

Podcast Reviews

Campu: A Podcast. Densho. Hana Maruyama and Noah Maruyama, Hosts. <https://densho.org/campu/>. September 2020-February 2021; Accessed April 2021.

The incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II is often misunderstood in the US by Americans who conflate Japanese Americans with Imperial Japan.¹ Indeed, this conflation, along with race prejudice, war hysteria, and the



Siblings Noah and Hana Maruyama, hosts of *Campu: A Podcast*. (Image courtesy of Hana Maruyama)

¹ Many people still conflate the Imperial Japanese military and Japanese Americans because of the attack on Pearl Harbor, as if Japanese Americans were complicit in the attack. To understand the hollowness of this argument is to ask if there would be a similar response to the accusation of German Americans during WWII being complicit in the Holocaust.

failure of political leadership, led to the creation of American concentration camps in the first place.² Hana and Noah Maruyama take seriously the incredible responsibility of telling the Japanese American incarceration history in all its nuances. They peel back the layers of this complicated story to examine difficult subjects using everyday items like rock, paper, and fences. They further connect these topics to relevant issues today, like the separation of children at the southern border, mental health awareness, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this six-episode podcast created by Densho, an organization “dedicated to preserving, educating, and sharing the story of World War II-era incarceration of Japanese Americans in order to deepen understandings of American history and inspire action for equity,” the hosts dive deep into the hearts and minds of people, connecting universal themes of family, memory, and survival.³ This brother and sister duo brings a breath of fresh air to this solemn topic, one of the darker periods in US history. The series starts with a story of their great-grandfather and ends with a beautiful tribute to their grandmother. This podcast is made for the general public, but the use of Japanese words like *campu*, *daikon*, and *mochi* helps descendants like me connect in a deeper way to my heritage. It is empowering to hear Noah and Hana tell their family’s stories and to hear the language that was lost in many families through the generations of ethnically targeted “assimilation.”

The Maruyamas use accurate terminology throughout this series to describe these sites as “concentration camps.” They do not use the euphemistic terms of “internment” or “evacuated.”⁴ Under the Geneva Conventions of 1864, 1906, and 1929, “internment” describes the removal and confinement of noncitizen residents, whereas two-thirds of Japanese Americans who were incarcerated were American-born citizens.⁵ Further, their parents were barred by law from becoming naturalized citizens until the passing of the Immigration Act of 1952.⁶ “Evacuated” is a term used to mean taking people to safety during natural disasters, when in reality Japanese Americans were forced from their homes to be incarcerated in remote areas across the nation because of their ethnicity. Words matter, and the academic

² The Commission, *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians* (Washington, DC: The Commission, 1982), 18.

³ See their website, <https://densho.org/>.

⁴ Roger Daniels titled his 1972 book *Concentration Camp, USA* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston). The Japanese American Citizens League produced the *Power of Words Handbook* in 2013, <https://jacl.org/power-of-words>. The National Park Service addresses the language terminology on page 19 of their style guide, https://www.nps.gov/subjects/hfc/upload/HFC_2021_StyleGuide.pdf.

⁵ As described by Yoshinori Himel: “Many Americans have used the word ‘internment’ to denote World War II’s civil liberties calamity of mass, race-based, nonselective forced removal and incarceration of well over 110,000 Japanese American civilians, most of them American citizens. But the word ‘internment,’ a term of art in the international law of war, does not describe that community-wide incarceration. Instead, it invokes an internationally agreed legal scheme under which a warring country may incarcerate enemy soldiers and selected civilian subjects of an enemy power.” Yoshinori H. T. Himel, “Americans’ Misuse of ‘Internment,’” *Seattle Journal for Social Justice* 14, no. 3 (Spring 2016): 797–837.

⁶ “Immigration Act of 1952,” Densho Encyclopedia, https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Immigration_Act_of_1952/.

community has discussed using accurate terminology for decades, and yet, this usage has not filtered down to the general public. Many people still use the term “internment” which does not adequately describe the American-born children who were incarcerated. This podcast encourages public education of correct terminology to allow the story to be told accurately.

