Barbara Johns discusses "The Hope of Another Spring"

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[00:00:36] Good evening. I'm Heather Marker and I'm a librarian here in the History department. Welcome to the Central Library and to tonight's event with Barbara Johns and Tommy Carter. They will be discussing Barbara's new book Hope of Another Spring. The program will begin with a presentation from Barbara. Then she and Tom will discuss the book. After that we'll have a Q&A session. And then Barbara will sign books up upfront at the end. I want to thank our author series sponsor Gary Kunis and the Seattle Times for their generous support for library programs. We are also grateful to The Seattle Public Library Foundation public or private gifts to the foundation from thousands of donors helped the library to provide free programs and services that touched the lives of everyone in our community to library foundation donors here with us tonight. We say thank you very much for your support. Thank you also to Elliott Bay Book Company for copresenting this event and selling Barbara's book tonight. We think the University of Washington Press for bringing Barbara here and for publishing her wonderful book. And thank you also didn't show and then. Executive director Tommy kata. For appearing in conversation with tonight's author. Here to introduce Barbara and Tom is Irene Yamamoto. Irene grew up in Seattle and attended the University of Washington. Where she earned a B.A. in linguistics and communications and an MBA in finance. She's worked in the bank in banking for most of her career and is currently vice president of Real Estate Treasury Services for m you f g. Union Bank in Bellevue. Irene is on the advisory board for the University of Washington consulting. Consulting and business development center and has served on The Seattle Public Library Foundation board for seven years. Currently as Treasurer.

[00:02:29] Please welcome Irene Yamamoto.

[00:02:36] Good evening Heather and thank you very much Heather. It's an honor for me to introduce tonight's speakers for a few reasons. One is that I've known Tommy Cato over the past several years for his impressive work with Dan show and throughout the U.S. with various communities helping them document some of their histories. Another reason is that my parents and grandparents were centered Minnetonka and I'm very grateful to Tom and Barbara for their work that's documented and preserve this part of U.S. history and done in such a sensitive and multifaceted manner. A third

reason is that as a board member for the Seattle Public Library Foundation I was very pleased to learn about tonight's program its relevance today is striking and provides valuable lessons that we need to remember. So I'm very pleased that the public Seattle Public Library Foundation can play a role in this tonight. I'm delighted to introduce Barbara Johns and Tommy Hedda. Barbara is a Seattle based art historian and pet and curator. She was awarded a doctorate in art history from the University of Washington where her dissertation focused on USA artists in Seattle. She's a former chief curator at two Tacoma Art Museum and former executive director of the Pilcher class school and has previously held positions at the Seattle said excuse me Seattle Art Museum and the Archives of American art for the Smithsonian Institution.

[00:03:57] Most recently she is the curator of Witness to wartime Tucker Tucker Ichi Fuji. On view at the Washington State History Museum through January 2018 Her books include fired by beauty and gold Hallberg. PAUL Her Yuichi east and west and signs of home the paintings and more time diary of comic kitschy took to. Tommy Keita is the founding executive director of DNA show an organization that preserved testimonies of Japanese Americans who were unjustly incarcerated during World War 2. Tom has had a varied career including work at Microsoft Houser and court estate corporation. He's received numerous awards for his historical contributions including the Humanities Washington award for outstanding achievement in public humanities the national J ACL Japanese American of the biennium Award for Education and the Microsoft alumni fellows award. They're here today to discuss the hope of another spring luckily to Fuji artist and more time witness Fuji left Japan in 1986 to make his home in Seattle. When war broke out between the United States and Japan he and his families were incarcerated along with more than 100000 ethnic Japanese located on the west coast while incarcerated Fuji documented his daily experiences in words and art. Here to tell us more about this remarkable contribution to Asian-American studies in American history.

[00:05:19] Please help me welcome Barbara Johns and Tommy Carter so I'm going to sit down and listen to Barbara for about 20 minutes and they will come in I'll join her up on stage and ask her questions so go ahead. Barbara thanks. Thank you Irene and Heather and the Seattle Public Library and University of Washington Press. And thank you Tom. My friend and mentor from Dunn show Rick Simonson for spending this evening here on behalf of Elliott Bay Books. And thank you for the opportunity to tell you this story this evening. The story is about talk of which you Fuji. You see him here in the upper right. He's seated in Chicago back in 1953 and in the lower left in Seattle some 20 years earlier in the early 1930s. That's he on the left in the black and white and his colleague and friend artist friend Ken Gero Nomura. On the right there was part of a small group of you say first generation Japanese artist in Seattle. There had been many since early in the 20th century but by the 1930s there were three who were most prominent. These two Fuji Nomura and two Kita

[00:06:49] Fuji was as I said immigrant or first generation USA came to this country who sailed to Seattle in 1960 just within a month of his 15th birthday. Became a fish merchant. He married and had two daughters. By the 1930s he was a well established artist respected among the city's leading modernist painters he was and his family were incarcerated during World War 2. After the war he eventually settled in Chicago and Seattle his former hometown. He was forgotten. Kenneth Callahan an artist you may know and who had been a firm supporter ardent supporter of his report in The

Seattle Times that he had returned to Japan. Instead fridges work from 1942 the beginning of the war until the end of his life. Was stored away with a family. And until now it's never been seen publicly.

