

Solidarity Syllabus – July 2018

'Never Again' is Now

In this month's episode of *Solidarity Is This*, host Deepa Iyer is in conversation with Dr. Satsuki Ina and Brandon Shimoda. The conversation explores the parallels between the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II and what's happening today – from the Muslim Ban to immigrant detention centers and the family separation policy.

Dr. Satsuki Ina is professor emeritus at California State University, Sacramento. She has a private psychotherapy practice in Sacramento and Berkeley specializing in the treatment of trauma. She has also produced two award-winning documentary films about the Japanese American incarceration: [Children of the Camps](#) and [From a Silk Cocoon](#).

[Brandon Shimoda](#) is a poet and writer. His most recent books include [Evening Oracle](#) and [The Desert](#) (forthcoming from The Song Cave this fall). His first book of nonfiction, *The Grave on the Wall*, a memoir about his grandfather, is forthcoming from City Lights in 2019. He is currently working on a book about the ongoing afterlife of Japanese American incarceration, parts of which he has presented at the Asian American Writers Workshop, Columbia University, and the International Center of Photography in New York City. He lives in Tucson, AZ.

Language Matters: Describing Japanese American Incarceration

"One of the ways you know you're a victim of mass incarceration is that the perpetrator uses euphemistic language to distort the reality of what's being done to them." –[Dr. Satsuki Ina](#)

U.S. government and military officials used euphemistic language to describe Japanese American incarceration – explaining the “evacuation” and “internment” of Japanese Americans into “assembly centers.” [Densho](#) outlines common euphemisms and how to use precise, purposeful language when discussing Japanese American incarceration.

Internment vs. Incarceration – ‘Internment’ refers to the detention of “enemy aliens” in wartime, but the majority of those Japanese Americans detained in the 1940s were citizens. This shifts blame away from the American government and military, which confined 120,000 people of Japanese descent to camps with no legal basis or due process of law.

Evacuation vs. Exclusion – Similarly, ‘relocation’ or ‘evacuation’ implies that a group is being moved for its own protection; this terminology shifts blame away from the government. “Forced removal,” “mass removal,” and “exclusion” more aptly captures the actions that forced thousands to abandon their homes for concentration camps.

Assembly Center v. Concentration Camp: Terms like ‘internment camp,’ ‘assembly center’ and ‘relocation center’ obscure the conditions under which Japanese Americans were incarcerated. These prison camps were surrounded by barbed wire and patrolled by armed guards, and individuals and families were held without leave for years.

According to Densho, “concentration camp” is the preferred term for these locations, and “prison camp” and “incarceration camp” are also used.

Further readings:

- [“FDR Called Them Concentration Camps: Why Terminology Matters”](#) by Joseph Shoji Lachman
- [“A Former Japanese Internment Camp Prisoner on the Dire Effects of Putting Kids in Detention,”](#) interview with Dr. Satsuki Ina by Jorge Rivas
- [“Words Do Matter: A Note on Inappropriate Terminology and the Incarceration of the Japanese Americans”](#) by Roger Daniels

Timeline: A History of Japanese American Incarceration

Explore Densho’s [Timeline feature](#), which compiles important moments in Japanese American history “before, during, and after World War II mass incarceration.”

Three critical moments:

February 19, 1942: President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which gave the military full discretion to exclude civilians from any area without due process. This cleared the way for Japanese American incarceration.

1942: Fred Korematsu, Min Yasui, and Gordon Hirabayashi purposefully violated the exclusion order and curfews in order to challenge EO 9066. The Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the exclusion order and the imposed curfews.

August 10, 1988: The Civil Liberties Act of 1988 issued a formal presidential apology for Japanese American incarceration and granted \$20,000 to every surviving citizen or resident immigrant who had been incarcerated.

Further reading:

- [The \(Ongoing\) Ruins of Japanese American Incarceration: Thirty Years after the Civil Liberties Act of 1988](#) by Brandon Shimoda (Densho)

Incarceration Sites

While many sites were used to incarcerate Japanese Americans, the War Relocation Authority built ten dedicated incarceration camps that housed ~120,000 people.

Gila River - Rivers, Arizona
Granada - Amache, Colorado
Heart Mountain - Cody, Wyoming
Jerome - Denson, Arkansas
Manzanar - Manzanar, California
Minidoka - Hunt, Idaho
Poston - Parker, Arizona
Rohwer - McGehee, Arkansas
Topaz - Delta, Utah
Tule Lake - Newell, California

Densho's interactive tool, [Sites of Shame](#), provides an in-depth look at these camps as well as 'assembly centers,' 'detention stations,' and other incarceration sites.

In June 2018, news reports revealed that the Trump administration was considering a plan to incarcerate immigrant children on a federal property [three miles away from the Rohwer, AK, incarceration site](#).

The Tule Lake Committee and Manzanar Committee regularly organize [multi-day pilgrimages](#) to the concentration camps and exclusion centers to honor and reflect upon the legacy of those incarcerated.

Family Separations and Trump's 'Zero Tolerance' Policy

- In April 2018, AG Sessions issued a ["Zero Tolerance" initiative](#) at the border directing the Department of Justice (DOJ) to prosecute all individuals crossing the border for illegal entry. As a result, families were separated. When parents were apprehended at the border, they were taken and prosecuted by DOJ while their children became "unaccompanied" due to the separation. Parents faced prosecution, while their children were eventually placed with sponsoring family members or foster families by the Office of Refugee Resettlement within the Health and Human Services Department.
- In response to litigation initiated by the [ACLU](#), a federal judge [ordered](#) the government to reunite children under the age of 5 by July 10. Of the more than 100 children under 5 who are separated, [only a fraction](#) were reunited. In some cases, the parents had already been deported. The government is under court order to reunite the 2,900

children over 5 years old by July 27th. Another federal judge, in a [case](#) brought by the Connecticut Legal Services and the Worker and Immigrant Rights Advocacy Clinic at Yale Law School, held that the separation policy violates the constitutional rights of children, and ordered that the post-traumatic stress disorder effects be addressed.

- Conditions at [detention centers](#) and private prisons holding detainees are [deplorable](#) and inhumane. In particular, children separated from their families and detained face considerable barriers to their development, [according to experts](#).

To fight back against these inhumane policies, explore action steps in this [Rapid Response Guide for Muslim, Arab, and South Asian Advocates and Organizations](#).

Muslim Ban and *Korematsu*

On June 26, the United States Supreme Court upheld the Muslim ban in *Trump v. Hawaii*, which challenged Muslim Ban 3.0 on the basis of its unconstitutionality. The Supreme Court found that the ban met the national security concerns raised by the government and deferred to executive authority in immigration matters. Justice Sotomayor's dissent spoke for many when she said that "[t]he United States of America is a Nation built upon the promise of religious liberty" and that "the Court's decision . . . fails to safeguard that fundamental principle." In the majority opinion, Justice Roberts pens two paragraphs about the *Korematsu* case, leading many to believe that the decision validating the incarceration of Japanese Americans is now unconstitutional. Law professor, Anil Kalhan [describes](#) this as Justice Roberts' "cheap parlor trick: purporting to "overrule" a narrow, distorted version of *Korematsu* while simultaneously embracing and replicating that decision's actual logic and reasoning in the course of his own decision-making."

- Timeline of the challenges to the Muslim ban [here](#).
- Full SCOTUS decision [here](#).
- Read Holly Yasui's powerful statement on the SCOTUS case [here](#), and check out her film about her father's life and legacy ["Trump v. Hawaii and Chief Justice Roberts's "Korematsu Overruled" Parlor Trick,"](#) by Anil Kalhan (American Constitution Society.)