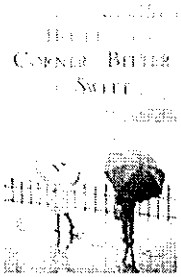
# Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet

**by Jamie Ford**



**List Price:** $15.00
**Pages:** 320
**Format:** Paperback
**ISBN:** 9780345505347
**Publisher:** Ballantine Books

In the opening pages of Jamie Ford's stunning debut novel, **Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet**, Henry Lee comes upon a crowd gathered outside the Panama Hotel, once the gateway to Seattle's Japantown. It has been boarded up for decades, but now the new owner has made an incredible discovery: the belongings of Japanese families, left when they were rounded up and sent to internment camps during World War II. As Henry looks on, the owner opens a Japanese parasol.

This simple act takes old Henry Lee back to the 1940s, at the height of the war, when young Henry's world is a jumble of confusion and excitement, and to his father, who is obsessed with the war in China and having Henry grow up American. While "scholarshipping" at the exclusive Rainier Elementary, where the white kids ignore him, Henry meets Keiko Okabe, a young Japanese American student. Amid the chaos of blackouts, curfews, and FBI raids, Henry and Keiko forge a bond of friendship–and innocent love–that transcends the long-standing prejudices of their Old World ancestors. And after Keiko and her family are swept up in the evacuations to the internment camps, she and Henry are left only with the hope that the war will end, and that their promise to each other will be kept.

Forty years later, Henry Lee is certain that the parasol belonged to Keiko. In the hotel's dark dusty basement he begins looking for signs of the Okabe family's belongings and for a long-lost object whose value he cannot begin to measure. Now a widower, Henry is still trying to find his voice–words that might explain the actions of his nationalistic father; words that might bridge the gap between him and his modern, Chinese American son; words that might help him confront the choices he made many years ago.

Set during one of the most conflicted and volatile times in American history, **Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet** is an extraordinary story of commitment and enduring hope. In Henry and Keiko, Jamie Ford has created an unforgettable duo whose story teaches us of the power of forgiveness and the human heart.

-Click here to watch an interview with Jamie Ford.
-Click here to watch a video in which Jamie Ford narrates a tour of the Seattle neighborhood where Japanese lives were disrupted at the start of World War II.

## Interview




Seattle's Union Station, where Keiko and her family left by train for Camp Harmony.A Conversation with Jamie Ford

***Where did the idea for HOTEL ON THE CORNER OF BITTER AND SWEET come from?***

It really started with the "I Am Chinese" button—this thing my father mentioned wearing as a kid. There was a bit of an identity crisis in the International District in the wake of Pearl Harbor. Many Chinese families feared for their safety, especially as the FBI was rounding up prominent members of the Japanese community. It piqued my curiosity and really led me to research the whole period.

From there I wrote a sliver of a short story, really nothing more than a vignette, and I submitted it to the now-defunct Picolata Review, where it was ultimately accepted. A few weeks later I was accepted to an intensive, immersive, week-long literary boot camp run by science fiction and fantasy writer Orson Scott Card—where we literally read and wrote fifteen to seventeen hours a day. It was while attending that camp in Virginia that Scott inspired me to write what he termed "a noble romantic tragedy." That story was called "The Button," about a Chinese boy (Henry) that tried to prevent his best friend (Keiko) from being taken away. I workshopped the story, changed the title to "I Am Chinese" and sent it off to Glimmer Train, where it became a finalist in their 2006 Short-Story Award for New Writers. That story became a chapter in the book.

***You're part Chinese. Tell us about your Chinese family. And the name Ford, where does it come from?***

Actually, I didn't even know the whole story until last year. I finally tracked it all down. It turns out my great-grandfather, a man named Min Chung, immigrated to America and later adopted the name William Ford—supposedly from the famous outdoorsman, not the father of Henry Ford. My grandfather, oddly enough, switched back to Chung as a screen name, going by George Chung and appearing as an extra in movies during the '50s. He went on to be a consultant for the '70s TV series Kung Fu. His son, my father, was 100 percent Chinese and fluent. Unfortunately, I don't speak Chinese—I had four years of German and that doesn't get me very far at family reunions.

In general, I had a very American childhood, though when you're half-Chinese, you never fully fit in. You don't feel white and you don't feel Chinese—you're half, or hapa, as they say in Hawaii. Census forms don't have a box to check for half.

***How did you come to learn about the Panama Hotel?***

That came about as I was researching a different story—one dealing with the Wa Mei Massacre, which was a mass shooting in the mid-'80s at a backroom casino in Chinatown, where my grandfather once worked. I was paging through some old news articles and there was an unrelated mention of the Panama Hotel about the owner finding the belongings of all these Japanese families. When I wrote HOTEL ON THE CORNER OF BITTER AND SWEET, I dug further into that story and eventually contacted the hotel owner and flew out to Seattle. It was amazing and humbling to see what still remains to this day in that dank, dusty basement.

