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Introduction

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Welcome back, everyone, to the *Intervals* podcast, a public humanities initiative of the Organization of American Historians. I'm Christopher Brick here on behalf of the OAH Committee on Marketing and Communications and here as well to welcome our 14th guest lecturer of the series, Professor Ken Marcus of the University of La Verne who is here today to talk about "Japanese Internment Camps, Health, and Human Rights During World War II: The Cases of Poston and Manzanar."

The story of the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II is something that a lot of people express awareness of but almost never through the prism of public health. That's what Ken

allows us to do with this wonderful talk. And with that I give it over to Professor Ken Marcus.

Lecture

KENNETH MARCUS: "World War Two and Japanese American Internment Camps" by Kenneth Marcus, University of Laverne.

The purpose of this podcast is to highlight some main themes regarding World War II and the US internment camps where almost 120,000 Japanese Americans were incarcerated during much of the war. Two thirds of them were American citizens. As illustration, I'll focus on two of the largest camps; Manzanar in California and Poston in Arizona, to bring out some of the challenges to health and civil rights during this deeply controversial period in American history.

Before we get started, let's first consider some definitions about the camps. There's been much debate among scholars and camp survivors themselves around what to actually call the camps. The War Relocation Authority during World War II called them relocation centers, a euphemism for what amounted to a clear violation of the civil rights of those who were incarcerated. Scholars and others have commonly referred to the camps both as internment camps and concentration camps, terms that I will use here. Of course, these World War II camps were nothing like those in Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, or Imperial Japan.

And those who study the Holocaust or are Holocaust survivors have been offended at calling the US camps concentration camps, since they have no similarity to camps run by the Axis powers, where

death was commonplace. Nor can we call these American camps prisoner of war camps since Japanese Americans were not enemy combatants and had not been convicted of any crimes, nonetheless people were concentrated by force in one of 10 camps during the war. And even President Roosevelt referred to the camps at least once in a press briefing as "Concentration camps."

Regardless of the terms we use, they were effectively prison camps.

In terms of the people in the camps, different terms have also been used; such as internees or evacuees. I'll use the term "incarcerates" since they were incarcerated behind barbed wire.

Other definitions are important here. "*Issei*" refers to 1st generation Japanese immigrants who are typically in their 50s or older. "*Nisei*" refers to those born in the United States, so they had US citizenship. "*Sansei*" refers to those who were third generation or were typically very small children when they came to the camps. Finally, "*Kibei*" means those Japanese-American citizens who went to Japan for part of their schooling before coming back to the US, and together they all comprised the "*Nikkei*" or those of Japanese descent.

First, to provide some historical context, I'll talk about some reasons for why the US got involved in World War II, and then I'll talk about why the internment camps were created. I'll then turn to two camps as examples, Manzanar and Poston, before making some concluding remarks.

The United States was not prepared for war.

Yet, there were plenty of warning signs by the 1930s. Nazi Germany had invaded Austria in March of 1938, followed the next year with the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

And after establishing a non aggression pact with the Soviet Union in August of 1939, Germany invaded Poland the following month, and the USSR invaded Finland and the Baltic States in November of that year.

Nazi Germany then invaded France, which fell in less than a month before occupying Norway, Holland, Denmark and other states. And a treaty between the Axis powers of Germany, Italy, and Japan— called the Tripartite Pact of September of 1940— assured mutual cooperation. So Imperial Japan immediately occupied French Indochina.

The attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941, was part of a coordinated attack on many Western held countries or territories in Asia; such as the Philippines, Hong Kong, Singapore and others, and the reasons are that Japan had become an imperialist nation and it wanted to expand further. it had occupied Korea since 1910 and then conquered Manchuria in 1931 before attacking the coast of China.

The goal was to dominate all of Asia— especially after seizing Indochina— but the US and Britain had cut off oil supplies and Japan needed oil to survive. So the main remaining barriers to imperialist expansion were the US and Britain. The attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii decimated most of the US Pacific Fleet. But it did not destroy fuel lines and it did not destroy aircraft carriers, which were out at sea at the time of the

attack. But what is certain is that the US and Britain declared war on Japan the following day.

Now the US *had* been sending supplies and loans to the Allies almost from the beginning, but no troops, and its armaments and munitions industries were in relatively poor condition. And so conscription and unprecedented investment in military industries followed, and men and women joined the armed forces. Civilian women also joined the workforce in large numbers to build up the nation's defense industries.

For the internment, the attack on Pearl Harbor was a wake-up call for Americans; the war that had been raging in Europe and Asia had now come home.

The conflict in Europe had seemed distant up to that point, almost 5000 miles away! And the war in Asia was more than six and a half 1000 miles away. Pearl Harbor brought that conflict much closer to home.

Fears of further attacks on the West Coast were not unfounded. There were at least two attacks shortly afterwards. One was a Japanese submarine that torpedoed an American ship in the Catalina Channel two weeks after Pearl Harbor. And another Japanese submarine fired on an oil storage area near Santa Barbara. At least twelve Japanese submarines were seen patrolling the West Coast, from San Diego to Seattle, firing on ships. So all of this contributed to a climate of fear. And to make matters worse, the Los Angeles Times and other newspapers reported on "secret societies" in Los Angeles of Japanese espionage centers and other major cities. Although there was no evidence of espionage.