[00:07:54] And it's my great pleasure to bring it to public attention through this book and exhibition through my work of the past say 12 years I've become more and more deeply immersed in studies of Japanese American artists here first generation and had the privilege of getting to know there each of their immediate heirs each of whom grew up or knew my subjects personally and so I also feel a great responsibility to convey those stories. In the 1930s Fuji painted work that looks like this on the left. These are small oil paintings just easily small easel size. One of the left is just 16 by 20. It shows me how much he or Japan town kind of from the backside of the buildings and alleyway placing Fuji in a situation of familiarity. He knows this is his neighborhood and in the background you see the steeple of what was our Lady of Good help that was located at the corner of 5th and Jefferson. And on the right. Rock Island damn painted about 1935. Rock Island dam was the first dam constructed on the Columbia River. And it was completed the year before to great acclaim Fuji places it here. Within a rhythmic kind of nestled rhythmically within the landscape doesn't show the devastation that such massive construction would have created. The painting was shown in New York in 1936 at the First National Exhibition of American Art Fuji was one of 10 artists to represent Washington state.

[00:09:42] And he left us this lovely portrait of one of his daughters about 1934. There is in the Broadway high school yearbook of the state self. There. One of his daughters is pictured in a blouse of about this style. But with Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor her appearance and ancestries that of foodies and all others of Japanese descent became a suspect and amid escalating A.J. Japanese racism wartime propaganda and Japan's seemingly unstoppable victories in the Pacific. On February 19th 1942 President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9 0 6 6 that authorized order authorized the military to round up any persons deemed necessary out of established military military zones. And look a little more than a month later on March 24th. The first such orders were posted on Bainbridge Island by Ben Mae entire West Coast was vacated eventually. About 120000 people of Japanese descent two thirds of them American citizens were incarcerated. They were held without charge Fuji and his family were sent to the Washington State Fairgrounds which became the PLO assembly center. Army publicists gave it the name Camp Harmony. It was one of 17 temporary detention centers established along the West Coast for the orders for mass removal had happened so rapidly that the government had no means to house and care for more than 100000 people. Puyallup itself held 7000 people in tightly confined quarters was communal living. That brought about a profound loss of privacy. Constant noise and acute and chronic sanitation problems.

[00:11:54] Four months later the first of September Fuji his family and others were taken to Minnetonka. Minnetonka relocation center was built on 950 acres of federal reserve land in South Central Idaho. Its population peaked at ninety four hundred Fuji and his wife were there from the 1st of September 1942 until October 1945. His central project. Throughout the war was an illustrated diary. It's a single volume a small book just eight by five inches in it. There are nearly 400 pages of text and image that span from the whole family's forced removal to the closing of Madoka. The text is frequently a brief caption occasionally longer. In all. The voice is very distilled and understated. I came to liken some of it to haiku for its distillation and evocation Roger Daniels distinguished historian

of the Japanese American experience has called this diary the most remarkable document by a Japanese American prisoner during World wartime incarceration. Among the early his early entries are this. It's also one of the longest the families last night in Seattle. It's also the only entry he titled An Evening of reluctance. Finally tomorrow we must take farewell to this house to which we have become so accustom naked having disposed of our shop furniture everything in a muddle we packed only the absolute minimum of personal belongings clothing and bedding our home which is now empty feels lonely and cold in the dim light since we had no bed.

[00:14:03] We got out our coats and making a temporary bed slept together like sardines in a can but because we couldn't sleep we were up before dawn having taken our last breakfast. We waited for the time to pass all my family looked anxious

[00:14:23] The diary continues to show their arrival at Puyallup on the left as I arrived in buses people behind the barbed wire fence are already there greeted them and on the right. The families settled into their barrack and then Fuji looks out the single room of that Barrack

