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**Witnessing *What We Could Carry*: A Critical Reflection on Performing  
Japanese American Collective Memory**

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**Witnessing *What We Could Carry*: A Critical Reflection on Performing  
Japanese American Collective Memory**

**by**

**Nikiko Rose Masumoto, B.A.**

**Thesis**

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my jiichan: Takashi Joe Masumoto.

## Acknowledgements

In just two short years this thesis developed from a ghost's whisper to a shared experience in performance and writing. I am grateful that this journey from dream to practice has been created collectively with the support of a community of friends, colleagues, mentors, strangers, and family. First and foremost, I am indebted to the people who made this work possible – specifically to the Japanese American individuals and collectives in my life. Without this community of survivors, storytellers, and activists, there would be no study of Japanese American redress and I might not be here to engage with it.

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## **Abstract**

### **Witnessing *What We Could Carry*: A Critical Reflection on Performing Japanese American Collective Memory**

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In the late 1970's Japanese Americans began organizing to demand redress from the United States government in both symbolic and material form; they asked for an apology and reparations. In 1981 a Congressional commission, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC), was formed to investigate Japanese American Internment and give recommendations to Congress for further actions. The Commission held public hearings in Los Angeles, California and 9 other cities across the United States. More than 150 individuals gave testimony at the Los Angeles hearings alone. Many were Japanese Americans who had never spoken publicly about their experiences.

On March 8, 2011, I performed a solo performance entitled *What We Could Carry* that wove together text and historical narratives from the archives of the Los Angeles redress hearings with auto-ethnographic interpretations of Japanese American memory. This written thesis is a reflection on the methods, theories, and implications of my performance. I locate my performance as scholarship within performance studies and



place my work in conversation with other scholars such as Joseph Roach. In Chapter One I argue that Roach's concept of surrogation can be extended to include embodied witnessing as a constitutive role in performing collective memory. In Chapter Two I document and analyze my research and creative processes as an embodied experience. Lastly, in Chapter Three I consider both successes and failures of my solo performance.

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## **Chapter One: Performing Japanese American Collective Memory: Methods, Theories, and Hopes**

On March 8, 2011, I presented a solo show, *What We Could Carry*, to an audience of mostly students, colleagues, and professors that I knew through various roles and relationships in the University of Texas' Theatre and Dance Department (though it was a public performance and open to anyone). The show itself was the principle manifestation of my thesis research (this written portion is its supplement) on the Japanese American movement for redress. The majority of the script was built from excerpts of archival transcripts<sup>1</sup> of a particular public hearing in Los Angeles, California. I conceived of the performance as a way to explore Japanese American history through memory and performance.

In the late 1970's Japanese Americans began organizing to demand redress from the United States government in both symbolic and material form; they asked for an apology and reparations. In 1981 a Congressional commission, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC from here on), was formed to investigate Japanese American Internment and give recommendations to Congress for further actions. The Commission held public hearings in Los Angeles, California and 9 other cities across the United States. More than 150 individuals gave testimony at the Los Angeles hearings alone. Many were Japanese Americans who had never spoken publicly about their experiences. My performance wove together text and historical narratives

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<sup>1</sup> The transcripts were accessed in the William Hohri Collection at the Japanese American National Museum.

from the archives of these hearings with auto-ethnographic interpretations of Japanese American memory. Before describing the performance and my methodologies more in-depth, I want to pose the major themes in my research in relationship to a post-performance exchange.

After the show ended most people stayed for about an hour to speak and listen to each other in a facilitated discussion about the performance piece itself. After a few guided prompts, the floor was opened to give audience members the chance to share feedback however they desired. One colleague shared an opinion; he said he appreciated my use of the term “concentration camp” to describe the camps where Japanese Americans were held during World War II. While the content of this comment could be analyzed through many important and interesting lenses, I am most interested in this comment for what it reveals about performance and collective memory.

My intrigue revolves around the pronoun relationship he chose; he complimented *my* use of the term. The term “concentration camp” appears in the script of *What We Could Carry* most often in text lifted and edited from the transcripts of the hearings (see Appendix A for script). The term within my performance, in one sense, comes from the text of *other* people’s memories; they are not my words. Yet, at the same time, I chose those particular excerpts from the transcripts (I remembered them), spoke and embodied them (I re-membered them), and I repeated them in my narrative framing of the testimony (I remembered them); therefore, is the term not also representative of my (performed) memories? This question of attribution is somewhat misleading because I do not think there is a singular answer. Instead, I believe the tensions of this inquiry and its

possible answers are tied to the many relationships between performance, collective memory, and me, as a culturally located and active subject.<sup>2</sup> In both the performance and this written thesis, I consider this overlapping area by interrogating how we perform collective memory while inviting multiple understandings of culturally located “we”.

In this written portion of my project, I offer my thoughts, reflections, and further questions as a(nother) way of participating in a long genealogy of artists, scholars, and everyday people who practice, investigate, and share collective memory and performance. I particularly place in conversation theorizations and methodological considerations of performance scholars Joseph Roach and Dwight Conquergood. For Roach, the border between memory and performance is “coterminous” as Diana Taylor describes his work (Taylor 5). Roach explains that “culture reproduces and re-creates itself” through performances of memory he calls “surrogation” (Roach 2). I bring Roach in conversation with Conquergood by also considering the position of audience as witness in the “co-activity” of performance (Conquergood, “Rethinking Ethnography” 188). I build upon this work to argue that collective memory functions through performance as a practice that is always co-performed<sup>3</sup> between surrogate<sup>4</sup> performer and multiple positions of witnesses (Roach 2; Conquergood, “Rethinking Ethnography” 188).

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<sup>2</sup> Looking at these three areas: the self, collective memory, and performance is not my original idea. I have been greatly influenced by many scholars, especially the work of Deborah Paredez, Diana Taylor, and Joseph Roach. Later I discuss these genealogies more in depth.

<sup>3</sup> One of Dwight Conquergood’s many contributions to performance studies is this articulation of ethnographic research as a performance activity that ethically out to be considered a “co-performance” since it involves interaction and exchange between more than one person; the researcher is not extracting or creating meaning alone (see Conquergood’s “Rethinking Ethnography”).

Performance is central as an object of study, methodology, product of investigation, and theoretical point of departure. My understanding of performance for this project is significantly built upon what Diana Taylor outlines in two overlapping conceptualizations of performance: “the object/process of analysis in performance studies” and “the methodological lens that enables scholars to analyze events *as* performance” (Taylor 3). In other words, performance is both the focus of my investigation and a way in which I do research.

In my project I attempt to put in motion both interpretations of performance in my exploration of Japanese American redress. Within the many manifestations and definitions of the Japanese American movement for redress, my scope is limited to one public hearing that took place in 1981. I consider this official Congressional hearing as a performance itself. That is, my analysis of it is guided by questions that we often ask of performances. Who is the audience? How did people take up space? Who spoke? How? What did they say? What did it feel like? What narratives were used? What identities and bodies were marked and how? Taylor’s understanding of performance as an embodied epistemology foregrounds my approach; I rely upon reading and interpreting the meanings of the embodied experience(s) of giving testimony at the public hearing.

Through performance analysis I search for and construct ideas not contained in the textual archives of the hearings alone. Without dismissing the significance of textual archives, I apply Taylor’s theorization of performance by centering my analysis of

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<sup>4</sup> In *Cities of the Dead*, Joseph Roach theorizes that performance and memory overlap through processes of “how culture reproduces and re-creates itself” through “surrogation” (Roach 2). I follow his focus and am concerned most with where and how performance and memory function together.

redress around the embodied experience of the hearings in order to access truths and knowledge erased, excluded, or inaccessible through text alone. As I read the transcripts of the public hearing, I understood them not as complete representations of the event, but as documentation that could signal embodied truths both in my reactions and in the embodied experience of the event. For example, there were several lines in the first testimony in which the testifier's sentences were interrupted by dashes on the page (CWRIC, "Transcripts" 16). The text here did not explain to me what happened, was the speaker nervous? Did he or she cough? Did something else happen? What followed were admonishments by the overseeing Vice Chairman of the hearing asking some unidentified person(s) to "have no public display here" (CWRIC, "L.A. Transcripts" 16). Rather than be satisfied with what the archive contained, I searched for other ways of understanding this moment.

The video archive gave me more information: I heard audible jeers during the dashes of the written transcripts. Yet, this information was still not where I wanted to stop. I studied my own embodied reactions as a repertoire of cultural memory and then re-created this moment of testimony through my performance by inviting the audience to also boo, jeer, and/or cheer (see Act Two of script in appendix). I used the archive as a springboard to identify and explore missing information through embodiment. Taylor helped remind me that archives are always incomplete, and that the embodied knowledge that often eludes them can provide equally valid epistemologies.

Furthermore, I take performance as a mode of doing scholarship – it is critical that this written document then be seen as supplemental and only one part of my thesis

project. My goal in both the performance and this paper is to reinforce Taylor's validation of specific types of epistemological possibilities enacted when performance is used both as a theoretical lens and methodological practice. I see my solo performance as a method of doing knowledge and performing collective memory.

In an attempt to highlight these various modes of performance, the structure of each chapter varies immensely. In this chapter I further explain the goals of my project and the academic conversations this work takes up. I particularly take up Joseph Roach's idea of surrogation and propose inclusion of witnessing in the "vital acts of transfer" of cultural memory performance (Taylor 2). I suggest that the CWRIC hearings of the Japanese American movement for redress were dialogic performances, co-constituted through multiple levels and proximities of witnesses as well as surrogate performance.

The following two chapters discuss different aspects of the performance. In Chapter Two I document and discuss parts of my process developing the performance *What We Could Carry* by weaving together methodological reflection and excerpts from the script itself. This chapter purposefully does not present a linear argument. Instead, like memory, I record, recall, analyze, and comment upon significant characteristics and moments that I have carried with me throughout my research and creative development process. Finally, in Chapter Three, I return to the opening anecdote of this chapter to reflect on the performance itself. I analyze several moments of the performance as they connect to my argument of extending Roach's concept of surrogation to meet Conquergood's idea of performance as dialogic and necessarily involving multiple people who co-perform cultural production.



With this structure I attempt to foreground another assertion of Conquergood's, that the performance is itself a stand-alone form of scholarship. I hope to continue the type of fearless work of many performance artists and scholars who honor embodied practices as equally valid and rich research processes. I seek to queer the trend observed by Dwight Conquergood in 2004 "of performance studies-allied scholars [who] create performances as a supplement to, not substitute for, their written research" (Conquergood, "Interventions" 318). Like Conquergood, I value the conversations and tensions between epistemologies and methodologies of text and performance. But instead of creating performance as a "supplement" to written research, this written thesis is a supplement to the theorizing and publicly shared experience of my performance. Without diminishing the importance of written scholarship, I attempt to position performance as my central way of doing scholarship. My writing about performance then is not a replacement for the performance, but rather another unique mode of generating meaning.

#### **SITUATING (MY)SELF IN RESEARCH**

Performance scholarship reminds us of the ways in which performance can be used to intervene in dominant power relationships between researcher and research subjects and publicly wrestle with ethical limitations and dilemmas. One of the influential performance studies scholars, Dwight Conquergood, advanced one mode critical scholarship he dubbed "dialogic performance." He described this type of performance scholarship as "a way of having intimate conversation with other people and cultures. Instead of speaking about them, one speaks to and with them" (Conquergood, "Moral

Act” 409). While my relationship with the people whose stories I am listening to and conversing with is not completely distinct from how I culturally locate myself, the ethical dimension of Conquergood’s model has influenced my process. As I created my solo show as a conscious attempt to perform surrogation, I was critically aware of my multiple positions within and alongside this project. Like Conquergood and D. Soyini Madison suggest in their writing about performance ethnography, I do not contend that performance is a magic ticket out of ethical concerns and power asymmetries. Rather, I use performance methodologies and theories such as dialogic performance as ways to critically interrogate and publicly name the complex relationships of how my identities do and do not map onto the stories I re-present.

While all of my identities and experiences shape how I conducted research and performed my findings, I paid particular attention to my identity as a Japanese American and feel my consciousness of it most useful to share here. As a Yonsei (a fourth generation Japanese American) my identities and family histories are implicated in the testimony and thus my reactions reflect an important intimacy and proximity, especially, for example, to the stories of suffering and embodied pain that I share with many of the Japanese American witnesses.

Yet as a researcher and Japanese American, I am also removed from the content and community of my study because of two major elements. First, as a Yonsei Japanese American I did not experience first-hand what many of the testimonies detail, and furthermore, I have learned about the redress hearings specifically only through my own study in higher education (rather than family memories). The archives taught me many

new things about the community to which I have always claimed belonging. Thus as a Japanese American, I am at once an ‘insider’ because of genealogy and trans-generational consciousness about Internment and ‘outsider’ because of generational and experiential distance.

Secondly, the process of research allows me to hold certain powers: I can choose what to include and exclude, my voice can ultimately circumscribe the voices of others. Instead of burying my reactions under the masquerade of ‘objective scholarship’ I embrace my multiple relationships with Japanese Americans and their testimony in both the process and “product” of this work (see Chapter Two for further discussion). Performance allowed multiple aspects of my identity to be publicly visible and let me play with using performance as a way to build connections and understanding between.

### **HISTORIOGRAPHY AND JAPANESE AMERICAN REDRESS**

My initial curiosity was to know more about the Japanese American movement for redress because it seemed to explicitly rely upon epistemologies of memory as means of advocating for symbolic and material reconciliation. As my yearnings to know more lead me to books and archival research holdings, I realized finding out what happened itself was a historiographical question that required critical analysis of how histories were produced about it and the implications of their conclusions. My approach to the topic through performance fills a gap that overlooks the embodied experiences of Japanese Americans in the historical narrative of redress.