These fears led to the forced removal and incarceration of about 120,000 Japanese Americans along the West Coast; one of the worst violations of civil rights in modern American history. To be sure, there had been longstanding anti-Asian attitudes on the West Coast. Attacks on Chinese communities or forcing people to leave towns were common throughout the West during the 19th century. The 1882 Exclusion Act that Congress passed over the veto of President Chester Arthur banned all Chinese immigration for the next 60 years. After Japanese immigrants began coming to the US in large numbers in 1885— first to Hawaii, then to the mainland USA— this racist attitude became more and more focused on the Japanese themselves. And the alien land laws of 1913 and 1920 banned non-citizens from owning land and the 1924 immigration Act effectively ended Japanese immigration to the United States until after the Second World War.

So how did the internment happen? First, immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the FBI began rounding up SA residents who tended to be the leaders in many Japanese American communities. So almost 2,000 *Issei* were incarcerated during the war in alien detention centers.

On February 19th, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which allowed the US military to remove anyone it deemed necessary for the war effort. Although the words Japanese or those of Japanese descent— or indeed any ethnicity— are never mentioned in the executive order, the intention was clear; to remove all Nikkei from the West Coast.

Under the command of General John DeWitt— a fervent racist who harbored deep resentment against all

Japanese Americans— so called Military Areas Numbers One and Two were drawn up. These were in the Western US and Area Number One comprised Western sections of California, Oregon, the state of Washington and Arizona. And President Roosevelt then signed Executive Order 9102 on March 18th, 1942, which created the War Relocation Authority.

Like Executive Order 9066, it too never referred specifically to people of Japanese descent, but again, the meaning was clear to all those involved; it gave permission to create internment camps in which to put residents of Japanese ancestry for the duration of the war.

And so, incarceration followed. This took place mainly between March and October of 1942. The government called it "a means of protecting them," and there is some truth to this statement, since there was *enormous* anti-Japanese fervor. And they were incarcerated in ten War Relocation Authority sites, almost all in desolate areas in the American West from 1942 to 1945, and these were in California and Arizona, Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado and Arkansas.

Los Angeles, for example, had by far the largest urban concentration of Japanese Americans. So, 2 main locations, little Tokyo, near downtown Los Angeles and Terminal Island off Long Beach were immediately targeted. Terminal island was targeted for evacuation on December 8th of 1942; people had less than 48 hours to leave.

And not only Japanese Americans, but also over 5000 Italian Americans and German Americans were also jailed following Executive Order 9066, and several hundred were repatriated to Italy and Germany.

But by far these orders were focused on the Nikkei, of all those of Japanese American ancestry. The US government typically coordinated with the Japanese American Citizens League, or the JACL, to arrange for this evacuation of citizens— which created many problems in the camps later. As a result, the Nikkei together lost hundreds of millions of dollars. They first were taken to so-called “assembly centers” such as Santa Anita Racetrack in Arcadia or the Pomona Fairgrounds; at the Santa Anita racetrack, people slept in horse stalls, in the beginning, before more appropriate barracks were built.

One of the ironies in this mass incarceration is that there was no proof of actual espionage or sabotage by Japanese Americans.

A Japanese spy in Hawaii called Takeo Yoshikawa was posing as the Vice consul, Tadashi Morimura, and he stated in 1941, before the attack on Pearl Harbor, that Japanese Americans were “distressingly loyal to the United States.”

True, over 150,000 people of Japanese ancestry in Hawaii were not removed or incarcerated, the US military determined that such a move would just be too difficult to arrange, it would entail rounding up a large portion of Hawaii's population.

Yet, the targeting of Japanese Americans met with very few Americans who actually spoke out. Some of those who did came from the so called “peace churches”— Quakers, Mennonites, Church of the Brethren— and several members from these churches went up to the camps to serve as teachers.

The president's wife, Eleanor Roosevelt, also protested the incarceration, but as the wife of the president, she had little room to maneuver without embarrassing her husband in wartime.

Now the idea of placing civilians in camps in wartime is nothing new. During the Cuban War of Independence from 1895 to '98, Spain had set up concentration camps for Cuban civilians. The US got involved in the Spanish American War and set up concentration camps in the Philippines. During the Second Boer War in South Africa, both sides, the Boer of Dutch descent, and the English set up concentration camps to hold civilians. And during World War I, the US set up concentration camps for those of German ancestry that the government deemed sympathetic to the enemy.

And they were placed in Fort Douglas in Utah and Fort Oglethorpe in Georgia— about 2000 civilians. But this was clearly different.

First, the numbers about 120,000 people moved to camps away from the West Coast with no formal charges of a crime before their incarceration. Another striking factor is that many of the US internment camps were on or near tribal lands. The sites were chosen, in part, because federal authorities sought out locations far from major towns or cities, and several camps were built despite tribal protests. And a number of the administrators from the War Relocation Authority came from the Bureau of Indian affairs. According to one account, it was reasoned that since they'd been dealing with people concentrated on the reservation, they might have expertise in dealing with another concentrated minority group.

Manzanar, for example, was near the Big Pine Indian Reservation where the Owens Valley Paiute tribe lived and still live.

In another example, the Poston camp was officially called the Colorado River Relocation Camp since it was built on the Colorado River Indian Reservation. There 4 tribes lived, including the Hopi, the Navajo and the Mojave, and members of these tribes provided some of the labor to build the camp barracks and other structures.

So, so far, we've provided a historical context for the camps and to provide some reasons for the onset of war and why the camps were created. So, let's turn to two of the camps themselves. Manzanar and Poston.

The Manzanar War Relocation Camp, as it was first called, was the first US concentration camp of World War II. At its peak, there were over 10,000 incarcerated; far larger than any of the nearby towns of Independence or Lone Pine.