[00:14:42] This cattle stall. He calls it let us check around peeking behind and back. There was a tall barbed wire fence beyond above the green grass of the pasture was a machinegun next to it. Some soldiers were sleeping and more retraining. When war comes two people become horrible like this thinking about that. I felt wretched. On the very next page he shows us a young man whom he tells us is the member of the Japanese American Citizens League a Nisei American born. And throughout the diary Fuji shows in various kinds of illustrations. The differences in the two generations activities and sometimes oftentimes alludes to the tensions between them. Mostly here at all up and up and Madoka the diary seems to make. He seems to make just a methodical survey of the of the camp grounds and the means of confinement. These are two of many guard tower in the fence and the main gate and in each of these he tell he not only shows the particularized view but tells us his viewpoint as in main gate scene from the north. So very specific about where he is located. He shows the daily activities such as the mandatory pledge of allegiance to the flag. Young people lying outside in the summer heat and the right to the latrine at night he shows the trains to Minnetonka and then on the lower left pounding he's just nameplate outside the family barrack and on the right. The family move in. And with that he looks at the door. Indeed. This is an odd door. The lock is on the outside. I see that this relocation center is the prison the diary continues all the way to the end of the war. We're past the end of the war to the closing a minute don't get more than a month after the end of the war. And through for the past year the closing of camps was announced. January 2nd 1945 rather than a relief Fuji describes tremendous anxiety among those left for families people and people like Fuji lost his home livelihood business. They had nothing returned to on the lower on the left he says tells us.

[00:17:18] This is where rumors happen. The latrine the last 10 pages of the diary have no text but we see and images like the other two Virginia's wife mirrored in their stooping by the sunflowers that now droop and below. People huddled in anxiety around the radio the upper right Fuji and his wife huddle over the over the kitchen table. Their bags are packed once again and on the wall behind was a calendar marked October 2nd the day they left Minnetonka and below the animals. The community had raised for food are left to starve

[00:18:01] Half of this diary is reproduced in the book with a translation by the grim artist grandson who is an art historian and a scholar of Japanese art.

[00:18:15] In addition to the diary however Fuji left some 130 thirty watercolors and larger ink drawings. Many of these replicate the compositions in the diary. Some like this one take a detail from the diary and make a larger image in another medium and others are fresh views. Here is a PR flip to more of pile up laundry after the rain and lower right. Boys playing marbles while outside the fence.

[00:18:44] A century marches and at Minnetonka would you tell us this on the left on left the fence the barbed wire fence around block 24.

[00:18:56] Again specifying his location and on the right he is pounding mushy and writes here that he and the young generation the elders and the young generation enjoyed the festivities together as they pounded much ay for New Year's. The watercolors range in size as I've tried to indicate here that the large one is about fourteen by 10 inches but that pounding mote used to six six by four inches. Very small and yet it has energy and a strength that obviously carries even on the screen. And he left us this beautiful landscapes of the desert for during the days people could get out beyond the fence and explore the desert something that Fuji and his wife enjoyed doing. It's only when you look at the lower left and see the rattlesnake a sign of danger. And then this montage of Minnetonka landmarks that also is the cover of the book you see again that barbed wire fence water the landmark water towers guard towers. Administration gate and children's swings all in a tumultuous montage. And to me the. Fracturing of this speaks of the disorientation and instability that life in such camps held. Future kept 42 of the large watercolours in this portfolio. It's about two feet tall and on the cover of the portfolio he pasted or taped a drawing of Seattle. You can see Smith Tower and again the steeple of that church that he'd painted before the war. The city is up in flames just the way his life in Seattle had gone up in flames on the lower left is the signature here a rice bowl. The only identity allowed him during these warriors

[00:20:57] Would you never return to Seattle. He moved briefly to Ogden Utah and eventually settled in Chicago where he once again his family was reunited experimented broadly and EPS styles of abstraction and the last years of his life produced paintings like this. Here he shows us going back to the diary an image of Fuji and his wife at Minnetonka. Her in several places. He shows himself as the artist. At work drawing. There's even one of of Fuji sit perched on the roof Puyallup APL up. He portrays himself as a witness to the events he's told us the perspective of many of his views. It's also an insider's perspective and a generational perspective. For despite the controls on his life he represents himself here and his own experience. To me it is a remarkable story of perseverance and resilience that is really the story.

[00:22:07] The title of the book is taken from one of foodies diary entries the one that follows immediately that pounding of Moti. And while none of the diary entries is dated nor are the watercolors dated. By other events we know that it was still the depth of winter for he got frostbite the following day

[00:22:29] He writes in the snow remaining in the advent of spring. I can see various birds singing and playing the beautiful stripes of yellow sunlight peek through from among dry willow trees. Although it is still very cold. The hope of seeing another spring gives me a warm feeling. I think we applaud that his resilience and creativity and I'm delighted to tell you that an exhibition of this work opens at the Washington State History Museum on Saturday and it will run this fall. I hope you have a chance to see it. Thank you

[00:23:09] Sir. So my role tonight is to really provide some context and perspective and just in terms of what you just saw. For the last twenty two years I've been playing the role of public historian. And my organization has collected over 900 in-depth oral histories about 100000 photographs and documents like like you've seen and so I've seen a lot of the type of materials that you just saw. And it was about 1 2 3 years ago when you five years ago five years ago when Barbara came to Dan show to show me what you just saw and even some more. And it was one of those moments where I told Barbara where I just got goose bumps. It's only happened maybe two or three other times in the last 22 years where I've come across a collection of photographs. Or an oral history where it just almost knocks you over because you say oh my gosh you know I never knew one that this existed but this is so so important. And so you know and so you know the first question we asked Barbara is what her reaction when she first saw the diary and the paintings. But she mentioned you know Roger Daniels someone that both of us greatly admire and view as a mentor. And I remember shortly after I saw that I had lunch with Roger and we talked about it and at that point he had been able to see some of the translation so I had just seen the images and not and not the translations.

