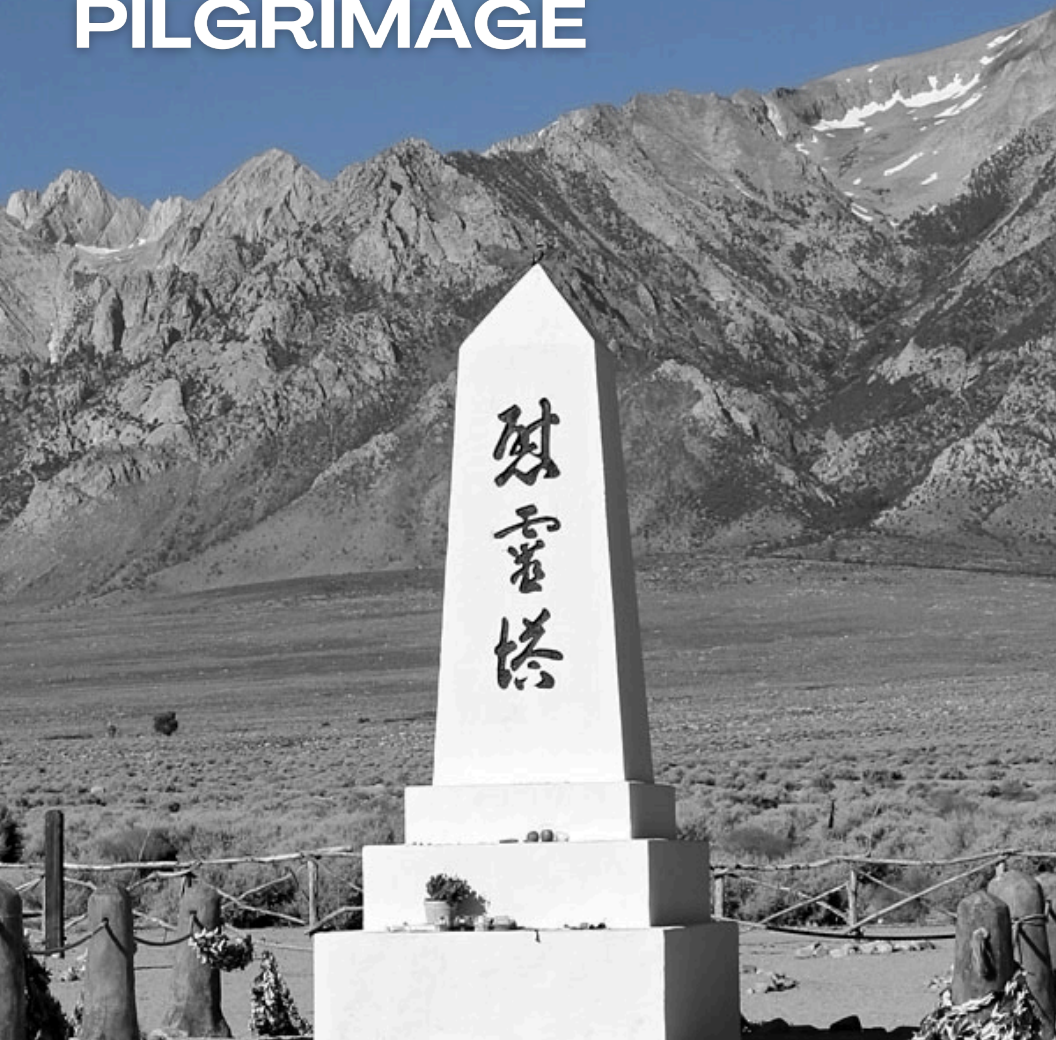


MANZANAR PILGRIMAGE



RESOURCE GUIDE

Created by Kevin Doi, Gillian Garcia, Krystin Bruan and Jason Ashimoto



Dear Friends,


We are on our way to Manzanar!


On behalf of the Asian American Center of Fuller Theological Seminary and Evergreen Baptist Church of L.A., we are delighted you are making this historic and sacred pilgrimage to the Manzanar National Historic Site. This trip marks the 56th annual pilgrimage organized by the [Manzanar Committee](#) and the [U.S. National Park Service](#) to remember the forced relocation and unjust incarceration of more than 125,000 legal residents and Americans of Japanese descent during WWII.

Manzanar is therefore a sacred site, set apart in our collective memories. We journey to honor our ancestors who were forced to make this desert their home amid grave injustice.