It was located 225 miles north of Los Angeles and 10 miles South of the town of Independence. Manzanar means "apple orchard" in Spanish. Farmers used to raise apples and pears before the diversion of water from Owens Valley to Los Angeles, and an old apple orchard still survived just outside the camp when incarcerated arrived. And the camp sits on an eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada mountains across from Inyo Mountains, at a height of about 4000 feet. And from Manzanar, you can clearly see Mount Whitney, the tallest mountain in the continental United States.

The camp was hastily constructed, not yet finished when the first incarcerated arrived in March of 1942. Hundreds of men put up wooden board barracks—similar to military barracks—almost all with the same design, and some of those workers included

volunteers, Japanese American Nisei who came up to help build the camp.

Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, the co-author of *Farewell to Manzanar*, described her family's arrival by bus.

We drove past a barbed wire fence through a gate and into an open space where trunks and sacks and packages have been dumped from the baggage trucks that drove out ahead of us. I could see a few tents set up, the first rows of black barracks, and beyond them, blurred by sand, rows of barracks that seemed to spread for miles across this plain.

The actual site of Manzanar was about 6,200 acres large. Yet the living quarters were built on about 540 acres, or about 408 football fields. It consisted of 36 blocks of between 12 to 14 military style barracks, and each barrack had four one room apartments, ranging in size from 20 by 16 feet to 20 by 25 feet. Each room had military style cots, a single light bulb and a coal burning stove for heat. And each block had showers, a laundry room, and latrines, which worked poorly in the first months and typically had plumbing issues until the camp was closed in November of 1945.

A total of 800 buildings eventually stood on the site and they were building well into August of 1941. The camp also operated a camouflage net factory and had a newspaper; "The Manzanar Free Press."

Yet the camp was surrounded by barbed wire with eight guard towers and with guards aiming their weapons not to the outside— which might suggest protection— but on the inside, towards the

incarcerees themselves. The guards had orders to shoot any incarcerated who tried to leave without permission.

So there's no way to sweet talk or whitewash this situation; it was an incarceration of over 10,000 men, women, and children with no evidence of espionage or sabotage, *precisely* the activities that the US military and government suspected them of but had never actually proven in court. Rather, the action was based almost entirely on suspicions, rumors, and innuendo.

It was therefore a concentration camp by the definition of civilians being incarcerated against their will in a gated, restricted site under armed guard. And no, this was nothing like the World War II concentration camps in Germany, the Soviet Union, or Japan. The incarcerated were, on the whole: well fed; they were not forced to work in slave labor for the war cause; they could meet for religious services; children had schooling, although rarely adequate; and at times, incarcerated could leave the camp to farm in nearby fields or later go hiking in the mountains; and there was even an orphanage at Manzanar called the Children's Village, where about 100 orphaned children stayed, including those separated from their parents during the war.

But there were also problems both in terms of the treatment of the incarcerated by the US government and amongst the incarcerated themselves, who soon experienced deep divisions, especially between the *Issei* and the *Nisei*.

Life was very difficult for the incarcerated, especially in the beginning. A constant experience with standing in line, for food at the mess hall,

for bathrooms, for laundry machines. Privacy was almost non-existent, although families often strung up blankets to act as walls and their compartments to allow for some privacy. Food was hardly adapted to a traditional Japanese diet, especially at first— people could expect rice, boiled vegetables and a lot of canned fruit prepared by cooks who rarely had much experience in cooking.

Occasionally, meat or meat supplements were added, but over time prisoners grew vegetables, cultivated fruit trees in nearby fields, and raised chickens, hogs, and even made soy sauce and tofu. And a handful of men and boys, and some women were able to sneak out of camp occasionally to go fishing in the nearby streams, where they might catch trout to supplement their diets. And those who worked on the reservoir crew had permission to go out of camp and some went with a fishing pole. Perhaps they experienced the freedom at those times that they had been deprived at camp.

So, people ate in large mess halls, cafeteria style, and families soon began eating apart, which added to the growing separation of families at the camp.

For schooling, an entire block was set aside for classes. Students came from over 200 different school systems throughout California, from elementary through high school, so bringing them together in a common system was a real challenge. Fortunately, some Caucasian women and men came up to teach them and live at or near the camps, and many of these came from the peace churches.

One music teacher, Lou Frizzell, was a recent UCLA graduate, and he taught music and drama. He even got instruments for students to play, and he formed

a choir. High school students put on plays and musicals, including an operetta Frizzell wrote called *Loud and Clear*. He also wrote a song for Mary Kageyama Nomura, known as the "Songbird of Manzanar." And she sang a song called "When I Can" many times at camp and long afterwards. Many students had fond memories of Frizzelle and a few other teachers, and students could also take part in athletic games such as baseball and basketball, to hold school activities, like dances or socials and just try to have some semblance of normality at the camp.

Yet there were also a lot of problems at Manzanar. Health is a big concern that rarely gets much attention by scholars, but Manzanar, common with many other internment camps, was in a desolate location with high winds that brought in much dust, and it could be very hard on those with lung ailments or asthma. The site was also freezing in the winter and very hot in the summer, conditions that few *Nisei* and *Sansei* were familiar with. Now, environmentally, the site was striking with views of the mountains, especially Mount Whitney, which reminded many older residents of Mount Fuji in Japan. And had they been able to farm or may have taken advantage of the beautiful hiking trails and rivers and other aspects that make the High Sierra a desirable place for tourists.

Yet people suffered. They would often wake up "Shivering and coated with dust that had blown up through the knotholes and in through the slits around the doorway," writes Jean Houston and she said "a skin of sand covered the floor." This was especially true in the first months when incarcerated had not yet closed up all the holes in the pine boards that made up the barracks, so

respiratory issues were a common complaint of Manzanar incarceratedees.