Within academic scholarship, three key books offer different information about the history of the movement. These histories begin at various points in time, some tracing the roots of the movement to informal meetings between members of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) in the late 1970s (Maki et al.; Hatamiya), others begin with World War II and Japanese American Internment (Murray). Regardless of the stated points of origin, most of these histories (save one which I will discuss below) share the same ending: the success of redress is measured by the passage of the Civil Liberties Act and President Reagan's signing it into law on August 10, 1988. These major texts describe the movement as a mobilization of Japanese Americans in the late 1970's that lead to a Congressional Commission in the early 80s and then to the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. This law granted \$20,000 to each internee and an official apology from the United States (Maki et al. 1). The linear and forward movement of these narratives order the story of redress in a particular way, leading us to believe that redress was achieved in only the moment of Reagan's signature, whether or not that moment was the most significant moment for the Japanese American community, and/or whether or not we can consider redress as "done" in a singular moment, or *ever*. These narratives leave out the possibilities of considering what a performance history and what performing history might yield. My intervention opens an embodied space to explore redress as a historic and performative site of memory (and healing).

One political science text cites the movement as a "miracle" of minority political activism because of the political climate and relatively small population of Japanese Americans in the late 70s and 80s (Hatamiya 2). The miracle of redress stems from the

passage of legislation alone according to the political analysis of Leslie Hatamiya. In her book, the meaning of redress is most significant within analysis of political capital and the lobbying strategy of key Japanese American leaders. While this is useful, Hatamiya ignores the embodied or collective experience of redress by Japanese Americans. Thus the story of redress becomes limited to actions amongst leaders and politicians.

Another book offers a more complex understanding of redress. A team of three authors, Mitchell Maki, Harry Kitano, and Megan Berthold, make the case that *the* movement was not ‘a’ unified or singular one, but included fragmented groups and tensions between Japanese Americans. Their history intervenes in the impulse to narrow the redress movement to a monolithic thing. This textured analysis based in mixed methodology of policy analysis, media studies, and the insider community knowledge of some of the authors is useful for remembering the tensions and differences within social movements. Yet, their narrative falls into a linear temporal order: their evidence of difference and collectivity is circumscribed by forward movement of time. As is postulated in the title, the movement ends with “achieving the impossible dream”: again, the signing of the Civil Liberties Act by Ronald Reagan in 1988. Although this legal accomplishment certainly represents a significant political and historical milestone, I believe there is another story of success that is overshadowed in this chronologically progressive historical narrative.

Adrian Yang-Murray’s book *Historical Memories of the Japanese American Internment and the Struggle for Redress* represents the most critically self-aware historiographical text. Echoing Maki et al., Murray also acknowledges the multivocality

of the redress movement and thus multiple truthful accounts of the movement (2). Murray goes further by suggesting a post-structural understanding of redress history; the people (in this case Japanese Americans) individually and collectively constructed multiple histories of internment. By using a combination of archival research and oral history techniques, Murray examines and then builds a case for the concurrent production and circulation of competing historical narratives. She argues that these histories of Japanese American internment were produced both during World War II and were (re)mobilized during the struggle for redress in the 1980s. Murray asserts “I could not understand the redress movement without examining the development of these different histories of internment” (3). These histories, according to Murray, especially emerge from *what* Japanese Americans publicly said during the “redress hearings” in the 1980s. I take Murray’s critical historiographical approach a step further by using performance as means and analysis to argue that it is also important to think about *how* these historical narratives were (re)produced and (re)circulated.

I locate the ‘success’ of redress not in the codification of law as Hatamiya or Maki et al., but in the embodied performances of the “redress hearings,” specifically those held in Los Angeles in 1981. As its own report *Personal Justice Denied* explains, these hearings were officially known as hearings of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. Concentrating on the legal success of redress legislation overlooks the collective and embodied processes that unfolded in the redress hearings. The redress hearings created material and political spaces where Japanese Americans could speak individually, collectively, and publicly. These hearings created a

transformational space where Japanese Americans publicly asserted their memories of Internment as true, and where the Commissioners, representing the state as perpetrators, witnesses, and judges, were put on stage as well. Analyzing and claiming the importance of the hearings as public performances re-centers a history of redress within the testimonies and embodied experiences of Japanese Americans, rather than crediting Reagan's hand with the labor of achieving redress or only those Japanese American leaders of the movement. Fundamentally, my thesis uses performance as means of peeling away the illusion of legal finality in redress history. My historiographical goal is to offer an alternative history of redress through public performance and collective memory.

### **CHOOSING L.A.**

In this thesis, I explore the testimonies of the CWRIC hearing in Los Angeles, California. Over the course of two days of hearings on August 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, 1981, more than 150 people gave testimony. The vast majority of those that testified were Japanese Americans. I have chosen to focus on this hearing for a combination of practical and critical decisions. Within the time span of my two-year graduate program, thoroughly studying all of the CWRIC hearings was not possible. The scale of the material produced is daunting. During the total of twenty days of hearings more than 750 people gave testimony (CWRIC, *Personal Justice Denied* xvii). The L.A. hearings alone were equivalent to over 600 pages of transcripts. Knowing that one of my principle goals was

to produce a solo show that was approximately an hour long, working with the L.A. hearings was logistically a sufficient challenge.

Not only was it necessary then to limit the scope of my research for this project, but also particular qualities of the L.A. hearings made it a rich choice for performance analysis and political engagement. This hearing stood out from the others in several ways. As the Vice Chairman Dan Lungren pointed out in the first few minutes, it was the “first in a series of field hearings” (CWRIC, “L.A. Transcripts” 4). In this moment Lungren points to L.A. as the beginning of the hearings outside of Washington D.C. This can be interpreted several ways; first, L.A. symbolically represents the first space in which the CWRIC commissioners travel to meet the witnesses. The population of Japanese Americans in 1981 was most concentrated on the West Coast (Johnson et al. 14). On one level then, demographically the L.A. hearings took place on Japanese American turf.

Furthermore, Japanese Americans exerted influence on the proceedings by shaping the content and literal spaces in which it took place. Grassroots activists, mostly attached to the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations, helped mold the CWRIC hearing in L.A. in several ways. They helped to make Japanese American voices central by recruiting, rehearsing, and submitting requests for individual Japanese Americans to give testimony (Murray 287). The result was a very different balance of voices in contrast to the D.C. hearings where a smaller percentage of Japanese Americans spoke on their own behalf (CWRIC, “D.C. Transcripts” 2). Instead in L.A., Japanese American voices dominated the hearing. The activists in L.A. also organized one evening hearing in Little



Tokyo; that night testimonies were given from within one of the central cultural and commercial hubs for the Japanese American community of Los Angeles. Thus in many ways, Japanese Americans claimed the space of the L.A. hearings as theirs. While my scope was limited to the L.A. hearings, my process of investigation is purposefully mixed.

### **POINTS OF DEPARTURE: CONVERSATIONS IN PERFORMANCE STUDIES ON MEMORY**

This project is indebted to a genealogy of scholars and practitioners in Performance Studies. There are numerous seminal texts that chart connections between performance and memory (e.g. Schechner, Roach, and Taylor). For example, Diana Taylor explicitly names memory as a function of performance. Taylor writes, “Performances function as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity through reiterated, or what Richard Schechner has called ‘twice-behaved behavior’” (Taylor 2-3). As Taylor defines it, performance is not equivalent to memory, but they are symbiotically entangled. Performance is a way memory is enacted. Taylor’s conception of this relationship provides an entrance to a theoretical understanding of my question: how do we collectively remember? Taylor suggests one way is through performance.

For Taylor, memory can be stored and transmitted through archives and repertoires. She notes that these two conceptions of memory are not equal. Taylor observes that writing, as representative of system of archives (tangible repositories of information such as diaries, videos, etc.), “has paradoxically come to stand in for and

against embodiment” (Taylor 16). Taylor points to colonialism in Latin America as a particular example of the subordination of the repertoire (forms of embodied memory such as movement, singing, etc.) to the archive (Taylor 18). Though she carefully recognizes the fiction of this binary and points to ways the two forms of memory often work together, Taylor stakes her epistemological investment in performance asserting that “instead of privileging texts and narratives, we could also look to scenarios as meaning-making paradigms that structure social environments, behaviors, and potential outcomes” (Taylor 28). I see her positioning and development of the idea of the scenario as an attempt to deconstruct the dominance of archival ways of knowing by swaying our attention and placing more energy in studying performances of memory via the body and repertoire.

My project is an enactment of Taylor’s epistemological position; I place pressure on the dominant status of the archive and attempt to undermine its binary opposition with repertoire by building my performance from both the archive and repertoire. For example, the script of my performance is based mainly on text from the transcripts of CWRIC hearings, but the script itself is also not representative of the larger enactment of memory. My performance deploys embodied epistemologies as ways of sharing the text. I thus mark performance as my central medium of scholarship. In one sense, this project privileges performance while still drawing from archives. (I expand this discussion of my methodology later in Chapter Two.) My performance plays between archival and embodied memory in a way that I ultimately hope draws attention to the particular benefits of creating scholarship through performance.

Joseph Roach's conception of surrogation in *Cities of the Dead* is another important theorization of performance and memory that frames my project. I consider my thesis project as a conscious attempt to perform surrogacy. Roach argues that cultural reproduction, or how we collectively remember shared histories and cultural knowledge, depends on a process of substitution or surrogation (he uses these words interchangeably). "Surrogation rarely ever succeeds" to the extent that collective memory is not transmitted seamlessly nor identically (Roach 2). In other words, surrogation as performance of collective memory is dependent upon repetition with inevitable difference. I am compelled by Roach's configuration of surrogation as a performance method of enacting collective memory in the way that it attends to the convergence of repetition, restoration, mutation, and implies agency. While Roach focuses on surrogate performers throughout the majority of his book, such as the Mardi Gras Indians in New Orleans parades, his analysis implies that surrogation is bound up in more than just the costumed or marked performers themselves. My research and performance have led me to believe that Roach's conception of surrogation can be productively extended to take witnessing into account.

Roach's understanding of performance and collective memory through surrogation can be further theorized by his own methodology. His work suggests that performance can be accessed and researched through both live embodied methods (i.e. his walking) and textual archive (i.e. the London publications about actors' deaths). His objects and subjects of analysis survey a wide range of sources: he reads texts, newspapers, plays, paintings, and sculptures to name a few, in conversation with both

documented practices such as funeral processions and his own observations from live embodied experiences of walking the streets of New Orleans (Roach). I focus on his walking methodology as it further complicates surrogation as a public process.

Though Roach does not explicitly discuss witnesses as vital co-performers in surrogation, I see particularly his walking methodology as an implicit reference to the constitutive force of public witnessing in surrogation.<sup>5</sup> Roach focuses his attention on the performers observing that during Mardi Gras the krewes “take over the streets” through their movements and bodies and in so doing call attention to “the occult origin of their exclusions” (Roach 14). Reinforcing his methodological choice, he follows these descriptions with the claim that “walking in the city makes this visible” (Roach 14). In this statement Roach implies that the embodied public, not an imagined or abstract configuration, but the actual people in the streets, such as himself, serve an important role as epistemological witnesses. Embodied witnessing allows non-surrogate performers like Roach to be hailed by the dancing Mardi Gras Indians in the streets as witnesses to the resistant histories their performances make visible and enact.

In the case of Japanese American redress, I read the performance of testimony as acts of surrogation that mark a similar constitutive relationship enmeshed with multiple kinds of embodied witnessing. Elements of surrogation emerge in the performance of the testimony; while differences abound, overall there are strong patterns between the

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<sup>5</sup> At the end of his book, Roach quickly touches upon the particular relationship between surrogate performers and audiences. He quotes from the work of Kobena Mercer who observes that “Carnival” in Europe “breaks down barriers between active performer and passive audience” (quoted in Roach 285). My extension of this discussion is meant to underscore the importance of this discussion which is underneath the surface of much of Roach’s revelatory work.

testimonies. Most of the testifiers present their stories based on their memories and/or the memories they have learned and shared with people in the Japanese American community. A clear example of the connection between surrogation and Japanese American testimony are testimony like Mike Murase. Mr. Murase was not interned himself, but he shares the stories of Japanese Americans who cannot perform their own memory (CWRIC, “L.A. Transcripts” 194); in other words, he stands in for them, though he clearly cannot fully speak for them. Surrogation is clearly performed as Japanese Americans share memories that are beyond their personal experiences.

In addition to explicitly performing substitution, Japanese American testimony also relies upon the repertoire as a source of memory. One of the first testifiers at the L.A. hearings, Mas Fukai, declares the importance of affective and embodied epistemology. He asserts

I am here to speak for myself. I feel that I was there and I have not learned, as others have testified, from a book or from colleges, for what they say really doesn't come from the heart, and I hope I can do that. [...] It's not an easy task for me to come here and sit here and speak to all of you. [...] I believe that the time is now, and the place is here to express to you and to the world our feelings (CWRIC, “L.A. Transcripts” 50 – 51).

In this declaration, Mr. Fukai positions his expertise as one based in feeling. His knowledge is valuable because it was not derived from the archive (a book) or official institution (colleges), but from the repertoire of his experience: he “was there”. This epistemological positioning aligns itself with Taylor’s conception of repertoire and Roach’s observation of performance as a key method of enacting collective memory.

