED NAKAWATASE INTERVIEW: Reflecting on it now is to remember the many poor, usually undereducated, and always deprecated Southern Blacks who encountered violence, terrorism, and the unwavering hostility of the local white ruling class but who continued to fight for their rightful place as citizens. Those were the real heroes by any measure. There were many others, of course, including the often besieged and beleaguered organizers who worked in some of the meanest towns

in the Bible Belt. I was, by contrast, a comparatively privileged sojourner who became much the better for taking this journey.

ROB BUSCHER: Sansei Todd Endo was also compelled to join the civil rights movement, and attended the third Selma march after watching television news reports about Bloody Sunday when John Lewis and other African American leaders were viciously beaten during a peaceful protest by Alabama State Troopers on March 7, 1965. A few days later Endo learned that an acquaintance of his Reverend James Reeb had been beaten to death by white supremacists in Selma. Although Reverend Reeb was white, as a Unitarian Universalist minister and member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, he was targeted for his support of the African American community's efforts to desegregate the South.

ROB BUSCHER: A graduate student at the time, Todd Endo recalled the impact of Reeb's death in spurring him to action.

TODD ENDO VOICE OVER: If Jim Reeb hadn't been killed, I wouldn't have been there. I went two days later. I got energized. In some sense, Reeb went, I didn't. He died, and I'm sitting in graduate school. Why did he go and I didn't? It was a pretty quick decision then to go.

ROB BUSCHER: People were surprised to see a Japanese American at the march, as Endo remembered a few people remarking,

TODD ENDO VOICE OVER: Even the Japs are here.

ROB BUSCHER: Despite the looming threat of violence, Endo said he felt safe because of the two Black women who marched on either side of him. Endo recalled,

TODD ENDO VOICE OVER: They're marching outside of me, because I'm the vulnerable outsider.

Others like Nisei lawyer William Marutani would support the civil rights movement through legal channels - who began his advocacy work doing pro-bono representation for African Americans in the Deep South during the Jim Crow era. Most of his clients were charged for violating segregation laws and were given trumped up charges to intimidate other activists from speaking out.

WILLIAM MARUTANI RECORDING: I served as a civil rights lawyer in 1965, down in Louisiana. In '66 the following year I went back again, this time in Mississippi. It was in Mississippi that the voter registration brouhaha arose. There was a young African American down there in Mississippi who was registering other African Americans to vote, and apparently the social structure didn't account with that kind of thing. Some "Black boy" doing this kind of thing. And so they rigged up a whole lot of charges against him of Grand Theft, and I defended that boy in the courtroom in Blackhawk Mississippi, as I recall.

ROB BUSCHER: At one point the law office that Marutani was working out of was targeted by white supremacists who detonated a pipe bomb that destroyed the interior of the building. Thankfully the office was empty at the time and no one was injured. But navigating the segregated South as a Japanese American provided its own difficulties, as Marutani remembered.

WILLIAM MARUTANI RECORDING: The only thing about me in particular, because of my ethnicity I was kind of a strange looking creature to everybody down there. Blacks they knew, whites they knew. I'm now talking about the power structure down there. So they didn't quite know what to make of me. Was I Black, or was I white? I wasn't so sure myself which I was closer to. That's illustrated by a point in Mississippi, not too far from Blackhawk.

WILLIAM MARUTANI RECORDING: I got hungry during the day time. I was driving through the countryside to interview some witnesses. So I looked on the map and saw a little town not too far from where I was. I drove into that town down the slope of a hill. You could make a movie set right out of that place. One gas station, dry goods store, cafe - that's all it was, and wooden sidewalks. Well to go into the cafe now, I'm not so sure I know one is white and the other's Black. I'm not down there crusading, that's not my job, my job is to do lawyering, not to raise Kane down there. It's not a sit-in as far as I was concerned. I didn't know which door to go through. If I guessed wrong I think something physical might occur to me. So I pondered a bit and a fellow goes walking by. I said, "sir where's the door to this cafe?" I knew where the door was, I was actually asking which door should I go

through? He pointed at one and it was the white door.

WILLIAM MARUTANI RECORDING: So I walked in and there were a bunch of fellas around, literally sitting around a coal stove like you see in the movies. I guess they call them crackers, I don't mean to demean them but... I was hoping I went through the door. Before I ate, I asked the man there, "where's the toilet?" I wanted to wash my hands. He pointed to the door and I went in there. As I was relieving myself, washed my hands and there's a bang on the door. I'm thinking, "oh boy this is it. I've come to the wrong place." And I says, "yea?" He says, "I'm leaving a towel for you outside to wipe your hands. And sure enough I opened the door and there's a clean linen towel. I left a tip that was bigger than my meal. And all I got was a hamburger, by the way.