Another problem was stomach cramps and diarrhea. At first this condition was due to shots that medical authorities gave the incarceratedees for typhoid, and this hit the younger children especially hard with reports of fever and vomiting. People also ate food that made them sick, young and old alike. With badly ventilated kitchens and spoiled food that had been left out, especially when the refrigeration would break down. All of this resulted in "The Manzanar runs," which resulted in many incarceratedees running for the bathroom. This was perhaps a minor annoyance, but it remained a problem because the plumbing at Manzanar was not ideal, causing toilets often to clog up and become inoperable.

Another problem, more difficult to define, was mental health. Nearly all incarceratedees, regardless of whether they were *Issei*, *Nisei*, or *Sansei* experienced some form of major stress which doctors know can be debilitating on the health. Most incarceratedees had lost their homes and possessions—everything—some of them had worked for, for decades. And they sold them for a low price or gave them away to friends or neighbors. Others had stored their items away, never knowing if they would be there when they returned.

Children lost friends. They lost pets, and everyone experienced complete dislocation and disorientation which sometimes led to severe stress ailments. We still see the remnants of some ornamental rock gardens at Manzanar, which some residents built to break up the drab nature of the camp, and perhaps to remind them of home or traditional culture. But the humiliation was very hard to take, especially

for the older men who grew up in a highly patriarchal society.

To quote Jean Houston once again, she said of her father "He had no rights, no home, no control over his own life." This kind of emasculation was suffered in one form or another by all the men interned at Manzanar.

Further, adding to the general stress was the December riot of 1942. It happened almost exactly a year after the Pearl Harbor attack, when everything seemed to come boiling up at once.

The Japanese American Citizens League or the JACL had been invited to attend a conference in November of that year in Salt Lake City in Utah, and they were to discuss the conditions of the internment and specifically how the Nisei might volunteer for military service— something that many Issei found deplorable. "What honor is there and fighting for a country that has disrespected you so much? And how could you turn against the mother country of Japan?" some claimed, to whom many older Japanese still had family ties and felt some loyalty.

The JACL was already deeply resented by the older internees, the Issei, who saw them as privileged upstarts who had usurped their own leadership role in the community. And even worse, the Issei and the *Kibei* made accusations to several members of the JACL of being informants, or "*Inu*," meaning dog in Japanese. It is the worst accusation you can make against a traditional Japanese man. Shortly after returning from the meeting, several JACL members were targeted. They especially went after Fred Tayama, the leader of the local chapter of the JACL

and six men cornered him at night and beat him so badly that he had to be hospitalized.

Authorities arrested three men the next day. One they sent to jail to the town of Independence, who was a young cook, he was popular and he was defiant towards camp authorities, Caucasian or Japanese. This action outraged many men in the camp who began roaming the camp after 6:00 PM, searching for their enemies, the JACL.

There was an internal security force made up of incarcerated men who sought to maintain discipline throughout the year, yet when they saw a mob of so many people, the security force disappeared and for a while, some claimed, the mob had the camp to themselves.

This did not end well.

One result was bloodshed. The mob approached the front gate and frightened guards fired on the crowd, killing one seventeen-year-old boy and wounding ten others.

The seventeen-year-old was James Ito, an 11th grader who had been a student of one of the Caucasian teachers at the camp, Helen Eli, a Quaker who taught at the camp for two years. She described the scene she witnessed;

It was a Sunday and we all went out to see what was going on. A lot of the young fellows came down near the police station and they all started shouting 'Banzai!' The guard told them to quiet down and go home and they wouldn't.

Others said the riot was a revolt against black market activity by kitchen crews, and there were many other factors; a hatred, a rage that had been simmering in the camp for the past year.

What is certain is that Ito died instantly, and a 21 year old named James Kanagawa died later from his wounds, and nine other men required hospitalization.

Camp authorities called for martial law, but if anything, the tensions increased when gangs have been hunted for *Nisei*, whose names were on a "death list" of suspected informers.

The upshot is that Fred Tayama and 65 other *Nisei* were relocated to another camp, and they would be resettled outside the exclusion zone. And others who arrested, such as Harry Ueno, a *kibei*, and 15 others were transferred to detention camps.

And then came a "Loyalty Questionnaire." In February of 1943, the US government distributed a questionnaire for all men to fill out, especially controversy were questions 27 and 28 regarding willingness to give up any loyalty to Japan and a willingness to fight in the US armed forces. Those who answered no to both questions were often transferred to other camps, especially Tooele Lake in Northern California, where incarceration restrictions were far more stringent.

Another result, which was already well evident before the riot, is that many of them simply wanted to leave as one young man put it— Togo Tanaka. "We had one objective; we wanted to get the hell out of there."

And many young people left for jobs or education opportunities in the Midwest or on the East Coast.

Others volunteered for military service or to work in fields and other states. For those who volunteered for military service, the All Nisei, 400 and 42nd Regimental Combat Team proved enormously important during the Second World War.

Over time, as young people moved away, the camp population became smaller and tensions among residents lessened *somewhat*, but the stress of incarceration continued, as did the toll it took on people's health.

Now, how did Manzanar compare with the Poston War Relocation Center?

Unlike Manzanar, Poston was actually three camps called Poston Camp One, Camp Two and Camp Three, each about 3 miles apart. Yet due to the hot and dusty conditions at the camps, the people of the camps, the incarcerated, soon nicknamed them "Roaston," "Toaston," and "Duston." And the camps were located in the arid countryside, where temperatures regularly registered in the triple digits, and this environment could prove very harmful to the incarcerated, and especially those with previous conditions such as asthma or bronchitis. The hot dusty winds were harmful and a constant threat to babies and young children. The camp was built on the Colorado River Indian Reservation, so it was first administered by the Office of Indian Affairs until late 1943 when the War Relocation Authority took over. It was named after Charles Poston, so-called father of Arizona, and it was located near Parker, close to the state line of California.

