



Emily Hanako Momohara

www.ehmomohara.com

Artist Statement

During WWII, my great-grandparents, grandmother and her four siblings were sent to the concentration camp, Minidoka, located in southern Idaho. They were not alone however. President Franklin D. Roosevelt forced all west-coast persons of Japanese ancestry, U.S. citizens and aliens, to relocate in camps fenced with barbed wire. Guilt by association or skin color affected how the Japanese American community progressed. Telling camp stories and teaching Japanese traditions became secondary to proving patriotism and Americanism.

In a struggle to understand the legacy left to me, I have searched both the physical remains of the camps and memories of others who shared that experience. The WWII incarceration was the pivotal moment in my family's history. Yet, this moment is absent from our stories. It dictated my life circumstances: where I was born; the traditions learned and those I did not; the language I spoke; and the national and ethnic values I was taught. This missing period of family history is the spring board for my art work.

Through video and photography, I create my own versions of the past. They are myths, constructions, interpretations, illusions and delusions of what happened. My work references historical and current political issues, such as immigration, war and detention. Whether one is a racial minority or considered "different," exile is in all of our histories. And so is the silence that follows it. Each piece I make is one stone on the path to discovery.