This digital resource is a handy reference for our day-long excursion. Below you can read a brief history of how people of faith responded to displacement and the unfathomable challenges of life in the camps. You will also find our itinerary and a list of resources for further learning.

Additionally, because this is as much a spiritual pilgrimage as it is a physical destination, we have included some reflection questions to deepen your own experience, and we hope, to open up opportunities to connect and process with your fellow pilgrims along the way.





We are truly grateful for your presence on this trip. We pray that as you walk the hallowed grounds of Manzanar, listen to presenters, and tour the exhibits and buildings, you will hear the voice of the Spirit as the one who brings hope amid suffering, just as so many resilient and faithful Japanese American incarcerated did during one of the darkest periods in our nation's history.

Sincerely,

2025 Manzanar Pilgrimage Planning Team

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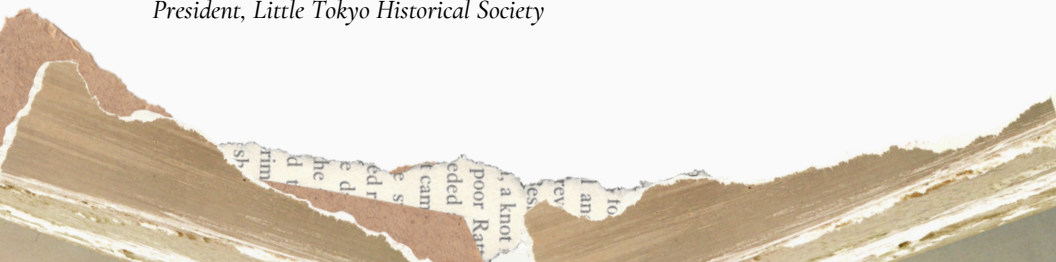




Photo: Heidi Gile

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6:00 am

Fuller Group

Assemble at 460 Ford Place, Pasadena

Evergreen Group

Assemble at 1255 San Gabriel Blvd, Rosemead

6:30 am

Buses leaves for Manzanar

(30-min. bio break)

11:00 am

Arrive at Manzanar

(You will receive a bento-boxed lunch at this time)

12:00 pm

Join Manzanar Committee Program

1:00 pm

Explore Exhibits

2:30 pm

Closing Worship Service

(Meet at Protestant church site block 15, see map)

4:00 pm

Leave Manzanar

(30-min. bio break on the way back)

8:00 pm

Return to Fuller and Evergreen

**Itinerary is subject to change. Other than departure times, all times are approximate.*

As a spiritual pilgrimage, we invite you to reflect on your own experience to Manzanar, as well as the experiences of others. As such, we hope these simple prompts will provide meaningful personal reflection as well as opening for deeper conversation with your fellow pilgrims.

REFLECTION

On the way up:

- What initially drew you to this pilgrimage?
- As you embark on this trip, what thoughts or feelings arise for you?
- How much history did you learn about the incarceration of Japanese Americans growing up? What are you most curious to discover or learn more about?
- As you consider your time at Manzanar, how might you turn this trip into a sacred one for yourself?

God of Justice, Love, and Mercy

Words by Edwin M. Willmington

Verse 1:

God of justice, love, and mercy
Pour your wisdom on our souls;
By your all-sustaining power
Keep our spirits strong and whole.
Lift our eyes to see your vision
Of a world in urgent need;
Grant us courage, then, to follow.
Bringing comfort with each deed.

Verse 2:

God of justice, love, and mercy
With compassion let us care;
As we come in humble weakness,
May your strength be ours to share.
Press our hearts to know the struggle
Of the ones we cannot see;
Brothers, sisters, all who suffer,
May Your kindness set them free.

Verse 3:

God of justice, love and mercy,
Send us out and make us bold.
As we strive for your high calling,
Let our hands your mercies hold.
You have blessed us with abundance,
Gifts to share with those in need;
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
May we follow as You lead.