Mas Fukai goes on to articulate what Roach's methodology implies about the co-constitution of collective memory between surrogate performers and witnesses. In the question and answer period following his testimony, Mas Fukai breaks the bifurcated structure of speakers (the testifiers) and listeners (the Commissioners as stand-ins for Congress) by posing a critical question for the Commission members. He rhetorically asks why the full committee of nine commissioners is not present at the hearing (CWRIC, "L.A. Transcripts" 63). After the Vice Chairman responds diplomatically, Mr. Fukai explains his grievance. He complains saying

What bothers me on that, Mr. Congressman, is that you're not going to be able to see the emotion; you're not going to be able to see their eyes; you're not going to be able to see their hands; you're not going to be able to see their faces (CWRIC, "L.A. Transcripts" 64)[.]

Though Mr. Fukai uses the word "see" to explain what the absent Commissioners will not be able to do, his first phrase suggests that he is not only concerned with visual reception. Rather, I read Mr. Fukai's admonishment as recognition of the importance of embodied witnessing. Seeing emotion is akin to bearing witness or experiencing the affective performance of testimony. Furthermore, the rhythmic listing of the body parts eyes, hands, and faces suggests to me that Mr. Fukai is concerned not with the sight of still bodies, but bodies in motion. In this statement Mr. Fukai criticizes the absent Commissioners because they cannot embody their role as witnesses.

Though not all testifiers explicitly call for embodied witnessing as Mr. Fukai did, his comments exemplify how surrogation functions publicly. Surrogation as an embodied epistemology emerges through the movements, bodies, and feelings of both surrogate

performer and spectator. Roach concludes that surrogation is characterized by its open-endedness (285). It restores through repetition and invention; surrogate performers enact collective memory and thus perpetuate it through mutation (Roach 286). My examination of Japanese American testimony as surrogation reveals to me the ways that it hails audience members, whether they were at the hearings or myself as researcher, as witnesses. Performances of collective memory ask us to engage our whole beings in performances of surrogation. The witness, as always a potential surrogate, constitutes part of the transformative power of collective memory.

In this project I attempt to highlight both of my roles in this research project as a witness to collective memory performed outside my embodied experience (I was not alive to witness the redress hearings nor World War II) and as a surrogate performer using the testimony and autoethnographic reflections to (re)enact Japanese American collective memory and hail new people as witnesses. I hope to honor and share the inheritance of collective memory I have received from both the Japanese American community at large and my family.

## Chapter Two: Research as Performance

Initially, I thought that a written form of my thesis would be the focal destination of my thinking and labor, but my experience of the archives intervened. As I spent more time with research material – specifically as I touched the pages of the archives and their stories reverberated in my body – I became acutely aware of the memories I already carried with me. For example, I have read one testimony by Alice Nehira many times, and every time my eyes scanned her words telling about how her mother was forcibly sterilized after giving birth to her in camp, my body reacts (CWRIC, “L.A. Transcripts” 205). My thoughts follow my embodied reactions; I feel this story to I understand it. My mouth clenches. My eyes swell with tears. The back of my throat tightens; it is literally hard to swallow. This one incident was not just an ethical breach; understood through my body, it reminds me of histories of eugenics and their target: people like my baachan (grandma), aunts, friends, neighbors and *me*. I am implicated through my body, through my family lineage, as both a witness and survivor. My identity and existence as a Japanese American are activated through embodied reactions like this that link my life with the testimonies I read. As a result of multiple experiences like this, I found myself shifting course and changing priorities; the power of the archives was not contained in pages and therefore I needed to do something similar: I developed a live performance.

Feminist theatre scholar Stacy Wolf theorizes a similar experience as she conducted historical research about Mary Martin. She confesses, “I did not expect this process would so thoroughly entrance me. I did not expect my desires to shift so



strikingly to the ‘personal’” (Wolf 84). Wolf re-theorizes the process of historical research as one that is always laden with and responsive to a researcher’s yearnings. For Wolf, research itself is a performance inextricable from desire. She concludes, “My desire encouraged and necessitated active, transgressive readings, which always happen in historical work but which are denied, masked, or naturalized” (Wolf 93). While my reactions to archival research did not constitute a relationship of desire the way Wolf discusses, like her I found that my affective reactions to reading testimony signaled patterns of how I performed research as an emotional act. Rather than mask this, I changed course and listened to my body and memories. I – as Nikiko, as a Yonsei, as an embodied researcher – chose to continue performing my research by building a solo performance based on autoethnographic interpretations of Japanese American collective memory. Unscheduled and unplanned, what began as a journey towards text transformed into a path of embodied processes to create a public performance.

In this chapter I tell stories from the development of the performance *What We Could Carry* in order to document significant parts of the process. While I share major lines of thinking and methodological influences in my approach, I weave in text from my script throughout (noted by the italicized sentences; the full script is in the Appendix). I did this in order to highlight what is missing from both text and the live performance. Like the script as text unable to completely capture live performance, neither my particular live performance nor the script fully articulate the methodological, ethical, and artistic thought and decision-making behind them. By weaving together the script and further explanation here, I highlight the generative chaos of creating work. It’s as if the

script can dramaturgically intervene in this academically framed chapter to remind us that a crucial piece of scholarship, the performance, has already happened. And simultaneously, my further explorations and descriptions of process can also document the effort, research, and critical thought behind the script and performance. The underlying purpose for this chapter and its structure is to highlight the circular, overlapping, and non-linear process through which I worked to create a performance piece about collective memory.

#### **ACT ONE: INTRODUCTIONS / THE ARCHIVE AND ME**

*I remember the first time I met these transcripts, it was in the Japanese American National Museum, in Los Angeles. They were waiting for me in the beautiful research room inside the Hirasaki National Resource Center. It's one of those rooms that has pocket lighting that you can dim, two of the walls are glass –impeccably cleaned and beautiful. The kind of place that makes you feel important. The place I started my archival research was familiar to me. I had visited the museum a handful of times for various events, some of which I participated in, my family had a “family membership” to the Museum, and the space literally housed some of our family’s belongings as well as used some quotes from my father’s writing in their permanent exhibition on Japanese American Internment. The place of the museum had a home feeling for me.*

These familial and community connections bound up specifically in the space of the Japanese American National Museum point out the particular ways I entered my research in connection with various identities, positions, and institutional structures. As

Antoinette Burton reminds us in *Archive Stories*, “archival work is an embodied experience” and that “the material spaces of archives exert tremendous and largely unspoken influences on their users, producing knowledges and insights which in turn impact the narratives they craft and the histories they write” (9 – 10). In alignment with Burton, I begin my performance describing the place of contact between the CWRIC transcripts and me as my primary archival source in order to call attention precisely to the embodied experience of archival work and my particular position. Juxtaposed with my comfort in the museum, it is easy to see how my initial reading experience was jostling.

*Before I had arrived, the reference librarian reserved and set up the space for me to work. When I walked in I found an entire archival research station ready for me: there was a plastic pad to protect the paper from the table, a yellow college-ruled notebook with freshly sharpened pencils, a magnifying glass, and white gloves. 2 pairs of white gloves! I marveled at my supplies, and giddily sat down.*

*But my sense of wonder and self-aggrandizing quickly faded.*

After reading through the table of contents in the CWRIC transcripts and the opening formalities, I arrived at the text of my first testifier. The first witness at the Los Angeles CWRIC hearing was the then Senator from California, Samuel I. Hayakawa. I started to read his testimony, taking some content notes on a separate pad of legal paper – I remember moving along at a moderate speed, but then I began to slow down as I got confused. He claims that the internment of Japanese Americans was justified because the forced evacuation and confinement of Japanese Americans actually protected them (CWRIC 11). Then he goes on to say that most Japanese Americans “welcomed

relocation as a guarantee of their personal safety” (CWRIC 12). At first, I was confused, and re-read his statement. Then my body changed – my muscles tensed up underneath my shoulder bones, my jaw tightened. I leaned closer to the page, as if getting closer would reveal something different. I scribbled in the margins, “What is going on here?” (my copy, CWRIC, “L.A. Transcripts” 17). The transcripts captured his words defining internment as a “three year vacation” for older Japanese Americans. I was angry.

*You all have my permission to react – and if that includes booing, cheering, jeering, or squirming, you are welcome to, these hearings couldn’t happen without an audience.*

This was a moment of intense contact across history through textual archive. The fire immediately breathed into my body upon reading his words revealed to me a depth of connection and the uncontrollable slippage of my status as an outsider and insider – I was removed from the archives and its contents to the extent that I was not alive for either Internment nor the hearings and my encounter with them was by conscious choice, yet my proximity to the subject matter through my own family memory and racial/cultural identification simultaneously made me inside – I felt that this stranger was telling lies about me and my family; and he said them to a Congressional Commission representing the government. This was both personal and public. In another discipline or field, my reactions to the text may have been bracketed off and dismissed as personal, subjective or insignificant. Yet, luckily, performance studies offers many models and theories that view my experience in the archives as a fruitful one, a point of contact between document and body, external source and living memory.

In her book *Lines of Activity*, Shannon Jackson opens with a similar archival story. She details the pains and discomforts of sitting in front of a microfiche machine in order to introduce one of her historiographical precepts in her creation of a performance history. Jackson brings the body into historical research when she comments, “Callused fingers, numb limbs, and swollen feet are all quite literal reminders of the bodily basis of research” (3). For Jackson, historical research, especially informed by performance scholarship, sharpens our consciousness of how history performs on us: working in the archives is not only a process of extraction, the archives also demand embodied behaviors. While Jackson calls our attention to how the body is a mediating force in history, even when we have archival material; our bodies inform the practice through which we conduct research. This inevitably tailors and influences what we “find” and then create in history. This anecdote for Jackson underscores a central historiographical lens that looks at history less as a positivist narrativization of truth, but a remembering of something. My archival experience mirrors Jackson’s historiography, yet I want to extend Jackson’s theorization of the relation of body and memory a bit further.

Not only did my archival encounter also underscore archival research as embodied, but it also revealed to me a *specific* context of memory in which I was already embedded. While Jackson’s body called her attention to historiography as a process of memory in general, my body calls my attention to what I already claim to know about Japanese Americans as a community and about myself as Japanese American. Rather than dismiss this experience as one tainted by subjectivity, I chose to follow this relationship. This project seeks to explore relations between the archive, the voices and

stories of the people who testified, and me, as a Yonsei (fourth generation) Japanese American. In other words, the research is self-consciously fashioned through the cultural memory I carry about Japanese American history.

*You know, I don't remember the first time I learned about camp. There is no origin to my knowledge of it - I didn't have an ah-hah moment in a history class or reading a book. I just always knew.*

In one sense, I am attempting to activate living archives through embodied performance based in my own autoethnographic memories and the textual archive. By crossing boundaries between knowledge production in cultural memory as embodied and the textual archives that exist, I play with the boundaries and porousness of memory. I'm creating a living archive, a surrogate practice of collective memory somewhere between I and we, now and then of the redress hearings and then of Internment.

I approached these relationships as opportunities to not only explore the specifics of my relationship with the material and people's lives who it documented, but also more generally the space between archive and repertoire, documented and living cultural memory, individual and collective testimony. The specific reactions the archive triggered were not simply disagreements or surprises from learning new things. I experienced them as visceral challenges to my core beliefs and understandings of who I was as a Japanese American. It was this space of collision with the archive that I wanted to bring to light in my thesis work where "I" became a significant site of analysis and the archive became a site of animation – the contents of the archive animated me, and called my attention to embodied knowledge I already carried.

## **ACT TWO: MULTIPLICITY / METHOD PLAY: BETWEEN ARCHIVE AND REPERTOIRE**

The archival beginnings of my project highlight the inseparability of performance and embodied experience from the archive. I had connections with the archive as a place that framed my experience and my own cultural memories and identities were implicated in the archive I read. In other words, borrowing from Diana Taylor's conceptions of knowledge repositories and transmission, this project is built upon the centrality of play between archive and repertoire. As I developed my research into a solo performance, I searched for and borrowed from two particular fields: performance ethnography and oral history. Yet, my methodology is not quite any of these practices alone.

I have found theories and practices of oral history performance useful because my project shares similar qualities to that of oral histories. The transcripts have an oral history quality to them; they capture the jolts pauses, repetition, and colloquialisms of verbal speech. The Commissioners ask questions of the testifiers, and occasionally the opposite transpires. I also used video archives of the hearings as archival sources to understand and listen to the testifiers. The videos captured many mannerisms and the vocal quality of each testifier, as well as a sense of the general atmosphere. Much like oral history, the stories were in one sense centrally focused on the speaker, as one testifier plainly put it, "I am here to speak for myself", but yet also co-produced through the public witnessing of the Commission (CWRIC, "L.A. Transcripts" 50). Like oral histories, the testimony emerged in the live space between a primary speaker and listener(s), both of whose roles and powers are fluid and shifting.

*You will hear today hurt, hate, fear, love and probably even tears in the testimony. But most important, they will speak the truth[.]*

There are two obvious and significant differences between the method of oral history and what I engaged with. First, and probably most obvious, my position and relationship with each testifier is completely mediated by the archive. I did not interview the testifiers personally, nor had any role in producing or editing the transcripts. One of the other major differences between oral history and my form of research is the public-ness of the hearings. Though not a pre-requisite, most oral histories are produced in intimate settings and often exchanged between two people or a small group in a private place. In the case of the redress hearings, there were hundreds in attendance and a hyper-awareness of the public-ness of the testimony. These are both important distinctions to make; however, I do not believe they foreclose the utility of Della Pollock's theorization of oral history performance.

By performing the testimonies I read, I placed myself in a public act of embodied remembering. In her work on performing oral history, Della Pollock has theorized the desire to 're-perform' oral histories as "an expression of devoted reception. It is one attempt to fulfill the promise – the sense of contractual responsibility and enormous possibility- of historical talk" (4). Pollock argues that performance is "a form of witnessing" that calls attention to the mutual constitution of people in history (4). Guided by the wisdom of the testimony itself, I strove to do something similar in my performance – to call attention to witnessing by performing. Performing allowed me to experiment with multiple layers of the co-production of memory and knowledge between me, the



testifiers whose words I re-presented, and a collective Japanese American community constructed through both.