***Do you personally know anyone that was affected by the Japanese Internment?***

I do, but I didn't know it at the time. I lived in Ashland, Oregon, until I was twelve, and one of my best friend's fathers had been uprooted as a child and sent to a camp in Arkansas. I never knew that until I was doing my research and saw that he'd written a book of poetry about his camp experiences (five actually). His name is Lawson Inada—he's now Oregon's Poet Laureate, by the way. We were able to reconnect and he was kind enough to read an early version of my manuscript.

***Do you see any parallels between the Japanese Internment and, say, the desire by some to lock our borders, or round up Muslims because they might be a threat?***

Only vague similarities. The empire of Japan had been cornered, and lashed out by attacking Pearl Harbor, Singapore, the Philippines, etcetera—it was an unexpected, vicious attack, but it was an all-out declaration of war between nations with very obvious borders. It's very different than having cells of foreign-sponsored terrorists within our country or operating overseas. And now, for the most part, we're a much more integrated society. Rounding up 120,000 Japanese Americans didn't slow down the ambitions of the empire of Japan, and I don't think rounding up Muslim Americans will stop the machinations of evil-minded people along the Afghan/Pakistani border. Let's hope that we learned our lesson sixty-five years ago.

***What about people like conservative columnist Michelle Malkin who have spoken out in favor of the Japanese Internment, even writing a book about it—saying it was a just endeavor?***

First of all, I really set out to write a people story—a love story and a family story. It ended up as a bit more than that, but any kind of oblique political thing was not my intention. However, after I'd written HOTEL ON THE CORNER OF BITTER AND SWEET, someone pointed out the Malkin book and I guess my answer to that is this: Ronald Reagan, the most beloved conservative in recent memory, was the one who signed legislation apologizing for the Internment and authorizing $1.6 billion in reparations to be paid to those who lost their homes and livelihoods in the camps. Case closed.

***You delve a little into the Seattle jazz scene of the '40s. How did that come about?***

I've always had a fascination with the paved-over history of Chinatown and Nihonmachi. My grandparents were always having these anniversary dinners at the China Gate restaurant—this funky old place that was originally a Chinese theater and after that a jazz club where greats like Cab Calloway and Duke Ellington played. As a kid, I was always fascinated by that. It's sad because now the International District is ripe with decay, but in its heyday—from Prohibition until the Internment—it was the place to go for a wild time on a Saturday night. You could find booze, gambling, and jazz. I find it sad that these great places, like the Black Elks Club where Ray Charles had his first paid gig, have basically vanished.

Also, growing up in Seattle my grandfather would always take me to his favorite seafood restaurant, which was in Rainier Beach between a soul-food restaurant and a Hispanic grocer. I was always fascinated with how Seattle's ethnic communities ended up right on top of one another. Turns out it was because of the zoning laws in the '30s and '40s. It was illegal (though how well enforced, I don't know) to sell land to certain minorities outside of certain zones.

***The novel is told in a split-narrative: past and present. What made you decide to go that route?***
I wanted to give the book a more redemptive ending. That's a literary way of saying, "And everyone lived happily ever after."

The short story wrapped up on a fairly tragic note. And even if I continued the story in the '40s, there really wasn't a way to give it an ending that felt satisfying. I mean, after the war was over, it didn't suddenly get better for Japanese American families. Their lives had been completely turned upside down—sort of like people who survive a hurricane. Sure the wind stops blowing and the floodwaters recede, but what do you have left except rubble, and does that provide happiness, or just relief? It took decades for most of these families to recover. It just seemed natural to have that redemptive ending come years later as well.

Also, I think that most people can relate to seeing their first love again, at a class reunion or just by chance, and there's this wave of nostalgia and melancholy—it's very poignant and universal, I think. Plus, as a writer, it was interesting to explore Henry's character as an adult. As the saying goes, everyone has two chances at a parent/child relationship, once as a child and once as a parent. To me, that was a rich dynamic worth exploring.

***You've written a compelling and touching novel, which also sheds light on an important time in American history. Which of those elements came most naturally to you?***
I'd have to say that the "love story/family drama" came most naturally. If I were to list my all-time favorite movies, they tend to be complicated people stories, a bit sentimental, and devoid of car chases and epic gun battles—it's just what I relate to and what I like writing about.

The historical aspects are a close second, though. I love cultural history and am always pleasantly surprised at how much I enjoy the research process. I feel like an archaeologist, dusting off the past and presenting it to the reader. And of course, it adds context to my characters, giving them a rich world to splash around in. I find the whole process incredibly motivating as a writer.

Plus, deep down, I think most of us like entertainment that is somewhat enlightening. My grandmother used to watch Jeopardy! because it was "educational." Do game shows really boost your IQ? Probably not, but they can be strangely satisfying to a lot of people.

***What is your writing process?***
It seems as though some authors meticulously outline everything, while others just write extemporaneously—working without a net. I tend to do a little bit of both. I do start with a few notes that are probably the least amount of words on a page that could possibly be mistaken for an outline—really nothing more than a beginning and an ending, with maybe a few scene ideas in the middle. But that ending is all-important for me. And by ending, I mean a real, unambiguous, nonmetaphorical ending. I look at storytelling as either banking or spending emotional currency with the reader. Good or bad, happy or sad, the ending is where those emotional debts are paid—if that makes sense? Plus, if I have a clear ending in mind, then the more nails I lay in the path of my characters, the more motivated I am as a writer to help them overcome them. And of course along the way I'll take a lot of spontaneous twists, turns, and unexpected detours.