ROB BUSCHER: Marutani would later present an amicus brief to the Supreme Court on behalf of the JACL in the 1967 Loving v. Virginia case, in support of interracial marriage. The Supreme Court decision in that case finally outlawed anti-miscegenation laws that had banned interracial marriage in 16 states.

ROB BUSCHER: Marutani would go on to become the first Asian American judge East of the Mississippi when he was appointed to the Court of Common Pleas by Pennsylvania Governor Milton Shapp in 1975. Two years later Marutani won his reelection and would serve on the bench until 1987.

ROB BUSCHER: Perhaps the best known Japanese American activist of her Nisei generation, Yuri Kochiyama settled in New York City with her husband Bill after they were released from the WRA camp at Jerome Arkansas. Moving to Harlem in 1960, Yuri became involved in the struggle for Black Liberation. She became an active member of Malcolm X's Organization of Afro-American Unity and advocated for collective liberation alongside her African American neighbors.

ROB BUSCHER: Meanwhile in Berkeley California, Sansei Richard Aoki played a pivotal role in arming and providing firearms training to the founding members of the Black Panther Party Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. Although Aoki was later alleged to have been working as an informant to the FBI, his contributions to the Black Liberation struggle and Asian American Studies were innumerable throughout his life.

ROB BUSCHER: Another Berkeley graduate, Yuji Ichioka coined the term "Asian American" in 1968 when he co-founded the Asian American Political Alliance with his future wife Emma Gee. Prior to this, persons of Asian descent were still commonly referred to as "Orientals," as one would call a rug or design motif. Bringing together a diverse group of Pan Asian activists from the Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino American communities the Asian American Political Alliance became a leading activist group that stood united with the Third World Liberation campus strike and advocated for progressive ideals related to the anti-war movement, labor organizing, and civil rights.

ROB BUSCHER: Amidst this broader sense of activism, Japanese Americans were compelled to revisit their own painful histories of racial oppression, ultimately leading to the first organized pilgrimages to the former WRA camps.

ROB BUSCHER: Warren Furutani was rare among the children of Japanese American incarcerated during World War II, because his parents talked openly about their experience as prisoners at the camp in Rohwer, Arkansas. Furutani's parents met as prisoners and eventually married. They moved back to California after the war, and Furutani attended schools in Gardena. He knew about the injustice of the incarceration and became active in student movements protesting the war in Vietnam.

ROB BUSCHER: Furutani like many in the Sansei generation realized that Japanese Americans and other Americans of Asian descent were underrepresented in politics, business, and popular culture. Although Furutani knew about his own family's wartime incarceration, there were few public resources to learn about the broader Japanese American experience.

ROB BUSCHER: While the JACL was busy advocating through legislative channels in Washington, Furutani instead drew his inspiration from African American leaders, like Malcolm X and Eldridge Cleaver, who were plain in their language about white supremacy being central to the status quo of the United States, and advocating for change by any means necessary.

ROB BUSCHER: Jim Matsuoka was six when he and his family were incarcerated at Manzanar. After the war, he served in the Army and then gravitated towards activism. He was part of the first Manzanar pilgrimage. Like Furutani, he credited the civil rights movement for inspiring Japanese Americans.

JIM MATSUOKA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: They were challenging everybody at the time. And here I was, coming out of the army, and I was gung ho, and I saw all these draft, people draft-dodging, and oh, I was outraged. And I would denounce them, I said, "You're nothing but a bunch of draft-dodgers. That's all you are. You're afraid to go over there and get shot. Why are you trying to bring up all these other things?" Little by little I listened to all these teachings, and my first impression was to denounce them, but the more I listened to them, the more I said, "You know, a lot of that makes sense. Why are we in Asia at all?" The most cockamamie idea is of dominoes, and what are we doing pounding these poor folks. And the Black people, Black speakers were very effective with me, anyway. 'Cause I used to listen to the Joe Pyne program. And Joe Pyne, a regular on his program was Malcolm X.

JIM MATSUOKA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: It's just that you're attracted to Malcolm X because he's out there telling it just like it is, you know. He's just like, "My enemy isn't in Vietnam, it's right down there in the South. It's among those crackers that are beating my people." I'm like, "Man, this guy makes sense," you know. "We're just gonna go against who I feel has a foot on my neck, and that happens to be you white folks." He laid it out there.