*My name is Mike Murase, and I'm the president of Little Tokyo People's Rights Organization of Los Angeles. Commissioners, although I did not go through the camp experience personally, my ten years of association with various social services, legal counseling and community anti-crime programs have led me to concur that virtually every Japanese in American society was deeply and irreparably affected by the concentration camp experience.*

*I believe that for every person who comes before you to testify there are hundreds of others whose stories will never be told publicly. Of course, after some 40 years many of the Issei are gone and others are too frail to come before you now. There are others who, to this very day, find it too painful to speak of the four years of suffering and the 40 years of trying to forget, yet still remembering.*

*There is a woman who finds it too difficult to recall the expression on her husband's face as he was being dragged away by the FBI – the face she saw for the very last time before he died a year later while they were still separated in two distant locations.*

*There is a man who can only speak in bitter and angry tones because his education was interrupted in the prime of life, and his family's business was destroyed.*

*There is another woman who suffers from high blood pressure, nervousness and other illnesses which were caused by those stressful years in camp, and for which she alone bears the burden of never-ending high cost of medical care.*

*There is still another woman whose lips cannot form the words to describe the fear and the sense of shame she felt when she was physically attacked and sexually abused by soldiers escorting her on the train taking them to camp.*

*There is a man who cannot overcome his feelings of futility and a total loss of faith after he was forced to sell his farm and all his belongings for a fraction of their actual value. He is a broken and defeated man, a severely depressed alcoholic with no sense of self-worth.*

*I have heard that in the post-war resettlement years tremendous pressures were applied by camp authorities as people were released to prove loyalty and to develop American habits. The clear message was: don't be clannish and don't be so Japanese.*

*In the late '50's when I was about twelve years old, I had a friend who used to throw away the rice balls his mother packed in his sack and skip lunch while his friends ate sandwiches. Another friend implored his father to let him off a couple of blocks away from school every morning because he was too ashamed to be seen being dropped off from a gardener's truck.*

*Japanese Americans lost land and property, freedom and privacy, educational and job opportunities, dignity and pride. For all this, there is no price tag. [But] there are more stories.*

Mike Murase's testimony exemplifies the play of witnessing that performing allowed me to enact. On its own, the testimony of Mr. Murase constructs a type of historical witnessing; he does not let us forget those individuals who could not and/or would not be able to speak publicly at the hearings either because of death or inability

due to trauma. Yet, he does not speak for them per se. By not naming the absent people, Mr. Murase in one sense continues to silence them; however, I consider his performance of silence productive and not oppressive. The anonymity of the people in contrast with the detailed description he shares about the effects of camp for them is a performance of proximity, not authenticity. He performs a role as a failed substitute: he cannot stand in for the silenced and absent, but he can recognize and describe those who are absent by constructing an intimate relationship with them. As an audience member, though both the stories of the people are unverifiable since they are anonymous and I cannot be certain of his relationship to these conjured people, the intimacy that he performs constructs a form of truth through witnessing. His testimony both highlights the specificity of Japanese American experiences and exemplifies the importance of collectivity; he must at least bear witness to those who cannot tell their stories. He remembers more than just his own experience, by listening and bearing witness to those who are absent and silent, he powerfully reconstructs a sense of collective memory grounded in specific affective experience and shared suffering.

In turn, my performance of his testimony adds another layer of witnessing. I am removed in time and space from his testimony and from the specificity of the absent people whose experiences he details. I was not alive when Mr. Murase gave this testimony and I have no firsthand story of Internment. I do not pretend to be him – although I have the video of his performance, I am not trying to convince the audience that my vocal choices, posture, and costume accurately represent him. I am a failed substitute. Instead, through his testimony, I (re)create his testimony so that I, too, can

bear witness to that which I do not know first-hand and that which I carry as part of the collective. I am not Mike Murase, but I perform his words in order that I could acknowledge the silences and absences in my performance of collective memory. Furthermore, my (re)performance of this testimony asks another audience to also bear witness to silence in collective memory.

### **ACT THREE: FRIENDS AND ALLIES**

While continuing to learn from, react to, and record my experience of the archives, I searched for multiple models and theories of methodology for my project. In addition to the helpfulness of oral history, I found performance ethnography to similarly provide useful paradigms for thinking about my work, but it was also not an exact methodological fit. One of the influential performance ethnographers, Dwight Conquergood, advanced a model of critical scholarship he called “dialogic performance” (Conquergood, “Moral Act” 407). D. Soyini Madison observes his contributions to performance ethnography: “For Conquergood (1982), dialogic performance is an ethical imperative. It is through dialogue that we resist the arrogant perception that perpetuates monologic encounters, interpretations, and judgements” (Madison 167). Building from work such as Conquergood’s, performance ethnography motivated me to push beyond recognition of sameness or difference between the people whose stories I wanted to tell and myself; I shared the ethical imperative to critically interrogate and perform the tensions between them. I looked for models of performance ethnography that might serve as guides to help transfer this philosophy into motion.

Inspired by Anna Deavere Smith's *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, I wanted to use performance to place different voices in conversation with each other in ways that the official Congressional Commission did not allow for. Couched in the format of legal testimony, the CWRIC hearings did not allow much space for dialogue. Each person was given an allotted amount of time to testify (supposedly between five and eight minutes though many of the testimonies ran longer) and they began with a declaration of their name for the record. Commissioners asked questions of clarification and occasionally challenged and supported some of the ideas of the testifiers, but rarely did testifiers ask questions. Furthermore, the hearings were linearly formatted; no one was allowed to speak twice. From within this individually centered framing, testifiers shared stories that overlapped and sometimes conflicted, they occasionally responded to previous statements and each other.

I wanted to illuminate these moments of shared experience and distinction, so I turned to Anna Deavere Smith and E. Patrick Johnson as models whose performances of other people's narratives achieved similar depth and range. I had appreciated the way both Smith and Johnson used solo performance to acknowledge discordance and simultaneously speak to collectivity through one body on stage. But, as I researched, I found little writing about how they actually chose, edited, and re-arranged the interviews they conducted into a performance script. As a result, I invented my own criteria for scaling the testimony down to a manageable solo performance piece.

## **CHOOSING TESTIMONY**

Selecting from over 600 pages of testimony, 23 hours of video, and 152 testifiers in order to create a one hour solo show was a challenge. I struggled with ethical, theoretical, and emotional consequences of deciding who to include and exclude and how to share their narratives. Nonetheless, the necessity of selecting only some helped me clarify what my particular performance was about. The multiplicity of voices and testimonies provided ample material to mold and shape into a performance that mirrored my curiosities with collective memory and Japanese American history. In order to try to construct a script that would speak to collective memory, my relationship with the archives, and the process of research and memory as performance, I came up with three main criteria that mirrored these goals by which to select what would be included.

I looked for (1) testimony that stirred an affective response from me (since after all research is always intertwined with the researcher's desire, I named this outright), (2) testifiers who explicitly referenced memory practices, and lastly (3) I searched for testimony that represented a wide range of views (both in content, form, and subject position). Much like the actual testimony themselves, I was confronted and had to accept the reality that representation of stories is never complete. Nonetheless, I hope that the fragments and edited pieces that I chose stir questions and produce experiences that reach far beyond the limitations of time and material.

The specific thematic and content patterns I saw in the L.A. CWRIC testimonies as a whole also helped guide my selection process, both in terms of what I wanted to include and what I did not. There were three large patterns I saw in the testimony. First,

there was a common thread in the content of most testimony; the overwhelming majority of the testifiers spoke in favor of some type of redress. Within this larger advocacy for redress, however, many individuals explained differing opinions about what redress should be and how it should be administered.<sup>6</sup> These dynamics are subtly reflected in the testimony of my script: most of the excerpts seem to be in favor of redress, while one disagrees (Sam Hayakawa) and another person explicitly questions the process through which redress is being pursued (Mo Nishida). Yet the particular debates and political landscape of the Japanese American community are not salient features of the testimony I chose because I was less interested in performing a version of redress through an analysis of internal political economies than I was interested in the second and third features I identified in the majority of the testimony.

Two aspects of the entire body of testimony in both content and form struck me as significant. Nearly every testimony that detailed experiences of Japanese Americans in concentration camps made reference to racism (either manifested in interpersonal and/or structural relationships) beyond the time and space of the camps. In other words, the testifiers traced lineages of racism that started far before World War II and continued long after. These stories, I believe, are examples of the genealogical function of collective memory of histories of racism. While the parameters of the CWRIC were specifically focused on World War II, Japanese Americans defied those limits by connecting racism

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<sup>6</sup> This reflects what historian Alice Yang Murray writes about in her chapter on redress as “Three Strands Woven into a Single Fabric” (Murray 287). Murray analyzes three major national organizations that disagreed about how to go about campaigning for redress and what redress should be while still working together to advocate for their shared vision of some type of reconciliation.

pre- and post-World War II with the camp experience. My script includes many of the strongest examples of this dynamic.

The form of many of the testimony also struck me: many of the testifiers explained with excruciating detail memories and experiences of racism. For example, one of the people who gave testimony about being in camp at Manzanar, Bill Shinkai (who is in my script) says that at five years old he did not remember everything clearly, but he remembered filling mattresses of straw (CWRIC, “L.A. Transcripts” 33). Many of these details, such as Mr. Shinkai’s, reflect embodied experiences. The embodied quality of the testimony represented for me the ways in which memory is tied to and understood through performance as an enactment through the body. Though he recalls these memories through verbal narrative, the affective quality underscores the significance of performance and collective memory. Similarly to the previous paragraph, my decisions to include certain excerpts followed this pattern: I tried to strategically include many of the testimony that created and used embodied memories.

After reading through all of the transcripts and highlighting those excerpts or whole testimony that matched my criteria and reflected significant patterns of the whole hearing, I typed them into a word document. At that point I guessed I had enough testimony for about three performances. My next phase of development involved careful editing.



## **EDITING**

After selecting the testimony that fit my criteria, I still had too much material. I reviewed the excerpts I had selected in the first stage and then eliminated those that did not meet at least two if not all three of the criteria. After this next round of sorting, I had two groups of text: one group of eight testimonies whose entirety reflected my criteria and a second group of about twenty different fragments of testimony. Next, I focused on sorting the fragments.

When I read each of the fragments on its own, I realized that many of them did not have enough information to be coherent or their major theme was already echoed in one of the larger testimony. At this point I narrowed the fragment selection to the strongest seven. I inserted them randomly between the eight longer testimonies and began a creative editing process that involved embodying the text, experimenting with order, and consulting with colleagues.

From these two collections I constructed my script through experimenting with how each testimony functioned through non-textual communication. I considered that some of the text would lend themselves more significantly to live performance I tried reading some testimony aloud to see how they felt, sounded, and tasted. The moments that triggered deep questions, sorrow, or anger signaled important excerpts. Slowly, I came to realize that basing my decisions on my embodied reactions was a method of constructing a script of both textual narrative and embodied knowledge. Recognizing that my decisions reflect the subject positions and relationships I had and continue to develop with the material then became not a limitation, but a point of departure.

Playing with the organization of the testimony also helped to point out the ways I could omit text in order to create dialogue and conversation between different points of view. For example, I placed two of the testimony next to each other that represented stories of allies, non-Japanese Americans who signaled their solidarity with Japanese Americans (see Act Three). By grouping them according to similar themes, I could omit redundant fragments and siphon off parts that did not carry as much weight. The seven major groups ultimately became the seven acts of the script.

Once the body of the script had emerged, I focused on editing individual testimony. With the help of colleagues, I continued to condense the testimony by omitting unnecessary information for the purpose of my performance and focusing each testimony on one or two significant moments, images, lines, or emotions. Almost all of the long testimony was cut by about half, and some of the expository information was rearranged or condensed. As I edited, I tried to strike a balance between retaining key content of the original text, concision, and cadence.

One example of a negotiation of these three aspects was a decision to cut out many of the “ending” moments of the testimony. Each testimony’s narrative was comprised of a beginning, middle, and closing statement. As I started reading the text out loud a colleague (Courtney Sale, MFA Directing) pointed out that though on the page many of the closing lines were powerful, as text for performance, the closing line disrupted building a meta-narrative arc in the piece. Additionally, the final lines even though beautiful (i.e. “No one benefits when the truth is silent”) foreclosed an opportunity for the audience to arrive at a conclusions themselves. Other ending lines

spelled out the individual's position in regards to monetary redress. While historically significant, these final words packaged the nuance of the excerpts too neatly; I thought they allowed the audience to hear textual answers (e.g. monetary reparations solves racial grief) that I wanted to leave open. Heeding these realizations, I decided to cut out many of the closing moments that were particularly axiomatic or finite. As a result, I could strategically discard the neat endings and build a narrative arc from the excerpts with a holistic view of the performance and my particular goals to explore collective memory and performance.

#### **A NOTE ON NARRATIVE STRUCTURE**

As I mentioned above, I started creating a narrative by grouping testimony around themes, which later became the acts. The themes allowed me to link testimony in content and create dialogue by placing voices beside each other who did not agree or that represented different experiences of a shared topic. Some of the testimony gave contextual information either about Japanese American history, Internment, or the hearings, so I placed some in the beginning of the performance to help give needed information and context for other stories.

As I started to see a performance rhythm for the remaining pieces, I tried to order them to create a dynamic flow. In other words, I paired testimony with a faster cadence alongside ones with softer or slower tempo. Just after the middle of the piece, I placed the most interactive part of the performance in order add more of a dynamic by breaking the sequence of testimony with movement. I thought of the interactive part as a movement

scene in which very little text accompanied my movement of unpacking a suitcase<sup>7</sup> and handing items (both material and imagined) to audience members. The incorporation of a seemingly mundane chore into my performance layered the significance of the testimony into the daily habits and behaviors we carry with us and transitioned the piece into its conclusion.

