



The Second
Annual Arnold
Maeda Manzanar
Pilgrimage Grant

January 7, 2022

Terumi T. Garcia

4TH YR DEPARTMENT OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
CALIFORNIA STATE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY,
POMONA

This American

Voyaged to exploitation

Now he longs for the desert

My great grandfather, Moritaro “Grant” Ishigaki was an internee at Heart Mountain, in Wyoming. Although he was originally a farmer from Sacramento, Grant was dropped off in “the middle of the desert”¹ when he returned to California by bus from the concentration camp. He settled in the Mojave Desert but also established a family with his wife and their sons in South El Monte, California where he became a gardener. Grant longed for the desert so much that his wife bought a trailer home in Victorville, California just so they could be closer to the desert. Much of my ancestors’ lives had been a mystery to me until recently, when I discovered my own personal connection to the landscape through my studies in landscape architecture in college and through the Japanese American Landscape Architecture and Ethics Studies class that I assist in.

I find the stories of the lives of internees such as Arnold Maeda inspirational in my own personal quest for knowledge of my family’s history. Learning about his life has influenced me to get involved with the Japanese American community to preserve historical and cultural events that have shaped so many American lives. This knowledge creates conversation and a better understanding of the Japanese American experience. Being a storyteller of the landscapes in which we live, learn, and grow are important because the forces of nature can quickly transform what is or what was once there. Humans have always had a heavy hand in shaping the landscape as well. It is important to not only share the stories of the people that helped build our nation but to memorialize it.

The social inequities and the exploitation of humans based on race in America has been able to continue because stories are forgotten, erased, misinterpreted or such.² But landscapes have stories. With the VJAMM Maeda helped create, we are taken back to an important time, that was not very long ago at all. To have something tangible that holds onto powerful memories is important in the healing of individuals and entire communities that have been faced with racial injustices. Remembering traumatic past events will help us build better relationships with each other and our environment. Having a role model like Arnold Maeda to identify with is important to younger generations like myself; his involvement with the community is influential and does not go unnoticed or unrecognized. To remember those who forcibly surrendered up their homes, businesses, their pets, and their livelihoods, *shigata ga nai*,³ nothing could be done at that time in history. Today, we can talk about these inequities to work towards social justice and with the help from The Manzanar Committee are able to visit the camp as to recognize resiliency and to not repeat history.

Word Count: 500

¹ Interview with my mother, Nancy Yoko Ishigaki, Dec. 2022

² Japanese American National Museum past exhibit *Re-Visioning Manzanar* displayed how written events of the Manzanar Riots were misinterpreted

³ Taken from the chapter “*Shigata Ga Nai*” Farewell to Manzanar by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston

Bibliography

1. California Japantowns. <https://www.californiajapantowns.org/sawtelle.html>
2. The Rafu Shimpo. <https://rafu.com/2020/09/obituary-arnold-maeda-94-leader-of-venice-ja-memorial-effort/>
3. Houston, Jeanne Wakatsuki. *Farewell to Manzanar: a True Story of Japanese American Experience during and after the World War II Internment*. Dell Laurel-Leaf, 1995.
4. Heart Mountain <https://www.heartmountain.org/collections-archives/digital-resources/>
5. Manzanar Committee. <https://manzanarcommittee.org/2021/10/13/2022-amgrant/>
6. Manzanar National Historic Site California <https://www.nps.gov/manz/index.htm>
7. Yamamoto, S. *Densho Digital Archive: Arnold T. Maeda Interview*. Friends of Manzanar Collection. 9 Jan. 2012, <https://ddr.densho.org/media/ddr-densho-1003/ddr-densho-1003-5-23-transcript-935ef58c38.htm>