[00:24:53] But when Roger told me that he was the most remarkable document that he had ever seen written by and drawn by a Japanese or Japanese American during World War 2 you know I was a little taken aback because I said you know the images are amazing I agree. But then he said Tell me what the words were saying. And that influence because you know from my perspective and most of what we know about Japanese American World War 2 comes from the Nisei generation. These were Japanese Americans who were born in nine states and they were generally you know from my perspective in terms who I interviewed teenagers or young adults like in their 20s telling me you know what happened during World War 2. It would be like if you think about today in terms of the immigration issues that we're grappling with our country if all you got were the stories of say the dreamers but not their parents. And you get a sense of kind of where a lot of Japanese American history has has been the last 20 30 years. Think about the war. And so as you can imagine our focus in terms of telling this story has been about from a U.S. citizen ship standpoint and what happened.

[00:26:12] And we and we sometimes tended to even place on a pedestal this idea that the Japanese make incarceration was so wrong because we focus on the two thirds of the people who are U.S. citizens and how wrong that was. But we but we didn't really talk about the first generation that you say. And so you know before I get to your ask you a question I really want to acknowledge you Barbara because you have single handedly through your work through art and I think of you know you mentioned Nomura to Kida. You were Yuichi. And now Fuji you'll sue your work. You have uncovered this perspective that for me was was pretty much unknown. I knew a little bit but pretty much not that

much from the U.S. perspective. You really brought this out in a way that is incredibly engaging and educational. So you know again this is why I really wanted to be here tonight to just make sure people understood the importance of your work and how tenacious you have been for so long to make this happen so. So thank you for for everything you have done. And so I told you a little bit about you know when I first saw these images and the goose bumps and I got it so my first question and you didn't really go into your talk. Tell me how you discovered these images and what you thought when you first saw them like so much in life. There's a lot of

[00:27:40] Backstory and unexpected connections but very briefly this is my fourth book a book length publication or project in the field of Japanese American studies. I've been doing it for about a dozen years but I knew. I knew this work. I worked at the Seattle Art Museum in the 80s and got to know the work of Nomura and Akita and then Fuji and life's like circles around so after that to Quita book I decided it was time to write my dissertation and let a dissertation go 20 plus years ago. And I wanted to do it. I had questions for myself. I want to do it on the artist in the thirties questions about place and identity. And I told you that Fuji seemed to have disappeared and I was even a big book by Stanford of Stanford about less than 10 years ago just has his death date as a question mark and I thought I would have just tidbits of information to glean to tell Fuji is part of the story and out of the blue completely unexpectedly I was introduced online to his only surviving heir a grandson. And it turned out that grandson is an art historian. Expertise is Japanese art. He had just completed his finishing translating his grandfather's diary.

[00:29:10] He lives in the Washington D.C. area. I had research to do at the Archives of American Art. Those took me to papers and met the grandson and his wife

[00:29:23] They had so much work from 1942 until the end of the artist's life that it took the three of us just a whole day to take snapshots of it. And I asked if I could make an exhibition. But having no idea that it would come to this kind of project I just will add Tom that it's represents five or six years research now. Not. All that of solely about Fuji. But I didn't understand the diary for a long time. It was translated and yet. Even till the very end to my research and the very end of my writing I kept the more research I did the more nuance and more layers and more understanding. I came to have and I'm sure that if I spent another five years I would continue to find more and scholars in the field who know more about Japanese American history than I will find it.

[00:30:20] It's a remarkably layered document a nuance document you know as as you were especially at the end as you're answering the question in terms of the nuance you're able to see by just looking at over and over again. You know it struck me so I've done personally about 250 in-depth oral histories and in the same way after you do something enough you really start seeing the nuances and and seeing the story and what happened during World War Two in different ways and so in some ways my art form is the interview and and it's fun because I get to actually interact with the subject but in many ways it is an art form in terms of really hearing and in catching nuances and then asking more probing questions in the same way you're you're questioning the art. I mean you're asking questions you're seeing things and I'm curious what you learn from the art.

[00:31:21] I wasn't playing to ask this question but as you're answering and thinking yeah because you probably more than anyone else have really looked at this I'm curious what's the art telling you you're asking me that in a big general way rather than I can tell you some specifics.