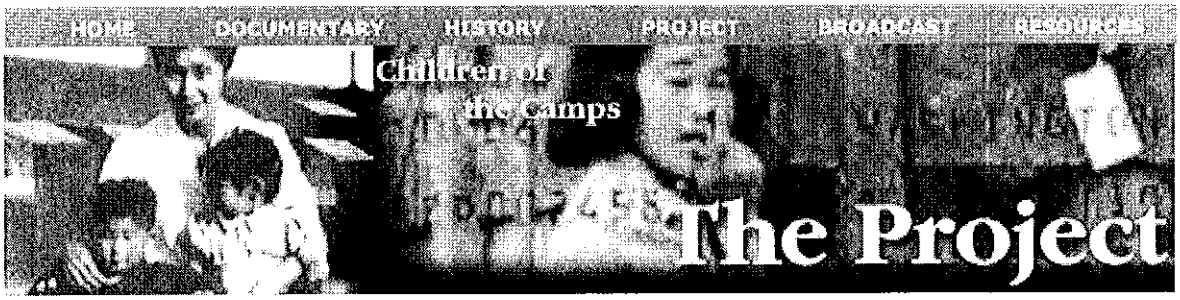
Process-wise, I try to get the entire story nailed in one draft—one chapter or one scene at a time. I'll start my day by cleaning up what I wrote the previous day and just keep going from there, occasionally backing up a chapter and starting over. I try not to slather words on the page with the intent to clean the whole thing up later. If I do, my stories tend to suffer a "death of a thousand cuts."

***Is Henry you?***
I think readers sometimes feel that there is some sort of linkage between protagonists and their creators. The truth is, there's a little bit of me in Henry—a small bit. Growing up in Oregon, I was the only Chinese kid in my grade

school and my best friend was the only Japanese kid. That's probably where the Henry/Keiko dynamic came from. But we weren't outcasts—I think one year we were the class president and vice president. See what a difference thirty years can make!

***Do you have a favorite character in the book?***

Honestly, I tend to fall in love with the characters that I'm writing at the moment. I'm working on a new book so I'm sort of emotionally vested in these other characters right now. But in the world of HOTEL ON THE CORNER OF BITTER AND SWEET, I really love Sheldon—Mrs. Beatty, too. I love them so much that I've written short stories starring each of them. I just wasn't ready to say goodbye, I guess. Maybe once the dust settles, I'll post those stories on my website.




Mission
Symposium Comments
Workshops
Articles

## Mission

The **Children of the Camps Project** was initiated by Dr. Satsuki Ina with the following primary goals:

- To develop a documentary that explores the ongoing emotional, familial and psychological consequences of the WW II internment camp experience for those who were "children of the camps", and that documents their personal journey to healing from the wounds of racism. Former internees report lifelong struggles with chronic depression, psychosomatic illnesses, low self-esteem and the stresses of over-achieving. Consonant with Japanese American values, these individuals have internalized their suffering in an effort to secure their acceptance in their own country.

- To facilitate a healing experience for the Japanese American community by holding workshops where former internees and their families can view the documentary and further explore the personal and intergenerational impact of the internment experience, perhaps for the first time. As a response to cultural constraints and fear of repercussion, many have buried their pain and endured the psychological consequences of this unresolved trauma.

- To educate the general public regarding the long term effects of the World War II internment trauma on Japanese Americans, the harmful impact of institutionalized racism in general, and the need for understanding and healing of both victim and perpetrator. The project will achieve this through:
  - national broadcast of the documentary on PBS through April 2003;
  - public screenings in local communities;
  - distribution of the video to schools, universities, mental health agencies, as well to individuals for personal use.

**"This travesty of justice could easily happen to any other group... Educating people about the incarceration of one group will help prevent its happening to other minorities in our American democracy."**
- "Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians"

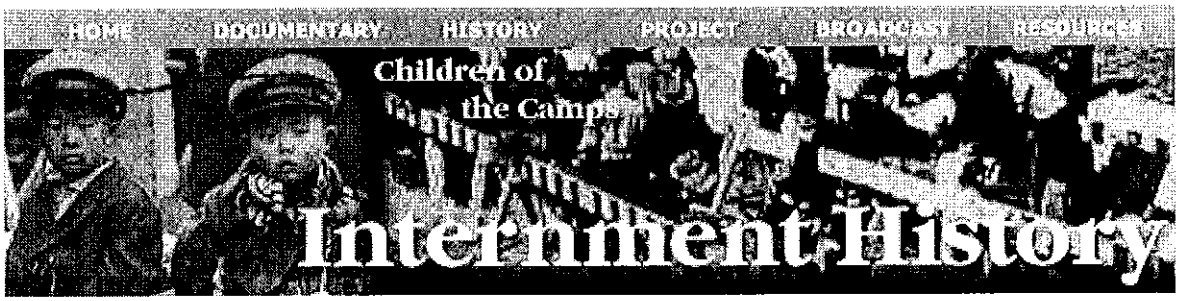
- To train mental health providers regarding the interplay of culture and oppression on the psychological well-being of ethnic minorities as exemplified by the coping strategies of the Japanese Americans in response to the WW II internment experience. Research supported by the National Institute of Mental Health and the National Research Center on Asian American Mental Health has reported the continued underutilization of mental health resources by Asian Americans. A training program will demonstrate culturally sensitive strategies that can serve to increase the perceived value of seeking mental health care and limit premature termination of treatment by Asian Americans. Training programs will be offered at social service agencies, professional conferences, and graduate programs.