JIM MATSUOKA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: I'm like, "Wow. Here these people are getting their jollies napalming these folks, taking body counts, and what did these people ever do to you?" And then they would bring up this thing, well, "What about the time you had in camp? Were they relocation camps or were they concentration camps, what were they?" I'm sort of like, oh, yeah. They had us behind barbed wire, they're calling us "Japs," they took everything, they left me with fifty dollars and a bus ticket out, and fend on your own.

JIM MATSUOKA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: I mean, we got out of there within nothing except fifty lousy bucks and a bus ticket home. And as far as the government was concerned, we could have, we could have starved to death. Yet on the other hand, all these JAs, somehow we all suffered and we made it. And they're all out there so grateful for everything. "Yeah, we were in the greatest country on earth." I'm like, "Yeah, well, it's a great country, but they just dumped us like garbage." And if we did anything and we got anywhere, it's because we did it. We did it the hard and dirty way through gardening, through... you know. Well isn't that the American story? I guess. If crapping on you and seeing how far you can go is the "American Dream," well, that's what it is. That's why, in a way, I became very much involved with the Asian American movement, because they brought out all these truths, so to speak. And we just throw it out there and see where it lies, and maybe the society is better for it.

ROB BUSCHER: Warren Furutani had a similar epiphany while driving with his friend Victor Shibata to a protest in Oceanside, California. They were on their way to an anti-war rally at a Marine base when they decided that Asians Americans needed to establish their own movement. Although the anti-war movement was

advocating for the withdrawal of US combat troops from Vietnam, many of the white activists were unwilling or unable to take a hard look at racial inequity that peoples of the Asian diaspora were experiencing in their own country.

ROB BUSCHER: Furutani and Shibata concluded that as Asian Americans, they needed to center themselves in an identity-based movement without being filtered through the lens of white America. The first step would be to better understand the historic injustices against Asian Americans. That was when they decided to start a pilgrimage to Manzanar in 1969.

ROB BUSCHER: On a bitterly cold day in December 1969, about 150 Japanese Americans arrived at Manzanar for the first organized pilgrimage. Many of them were Sansei college students, although a small group of Nisei former incarcerated joined them, including Sue Kunitomi Embrey, who was imprisoned there before leaving for school in Wisconsin. Jim Matsuoka remembers being surprised by the plan to visit Manzanar in December.

JIM MATSUOKA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: They came up with, to me, the sort of cockamamie idea of going there in December. And having been there in December for three and a half years, I had no desire to go back there in December. But they kept saying that if we went there any other time, it would seem like more of a picnic than, you know, trying to experience what we did. So they knew that in December it would be cold and freezing. I said, "Godspeed," or whatever, like, "go at it and let me know how it is." And they were like, "Aren't you coming?" I said, "No, I'm not going." They must have caucused and they said, "Well, you've got to

come." I said, "Why?" "Because you're giving the opening statement" So that was an honor that was very hard to turn down. I said, "Well, all right."

JIM MATSUOKA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: But it was so cold. I never, ever saw Warren speechless. He was supposed to be our press liaison, and his teeth were, like, crunched together. He was out of it. Everybody showed up. I couldn't believe how many people showed up at that pilgrimage. National media, NBC, ABC - it was a media storm over there. Couldn't believe it. The minute it came time for our political message, they left. They got all the footage they wanted, and they took off.

JIM MATSUOKA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: So it came time for me to give my little speech, there's hardly anybody left. But anyway, I said... when people ask me how many people have died at Manzanar, I say, "A whole generation." And of course, by that I mean all these people that were, I always quote Frank Emi, "that tucked their tail, like a dog that tucks his tail behind and runs away." I said, there's too many *Nisei* doing that, and it wasn't to my liking. A whole generation of them went down there.

ROB BUSCHER: Cold wind whipped across the dry lake bed that day, as the small band of pilgrims struggled to stay warm. They spoke about the need to remember what had happened and reclaim their history.

ROB BUSCHER: Sue Embrey was joined by other incarceration survivors like Amy Uno Ishii, who was incarcerated at Heart Mountain, but also had family at

Manzanar. Students asked the incarceration survivors questions about their experiences, because many of their own parents refused to talk about it. Their questions inspired many of the former incarcerated to embrace an educational mission and share their experiences with the broader public and make sure nothing like this happened again.

ROB BUSCHER: Sue Embrey remembered the effect of the first pilgrimage on her.

SUE EMBREY VOICE OVER: I knew what had happened to us was wrong, but didn't feel anything could be done about it until then.

