

Author's Note: Kimiko Marr asked me to write for the 80th anniversary zine. What I thought would be a short piece turned into an essay, which they have graciously allowed me to share along with my shorter piece. I have never written anything so personal before or shared most of this publicly.

I owe my career to Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and her book *Farewell to Manzanar*. But I owe her so much more than that. Through her book, I finally found other authors whose experiences mirrored mine, and through their writing, I found a camaraderie that I have never felt, even among my fellow mixed Japanese American friends. Unfortunately, it would not be until well into adulthood that these books would exist, never mind that I would read them.

I spent my first nine years in Houston, attending American school on weekdays and a full-day Japanese school on Saturdays. As I lived near the medical center, my American school classmates were diverse, though, all of my close friends were white. Most of my Japanese school classmates were fully Japanese, but there were a few hafu like me. I had a mix of Japanese and mixed friends and never felt out of place. Race was not something that I ever thought about. At least not in any depth. My mother frequently recalls how, as a toddler, I would change my pronunciation of Japanese-ized English words when speaking to a her versus using the English word when speaking to my White family members.

All that changed when I moved to my mother's hometown, Kumamoto. I had a lot of culture shock, from learning that my Japanese surname was my mother's (and learning how to write it), to speaking Japanese with everyone but my father. But other than teaching me how to write my name, and explaining that I could now get around on my own, my mother did little to prepare me for my new life. I may have been fluent in Japanese and academically on par with my classmates, and the school system was much like my Japanese school had been. My mother seemed to assume everything would be fine. It wasn't.

I would soon be learning much more than academics in school. I attended a small elementary school of perhaps 200 students, with only one class per grade. There was one girl who was half-Korean, but she looked like everyone else. I didn't. I was the only one with brown hair. I did not learn about the anti-Korean prejudice in Japan until I was an adult, but I do not recall her being bullied, even from the girls who bullied me.

But I didn't really notice these things at first. For about a month, I was treated as a bit of a celebrity, the new kid from America who could speak English. And then, as if a switch had been flipped, my honeymoon period was over and the bullying began. Being a *gaijin*, a foreigner was now a liability. My classmates bullied me emotionally and occasionally physically, even destroying art projects. Even being the tallest student and having being able to outrun the entire school during field day wasn't enough.

My mother and my teachers tried to help, but nothing worked. Or rather, anything they tried was ineffectual and frankly stupid. My teacher even used my experiences as an example in "Moral education" lessons when they read my "anonymous" composition about my experiences and talked about it. It was one of the most awkward experiences I had in school, sitting there listening to my teacher read my composition and have my class discuss it.

Despite being bullied for being a *gaijin*, I began to hate being Japanese. I resented my mother for being Japanese and being the reason I was being bullied. I realized that if I were white they wouldn't treat me like this. My suspicions were confirmed when my White, blonde, and blue-eyed cousin came to visit. She came to school with me for a day and everyone fawned over her. The following year, another *hafu* student, this time a boy named Michael came for a

*taiken-nyu-gaku* (trial enrollment), where after the American school year ends, children attend the last month of the spring semester in Japanese schools. Astonishingly, I became his translator. Maybe it was because he was only there for a short time. Or maybe because he looked less Asian, or because he was a boy. No one seemed to mind his accented Japanese or his difficulty speaking or that some of the things he said were incomprehensible to them. During those times, they left me alone, and I basked in the limelight.

I have blocked out most of my time in Japan, and I can only remember snatches of my time there, the music, the food, the few friends I did make, including the younger brother of one of my bullies. But the rest is lost. What I do remember is how much it affected me. Though of course, at that age, I didn't understand that I was having PTSD. I started having headaches and feeling sick when I went to school. I have some health issues that would need surgery, with symptoms including nausea and headaches, so my parents were worried, but that didn't seem to be the issue. Somehow, despite knowing what I was going through, my mother never attributed my symptoms to the bullying. And as miserable as I was, it never occurred to me to not attend school, as so many bullied Japanese children do. Years later, my mother told me, "If you hadn't wanted to go, I wouldn't have made you." That would have been nice to know then.

But one day, I reached my breaking point. Despite a relatively sheltered childhood. I was aware of suicide. I came home one day and without any real thought decided to jump off of our apartment building. Then I realized how far up I was and how terrified I was and decided that I didn't want the last few moments of my life to be consumed with fear, I wanted to be relieved I climbed back over. I struggled - and continued to struggle with - depression, self-loathing, suicidal impulses and PTSD. Even decades later, whenever I approach my old elementary school, my heart races and I feel nauseous.

But I had never told my parents any of this. I realized, even then, that they couldn't understand. They couldn't understand what it was like not to fit in, to hate yourself for being what you were, or, in my mother's case, hating her for making me what I was. I wept with joy when we left Japan. I didn't know you could cry from happiness.

We moved to Minnesota where my father was from and where all of his family lived, another culture shock. I was now surrounded by White, mostly blonde people, most of whom probably couldn't have pointed out Japan on a map, much less distinguish Japanese from any other Asian language or culture. The few Asian Americans were mostly Korean and Vietnamese adoptees. Naturally, all of my American friends were white.

I frantically attempted to learn the fashion, language, music, and other aspects of American life and teenage culture that I was woefully ignorant of. I wanted to shed my Japanese heritage. But I couldn't. My Asian-ness was obvious. And I hated it. I was bullied by students in the U.S., but was much less severe. I shrugged off most of it as ignorance. It would be the adults who would be much more racist and ignorant. And though their comments only began when I was in my mid-teens and were relatively rare, they add up. I had never had adults be prejudiced toward me and it was jarring. I realized that what they were saying was racist, but I did not understand until later, how much all of the microaggressions affected me until I my Japanese American friends and *hafu* I befriended online started sharing memes and articles.

Oddly, most of these incidents happen at the local grocery store, which is, apparently the gathering place for bigots. Of course, I get the usual "Oh your English is so good!" and the "Where are you from", (Minnesota) "Where are you *really* from?" (I can see their heads practically explode when I tell them I was born in Texas), and their relief when I finally relent and explain that my mother is Japanese. Of course, once they know my mother is Japanese, it usually

leads to something along the lines of, “Oh, I went to Japan once, when we were going to adopt our daughter from China” (Why should I care?) or “I love Japanese food!” (Real Japanese food or the Americanized junk?). I have yet to ask them where they’re *really* from and point out that this is not a question they would ask a White person. Although I would love to, my Japanese “don’t be confrontational” side kicks in and I leave it alone. But it’s also disheartening that the adults around me never do anything.