How Deep the Father's Love for Us

Words by Stuart Townend

Verse 1:

How deep the Father's love for us
How vast beyond all measure
That God should give his only Son
To make a wretch his treasure
How great the pain of searing loss
The Spirit turns her face away
As wounds which marred the Chosen Son
Bring many ones to glory

Verse 2:

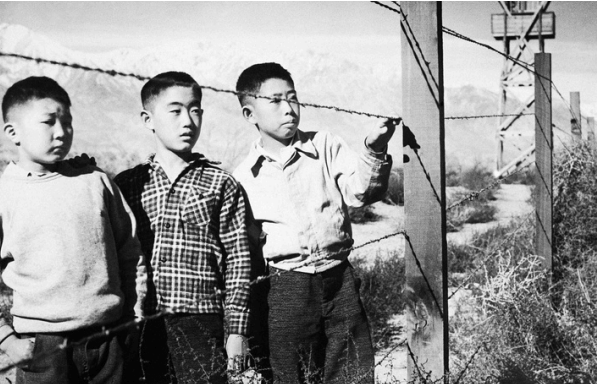
Behold the man upon a cross
My sin upon His shoulders
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers
It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished
His dying breath has brought me life
I know that it is finished

Verse 3:

We will not boast in anything
No gifts, no power, no wisdom
But we will boast in Jesus Christ
His death and resurrection
Why should we gain from His reward?
We cannot give an answer
But this we know with all our hearts
His wounds have paid our ransom



Photos by Ansel Adams, Clem Albers, and Toyo Mizutake via NPS.gov



Former Evergreen Baptist building used as a registration site

Kevin's Story

My mother Sumiko was born to Masao and Haruye Hirata on February 20th, 1936, in Thermal, California, the fifth of six children. Similar to other Nisei children, the Hirata kids went to school and helped around the farm where their father and mother grew fruit and vegetables to eke out a living in the desert. But then Pearl Harbor happened, and World War II suddenly arrived on our shores.

In an event that was etched in my mom's psyche forever, on her 5th birthday, FBI agents arrived at the family house and forcibly took my grandpa into custody—we surmise, because he was a leader in the Japanese community and a Kendo instructor.

My grandfather was transported to Lordsburg, New Mexico. A few months later, my grandmother, with six kids in tow ages 12-4 years, were brought to the incarceration camp at Poston, Arizona as part of the forced removal of approximately 125, 000 legal residents and Americans of Japanese descent. Families were allowed to take only what they could carry—often in a suitcase—and forced to leave all other traces of their former lives behind.

How did my grandmother, without knowing the whereabouts or condition of her husband, manage to care for six young children under unimaginable circumstances? And how much of their lives could she possibly carry?

My mom and siblings would not see their father again for three years.

It is pure conjecture on my part, and who can ever know, but I've always wondered if my mother ever really got over that 5th birthday party? An occasion that any five-year old American girl would relish on her special day, only for it to turn out, in my mom's case, to be one of the worst days of her life.

My mother passed away in 2019, but in April of the prior year I had the privilege of accompanying her, along with my auntie and uncle, on a pilgrimage back to Poston. In a strange form of redemption, to visit that painful yet sacred site of her childhood was one of the best days of my life. And there isn't a day since that I don't think of my mom or the experience of that little five-year old girl.



*My mom with her mother, father, and siblings.
Poston Camp circa 1945.*

Michi's Story

Driving through the desert in an old Pontiac, we- the Tatsui family- left Manzanar and headed for the Venice Hostel, which had been set up by some Christians to house returning evacuees. Towed behind the car was a little trailer that held a few meager possessions accumulated at Manzanar. In the car, in addition to me, were my parents, Kunio and Ikiko, brother Paul, and twin brothers Tom and John, who were born at Manzanar. Paul was six, the twins were three, and I was eight.

A tent city with kerosene lamps was what greeted us at the Venice Hostel. After a while, because my little brothers were always getting sick in the cold tent, our family moved into the large recreation hall, which had been filled with numerous families, each separated by portable partitions. Our allotted space accommodated two full-size beds that the six of us shared.

Although the story I want to share is not dramatic, earth-shaking, or history-making, it was for me, in retrospect, an experience of God's love. One day, I was invited to visit the home of a third-grade classmate, Mary Lou. Knowing only the camp barracks and the cramped quarters of the hostel, I felt that going to this Caucasian family's home was like walking into a palace. Mary Lou was like the princess with golden hair, and her mother and aunt were like fairy godmothers. Cookies and milk were served in a festive setting.

What happened next is something I still remember over fifty years later. Mary Lou's aunt placed me on her lap and held me in her arms as if I were a very special person. I remember thinking that I was a little too big to be sitting on someone's lap, but I also remember how wonderful it felt. Picture a shy eight-year-old Japanese girl being shown this kind of attention and caring by a kind Caucasian woman so soon after the war.