[00:31:38] The first thing that comes to mind there are a couple examples that I I give one when this book presentation talk is longer. They wrote. A couple of images at the back of the toward the end of the diary.

[00:31:53] One is of young people coming back from a dance and they were they were angry because their bus hadn't come to give them a ride home and they were vandalizing the library. I thought that made no sense. And what

[00:32:07] I think of as no of the culture just makes sense and below that this is toward the end of the diary there two little drawings per page which says there's a guard tire and it was set on fire by four year olds playing with matches and that too didn't make sense. And then I began to read more deeply more deeply and find how from the very beginning of forced confinement appeal up and other temporary detention centers and then throughout the war that that communal living under such tight quarters and oppressive conditions very quickly began. A long slow process of undermining the family unit for Pham that the fathers no longer provided for the families the mother no longer gathered the family around the table for meals. Home is where values are taught where discipline is given if needed and that no longer existed because families sometimes three generations were held in one room. Young kids as soon as they were old enough left for the day to hang out with friends their own age so that that broke down too.

[00:33:14] So that's that's an example of just seeing and then realizing the much larger story you know you mentioned at the end that there would be an art exhibit at the Tacoma Museum History Museum. What. What other thoughts. I mean again I'm so struck by how remarkable this body of work is. What else do you see coming from this. Do you see. I mean your books been out for a while. I'm curious if you've gotten a reaction in terms of other ideas in terms of what's going to happen with this work.

[00:33:47] Well I'm really thrilled that both can happen. And as I began this work I had no idea. None of us did that the book would end up being published the seventy fifth year of commemorations. And as a political moment in our country like this when issues of immigration ethnicity are so acute and scary and so I'm glad for it the exhibition will tour nationally. I think it will be really interesting to see the different local. Takes on what happens. It's going from Tacoma to central Louisiana.

[00:34:29] I don't know why. Alexandria Louisiana and. Some other other places around the country are tentative but hopeful.

[00:34:40] So I think the exhibition and we had the press preview of the exhibition yesterday. I think it's going to provide as the book has to some extent but the exhibition even more publicly an opportunity to consider these issues are current issues of what it means to round up an ethnic group

[00:35:04] Segregate them and I I can't imagine. I think every cultural institution that wants to present it would be very attuned to these issues. So I think it does provide a much more public venue to raise the issues today.

[00:35:23] I mean as you talked about that so I won't make a comment about kind of what's going on today and then I'm going to open up the question. So start thinking if you have any questions for for Barbaro or for me.

[00:35:34] But you know when you when you talked about you know the immigration issues today and and when I thought about you know this work and again how remarkable it is because it comes from the USA a an immigrant you know and back then the essays were in some ways immigrants without a country in that these Japanese immigrants who had come to live and stay in the United States were ineligible for citizenship.

[00:36:10] You know by law and through rulings of the Supreme Court if you were an Asian immigrant you were ineligible for citizenship. You know that changed for Japanese in the 1950s for Chinese it was during the war of the 1940s.

[00:36:27] But back when Fuji was doing all these paintings you know he was a you know what the term was alien ineligible for citizenship. And and when I think about the immigration issues today it's something that I've learned in Japanese American history is is how we sometimes we almost there's a narrative and it's not necessarily intentional but I know thinking back to Japanese American history and how we talk about the World War and to to incarceration. We always make it a point to say you two thirds are U.S. citizen and we always really emphasized that citizenship part and in some ways and it wasn't done intentionally but I recognize in particular thinking about the current immigration issues is how in some ways we threw under the bus that you say generation you know we we didn't talk about them and their stories so much got lost. And again that's why your work is so remarkable because it brings back into light and in the same way we think about today I think you know when we think of you know the dreamers who of course here we want to be treated fairly. You know we shouldn't throw the others under the bus in terms of making sure that we think of all of them in terms of dignity and protecting them. So that's just a comment. And so at this point Tom before you open it up

[00:37:54] Before this evening you were talking and I heard you say about how your own work has has given you so much more freedom. Would you address.

[00:38:05] Well yeah. You know when I started this project 21 years ago I realized I didn't really know my my family and community story. Yeah sure I took a course at the University Washington I think I was Asian-American studies and I got the textbook definition of what happened during World War Two. But it wasn't until I started hearing the stories from the community that things really opened up. I mean first it's a process of discovery of kind of what happened to others but the surprising thing was discovery inside you're really understanding who I was that when I was a kid growing up in Seattle

Public Schools every December 7th I felt so uncomfortable as Pearl Harbor Day and and my parents were U.S. citizens. But their place in camp I was a U.S. citizen. But yet on that day you always felt that the eyes were pointing toward you in terms of you were the enemy. And that was just a taste. You'll hear my baby boomer. What was it like for my parents and grandparents.