ROB BUSCHER: Nisei Robert Nakamura also attended the first Manzanar pilgrimage and shot photographs that were later featured in an issue of Asian American activist zine *Gidra*. Widely considered the literary vanguard of the emerging Asian American movement in Los Angeles, Nakamura's feature in *Gidra* helped raise awareness about Japanese American wartime incarceration among other Asian ethnic communities, and built support for future pilgrimages to Manzanar. Nakamura remembers the event as one that triggered a greater personal awakening.

ROBERT NAKAMURA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Yeah, I heard about it and I knew I had to go. Because I kind of, like everyone else, kind of blocked it out. Although the movement was beginning to kind of redefine the camp experience from a *Nisei's* point of view. And remember, there was no other pilgrimages or

anything, so it was like really out there with sagebrush and all of that. It was kind of quote, "untouched." And so wandering around, I was able to recall, "I used to play here, we used to do that there." So very, very emotional. I kind of repressed, like a lot of the *Nisei*, the whole experience was repressed, and just came out all at once at the pilgrimage. That was kind of a life-changing experience there, going back to Manzanar.

ROBERT NAKAMURA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: I wasn't really prepared. I thought I'd go 'cause everyone wanted to go, and I think we all knew we wanted to kind of make that as an issue, one of the more blatant acts of racism against Asian Americans. So it was this really dichotomy of remembering kind of pleasant, having pleasant childhood memories, and now as an adult, realizing that these experiences took place in American concentration camp. And it's an example of the kind of racism that's always with us and probably still is with this country.

ROB BUSCHER: Robert Nakamura was so inspired by his experience at the first Manzanar pilgrimage that he worked with JACL to develop a traveling photo exhibition titled "America's Concentration Camps." As the first public exhibition drawing attention to the wartime incarceration of Japanese Americans, Nakamura's exhibit left a major impact on both the Japanese American community and the broader American public.

ROB BUSCHER: Nakamura would go on to co-found Visual Communications in 1970, the oldest Asian American media advocacy organization in the country, where he directed dozens of groundbreaking documentary films about the

Japanese American experience. Of particular note is Nakamura's 1972 short documentary *Manzanar*, the first film about the wartime incarceration produced by a Japanese American filmmaker in the postwar era.

ROB BUSCHER: The first Manzanar pilgrimage inspired a grassroots movement that called for the historic designation and preservation of the Manzanar site, and the pilgrimage would become an annual event. Jim Matsuoka remembered what happened after the pilgrimage and how the movement was initially dominated by the Sansei generation.

JIM MATSUOKA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Even Sue Embrey was not part of our group. Sue Embrey shows up later on at Cal State L.A. One day someone came to me and said, "Oh, there's this older *Nisei* lady that came to our class, and she seems to know an awful lot about the camps, 'cause she said she used to work for the *Manzanar Free Press*." I said, "Oh, who is it?" "Some lady by the name of Sue Embrey." "Okay, I guess she can, she'd be a real help. Put her in the class." Of course, Sue is one of those types you don't need to wind up too much. She jumped off of that and formed the Manzanar Committee, and next thing you know, I was part of the Manzanar Committee with Warren.

ROB BUSCHER: George Yoshinaga was a Heart Mountain survivor who later became an influential columnist for the *Pacific Citizen*, the newspaper of the Japanese American Citizens League. He was often critical of the more vocal Japanese American activists. Yoshinaga remembered the role Sue Kunitomi

Embrey played in the community after the Manzanar pilgrimages.

GEORGE YOSHINAGA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Well, when somebody I know speaks out, I know what their background is or why they are thinking that way. so it's not objectionable to me. The thing that really kind of aggravates me is you know, when somebody that was four or five years old now gets up and they're the spokesman for the evacuation. That turns me off. Of course everyone talks about the barbed wire and the guard towers, but there's more to camp life than that. I ask them I says, "were you aware that we used to have dances every week?" When a guy is five - six years old, what does he know about camp dances? And that's where we, people from different areas of the country that were put together, that's where we got to know each other. That's one of the things that I feel was an important part of my life. I got to know so many people that if it wasn't for evacuation, I would have never had the opportunity to do so. Today I wouldn't be here, I would be driving a tractor on our farm.

ROB BUSCHER: The same year as the first Manzanar Pilgrimage in 1969, a small group of pilgrims went to Modoc County, California, on the state's northern border with Oregon. That was the former site of the infamous Tule Lake camp. When it first opened, Tule Lake functioned much like the other nine WRA camps, but after the so-called loyalty questionnaire was distributed in 1943, the government decided to turn it into a segregated camp of incarcerated who were deemed "disloyal" based on their responses to the survey. Tule Lake prisoners

were stigmatized by the incarcerated from other camps, and the Military Police implemented much harsher conditions as a result.