One of the later significant decisions in crafting the narrative was to open and close the piece through my perspective. I had wanted the introduction to be from my perspective in order to position myself within and alongside the research and subject. But, I was originally resistant to closing the same way. As I started performing the piece in rehearsal, I realized that it needed to close with me to signal the autoethnographic journey that the script and performance represents. The excerpts, editing, ordering, and performance were my decisions, a way for me to filter, retain, and sustain collective memory. In order to mark this, I needed to close the piece also.

## **PERFORMANCE STYLE**

Once I had a solid script, I turned to questions about performance quality. How would I deliver such wide-ranging testimony in content, form, and diction? The following example in my script of testimony from Mo Nishida exemplifies the non-linear and colloquial speech patterns of some of the play text.

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<sup>7</sup> This particular idea came from Courtney Sale (MFA Directing) after a reading of the script. She commented that she was hungry to know something about daily life in camp. From this suggestion we collaboratively came up with the idea to unpack a suitcase. I am grateful for Courtney's input.

*I guess what I would like to talk about is my own personal experience, in particular after the war, in particular during this last period of my life. And it has to do with, okay – okay, let me start off with a little bit about my personal self.*

*Okay, for me, then, in terms of coming out of camp and moving around a lot, like going, especially in the country and having to, like, you know at every school we went to how you have to deal with this Jap business.*

*And I guess one incident that I remember as a child right after the war was, you know, coming to Los Angeles in a car and looking at the back of this bus and seeing this GI, this sailor, right looking at – into our car, right and then picked me out, right, and then give me a finger, right and give me this hate stare, right, that I didn't know what that was about.*

As I started experimenting with performance, I realized another important departure between my work and performance ethnographies such as Anna Deavere Smith and E. Patrick Johnson wherein I recognized that their specific methods veered away from the goals of my work. Both Smith and Johnson place heavy emphasis in their performance and preparation on what Joni L. Jones/Omi Osun Olomo calls authenticity. For Jones, authenticity “has less to do with essentialism than it does with practice- a tireless striving for the physical details that make up cultures” (14). She locates authenticity in embodied performance and particularly in the respect and intent of “physical details of the performer” in comparison with “referents (video, audio, persons from the culture)” (14). Smith and particularly Johnson’s performance of *Pouring Tea* are prime examples of extensive work on the part of the researcher/performer to physically

embody the people they interviewed. In *Pouring Tea*, for example, Johnson plays a small excerpt of his interviews before performing each oral history. This act introduces the audience to the referent and from that point of reference we can see both the gaps (Johnson can never be the people he interviewed) but also his virtuosity at altering his vocal performance to mimic and conjure the recording. His performance of the interviewee shows an incredible ability and dedication to using all elements of his embodied presence to bring himself and the audience as close as possible to a re-performance of listening to the interviewee. While I have been deeply touched and critically amazed by this particular genre of research and performance, I realized I was not searching for nor had access to Jones' interpretation of authenticity of the body.

The embodied authenticity of the referents (the archives) I used was circumscribed by the context of their genesis. As I mentioned earlier, the transcripts and video archives of the CWRIC hearings in Los Angeles reveal their rigid format. The official and legal format of the CWRIC hearings framed the performances of the testimony in such a way that proscribed a certain type of embodied performance. *It's not an easy task for me to come here and sit here and speak to all of you.* For example, all testifiers had to sit and deliver their narratives. Embodied movement was further limited by the need to speak directly into a microphone. The environment drastically limited the way Japanese Americans could tell their stories through movement and bodies. As a result, I do not consider the archives of the CWRIC hearings to be a credible referent for the type of work Jones urges performance ethnographers to consider to the extent that the

embodied cultural behaviors of Japanese Americans were circumscribed by the structure of the event.

In response, I attempted to strike a balance between performing the testimony as a reactivation of the archives and using the text and script to generate autoethnographic interpretations of the referents. The testimony and my performance of Hannah Tomiko Holmes' story represent my negotiation of these forces. Ms. Holmes' testimony told her story about growing up as a deaf Japanese American in concentration camps. In the CWRIC hearings her testimony was read aloud by a friend of hers who she asked to share her words while an American Sign Language interpreter translated her written words, read by a friend, back to Ms. Holmes. In the video of her testimony, I watched her body. She sat on the edge of her chair; her eyes attended to every translation of the interpreter. She affirmed many moments of her own testimony by nodding intently at her interpreter. This scene is an example of the hidden biases of the format of the hearings. It seemed that because she spoke a different language than the Commissioners (like many of the Japanese speaking testifiers who also could not read their testimony in their language), she could not deliver her own testimony. Since I was the mediating body for all of the testimony I performed, with the suggestion of a colleague (Courtney Sale) I decided to (re)perform Ms. Holmes' testimony in a way that would call attention to American Sign Language as a legitimate language of testimony and performance. I delivered the second paragraph and last line of her testimony in American Sign Language.

*My name is Hannah Tomiko Holmes, formerly Takagi. I am now 53 years old, and I have been deaf since the age of two. When the war started I was a 13-year-old student at the California School for the Deaf. [...] Helen Keller was our only friend.*

While running the risk of tokenism because the remaining part of my performance is not accessible to deaf individuals, I still felt strongly that this choice to include American Sign Language would produce important interventions. It reflects my ability as a performer to generate and add embodied practices that are strategically not accurate to the extent that my signing does not reflect what happened in the records of the hearings. Instead, the result is a co-constituted performance of memory that mirrors the process of transmission of collective memory. I do not claim to accurately represent the individuals or testimonies, but instead, I have found my negotiations and interventions to produce more nuanced understandings of how collective memory functions. My performance layers memories and knowledge in a way that calls attention to the footprints or interpretations that inevitably change and reinvent the truths of collective memory.

Though I do not take up the same performance quality of many performance ethnography projects, the end goal is to underscore the complexity of co-authorship and co-performance that performance ethnographers also highlight. I attempt to ethically mark my methodology in the performance by positioning clearly myself as a mediating force. I open and close the performance through narrative in my voice to draw attention to the way I, as Nikiko, shaped this project. At the same time, my opening monologue begins to tease out the collaborative origins of the piece through an anecdote about a reference assistant whose personal generosity gave me more time to access the archives.



The meanings of this beginning are multiple and infinite, but as far as marking my performance style, it is meant to make me visible and accountable as an authoring force, yet negate any claim that the performance emerges only from me.

### **SETTING THE SPACE**

*Chairs are set up in a circle around the pole in the middle of the space. Seats should be set-up in a way that allows people to see around the row in front of them and so performer can walk through any rows.*

*Four black cardboard panels are set up at the end of four aisles in the circular seating. The cardboard is carved. The names of the acts and the performer's family members are etched into the surface. Crayon tracings of these titles on white paper are hanging from the board, on top of it.*

*A suitcase filled with artifacts and act sign for "life expectancy" is placed between audience members on the north side of the audience.*

*On each seat is a Kleenex flower. One empty chair reserved in the front row on the east side to be pulled into the middle.*

*Around the pole there are hooks for the signs. There are also strings of cranes – red, white, and blue.*

My stage directions from the first Scene One in Act One are the textual documentation of a plan to create a dynamic and interactive collective experience of the performance. I set the piece in the round to expose myself to audience members, invite them to see each other, and be able to easily facilitate interaction amongst them. The

scenic design elements such as the cranes and the black boards were meant to conjure images and memories of war and peace memorials (specifically the Vietnam Memorial, Go For Broke Memorial, Children's Peace Monument in Japan). These major elements became part of an aesthetic of public remembering. By creating a visual environment linked to other public spaces of remembering, I tried to set the stage literally for the audience to participate in the performance as a practice of public remembering.

Much like the material memorials (and archives), public remembering is an embodied act that is not guaranteed by objects and monuments. This idea has been developed and studied by many public memory or memorial scholars. Marita Sturken elaborates on the relationship between the materials of memory and that which they provoke. She writes

Cultural memory is produced through objects, images, and representations. These are technologies of memory, not vessels of memory in which memory passively resides so much as objects through which memories are shared, produced, and given meaning (Sturken 9).

In other words, the physical things do not enact collective memory, but the people who witness them do. Drawing on this conceptualization of material memorials and the sets of behaviors and engagements we already associate with particular memorials (such as what Sturken observes about people leaving items at the Vietnam War Memorial), I selected the scenic design elements such that my performance would build linkages and conversations about how we already remember through performance in response to memorials.

My performance as a practice of collective memory was designed to engage audiences in the act of remembering as witnesses, but the performance itself always risks failure. I have documented here some of the decisions and methodological influences that guided my creative process. The process of performance extends beyond development into the live embodied act; performance itself is an enactment, not a thing. In the next chapter I continue my discussion of using performance to engage and share my research on Japanese American collective memory and the CWRIC hearings by reflecting on the debut performance of the piece and the responses I received.

### **Chapter Three: Remembering Performance: Analysis and Reflection on one presentation of *What We Could Carry***

“[Y]ou can’t connect the dots looking forward, you can only connect them looking  
backwards.”

Steve Jobs (Commencement speech 2005)

“I mean this really makes me angry right now because in the San Fernando Valley, for  
example, the same kind of terror, the same kind of abuses have been happening right now  
day to day.”

Gilbert Sanchez (CWRIC, “L.A. Transcripts” 179)

The moment my rehearsed and scripted performance of *What We Could Carry* ended, I felt relieved. The performance that represented two years of research, thought, and creation is now in the past. Yet the work of performance pedagogically, artistically, and intellectually, was in still flight. The sense of release later refigured itself as a feeling of initiation. I was reminded of Elin Diamond’s assertion that performance is “always a doing and a thing done”, the paradox of something that is done (passed, completed, bracketed) and something that is doing (embodiment, continuation, motion, action) mirrored the genealogical hopes and units of collective memory. I was one person who had finished one performance in a much larger community of Japanese Americans constructing, performing, and transmitting collective memory.

The other things that happened after the performance, particularly the feedback and commentary from audience members, called my attention to the particular ways performance allowed me to engage with collective memory in productive ways. I also have begun to think about the failures of this project and future iterations of it. In this chapter I analyze two moments from the post-show discussion that illuminate the ways

performance allowed me to embody, theorize, and practice collective memory. These moments underscore the co-performance of collective memory between surrogate performer and witness(es). Through analysis of what happened during moments of the performance (and spilled into post-performance discussion), I articulate how collective memory in live performance creates opportunity for meaning making by both surrogate and witness(es). Then I share some questions and observations about the limits of this project. Finally, I end with thoughts about the perpetual risk of forgetting and my hopes for a never-ending practice of collective memory.

### **WHOSE WORDS?**

I want to return to the talkback exchange I laid out in the first passage of Chapter One in order to begin a conversation about the particular motions and opportunities performing collective memory gave me. I shared with you that a friend and colleague responded to my performance with a compliment. He applauded my use of the term “concentration camps” throughout the piece as a political statement. When I heard his comments, I was personally warmed by his approval, but I simultaneously fought the impulse to correct him. I confess, I first thought to myself, it was not me who used the words “concentration camp” throughout most of the piece. I wanted to point out that the choice of terminology had been determined and authored by the people whose testimony I had performed. Yet, my own initial reaction erases the palimpsest my performance created. I want to point out here the ways in which this comment exemplifies two of my overlapping arguments about performance in my work. My initial reaction was wrong.

First, this exchange illustrates the ways that performance as scholarship produces and engages epistemologies of genealogical history rather than stable origins (Foucault 88). Secondly, this moment marks how witnessing is an integral epistemological practice of a performance of collective memory.

#### **ACT SEVEN: GENEALOGIES**

While I believe self-reflexive research can also be enacted through written scholarship, I see particular ethical benefits of presenting my research of the redress hearings through performance. In the hearings, Japanese Americans made themselves publicly vulnerable through their embodied testimony; most shared their own personal experiences of Internment and detailed the pain and suffering they remembered. I feel strongly that in order to validate their voices, bodies, and experiences, I needed to also use my body and voice as a public conduit for memory, interpretation, and knowledge of Japanese American redress. Though I can never fully inhabit or represent the Japanese Americans who gave testimony, by performing my research I can, in the least, make myself similarly vulnerable in public. By performing my research, I asked to be held accountable ‘in the flesh’ for my work.

In addition, the incompleteness of my representations of others enabled by performance helped to construct the collectivity of the memory. Without erasing important sources and experiences, my performance positioned me as a surrogate for the testimonies and stories of Japanese American redress, experience during World War II, and larger lineages. In multiple ways the sources of the testimonies are marked in the

performance. The program as a preparatory text for the performance clearly recognizes that the majority of the script is excerpted from the transcripts of the CWRIC hearings in L.A. Additionally, within the performance each monologue is marked by the name of the speaker as it appears in the transcripts. I verbally say, “My name is Mas Fukai”, “My name is Hannah Tomiko Holmes” etc. My repetition of this self-naming clearly demarcates that I am shifting and speaking from multiple points of view. In this way, I acknowledge important experiential differences between the Japanese Americans whose stories I share and me. But this marking of difference is not the ultimate goal. My performance challenges audiences to think further than difference.

While I textually placed myself in the position of the testifiers by repeating their statements of identity (“My name is Mas Fukai” etc.), I did not attempt to match my voice, posture, rhythm or any other part of embodiment to the ‘original’ testifiers. In this way, I play in the space between the archive and my repertoire. My performance style creates genealogical connections; they are not my stories, and yet they are my *inherited* stories. I am Japanese American, and I know Japanese American history through shared collective memories. The particular style of my performance in a sense promoted the slippage between their words and mine. The somewhat contradictory marking of other people and yet not marking them through pronounced embodied choices (i.e. costumes, drastic voice changes, etc) performs this strategy. Performance as a multi-sensory form of knowing and doing allows dissonance and association to simultaneously take place through differences in the performance script and embodied choices.