Despite being in America, Japanese language and culture consumed my life. My mother wanted me to be Japanese, at the expense of my American-ness. She enrolled me in Japanese school. It consumed my weekends, from spending every Friday night doing homework and arguing with my mother and attending school most of the day on Saturday. I couldn’t participate in extracurriculars unlike my other classmate who were allowed to skip Japanese school for sports practice and games. My mother is the only Japanese parent I knew who throws a fit when I speak to her in English, despite my explaining that I can articulate myself better in English and our frequent miscommunication in Japanese.

Japanese school also consumed my summers. I was the only person who went back annually to spend an extra month in school. Even after my disastrous years in Japan, my mother re-enrolled me in my old elementary school, though thankfully only for a year. Then I went on to three years of middle school. I didn’t not understand any of my classes, except one: English. I thought it was a huge waste of time. My mother continues to insist that “sitting there listening was enough.” Even now, I don’t see any benefit to this annual ritual.

Even after returning to the U.S., Japanese school still dominated. As my friends attended camp and went to the cabin, I had Japanese school homework to complete and started Japanese school at least a week before American school. Even after I put my foot down about going to school in Japan, I still had to attend Japanese school through mid-July as my friends continued to enjoy themselves. I found it all quite unfair.

Given that I had no control over attending Japanese school or school in Japan, I did the one thing I could: I refused to read Japanese books. I struggled in school, but I didn’t care. I was sure I would never use Japanese after graduating and I certainly wasn’t going to go back to Japan any time soon, if at all. My mother lamented my complaints about Japanese school. “No one else ever complains about this. Your friends don’t.” *Of course they don’t*, I’d think. *None of them have gone through what I have.*

I couldn’t understand why no one else ever had any issues, even my *hafu* friends. But even if they had, I’m not sure I would have had the words to express my feelings. Not to mention my Japanese school had a culture of “We only talk about how beneficial Japanese school is.” It wouldn’t be until decades later, after a few friends had spent years in Japan, or younger generations became more vocal about their struggles that my classmates and I began discussing identity, culture clash, and other issues. Several years after graduating, my classmates and I attended the twentieth anniversary of the school. We had a discussion with current students and for the first time, I touched on the struggle of attending Japanese school and how beneficial it would have been, to have a space to discuss the struggles that students faced. I was gratified that some of the parents of younger students came to me, afterward to talk more in depth about their children’s struggles and I hope I was useful.

Although my parents did little to prepare me for the various cultural changes I experienced, they were aware of needing to include Asian American literature in my life. My first exposure to Japanese American history were Yoshiko Uchida’s children’s books, *The Best Bad Thing*, *The Jar of Dreams*, and *Journey to Topaz*. I assumed that all of them were fiction, and it

was not until reading her children's autobiography *The Invisible Thread* that I realized that Yuri's experiences in *Journey to Topaz* were based on real events. Uchida's autobiography would also be my first exposure to my future alma mater, Smith College.

What little exposure I had to Japanese American history in school was, even as a child, infuriating. Though some of it I didn't realize until I was an adult. In seventh grade history, Pearl Harbor was perhaps a sentence in the textbook. The incarceration, of course, was not mentioned. We also watched a news reel about the attacks - I became furious at the racial slurs and the way the announcer was discussing the events and nearly walked out. For several years, just hearing the word "Pearl Harbor" made my blood boil. Of course, my White teacher never discussed any of this or made any attempt to make sure that I felt comfortable. In fact, she did the opposite.

I had forgotten the incident until years later. During the unit, we learned about Navajo Code Talkers. My teacher had us do a skit. I, as the sole Japanese American in the class (and probably the school), who could also speak Japanese (I don't remember if I was asked if I could), was naturally cast as the Japanese soldier complaining about not understanding the communication. At the time, I hadn't understood how problematic this was, and fortunately the incident did not dampen my love of history.

When I graduated from high school, I was delighted to leave my WASP hometown. Surprisingly, it was in college that I really began to look at how being Japanese had shaped my life. As much as I had disliked attending Japanese school, I had become very close to most of my classmates and I was sad to leave them. There were five of us, one boy, and four girls. All but one of us were *hafu*, and ironically, it was my full-Japanese classmate who was my best friend.

The Japanese school year starts in early April. Another classmate and I had birthdays that put us a year behind in Japanese school than American school, so when we began college, we were part-way through our last year of high school. I spent one last year doing my homework on Friday nights. Fortunately, the amount had decreased, though it was so complicated - geared more toward Japanese students attempting to keep up with Japanese schools than students like us who grew up in the U.S. - but we made it through our last year.

In my first semester, I took an English course called "The Politics of Language." Most of us were multilingual, and one of our assignments was to explore how we used each of our languages. I had never thought about this. I primarily use English, especially when discussing U.S. issues, culture, and so forth. Or complicated things that I don't have the Japanese vocabulary for, or when I get emotional. And English loan words, are always in English. I use Japanese for Japanese things, multiplication. But now, most of my conversations, even with my Japanese-speaking friends are in English and we all admit that our abilities are decreasing.

Japanese school graduation occurs around the end of March, and coincidentally our college spring breaks aligned and we could all attend. I had no idea how much this community had meant to me. I realized that, even if we didn't talk about it, my classmates and I were the ones who understood what it was like to grow up with two cultures, languages, and the struggles that entailed. Each of us had to write a speech and I found myself putting it off until the last minute.

This was the longest we had been apart and it was wonderful to see everyone again. The junior class each wrote us a congratulatory send off, and to our astonishment and happiness, they explained that, there had been many times that they had wanted to quit. But seeing us persevere had inspired them, and they too, wanted to finish. It was incredibly touching and humbling. I don't remember any of our speeches and I don't think we were very coherent. We were all sobbing by the end. I felt a little bit better about being Japanese.

While Smith was not immune from racist incidents and issues, for the most part, I found a haven. There were clubs for various groups, South Asian, Latinx, Black, and even a group for mixed students. I had never seen anything like it and I was thrilled. There were classes on Asian American and Black literature, Japanese and Chinese, and Native American history, all things I had never even seen in my White, Euro-centric curriculum.

In my sophomore year, I took Professor Floyd Cheung's American Studies course called Narratives of Internment. I was one of two half-Japanese in the class. The other student was from Hawaii and was the only one with extensive knowledge of the incarceration, which she had learned about in school. For the rest of us, this was our first exposure or first in-depth course. She was something like *gosei* (fifth generation). This was the first time I truly understood how long Japanese American history was. The majority of my Japanese American friends were also nisei, with a few issei who had come with their parents. I had no concept of having a Japanese legacy that went back more than twenty-five years. We spoke briefly during that year of our backgrounds and she shared her regret at not having learned Japanese. She told me how lucky I was to know the language and culture and that she envied me. It was the first time I had met a Japanese American who not speak the language and I had never considered it a privilege.

