

For Immediate Release
March 18, 2004

Subject: 2004 Tule Lake Pilgrimage, *Citizens Betrayed*
July 2 -5, 2004

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Registration forms are now available for the bi-annual Tule Lake Pilgrimage, a four-day gathering of the Japanese American diaspora. The pilgrimage is scheduled over the 4th of July weekend, Friday, July 2nd through Monday, July 5th.

This year's pilgrimage, *Citizens Betrayed*, will tell the little-known story of 5,589 Nisei and Kibei in Tule Lake who - under duress and with feelings of bitter disappointment and anger toward the country that imprisoned them and their families - renounced their U.S. citizenship. The main panel discussion will explore the conditions that drove them to give up their birthright. It will include former renunciants who will speak about their experiences, including those who went to Japan as well as those who remained in the U.S. as "Native American aliens."

"Now that nearly 60 years have gone by, it's time to tell this story with greater understanding and compassion," says Hiroshi Shimizu, the San Francisco-based Sansei who is coordinating this year's all-volunteer pilgrimage planning committee. His father, the late Iwao Shimizu, was a member of the Tule Lake defense committee that assisted San Francisco civil rights attorney, Wayne Collins, in his 20+ year legal battle on behalf of the renunciants.

"Like the draft resisters, this group of Japanese Americans suffered a lifetime of stigma for responding with protest and anger to the unjust treatment of the U.S. government," says Shimizu. "Their dissent contradicted the narrative of unquestioning patriotism, consequently, they were labeled 'disloyal' and scorned as troublemakers," he says. "We hope this pilgrimage will help people see Tule Lake in a more positive way, as the camp where Nikkei protested and resisted the injustice of their incarceration."

Other planned pilgrimage activities will include a tour of the Tule Lake campsite and memorial service at the cemetery on the camp grounds. Several workshop panels are planned, including a discussion on the historic preservation of the Tule Lake site, a panel addressing the unfinished business of redress, and a discussion on protest and resistance in the camps. Several films concerning these topics will be shown, and a taiko workshop will be organized to include pilgrims and members of the local community.

As in previous years, inter-generational discussion groups will provide an occasion to share experiences and help heal the wounds of the incarceration. For the more active, there will be opportunities to hike up Castle Rock and to explore the Native American past at Captain Jack's Stronghold. On the evening of July 4th, local residents in the Tule Lake region are invited to the closing cultural performance of the pilgrimage.

Pilgrimage Details

Pilgrimage participants travel together in chartered buses that will depart from San Francisco, San Jose, Union City, Seattle, Portland, Berkeley and Sacramento. Accommodations are double occupancy college dorms at the Oregon Institute of Technology in Klamath Falls. Registration forms are available through the contact persons below, or may be downloaded from the Tule Lake Pilgrimage website <<http://www.tulelake.org>>

Thanks to the voluntary efforts of the Tule Lake Committee, the cost of this event remains extremely low. The registration fee is \$300 per person, which covers all activities, transportation, housing, and meals. For those on low or fixed incomes, the fee is \$250. If you are able, pilgrimage organizers ask that you please consider making a donation which will be used to defray registration fees for others requiring financial assistance. Scholarship applications can be obtained online at www.tulelake.org. For more information on scholarships, contact Stacy Kono <konostril@yahoo.com> 510-841-2143.

Check the website for registration information and news on the pilgrimage, or call or email:

San Francisco: Hiroshi Shimizu <hshimizu@pacbell.net> 415-566-2279

San Jose: Jimi Yamaichi <jimiyama@aol.com> 408-269-9458

Sacramento: Grace Kajita <Tulelake@att.net> 916-392-5416

Seattle: Stan Shikuma <sktaiko1@mac.com> 206-721-1128

Los Angeles: Sharon Yamato <syamato@comcast.net> 310-578-0090

Japan: Sachiko Takita <stakita@yokohama-cu.ac.jp> 045-787-2099

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Background SIDEBAR 3/18/04
Citizens Betrayed

Tule Lake was unique among the camps. It was the first War Relocation Authority camp, opened on May 26, 1942, and the last to close, March 28, 1946. With a peak population of over 18,700, Tule Lake was the largest camp. Tule Lake was the only camp to become a segregation center and the only camp ruled under martial law, occupied by the Army from November 14, 1943 to January 15, 1944.

Tule Lake became a high-security segregation center on July 15, 1943, the result of the War Department's Application for Leave Clearance, a form that included two clumsily-worded questions; number 27 concerned military service for those imprisoned; number 28 implied allegiance to the Japanese Emperor.

