Willie Ito ICOMM Keynote Lunch Presentation

On February 18, 1942, Executive Order 9066 was issued and 8-year-old Willie Ito and his family were removed from their San Francisco home and forced into an internment camp along with over 120,000 U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry. Rule of law principles were trampled and every civil and constitutional right guaranteed by the Bill of Rights was violated. This ugly episode in our history continues to rear its head as selective enforcement is being advocated with seemingly increasing volume. Regardless of the context, such action would similarly violate U.S. laws as well many international human rights treaties to which the U.S. is a signatory.

Willie Ito’s professional journey began in the dried salt lake desert internment camp in Topaz, Utah. In his spare time in the camp, Willie would entertain himself by drawing pictures on the corners of the War Relocation Authority provisions catalog. Flipping the pages, he became a self-taught animator. To the bemusement of his parents, at age 10, Willie announced his intention to become a cartoonist or comicstrip artist upon their release from camp. His professional career as an animator began in 1954, when Willie was hired by Disney and assigned to the “Lady Unit”. He assumed that this was a derogatory term for junior animators, but Willie was actually assigned to the Lady and Tramp project. As fate would have it, his first assignment was to animate the “spaghetti sequence” in The Lady and the Tramp, a scene that would go on to become one of the most iconic of early feature animation in history. Willie moved on to Warner Bros. Cartoons and spent the following 6 years on such classics as "What's Opera Doc?" and "One Froggy Evening" directed by Chuck Jones.

In 1961, he became one of the “Three Tooners” at the famed animation studio Hanna Barbera; contributing to the creation and production of the Flintstones, Yogi Bear, the Jetsons and Scooby-Doo, among others.

In the 1970’s Willie returned to Disney where, as Director of International Creative, he played a key role in the expansion of the American animation industry into Japan, Korea and ultimately, China. Now in his 80’s, Willie remains healthy and active and is a passionate and compassionate publisher and illustrator of children’s books with his writer partner Shig Yabu. He will speak about the books that he is most proud of including Hello Maggie!, and the long-form follow-up A Boy of Heart Mountain, fictionalized accounts of the experiences of a young boy in the Heart Mountain Internment Camp in Wyoming. Like so many Nisei and Sansei (second and third-generation) internees, Ito notes that it took him many years to work up to participating in the project, having never previously dwelled on his own incarceration experience.
Japanese American Incarceration Facts

PRECIS
During World War II the U.S. Government forcibly removed over 120,000 Japanese Americans from the Pacific Coast. These individuals, two-thirds of them U.S. citizens, were sent to ten concentration camps built throughout the western interior of the United States. The Japanese Americans of Hawaii were not forcibly removed because they were such a large proportion of the territory population.

INITIAL AUTHORIZATION
Executive Order 9066, February 19, 1942, authorized the military to exclude any persons from military areas without trial or hearings. Executive Order 9012, March 18, 1942, established the War Relocation Authority (WRA) which administered the concentration camps.

AGENCIES INVOLVED IN INCARCERATION
- Western Defense Command was an army command area consisting of eight western states.
- Wartime Civil Control Administration (WCCA) was responsible for the "assembly centers" evacuation.
- War Relocation Authority (WRA) ran the concentration camps.

SUPREME COURT DECISIONS
- *Hirabayashi v. United States* (1943) upheld the legality of using racial criteria in the military's curfew order.
- *Korematsu v. United States* (1943) upheld the constitutionality of the military detention process.
- *Ex Parte Endo* (1944) found that the WRA could not detain U.S. citizens who were shown to be loyal, effectively ending incarceration.

"ASSEMBLY CENTER" LOCATIONS AND DATES OF OPERATION (1942)
These 16 centers, run by the U.S. Army, were where Japanese Americans were sent in preparation for eventual removal from the Pacific Coast.
- Puyallup, WA (4/28 - 9/12)
- Marysville, CA (5/8 - 06/29)
- Tanforan, CA (4/28 - 10/13)
- Turlock, CA (4/30 - 8/12)
- Salinas, CA (4/27 - 7/4)
- Tulare, CA (4/20 - 9/4)
- Pomona, CA (5/7 - 8/24)
- Manzanar, CA (3/21 - 6/2)
- Portland, OR (5/2 - 9/10)
- Sacramento, CA (5/6 - 6/26)
- Stockton, CA (5/10 - 10/17)
CONCENTRATION CAMP LOCATIONS AND DATES OF OPERATION
The 10 concentration camps were where Japanese Americans were housed behind barbed wire and watched over by armed guards. The camps were run by the WRA.

- Central Utah (Topaz, UT) (9/11/42 - 10/31/45)
- Colorado River (Poston, AZ) (5/8/42 - 11/28/45)
- Gila River (Rivers, AZ) (7/20/42 - 11/10/45)
- Granada (Amache, CO) (8/27/42 - 10/15/45)
- Heart Mountain, WY (8/12/42 - 11/10/45)
- Jerome (Denson, AR) (10/6/42 - 6/30/44)
- Manzanar, CA (6/1/42 - 11/21/45)
- Minidoka (Hunt, ID) (8/10/42 - 10/28/45)
- Rohwer, AR (9/18/42 - 11/30/45)
- Tule Lake (Newell, CA) (5/27/42 - 3/20/46)

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT CAMPS
Internees from the internment camps that the WRA labeled as "trouble-makers" and who were not U.S. citizens were placed in these camps.

- Santa Fe, NM
- Bismarck, ND
- Crystal City, TX
- Missoula, MT

CITIZEN ISOLATION CAMPS
Internees from the internment camps that the WRA labeled as "trouble-makers" and who were U.S. citizens were sent to these camps.

- Moab, UT
- Leupp, AZ

OTHER CENTERS
- Seagoville, TX
- Stringtown, OK
- Assembly Inn, Montreat, NC
- Fort Sill, OK
- Tulahoma, TN
- Fort Livingston, Alexandria, LA
- Fort Lincoln, ND
- Fort Meade, MD
- Fort Richardson, AR
- HAWAII DETENTION CAMPS
• Sand Island (1942-43)
• Honouliuli (1943-45)
• Maui (1942-43)
• Kauai (1942-44)
• Hawaii (1942-44)
• Molokai (1942)
• Lanai (1942)

REPARATIONS AND REDRESS
Japanese American Evacuation Claims Act of 1948 paid a total of $38 million, less than 10 cents for every dollar lost. In 1983 the Commission on the Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians published *Personal Justice Denied* which recommends compensating all living victims of the incarceration. The Civil Liberties Act of 1988 mandated a formal government apology for the internment and a payment to all living inmates.

1 Reproduced courtesy of the Japanese American National Museum. For more information and additional resources visit: [www.janm.org](http://www.janm.org)