Since it was in a desert, it was perhaps the hottest of all the camps and the scorching sun

meant that in summer, temperatures could reach 120 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade. One social scientist, who lived and worked at the camp, [Tami or Tomi? Sugiyama?] found that her sensitivity to the Arizona summer heat was so great that it left her unable to sleep well for days on at least a couple of occasions. It even put her into Poston's hospital. And as a desert that also meant the presence of rattlesnakes and scorpions.

It was the largest in size among the concentration camps at 71,000 acres. It opened in May of 1942 and the last camp closed in November of 1945. The population came mostly from Southern California, about 7,700 residents: LA County, San Diego County, Orange County, Imperial County. The rest came from central and Northern California over 6,200 incarcerated from Fresno County to Laura County, Monterey County and Santa Cruz County. The total peak did almost 18,000 incarcerated by September of 1942, making it the most populated of the Japanese American concentration camps, with the exception of Tooele Lake. And it became the third largest community in Arizona during the war.

Like Manzanar, the camp had a newspaper called "The Poston Chronicle," and as at Manzanar, it also had a war industry— a camouflage net factory And Poston also had a social science lab on site where several scholars studied camp life and wrote up their results.

What was life like for children? By October of 1942, 5,300 children were enrolled from nursery school through high school. At first, teachers held school classes in barracks in a regular block that had been set aside as a school site. And later, incarcerated used adobe bricks to make more

permanent campuses, which was completed in 1943. So, Poston Camps One, Two, and Three each had an elementary school and a high school, which provided some academic and athletic rivalry and competition.

Yet life was hard for children. They suffered under the trauma of forced evacuation, the indignities of internment, the harshness of the climate and of the desert. Yet we could say they were also among the first to adapt to the routine of camp life. Since few arrived with toys, they had to create their own toys from scrap lumber and rocks—branches and shells. So perhaps we could say that this helped to fuel their imagination.

But life was very difficult in a desert environment, so one key aspect to survival was water. An irrigation canal was built which ran through Poston Camps One, Two and three, and that transported water for agricultural crops by 1943. And that point, I think, is very important because residents could grow and harvest over 30 varieties of food crops ranging from beans to watermelon. And they also grew white radish called daikon, which is a very common vegetables in *Nikkei* communities.

And this canal also provided the ideal conditions to construct a swimming hole. So, the incarcerated built, with cotton wood logs, an actual swimming pool as relief from the hot summer sun and heat. And some incarcerated wrote poetry on the camp environment, and this reflects some of the hardships that they encountered. One named Shizuku Muta wrote a *tanka*, which is a very old type of Japanese poetry. "In the human world, when will the storm ever end? On what future day? Fenced around as we are here. Greeting another summer season."

And another incarcerated named Yoshitake Marita wrote, "In this war and endless desert, a line of simmering air.

Now that "simmering air" may also have reflected the growing tensions within Poston. There was no riot as it Manzanar, but there was a strike that resulted from divisions that were similar to Manzanar.

It began with camp regulations, which said that only *Nisei* could hold elective office, and most were members of the JACL. The older camp members, the *Issei* mockingly called them "The Child Council." The result is that some JACL council members were attacked.

On November 14th of 1942 one member was beaten so severely with a pipe that he had to go to hospital. Camp authorities arrested 50 suspects and detained, two who also turned out to be quite popular in the camp. And when news broke out that they would be tried *outside* the camp, protests erupted. An *Issei* delegation visited the camp director and asked for release of the suspect, the director refused. After a second meeting with the director and still no resolution, *Issei* members called a strike. All services closed down; police, the fire department, and the hospital.

Finally, the administration agreed to release one prisoner and try the other within the center. So, after ten days of the strike, *Issei* leaders were recognized by the administration, and they agreed to help stop the beatings and try to create better relations between the administration and the incarcerated.

Yet incidents of violence continued. On February first, 1943, on Saturday at 10:00 PM, the FBI detained a popular *kibei* and removed him from Camp Two. As a result, Saburo Kido, a national JACL president, was beaten and hospitalized. It seems that eight *kibei* beat him before authorities took them away to a detention in Yuma, AZ.

It was not an isolated incident. Kido had been beaten in September of 1942, since the *Kibei* considered him to be an informant, and after the February 1943 beating, he and his family relocated to Salt Lake City, where he taught Japanese at Fort Douglas.

But it was reflective of the tensions at the camp between the *Nisei*, the *Issei* and the *Kibei*, all resulting from the outrage of continued incarceration.

So, let's conclude.

There was an impact long after the incarceration of over 120,000 Japanese Americans. Incarcerates often struggled to reintegrate into American Society. The older generation, the *Issei* tried to forget, causing the younger generation they came of age in the 1960s and 70s to question, and to demand answers and compensation for the terrible losses that many had endured. Some returned to alcohol, others abused drugs after they had returned home, so the psychological scars for many never went away.

And perhaps for these reasons there were growing demands for memorialization of the camps. And this reflected how many people viewed or recognized the camps, even though most of the structures that all ten camps have been largely removed— almost as if

the US government wanted to forget this gross violation of civil rights.

In 1969, beginning with the pilgrimage to Manzanar. We see a change in how people are viewing the camps that was organized by Manzanar Committee—founded by Sue Kunitomi Embrey— who was also one of the editors of the Manzanar Free Press.

