

m; Contrast your expectations or the interviewee's responses to his or her
ual responses.

ere did the interview lead you? Did it bring up new issues? Did it help you
derstand a part of your subject that you had found difficult or confusing?

ou are going to write an article, remember to include some direct quota-
is from the interview or summary. Note this information.

1 the interviewee suggest any solutions to the issue? Did the interview
nge your mind about any aspect of the issue that you are researching?

1 the interview encourage you to do more research? What type? What do
I want to learn about your topic now?

ow do you plan to incorporate the information gathered in this interview into
; paper or article that you are writing?

Interviews take many forms. We have included two different student
aches to writing the interview essay. After reading them, think about
trengths of each.

Donald Matsuda

Matsuda 1

*Student Donald Matsuda developed the following essay
after interviewing his grandmother about her experiences
in the internment camps during World War II.*

Bachan's Story

Until recently, one of the lesser known episodes in the
history of the United States was the forced exclusion and
detention during World War II of over 120,000 Japanese
American civilians who resided on the West Coast. These
civilians were denied their constitutional rights, forced by
armed military guards to abandon their homes and jobs,
and herded into internment camps, which had all the trap-
pings of prisons. Although unfairly stigmatized by accusa-
tions of disloyalty to America, the Japanese could not find
the voice within themselves to tell others, often even their
own children, about what happened to them during the
devastating and humiliating years of wartime incarceration.
As I began to learn about this tragic event that forever
altered the lives of my ancestors, I was motivated to dis-
cover how and why these Japanese Americans were taken
from their homes in the spring of 1942 and incarcerated in

concentration camps. In order to gain a personal and inti-
mate view of the internment camp experience, I decided to
conduct a candid interview with my grandmother, or
bachan, Alice Watanabe, a proud and loyal United States
citizen who survived three years of internment at Tule Lake
Relocation Camp in California. I felt that Bachan Watanabe
would be able to provide some vital information and valu-
able insight into the living conditions of the camps and her
experience as a Japanese American in postwar America.

My grandmother was born in Marysville, California,
on May 9, 1924. Her parents were *issei*, Japanese Ameri-
cans who were born on the mainland of Japan and subse-
quently immigrated to the United States. They settled in
Marysville, California, where they owned a grocery store
and many acres of farmland. Bachan Watanabe vividly
recalled how wonderful life was in their close-knit town of
Marysville, but when I asked her if she recalled the day of
the Pearl Harbor attack, her response reflected a more seri-
ous tone. With a look of apprehension and great sadness,
she began to tell her painful story of internment in Amer-
ica: "I do remember Pearl Harbor day. It was a December
Sunday and I was at church with our neighbors, the
Tanakas, preparing for the upcoming Christmas service.
The sanctuary doors were suddenly flung open and our
minister hurried in and shouted, 'Pearl Harbor has just
been bombed. We are at war with Japan.' We sat there and
looked at one another fearing the worst, yet not knowing
what to fear." As my grandmother continued her emotional
account, I began to comprehend the devastating impact
that both fear and an uncertain future had had on the
Japanese Americans who were caught between their
ancestral ties and their loyalty to their new country.

As a *nisei*, a Japanese American who was born in the
United States, my grandmother faced an uncertain fate fol-
lowing the shock of the Pearl Harbor attack; unfortunately,
her worst fears were confirmed as exclusion orders began
to appear on telephone poles throughout the Japanese com-
munity, signaling the beginning of a government-ordered
evacuation. Bachan Watanabe painfully recalled the early
stages of the incarceration during which her family was
given forty-eight hours notice to dispose of all of their prop-
erty, including their store and countless acres of farmland,
prior to vacating the West Coast. They were allowed to take
only what they could carry, and were immediately placed

under detention in what the U.S. government euphemistically called Assembly Centers—temporary camps that were hastily converted racetracks where entire families were housed in horse stalls. Although the living conditions in the Assembly Centers were unbearable, my grandmother's tearful recollection served as a powerful testament to the even more devastating shock of being betrayed by her own country. As she clearly expressed, "Here I was a loyal American citizen who was being labeled as a traitor to America simply because of my ancestry—it was an alienating, humiliating, and embarrassing experience."

According to my grandmother, she and most other Japanese Americans did not remain in the Assembly Centers for more than a few weeks before being tagged, like luggage, and transported to more permanent relocation centers, which were to serve as their "home" for the next two to three years. While I had read about the sordid living conditions in these barbed wire compounds, it was quite overwhelming to hear the many details that my grandmother so vividly recollected and related to me.

In particular, when I asked her to describe her first impressions of the relocation camp, she paused for a moment before responding, as if her memories of the actual internment were too painful for her to recall. However, she continued: "We were loaded onto buses with all the windows blacked out, and a blanket was placed behind the side door so we could not see where they were taking us. When we finally reached our destination, I was shocked to see that the sites were not prepared for human habitation—the toilets consisted of one level board with holes just inches apart with no partitions, and the 'apartments' each family were assigned to were, in reality, six by nineteen foot makeshift barracks surrounded by scrubby sagebrush, dirt, and barbed wire."