We read Hisaye Yamamoto's poetry, John Okada's *No-No Boy*, and Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660*. But Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston's *Farewell to Manzanar*, would have the biggest impact on me. Shortly after the family arrives in camp, Jeanne makes friends with a neighbor girl. She was the adopted Japanese daughter of a mixed couple. Her mother "was a tall, broad woman...[who I] realized much later, was half-black...passing as Japanese in order to remain with her husband. She wore scarfs everywhere to cover her give-away hair."

I was floored. First, because this was the first time that I had seen a bi-racial couple during this period. The first bi-racial couple I had read about was Yoko Kawashima, in her autobiographies *So Far From the Bamboo Grove* and *My Brother, My Sister, and I*. The first book covered her Japanese family's life in Korea and fleeing to Japan when World II begins and adjusting to life there. At the end of the second book, she meets her white Air Force husband, Donald Watkins. As a teenager, I hadn't really thought about how this was the first time I had seen a family similar to mine in literature. Second, I believed that interracial marriages had been illegal. Intrigued, I decided that my final project, researching mixed families in camp. I have spent fifteen years attempting to find out who the couple and their daughter were, but have failed thus far. I would love to know more about them.

But, before I even had a chance to start on my research, a classmate would asked a question that would lead to the most meaningful experience of my college career. While discussing the book, we had somehow begun talking about having class outside when it got warmer. Professor Cheung agreed, after we promised we would pay attention.

Then, the classmate asked the fateful question, "Can we go [to Manzanar]?" Professor Cheung promised to look into it. He later wrote in the alumnae newsletter that he didn't have high hopes for the trip and I don't think my classmates and I did either. However, a few days later, we got an email.

Subject: You wanted to have class outside...

What about having class in California?

We were thrilled. Unfortunately, we were going the weekend before the last week of classes. We had to leave behind several classmates who couldn't miss their other classes.

Over the next two months, I learned so much about the cruelty of the incarceration. Everything I learned was revelatory, and filled with sexism and racism. However, I could only tease a few threads, due to the breadth of the topic and limited time and resources. Despite the brevity, it ignited my passion. The more I researched, the sadder the stories became. Military regulations broke apart biological, adoptive, and foster families, all because there were (part) Japanese American children involved. But it wasn't just the U.S. government, the Japanese American community was also cruel to fellow incarcerated because of their differences.

The government gave a lot of thought to and put a lot of effort into mixed race individuals and families and created a complicated rules about who could and could not leave camp and return home. Families were deemed more American if the Japanese father had died or deserted the family "long since" or if the father was non-Japanese. If there were minor children, they could go home. Though some were allowed to go home, if the Japanese father stayed in camp. Families with Japanese fathers could leave camp, but had to settle outside the Evacuation Zone.

There wasn't much literature yet about mixed families. Karl Yoneda's autobiography *Ganbatte Sixty-Year Struggle of a Kibei Worker* taught me about the blood quantum rule, the Children's Village orphanage at Manzanar, and the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) in Minnesota. Wartime Civil Control Administration (WCCA) head Colonel Karl Bendetsen had declared that, anyone with "one drop of Japanese blood in them" would have been included, though ultimately anyone with one-sixteenth Japanese ancestry (one great-grandparent) was incarcerated. I was stunned. I didn't even know who my maternal great-grandparents were, let alone my great-great-grandparents. How had they figured this out? Much later, I learned that officials had scoured census records. The Final Report confirmed that there were "some with as little as one-sixteenth Japanese blood; others who, prior to evacuation, were unaware of their Japanese ancestry; and many who had married Caucasians, Chinese, Filipinos, Negroes, Hawaiians, or Eskimos." In the last fifteen years, I have found perhaps one family with children who were an eighth Japanese American, but no one who was one-sixteenth.

Karl's wife Elaine, as a non-Japanese was exempt. Officials attempted to placate her that their son Tommy would be placed in the Children's Village while Karl lived in the bachelors' quarters. But she refused to be parted from Tommy and joined them in camp. The Yonedas' difficulties had less to do with being an interracial family, than Karl's status as a *kibei* and those who saw him as an *inu* (literally, dog, one who sides with camp administrators). The Yonedas left Manzanar in December 1942, Karl for Minnesota to join the Military Intelligence Service (MIS), while Elaine and Tommy returned to Los Angeles.

The Yonedas were lucky. Orphans and foster children remained in the Children's Village for the duration, except those few who were adopted or re-united with family outside camp. *Twice Orphaned, Voices from the Children's Village of Manzanar* hadn't been published yet and most information hadn't been digitized, so there was little information and it focused on Japanese orphans. Then I learned about Dennis Bambauer. He was a half-White boy who had grown up in a White orphanage. He did not know he was Japanese until authorities came to get him. They took him to the Shonien orphanage in Los Angeles shortly before the children were sent to Manzanar. The children teased him because he was half-White (calling him a half-breed) and shared his surname with the Japanese general. After a year at Manzanar, the Bambauer family adopted him. In an interview years later, he credits the incarceration with allowing him to gain appreciation of Japanese culture that he would not have had otherwise. His experience resonated

with me - especially as we were around the same age when our struggles began - and it was heartbreaking. I also found it sad that apparently none of the adults, including parents of mixed children tried to help children like Dennis.

At least the orphans had adults to care for them. The Yamahiro siblings, Helen, Roy, and Harry had to fend for themselves. The four siblings had been orphaned several years earlier and the three were living with Caucasian foster parents. The eldest Mary, had died at 21 shortly before the incarceration. Helen, then fifteen and her brothers were sent to camp alone - and unlike others, not to the Children's Village - and had to fend for themselves through the war. It must have been traumatic. It took many years for me to find out more, and I was happy to find Helen's Redress testimony recently.

I was surprised to learn that some incarcerated went to camp voluntarily. Masayo Duus wrote a Japanese biography (which her husband Peter translated into English) about sculptor Isamu Noguchi. He was the illegitimate son of artist Yone Noguchi and his White assistant Léonie Gilmour. He lived in New York, and despite being exempt, asked to voluntarily enter Poston. He wanted to use his sculpting skills to make the camps better. Unfortunately, his plans did not work out. He felt isolated, not only for being mixed race, but older than most nisei. After six months, he was granted permission to leave under the rules for mixed people.

