



Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience

By Lawson Fusao Inada

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In the wake of wartime panic that followed the Japanese attack of Pearl Harbor, more than 100,000 Japanese Americans residing along the West Coast of the United States were uprooted from their homes and their communities and banished to internment camps throughout the country.

Through personal documents, art, and propaganda, *Only What We Could Carry* expresses through words, art, and haunting recollections, the fear, confusion and anger of the camp experience. The only anthology of its kind, *Only What We Could Carry* is an emotional and intellectual testament to the dignity, spirit and strength of the Japanese American internees.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Adult/High School-The editor of this unusual anthology has drawn from a wealth of material: poetry, prose, biography, news accounts, formal government declarations, letters, and autobiography along with photographs, sketches, and cartoons that reflect the tragedy of the internment. Taken as a whole, it conveys the deep anguish felt by Japanese who defined themselves as citizens of the United States and yet lost their rights as citizens during a time of national fear. There are editorials published in both Japanese-American newspapers and local papers of the time. A girl describes the day she voluntarily left her home to gather with hundreds of other Japanese to board trains to unknown destinations. One selection is from the autobiography of George Takei, Star Trek's Mr. Sulu. There are delicate haiku and woodblock prints. The official documents issued by President Roosevelt that instituted the forced internment are also included. Readers will come away from this book with a deep understanding of the times, the sense of betrayal, and the conflicting feelings among the three major groups of Japanese who went through the ordeal.-Cynthia J. Rieben, W. T. Woodson High School, Fairfax, VA

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Review

"The presence of such a volume inspires historical and moral reflection on both the delicate construction of individual liberty and the ambiguities of national identity."--*Doubletake*

"It conveys the deep anguish felt by Japanese who defined themselves as citizens of the United States and yet lost their rights as citizens during a time of national fear."--*School Library Journal*

"Contained in these pages are what we have carried...in these stories are lifted up our humanity, our indomitable spirit and dignity, an implacable quest for justice to redeem the crimes committed against an entire race--indeed an entire nation."--Janice Mirikitani, Poet Laureate of San Francisco, 2000, author of *We the Dangerous and Shedding Silence*

"*Only What We Could Carry* gathers together the voices of interment--private, personal stories that could have been lost, but will now be heard and felt. It's as if we have a seat at a family dinner, listening to stories passed down from one generation to another, feeling the pain and the spirit of hope."--David Mas Masumoto, author of *Harvest Son: Planting Roots in American Soil*

"*Only What We Could Carry* gives us yet another way of looking at an American tragedy....Above all, it is a collection of documents which, together, are a testament to the human spirit." --Roger Daniels, Charles Phelps Taft Professor of History, University of Cincinnati

About the Author

Lawson Fusao Inada is regarded by many as the poet laureate of Japanese America. He is co-editor of *Aiiieeeee!* (1983) and *The Big Aiiieeeee!* (1991) and author of *Legends from Camp* (1992) and *Drawing the Line* (1997). Inada is a multiple recipient of NEA Poetry Fellowships and has read his works at the White House. He has been Professor of English at Southern Oregon State College since 1966.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Max Norris:

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