[00:39:12] And so through this process the last twenty two years the more I learned about what happened to our my community and in the stories of not only during the war but before the war after the war might my grandparents who you know they barely gotten in the country because their immigration bans against Japanese you know they had to face discriminatory laws in Washington state where they couldn't own land during the war their eldest son my uncle was killed in action fighting for the foreigner 40 second in Europe and my grandparents I have this photograph of them accepting the American flag on a dusty field at Minnetonka and then in 1951 when it was possible for them to become a U.S. citizen they were when the first ones to do it. And there's there's such a powerful story that I didn't know when I first started the project. And as I dived in deeper and got the nuances and the depth there was this freedom that I got this this the sense of it was OK to be Japanese American and to and to be very much more vocal in terms of my community story and then to stand up for others. And so this transformation took time but it started with really the power of these stories and just just learning and understanding. So thank you for the question. Good.

[00:40:35] So do people have questions. First to comment. A wonderful book with a different perspective is called define gardens kidney health fan and it is about people in the camps and other places like during the Holocaust making gardens.

[00:40:53] Question is why did it take so long for the camps to close so what was so the exclusion order that kept Japanese Americans off the west coast that was lifted on January 2nd 1945 and so that was why the war was still going on and it was lifted because a couple of reasons that come to mind the presidential elections had just finished. And in Roosevelt for political reasons didn't want to lift the ban before the election because he thought he would lose votes on the west coast and then to the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Mitsu Ando a loyal Japanese American who was in the camps and her brothers were fighting for the U.S. Army and and she had this impeccable record of public service and her stance was you can't hold a loyal American in you against her will and campaign and she won that the Supreme Court level the Supreme Court held the ruling until the end of December. And at that point the government lifted the ban on Japanese kids come to the west coast. So at that point the West Coast opened up. And your question is why do the camps last so long. So although Japanese Americans could leave you know coming back to places like Seattle was a very scary proposition. You know here you know there were stories that were true of. You know outright terrorism army people Japanese Americans returning to the coast being beat up being threatened. And these stories came back to the camp. And so there was an issue that for many Japanese Americans they didn't want to leave the camps because they were afraid. And it was until essentially the government closed the camps and forced people out that the camps know officially closed.

[00:42:49] And so that happened and there were varying degrees of when they shut down those Fuji and took to stay as long as they could out of that very fear. And in fact then they were finally evicted given papers even.

[00:43:02] And part of that too was economic too when you think that you know for probably most of them everything was taken away. I mean they when they left the camps you know they may have been renting a house but pretty much when they went to camps they were holding everything that they really owned knowing that if they went back things would be gone. And so the idea of starting all over again with you know essentially twenty five dollars and a bus ticket to someplace was was really daunting for me.

[00:43:31] People very scary so I just want to ask a sort of couple of nitty gritty.

[00:43:38] His family was with him children. Is that correct. Because you had that one picture with the children.

[00:43:46] The question is was Bush's family with him he had two young adult daughters at the time of the war. And one was the first to be married at Minnetonka very first and left to live with her husband but also. Relates to the previous question even by the fall of 1942 the government realized that it created a huge dependency problem.

[00:44:10] Not only that but agriculture throughout the West particularly badly needed needed workers because the men Caucasian men who were left there had been drafted and went to war. So for a combination of reasons the government began urging Nisei able young adult Nisei to leave they could leave for work. Temporary work permits they could leave for school. For more reasons but

[00:44:38] Not less. And and then by militant by early 43 for military service and soon then they could not only volunteer for military service but they were drafted from camps so. It was a active program the war relocation authority had a dual mission both to house and care for people incarcerated people and to disperse and resettle Japanese Americans mostly Nisei some say and to disperse them far from the coast and never again to let. Clusters such as Japan towns form not not paying attention to the fact that a large part of that condensation and clustering was because of discriminatory laws and and racism outside.

[00:45:29] Oh I guess so. His daughters would love to get married and then to work in agriculture with their husband. So the other one the other one left and they both left and 43 the other one left for work in Minneapolis and then joined the Women's Army Corps. So by the end of the war isa Fujian whose wife spent the last year plus but a year and a half by themselves about 44 of the hunt. One hundred and twenty thousand people remained in the camps that last year people were moving out rapidly but the camps also lost their young professionals their doctors dentists able bodied young men and then from 19 January 2nd of 45 when they announced the closure it began in shutting down services but still people lingered out of fear.

[00:46:17] That's fascinating. I just wanted to ask about the art supplies. Presumably he took that little notebook with him from home. But the larger watercolors. How did he get those art supplies.

[00:46:29] Well good people ordered clothing and other things from Sears catalogs and other catalogs and so they could order. And the art supplies vary some. I hope you'll have a chance to see the exhibition you'll see some work that's on corrugated cardboard and one painting we had open and it was painted in the backside of a toilet paper carton. But others Ed suit collar cousin of the better known George said Okinawa was an artist. Also at Madoka he sang and he talks about being able to order the finest of art materials.