But there were also others who should not have gone to camp at all - not that anyone should have - such as Paul and Ivy Ozawa. Paul was full-Tlingit (Native Alaskan) and had a Japanese surname because his mother had married an *issei* before he was born. He and Ivy were sent to Puyallup and perhaps Minidoka, where the other incarcerated stared at them, and "a white lady married to a Japanese there and she was the only one who was friendly to us." The couple left camp to work and eventually went to Chicago. In his interview with Charles Kikuchi, he lamented having his stepfather's surname and all the trouble it had caused him. Despite his experiences, he kept his surname, and his family participated in the 2020 Tadaima virtual pilgrimage.

There were "at least fourteen hundred intermarried Japanese-Americans, a few of their non-Japanese spouses, and at least several hundred people of mixed racial ancestry". Over fifteen years, I have found approximately eight hundred, including people of mixed Native American, Alaskan and Hawaiian, Black ancestry, and a Japanese American woman who married a Mexican immigrant of Mayan descent. Unfortunately, there are only hints about many of these families.

I had enough material to work with, so I wrote a short story about a pair of mixed Japanese girls who meet in camp, one with a white father, and one with a white mother, to compare their experiences. It is absolutely terrible, but would be my first attempt at writing about Japanese American history, years before I knew that's what I wanted to do.

Though I had only scratched the surface, I had already learned so much. But the best was yet to come. On April 27, 2007, half of my American Studies class skipped Friday tea and headed to the airport. Most of us were sitting together on the plane and we began to talk about the class. We soon agreed that, considering what we were doing, "Professor Cheung" just didn't seem right anymore. But my Asian classmates and I didn't just want to call him "Floyd", so we settled on "Uncle Floyd." We asked if we could call him Uncle Floyd and he agreed, provide that we didn't mind if Uncle Floyd gave us grades. We didn't. We landed in LA at 8 PM PST/11 PM EST, but I don't think any of us slept.

The next morning, we got up early and went to the bus stop. Just before we got on, we learned that this was the annual pilgrimage. We were awed. As one classmate put it, "It's already

worth it.” We spent the next four hours talking with fellow passengers. I think all had been incarcerated at other camps. Time flew by and soon were in the desert surrounded by the Sierra Nevada and Inyo Mountains. It was breathtaking. Then a hush fell as it turned onto the dirt road, toward the small guard house and the sign reading “Manzanar War Relocation Center”.

We got off the bus and watched as everyone around us greeted each other, asking about families, health, and jobs. It felt like a huge family reunion. Many were curious about us and I spoke to many incarcerated and their families. Like my Hawaiian classmate, several expressed regret at never learning the language, as their parents had wanted the family to assimilate. Some were learning late in life or had children and grandchildren who were and were proud.

The camp was desolate, with only a few of the buildings that had once stood there: the guard house, the replica guard tower, the auditorium, a few signs for blocks and gardens. As I stood there, in that desert, under the sun it dawned on me that, had I been born fifty years earlier on the west coast, I would have been here too. It was a sobering thought.

Though I got side-tracked, I eventually came back to researching mixed race Japanese American history. I continued to focus on the incarceration years, learning more about the Children’s Village and the roughly 20 mixed race children who lived there. A White woman sent her two half-Japanese granddaughters (who did not know of their Japanese ancestry) to the Shonien, fearing penalties for housing Japanese Americans. I have not found out any more about them and hope the family was reunited after the war. The three Shirai siblings were half Native Alaskan. Their mother was in a tuberculosis sanitarium and the FBI took their father away. Eventually the four were sent to Puyallup. The family was further separated when Harvey Sr. went to Minidoka, and the children to the Children’s Village. Most of the children would not see their parents for over three years. But there were also children who were orphaned in camp due to parental abandonment and suicide. On top of the trauma of losing their families and communities, the orphans were ostracized by the other incarcerated. Teachers would not call on them and parents threatened to send their misbehaving children there. I was shocked.

Mixed race families faced many difficulties. And the camp staff and other incarcerated were fairly callous about their plight. The final issue of the *Tanforan Totalizer* summed up events at the camp and included the following: “The drama of the month was not individual outward events. Such things as the escape and attempted suicide of a Eurasian boy...” That was all and I found it so callous. It was years before I found out more, including his name, through a newspaper article and later a letter from a Tanforan incarcerated to a friend outside camp. Clarence Samadune and his sister, half-Portuguese and their father were sent to Tanforan. He escaped through a fence and went to the WCCA office to enlist. After he was rejected for being half-Japanese, he tried to poison himself. He recovered and rejoined his family - including his mother - at Poston. Unlike some of the children, Clarence made friends in Poston. After he, his mother, and sister left camp and returned home. Clarence later wrote to camp officials, thanking them for their work and that he missed his Poston friends.

But the prejudice was not confined to the war era. I recently found an interview from the early 2000s, while researching the Horimotos, a White-Japanese family who had been incarcerated in Amache/Granada. The interviewee had shared a barrack with them. The mother had accompanied the family, and while the interviewee noted that she had been a “[v]ery likeable person”, he described their children as “half-breeds”. I was disturbed. Camp newspapers, however were far more accepting of the Horimoto family. There was an article about their son Philip and his role as the little boy in the 1932 version of *Madame Butterfly* and several articles about Philip and his sisters’ activities in camp.

While I continued to be interested in the war years, I expanded my search as I began looking at the pre-war lives of those who had been incarcerated. That led me to learn more about couples who had been married even earlier, and eventually to look at mixed race families in Japan and the U.S. in its entirety. Many couples faced not only prejudice and racism, but legal issues for marrying. The Expatriation Act of 1868 stripped women of their U.S. citizenship if they married non-citizens and left the country. It was assumed that, upon marriage, a woman and her children assumed her husband's citizenship. Then the Expatriation Act of 1907, stripped women of their citizenship for marrying non-citizens, even if they remained in the United States. The Cable Act of 1922 rescinded the Expatriation Act of 1907, allowing women to retain their citizenship unless she married "an alien ineligible for citizenship." This meant that, American women who married Japanese immigrants became stateless, unless the marriage was registered in Japan, then she gained Japanese citizenship. If the wife was non-Japanese, she could regain her U.S. citizenship if the couple divorced or she was widowed and returned to the United States. But nisei women as "aliens ineligible for citizenship" could not naturalize. Finally, 1931, nisei activists finally got the U.S. government to repeal the Cable Act, but it was not until 1940, that nisei women could regain their citizenship through naturalization. It was utterly ridiculous.

In many ways, Japan was more progressive than the U.S. Japan legalized interracial marriage in 1873, almost a century before the U.S. Supreme Court struck down all barriers to interracial marriage. Of the 230 interracial couples married between 1873 and 1897, 25 were between Japanese and U.S. nationals. 12 Japanese men married American women and 13 Japanese women married American men. Many lasted for decades, but others ended quickly and tragically.

