

September 2019

From Executive Director Tom Ikeda

Dear friends,

I am honored to share the news that on September 21st I am being awarded the Robert Gray Medal, the highest award bestowed by the Washington State Historical Society. As I said in my acceptance speech, I feel this is an award that really belongs to the Japanese American community. After all, it was this community that was unjustly uprooted and incarcerated during WWII and yet has generously shared its stories so that what happened to them wouldn't happen to others.

Over the past 24 years, almost 1,000 Japanese Americans have agreed to be interviewed by Densho. They opened their homes and hearts while sharing their story of what happened when our country turned its back on them.

As difficult as it has been to hear thousands of hours of painful memories, there is a silver lining to the dark cloud of these stories. The silver lining is that listening to these stories will change you, as they have changed me. As I listened and opened my heart to the pain and suffering, what emerged in me was a feeling of deep compassion. Compassion not only for Japanese Americans who were incarcerated during WWII, but also for other vulnerable communities that experience discrimination and violence today.

That ability to feel deep compassion is a gift that I will treasure more than any award. So as I celebrate this honor alongside the community that made it possible, let's use this as an opportunity to remember that we need to keep telling and sharing these stories. My hope is that by listening—really listening—others can open their hearts to understand the pain caused by oppression and violence in our country, and feel compelled to act.

In appreciation and solidarity,
Tom

Poet Mitsuye May Yamada Joins Densho Dinner Lineup



We are honored to welcome the acclaimed poet, essayist, educator, feminist and human rights activist, Mitsuye May Yamada to the 2019 Densho Dinner. She will read from her newest collection of poetry, *Full Circle: New and Selected Poems*. Yamada was born in Kyushu, Japan and grew up in Seattle, Washington. As a teenager, she was incarcerated at Minidoka concentration camp along with her family. After the war, Yamada was one of the first and most vocal of Asian American women writers who wrote about the wartime incarceration of Japanese Americans. She authored poetry collections, *Camp Notes and Other Poems* (1976) and *Desert Run: Poems and Stories* (1988). Now, at the age of 96, she has released her latest work, *Full Circle: New and Selected Poems* (2019).

[Buy Tickets](#)

Please join us at the Densho Dinner on Saturday, November 2! We'll gather, share, and celebrate—all while supporting efforts to activate our history

You can also support the Densho Dinner, whether you live near or far:

Donate items for the [Silent Auction](#)
Become a dinner [sponsor](#) or [table captain](#)
[Volunteer to help](#) (set-up, registration, etc.)

Contact jen.fukutaki@densho.org or danielle.higa@densho.org with questions.