As I continue to perform and develop *What We Could Carry*, I will particularly pay attention to ways in which I can further explore and enact simultaneous dissonance and association. For example, I will experiment with expanding the visual and movement qualities of my performance. How can I use the props, object, and maybe even people to layer meaning? I want to use theatrical elements to layer meaning so that objects, for example, are both inherited things and also transformed through my interactions with them.<sup>8</sup> This can further develop the genealogical dissonance and association I create through text and performance style.

I will specifically explore assumptions and norms of verbal communication as I plan to share this with my baachan who is deaf and does not speak American Sign Language. What are other ways I can speak words that play with the meanings that are lost and gained in multiple modes of communication? There are many ways I can expand the piece and build upon where it succeeds in playing with multiple, sometimes contradictory, meanings.

My colleagues' comment attributing the terminology to me reflects, in one way, a successful performance of collective memory. By performing other people's memories through my body and voice, I become accountable to the memories I was attempting to transmit. I do not become synonymous with the people whose stories I tell, but I share responsibility and a stake in re-telling and remembering their lives and stories.

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<sup>8</sup> I am grateful to Deborah Paredez, my thesis advisor, for challenging me to think theatrically and deepen my use of things on stage to re-infuse meaning.



Performance allows me to move beyond clear distinctions between them and me, to claim responsibility for and to Japanese American collective memory.

### **EMBODIED WITNESSING**

During the talkback I asked audience members what it was like to be touched (either by my hands or the objects I asked them to hold) and how that contributed (or not) to their experience. Their answers confirmed for me some of the ways the staging and interaction of my performance invited physical participation by audience members and heightened the way in which I could invite others to physically and symbolically be responsible for remembering the stories of Japanese Americans. Several of the audience members commented about how the performance impacted them, especially when I asked people to hold both material and imagined items, such as my jiichan's (grandpa's) army jacket, an imagined picture of my baachan (grandma), a baseball, and kleenex flowers I made. They were asked to help me, to hold, touch, and feel artifacts and props of memory. One audience member said she was nervous because holding something gave her responsibility in the show. The embodied experience of being asked to hold something in the show heightened the stakes for the audience members, it underscored the request that is always made to audiences: it asks them to become embodied witnesses.

Asking people to hold things that represent Japanese American collective memory uses the risks and relationships that are already part of performance to reveal stakes of memory. Though my performance is scripted, rehearsed, and planned, its liveness always leaves room for the unknown. Unlike a book that is constant to the extent that the words

on its pages do not change from day to day, and whose maker (the author) does not know its reader, live performance remains open to change and exchange between performer(s) and audience. By asking people to hold things in the performance I invited audience members to actively participate in a relationship we already were engaged in: we share embodied attention to each other. Audiences can leave, can interrupt, and can refuse; as a performer I am vulnerable to their reactions. Unlike a book that does keep going on regardless if the reader has left, in live performance the performer publicly shares power with the audience: they both construct the space and time for performance.

Like collective memory, my performance of it is subject to the interpretive and creative powers of the audience. The threat of forgetting is always present, as is the instability of memory itself. The sustainability of memory depends on not only the performer, but also the audience. My particular choice to ask people to hold representations of collective memory made their role in the relationship of performance and memory clear. If they so choose, the audience can destroy the things that I ask them to hold – that which helps activate and facilitate my performance of collective memory. The sharing of collective memory through performance makes visible the mutual recognition and shared responsibility of memory recreation and transmission.

On the flipside, live performance can also lend itself to coercion. There is power asymmetry to the extent that I, as the performer, know the game plan, whereas the audience only knows what information they have been given and the norms and behaviors that accompany the form of performance. My request of the audience members to hold things is therefore couched in my power as performer, yet it also reflects my

attempt to invite audience members into my collective memory practices as an embodied experience and through their own bodies.

Collective memory always already depends on collectivity, more than one person. This seems tautological when thought about in relationship to the past, but surrogation also emerges from hailing of the future. Performance allows the surrogate performer, in this case me, to exchange glances with potential surrogates or surrogate allies. Though this does not guarantee continuation, performance allows people to share moments of mutual dependence. The risk of forgetting perpetually haunts remembering, and as Joseph Roach acknowledges, surrogation is bound up in forgetting because substitution is never seamless and identical. Performing surrogation then reminds us that witnesses co-constitute the enactment of remembering; they validate the doing of performances of collective memory and stand-in as always-potential surrogates. The audience and I had shared a performance, built from memories and archives, we created genealogies of collective memory, though the momentary enactment of performance and shared responsibility is now gone, the active engagement of the audience as witnesses serves as another hand off in genealogies of remembering. The hope of repetition is palpable for both surrogate and witness when it emerges between bodies.

### **LEARNING FROM FAILURES**

Despite its powerful opportunities for embodied exchange, performance also heightens the margin of error and risks in surrogation. Because performance happens and is embodied, the meaning it produces is particularly fragile. This fragility is part of its

power. The collective memory that I am trying to engage with, embody, and share is subject to interpretation by witnesses. Things are unpredictable and not contained. One particular example of this was in the first few minutes of the performance.

As soon as I entered the room, I followed my plan to walk around and whisper short sentences into audience members' ears. I then asked them to pass it on; I intended this to be like a game of telephone. As happened in rehearsal, I expected the audience to stop repeating the phrases when I began with my recollection of my first encounter with the transcripts. But this did not happen. Audience members continued to share their phrases to each other (as I had directed them to do so) well into the first sentences of my narrative. While speaking my memorized lines, I asked myself, how should I respond to this unexpected situation? I thought if I kept going people would catch on and listen, but another phrase passed, and I realized I had to intervene. I made up a sentence to try to gently stop the activity. It finally worked and I had everyone's full attention.

This moment of failure reminded me of the power of live performance, especially in its vulnerability. Though I had created the performance and practiced countless times, its liveness means it is unpredictable. I was reminded that performance, like collective memory, requires both a leap of faith and innovation. Performers must trust their audiences, and visa versa, or no performance would ever happen; and yet, simultaneously, improvisation and adaptation are necessary tools. Regardless of ego, I was vulnerable and had to respond to the people who came to witness. In retrospect, I am glad the performance started like this. From that moment onward, I was acutely aware of the presence of each person in the room. Now, I realize this beginning is emblematic of

the shared experience of performance and the immediate risks of misinterpretation that we must accept when we create embodied meaning.

### **GENERATIVE POSSIBILITY**

When I proposed this project, I wrote that I hoped to heal. Healing, like memory, I have learned is a practice, not a destination or only a thing done. Healing is a doing, an enactment. This performance and written thesis have taught me more about how collectively memory functions through the body, and how performance can facilitate exchanges of memory. This project has given me the space and time to investigate, listen, and share stories of Japanese American collectivity that span generations. The successes and failures of this project will continue to make themselves known as I move forward; but for now, I am satisfied in naming both.

As mentioned in the previous section, there were moments of blatant failure. I remember the moments in which my memory faltered and I flubbed lines from the script, but there are other significant failures are more difficult to identify. I remember seeing confused looks on people's faces; I wonder what was difficult that could be made clearer. Or, was the confusion productive and useful? In pedagogical terms, my performance was only half of the work. In the future, I envision this project as a series of performances coupled with community workshops where we (audience members, testifiers, and I) can explore embodying Japanese American memory through not only my performance, but also conversations, exercises, and other means of meaning making outside the time and space of my solo show. (I specifically want to use this performance to spark

conversations between multiple generations of Japanese Americans about our collective past and how we remember it.) I hope to develop the theatrical elements of the show and my weakest performance skills as I also expand and deepen the pedagogical exchanges that might happen after, through, and in response to the bracketed performance.

Measuring the successes of this project is a particularly difficult task. On the one hand, I believe I succeeded in performing collective memory based on my analysis of the show, my feelings at the end of the show, and the responses from audience members immediately following the performance and thereafter. Yet, the success of performing collective memory is never completed or finished since the larger goal is sustaining the memories. If then, I cannot measure the success of the performance in its ability to perform collective memory because it depends on future performances, I conclude that the major success of my performance was its cooperation and participation in collective memory.

I left the performance carrying something new: the sense that I had begun something big. The performance marked a beginning for me, a public entrance into genealogies of surrogates. Since the debut of *What We Could Carry* I have acquired a new sense of responsibility and desire. I hunger to perform again not because I know I will succeed theatrically or pedagogically, but instead, because in the moment of performance – live, fragile, and unpredictable – we (the audience and I) can transform the risks of forgetting into generative possibility. For me, it is the embodied hope of performing collective memory that sustains me to the next performance.

## Appendix A

### What We Could Carry

Written / Developed by Nikiko Masumoto

#### CHARACTERS

NIKIKO MASUMOTO  
MAS FUKAI  
DAN LUNGREN  
MIKE MURASE  
SAM HAYAKAWA  
HANNAH TOMIKO HOLMES  
WARREN FURUTANI  
MORRIS KIGHT  
GILBERT SANCHEZ  
SALLY KIRITA TSUNEISHI  
AMY MASS  
ALICE NEHIRA  
MO NISHIDA  
BILL SHINKAI

#### SETTING

Here. Preferably a community space (rather than a theatre).

#### TIME

Now.

#### AUTHOR'S NOTE

All of the text except for those spoken by myself (Nikiko Masumoto) is excerpted from transcripts of a particular public hearing. In 1981 the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) was formed in order to investigate and submit a report to Congress about what happened to Japanese Americans during World War II and what the government should do as a result of the findings. On August 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, 1981 the CWRIC held public hearings in Los Angeles, California during which 152 people, mostly Japanese Americans, gave testimony about Japanese American Internment and advocated for their particular stance on redress and reparations. This script was written and developed with autoethnographic methodology in mind, thus I would recommend anyone thinking of performing this either as a solo piece (as it was intended) or with an ensemble do their own archival research about the CWRIC hearings (transcripts and videos are available at the Hirasaki National Resource Center at the Japanese American National Museum in L.A.). Anyone can find that I have selected, edited, re-arranged, and added

repetition to the testimonies of the individuals whose names are listed in the character list.

This version of the script was developed with the first performance venue in mind. I have included the instructions here because the staging of the space is key for the interactive portions of the piece as well as the dramaturgical function of audience as witnesses to the performance and each other.

#### PRODUCTION HISTORY

This script and performance was developed as part of a Master of Arts thesis project at the University of Texas, Austin in their Performance as Public Practice program between 2009-2011. It was first performed on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at Casa de Luz (a non-profit community center) in Austin, Texas.

It was self-produced and performed by Nikiko Masumoto. Deborah Paredez served as thesis advisor and mentor for the project. Nicole Martin gave dramaturgical support particularly in developing the script as well as in rehearsal. Courtney Sale and Katelyn Wood acted as directorial support. Nicole Gurgel facilitated the talkback and also dramaturgically supported the rehearsal process



## ACT ONE: INTRODUCTIONS

*[Chairs are set up in a circle around the pole in the middle of the space. Seats should be set-up in a way that allows people to see around the row in front of them and so performer can walk through any rows.*

*Four black cardboard panels are set up at the end of four aisles in the circular seating. The cardboard is carved. The names of the acts and the performer's family members are etched into the surface. Crayon tracings of these titles on white paper are hanging from the board, on top of it*

*A suitcase filled with artifacts and act sign for "life expectancy" is placed between audience members on the north side of the audience.*

*On each seat is a Kleenex flower.*

*One empty chair reserved in the front row on the east side to be pulled into the middle.*

*Around the pole there are hooks for the signs. There are also strings of cranes – red, white, and blue.]*

### SCENE ONE

*[NIKIKO walks in from outside of circle, maybe outside of the room carrying a thick binder. She approaches a single audience member and tells them softly]*

NIKIKO MASUMOTO

I remember... pass it on.

*[NIKIKO walks to another person.]*

I feel that I was there...pass it on.

*[NIKIKO walks to another person.]*

If I could take just another minute...pass it on.

*[NIKIKO finds a central place in the performing area.]*

Wait a second. I remember the first time I met these transcripts, it was in the Japanese American National Museum, in Los Angeles.

They were waiting for me in the beautiful research room inside the Hirasaki National Resource Center. It's one of those rooms that has pocket lighting that you can dim, two of the walls are glass –impeccably cleaned and beautiful. The kind of place that makes you feel important.

Before I had arrived, the reference assistant reserved and set up the space for me to work. When I walked in I found an entire archival research station ready for me: there was a plastic pad to protect the paper from the table, a yellow college-ruled notebook with freshly sharpened pencils, a magnifying glass, and white gloves. 2 pairs of white gloves! I marveled at my supplies, and giddily sat down.

But my sense of wonder and self-aggrandizing quickly faded.

I sized up the transcripts: there were 600+ pages from the LA hearings alone from 152 testimonies, and I had two days, and the research center was open four hours each day. I realized I needed to read later, and copy as much as carefully and quickly as I could.

With my gloves, I gingerly carried stacks of the transcripts to the copier, I lifted and rested each piece of paper on the glass making sure not to fold a corner, pushed the green button, waited, and then replaced that page with another. And after a while, the gloves got annoying. And I did not wear the right shoes for copying.

I didn't finish everything during that first trip, so I begrudgingly made arrangements with the librarian to return several months later.

When I came back, the research room looked the same; it was brightly lit with a splay of the same supplies, neatly arranged and waiting for me.

But the reference librarian had changed. Four months later, she wore a colorful silk scarf covering her head. Her pitch-black hair was gone.