Some of the families were - or claimed to be - related to several famous Americans. Robert Walker Irwin and Takechi Iki, the first couple to marry in 1868, though the marriage wasn't registered in Japan until 1883. Walker was Benjamin Franklin's great-great-grandson through his mother Sophia Arabella Bach. Their granddaughter Anna Osterhaut married Theodore Edison, son of Thomas Alva Edison.

Clara Whitney and her family moved to Japan when the Emperor asked her father to help establish University of Hitotsubashi. She married Kaji Umetarō, and had several children. They divorced and she and the children returned to the U.S. A 1944 article which explains that, a judge had ruled that her children - by virtue of Clara repatriating - were U.S. citizens, claimed that she was descended from Eli Whitney, but I have not found a direct connection.

Pauline Richter and Izuka Osamu married in 1875. They met in Geneva where Osamu was an attaché of the Japanese Legation, and Pauline was visiting an aunt as a teen. They were the tenth couple to be registered. Unfortunately, like many of the early interracial marriages, the Izukas divorced. Pauline left their children in Japan. After traveling for several years as a teacher, Pauline returned to New York around April 1897 and committed suicide shortly after.

But not all relationships ended tragically. And I began to see many connections between families. Jōkichi Takamine traveled to New Orleans as co-commissioner of the Cotton Exposition in 1884, where he met Lafcadio Hearn and Caroline Hitch, his future wife. Lafcadio Hearn - who had not only married a Japanese woman, but taken her name - was another interesting character, and I had done research on him in high school, as he had lived briefly in Kumamoto and his house was near our old apartment in Japan. Jōkichi would become famous for, among other things, isolating the hormone adrenaline/epinephrine. The couple married in 1887 and the family moved around Japan and the U.S. until Jōkichi died in 1922. Their grandson Jokichi Takamine III died in 2013 and their last descendent appears to be their great-granddaughter.

I was giddy at all the connections that I was making, all the familiar and overlapping names, places, and dates. But I realized that most of these families were White and I wanted to know more about the diversity of interracial Japanese American families.

In fact, the first interracial families were Japanese men and non-White women, including Hawaiian, Black, Portuguese, and mixed race women. As I continued my research, I realized that there were so many threads, but that no one had put them together to tell the entire story. I decided (perhaps foolishly) that I would be that person. I started my first draft in 2011.

As far as I can tell, the first examples occur in the 1840s, between Japanese men and Hawaiian women. In January 1841, while Japan was still in its *sakoku* or isolationist period, Manjirō of Naka-no-hama in Tosa (present-day Kochi prefecture), and four other fishermen, Toraemon, and brothers Fudenojō, Goemon, and Jusuke were shipwrecked. On June 5, they were rescued by J. H. Whitefield, captain of the American whaler *John Howland* (coincidentally named for my 11th great-grandfather who was rescued after falling off the *Mayflower*) and taken to Oahu. All but Manjiro stayed, and he went on to Massachusetts. By 1851, Toraemon and Goemon had married Hawaiian woman. They also became the first naturalized "U.S." citizens - Hawaii was still a kingdom at the time - as was the requirement for marrying a Hawaiian citizen. That year, Manjirō returned to Hawaii, intent on returning to Japan. Fudenojō (now known as Denzō) and Toraemon accompanied him. Toraemon could not bring his wife to Japan, and died a few years later. Manjirō's story and his involvement in ending *sakoku* has been related many times. A few others arrived in Hawaii over the next two decades, either shipwrecked or having jumped ship, including Matsugoro Takeshita (or Segiwara).

In 1868, the *gannenmono* or first-year people (so named because they arrived in the first year of the Meiji era (1868-1912) were the first group of Japanese immigrants to reach Hawaii. There were around 150 people, mostly men, and a few of their wives and children, who had come on three year contracts. Most did not fulfill their contracts after being mistreated by the plantation overseers. Some returned to Japan, around 50 stayed in Hawaii, and 40 went to the mainland. Of those who stayed in Hawaii, around 12 married Hawaiian, Portuguese immigrants, and mixed race women. Some early immigrants even married into the Hawaiian royal family. Matsugoro Takeshit married Maria Figueira, who had come from Portugal with her parents. Their eldest son Joseph Matsugoro (the family had taken Matsugoro as a surname) become connected to the Hawaiian royal family, when he married Elikapeka Kaimiōla Kaluakini, adopted daughter of Queen Kapiolani, sister-in-law of Queen Lili'uokalani, the last queen of Hawaii before it became a U.S. territory. These were the first in a long line of intermarriages between Native Japanese (Ainu and Ryukyuan or Okinawan) and Native American, Hawaiian, and Alaskan. It was wrenching to read about languages, culture, and traditions being suppressed by colonizing governments, but exciting to read that so many resisted then or future generations had or are now learning about and preserving what was nearly lost.

The first mass migration to the contiguous states was the group led by Joseph Schnell from Aizu Wakamatsu (present day Fukushima prefecture). They arrived in Gold Hill in El Dorado county, near Coloma where gold had been discovered in 1849. Their leader Joseph Schnell and his wife Jou had a daughter Frances in Japan and their second daughter Mary was born in California in 1870, perhaps the first recorded mixed race nisei. The colony arrived in several stages, with some, including Masumizu Kuninosuke arriving as late as 1870. They planted tea and mulberry trees, but drought and other issues destroyed their plans.

Afterward, Kuninosuke, now known as "Kuni" moved to Coloma and married Carrie Wilson in 1877. She is said to be of Black and Native descent, but her Native ancestry has not

been conclusively proved. Their descendants married Black, Chinese, and other multi-racial people. I quickly learned that the family was not incarcerated during World War II, but it took until a few months ago to learn why. When World War II began, federal agents interrogated the entire family, including 90-year-old Carrie, her son Harry, granddaughter Juanita and her school-aged great-grandchildren, who were an eighth Japanese American. Though Juanita and her sons were taken to Roseville assembly center (which I had never heard of), officials there felt “uneasy” about incarcerating them, and after Juanita protested, they were allowed to go home. I recently got in touch with one of Kuni’s descendants and it has been wonderful to learn so much.

But being mixed race did not save others. Kamaichi Miyasato arrived in Hawaii with his father when he was fourteen. After moving to several states, he arrived in Alaska in 1920. Three years later, he married Mary Worthington, daughter of Chester Worthington, and later, step-daughter of James C. Johnson. Both men were founding members of the Alaska Native Brotherhood (ANB), later the Alaska Native Brotherhood and Sisterhood, which campaigned for citizenship rights for Native Alaskans and Native Americans. They achieved their goal, and in 1924, Native Americans who had not been granted citizenship under the Dawes Act of 1887, now became citizens. The Dawes Act was one of the U.S. government’s efforts to assimilate Native Americans by encouraging them to farm. It divided Native American land into plots and only those who lived on the plots became citizens. Miyasato, his family and most other Japanese-Alaskan families were incarcerated in Puyallup, Minidoka, and other detention facilities.