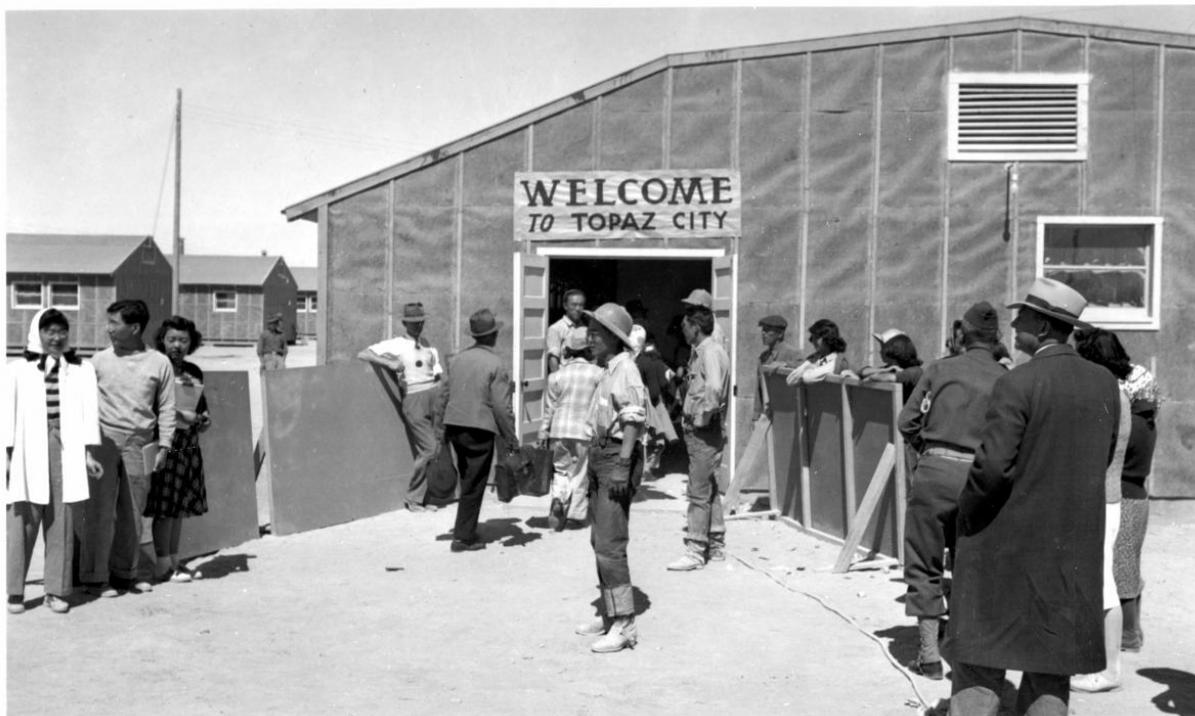
Oral History Spotlight: Flora Ninomiya

Flora Ninomiya grew up in Richmond, California. During World War II, she and her family were incarcerated at the Amache concentration camp in Colorado. In this clip, Flora talks about returning to elementary school



Director Natasha Varner will attend the 2019 Poston Pilgrimage, convening in Parker, AZ October 11-12. We hope to see you there! And we're looking for historic materials relating to Poston, so whether you're attending the pilgrimage or not, please [let us know](#) if you have any photos, documents, or other materials you would like to have digitized and added to the Densho Digital Repository.

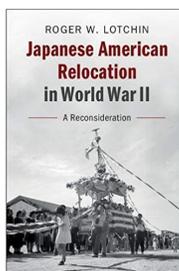
Blog Highlights



Ten Little Known Stories about Topaz Concentration Camp

Topaz concentration camp — which opened in September 1942 — is perhaps best known as the site of the fatal shooting of an inmate by an overzealous camp sentry in April 1943 and for its art school, which included a faculty roster of notable Issei and Nisei artists. It was also the site of significant protest against the “loyalty questionnaire” and of a variety of labor disputes.

>> [Read more.](#)



A new book claims WWII incarceration wasn't about racism. It's wrong.

Cambridge University Press recently published Roger W. Lotchin's *Japanese American Relocation in World War II: A Reconsideration*. The book's goal is to “correct” several mistaken findings in the literature on the removal and confinement of Japanese Americans in World War II — including that racism was a key cause. But as guest writer Professor Eric L. Muller points out, the book omits crucial historical evidence that it was indeed very much about racism.

>> [Read more.](#)

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THANKS TO OUR SUMMER APPEAL DONORS!
WE COULDN'T DO OUR WORK WITHOUT YOU.

Densho recently received an unexpected gift from the estate of a supporter. We are deeply honored by this gift and by other planned giving pledges and gifts from our community. These gifts will be placed in a special fund to maintain Densho's materials in perpetuity.

If you are interested in making a lasting impact with your estate or have questions in regards to planned giving, you can find information [here](#). You may also be interested to know that Densho, in collaboration with other local non-profits, hosts free planned giving seminars.

The next planned giving seminar "Getting Your Financial, Personal and Legal House in Order" is set for Wednesday, October 23. Please RSVP and receive further details from danielle.higa@densho.org.

Afternoon session: Green Lake Library from 1:30-3:00 pm

Evening session: American Red Cross/Seattle from 5:30-7:00 pm

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