I do not remember the circumstances of my being invited to that home, but it was an act of kindness and, for me, a magical moment. As I look back now on that brief, simple experience, I could see God was reaching out to me through that family.

I often think that many times in life we are touched by people in profound ways and that these people may not be aware that they have touched us. In the same way, we touch others unawares. This is one of the ways in which God is manifested to us -through people, through relationships.



Michi Tanioka, 5, as she waits to be sent from Los Angeles to the Manzanar prison camp. (Triumphs of Faith)

Nancy's Story

I was born in Long Beach, California on March 1, 1939 to Jinmatsu and Fushi Nakagawa. With my older sister, Mary Mariko, our family lived in Terminal Island - a small fishing community across the bay from San Pedro where my father was a fisherman. I had just celebrated my 3rd birthday when Pearl Harbor was bombed. The FBI came and searched our home, then took my dad and all the other fishermen in Terminal Island away. He was detained at the Tuna Canyon Detention Center, and then sent to Bismark, North Dakota to a prisoner of war camp.

During the evacuation of Terminal Island, I remember two very big hakujin (Caucasian) men helping our family. I later learned that one of them was Ralph Mayberry - the former executive minister of the Los Angeles City Mission Society. We were taken to Chio Gakuin, a Japanese school located in Boyle Heights. We then boarded a train which took us to Manzanar. I remember the train ride. We couldn't see outside, we had seats that faced each other, and my mom sat on a suitcase so I could lie down on the seat. When we arrived in Manzanar there was no train station and sand was everywhere. It was very hot.

We were assigned to a barrack in block 9 (9-9-3 was our address). We walked to the mess hall for all our meals. The wind would blow sand everywhere - including inside our homes. There was a big pot belly stove in the middle of the room. There were community showers and lavatories. The community laundry room was in the center of the block where all the ladies would gather to wash and catch up on the latest gossip. I would go with my mom and one day I decided to squeeze behind some pipes and got stuck. Mom was so mad that she yanked and pulled me out.

My sister Mary was 13 years older than me. She was quiet and studious and a talented musician. She played the piano with no music and if one would hum a tune, she could play it. She had just graduated from high school and looked forward to college. In Manzanar, she started work at the preschool and became the pianist for a Sunday Fellowship called The Big 17.

My dad was eventually able to join us in Manzanar. To protect my eyes from the dust, he brought me a pair of goggles that I wore to every meal. We always ate together as a family. My dad took me to a pig farm in the camp, we visited a friend in block 26 and walked by the orphanage. I started Kindergarten in camp and made a few friends. One of my favorite things to do was to chase tumble weeds. There was a general store in camp. With ration stamps, my mom would buy material and make clothes. She learned how to create patterns and was able to earn some money by tailoring.

As the war ended, a man came from Seabrook Farms in New Jersey to recruit workers for a frozen food packing company. Because all the fishing boats in Terminal Island had been confiscated there was no boat for my dad to return to, so he decided to go.

A short time later, he returned to Manzanar to take the family to New Jersey. Many families from the camps relocated to Seabrook.



Nancy Takiko Nakagawa Hamamoto, EBCLA member.


FAITH + RESILIENCY

All during those tumultuous war years, I closely observed my parents —how they reacted to events, how they coped with frequent visits by the police and federal agents. To my amazement, I observed a calm serenity. Maybe it was the fabled Japanese stoicism: inward story, outward peace. But more likely it was their unwavering religious conviction. They frequently assured me, “Do not fear, for God is with us. He will guide us wherever and whatsoever. Keep hoping and praying.”

—Rev. Dr. Ren Kimura, in *Triumphs of Faith:
Stories of Japanese American Christians
During World War II*

Looking at the role of faith during the incarceration of Japanese Americans during WWII provides a window into how Japanese Americans persevered in the face of immense injustice and an uncertain future. As an act of faith and resistance, many of them managed to recreate a semblance of life for themselves, their families, and their community behind barbed wire. Clergy, newly formed churches, and people of faith drew on sacred scriptures, ritual practices, and each other, to find a degree of hope, comfort, and courage even when their civil liberties were taken away.

