

Voice 1: Imagine a classroom - a standard vintage one out of a movie, old wooden schoolroom desks with the tables on the back, strewn with assorted papers, and large windows with the blinds pulled open...

Voice 2: there's chalkboard with small, scribbled math annotations. A globe rests on a desk at the back of the room...

Voice 1: A handful of glass bottles next to the windows...

Voice 2: Students sitting, hands neatly folded at their desks, looking to the side. It all seems like something out of a 1940s movie, except for one thing—the classroom is half-full.

(theme music plays)

Voice A: Seattle is—

Voice B: Well, we don't use umbrellas.

Voice C: Coffee.

Voice A: Computers?

Voice C: It's a city with a needle.

Voice B: Home to sasquatch.

Voice D: Home to the Museum of History and Industry.

Voice B: Innovation.

Voice C: Rain.

Voice A: A story.

Voice D: A history.

(music fades out underneath)

Voice 2: My name's Atul.

Voice 1: and I'm TK. We're Youth Advisors at the Museum of History and Industry in Seattle—

ATUL: And this is Rainy Day History, recorded at MOHAI. In this first season, we're exploring inclusion, exclusion, objects, people, and how the Seattle we know now - the questions we grapple with now about what it means to be a Seattleite—

TK: Are all part of a bigger story of belonging. Enjoy the show, whether it's raining outside, or not.

(sound of rain fades in and out)

ATUL: The scene we described before, with the half-full classroom...

TK: is from a photo taken at Bailey Gatzert Elementary, a school in what is now the International District, in 1942—during the middle of World War II. The reason it was half-empty?

ATUL: 45% of the students in the school were of Japanese descent. At this time, in the wake of Executive Order 9066, the government detained them, along with their families, for no reason other than their ethnicity.

TK: Today, we tell the story of the Executive Order, Japanese incarceration, and what it all has to do with Seattle—

ATUL: Wait, incarceration? Don't people usually call it internment...

TK: Good question, Atul.

ATUL: I'm full of those...

TK: Well, internment is indeed the dominant term, but many organizations, like MOHAI itself, have started to use the term "incarceration." Internment, as explained by the Densho Encyclopedia, means the "legally permissible, though morally questionable, detention of (quote un-quote) "enemy aliens" in time of war". When all people of Japanese descent, without probable cause, including those who were American citizens, were rounded up and forced into prison, this was not internment. It was incarceration.

ATUL: So...wait. Incarceration sort of calls it what it is. No euphemisms here! I like it. Is there anything else we should be keeping in mind?

TK: It's also important to remember that it can be difficult to trace the history of mass movements of people, because there are so many of them. It is wrong to imply that there is a single story of incarceration or a single object that summarizes the experience of incarceration during the war. These stories are so intensely personal—incarceration uprooted lives, sometimes even for generations—The stories we are about to share really are just about *some* of the objects that were left behind.

ATUL: And *where* they were left behind...which, eventually, will bring us back to Bailey Gatzert Elementary.

(small piano music interlude)

TK: True Northwest, MOHAI's core exhibit about Seattle history, has a section dedicated to World War II. Along one wall are some paragraphs about Japanese incarceration, photos, a copy of a notice to people of Japanese descent about Executive Order 9066, and a station where you can listen to oral histories from the Densho archives. Next to the wall, there is a giant trunk.

ATUL: This trunk was one of the things that was left behind.

TK: By a man named Kino Iwasaki.

ATUL: And who was this Iwasaki?

TK: He and his family owned and ran the Star Lake Nursery near Auburn, Washington, before the war. He was incarcerated for three years and used the wooden chest to ship his belongings home

when the war was over. He had been able to take some of his things with him, but also left a lot behind, including his whole nursery.

ATUL: Yeah, that's a lot of plants.

TK: A family friend took care of the nursery while he was incarcerated. But he was still, literally, *uprooted*.

ATUL: (pause) Uprooted. I get it. Because of plants.

TK: Thanks, Atul... When people were detained, they had very little time to make plans, nor did they know when or if they would be able to return to where they had lived or worked. Some had less than a week to prepare...It felt almost random, and certainly unexpected. Everybody had to rely on the kindness of friends and neighbors to keep things intact.

ATUL: Or, in some cases, school principals.

TK: True. Right next to Iwasaki's trunk in the exhibit, rest four dolls. The dolls are small, nondescript. One could walk right past them. And yet, they demonstrate the heartbreaking truth that not only did adults have to figure out what to do at work, like Mr. Iwasaki, even kids had to figure out what to do with their belongings.