ROB BUSCHER: Facing large scale protests and hunger strikes, the MPs went as far as declaring martial law - storming the camp with tanks and 1,000 armed soldiers. Community leaders who organized resistance were held in the stockade - a prison within the prison where many documented cases of torture and physical abuse occurred.

ROB BUSCHER: Warren Furutani helped plan the Tule Lake pilgrimage, too, working with a student organization at UC Davis called Asian American Concern. Although further afield than Manzanar was from LA, visiting Tule Lake was still manageable for Northern California residents who lived close enough to reach it after a day in the car. It was 300 miles north of UC Davis and 360 miles from the Bay Area. After the first pilgrimage, interest in going to Tule Lake tapered off until the second pilgrimage occurred five years later, in 1974.

ROB BUSCHER: In 1970, the year after the first pilgrimages, the Japanese American Citizens League waded into the renewed debate over whether the community should seek restorative justice from the federal government. Spurred by swelling activist ranks from the Sansei generation, the JACL itself was becoming a more vocal and progressive civil rights organization.

ROB BUSCHER: JACL established the National Committee for Redress in 1974, the same year the first Redress bill was introduced in Congress, although it failed to get out of committee. In 1976, the National Committee for Redress helped persuade President Gerald Ford to formally rescind Executive Order 9066, which authorized the forced removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast. All of this activism culminated in a one-sentence resolution passed at the JACL's July 1978 convention calling for legislation that would compensate the Japanese Americans incarcerated during the war, and demanding a formal apology from the government.

ROB BUSCHER: The JACL's National Committee for Redress proposed a \$25,000 payment from the government for each incarceration survivor, plus a \$100 million fund for Japanese American community organizations.

ROB BUSCHER: The plan drew opposition almost immediately. Senator S. I. Hayakawa, a California Republican, attacked the idea of a payment as "absurd and ridiculous" and "not Japanese." Hayakawa had long been a staunch critic of progressive Asian American causes. Serving as President of SF State University during the Third World Liberation Front campus strike for ethnic studies, Hayakawa escalated the situation by calling in the SFPD riot squad to mass arrest the peaceful student protestors. Thankfully, Hayakawa held a minority opinion among Japanese American elected officials.

ROB BUSCHER: In 1979, Japanese American Democrats in Congress met in the office of Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii to develop a plan to move a Redress bill

forward. Together with Representatives Norman Mineta and Robert Matsui of California, in addition to Inouye's fellow Hawaii senator, Spark Matsunaga, they determined the best way forward was to establish a Congressional commission to study the issue. Senators Inouye and Matsunaga co-sponsored a bill proposing the establishment of a commission, which was signed into law by President Jimmy Carter in 1980.

ROB BUSCHER: The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians started its work the next year with a series of public hearings held throughout the country in densely populated Japanese American communities. Composed mainly of government bureaucrats, the commission's sole Japanese American member was Judge William Marutani, himself a former incarcerated from Tule Lake. Marutani remembered struggling to hide his emotions during the commission hearings.

WILLIAM MARUTANI RECORDING: The commission's charges were threefold; number to find out what occurred, what the damage to those who were victimized - what those damages were, and thirdly what recommendations the commission could make. I as an Asian of course attended every single session of the commission, plus even those conducted by the community where we were invited to attend and participate. In my time growing up, I knew that you don't let the community know anything that might be regarded as shameful. Well I was astounded that at the commission hearings people would appear and testify about their sister or mother being in a mental institution, and how it impacted them. And that still sticks in my mind. Why did they do that? They didn't have to

tell it, but they did. They opened up their hearts and said whatever was true. Some of them sat in the audience and just tears streaming down their eyes. I guess getting rid of the poison perhaps that they felt.

WILLIAM MARUTANI RECORDING: Having the Issei testify and their telling of their stories of how the uprooting affected them and how their dignity was destroyed. Now I was also ejected, so I knew what the facts were. Several times when I was sitting on the commission I wished I didn't know what they were telling me was true because it wouldn't hit me in the gut so much, as hard as it did. There were times when I choked up, I really did. I got a knot in my throat to try and keep from crying. To let the tears well up. Well in my culture and yours too, really everybody's generally men don't cry. It's a sign of weakness to cry. And here I was constantly on the verge of tears, tears welling up and hoping that nobody saw them. I spent all this time with the knot in my throat that it began to hurt, it really hurt.