In the 1930's, the vast majority of Japanese Americans—nearly seventy five percent—were Buddhist. By contrast, only twenty five percent of the community claimed an affiliation with a Christian denomination. On December 7, 1941, Japan's invasion of Pearl Harbor occurred on a



Sunday, meaning that many Japanese Americans were attending religious services at their temples and churches both in Hawaii and mainland when they learned of the attack. In the months that followed, U.S. government discussions and growing public resentment toward Japanese people helped fan suspicions about how much of a threat Japanese Americans might pose to national security, including those with religious affiliations. As a result, many of their temples and churches were vandalized.

It must be noted that because of the presence of xenophobia and Christian supremacy among U.S. government officials and the population as a whole, Buddhists were disproportionately affected by the growing racism and unfounded suspicion toward Japanese Americans. For instance, before the smoke had even cleared at Pearl Harbor, the FBI arrested Reverend Gikyo Kuchiba, the head priest at the Honpa Hongwanji—Hawaii's largest Buddhist temple.

Declassified intelligence agency reports reveal that U.S. officials described non-Christians as “un-American” and non-clergy as “dangerous and likely to encourage sedition, espionage, and subversion.” As a result, three-quarters of all Buddhist priests and every single Shinto priest in Hawaii and in the continental U.S. were rounded up. In contrast, just seventeen percent of Japanese Christian ministers were detained.

Amid racism and war hysteria, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942, which authorized the forced removal of all persons deemed a threat to national security. This particularly affected Japanese Americans living on the West Coast but also included “relocation centers” further inland. Tragically, many of these locations forced already dispossessed indigenous peoples from their land in order to construct crude and primitive camps. In the wake of these orders, religious institutions played a


significant role in coordinating the practical needs of a Japanese community suddenly facing displacement and political exile. Churches and temples served as trusted gathering spots from which luggage could be transported to detention centers and where families could store family possessions and treasures.

During this frightening and confusing upheaval of lives, clergy from both Buddhist and Christian traditions did their best to offer perspective in sermons, speeches, letters, and poems even as they did not know what would become of their sanghas and congregations. Many Christians drew on narratives of exodus and exile that presume dislocation as a precursor to liberation. In one sermon, on the last day before the evacuation, minister L.E. Suzuki addressed his congregation with these sobering words:

Brethren, we are facing the eve of evacuation. We must evacuate our homes and churches and be taken to strange places, and we will not know what will happen to us. This is our last Sunday on which we can worship in our own sanctuary. This Wesley Chapel is only a year old, and it is the first chapel in the U.S. built for the sole purpose of taking care of the religious services of the Niseis, and it is all yours. You paid for the pews, the altar, and you contributed to the building of it. But now you must vacate it, not knowing whether you will be able to use it again.

—Rev. L.E. Suzuki, from a sermon manuscript in *Sutra and Bible: Faith and the Japanese American World War II Incarceration*

For Japanese Americans, forced removal and incarceration meant separation from family members and friends, and a loss of possessions, homes, and businesses. For some, the magnitude of what




they had lost began to register only after arriving at remote camps when the reality of imprisonment began to sink in.

Many turned to their faith amid confusion and uncertainty, fear and anger, devastation and loss. Faith became an anchor to regain a sense of grounding and purpose. Once at the camps, Japanese Americans realized what little consideration the U.S. government had given to dedicated structures for religious practices and observances.

By creating their own spaces for worship and prayer, Japanese Americans began crafting religious objects and marking times through religious and cultural holidays. Buddhists and Christians alike found ways to connect with the divine and each other through the difficult circumstances in which they found themselves. Religious services, Dharma talks, scripture studies, and Sunday schools along with holidays observances such as New Year's Day, Hanamatsuri, Easter, Obon, and Christmas became ways to reenact annual rhythms to counter the uncertainties of indefinite incarceration.

As loved ones started dying in the camps—whether from natural causes or from inadequate food, shelter or healthcare—Japanese Americans turned to their faith traditions to help mourn their losses. Buddhist and Christian clergy ministered to families by offering funerals and memorials that took place in cemeteries, barrack churches, and auditoriums. Clergy also spearheaded efforts to build monuments to honor the dead.

For many Japanese Americans today, the collective trauma and long shadow of injustice caused by the hardships of incarceration and its aftermath remains, as does the work of repair and remembrance across multiple generations. Buddhist and Christian clergy played a central role in organizing the first pilgrimages to the camps, like



Manzanar. Soon younger Japanese Americans, accompanied by allies and advocates, took up the mantle of these annual excursions and the practice of interfaith ceremonies as part of these gatherings.