Since I had only seen her once before and we were practically strangers, I decided it was not my place to make any comment reminding her of what seemed to be a clear sign of chemo-therapy.

I greeted her and we both continued with our work. I resumed my position at the copier, this time on a mission to get those transcripts copied.

At the end of the day I was sweating glancing at the clock and the stack of uncopied stories.

Noticing I had more work to do, the reference assistant offered from underneath the purple flowers on her scarf, “You can stay longer if you need, I don’t mind sticking around after closing.”

She gave me time to be with the archives, because I wanted to let them sink into my lap, weigh on my bones. I wanted to carry them with me.

*[NIKIKO stands behind someone, places hands on their shoulders, transform to MAS FUKAI.]*

MAS FUKAI

My name is Mas Fukai. I am here to speak for myself.

*[Beat]*

I feel that I was there, and I have not learned, as others have testified, from a book or from colleges, for what they say really doesn’t come from the heart, and I hope I can do that. It’s not an easy task for me to come here and sit here and speak to all of you. [But,] I believe that the time is now, and the place is here to express to you and to the world our feelings.

You will hear today hurt, hate, fear, love and probably even tears in the testimony. But most important, they will speak the truth[.]

*[Walk into the circle of chairs, setting a faster pace.]*

NIKIKO MASUMOTO

The Forward truth.

In 2009 I received an e-mail that went viral in the Japanese American community.

Subject line: You know you’re Japanese when...

90+ ways to find out

*[Read the punctuation aloud.]*

90. You never take the last piece of food on a plate, but will cut it into smaller pieces. My baachan/grandma sooo does that.

*[With each number, walk to a different audience member, “give them” the number. The commentary after each criteria should be improvised.]*

64. You buy rice 20 pounds at a time and shoyu a gallon at a time. Absolutely, so true...except recently my baachan hasn't been doing this, because she's 83 and can't lift the bag anymore. Instead my aunt buys rice for her. So that still counts.

61. You own a 5-cup AND 10-cup rice cooker. My baachan is soooooo Japanese that she has a back-up 10 cup rice cooker. And my parents live about ½ mile away and have one too, just in case.

50. You know the virtues of SPAM. Oh. Yeah. Raise your hand if you've had spam musubi. Oh, you have to try it so you can be Japanese too. *[OR]* You know exactly what I'm talking about.

30. You know that Pat Morita doesn't really speak like Mr. Miyagi. I hope that means we're all Japanese, right?

*[Speak from a more central place, no longer walking to an audience member.]*

And the top four:

4. Your Issei grandparents had an arranged marriage.

*[Give a thumbs up.]*

3. The women in your family were seamstresses, domestic workers or farm laborers. Jackpot – all three in my family tree.

2. The men in your family were gardeners, farmers, produce workers or plantation workers. Some people talk about having a metaphoric family tree, and I have a literal one, well thousands. My family has a farm.

And the most sure-fire way to know you're Japanese....

*[Change tone and tempo.]*

1. You know that Camp doesn't mean a cabin in the woods.

*[Walk slower pace to another spot.]*

You know, I don't remember the first time I learned about camp. There is no origin to my knowledge of it - I didn't have an ah-hah moment in a history class or reading a book. I just always knew.

## **ACT TWO: MULTIPLICITY**

*[To designate the beginning of the remaining Acts, bring an etched copy of them to a central location, holding them up. For "2: Multiplicity", take the sign hanging from somewhere in the room and walk around circle holding it so all can read, then hang on the pole. Deliver line while walking.]*

DAN LUNGREN

I'm Dan Lungren, Vice Chairman of this Commission. I'd like to welcome you to the first of a series of field hearings that the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians will be having around the country. We are scheduled to have a number of hearings so that we can carry out the mandate given to us by Congress and the President to look into the question of wartime relocation and internment of civilians during World War II.

*[Walk across the circle.]*

MIKE MURASE

My name is Mike Murase, and I'm the president of Little Tokyo People's Rights Organization of Los Angeles.

Commissioners, although I did not go through the camp experience personally, my ten years of association with various social services, legal counseling and community anti-crime programs have led me to concur that virtually every Japanese in American society was deeply and irreparably affected by the concentration camp experience.

I believe that for every person who comes before you to testify there are hundreds of others whose stories will never be told publicly.

Of course, after some 40 years many of the Issei are gone and others are too frail to come before you now. There are others who, to this very day, find it too painful to speak of the four years of suffering and the 40 years of trying to forget, yet still remembering.

*[Deliberately, step outside the circle and behind someone.]*

There is a woman who finds it too difficult to recall the expression on her husband's face as he was being dragged away by the FBI – the face she saw for the very last time before he died a year later while they were still separated in two distant locations.

*[Find another person to step behind, work in a circular direction for each missing person.]*

There is a man who can only speak in bitter and angry tones because his education was interrupted in the prime of life, and his family's business was destroyed.

There is another woman who suffers from high blood pressure, nervousness and other illnesses which were caused by those stressful years in camp, and for which she alone bears the burden of never-ending high cost of medical care.

There is still another woman whose lips cannot form the words to describe the fear and the sense of shame she felt when she was physically attacked and sexually abused by soldiers escorting her on the train taking them to camp.

There is a man who cannot overcome his feelings of futility and a total loss of faith after he was forced to sell his farm and all his belongings for a fraction of their actual value. He is a broken and defeated man, a severely depressed alcoholic with no sense of self-worth.

*[Come back in the circle to find a new location from which to deliver the rest.]*

I have heard that in the post-war resettlement years tremendous pressures were applied by camp authorities as people were released to prove loyalty and to develop American habits. The clear message was: don't be clannish and don't be so Japanese.

In the late '50's when I was about twelve years old, I had a friend who used to throw away the rice balls his mother packed in his sack and skip lunch while his friends ate sandwiches.

Another friend implored his father to let him off a couple of blocks away from school every morning because he was too ashamed to be seen being dropped off from a gardener's truck.

Japanese Americans lost land and property, freedom and privacy, educational and job opportunities, dignity and pride. For all this, there is no price tag.

[But] there are more stories.

*[Walk to sign, touch it. Transform into DAN LUNGREN.]*

DAN LUNGREN

The first individual I would like to recognize for the purpose of making a statement is the Honorable Sam Hayakawa, Senator from the State of California. Senator.

*[Push empty chair from first row slightly in front of circle as line is delivered.]*

NIKIKO MASUMOTO

You all have my permission to react – and if that includes booing, cheering, jeering, or squirming, you are welcome to, these hearings couldn't happen without an audience.

*[Stand tall to the side of chair.]*

SAM HAYAKAWA

*[Haughty.]*

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks to the honorable members of the Commission for permitting me to be here.

I believe this event can only be understood in the full context of California history. As is well known, California has been the source of anti-Oriental propaganda in the United States for more than 100 years. It was a regular practice during the gold rush for the miners on a big Saturday night drunk to raid Chinese sections of mining towns to beat up or lynch a few Chinese just for the hell of it.

Now against this background of 100 years of successful anti-Oriental agitation throughout California, it is easy to understand that the attack on Pearl Harbor aroused in the people of California, as well as elsewhere, all the superstitious and racist fears that had been generated over a hundred years, as well as the normal insanities of wartime.

The surprise attack on Pearl Harbor was called a “stab in the back” – a typical Oriental trick, according to the belief at that time.

And war, of course, breeds fear of enemies within – spies, saboteurs. There were rumors that Japanese farmers in Hawaii had cut arrows in their fields to direct Japanese fighter planes to Pearl Harbor, and that west coast Japanese were equally organized to help the enemy.

Such rumors were later found to be completely baseless.

There was a popular hue and cry on the part of the journalists for the evacuation and interment of the Japanese.

The relocation was unjust, but under the stress of wartime anxieties and hysteria, and in the light of the long anti-Oriental agitation in California and the West, I find it difficult to imagine what else could have occurred that would not have been many times worse.

*[Transform to NIKIKO, dumbfounded, sit in chair.]*

NIKIKO MASUMOTO

What?

*[Stand.]*

SAM HAYAKAWA

I recall a friend of mine, a Japanese American now living in Marin County, who was 11 years old at the time the war broke out. She and her parents were vastly relieved when they learned of the evacuation. Most of her generation and her parents' generation welcomed the relocation as a guarantee of their personal safety.

The trouble-free and relatively happy lives at all other relocation centers (except Tule Lake) can be attributed to a cultural trait. Tule Lake was different because those who resisted evacuation and other angry people were sent there.

For many older Japanese in the camps the reaction turned out to be a three-year vacation.

*[Lean knee against chair to signify character shift.]*

NIKIKO MASUMOTO

no.....booooo.....no!

*[Stand up and away from chair; even if audience is not booing, deliver as if they were.]*



SAM HAYAKAWA

How else can one account for the tremendous artistic output of these amateur artists, who, having time on their hands, turned out little masterpieces of sculpture, ceramics, painting and flower arrangement.

Let me remind Japanese Americans that we are, as we repeatedly say in our pledge of allegiance, “One Nation” hoping for “Liberty and justice for all.”

And this means – I say this to Black Americans and Mexican-Americans and all other ethnic groups – let’s stop playing ethnic politics to gain something for our own group at the expense of all others. Let’s continue to think of Americas as “one nation, under God, indivisible” and let us act accordingly.

*[Take a deep breath; push the chair to the other side of the circle as deliver line.]*

NIKIKO MASUMOTO

And that’s how the testimony began, and it keeps going.

*[Hold friends & allies sign, hug to chest.]*

**ACT THREE: FRIENDS & ALLIES**

HANNAH TOMIKO HOLMES

*[stand outside circle, still holding sign]*

Helen Keller was our only friend, it sometimes seems. The experience of myself and other deaf children of Japanese ancestry during World War II was an example of what happens when people forget the truth. I was Japanese and deaf, and I was denied an equal education and other rights because of my differences.

*[Give an audience member the sign.]*

*[Deliver first in American Sign Language.]*

My name is Hannah Tomiko Holmes, formerly Takagi.  
I am now 53 years old, and I have been deaf since the age of two.  
When the war started I was a 13-year-old student at the California School for the Deaf.

*[Deliver verbally.]*

My name is Hannah Tomiko Holmes, formerly Takagi.  
I am now 53 years old, and I have been deaf since the age of two.  
When the war started I was a 13-year-old student at the California School for the Deaf.

I was one of the 11 Japanese students at that school who were forced to leave because of the war.

[I]n May 1942, I arrived at Manzanar with my family. Although some education was offered to non-handicapped children at Manzanar, children who suffered from handicaps had to do without. In my own case, I had no education or training at all.

[The War Relocation Authority] officials made a half-hearted attempt to find facilities for myself and other deaf children outside of camp. An attempt was made to obtain classes for us at the Arkansas School for the Deaf.

The School said they would have a board meeting to decide whether we could be admitted, but nothing ever came of it. It's my understanding that the Arkansas School wouldn't admit black children either.

In May 1943, my parents moved us to Tule Lake where an attempt was made to start a school for handicapped children. It was called the Helen Keller School.

Although the Helen Keller School at Tule Lake was unsuccessful, I would like to tell of one truly rewarding experience. In the early days at Tule Lake, when we still had some hopes for the school, I wrote to Helen Keller herself about it. How surprised and delighted I was when I received a letter from Helen Keller in August 1943.

If I could take just another minute, I'd like to read Miss Keller's letter on the record. It's dated August 2, 1943, from Arcan Ridge, Westport, Connecticut.

“Dear Hanna, How I love your beautiful, sweet letter and the love that made you write it. Truly it is wonderful that you and the children at the Tule Lake school should think so highly of me, a stranger, when you must miss your homes and many other things dear to you.

I shall never forget the tribute you have paid me, giving my name to the Tule Lake project. I am glad of the chance that the children there have to learn to read books, speak more clearly, and find sunshine among shadows.

Let them only remember this: Their courage in conquering obstacles will be a lamp throwing its bright rays far into other lives besides their own. War, change and sorrow cannot take us from anything really noble, gracious and helpful in our lives.

I wish I could show the children the garden and the rocks around which I work from half past five until breakfast weeding, raking up leaves and clipping grass. The fragrances from roses and evergreen make me feel that I truly see.

With best wishes for the children in their studies, and victory over limitation, and with warmest thanks for writing to me, I am, affectionately, your friend, Helen Keller.”

*[Step back and sign in American Sign Language.]*

Helen Keller was our only friend.

*[Verbally deliver the last line.]*

Helen Keller was our only friend.

*[Pick one place, transform, and stand to deliver WARREN.]*

#### WARREN FURUTANI

My name is Warren Tadashi Furutani. I am a Sansei/Yonsei.

A lot of people feel that particularly the Sansei and Yonsei who are the children of parents or grandparents who were in camp, were not affected or touched by the camp experience. I think if people hold that as in fact true, that they do not understand the depth and the impact of the captives.

I think the point I am making is that the camp experience has had a direct impact on those of us who were born after the war because it is in constant reference and because it is a part of our history. And when I mean history, I don't mean something that is logged in books. I don't mean something that is only studied periodically. I mean something that impacts on us as individuals and as young people today.

But what you see in this effort by the Japanese American community is an attempt to bring about in fact justice that deals with the subject of injustice.

I know that people have made reference to the fact if the Japanese Americans get redress and reparations, then that means Afro-Americans should get their 40 acres and a mule [,] finally then we have to bring up the question of all the hundreds of treaties that have been broken by the United States government and all the nations of native Americans.

And if you talk about that, you have to talk about the broken treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the point I am simply making is, that the issue of concentration camps that Japanese

Americans were put in cannot be taken out of context of American history, but must be looked as a part of American history. And in that context, you can see that it is not an exception, it is the rule.