Following administration of this divisive loyalty questionnaire, nearly 12,000 persons were removed from other camps and sent to the Tule Lake segregation center. Known as "no-nos," most had given negative responses to questions 27 and 28, or refused to answer the two ambiguously-worded questions. Many were motivated by anger over the injustice of their treatment by the American government, while others sought to ensure the safety and security of their families by keeping everyone together at Tule Lake. Contributing to the volatile mix at the segregation center were those who had given up hope for a future in America and sought repatriation to Japan, and leaders and dissidents from other camps who protested their treatment. Six thousand pre-segregation Tuleans remained, not wishing to make another move to an uncertain future in a new camp.

From the beginning, the segregation center was wracked with conflict. It was a complex, overcrowded community where tempers were short and frustrations were high. Following a major work stoppage, a mass show of internee support led to the imposition of martial law and an Army takeover of the camp. The elected leadership within the segregation center were picked up and imprisoned in the stockade. The repression led to the rise of pro-Japan groups that advocated a return to Japan; their supporters demonstrated allegiance by performing early-morning exercises around the center's perimeter.

Perhaps the most tragic and divisive issue was created when Public Law 405 was passed by Congress and signed by President Roosevelt on July 1, 1944. This law, directed at the Japanese Americans in Tule Lake, authored by the U.S. Attorney General Francis Biddle, permitted an American citizen to renounce citizenship during time of war. This denationalization effort was promoted by U.S. Congressional Representatives from California, Clair Engle and Leroy Johnson, supported by the American Legion, and culminated decades of nativist effort to rid the country of unwanted "yellow hordes."

Passage of this renunciation law began one of the saddest, and least known chapters of Japanese American history. Initially, only 117 applied. However, once the announcement was made in December 17, 1944, that internment was ending and the camps were closing, the segregation center was swept up in panic, anger, confusion and anxiety.

Individual motives varied widely, but had little to do with the issues of loyalty or disloyalty. Many Tuleans believed that renouncing their American citizenship would enable them, as prisoners of war, to keep their family together in Tule Lake. Worry over what would happen to them and their families - sent into hostile communities with no money, no promise of income and no place to live - led to thousands of renunciations.

In the warped and prison-like environment of the segregation center, rumors, speculation, and a lack of trusted sources of information meant that making a rational decision about the future was not a simple task. Many believed, for example, based on news from contraband short-wave radios, that Japan was winning the war; Allied victories were dismissed as WRA propaganda.

Nisei and Kibei described intense pressure from their non-citizen Issei parents to renounce, a strategy to keep the family together in case the Issei were purged and deported to Japan after the war. Others describe coercion by pro-Japan groups that led them to renounce. Many adopted the exaggerated ethnic pride of a mistreated minority group, viewing renunciation as a way of showing one was "true Japanese." Young Nisei men classified as 4-C enemy aliens, renounced when the Selective Service reversed itself and began drafting internees to serve in the segregated 442nd Regimental combat unit. For people with no legal forums available to them, renouncing became a way to express anger and to protest their treatment.

When the war ended, the tragedy of the renunciants became apparent when the Department of Justice prepared for the mass deportations of these stateless individuals who were betrayed by the country of their birth. Some of them had family and property in Japan; after having an economic stake in America wrested from them by the removal, they chose not to stay in a country that did not want them. Others remained in the U.S. as "Native American aliens" stripped of their citizenship. The statistics are staggering. At Tule Lake, 7 out of 10 citizens 18 years and older renounced, and 73% of families had at least one renunciant. Most who renounced had little understanding of what they were giving up, or that they would become "enemy aliens" who could be legally expelled.

Of the 5,589 Japanese Americans who renounced, 5,461 were from Tule Lake. Nearly all who renounced, 5,409, sought reversal, including 1,327 who expatriated to Japan. Most of the renunciants regained their citizenship primarily because of the heroic and largely unsung efforts of attorney Wayne Collins. The renunciation law was repealed in 1971, but the constitutionality of depriving native-born Americans of their citizenship was never ruled on.

Even though they were legally absolved by the U.S. Government, many former renunciants have not sensed forgiveness coming from within their own community. Most express a sense of being shunned, treated as though they did something wrong by accommodating their families and pursuing their options under impossibly difficult circumstances. Consequently, they have learned to avoid the topic of Tule Lake, a subject area filled with powerful feelings of stigma and shame.

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