The memory of the incarceration experience has emboldened generations of Japanese Americans to organize and participate in the fight for justice. During WWII, Japanese Americans like Gordon Hirabayashi and Fred Korematsu challenged the constitutionality of the government's orders.

In the late 1960's, Japanese American activists organized and marched during the Civil Rights Movement, protested against the War in Vietnam, and with other students of color, demanded the creation of ethnic studies programs at colleges and universities across the country.

After 9/11, Japanese Americans were some of the strongest opponents to the mistreatment of Arab Americans and Muslims, recognizing the striking similarities to the U.S. response to Japanese Americans after Pearl Harbor.

Now more than 80 years after the issuing of E.O. 9066, we continue to live in a country marked by racism, xenophobia, anti-immigration policies, Christian nationalism, and anti-Asian hate and violence. Policies and impulses to detain people in detention centers and makeshift prisons out of fear and ignorance is a stark reminder of this country's historical amnesia.

The question remains, as people of faith, what will we do to resist and respond to the injustices we see and experience in our world, particularly those affecting our most vulnerable peoples and



communities? How will we imagine and labor toward a better, safer, more inclusive world for all?

May we follow in the footsteps of those first pilgrims to Manzanar and walk in the legacy of those Japanese Americans of faith, who amid suffering, hardship, and injustice, worshiped the God of love and justice, and created an interfaith solidarity on this holy ground.

Sources:

Anne M. Blankenship. Christianity, Social Justice, and the Japanese American Incarceration during World War II. 2061.

Duncan Ryuken Williams and Emily Anderson, eds. Sutra and Bible: Faith and the Japanese American World War II Incarceration. 2022.

Victor Okada, editor. Triumphs of Faith: Stories of Japanese American Christians During World War II. 1998.



Photo of Dr. Dickson Yagi visiting Manzanar / By Ken Fong



On the way back:

- As you reflect on your visit to Manzanar, what most stood out to you? What feelings did the visit bring up?
- What did you learn or experience today that seems particularly significant?
- What connections, if any, do you make between what happened at Manzanar and our country/world today?
- Do you sense any invitation of the Spirit as you return home?



There are many good sources of information about Executive Order 9066, Japanese American incarceration, life in camp, resettlement, and reparations. Here are just a few suggestions if you are interested in exploring more.

- [Japanese American National Museum](#)
- National Park Service: [Manzanar National Historic Site](#)
- [Pilgrimage](#). A short 22 min. digital video directed & edited by Tadashi Nakamura and produced by Karen L. Ishizuka, 2006.
- [Journey to Manzanar](#): A self-guided tour of Manzanar Historic Site.
- [The Ken Fong Podcast](#): EP 416: Shirley Ann Higuchi On Setsuko's Secret and Intergenerational Trauma Stemming from EO9066
- [Sutra and the Bible: Faith and the Japanese American World War II Incarceration](#) by Duncan Ryuken Williams and Emily Anderson
- [Triumphs of Faith: Stories of Japanese-American Christians During World War II](#). By Victor N. Okada

- [Farewell to Manzanar](#) by Jeanne Wakastuki Houston
- [No-No Boy](#) by John Okada
- [Citizen 13660](#) by Miné Okubo
- [They Called Us Enemy](#) by George Takei
- [Infamy: The Shocking Story of the Japanese Internment in World War II](#) by Richard Reeves
- [Christianity, Social Justice, and the Japanese American Incarceration during World War II](#) by Anne M. Blankenship
- [Life After Manzanar](#) by Naomi Hirahara and Heather C. Lindquist
- [Densho Archive](#). Primary sources from the Japanese American experience from the early 1900s through redress in the 1980s.
- [The Irei](#): National Monument for the WWII Japanese American Incarceration Names. (ireizo.org)





We believe God has called our church to be a home for the New Humanity. This value directs how we want to live out lives- within our community of faith and in the world around us. EBCLA is celebrating 100 years this year.

ebcla.org | [@ebcla](https://twitter.com/ebcla)



At the Asian American Center, we equip and resource you to know and connect all of who you are to Christ for holistic discipleship and empowered ministry.

aac.fuller.edu | [@fulleraac](https://twitter.com/fulleraac)



We envision a day when the stories of faithful and diverse Asian Americans are familiar to everyone. AACHI brings people to encounter and be enriched by the Great Cloud of Asian American witnesses.

pearldive.net | [@fulleraachi](https://twitter.com/fulleraachi)