The hosts weave an intricate pattern in their storytelling connecting the past to the present, covering many topics under each episode title theme. Everything is on the table for discussion, even taboo topics like sex. The writing is clever—“Rocks”⁷ describes how incarcerated people tried to beautify their prison, while also telling us how their great-grandfather only had rocks by the end of the war that he had to abandon. “Paper”⁸ notes that although the government documented much about Japanese American incarceration experience, this paperwork provides little information about life in the camps. Other episodes demonstrate how people’s lives and their futures were determined by answering two poorly worded questions of the so-called “loyalty questionnaire.” Listeners hear people describe why they answered the way they did, providing much-needed context of the variety of reasons, many of which had nothing to do with loyalty.

The Maruyamas used the online oral history archives of Densho to create dialogue between those from the past and the present.⁹ It was wonderful to hear the voices of elders who are still active in the community and of those who have passed away. Sometimes these soundbites echo each other to signify similar experiences such as food poisoning in camp in the Latrine episode.¹⁰ Sometimes a conversation between many people tells a story, such as that about a labor strike in the “Food” episode.¹¹ This type of research and editing provides a strong and powerful medium in which the listener can fully engage and perhaps not only understand what people had to endure in these concentration camps, but to reach the highest level of understanding—empathy.

Hana is a PhD candidate in American Studies at the University of Minnesota, and her talents as a researcher, writer, and host created a very authentic and captivating podcast in which she ties in diverse stories and a whole lot of feelings. Noah brought his skills as a composer, audio engineer, and host to stitch it all together into an impressive, high-quality program. The composed music drew segments together and helped bring to life the emotions, everything from sadness to curiosity, that the Maruyamas captured in each episode. This is what public history is about. The podcast builds the bridge between academia and the public, while helping listeners develop a clearer understanding of the Japanese American

7 “Rocks,” *Campu*, <https://www.spreaker.com/user/densho/rocks>.

8 “Paper,” *Campu*, <https://www.spreaker.com/user/densho/paper>.

9 Densho is a rich resource for digitized primary documents and oral histories on the Japanese American incarceration experience: <https://densho.org/archives/>.

10 “Latrine,” *Campu*, <https://www.spreaker.com/user/densho/chambas>.

11 “Food,” *Campu*, <https://www.spreaker.com/user/densho/campu-e6-food>.

incarceration during WWII. This podcast connects the audience to untold stories through stirring storytelling and quality production.

Hanako Wakatsuki, National Park Service

The views shared in this review are solely those of the author and do not reflect the views of the National Park Service.

Disability History Association podcast. Disability History Association. Caroline Lieffers and Kelsey Henry, Hosts. http://dishist.org/?page_id=735. January 2018–present; Accessed April 2021.

“But what my dissertation research focuses on is, incredibly, a disability history of the television series *The Waltons*.”¹ From the very first episode of this podcast, it is brought home that disability can be found everywhere, even in well-loved television shows. This was a very clever choice for a first episode of the Disability History Association’s (DHA) podcast, drawing on a show and a pastime familiar to many of us. Even without my current involvement in researching disability history, this would have piqued my interest. The DHA, a nonprofit organization, promotes disability histories and the study of disabilities broadly. It is an inclusive and international organization and welcomes everyone working on disability history no matter the time period or geographic scope. As an association, the DHA offers access to a wealth of resources, newsletters, awards and a community of historians—as well as its podcast.

The podcast itself focuses on recent work undertaken in disability history. Importantly, guests come from both inside and outside of academia, which is refreshing to see promoted and will hopefully foster some purposeful partnerships. Running since January 2018, there are now twenty-seven episodes covering a wide range of topics, regions, and time periods. Disability history is a burgeoning field, still in its infancy, yet exciting, despite, as Alice Wong states in the introduction to her masterful collection *Disability Visibility*, the fact that disabled people have always existed.² And this podcast is beginning to explore wider contexts of disability in the past, although perhaps as both the podcast and disability historians move forward we will see more on earlier time periods and wider geographies. What it does do extremely well is show that disability history doesn’t just belong to the historians or to academic tomes. Episodes encompass everything from exhibitions in museums, television and film, and accessibility in museums and universities. The importance of objects and

1 Haley Gienow-McConnell, “Disability and *The Waltons*,” Disability History Association podcast, episode 1, January 2018, http://dishist.org/?page_id=735.

2 Alice Wong, “Introduction,” in *Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Alice Wong (New York: Vintage Books, 2020), xxii.