By 1972, Manzanar was designated as a California Historic Landmark, and in 1985 it became a National Historic Landmark. Finally, by 1992, Manzanar became a National Historic site with the restoration of the high school auditorium and plans to recreate the watchtower, mess hall, residential blocks... It has a collection of oral histories of survivors, and in 2004, a museum opened on the Manzanar site.

It is a work in progress, with installations expanding over time to give visitors some insight into the life of the incarcerated who lived at the camp and by extension, a sense of what 120,000 people went through from 1942 to 1945.

And as at Poston there are now memorials at all ten sites, although almost none have structures still standing like Manzanar.

Rather, together they are markers of an earlier time, of a distinct loss of civil rights in wartime, and the harm done to many people's health during their incarceration. All of these remain a warning for those in the present, and the future.

Q+A

[segue from lecture]

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: One of the really great things about collaborating on this series has been getting the chance to make connections between public history and public health -- a subject I talked about in the intro to this series, and it's a subject that came up quite a bit in this Q+A. Enjoy.

[beginning of group conversation]

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Alright, Ken Marcus, welcome to the podcast!

KENNETH MARCUS: It's a pleasure to be here.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Thanks for joining me tonight and for the lecture you contributed to this inaugural series of "Intervals," an OOH podcast. You ended up contributing the sort of World War II era lecture to this series, you're rounding that out, and the issue story that you chose to tell arises from the incarceration experience of Japanese Americans during World War II and you focus in particular on Manzanar and Poston. Am I mispronouncing those?

KENNETH MARCUS: That's right.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Also you described the terrain itself, where these-- this is where I wanted to begin, where these camps were located themselves were often the authorities didn't really take it upon themselves or bother to situate these facilities in spaces that were conducive to the health of the inmates to start with.--So, I wanted to know, because Manzanar and Poston are both in different ecological settings, each of those have an... I wonder if you could just talk about that a

bit. And A.) was that intentional, one of the questions I had as I was listening to you talk was, was it intentional or not? Was there malice encoded in that choice, to displace these populations, to these individuals, to hostile environments?

KENNETH MARCUS: Yeah, these ten sites were chosen precisely because they were in desolate locations in the United States, largely in the American west, that they would be far from most urban settings.

The question of malice is an interesting one. I didn't see malice necessarily in the choice of these sites, just that they would be far from most human inhabitants. And in that sense by removing over 120,000 people from the west coast, they'd be placed in areas where it would be effectively, it would be impossible to engage in the kinds of espionage activities that they were accused erroneously of doing. So, for example, Manzanar was within roughly ten miles of one town, Independence, and roughly ten to twelve miles from another, Lone Pine. It wasn't completely desolate, but there's no question that the purpose of these sites was to place them in areas where the American military thought they would not be a danger. And the upshot of that is that they, although they were initially brought to racecourses on these so-called assembly centers before being transported to the camps, there they typically ended up in some sorts of structures, usually horse stables or something equally inadequate.

Here you're really building camps from the ground up, virtually all of them are camps built from the ground up. So, in most cases when the internees arrive, the camps are not fully functional or ready and so it's a question certainly in the first year

of trying to habituate oneself to an extremely stressful situation in environments that overwhelmingly most incarcerated had no experience. And trying to find some kind of common ground to survive in very desolate conditions. And when one hears, certainly at Manzanar and at Poston and other camps as you mention, these high winds that would periodically sweep through these areas creating dust storms and incarcerated would have memories of waking up covered in dust and having to inhale this, on a constant basis. One witness arrived at Manzanar with people wearing goggles and it was just I think a dreadful situation all around, that to some extent certainly got better as time went on as people made the camps more livable. But I think by no stretch of the imagination could you say the camps were really more than at subsistence level.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: They do sound, you've used the word desolate a few times, they sound that way, very bleak, very spare. These weren't comfortable homes for, I think you said there were families. It was like family units were assigned to sort of one of these structures per family unit, more or less. Is that accurate?

KENNETH MARCUS: Yeah, right. Typically, one or two families per unit. And four units per barrack.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: They're one room, right? These structures?

KENNETH MARCUS: Yeah.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Okay so you could have multiple families living in the same individual unit?

KENNETH MARCUS: In worst case scenarios, but if it were multiple families, they would usually be related to each other. We find some examples, for example a group of young men Keybay, who were isolated in their own unit, their own barrack, but usually it was the case of one family per unit, or extended family per unit.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Yeah and that, so very little privacy. It sounds like they had very little privacy, multiple generations in close proximity to one another. We have these extremes of temperature, environment, out breaks of typhus, I think you said...

KENNETH MARCUS: Well, they were inoculated for typhus before going in and so we don't really get these outbreaks of these infectious diseases so much because of the inoculation, but people arriving at the camps, especially the children, responded to these inoculations with violent stomach upsets and fevers and so on. But there were these inoculations precisely to try and prevent things like typhus.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: You alluded to this, was there health care in the camps at all? Was there any attempt to manage that, that you came across in the sources? Because I want to ask you about the sources next too because that is something that I was particularly curious about.

KENNETH MARCUS: Each of the camps had a hospital where they could bring the sick or the ill, for example Poston had three camps and there was a hospital in the first camp. So, there was access to medical care. Usually, staff stood by and nurses and doctors, who were also at times residents of

the camps, incarcerated themselves. But medical care too was at a subsistence level, you're not going to find high tech operation rooms or anything but there was some level of subsistence care. That's right.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: I didn't know about the hospitals either, I'm interested to learn that there were, sounds like some of the incarcerated were also, not just the patients, but the health care workers themselves?