- To learn more about how to schedule a workshop or screening in your community, see the workshops page.

For a detailed mental health rationale for this project, see Dr. Ina's remarks from the Tule Lake Reunion Symposium, or download/view a copy of the Children of the Camps Teacher's Guide by Dr. Ina.

Home | Documentary | History | Project | Broadcast
Resources | Feedback | Site Credits | PBS Online Home

The Children of the Camps Project
kimina@children-of-the-camps.org
Tel: (916) 452-3008




Historical Documents
The Camps
Timeline
Health Impact

## Timeline

### WWII INTERNMENT TIMELINE

**August 18, 1941**
In a letter to President Roosevelt, Representative John Dingell of Michigan suggests incarcerating 10,000 Hawaiian Japanese Americans as hostages to ensure "good behavior" on the part of Japan.

**November 12, 1941**
Fifteen Japanese American businessmen and community leaders in Los Angeles Little Tokyo are picked up in an F.B.I. raid. A spokesman for the Central Japanese Association states: "We teach the fundamental principles of America and the high ideals of American democracy. We want to live here in peace and harmony. Our people are 100% loyal to America."

**"Evacuees feared and resented the changes forced by life in the centers, particularly the breakdown of family authority...Children unsettlingly found their parents as helpless as they."**
- "Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians"

**December 7, 1941**
The attack on Pearl Harbor. Local authorities and the F.B.I. begin to round up the leadership of the Japanese American communities. Within 48 hours, 1,291 Issei are in custody. These men are held under no formal charges and family members are forbidden from seeing them. Most would spend the war years in enemy alien internment camps run by the Justice Department.

**February 19, 1942**
President Roosevelt signs Executive Order 9066 which allows military authorities to exclude anyone from anywhere without trial or hearings. Though the subject of only limited interest at the time, this order set the stage for the entire forced removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans.

**February 25, 1942**
The Navy informs Japanese American residents of Terminal Island near Los Angeles Harbor that they must leave in 48 hours. They are the first group to be removed en masse.

**"There were shootings...At Topaz, an elderly evacuee thought to be escaping was killed.**

**February 27, 1942.**
Idaho Governor Chase Clark tells a congressional committee in Seattle that Japanese would be welcome in Idaho only if they

**At Gila River, a Guard shot and wounded a mentally deranged evacuee. At Tule Lake, after segregation, an evacuee in an altercation with a guard was shot and killed."**

- Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians.

were in "concentration camps under military guard." Some credit Clark with the conception of what was to become a true scenario.

**March 2, 1942**
Gen. John L. DeWitt issues Public Proclamation No. 1 which creates Military Areas Nos. 1 and 2. Military Area No. 1 includes the western portion of California, Oregon and Washington, and part of Arizona while Military Area No. 2 includes the rest of these states. The proclamation also hints that people might be excluded from Military Area No. 1.

**March 18, 1942**
The president signs Executive Order 9102 establishing the War Relocation Authority (WRA) with Milton Eisenhower as director. It is allocated $5.5 million.

**March 21, 1942**
The first advance groups of Japanese American "volunteers" arrive at Manzanar, CA. The WRA would take over on June 1 and transform it into a "relocation center."

**March 24, 1942**
The first Civilian Exclusion Order issued by the Army is issued for the Bainbridge Island area near Seattle. The forty-five families there are given one week to prepare. By the end of October, 108 exclusion orders would be issued, and all Japanese Americans in Military Area No. 1 and the California portion of No. 2 would be incarcerated.

**March 28, 1942**
Minoru Yasui walks into a Portland police station at 11:20 p.m. to present himself for arrest in order to test the curfew regulations in court.

**May 1, 1942**
Having "voluntarily resettled" in Denver, Nisei journalist James Omura writes a letter to a Washington law firm inquiring about retaining their services to seek legal action against the government for violations of civil and constitutional rights and seeking restitution for economic losses. He was unable to afford the $3,500 fee required to begin proceedings.

**May 13, 1942**
Forty-five-year-old Ichiro Shimoda, a Los Angeles gardener, is shot to death by guards while trying to escape from Fort Still (Oklahoma) internment camp. The victim was seriously mentally ill, having attempted suicide twice since being picked up on December 7. He is shot despite the guards' knowledge of his mental state.