[00:47:03] So I think it varies according to a person's means and context and we should mentioned that George's daughter Miami to the car was in the audience right there.

[00:47:16] So gas cure more questions here the time I have a question for you about the DNA show project does it advise or grab some input into the curriculum and textbooks that's used in schools. You know that middle school and high school students so that they learn about this story to the fullest being as this is the northwest and this is where the story took place.

[00:47:43] Yeah. The education component is just so critical for us we.

[00:47:48] It was really after 9/11. So it's appropriate that just just happened so. 9/11 2001 when we recognized how relevant the Japanese American story was to really American history and the fact that you know these things would perhaps happen over and over again. And so we really ramped apart our curriculum efforts and because we were digital born. So your prior to starting Daniel 20 years ago you I had the opportunity to work at Microsoft for seven years. And so back in the mid 1990s we you know we knew that everything was going go digital. So on purpose we when we did all the oral histories and we collected all these photographs and documents newspapers we digitized everything online and so we have a heavy emphasis to have all of these materials along with curriculum online. We just you know in our news I guess coming out tomorrow Natasha we're announcing that we have a brand new curriculum with resources that takes not only the Japanese American story but it just shows similarities to the African-American community during the Jim Crow era as well as some of things happened today with the American Muslim community. And so we think the story the importance of the story in terms of not only just has a history but to also show the US the patterns in American history. So we so we do have curriculum for all those levels. If you go onto our Web site that Daniel dot org not only could you see the nine hundred oral histories we have with the thousands and thousands of photographs and documents but all these online resources also IDC and essay Cho dot org.

[00:49:40] Thank you so Barbara.

[00:49:43] Uh the art Tuck Ichi that is in the book and that you showed most of it is very autobiographical are you know his community. Yeah. The camps and where he was living and giving himself the one that you showed from post-war. Was very abstract and is a radically different type of

art subject wise as well as style. I mean one thing. Was there a gradual transformation or was it like when you left the camp that the autobiographical stuff disappeared well none of this is dated.

[00:50:20] So I think it's possible that some of the watercolors were done later on the flip side.

[00:50:29] There are a number of abstract paintings if you know styles of modern art something looks like early Kandinsky or the geometric style of Kandinsky the surrealist style of Picasso.

[00:50:43] He was trying all kinds of things some of that may date from the war there. There are a couple abstracts during during the war that definitely the Madoka but I don't know. And probably we won't know. But there's a very interesting since you're sitting next to Miami has a really interesting connection to George the tequila. Now I Fuji left. Not only is none of us dated Fuji left almost no personal papers of any kind. There are maybe a half a dozen snapshots. There's an art book that is inscribed by George to Carla to Mr. Fuji from J Street Okinawa 1944. And there's a small watercolor about this big in which Sudoku is and it's in the very geometric style like Kandinsky.

[00:51:40] If you know Kandinsky of the 1920s but just think of circles and rectangles and it's signed. That a cow in 1943. Jerry Naomi's brother gave me the opportunity to go through George's papers that are held by the family and during the war George speaks.

[00:52:01] He was bored. He was in the army and bored and speaks of reading philosophy and how thrilled he is to read and and more and more and then

[00:52:13] And go back to pure ideas.

[00:52:16] And there's repeated messages to an artist friend here in Seattle about pure ideas and then he is stationed in Minneapolis and has an opportunity to go to Chicago and New York and see exhibitions a Kandinsky and Miro. And again he speaks about it. He was firm that the future of art like pure music pure science pure ideas is the future. So it's really interesting to me to see this work of Georges inscribed to Fuji even though there's no trace of any other connection there. Very little. And then to see some of wages work in a similar style. There's one in the exhibition. So it's all piecing together stories and that's kind of how you construct a story like this just out of pieces and trying to find connections and seeing the only other connection I found is in the papers there's no mention of Fuji in India of the extended interviews by George shoot collar Septimus papers as a little tiny address book that would have fit in a breast pocket of a shirt

[00:53:25] And it was at Minnetonka through Gee's address at Minnetonka that's the only connection.

[00:53:31] So piece by piece the story of Fuji and any connection to that style and his artistic evolution happens that way.

[00:53:42] The question is about artwork by others produced in the camp is understood and was perceived as American. Was that part of your question. And how is how is it received in pseudocode

George's cousin speaks in the interview a done show being at P all up and having a soldier. Stick a band at his back as he was sketching but very quickly the Army discovered the public relations value of all the art that was produced because there was a lot both amateur and experienced artists such as as Fuji or Ed and they and soon Ed's drawings are paintings of people were published in The Oregonian in Portland in the paper. So. In California an art professor Jiro Obama had been a professor of Art at University of California Berkeley he led very early on the establishment of art schools in camps in California that were staffed by other professors other experienced artist. There was were so successful it in there was one in a big exhibition that was published in the Oakland newspaper in June and said there art is American.