KENNETH MARCUS: At times, yeah, because most of the workers were-- most of the incarcerated, were encouraged to work at the camp. The idea was that each camp would be more or less self-sufficient in terms of growing food, in terms of taking care of a number of the services that people required at the camp, in terms of preparing the food and the mess halls, cleaning the camp, ironing services, postal services, what have you. And in both cases, in both camps, camouflage netting, factory or shops to create that for the war effort. And they were paid a very minimal wage for this, but this was part of the goal for these camps was to try and make them, in some way shape or form, and I think actually more by the incarcerated than the organizers of the camps, to make them more or less livable environments, which they could at least tolerate the situation that they had been thrown into.

And I think in all fairness, I think that the incarcerated did an extraordinary effective job in doing precisely that. In trying to create social groups, social services, networks to help each other out, and I did mention to the serious tensions within these camps. Between the Japanese American Citizens League, and other members.

There's no questions that there were divisions, and these were especially sharp in the first year and then as some members left the camps or were arrested or removed. The tensions by and large subsided compared to the first year, but they never went away. And so, what you have I think is a dynamic of men, women, and children of all ages-- trying to make the best of a bad situation. So, I think especially for the young people, their impressions were there are some good memories of shows that they put on or are acting drama of some comradery amongst their friends and sports and so on. So, we do have those memories and they are very real memories. But you know I think it's also fair to say these are few and far between, to try to put up with the overwhelming sense of having been rejected, many of them, as American citizens, and trying to find some sort of accommodation just to get through this very depressing and oppressive period.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Well and about midway through your talk you turned to the issue of mental health and then you kind of bring us to the public health conversation of these spaces. Initiate us with descriptions about infectious diseases, some of the sanitary problems that were inherent in these spaces. But then you also, one of the things that I really appreciated, you bring in this subject of mental health and describe how for historians it's a more challenging thing to track, to reconstruct, because there was just much less of an awareness that there's a need to manage these problems, to the less documentation about it, the sources, there's a depletion there. So, it sounds like you relied a bit upon either oral histories, memoir, autobiography, that kind of first-person narratives.

KENNETH MARCUS: Yeah, one of the best locations for these sources is the Japanese American Museum library oral history collection in Little Tokyo, in Los Angeles. Many of these materials have been put online so they are freely available to those who are interested. Both documentation and oral history interviews. So those are very important. I think getting the oral record, as it is true for survivors of the concentration camps in Europe during World War II, those oral history interviews are a critical part, I think, in trying to assemble a kind of picture of what people are going through.

At Cal State, Fullerton there's an oral history, an important oral history collection. The Library of Congress has collections of value. And then as you stated, I conducted some of my own interviews, with survivors from the camps. And then you really do, I think, piece together a sense of what analysts, social scientists at the time documented, and what incarcerated themselves experienced. And they could be different. There's no question that the US government wanted to present the best picture and its materials on the camps as sort of a PR campaign, and news reels and photograph displays and so on that the camps are livable, and people are by and large happy and getting along. And so there's that picture.

And there is certainly some evidence for that, we have examples of people finding ways to enjoy themselves or at least find comradeship in extremely difficult times. But this underlying picture of exploitation, the results of discrimination, these really take place not just during the time in the camps but in I think the ripple effects, long after the camps were closed. So, either incarcerated or

children of incarcerated speaking of alcohol abuse and drug abuse and trying to come to terms with this fact of relatives having been maltreated and incarcerated with no evidence of wrongdoing whatsoever.

There really is little precedent for that in American history, placing a large number of people in camps in modern American history. And with, effectively with no evidence at all of wrongdoing, and that really, I think, from the sources that I've seen, it took a toll on peoples' mental health. And mental health is, you certainly do see the documentation of, it's called what I mentioned "the Manzanar runs" and people having internal health problems. And because of the food they were taking or some lack of sanitary conditions-- especially in the first year but for many, the children that continued throughout their experience at the camps. You hear that. But the mental health aspect, and I'm glad you bring that up, is much less documented. And it's, I think, much more difficult to piece out and analyze, just from what the incarcerated themselves and their descendants and to say.

What impact, and I mean, as I mentioned in the podcast, you cannot compare these concentration camps with the concentration camps in Europe, which were overwhelmingly far more severe and destructive. But you do see this similar dynamic of the mental health issues, not just amongst the survivors themselves, but amongst their descendants trying to deal with that experience. That trauma can carry across generations, and we know that from the experience of slaves and the descendants of slaves in the United States. Trauma can carry across generations, and I think you can make the

case for the World War II concentration camps for Japanese Americans as well.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Well, yeah. I'm glad you brought that up actually because one, it's a great segue, thank you, I love a great segue. One of the words that kept occurring in my own mind as I was listening to your talk is the word "trauma." Particularly the way its manifested in the mental health of second-, third-, and fourth-degree aftereffects of this experience. Which, by the time these deportations occur, there's already been profound disruption to the everyday lives that these Japanese Americans had heretofore had. Where they were on the west coast and basically had, sounds to me, like fairly predictable standard of living for the time. And obviously lose a tremendous amount of wealth-- there's a tremendous amount of opportunity, some of them lose homes, they lose property, so there's a lot of disruption it sounds like for anybody that would be psychologically traumatic. Even just on day one when they get there, that's already priced into what they're processing and what they're trying to recover from.

KENNETH MARCUS: Yes, I think that's right. And what makes the experience of Japanese Americans internment camps quite different from say, for example, the documentation of survivors of the World War II concentration camps in Europe-- where documentation immediately started taking place as soon as inmates were being freed and so on. In the case of the Japanese American camps, there was almost immediately an effort to not talk about the camps, to cover up one's experience and just get on with life. And so, people are not interviewing the survivors, so their experiences to any great degree

at all. And there's a sense amongst the older generation to just not talk about it and to keep it under wraps. Not necessarily as if it didn't happen, but to look forward, to try to find means of survival, because you have families that are dependent on you and so on.

