Exhibit "Then They Came for Me: Incarceration of Japanese Americans during WWII and the Demise of Civil Liberties" has been going on at the Alphawood Gallery, 2401 N. Halsted St., Chicago, until November 19. What does an America look like? Who is welcomed in this country? What is every American’s duty in the face of racist government action? The powerful new exhibition examines the effect of racism and xenophobia from a dark period in American history. The exhibition is organized by the Alphawood Gallery partnered with the Japanese American Service Committee cooperated by other Japanese American organizations.

In the name of national security, Executive Order 9066, signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on February 19, 1942, allowed the removal of about 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry, no matter if they were citizens or legal residents, from the West Coast areas and imprisoned them in 10 internment camps in the desert areas across the U.S.

Exhibit "Then They Came for Me" Not To Be Repeated

New Deputy Consul General Arrives at Chicago
Interview with Kenji Tanaka

The new Deputy Consul, Kenji Tanaka, arrived at Chicago early July.

Tanaka was born in 1961 in Nagano, Japan. Upon graduating from Chuo University Faculty of Law, he joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1987 as a U.S. Specialist. After studying at Oberlin College and University of Pennsylvania from 1988 to 1990, he was assigned to the Consulate General of Japan in Chicago to work for the Japan Information Center until 1992. From 2002 to 2005, Tanaka was in charge of foreign press at the Consulate General of Japan in New York. This is his third U.S. assignment.

Q: I see that you were engaged in numerous international negotiations right after you joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, such as the talks under the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), Uruguay Round, WTO (World Trade Organization), PECC (Pacific Economic Corporation Council), ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Plus, and Japan-Europe EPA (Economic Partnership Agreement).

Tanaka: I was first assigned to the First International Organizations Division, Economic Affairs Bureau, and my job there was engaged in negotiations under the Uruguay Round with regard to the service-related matters. In the late 1990s, I was responsible for negotiations regarding the four service-related areas that were left unsolved by the WTO.

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Kenji Tanaka
Exhibition from page 1

They were only allowed to carry a bag per individual and lost all their properties.

The 12,000-square-foot space of the Alphawood Gallery accommodate more than 100 large photo panels, which are culled from the book “Un-American” by Chicago-based photography historians Richard Cahan and Michael Williams. The featured photos include works of renowned photo journalist Dorothea Lange and Ansel Adams. Lange was hired by the U.S. Government’s War Relocation Authority to document the evacuation of Japanese Americans. She captured the pride of Japanese Americans, who were dressed well and waiting for transport trains with dignity. However, a Sansei (third generation of JA) who was looking at the photos, said that their facial expressions were different at their homes.

Photos of Toyo Miyatake, who managed to bring some camera lenses into a camp and assemble a camera inside the camp, are also exhibited. He vividly photographed the imprisoned people and their lives.

Alongside the photographs, a rich trove of documents, diaries, art, and other archival materials are exhibited. The first-hand experiences of JAs are available through videos and films.

Alphawood Gallery has offered a series of programs related to the exhibition. The program schedules are available at www.alphawoodgallery.org.

Roy Wesley’s Testimony

Sansei Roy Wesley spoke about how his hard working family was affected by the incarceration at an opening reception that was hosted by the Alphawood Gallery on June 28.

Wesley’s father was born in Westport, and his family moved to Portland to run a hotel business and a grocery store. While he helped the family businesses, he also spent much time reading. After graduating from high school, he worked in a salmon cannery, track line, and lumber company to save his college tuition. He graduated from the North Pacific College of Optometry and opened an eye clinic after a while.

Wesley’s mother grew up in Seattle and visited Portland to run a store. While he helped the local papers. He strongly attacked the Japanese American Citizens League, rebutted false accusations and rumors against the JAs reported in the local papers. He strongly appealed to JAs’ patriotism.

His father served on the Portland auxiliary fire department and the police department. He trained and marched with the police. He guarded bridges in the night for possible enemy invasions and helped the FBI identifying Japanese Issei Loyalists.

One day, the FBI came to his father’s home when he was away. After inspecting the house, a FBI man asked his father if they took his grandfather with them. The captain said, “No,” and they left. His grandfather said that the captain’s name was Grossenbacher. Grossenbacher, who occasionally visited his eye clinic, was an undercover FBI agent.

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese Imperial Navy attacked Pearl Harbor, and hatred and prejudice against Japanese Americans surged among American people. Wesley’s father, then President of the Portland Japanese American Citizens League, rebutted false accusations and rumors against the JAs reported in the local papers. He strongly appealed to JAs’ patriotism.

Rebecca Ozaki speaks about her grandfather late Sam Ozaki, who devoted his life to protect civilian rights.

Roy Wesley was born in the morning of May 5th, 1942, the final day to report the Portland Salvation Army to be sent to the Portland Assembly Center. Because of his birth, he and his mother could stay in a hospital, but only for three days.

The Assembly Center was formerly livestock stalls.

The attendees listen to the story of Roy Wesley at the opening reception.

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One Year after Release, Pokemon Go is Fitness Tool for Older People

About a year after the release of Pokemon Go, the smartphone app game has largely become a tool for middle-aged and older people to stay fit as well as a way for some Japanese tourist spots to attract visitors. One day in early July, 48-year-old Tutomu Misago was touching the screen of his smartphone in Tempozan Park in Osaka, western Japan, where hordes of young players used to gather to catch rare virtual characters of the location-based game.

“I stopped playing it after two months as I felt tired of walking,” said a 20-year-old man strolling in the park with his girlfriend.

They were in the park “to see the baby panda,” he said, referring to a giant panda cub born in June at a zoo adjacent to the park. The augmented reality game jointly developed by Nintendo Co., Pokemon Co. and Niantic Inc. was released in Japan on June 22 last year, about two weeks after its global debut in the United States, Australia and New Zealand.

As it had elsewhere before, the game immediately became a social phenomenon in Japan, flooding parks and streets with players trying to catch various "Pokemon" monsters that appear superimposed on their smartphone screens based on the player's location.

The game was blamed for causing traffic accidents and trespassing problems involving players getting carried away.

According to Tokyo-based research agency Values Inc., the number of players who play the game at least once a day has increased from around two weeks after its global debut in Japan on June 22 last year, to an estimated 30 million players as of early July.

The augmented reality game has rapidly become a social phenomenon in Japan, the United States, Australia and New Zealand.

Pokemon Go, the smartphone app game that has become a social phenomenon in Japan, the United States, Australia and New Zealand, is a tool for middle-aged and older people to stay fit as well as a way for some Japanese tourist spots to attract visitors.

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