ATUL: Which, finally, brings us back to Bailey Gatzert Elementary, the school from the beginning of the episode, where 45% of the students were of Japanese descent. When the military began to post notices ordering all people of Japanese descent—regardless of citizenship—to leave their homes, with no information about where they were going, 60 dolls were given to the Bailey Gatzert principal, Ada Mahon, for sake-keeping. The dolls were Hinamatsuri dolls—

TK: The Hinamatsuri is, according to an article by the Japanese American National Museum, "Hinamatsuri literally translates as Doll Festival, but is often referred to as Girl's Day...On this day, families with young daughters celebrate this event by displaying *hina-ningyo*, special dolls for the occasion. The celebration of Hinamatsuri was brought to the United States by early *Issei* immigrant families."

ATUL: So, they weren't just dolls?

TK: They had cultural importance. In fact, dolls were actually sent between Japan and the US in 1927 to increase cultural community. But they might have not seemed like something to bring as people were forced to pack for detention centers. People received little notice and were only allowed to bring one suitcase. There wasn't a lot of room.

ATUL: And so the dolls just stayed at the school, where they remained until 1973.

TK: The kids never came back to pick them up. And of course, we don't know exactly why. For some, their lives may have been completely changed by the war. Some Americans of Japanese descent left the West coast, others relocated to other neighborhoods, areas, or homes in search for work. For others, the dolls might have just slipped their minds, forgotten. We don't know. The historical record is...incomplete.

ATUL: When learning about the Second World War, the dominant narrative often tries to push Japanese Incarceration to the back of the story.

TK: The work of preserving this history and objects has often fallen on Japanese communities, as they reckon with their own personal history. Some stories of objects have remained untold in museums, or perhaps cast aside, leaving some things out, or meaning stories don't always reach the public. In a museum, and in Seattle, it is important it is to support and preserve the history that we do know.

ATUL: So, to preserve the best that we can, let's be *objective* here.

TK: Ha ha Atul. Very funny. *Objective*.

ATUL: Thanks TK. And talk a little bit about how all of this—incarceration, Americans of Japanese descent and on the west coast, the Second World War—came to be.

(brief musical interlude)

TK: You know what really annoys me? Besides you...

ATUL: (clears throat) Ouch. Uh...All this? When you, um, looked at what the weather was supposed to be like in the morning and then you wear shorts and you have to walk around in the pouring rain? I dunno, when your dog pees on your bed? Help me out, I don't know.

TK: I find it annoying that sometimes the first mention of Americans of Japanese descent is during incarceration during World War II. But of course, it's not like they all magically appeared in order to be interned, detained, and incarcerated by the government. They were all part of a larger city infrastructure. By 1940, Seattle had a well-established Chinatown and a little Japantown.

Japanese immigrants began to come to the United States, often to set up shops, to work in factories, or work on farms, but that all stopped in 1924. When, a United States federal law, fueled by racist and nativist prejudice, established a quota system of immigration, and banned immigration from Asia. You know, Atul, we're both of Asian descent. Me from Vietnam.

ATUL: Me from India. So, (clears throat) that means our that our families wouldn't have been able to come. Which, of course, means Japanese American communities experienced anti-Asian sentiments and government policies even *before* the Second World War. There was a pervasive belief that Asians were different, others, and foreigners.

TK: And of course, many weren't foreigners! Because immigration from Japan effectively stopped after the Immigration Act of 1924, Americans of Japanese descent were split into two generational categories: the *Issei* generation, who had immigrated before 1924, and the second, *Nisei*, generation, who were born in the United States. Both generations faced discrimination well before World War II—such as exclusionary land laws that did not allow them to own property because they were not citizens, and couldn't be citizens.

ATUL: By the time of World War II, Seattle was rapidly growing. It was a boomtown and a hotspot for weaponry and military manufacturing. After the Great Depression, the war became a point of unity. The government put up posters saying:

TK: “Why do we fight? What must each of us do to win?”

ATUL: This is a big topic. I’m having trouble wrapping my head around it. So, ok, so we’ve got a local Japanese American community established in Seattle before the war, a system of exclusionary government policies...

TK: All before WWII.

ATUL: So, the Second World War began in 1939, but the United States refused to engage directly, only sending military support to Europe...

TK: Until they were bombed by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941. The US formally entered the war the next day.

ATUL: So the declaration of war wasn’t the only government action after Pearl Harbor. After the attack, the FBI arrested 6,700 *Issei* men, many whom were community and civic leaders, held as so called “potential threats to national security”...

TK: Because they were not citizens—if you were a person of Japanese descent not born in the United States, you could not become a naturalized citizen at the time. They had few rights, and were held by the department of justice. A year later, when *Nisei* people, who were citizens, were investigated, the military actually made small prisons that they called “citizen isolation centers.”

ATUL: Worries about national security grew, and on February 19th, 1942, President Franklin [Delano] Roosevelt issued Executive order 9066, which let the Secretary of War (now known as the Secretary of Defense) to create military control zones and force the relocation of those who were considered potential security threats. While it did not explicitly state that it referred to those of Japanese descent, it was quickly interpreted as such, and most of the west coast became a military zone. Soon after, the military began the process of relocating those of Japanese descent to 10 different incarceration camps and 59 other various government facilities.