So, it's really the children of these camp survivors who start questioning so much this situation. Why do we know so little about the camps, why haven't our parents talked that much about the camps, why is there this sense of repression? So I think there is, as part of the Civil Rights Movement in the 60s and 70s, there is the first pilgrimage to Manzanar, and that is how it was portrayed, as a pilgrimage, as a way of coming to terms with the past. In which the children of incarcerated, as well as incarcerated themselves, would take this journey, so many of the children were at the time students at UCLA for example. And take this journey from Los Angeles to Manzanar and document in a very visual, a very dramatic way, we will not forget.

And that starts a process of remembrance that continues then as Manzanar is then accepted as a California historical site, and then a national historic landmark, and then a national historical site in 1992. And all the while before in the 1970s up until the early 1980s, then there really is this process with Congressional support, US Congress, of trying to understand exactly what happened, what peoples' experiences were and this sense of loss.

So yes, certainly it is monetary, there is no getting around that, it's all over two hundred million dollars in 1940s dollars was lost in total by the incarcerated. A fraction of that was

restored, it was paid to camp survivors immediately after the war, and then this \$20,000 per survivor paid during the 1980s, during the Regan Administration.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Was that sort of by way of restitution?

KENNETH MARCUS: Yes, exactly, but it's purely symbolic. And nothing today would be over what I think is 1.5 billion dollars, something to that effect, that would be the actual amount due in terms of reparations. So, it was symbolic, and it came with an apology. The first apology was with Gerald Ford, well, at least recognition that there was wrongdoing by Gerald Ford. And then under Carter, and finally under President Regan, a formal apology. So, this certainly is a step in the right direction, to acknowledge that horrific violation of civil rights took place and to make a symbolic gesture in terms of repayment. And that does go a long way I think, also to designate Manzanur as a national historical site so it gets that kind of funding, and there's memorials at all of the ten concentration camps.

All these things make a difference, and they are acts of remembering but virtually all of it really is driven by both the survivors and the children of survivors themselves. And to force Americans who knew little about this event to come to terms with what happened, that it isn't just a footnote in American history, but was truly emblematic of a wider movement of discrimination against specific ethnic groups and long-standing discrimination.

So it didn't just appear out of nowhere, as I mention in the podcast there's a whole series of

steps that lead up to that. The incarcerated knew that they were disliked by large segments of the population. And when the second World War broke out, there is clear recognition that they will be targeted, there's that knowledge. But then when the incarceration actually takes place and then the loss, as you point out-- that the uprooting of, the dislocation, the loss of friends and family and when things that children for example are resilient, we always say that children are resilient, well yes, but also think of what so many of those children went through. The humiliation of how they were treated in classrooms leading up to the camps, again you see that very often in memoirs, the loss of their friends, pets, the loss of what they knew as normal, yes they are among the first to adapt in the camps, I'll give them that. But then coming home to a very changed environment, socially, politically, and never really knowing whether they are truly accepted as American citizens or not-- that's a staggering underlying anxiety I think to try to live with. And I don't think it's something that could be sort of cast aside, get over it, or I guess you just have to live with it. It is a fact of what happens when you have this wholesale violation of people's civil rights.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Well and I feel like that's a, thank you for teasing me up once again, I feel like the biggest question, really in any language, but the one I wanted to end this chat with you on tonight is: why did this happen?

KENNETH MARCUS: Why did it happen? I think the number one thing, because there is no evidence of sabotage or espionage on the part of Japanese Americans. I think it's fear. It was the fear of

what could happen, it was rumor and innuendo, it's certainly based on many decades of hatred and abuse of Asian Americans. First Chinese Americans with the exclusion act of 1882, and then with the alien land laws passed in California in 1913 and 1920, and then the 1924 immigration act which banned immigration. So, there's a whole series of steps leading up to it and in that sense, it doesn't appear out of nowhere.

But the immediate act itself, of the signing of the executive order 9066 to begin that process of allowing the military to remove individuals. That really is based on fear, not evidence, but fear. It certainly is true that there were Japanese American submarines that were patrolling the west coast and were causing some damage, and further out to sea were sinking ships, largely merchant ships. That is a fact. But the rumor that there were, Japanese Americans on land that were signaling to them, whether at Terminal Island or at Santa Barbara, or wherever, there is no evidence for this. So that's the fear aspect of, and that we can't discount that fear was very very real. And many Americans were terrified that the war had come to them now, it seemed so distant in Europe and now it's come to the west coast. So, I think you can't discount that very real fear that people had, that the coast would be invaded, so we do have that. But its fear on the one hand, and then allowing the military to make some of these decisions, especially general John DeWitt, who was a fervent racist and remained that way unrecalcitrant throughout the war. And so, it's trying to, its building on this history of discrimination, this history of hatred, and then finally a fear that allowed such a cataclysmic event to take place.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Well and that's I think a great place to end because, simple reality is that there's a lot more of this history to be written. And there's going to be some students in this audience and some up and coming grad students in this audience, in particular, people who are working in this area, who will have the opportunity to continue to develop this story and our memory of it, which you certainly helped us do that today. I want to thank you again for joining us.

KENNETH MARCUS: My pleasure, thank you for asking.

Conclusion

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: And that's a wrap. And just a good word of advice from me to be sure to join us next time when Professor Kylie Smith of Emory will be good enough to join us. I was so honored to be able to share her work on the history of Jim Crow, racial violence, and Southern psychiatry as part of this series. And that is next time. Don't miss it. We'll catch you then.