**May 16, 1942**
Hikoji Takeuchi, a Nisei, is shot by a guard at Manzanar. The guard claims that he shouted at Takeuchi and that Takeuchi began to run away from him. Takeuchi claims he was collecting scrap lumber and didn't hear the guard shout. His wounds indicate that he was shot in the front. Though seriously injured, he eventually recovered.

**May 29, 1942**
Largely organized by Quaker leader Clarence E. Pickett, the National Japanese-American Student Relocation Council is formed in Philadelphia with University of Washington Dean Robert W. O'Brien as director. By war's end, 4,300 Nisei would

be in college.

**June 1942**
The movie "Little Tokyo, U.S.A." is released by Twentieth Century Fox. In it, the Japanese American community is portrayed as a "vast army of volunteer spies" and "blind worshippers of their Emperor, " as described in the film's voice-over prologue.

**June 17, 1942**
Milton Eisenhower resigns as WRA director. Dillon Myer is appointed to replace him.

**July, 27 1942**
Two Issei -- Brawley, CA farmer Toshiro Kobata and San Pedro fisherman Hirota Isomura -- are shot to death by camp guards at Lourdsburg, New Mexico enemy alien internment camp. The men had allegedly been trying to escape. It would later be reported, however, that upon their arrival to the camp, the men had been too ill to walk from the train station to the camp gate.

**August 4, 1942**
A routine search for contraband at the Santa Anita "Assembly Center" turns into a "riot." Eager military personnel had become overzealous and abusive which, along with the failure of several attempts to reach the camp's internal security chief, triggers mass unrest, crowd formation, and the harassing of the searchers. Military police with tanks and machine guns quickly end the incident. The "overzealous" military personnel are later replaced.

**August 10, 1942** The first inmates arrive at Minidoka, Idaho.

**August 12, 1942** The first 292 inmates arrive at Heart Mountain, Wyoming.

**August 27, 1942** The first inmates arrive at Granada, or Amache, Colorado.

**September 11, 1942** The first inmates arrive at Central Utah, or Topaz.

**September 18, 1942** The first inmates arrive at Rohwer, Arkansas.

**October 20, 1942**
President Roosevelt calls the "relocation centers" "concentration camps" at a press conference. The WRA had consistently denied that the term "concentration camps" accurately described the camps.

**November 14, 1942**
An attack on a man widely perceived as an informer results in the arrest of two popular inmates at Poston. This incident soon mushrooms into a mass strike.

**December 5, 1942**
Fred Tayama is attacked and seriously injured by a group of inmates at Manzanar. The arrest of the popular Harry Ueno for the crime triggers a mass uprising.

**December 10, 1942**
The WRA establishes a prison at Moab, Utah for recalcitrant inmates.

**February 1, 1943**
The 442nd Regimental Combat Team is activated, made up entirely of Japanese Americans.

**April 11, 1943**
James Hatsuki Wakasa, a sixty-three-year-old chef, is shot to death by a sentry at Heart Mountain camp while allegedly trying to escape through a fence. It is later determined that Wakasa had been inside the fence and facing the sentry when shot. The sentry would stand a general court-martial on April 28 at Fort Douglas, Utah and be found "not guilty."

**April 13, 1943**
"A Jap's a Jap. There is no way to determine their loyalty... This coast is too vulnerable. No Jap should come back to this coast except on a permit from my office." Gereral John L. DeWitt, head, Western Defense Command; before the House Naval Affairs Subcommittee.

**June 21, 1943**
The United States Supreme Court rules on the Hirabayashi and Yasui cases, upholding the constitutionality of the curfew and exclusion orders.

**September 13, 1943**
The realignment of Tule Lake as a camp for "dissenters" begins. After the loyalty questionnaire episode, "loyal" internees begin to depart to other camps. Five days later, "disloyal" internees from other camps begin to arrive at Tule Lake.

**November 4, 1943**
The Tule Lake uprising caps a month of strife. Tension had been high since the administration had fired 43 coal workers involved in a labor dispute on October 7.

**January 14, 1944**
Nisei eligibility for the draft is restored. The reaction to this announcement in the camps would be mixed.

**January 26, 1944**
Spurred by the announcement of the draft a few days before, 300 people attend a public meeting at Heart Mountain camp. Here, the Fair Play Committee is formally organized to support draft resistance.

**March 20, 1944**
Forty-three Japanese American soldiers are arrested for refusing to participate in combat training at Fort McClellan, Alabama, as a protest of treatment of their families in U.S. camps. Eventually, 106 are arrested for their refusal. Twenty-one are convicted and serve prison time before being paroled in 1946.

**May 10, 1944**
A Federal Grand Jury issues indictments abgainst 63 Heart Mountain draft resistors. The 63 are found guilty and sentenced to jail terms on June 26. They would be granted a pardon on December 24, 1947.

**May 24, 1944**
Shoichi James Okamoto is shot to death at Tule Lake by a guard after stopping a construction truck at the main gate for permission to pass. Private Bernard Goe, the guard, would be

acquitted after being fined a dollar for "unauthorized use of government property" --a bullet.