It took me many years to understand why I was so drawn to my research, to the stories I was reading, and why I was compelled to write about it. In 2013, shortly after it was published, I found Leslie Helm’s *Yokohama Yankee: My Family's Five Generations as Outsiders in Japan*. It was groundbreaking. For the first time, I didn’t feel so alone. I had finally found real people who shared and could understand my experiences in Japan as a mixed person. Yoshiko Uchida had talked about her inability to fit in, unable to speak or read Japanese. But she still looked like everyone else. I didn’t. The Helm family didn’t. In Helm’s book, I had finally found the people who understood both sides of me. While most of the people I encountered had faced prejudice in the United States, from both the Japanese and non-Japanese, few had gone to Japan, and there was little detail about their lives. Here was a book that went into such familiar detail about being a *gaijin* in Japan and a “forever foreign” in the U.S. that connected everything for me.

Helm’s great-grandfather Julius Helm, a Prussian, traveled to Yokohama in 1869 and married a Japanese woman, Komiya Hiro 小宮ヒロ. They married two weeks before Lafcadio Hearn (Koizumi Yakumo) and Koizumi Setsu. The six Helm children struggled with being mixed in Japan. They did not speak much Japanese, having been educated abroad. Many of his descendants including his half-Japanese grandson moved to the United States. But there was no respite.

Julius’s son Julie - Helm’s grandfather - and his family moved to California in 1941, months before Pearl Harbor and hid their Japanese heritage. Though they were eventually found out, they unlike the hundreds of other mixed families were not incarcerated. This did not reconcile with what I had learned about government officials’ efforts. I was surprised and frankly a bit angry and jealous. I’m not sure if I was angry on behalf of those who were incarcerated, or because I would not have been escaped that fate. I looked too Japanese and even strangers in the grocery store noticed.

So much resonated with me. Helm explains that, “Dad and I were similar in another respect. Neither of us had ever been comfortable with our Japanese heritage,” and his father continued to hide his Japanese heritage through his teenage and adult years. I could understand that. I had wanted to do the same, and still do, especially given the anti-Asian racism occurring now.

But the book also touched on the prejudice in Japan that I had never really articulated. “Although I spoke Japanese fluently,” Helm notes, “to the Japanese I was just another foreigner.” He recounted a time when he was speaking with a Japanese businessman in Japanese, when the man asked, “So, do you speak Japanese?” Helm replied that they were, and the man noted that his English couldn’t have been that good. “I laughed at the time, but the remark reminded me again that I might occasionally fool myself into thinking that I fit into Japan, nobody would ever make that mistake.” I could definitely relate to that.

Just as Americans began making rude comments as I became a teenager, so did the Japanese. My mother’s friends, who had known me since birth, suddenly began telling me, every time we met, that, “Your Japanese is so good!” Or even more stunningly, “Your English is so good!” My mother insists that this is a compliment and does not understand why I find it so insulting. Strangely, I have never heard anyone in the United States tell my mother, “But your English is so good!” Or ask her “Where are you from?” So I’m not sure she understands. Then there is, of course the inevitable old man - it’s always an old man - who tries to talk to me in English, despite my speaking to him in Japanese. As with Helm’s example, they seem incapable of understanding that I can and am speaking Japanese.

Helm and his White wife adopted two Japanese children. It was astonishing to me that, the couple had assumed that everything would be fine. “Little did we know of the challenges we would face as we forged a new identity for our family.” Their naïveté about the difficulties their children would face, especially with Helms’s family history, was quite disconcerting. Their daughter Mariko struggled in the United States, being one of only two Japanese Americans in her class. Like me, she had also been disturbed when learning about Pearl Harbor, but was unable to articulate her feelings. But in Japan, everyone looked like her and could pronounce her name, and she finally felt like she belonged. For me, it was the opposite. My experience more closely resembled their son Eric’s. Unlike Eric’s, my bullies never stopped.

Even as an adult, Helm “was searching into my past to establish my sense of identity, to come to peace with Japan”. It was nice to know that I wasn't alone in still struggling with my identity and sense of place. Unlike Helm, I haven’t found peace yet. Maybe I never will, but I am grateful to others who have shared their struggles to help people like me.

A few years later, I would find another book that would hit home in a different way. In 2016, I read fellow Smith College alumna and mixed race author Ruth Ozeki’s *A Tale for the Time Being*. I finally found a book that captured the depth of despair I had felt while living in Japan. *Tale* is about Nao, a girl born in Japan, who spends several years in California, before returning as a teen. There she is bullied to the point of attempting suicide. Nao’s isolation, depression, despair, and suicidal impulses were not something I had ever seen in Japanese American literature. I had been excited to read *Yokohama Yankee*. But it hurt to read *Tale for the Time Being*. I had to put it down several times because I found it so overwhelming. It took me some time to get through it, but I’m glad that I did. I sent a gushing email to Ruth, which I unfortunately can’t find now, but I was grateful for he reply.

Several events happened over the next few years that have shaped my path. I decided to apply to a MA program to learn how to write for general audiences. Shortly after that, I went to

my fifth college reunion. I met Uncle Floyd who told me that Asian American disability history was a burgeoning topic. I didn't think about it much for several years.

After a long absence, it was nice to be back in an academic setting, even though I knew I would never go into academia as a career. The summer after my first year of graduate school, I was one of several interns at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History (NMAH), working on the "Righting A Wrong" exhibit, commemorating the 75th anniversary of Executive Order 9066. We catalogued donated artifacts that included everything from camp yearbooks to letters, to a beautiful hand-stitched clothing and other objects. I was so moved to seeing such precious and personal objects up close and to be able to touch them. The most poignant was a letter written by a woman to her son's teacher. She asked to have his records as they were leaving for camp. It was the only piece I saw, written on behalf of someone else, and somehow that made it all the more touching. I visited DC a year later and was glad to see it included. From where I stood looking up at it, the light cast three horizontal shadows like barbed wire, across the letter. It was chilling. Though the pieces I saw that day weren't in the traveling exhibit when it came to Minnesota, it was exciting to show my family "my" exhibit.

My research on mixed race history continued in graduate school when I took a course on modern Japan. I wrote a paper on Black GIs and Japanese war brides. I had heard of the anti-Black prejudice in Japan as some of my Japanese school classmates had a Black parents, and when they returned to Japan to see their maternal grandparents, they were treated differently than their half-White cousins. But I had never heard of first-hand experiences until I began to read accounts in Black newspapers of the couples facing prejudice from Japanese, Japanese Americans, and Whites. They only found acceptance among the Black community.