WILLIAM MARUTANI RECORDING: I was also outraged at some of the steps the politicians took. The way we toyed with our people, with Nikkei residing in the United States. We saw a memo signed in the government archives that in 1943, June of 1943 the government finally decided, issued a memo that, "there was no further excuse, we have no excuses to hold these people in camps." That's in '43. Did they do anything about it? No. So following Spring of '44, and keep those last two digits in mind of '44, they finally let the President, Roosevelt know, "Mr. President, we've concluded that there's no excuse for keeping these people in camps." And yet nothing was done until December 17, 1944 when they

announced they were closing the camps. And I asked myself, “why? Why?” You have to remember that 1944 is an election year. Roosevelt was running for reelection, what was it his fourth term now? The memo indicated that maybe he would rather delay the announcement until after the elections.

WILLIAM MARUTANI RECORDING: Mentally and psychologically I hit the roof on this. How dare these people - my country, the politicians play pawn with Japanese Americans and my parents. How dare they use them as a pawn political pawn to make sure one man would be reelected. That’s outrageous. Incomprehensible. Completely contrary to everything that’s American - or should be American.

ROB BUSCHER: Aside from Marutani’s involvement as a commissioner, the CWRIC also had direct connections to the pioneers of the pilgrimage movement. One of the first staff members hired by commission director Angus Macbeth was Warren Furutani’s mother-in-law – Aiko Herzig Yoshinaga.

ROB BUSCHER: A former prisoner at three camps during the war—Manzanar, Jerome, and Rohwer, Yoshinaga had moved to New York after the war and joined a group of Asian American activists. She married Jack Herzig, a fellow progressive, and moved to Washington in 1978, where she first read Michi Weglyn’s *Years of Infamy* and began immersing herself in the history of wartime incarceration. She became a tenacious investigator who developed critical leads for the commission.

ROB BUSCHER: It was Herzig-Yoshinaga who found the only remaining copy of the War Relocation Authority’s error-filled and inflammatory “Final Report,” which

acknowledged that the military planned to keep the Japanese Americans in camp for the duration of the war, despite having no firm evidence to support any of the claims of potential sabotage. That discovery unmasked the government's lie, and built a solid case for Redress.

AIKO HERZIG-YOSHINAGA VOICE OVER: When I saw it. I just about hit the ceiling. I had operated for the past few years under the assumption that there were no more of these copies, so it was like finding a gold nugget.

ROB BUSCHER: The commission's work created a platform for Japanese Americans to share their stories and unlocked the reticence that many Nisei incarcerated had about reliving their wartime experiences. Groups of former incarcerated from each of the 10 WRA camps started to hold reunions in cities throughout the country where there were significant populations of Japanese Americans. In Los Angeles, incarceration survivors from the Heart Mountain, Wyoming camp held their first reunion in 1982.

ROB BUSCHER: Bacon Sakatani, who was 12 when he and his family were incarcerated, was asked to help organize the reunion. Sakatani went to the public library and began reading everything he could find about wartime incarceration. Until then, he had paid little attention to the impact of anti-Japanese racism as a principal motivation for forced removal, and believed the government's rationale that it was a "military necessity" that he and his family were sent to prison in

Wyoming. Not until Sakatani read Michi Weglyn's book *Years of Infamy* did he learn the truth. What he discovered radicalized him for the rest of his life.

ROB BUSCHER: In 2010, Bacon Sakatani told interviewer Tom Ikeda about the evolution of the Heart Mountain reunions and how they contributed to the creation of the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation, which operates a museum on the site of the former camp.

TOM IKEDA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: You talked about the very first reunion back in 1982, and so I take it now there have been ten reunions. Tell me about that. Why, how was that last reunion? How have the reunions changed over time?

BACON SAKATANI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Well, it, I don't know if, if you could say it changed over time. It just, people got older, people have died, but we got people together. I think the most we ever had was a thousand fifty, and it's just, an enjoyable event for us who were at the camp to see each other and so, actually we had eleven. We got a group together, I got a group together in 1995 and we put on a school reunion, just for the school people, just the teenagers. 1997, the Los Angeles group put on another reunion. And the last three years, in 2005, 2007 and 2009, the Los Angeles group put the reunions together. It circulates from Seattle to San Jose and to Salt Lake City.

ROB BUSCHER: Throughout the 1980s many of the reunion groups also began organizing pilgrimages to the former sites of their incarceration. Like the earlier pilgrimages to Manzanar and Tule Lake, these events drew deep emotions from those who attended.

ROB BUSCHER: Some Nisei came out of a curiosity to see the place they had spent several years of their childhood or adolescence. Others were drawn by their Sansei children or other younger family members who sought to heal the intergenerational trauma brought about by what their elders had endured during the war.

