

# NEW MEXICO HISTORY MUSEUM

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## PALACE OF THE GOVERNORS

### **Compounded Ironies: Japanese Internee Fathers, American Patriot Sons**

*A special lecture by Gail Y. Okawa*



Santa Fe—During World War II, Santa Fe was the site of one of the nation's largest Justice Department internment camps. It primarily housed Japanese immigrants, among them the Rev. Tamasaku Watanabe. On Sunday, November 15, at 2 pm, Watanabe's granddaughter, Dr. Gail Y. Okawa, speaks on a brain-twisting aspect of that heartbreaking period: Even as our government locked up Japanese residents over fears of their supposed disloyalty, their own children put on soldiers' uniforms to defend the nation.

"Compounded Ironies: Japanese Internee Fathers, American Patriot Sons" is a free-with-admission lecture in the New Mexico History Museum auditorium. (Sundays are free to NM residents.)

Tensions between the United States and Japan were brewing well before the December 7, 1941, bombing of Pearl Harbor. Officials with the War and Justice Departments were working together to identify the leaders of Japanese American communities. As a minister, the Rev. Watanabe made one of their lists. Within hours of the Pearl Harbor attack, he was arrested and eventually exiled from Hawai'i. He and others ended up at the camp that today is the site of Santa Fe's Casa Solana neighborhood. Between March 1942 and April 1946, 4,555 men of

Japanese ancestry were held there. (The Army also operated an internment camp in Lordsburg.)

The men's imprisonment was only the beginning. On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, authorizing the removal of people from military areas "as deemed necessary or desirable." The military thereupon defined the entire West Coast as such an area. By June, more than 110,000 Japanese Americans were relocated.

Despite the government's distrust over the internees' loyalty, their sons were drafted into or volunteered for service in the U.S. military on both the European and Pacific fronts.

"Not only did those sons serve their country, in part consciously to prove the loyalty of the American Japanese to the United States, but many had to visit their fathers behind barbed wire," Okawa said. "Seven of the Hawai'i internees' sons were killed in action—one in the Military Intelligence Service in the Pacific, and six in Italy and France as members of the 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team."

The 100th Battalion/442nd RCT is the most decorated unit in U.S. military history for its size and length of service: 21 Medals of Honor; over 4,000 Purple Hearts; 29 Distinguished Service Crosses; 588 Silver Stars; more than 4,000 Bronze Stars; and seven Distinguished Unit Citations.

Dr. Gail Y. Okawa is emeritus professor of English at Youngstown State University in Ohio and a visiting scholar at the Center for Biographical Research at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. Interested in the relationships among language/literacy, culture, and race in historical, political, and educational contexts, she has published numerous articles in national journals and collections and has presented papers and lectures nationally and internationally. Since 2002, she has researched the politics of literacy, identity, and culture among Japanese immigrants from Hawai'i, including those who were imprisoned in U.S. Department of Justice internment camps.

In addition to giving lectures at the University of New Mexico, the College of Santa Fe, and the New Mexico History Museum, she co-chaired and organized a two-day New Mexico Centennial symposium in 2012 at the New Mexico History Museum, co-sponsored by the New Mexico Humanities Council. She is concluding a book-length study, *Exile from Paradise: Hawai'i Japanese Immigrants in World War II U.S. Department of Justice Internment*.

### **Calendar editors**

**What:** "Compounded Ironies: Japanese Internee Fathers, American Patriot Sons," a lecture by Dr. Gail Y. Okawa.

**Where:** New Mexico History Museum auditorium, 113 Lincoln Avenue, Santa Fe.

**When:** Sunday, Nov. 15, 2 pm.

**Cost:** Free with admission; Sundays free to NM residents.

**More info:** (505) 476-5200, [www.nmhistorymuseum.org](http://www.nmhistorymuseum.org).

**Photo above:** Military sons visiting their interned fathers and friends at the Santa Fe Internment Camp. Photo courtesy Shinoda Family Collection.

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[The New Mexico History Museum](#), 113 Lincoln Avenue, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, is part of a campus that includes the Palace of the Governors, a National Treasure and the oldest continuously occupied public building in the United States; the Fray Angélico Chávez History Library; the Palace of the Governors Photo Archives; the Press at the Palace of the Governors; and the Native American Artisans Program. A division of the Department of Cultural Affairs, its exhibitions and programs are supported by the Museum of New Mexico Foundation.

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