**June 30, 1944**
Jerome becomes the first camp to close when the last inmates are transferred to Rohwer.

**July 21, 1944**
Seven members of the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee are arrested, along with journalist James Omura. Their trial for "unlawful conspiracy to counsel, aid and abet violators of the draft" begins on October 23. All but Omura would eventually be found guilty.

**October 27-30, 1944**
The 442nd Regimental Combat Team rescues an American battalion which had been cut off and surrounded by the enemy. Eight hundred casualties are suffered by the 442nd to rescue 211 men. After this rescue, the 442nd is ordered to keep advancing in the forest; they would push ahead without relief or rest until November 9.

**December 18, 1944**
The Supreme Court decides that Fred Toyosaburo Korematsu was indeed guilty of remaining in a military area contrary to the exclusion order. This case challenged the constitutionality of the entire exclusion process.

**January 2, 1945**
Restrictions preventing resettlement on the West Coast are removed, although many exceptions continue to exist. A few carefully screened Japanese Americans had returned to the coast in late 1944.

**January 8, 1945**
The packing shed of the Doi family is burned and dynamited and shots are fired into their home. The family had been the first to return to California from Amache and the first to return to Placer County, having arrived three days earlier. Although several men are arrested and confess to the acts, all would be acquitted. Some 30 similar incidents would greet other Japanese Americans returning to the West Coast between January and June.

**May 7, 1945**
The surrender of Germany ends the war in Europe.

**August 6, 1945**
The atomic bomb is dropped on Hiroshima. Three days later, a second bomb is dropped on Nagasaki. The war in the Pacific would end on August 14.

**March 20, 1946**
Tule Lake closes, culminating "an incredible mass evacuation in reverse." In the month prior to the closing, some 5,000 internees had to be moved, many of whom were elderly, impoverished, or mentally ill and with no place to go.

**July 15, 1946**
The 442nd Regimental Combat Team is received on the White House lawn by President Truman. "You fought not only the enemy but you fought prejudice -- and you have won," remarks the president.

**June 30, 1947**
U.S. District Judge Louis E. Goodman orders that the petitioners in Wayne Collins' suit of December 13, 1945 be released; native-born American citizens could not be converted to enemy aliens and could not be imprisoned or sent to Japan on the basis of renunciation. Three hundred and two persons are finally released from Crystal City, Texas and Seabrook Farms, New Jersey on September 6, 1947.

**July 2, 1948**
President Truman signs the Japanese American Evacuation Claims Act, a measure to compensate Japanese Americans for certain economic losses attributable to their forced evacuation. Although some $28 million was to be paid out through provision of the act, it would be largely ineffective even on the limited scope in which it operated.

**July 10, 1970**
A resolution is announced by the Japanese American Citizen League's Northern California-Western Nevada District Council calling for reparations for the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans. This resolution would have the JACL seek a bill in Congress awarding individual compensation on a per diem basis, tax-free.

**November 28, 1979**
Representative Mike Lowry (D-WA) introduces the World War II Japanese-American Human Rights Violations Act (H.R. 5977) into Congress. This NCJAR-sponsored bill is largely based on research done by ex-members of the Seattle JACL chapter. It proposes direct payments of $15,000 per victim plus an addtional $15 per day interned. Given the choice between this bill and the JACL-supported study commission bill introduced two months earlier, Congress opts for the latter.

**July 14, 1981**
The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) holds a public hearing in Washington, D.C. as part of its investigation into the internment of Japanese Americans during Workd War II. Similar hearings would be held in many other cities throughout the rest of 1981. The emotional testimony by more than 750 Japanese American witnesses about their wartime experiences would prove cathartic for the community and a turning point in the redress movement.

**June 16, 1983**
The CWRIC issues its formal recommendations to Congress concerning redress for Japanese Americans interned during World War II. They include the call for individual payments of $20,000 to each of those who spent time in the concentration camps and are still alive.

**August 10, 1988**
H.R. 442 is signed into law by President Ronald Reagan. It provides for individual payments of $20,000 to each surviving internee and a $1.25 billion education fund among other provisions.

**October 9, 1990**
The first nine redress payments are made at a Washington, D.C. ceremony. One-hundred-seven-year-old Rev. Mamoru Eto of Los Angeles is the first to receive his check.

Father-son relationships are a crucial theme in the novel. Talk about some of these relationships and how they are shaped by culture and time. For example, how is the relationship between Henry and his father different from that between Henry and Marty? What accounts for the differences?

2. Why doesn't Henry's father want him to speak Cantonese at home? How does this square with his desire to send Henry back to China for school? Isn't he sending his son a mixed message?

3. If you were Henry, would you be able to forgive your father? Does Henry's father deserve forgiveness?

4. From the beginning of the novel, Henry wears the "I am Chinese" button given to him by his father. What is the significance of this button and its message, and how has Henry's understanding of that message changed by the end of the novel?

5. Why does Henry provide an inaccurate translation when he serves as the go-between in the business negotiations between his father and Mr. Preston? Is he wrong to betray his father's trust in this way?

6. The US has been called a nation of immigrants. In what ways do the families of Keiko and Henry illustrate different aspects of the American immigrant experience?