ROB BUSCHER: The burgeoning pilgrimage movement would also be bolstered by the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians commission's 1982 report titled "Personal Justice Denied," which recommended a formal apology from the federal government and \$20,000 for each living incarceration survivor. It would take another five years of lobbying efforts, but the bill was eventually passed in 1987 and signed into law as the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 by President Ronald Reagan. For many incarceration survivors who had been living in denial, this was their moment of vindication when they finally felt able to talk about their wartime experiences. This encouraged some who had not previously participated in the pilgrimage to visit the former sites of their incarceration.

ROB BUSCHER: All incarceration survivors struggled with a sense of shame, but those incarcerated at Tule Lake faced an additional stigma of being sent to a camp that was meant for those deemed "disloyal." Bill Nishimura and his family renounced their citizenship after they were sent to Tule Lake. After an extended legal fight, they won their citizenship back, arguing successfully that their renunciation was given under duress. Returning to Tule Lake had an extra resonance, as Nishimura recalled.

BILL NISHIMURA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: On this trip, when I saw that Castle Rock on the first glimpse, oh, my gosh. It just really made me so happy, and brought all the memory back. And then when I got off of the bus, I immediately touched the soil, felt the soil. Oh, my gosh. It was terrific. To reminisce the past, turbulence or whatever you want, you may wish to call, and to look back and, "Would I take the same route again?" And I told myself, "I would certainly do the same thing."

BILL NISHIMURA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: I was very happy to see so many younger generation on this trip. And I think this tradition should continue forever, because once you stop doing this type of thing, people forget the past. But when this is going on, hatred and other things will start to diminish. I wouldn't say completely, but it will take a turn and become less and less. And the people will start to understand one, each other.

ROB BUSCHER: Marianne West also remembered her pilgrimages to Tule Lake.

MARIANNE WEST RECORDING FROM DENSHO: The second time is much easier. The first time, there were some moments that were kind of traumatic, seeing the barracks, and I still can't believe that seven people lived in the area that we lived in. Going through the camp, it was kind of hard, but this time it's much easier. The children were never aware of my camp experiences. They knew that I had been in camp because when Congress declared that they had made a mistake, and during that time they found out that I had been in camp. But even my husband was unaware of those three hidden years of my life. Now more and more is coming

out, and we sit and talk about different things. I think it's hard for them to believe, too, some of the things that have happened.

MARIANNE WEST RECORDING FROM DENSHO: I knew I hadn't done anything wrong. But still, the stigma of being sent to a camp and being interned, there was just some feeling there that I still thought something was wrong. And for that reason, we never talked about it. And I've talked to other people, and I think they've done the same thing. So now it's out in the open. After the last pilgrimage, too, I also said that this was something I wasn't going to keep quiet. So I have been open about it in different areas. In fact, in September, I have a speech at a church about diversity, so I'm not being quiet anymore. It might be a little late, but it's better than never.

MARIANNE WEST RECORDING FROM DENSHO: You know, when God created us, He created us all equal. And this is something that we should remember, that everyone is a human being. Everyone has feelings. There is no difference, whether you're black, white, brown, yellow, green or purple. We're all human beings. And until the time that we take the time to understand each other and work together and give each other the respect that we should give, and then we'll receive it, I think everything will work out at that time. But as long as you try to stay in your own little clique and not worry about what's happening to anyone else, you're doing yourself harm as well as the other person.

ROB BUSCHER: For Jimi Yamaichi, the first time he returned to Tule Lake in 1991 was overwhelming, as he told Tom Ikeda of Densho,

JIMI YAMAICHI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: First time was in '91, when I first went, I really cried. I really cried because... tears came out of my eyes, just rolled out. We talked to different people, see different people, and I happened to run across... her name was Hara. They were in our block. When I met her we talked about old times, about Block 27 and about different people we knew, this and that. And she just had tears in her eyes seeing that. I just wondered what happened to them. So then I decided I should be out there and tell my story. Tell everybody it was no picnic, I don't care what the hell they say it was. Because at the time, it was mostly all the young generations was running the pilgrimage there, and they don't know. They didn't live it, we lived it.

TOM IKEDA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: So back in '91, how many Niseis or how many former prisoners?

JIMI YAMAICHI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: At the time, I think there were only about, the registration was three hundred something, and there were like eighty-something former Tule Lake. And after that, every year, it started getting bigger and then it started going the opposite direction. There was more former Tuleans than the Sanseis. And I think about the third or fourth, we took over completely the operation of the Tule Lake Pilgrimage. Mostly all former Tule Lake people. So it got to be we have to do it attitude, all of us. We should go out there and tell the people the story. So it was an eye-opener for me, that we have to. My wife and I says, "we got to do this."

