

Silence . . . No More

by Kiku Funabiki

(1) Silence, forty years of silence
Forty years of anger, pain, helplessness
Shackled in the hearts of
Issei, Nisei, Kibei *

(5) Many died in silence
Some by their own hands
Some by others

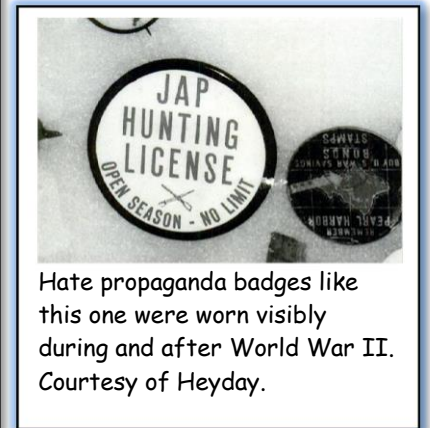
Today
The survivors

(10) Stood tall, strong, proud
Issei, Nisei, Kibei all vowed
No more enryo, giri, gaman **
Shattering the silence.

(15) Today
the survivors
Cried out redress, restitution, reparations



Kiku holds up her father's prisoner uniform as she testifies at the redress hearings in San Francisco in 1982. Photo by Isao Isago. Courtesy of Heyday.



Hate propaganda badges like this one were worn visibly during and after World War II. Courtesy of Heyday.

(20) for
a father detained in five
prisoner-of war camps in America
for the crime of being Japanese
and joined his loved ones
in yet another barbed wire compound
then returned home to die at seventy-three
in San Francisco ***

(25) for
a mother whose demons drove her
to hammer her infant to death
now skipping merrily after butterflies
in the snow

(30) for
a brother, honor student,
star athlete, Purple Heart veteran
now alone in a sleazy Seattle Hotel room
sitting on the edge of a cot

(35) rocking, rocking

(40) for
a girl of fourteen
mother to the Japanese American children
in Petersburg
orphaned by the FBI seizure
of all Japanese adults
now agonizing in guilt
at having detoured the jailhouse
too ashamed at the sight of her father
waving desperately at her

(45) for
a baby whose whimpers
were silenced forever
in a camp hospital
the Caucasian doctor who never came
was a father of a son killed
in the Pacific

Silence
Silence, no more . . . no more

This poem was written after a public hearing in 1982, held by the Commission on the Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians in ten cities. Many ex-detainees spoke out for the first time. The incidents are taken from actual testimonies at hearings the author attended in San Francisco and Seattle. The author later read her poem with her testimony at a Congressional hearing before the Committee on the Judiciary in Washington, D.C. in 1984.

* Issei, Nisei, Kibei: first generation/second generation/second generation educated in Japan

** enryo, giri, gaman: deference/obligation/endurance (deeply entrenched cultural values)

*** Author's father: Sojiro Hori

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