7. What is the bond between Henry and Sheldon, and how is it strengthened by jazz music?

8. If a novel could have a soundtrack, this one would be jazz. What is it about this indigenous form of American music that makes it an especially appropriate choice?

9. Henry's mother comes from a culture in which wives are subservient to their husbands. Given this background, do you think she could have done more to help Henry in his struggles against his father? Is her loyalty to her husband a betrayal of her son?

10. Compare Marty's relationship with Samantha to Henry's relationship with Keiko. What other examples can you find in the novel of love that is forbidden or that crosses boundaries of one kind or another?

11. What struggles did your own ancestors have as immigrants to America, and to what extent did they incorporate aspects of their cultural heritage into their new identities as Americans?

12. Does Henry give up on Keiko too easily? What else could he have done to find her?

13. What about Keiko? Why didn't she make more of an effort to see Henry once she was released from the camp?

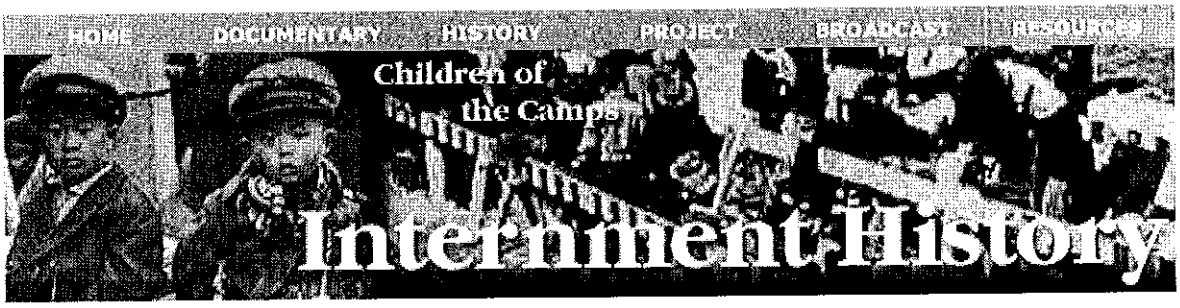
14. Do you think Ethel might have known what was happening with Henry's letters?

15. The novel ends with Henry and Keiko meeting again after more than forty years. Jump ahead a year and imagine what has happened to them in that time. Is there any evidence in the novel for this outcome?

16. What sacrifices do the characters in the novel make in pursuit of their dreams for themselves and for others? Do you think any characters sacrifice too much, or for the wrong reasons? Consider the sacrifices Mr. Okabe makes, for example, and those of Mr. Lee. Both fathers are acting for the sake of their children, yet the results are quite different. Why?

17. Was the US government right or wrong to "relocate" Japanese-Americans and other citizens and residents who had emigrated from countries the US was fighting in WWII? Was some kind of action necessary following Pearl Harbor? Could the government have done more to safeguard civil rights while protecting national security?

14. Should the men and women of Japanese ancestry rounded up by the US during the war have protested more actively against the loss of their property and liberty? Remember that most were eager to demonstrate their loyalty to the US. What would you have done in their place? What's to prevent something like this from ever happening again?




Historical Documents
The Camps
Timeline
Health Impact

**"Most of the 110,000 persons removed for reasons of 'national security' were school-age children, infants and young adults not yet of voting age."**
- **"Years of Infamy"**, Michi Weglyn

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which permitted the military to circumvent the constitutional safeguards of American citizens in the name of national defense.

The order set into motion the exclusion from certain areas, and the evacuation and mass incarceration of 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry living on the West Coast, most of whom were U.S. citizens or legal permanent resident aliens.

**"In the detention centers, families lived in substandard housing, had inadequate nutrition and health care, and had their livelihoods destroyed: many continued to suffer psychologically long after their release"**
- "Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians"

These Japanese Americans, half of whom were children, were incarcerated for up to 4 years, without due process of law or any factual basis, in bleak, remote camps surrounded by barbed wire and armed guards.

They were forced to evacuate their homes and leave their jobs; in some cases family members were separated and put into different camps. President Roosevelt himself called the 10 facilities "concentration camps."

Some Japanese Americans died in the camps due to inadequate medical care and the emotional stresses they encountered. Several were killed by military guards posted for allegedly resisting orders.

At the time, Executive Order 9066 was justified as a "military necessity" to protect against domestic espionage and sabotage. However, it was later documented that "our government had in its possession proof that not one Japanese American, citizen or not, had engaged in espionage, not one had committed any act of sabotage." (Michi Weglyn, 1976).

Rather, the causes for this unprecedented action in American

history, according to the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, "were motivated largely by racial prejudice, wartime hysteria, and a failure of political leadership."

Almost 50 years later, through the efforts of leaders and advocates of the Japanese American community, Congress passed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. Popularly known as the Japanese American Redress Bill, this act acknowledged that "a grave injustice was done" and mandated Congress to pay each victim of internment $20,000 in reparations.