TOM IKEDA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: So I have to ask this question because I asked my parents, they were at Minidoka. And I asked them if they'd ever go back

to a Minidoka pilgrimage, and they kind of look at me funny and says, "Why would we ever want to go back there?" I mean, did you get a lot of that from *Niseis* saying, "Why would we ever want to go back there, and why would you have a pilgrimage?"

JIMI YAMAICHI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Yeah. Well, I think it isn't why we had to go back there, we should go back there and show the people where we lived for four years, how we lived for four years. All the camp people's kids started infiltrating and want to know, want to know what happened. And they want to know how was it in camp, why their parents, just like Will Kaku, when they went a few years ago with his dad to Tule Lake. And he confronted his dad about certain things, and his dad answered him. Until then, he could never, he was at odds with his dad.

JIMI YAMAICHI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Then for the first time Will found out what caused that. It was the camp experience that made him so indifferent, so bitter. To Will, to the family, he's very cold, just like a clam. Doesn't say a word. And this father and son, the son could never along with the father. He could never understand his father's feeling on this and that. Then the father opened up and then told the story about his growing up with his parents and Japanese camp life and so forth. Then his son said, "That's why Dad's different." So the next morning at breakfast time I stopped by and saw them, I said, "How you doing? How's your dad treating you?" Says, "Now I understand my dad. I really understand my Dad, what he went through. It just stuck in his mind, and he just can't let that part of it go." So there's a lot of closures for a lot of people. And I think, when I see that, I think, really makes me happy, you know.

ROB BUSCHER: At first, many of the pilgrims found little but barren desert plains when they visited Manzanar, Tule Lake, Heart Mountain, or the camps at Amache, Colorado, and Minidoka, Idaho. After the camps were closed and WRA disbanded, the federal government dismantled the barracks for scrap lumber or sold them to homesteaders for \$1 apiece. All that remained were the poured concrete foundations, save for a few administrative buildings that had fallen into disrepair at a couple of the sites.

ROB BUSCHER: As the pilgrimage movement picked up steam, this encouraged former incarcerated and their descendants to push for either the National Park Service or independent non-profit organizations to develop museums or at least historical markers at the camp sites. Today the National Park Service operates interpretive centers at Manzanar, Tule Lake, and Minidoka - with an active campaign to build another at Amache.

ROB BUSCHER: Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation emerged from the activism inspired by Bacon Sakatani and his fellow reunion participants, and now operates its own museum independently from the federal government. Another non-profit organization operates the Topaz Museum in Delta, Utah, located just outside of the former camp site.

ROB BUSCHER: While local communities surrounding Manzanar and Tule Lake have not always supported the work done by Japanese American community groups to commemorate the wartime incarceration, the Wyoming locals surrounding Heart Mountain expressed interest in contributing to the foundation's success from the beginning. Bacon Sakatani recalls.

BACON SAKATANI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: We're lucky to have this interest from the white people in the towns surrounding the camp. I really can't say what motivated them to help us out. I think they want to right the wrongs of the past. The people of Wyoming were really against the camp being there and they forced the authority to make that into a concentration camp. Otherwise it would've been a reception center where we were not to be under guard and we were to be relocated throughout the country, but it ended up being a camp where we were confined behind barbed wires and armed guards. And so I think this is a good gesture on part of Wyoming to, to put out this history of the camp and maybe they can help undo some of the bad things that were done in Wyoming.

ROB BUSCHER: In 2015 groups representing survivors from each of the 10 WRA camps along with a dozen or so Japanese American community organizations formed the Japanese American Confinement Sites Consortium. Advocating to preserve, protect, and interpret historic sites, artifacts, and experiences related to the wartime incarceration, JACSC also seeks to elevate the social justice lessons of the Japanese American WWII experience to highlight ways that civil and human rights abuses put at risk the rights of all Americans.

ROB BUSCHER: Although fewer incarceration survivors attend with each passing year, the pilgrimage movement is still active today. The pilgrimage movement continues to heal the wounds of intergenerational trauma, actively builds a sense of community among a community widely dispersed across the country, and serves as a moral compass to younger generations of Japanese American activists.

ROB BUSCHER: *Look Toward the Mountain* is presented by the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation. Written by Ray Locker and Rob Buscher. Produced, Edited, and Hosted by Rob Buscher. Voice overs sourced by Darrell Kunitomi. Special thanks to Densho: The Japanese American Legacy Project. Many of the oral histories used in this podcast series were provided by Densho. Visit the Heart Mountain website for a full list of credits.

ROB BUSCHER: Join us for the final episode of this special three-part series titled, "Who We Are Today."