In addition to these unbearable living conditions, my grandmother noted that she and the other internees were crowded into long lines three times a day to eat starchy, unsavory meals, and that they were forced to work long hours, earning no more than \$12 a month. What I found most disheartening about her account was the devastating impact that the internment camps had on the once orderly and spirited lives of the Japanese Americans. She sadly recounted, "Our dignity was destroyed. We were over-

whelmed with despair, for our families were torn apart, and our hopes and dreams for the future were shattered."

Considering the trauma that Japanese Americans were forced to endure during the internment, I found it quite remarkable that they did not develop any feelings of bitterness or anger toward the Americans for imprisoning them solely because of their ancestry. In fact, my grandmother proudly recalled that her brother, Leonard, was one of over 33,000 Japanese Americans who fulfilled their obligation and loyalty as United States citizens by serving in the armed forces. "They literally gave their lives and limbs to prove their loyalty," she explained, "and, as a result, military observers agreed that the Japanese American battalion was the most decorated unit in United States military history." Since many of the internees helped America win the war against Japan, there was clearly no need for the government to continue its incarceration of Japanese Americans. Consequently, the evacuation order had been canceled, and the government had begun to close the internment camps.

Expecting the postwar period to have been a liberating experience for the internees, I asked my grandmother how her life had changed after being released from camp. She immediately appeared dispirited as she indicated that the years following the internment were more difficult than the incarceration itself. "In many respects, this was the hardest part of the internment because my family had no home to go back to—we had lost our store and all of our farmland. We also faced considerable discrimination in housing and employment, and everywhere we went, we were met with hostile signs that read: 'No Japs Allowed,' 'No Japs Welcome.'" Not surprisingly, however, she and the other Japanese American internees did not allow the pain and shock of postwar discrimination to affect their efforts to rebuild their lives. Instead, they accepted the grave injustice that was done to their race and found the courage to withstand the shame of being treated as traitors in their own country.

After painfully reliving the details of wartime incarceration, my grandmother described her feelings about this relatively unknown period in both our family's history and the history of America: "I do not hold any feelings of bitterness because of the internment. While it was a humiliating and shameful event in my life as a United States citizen, I feel that I have worked very hard to overcome any disadvantages

that I have faced, and have successfully proven myself as a loyal, diligent, and respectful American." Bachan Watanabe's reflections on her internment experience are strikingly representative of the responses of most Japanese American internees, who have made their unique mark and have responded admirably to the challenges that they faced and endured amid strong postwar racism. The Japanese values of hard work, education, and survival, which were instilled by their traditional *isei* parents, have enabled them to rebound from the devastation of the incarceration and to succeed economically in America.

The internment of Japanese Americans is undoubtedly a tragic chapter in the history of America. However, it is also a courageous story of a group of United States citizens who would not let racism and incarceration affect their dedication and loyalty to their country. After hearing my grandmother's emotional account of her experience in an American concentration camp, I better understand what a devastating impact the internment had on persons of Japanese ancestry—psychologically, emotionally, and physically. I was overwhelmed by the reality that a group of American citizens could so easily become innocent victims of a racist policy that ignored all the protections of individual rights, which are fundamental principles of constitutional government. Indeed, the exclusion and internment of Japanese Americans during World War II was an injustice felt at the deepest personal level by those who experienced it, but for all Americans, it remains a betrayal of the tenets upon which this nation was founded—a grave violation of liberty that will hopefully never again be repeated.

The Healing Power of Listening

As the daughter of a breast cancer survivor, I am familiar with the effects cancer imposes on family members. However, I yearned to better understand the emotions victims experience, the ways families deal with this terrifying disease, as well as the benefits of participating in a support group. In search of these answers, I interviewed Pat Fobair, the head social worker of the Patient Resource Center at the Stanford Hospital. Pat greeted me with a smile as I stepped into her office. She carried herself graciously and asked me how I felt, but even this commonplace question resonated with warmth.

In the oncology ward I had visited beforehand, the patients were staring blankly at the white floors only to avoid revealing their preoccupations; a child was screaming desperately; a woman was weeping. A nurse was quietly humming a sorrowful tune as she continued pushing a handicapped elderly woman in a wheelchair. At first, the hospital seemed like a frightening revelation of patients' illnesses and pain. Even though most of the women in the Patient Resource Center were terminally ill cancer patients, Pat's presence and silent comfort made all of us feel much more at ease than we would have felt outside, in the oncology ward.

Soon, Pat began sharing her life stories with me. Born in 1935, she is the oldest of five children. While the responsibilities of being the oldest made her reluctant to have children of her own, her patients and coworkers have become her family. Pat enjoyed helping others from an early age, and after reading an inspirational story in *The Ladies' Home Journal*, she decided to devote her life to caring for others. As a social worker, she has reached out to hundreds of patients in the fight against cancer.

Pat first discovered the power of group discussions after joining the Encounter Group Movement, an organization designed to encourage college students to speak openly about diversity. "It was a liberating process," she remarked, "and through these groups I could share my experiences with others. I became familiar with new perspectives. What I learned from others was priceless." Years later, as a social worker at a hospital in San Francisco, Pat