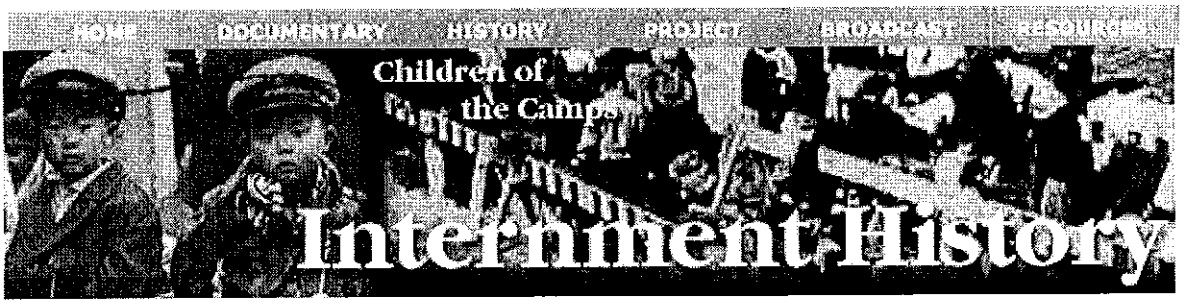
The reparations were sent with a signed apology from the President of the United States on behalf of the American people. The period for reparations ended in August of 1998.

Despite this redress, the mental and physical health impacts of the trauma of the internment experience continue to affect tens of thousands of Japanese Americans. Health studies have shown a 2 times greater incidence of heart disease and premature death among former internees, compared to noninterned Japanese Americans.

**See Timeline for more historical details.**

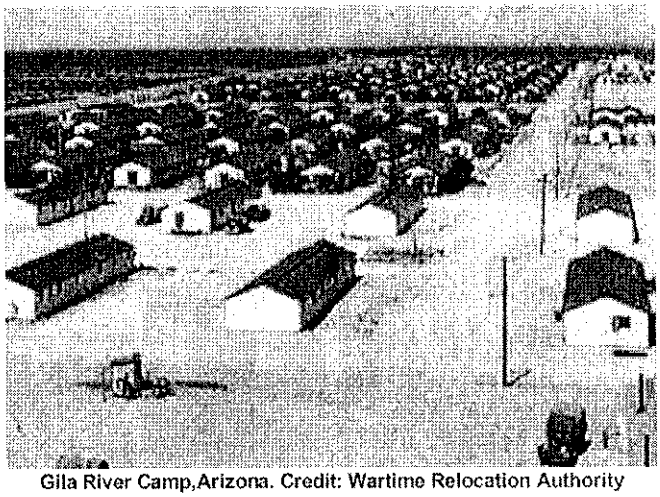
Home | Documentary | History | Project | Broadcast
Resources | Feedback | Site Credits | PBS Online Home

The Children of the Camps Project
kimina@children-of-the-camps.org
Tel: (916) 452-3008




Historical Documents
The Camps
Timeline
Health Impact

## The Camps



Gila River Camp,Arizona. Credit: Wartime Relocation Authority

**"At Gila, there were 7,700 people crowded into space designed for 5,000. They were housed in messhalls, recreation halls, and even latrines. As many as 25 persons lived in a space intended for four."**

- Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians.

**"In desert camps, the evacuees met severe extremes of temperature. In winter it reached 35 degrees below zero, and summer brought temperatures as high as 115 degrees.**

**More than 120,000 Americans of Japanese Ancestry were incarcerated in the following 10 camps scattered throughout Western states during World War II:**

**Amache (Granada), CO**
Opened: August 24, 1942.
Closed: October 15, 1945.
Peak population: 7,318.

**Gila River, AZ**
Opened July 20, 1942. Closed November 10, 1945.
Peak Population 13,348.

**Heart Mountain, WY**
Opened August 12, 1942.Closed November 10, 1945.
Peak population 10,767.

**Jerome, AR**

**Rattlesnakes and desert wildlife added danger to discomfort."**
- Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians.

**"When we first arrived at Minidonka, everyone was forced to use outhouses since the sewer system had not been built. For about a year, the residents had to brave the cold and the stench of these accomodations."**
- Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians.

Opened October 6, 1942.Closed June 30, 1944.
Peak population 8,497.

**Manzanar, CA**
Opened March 21, 1942.Closed November 21, 1945.
Peak population 10,046.

**Minidoka, ID**
Opened August 10, 1942. Closed October 28, 1945.
Peak population 9,397.

**Poston (Colorado River), AZ**
Opened May 8, 1942. Closed November 28, 1945.
Peak population 17,814.

**Rohwer, AR**
Opened September 18, 1942. Closed November 30, 1945.
Peak population 8,475.

**Topaz (Central Utah), UT**
Opened September 11, 1942. Closed October 31, 1945.
Peak population 8,130.

**Tule Lake, CA**
Opened May 27, 1942. Closed March 20, 1946.
Peak population 18,789.

For Web sites devoted to camps, see also these pages:

Internment Sites

Specific Camp Sites

Home | Documentary | History | Project | Broadcast
Resources | Feedback | Site Credits | PBS Online Home

The Children of the Camps Project
kimina@children-of-the-camps.org
Tel: (916) 452-3008