During my last semester, I took an Oral History course. Our first assignment was to analyze an interview. I remembered that UC Berkeley had interviewed Deaf Japanese Americans Ron Hirano and Nancy Ikeda Baldwin about their wartime experiences. They were among several Deaf Japanese Americans attending the California School for the Deaf (CSD) when the war began. Baldwin's family was Deaf and all had been incarcerated. Hirano's family was hearing, except for his brother who was hard-of-hearing. Hirano had been exempted from the incarceration and allowed to stay so that he could continue his education at CSD. I had found the interviewee several years earlier, as both had married White spouses. I also remembered another Deaf woman, named Hannah Takagi, who had married a white man named Holmes and that she had been involved in the Redress movement.

I had not thought much of it until then, as I recalled Uncle Floyd's comment about Asian American disability history. I began my research, scouring camp newspapers and soon found out about the Helen Keller School for disabled children at Tule Lake. In August 1943, the *Tulean Dispatch* had published a letter that the children - with Hannah as their spokesperson had written to Keller - and Keller's reply. Unfortunately only part of the children's letter was included:

"Some of us have read a book about you and have seen you in the movies...we are but a few of the thousands of Japanese-Americans who were evacuated from our homes on the West Coast, over an [sic] year ago...Our school is called "Helen Keller" in honor of you, Miss Keller, because you tried so hard to succeed and become famous."

Those enrolled in this school are children who are deaf, have poor vision, unable to walk very well, and those who are learning to read and speak more fluently.

However, they had printed Keller's reply in its entirety. The letter read, in part:

“Dear Hannah,

How lovely your beautiful, sweet letter and the love that made you write it! Truly it is wonderful that you and the children at the Tule Lake School should think so kindly of me, a stranger, when you must miss your homes and many other things dear to you.

I shall never forget the tribute you have paid me - giving my name to the Tule Lake Project. I am glad of the chance that the children there have to learn to read books, speak more clearly and find sunshine among shadows. Let them only remember this-their courage in conquering obstacles will be a lamp throwing its bright rays far into other lives beside their own.” She spends two paragraphs reminiscing about her visits to Japan and California, ending with, “With best wishes for the children in their studies and victory over limitation, and with warmest thanks for writing to me, I am

Affectionately your friend  
Helen Keller”

Hannah treasured the letter and read it during her redress testimony recalling, Keller “was our only friend, it sometimes seems.” I have searched for many years for Hannah’s letter to Helen, but aside from the paragraph printed in the *Tulean Dispatch*, I have not found any more of its contents. I did however, recently learn that Hannah sent a handmade doll to Keller.

I became obsessed, scouring camp newspaper records and reading everything I could find. I was surprised at how much I found in camp newspapers and recent online articles, about disabled children and disability education, but there was little information as a whole. There were several camp newspaper articles on individuals, including a blind boy named Kengo Sakamoto who became a violin prodigy in camp. There were also articles on “Crippled Children’s Clinics” where children with orthopedic issues were taken to outside hospitals for surgery.

Camp and outside newspapers provided vivid accounts of soldiers disabled in combat and the prejudice they still faced. Disabled soldiers were featured many times in camp and outside newspapers and magazines. Stories of soldiers “overcoming” their disabilities to attend school and gain jobs. But also, soldiers facing discrimination, being barred from various establishments, and after the war, jobs and housing. Many soldiers, former, incarcerated, and their family members used their experiences to advocate for redress and disability rights. Although there was plenty of material about Japanese American mixed race history, there was little about disability history. I was charting new territory, starting from scratch.

While finding mixed race experiences that mirrored mine had been exiting, finding disabled experiences was exhilarating. This was the first time that I had found both of my identities intersecting and it was amazing. But it was also very depressing. So many families were torn apart, their needs unmet in camp, leading to disease, disability, and death. It was heartbreaking.

When the government enacted Executive Order 9066, curfew, and exclusion orders, it provided exemptions for German and Italian Americans based on (pending) citizenship status, age, military service, and disability. The only exception officially included Japanese Americans was disability, including institutionalized and hospitalized people. However, this would ultimately only apply severe disabled people, many of whom were forcibly institutionalized when their families went to camp. One of them was Taeko Hoshida, whose family lived in Hawaii. She was blind and mentally disabled after a car accident when she was only a few months old. After Pearl Harbor, her father George was sent to the Sand Island detention facility. Tamae and the

children were sent to Jerome, where the family was reunited a year later. Then they were transferred to Gila River. A month later, they learned that Taeko had died of neglect. She was not the only one. Toyoki Kurima, was also blind and mentally disabled, and had also been forcibly institutionalized when his family was incarcerated at Fresno assembly center. Toyoki, who had always eaten Japanese food, and lived with his family, died a month later.

Although Deaf and blind people were supposed to be exempt, only Ron Hirano was. The other eleven Deaf Japanese American children at CSD, and blind and Deaf Japanese American at other schools were all sent to camp. While schools and other activities for able-bodied children were quickly established, disabled children languished. They were isolated and ridiculed by other children and adults when they did interact with others. In January 1943, a Manzanar elementary school teacher began privately tutoring three Deaf children, Hannah Takagi, and Choko and Tsuichi Hayashi. However, the education was inadequate, especially for Hannah, between the teacher's lack of time, and her insistence that the children learn lipreading and speech, instead of American Sign Language (ASL).

Within a few weeks, citing a lack of educational opportunities for disabled children, a school was established. All disabled children were educated together. Hannah's elder sister Ruth, who was hard-of-hearing and had also experienced prejudice at Manzanar, helped the Deaf students. But the education was far below her abilities. Then Hannah's family heard that a better school was opening at Tule Lake and moved there. Hannah was delighted to be reunited with many of her CSD classmates and also made new friends.

The students and the teacher Miss Perry, helped set up the school. Miss Perry even suggested that the students name the school. Hannah, who had read about Helen Keller and admired her, suggested naming it after her. The children agreed. Miss Perry suggested that Hannah write to Helen. This was the correspondence I had found earlier. While the students eagerly waited for a reply, events beyond their control were occurring that would have a drastic effect on them.

The loyalty questionnaire had been established in early 1943. By August, Tule Lake had been designated the segregation center for "disloyal" people who had answered no-no to questions 27 and 28. That meant that the Helen Keller school had to close. Helen's letter arrived shortly before the students and their families left.

Though the Helen Keller School closed, it had a positive effect on the other camps. All of the camps eventually had a program for disabled students, including Heart Mountain, though it did not open until January, 1944. But the inclusivity and success varied. Many of the camps blind incarcerated such as Aiko Kuroki and Tokinobu Mihara giving Braille lessons. Unfortunately, I only know a few of their students.