TK: But to really put this into perspective: during World War II, no Japanese American in the U.S., Hawaii or Alaska, citizen or immigrant, was ever convicted of espionage or sabotage.

ATUL: And, on these somber notes, it is important to recognize Washington’s intimate connection to incarceration. On March 30th, Bainbridge Island residents of Japanese descent were transferred to the Puyallup Temporary Assembly Center—the first on the West coast.

(musical interlude)

TK: The Puyallup TAC is now home to the Puyallup fair. Can you imagine, having been one of those little kids from the elementary school? Now brought into this huge complex, not knowing where exactly you’d end up?

ATUL: For many, where they ended up was less than pleasant. Huge barbed wire fences hung around the camp edges. Dissidents were sent to smaller camps for quote-un-quote “troublemakers.” Armed guards stalked the borders, inmates were forced to do roll call.

TK: This is depressing.

ATUL: Yeah.

TK: Tell me something happy?

ATUL: Well, there are stories of immense bravery from soldiers of Japanese descent in the American Army during the war, ways in which community leaders came together to teach kids during incarceration; some even resisted incarceration, like Gordon Hirabayashi, who was born in Seattle, Washington and attending University of Washington at the time. Instead of relocating, he turned himself in to the FBI. As a citizen, he demanded due process and eventually, he became part of a larger court case...but it was eventually struck down.

TK: The last incarceration camp closed in 1946. When Americans of Japanese descent came back, they often didn't have a home. Some, like Kino Iwasaki, through trust and resilience, were able to remake their old jobs, work, and life—the Iwasaki family still owns the nursery today.

ATUL: Lynne, a staff member at MOHAI, had this to say about the trunk and the dolls:

[TK voicing Lynne's quote]: “These objects are very powerful in that the story that they tell and represent is one of unjust treatment and exclusion, racial bias and imprisonment. Given current U.S. political debates about limited immigration based in racial biases, these objects represent an important history lesson that should not be forgotten”

ATUL: Thanks Lynne.

TK: And immigration, as we all know, is a hot topic. I suppose it's valuable to see that anti-immigrant sentiment isn't new, it's part of a larger story. And that story isn't far removed from Seattle. It was up close, and personal.

(moment of silence)

TK: You know, I think this story isn't really just about being a Seattleite.

ATUL: TK! You'll ruin the podcast.

TK: Hear me out!

What happened to people of Japanese descent here was similar to what happened all over the west coast. It wasn't just a Seattle thing—there was a presidential Executive Order. Really, it wasn't about who was a Seattleite...because it was about who was an American. Of course, this doesn't mean that Seattle can forget about the very actions that took place within our city or distance ourselves from the past. Instead, we must recognize resilience in the face of hardship, and the ways in which power and prejudice shape our city, and fight for everybody to belong.

ATUL: Huh.

TK: Ha! At a loss for words?

ATUL: I suppose. In which case, it might be better just to use somebody else's. I've been thinking a lot, obviously, about exclusion this episode. But perhaps the lesson we can learn is one of inclusion. Frank Murphy, who dissented in the Supreme Court case, *Korematsu v United States*, which allowed incarceration to continue, said that residents of the United States, (quote) "are primarily and necessarily a part of the new and distinct civilization of the United States. They must, accordingly, be treated at all times as the heirs of the American experiment, and as entitled to all the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution" (unquote).

TK: Wow Atul... I never pegged you to be able to quote such a supreme court case. Since when did *you* get so smart?

ATUL: Yeah, I didn't know I knew this all either... Thank you to the writers of our podcast! We couldn't do this without them.

(music begins and fades under spoken word)

TK: Thanks for listening to our podcast!

Atul: We hope you enjoyed what you learned. If you want to learn more about Seattle history, you can visit the museum, or visit the website at mohai.org. That's M-O-H-A-I dot org.

TK: And, if you want to see the trunks and the dolls, they are on display in the World War II section of "True Northwest: The Seattle Journey"

Come back next week for another exciting episode of *Rainy Day History* on changing tunes and changing tides in Seattle's Central District.

(jaunty piano comes in and plays out underneath)

FINCH: This is Finch, I'm one of our editors, here with the credits.

This episode was researched by Tyler, written by Leela, and recorded by Ziah and Andrea. Our editors are Grace and myself. I wrote our theme music and performed it along with Tyler, and friend of the pod Sylvie Wang. Our logo was designed by Grace. Marketing help came from Julia, Tyler, and Grace. Special thanks to Pei Pei, Chris, Tori, and Emily T, also known as our style icon and "The Celery Queen." Stay dry out there!