MORRIS KIGHT

My name is Morris Kight. I'm a member of the Human Relations Commission of the County of Los Angeles [and] Governor Brown's Task Force on Civil Rights, and convenor of the Committee for the Study of Public Policy.

While I am a member of the above-listed groups, I would prefer to appear here today speaking as a concerned citizen and an observer of the actions which precipitated this Commission.

I come here to apologize to all of those who were incarcerated. What was done to you was wrong. Any of us who did not take some advanced role of opposition to the actions ourselves are guilty of crimes of silence. Insofar as I did not act, I seek the forgiveness of the victims.

I hope that all the rest of the nation joins in an apology [...]. Thirty-nine years later, anything we may do would be hardly enough to compensate for the loss of liberty, the denial of due process, and the almost monolithic support of the unlawful and anti-civil rights action which we have done in our nation's name.

Our most important act must be to ally ourselves with groups who are capable of resisting such evil as happened in the exclusion of our beloved American-Japanese neighbors in 1942.

I stand in total support of appropriate redress and reparations, knowing full well that we can never fully redress the pain and suffering.

Nevertheless, we must try.

**ACT FOUR: THEY'RE GONE.**

*[Next sign should be hanging on east side of room. Take it down, hold it, ask an audience member to keep it.]*

GILBERT SANCHEZ

My name is Gilbert Sanchez and I am speaking on behalf of Frente de los Pueblos Unidos. We are an organization based in the San Fernando Valley fighting for the rights

of Latino peoples, and I would like to put on record right now, that we believe that the Latino people will stand behind the Japanese people for reparations.

Now, we ask why will the Latino community support the Japanese community? I can speak for my personal experiences on behalf of myself and my family.

My uncles, my cousins and myself all worked in these fields [in the Domingues Hills, Torrance, Gardena, areas of South Central, Willowbrook] with the Japanese people that were inhabiting these same communities.

When the internment came down, as I recall, it was a very terrifying experience, especially for a lot of the Chicano-American people.

For example, one night after Pearl Harbor, as our family was asleep, in the middle of the night we heard a loud banging on the door and I remember my father getting up to answer it. Before he had a chance to approach the door, the door was broken down. It was the FBI or INS or what have you but the thing is they broke the door down and walked right in, searched the premises and then walked out. It terrified the heck out of my mother and out of the children that were there including myself, you know. Then they proceeded to go down the street doing the same thing to all the houses.

You know what happened, was that they were after the Japanese. They took the neighbors that we did have, you know, in the middle of the night. Their belongings were just left there. I mean the people just disappeared, you know. Why that happened, I mean, at that time there was no clear understanding.

People were talking and asking each other if the United States for some reason went to war with Mexico, would this also happen to the Chicano-American people, you know.

The INS was right there when they dragged the Japanese spouses away from their families.

I mean this really makes me angry right now because in the San Fernando Valley, for example, the same kind of terror, the same kind of abuses have been happening right now day to day.

[And our neighbors] we never did find out what happened to them.

## **ACT FIVE: THE AMERICAN FLAG**

### **SCENE ONE**

*[Take the American Flag tracing, hold it so all can read, then hang it on the pole.]*

SALLY KIRITA TSUNEISHI

*[Deliver from a central location, looking at the sign.]*

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Commission, my name is Sally Kirita Tsuneishi.

My father, an immigrant from Kumamoto, Japan, settled in Kohala, Hawaii at the early turn of the century. As a scholarly gentleman, he became the president of our Japanese community, the Japanese school; he was the town's newspaper reporter for the Hawaii Hochi, and he was the official matchmaker, a baishakunin. He was highly respected.

On December 7<sup>th</sup>, all the world was shocked by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. As for us, we were filled with a terrible fear.

That night an FBI agent with our town sheriff appeared at our door in the middle of the night to arrest my father. Without a word of protest, he got dressed and went with them into the dark night. We did not see him again for two and a half years.

[A]lmost a year after Pearl Harbor, [...] about 400 family members of these interned were asked to evacuate. The Army authorities never told us where we were going. We just blindly obeyed orders.

I can never forget the day the Army trucks rolled in front of my home. Because we were singled out from the many Japanese families, I felt an overwhelming sense of shame. We were no longer a part of the community. We became outcasts.

*[Point at the sign, look at "flag" .]*

As I passed my high school, I saw the American flag waving in the wind, and my emotions were in a turmoil. I thought of the prize-winning essay that I had written for my English class titled, "Why I am Proud to be an American." As tears streamed down my face, an awful realization dawned on me: I am a loyal American. Yes, I had the face of an enemy.

After an ocean voyage, a long train ride across the country, we arrived at Jerome, Arkansas, on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1943. Because I lived on the edge of the camp, I lived under the shadow of the barbed wire, the high sentry tower and the armed guard.

After many months, my father had still not joined us, as was promised to us, and we were very concerned for him. At the age of 16, I had assumed the role of head of the household for my mother could neither read nor write English. I was granted permission to visit my father, held in a prisoner of war camp in Camp Livingston, Louisiana. As I waited for his arrival at the guard house, I was shocked to see my father, stoop-shouldered, aged beyond his years, walking slowly toward me with the help of a cane. [A]fter two and a half years he was returned to us broken in health and in spirit. If there ever was a time when I wanted to lash out at my country, it was then. I cried out in my heart, “How could you do this to us?”

*[Take deep breaths. Let the testimony sink in. Walk to other side of circle.]*

### AMY MASS

My name is Amy Iwasaki Mass, I’m a clinical social worker and have worked in the profession for 23 years.

*[Kneel for the duration of testimony.]*

I was six years old when the war broke out between the United States and Japan. I spent three years of my childhood in a concentration camp at Heart Mountain, Wyoming.

Until I was in my mid-thirties, I did not think that camp was a bad experience. When people asked me how it was to be put away, I said it was fun for me, I was a child, I was with my parents. In Heart Mountain we played in the snow. Camp was fun for me.

Several years ago, however, I went through a period of careful self-examination, and these carefree memories began to crumble.

I started to remember the terror of the days following Pearl Harbor when I was afraid the FBI was going to come to take my father. I woke up each morning being afraid that he was gone.

I remembered the scared feeling I had as we lined up to go into the buses to take us to the assembly centers. We all wore tags with numbers. Each family lined up with the oldest member of the family at the head of the line, the youngest at the end. I was scared. I was the youngest and I wanted to be closer to my parents. My cousin, whose father I [was] taken away by the FBI – my cousin threw up in the bus on the way to the Pomona Assembly Center.

I remembered the guard towers, the soldiers with their guns pointed into us. Weren’t they there to be protecting us from all the potentially dangerous hostile people outside? Why were the guns pointed at us?

I remembered feeling bad about being Japanese, of being even able to speak Japanese, of having Japanese parents.

I felt ashamed because I loved my parents. I also loved America. I get goose bumps when I sing the Star Spangled Banner. I believed what our teachers taught about what a great country America is.

We were told that we were being put away for our own safety. We were told that this was a patriotic sacrifice necessary for national security.

The truth was that the government we trusted, the country we loved, the nation to which we had pledged loyalty had betrayed us, had turned against us.

It was more tempting and easier to believe the propaganda and rationalizations of the American government in order to defend ourselves against the truth. Rather than facing the truth that America was being racist and unfair, we wanted to believe that America did not hate and reject us.

## SCENE TWO

*[Movement Scene: Stand up and take suitcase from aisle. Open it on the ground, unpack, naming each object and asking people to hold it for me. Items in order.]*

### NIKIKO MASUMOTO

A Baseball– maybe from Zenimura.

A picture of my baachan. She’s standing on a dessert dune, wearing a white skirt and blouse. The wind is blowing and she’s holding down her skirt.

My jiichan’s belt.

My jiichan’s army jacket.

*[Keep the flower.]*

Kleenex flowers. One of my great grandfathers was one of the first to die in camp. There were no live flowers for his funeral.

*[Unpack sign last, ask someone to hold.]*

## ACT SIX: LIFE EXPECTANCY



ALICE NEHIRA

*[Holding Kleenex flower in hand. Ghostly.]*

My name is Alice Nehira. I was born on June 4, 1943 at the Tule Lake project in Newell, California.

At the time of my birth, my mother's physician in camp, performed a tubal ligation on her. She never gave her consent, and was totally unaware of it until ten years ago when she was examined by her physician. She is not the only one who bears physical scars as a result of our incarceration. I am married to another victim. He is permanently disfigured with burns over one-third of his body. Because the barracks we were assigned to had no hot running water, warm water for bathing purposes had to be heated over a fire.

At the age of three my husband fell into a tub of this boiling water and nearly died. Skin grafts were taken from his pregnant mother's thighs and she miscarried her child from shock.

*[Give the flower to an audience member.]*

MO NISHIDA

*[Start squatting, move a lot in this monologue.]*

My name is Mo Nishida. I am 44, and I was at Amache, Colorado.

I guess what I would like to talk about is my own personal experience, in particular after the war, in particular during this last period of my life. And it has to do with, okay – okay, let me start off with a little bit about my personal self.

*[Stand up and start to walk, talking directly to individuals in the audience.]*

I come from a fairly large clan of about – my mother had about eight children --- I mean eight sisters and brothers, and the family was really tight, okay, so that for me being, you know, the first grandchild I got a lot of support from this family.

In the last four years, four of my relatives four of my aunts and uncles have passed away. Okay, the oldest was about 60-something; the youngest was about 52. Okay, and they have all died from cancer or heart trouble. It is all stress-related kinds of things.

And I believe, you know, from the bottom of my heart, that, you know, this camp and the racism that our people had to face directly affected them and caused them to lose, okay, a good 10 or 15 years, right. The average is supposed to be around 70 right now.

Okay, for me, then, in terms of coming out of camp and moving around a lot, like going, especially in the country and having to, like, you know at every school we went to how you have to deal with this Jap business.

And I guess one incident that I remember as a child right after the war was, you know, coming to Los Angeles in a car and looking at the back of this bus and seeing this GI, this sailor, right looking at – into our car, right and then picked me out, right, and then give me a finger, right and give me this hate stare, right, that I didn't know what that was about.

And all I could do was personalize it. And this feeling of inferiority, of guilt kind of stuff, right. I mean always fearing the police and – or should I say feeling guilty. Whenever something happened, you know, you say, aw, shit, they are going to – you know, they are going to blame me, kind of stuff, that kind of thing, passing through life on that.

And this last thing I want to say, just, you know, directed to the Commission, this process that has been going on is, is that, you know, I feel really kind of insulted the way this thing has been coming out, right. I mean, when I heard that you all were coming down here on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, right in the gut of the week, right, right in the middle of the week and having meetings from 9 to 5, right, now, I just wonder whether you guys were thinking about people like me, who work.

I would like to see a full commission come back here on a weekend, right, so we can get people from outlying districts and, you know, get down and talk about this some more and really, you now, get our feeling out.

See, because I think the reality is, is that – you know, it is not us that [is] on trial right now.

*[Ask an audience member to read the last sign.]*

## **ACT SEVEN: GENEALOGIES**

*[Retrieve the jacket, put it on. Sit in chair in the midst of people.]*

**BILL SHINKAI**

My name is Bill Shinkai. I am going to be 45. And I was asked to express my feelings here tonight.

We went to Manzanar when I was five years old and as young as I was, I do have memories of it. They are not awfully clear at all times, but I know that one thing – the first thing we did – I remember the mattresses. I remember filling these mattresses of straw. I remember the barracks. We were given one room. There was nothing else but the beds, the cots and we were assigned – we had to live with another family.

I remember the windstorms and the terrible food and the loneliness and the – well, you know, I know it wasn't [as] hard on me as it was on my parents.

And you talk about – people talk about 40 years. I mean, why do we bring this up 40 years later? Well, this past week I have – the people in this community work – you know work. Different people. We have different political viewpoints, different attitudes, values.

But this is really the first time – I think, somehow or other, I have never felt closer to these people, to my people, then ever before in my life.

And 40 years. I think we have been in – they talk about being let out of camp in '45 and 44', '43. I don't think we ever did get out of camp. I think we are beginning to get out of camp now.

*[Take off the jacket, lay it neatly over the chair, like an altar.]*

#### NIKIKO MASUMOTO

My baachan says our family was one of the last to leave, my dad says it's because we had nowhere to go.

In 2007 I went with my family for the first time to visit Gila River, Arizona, where my family was in camp. A member of the Gila River Indian Community came with us to share his knowledge of my family's history and escort us through their land.

I found out that in the middle of the Arizona dessert and on land that was not theirs, the United States government built my grandparents' concentration camp while ignoring the Gila River Indian Community's rightful claim and ties to the land.

The Gila River Indians have promised to keep the campsite and to allow any descendent of Japanese Americans who were interned to visit their land. I don't know if it's written down or legally binding in either judicial system, but I believe they will keep their promise to save space for our memories.

Now there's almost nothing there.

The entire camp: hundreds of barracks, big mess halls and bathrooms, the baseball diamond Japanese Americans built - they were all destroyed shortly after the last people left.

Now, tumble weeds dot the parched earth and I can see just a few cacti stranded in the vastness of desert.

The landscape looks lonely.

We found a few things:

A rusty crumpled trashcan imprinted "US Army 1942" on the bottom.

Cracked gray cement foundations.

An empty cement pond carved into the earth by Japanese Americans trying to improve their isolated world.

Ghost fish.

There are 2 monuments:

A waist-high plaque stands alone telling part of the story to any passing snake or bird.

A semi-circle of white columns stand atop a small butte with more small plaques tell a bit more.

But from the closest public road, you can't see anything of this.

*[Walk to jacket, make contact.]*

It's 2011, and I think we're beginning to get out of camp now.

END OF PLAY

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