Despite this rosy picture, students struggled. Deaf students were forbidden from using sign language, and the curriculum was far below their abilities. While some Deaf children left camp and attended Deaf schools, others did not and were years behind their peers after the war. Education for mentally disabled children was also quite limited, if it existed at all.

Inadequate health care and malpractice caused disability in camp, including injuries to babies during birth, exacerbated untreated conditions that had been managed before the war, and caused sickness and disease that led to disability after the war. Senator Matsui's mother contracted German measles in camp and his sister Barbara was born blind. Senator Matsui lost part of his hearing from an ear infection. Though he contents that his and his sister's illnesses could have happened even if they had not been incarcerated. Madeline Ota was born mentally disabled because the one doctor in camp was unavailable while her mother was giving birth. All of this

was so tragic, and so ignored. As I had with mixed race history, I realized that I wanted to tell this story. But it would be a while before I was confident that I could.

After finishing my MA in 2017, I returned to Minnesota. I also became involved in the local Japanese American community, attending exhibits at Fort Snelling about the MIS, the “Courage and Compassion” about the MIS and students and families who resettled in Minnesota during the war, and Paul Kitagaki’s “Gambatte! Legacy of an Enduring Spirit”, which juxtaposing historic photographs taken by Dorothea Lange, Ansel Adams, and other WRA photographers, and his photographs of the same people or their descendants in the same location. Many of the individuals were familiar and it was wonderful to see them with their children and grandchildren.

However, I began to realize that most of the information about the MIS focused on Japanese American men. The exhibits and literature virtually left out the mixed race and non-Japanese American men (there were some White children of missionaries, others who had learned Japanese elsewhere, Chinese and Korean Americans), and Women’s Army Corps (WACs) stationed at Fort Snelling. I eagerly began to research, though it proved much harder than I anticipated and it is only within the last couple of years that I have made progress.

In April 2019, I attended the 50th pilgrimage at Manzanar. It looked completely different from my last trip. There was a replica barracks, latrine, dining hall, and many other buildings. The Education Building was the most valuable. One of the tables, showed a picture of Hannah and a quote about her camp education. Beside her were pictures of several physically disabled children and a pamphlet titled “Classes for the Physically Handicapped.” I was ecstatic.

After returning home, I found a trove of WRA documents, including social welfare and education committee records online. I feverishly read everything I could find, and slowly began including more stories. There were so many children whose had been forgotten and consigned to camp records simply as “Girl A” or “Boy C”. I have identified a few through interviews by family members and other records, but many of them remain anonymous. As with camp records, even the interviews are full of ableist and harmful slurs. So many of them were only known through others’ words, instead of their own.

A few months later, I applied to a fellowship to write adult creative nonfiction about Japanese American disability history. I got rejected, but soon after saw another fellowship, this time writing for children. I had never thought of writing for children, as I wasn’t sure I could simplify things enough for them. But I applied anyway, to write a middle grade book about five children with various disabilities who were sent to the incarceration camps. I got in, and have been wrote a rough draft. A few months after the fellowship finished, I attended a conference and met with an agent and editor. The editor suggested Hannah's story would make a good picture book. I was quite surprised but agreed. It took over a year for me to finish the draft which I queried in January 2021. I haven’t found an agent yet, but I am hoping to publish the picture book in 2023, the 80th anniversary of the first schools for disabled children in the camps.

My research continued to intersect in unexpected ways. I had heard of Kathleen Tamagawa Eldridge, daughter of an Irish mother and Japanese father, both immigrants, who married an American diplomat, many years ago. But I did not read her autobiography *Holy Prayer in a Horse’s Ear* until recently after I found a review in Kikue Ukai’s column, “Literary By-Paths with Kikue Ukai” in the *Shin Sekai Asahi*. Ukai had become blind in one eye and deaf in a childhood accident. She attended the California School for the Deaf and Blind (it separated into two schools while she attended), then became the first known Japanese American student to attend Gallaudet University, the only Deaf liberal arts college in the country. Ukai was a prolific writer,

at Gallaudet, publishing articles in the *Buff and Blue* and *The Silent Worker*. Her column “Literary By-Paths” debuted in 1936. I have read all of the columns I could find and marvel at her ability to read, what to me was very dry, dull material.

I looked forward to *Holy Prayer*, as perhaps the first autobiography by a mixed woman I had read from that early period. However, both Ukai and I were disappointed. She begins her review with, “a word of warning, this book is poorly written; there is little co-ordination of material, particularly in the first part. The style verse, in my feeling, from the flippant to the near-flamboyant at times; to me, this is distasteful.” Ukai concedes however, that, it provides, “an insight into the woman Kate Tamagawa was” and that the autobiography “is a memorable in its own unique way.” However, this was one of the few books to discuss this time period and it was interesting to see that the Tamagawa’s memoir as the beginning of a long line of *hafu* memoirs discussing our inability to feel at home in either the U.S. or Japan.

But the best was yet to come. Though I have a disability and benefitting greatly from the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), I knew little about it. In 2020, I wrote a piece for the Disability History Association about the ADA’s 30th anniversary. As I began looking into ADA history, I was surprised to learn that both Justin Dart, “Father of the ADA” and Micheal Winter, a wheelchair using activist who participated in the Capitol Crawl in 1990, had Japanese American wives, Yoshiko Saji and Atsuko Kuwana. The Darts traveled across the United States and its territories, garnering support for the ADA. After it failed in the House, Atsuko Kuwana was among thousands who petitioned for it to be passed. Michael Winter joined others who got out of their wheelchairs to illustrate the struggles that disabled people faced. He is in the famous picture, sitting at the top of the steps, as Jennifer Keelan, then 8, the youngest participant, finished her climb. The bill finally passed three months later, in June 1990.

I soon discovered the photographer’s name, Tom Olin, and learned that he had photographed much of the disability rights movement. I contacted him and he graciously shared his photographs with me. Through him, I got in touch with Yoshiko Dart, Justin’s widow, and through her, with Atsuko Kuwana, Micheal Winter’s widow. I have recently also heard from Jennifer Keelan, who shared her experiences with the Darts and Kuwana-Winter families. I am grateful to them for their enthusiasm and support.

I have accomplished a lot in the last few years, but I have a lot more to do. Unfortunately, there is only so much I can do, working alone. As a disabled, independent scholar, I know it will take years to accomplish my goals, but I am grateful for the support from so many people. There are so many stories that have been silenced because of racism, xenophobia, ableism, and so many other prejudices. I hope one day, that I can share all of the stories.