[00:55:05] Last year I was going to the fair and I spoke to a friend of mine as an elderly Japanese man who was he was interned and he gave me a nice sunshine doing oh I have all.

[00:55:17] That's where I stayed before I went off to the camp and I'm like oh he just. But now when we think of that every time I go to the job fair and

[00:55:27] I get used to talking about PR. But that association that's not really commonly known. Any any thoughts or stories about that.

[00:55:35] Thank you on September 2nd at the fairgrounds there was a commemoration of camp ground. Tom spoke you think there are maybe fifteen hundred people right. Yes. This past September.

[00:55:53] Not every year. This was a special year. BS It's a seventy fifth anniversary so commemorating the the forced removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans. And so this was a kind of special one time event.

[00:56:08] There is a sculpture by George said Okinawa commemorating it's called Harmony is the name of the sculpture there that commemorates and for that weekend. I don't know if it's there throughout they had hoped it would remain up throughout the fair. There are banners behind naming all the people who were held at Vietnam.

[00:56:28] So the sculpture is inside the gold gate. And then if you walk down that path there's a museum. You know the the kelp fare museum which they have a special thing going on so I think that means the pill fair still open isn't it still open. And so it's it's all open so yes you check it out. So maybe I'll take one more question and one or two more questions because Phil his work is so striking

[00:56:56] Looking at the wonderful image on the cover of your book. I would never have guessed that there was any uh Japanese influence on it. How much do you know about how he became an artist and whether you see uh sort of streams of uh Japanese influence in his work.

[00:57:24] Let me back up and just say that Western style art production was introduced in Japan in the 19th century and there was a big modernist movement in Japan in the late 19th and early 20th

century. So. But Fuji as a youth the only thing we know is is one sentence statement in a nice little slim 1937 catalog that says he had two years of private study in Sumi and brushwork in Japan. Now we came here

[00:57:55] Right after his 15th birthday so he would been young but obviously he had a tremendous natural facility. There's no record of no statement of his. Any paper anywhere else saying how he learned the oil painting once he was got here. Took he speaks briefly of learning from Nomura. No I had formal study here so it's likely you know they painted alongside one another. Took me to a Nomura had a sign shop and knew how much he and it was a place where Eastside artists gathered particularly and then young George Satoko and his friends. But there are a number of artists who practice didn't Western style oil painting the abstraction. Well I told you the story about George where that one comes particularly just we don't have enough to know exactly but I don't see a lot of Japanese there.

[00:59:00] It's easier to make the case for that.

[00:59:02] You know there's a lot of talk about abstract expressionism and the very last painting I showed you and the Asian influence there. That's another subject I was born

[00:59:17] 12 miles from Minnetonka born and raised in southern Idaho and eastern Idaho went to school and not once in any of my educational experience was Mendoza or internment ever mentioned through the Dan show project. The question I have is are we making strides to addressing these old missions from contemporary history books.

[00:59:50] I mean that's the the vision the goal of of DNA. I mean you know with the. In some ways with the transition to digital technology. I remember when when that was happening I really felt that this was our opportunity to rewrite the textbooks that in the future the textbooks will be digital and that it was so hard. You know 20 years ago to try to get any changes in the printed textbooks but more than than just the digital revolution. It's it's what's going on in our country today. I mean I think you know it's you know people talk about how troubling the times are today in terms of whether it's racism immigration issues. And for us for those of us in the Japanese American community you know we look at this and said You know what this has happened before. You know this is not that strange. You know it's actually too familiar. And and so it really. Inspires us in many ways that you know the story is so important. And and to your point you know we you'll have a staff and in many other organizations who are just working so hard to get the story told in schools all over.

[01:01:01] What can we do to help.

[01:01:04] Well one issue is share what you hear today. You could you can donate to then show with it would help us to get the word out because you know we're resource constrained but. But sharing what you hear I think is important I think in our country today. I really feel there's this divide and and we have to repair almost the social fabric. I mean these these people to people connections that we so missed today I think part of it due to the digital technology in our in our mobile devices that we we

get so isolated. So the more that you share. I mean you know I look at you as as a white male who grew up in southern Idaho for you to know this story and tell people in southern Idaho this would be so powerful just to open these dialogues invite me down there I'd love to come down and talk to the people in southern Idaho about about what happened. You probably have friends maybe who are still there. But anyway wherever it is you're just having these these conversations I mean I think Barbara's book is a great example of of really discovering something new and seeing this freshly. So I think we just keep doing that. Thank you and thank you so much for the evening. Let's have a great big

[01:02:24] This podcast was presented by the Seattle Public Library and Foundation and made possible by your contributions to the Seattle Public Library Foundation. Thanks for listening.