

From the Director: Tom Ikeda

Some unsung heroes at Densho are the Board of Directors. These volunteers have the critical task of defining the mission of Densho and making sure we deliver on that mission. It may sound easy, but if a board does not succeed with these hard-to-do but simple concepts, an organization suffers. For example, it is easy for an organization to go in too many directions and lose focus if the board does not set and enforce a clear direction. Or if the board decides to set a course for the wrong direction, the consequences are costly and sometimes fatal to the organization.

Densho is fortunate to have a group of very smart, committed board members who take their responsibility seriously. Last week the board convened in an all day meeting to discuss technology issues, fundraising progress, and program implementation. They also forecast what issues will be important to Densho in 2042, the centennial of the incarceration of Japanese Americans. The outcome of this meeting was a clearer focus on advancing democratic principles like justice, civil liberties, and diversity through the educational use of Densho's rich resources on the Japanese American experience.

I am fortunate to work with such talented individuals who help guide and support the work of Densho. Thank you to Densho board members Scott Oki (Board Chair), William Kazuo Bryant, Mark Fukunaga, Brenda L. Handley, Mari Horita, Gene Kanamori, Tomio Moriguchi, and Ron Tanemura.



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From the Archive

Canned Milk and Forbidden Grapes: Childhood Memories of the Incarceration

*"Things like that leave a very deep impression on a child.
Never to be forgotten."
-- Irene Najima*

The life stories gathered by Densho over the last twelve years become more precious every year, as those with adult memories of the wartime incarceration pass away one by one. Interviewees who were very young when Pearl Harbor was attacked admit to having only vague memories of the move from home to fairgrounds or racetracks. And many of those memories are "received," planted by family stories and pictures or by later reading about the camps. Densho's wartime photos show toddlers and schoolchildren behaving as children would anywhere: laughing and playing, seemingly oblivious to their surroundings of barracks and barbed wire. Interviewees' own mental images from their early childhood remain out of focus, though their memories of discrimination still sting.

>> [Read more of this article](#)

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Densho News

Grant Awarded for California Interviews



Densho has received a \$22,000 grant from the California Civil Liberties Public Education Program to collect a dozen life histories in the Los Angeles area. The grants are administered through the California State Library. For these interviews Densho will focus on women's stories, since the female perspective is underrepresented in Densho's and other organizations' oral history collections. After recording interviews in Hawaii and the Midwest in June, Densho staff will begin interviewing in Los Angeles in July. We will share selections from the new life histories in the fall.

>> [Learn more about the California Civil Liberties Public Education Program:](#)



Densho Poll: Japanese American Community of the Future

The Densho poll is going on summer vacation while we think of new topics (suggestions are welcome). The May poll yielded results that somewhat surprised us. The questions about what it will mean to be Japanese American in coming decades were phrased in terms of race: will intermarriage and multiracial children move the community away from traditional cultural values? A few respondents worried about the "dilution" of the Japanese American community, and that future generations will forget how the World War II incarceration shaped their families. But more respondents promoted an inclusive definition of being Nikkei. Comments included:

- "JA is a state of mind. I consider many of the non-ethnic J folks at my Aikido Dojo to be JA."
- "I don't think it's blood that makes someone Japanese, but rather it's the way of thinking. The Japanese mind of discipline, humility, and pride I think is what makes someone 'Japanese.'"
- "There are many 'adopted' siblings, nieces/nephews, grandchildren, etc., that are part of the family because they love the family structure, closeness and culture."

>> [Read a blog about of the poll on the future Nikkei community](#)



In Search of Narrators

Densho is looking for the following people as potential interviewees:

1. Residents of Seattle's Yesler Hill neighborhood who were forced to leave their homes/businesses in 1940 to make way for the Yesler Terrace housing project.
2. Japanese Americans who lived in the Snoqualmie Falls Lumber Company logging camp prior to World War II.

If either of these topics applies to you or anyone you know, please fill out the [Interview Nomination Form](#) and return it to Densho. Feel free to email info@densho.org with any questions.

>> [Download Densho's Interview Nomination Form](#)



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New to the Archive

Look Inside the Archive: Hiring German Prisoners of War

In a recent interview conducted in Denver, Alley Watada shared his life story of growing up in Fort Lupton, Colorado. His parents continued farming during World War II and employed Japanese Americans from the Amache incarceration camp and German prisoners of war. In an excerpt from his interview, Alley



recalls his mother's charitable instincts toward the German prisoners. In turn, the prisoners were quick to help repair the broken harvester that teenager Alley drove through the potato fields. Alley went from being a farm boy to earning a Ph.D. in horticulture at UC Davis.

- >> See the featured sample from the Densho Digital Archive
- >> Register for the free Densho Digital Archive

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National News and Events

Minidoka Pilgrimage and Symposium

June 10 is the deadline to register for the 2009 Minidoka Pilgrimage to the former site of the incarceration camp near Twin Falls, Idaho. Nearly 13,000 people of Japanese ancestry from Washington, Oregon, and Alaska were imprisoned at the camp. Former detainees, their friends, families, and others interested in this historic episode will make the pilgrimage from Seattle and Portland to Minidoka from June 26 to 28. Participants will visit the grounds of the Minidoka National Monument, go on guided tours of the camp remains, and take part in a memorial service.

Preceding the pilgrimage is the fourth annual Civil Liberties Symposium, June 25 - 26, held on the College of Southern Idaho campus. This year the conference will focus on "Color and the Constitution." Speakers from a wide variety of backgrounds will address issues related to civil liberties and communities of color with an emphasis on the Japanese, Hispanic, African American, and Native American experience.

- >> Register for the Minidoka pilgrimage
- >> For more information about the symposium, contact Dr. Russ Tremayne at (208) 732-6885.



Manzanar Online Store

Manzanar National Historic Site's nonprofit partner Manzanar History Association (MHA) recently launched an online store featuring more than 200 books, videos, gifts, and other items. The materials pertain to Japanese American history, Japanese culture, World War II, the 1940s, the nature and history of the Owens Valley and Sierra Nevada region, national parks, and more. Proceeds from MHA sales support educational and interpretive programs at Manzanar National Historic Site.

- >> Go to the Manzanar Online Store
- >> Visit the National Park Service website for the Manzanar National Historic Site



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Recommended Resource

The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands

The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands recently provided DVDs of Supreme Court justices teaching high school students about the Japanese American World War II cases. Densho gave the DVDs to the social studies teachers who are testing our curriculum in the classroom. The Sunnylands Trust was established in 2001 by the Annenberg Foundation to improve public understanding of the United States Constitution and the democratic process, and to address serious issues facing the country and the world. The Sunnylands Trust develops curricular and other materials for high school civic initiatives; improves media reporting on Constitutional issues; builds support for the justice system; and helps citizens to



understand the nation's important public policy debates.

>> [Read more about the Sunnylands Constitution Project](#)

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