

Hello. My name is Bruce Saito. I am the chair of the Friends of Manzanar. Friends was founded in 2004 by Lillian Kawasaki and Rose Ochi. Both have passed but our mission remains the same. Friends of Manzanar works with the National Park Service and other interested groups to preserve and restore the Manzanar site and to interpret its stories, resources and lessons for this and future generations.

My day job and my passion for 45 years is the CA Conservation Corps. I started my career at the CCC in 1977, where I stayed for nearly 10 years. I helped to start-up the Los Angeles Conservation Corps, a not for profit, in 1986 where I stayed until 2015. In September 2015 Governor Jerry Brown appointed me to the Director of the CCC.

I am here today to testify to the committee because I think the World War II Japanese Internment Camp Network legislation is important and should be supported.

Both my parents and grandparents were imprisoned in Japanese Internment Camps. In her junior year of high school in Artesia, located in Los Angeles County, my mother was removed from school and sent to the Poston Camp in Arizona with her parents and a handful of relatives. My father and his parents were sent to Gila River Camp, also in Arizona. My parents had been dating but were not married until my father worked out a transfer to the Poston Camp where he then married my mom in camp. I never knew much about their marriage until many years later at their 50th wedding anniversary. My sister and I and many relatives and friends celebrated their anniversary by serving Nesbit Orange Sodas and a Dolly Madison short cake, just as my parents did while they were in camp 50 years ago. We all got a kick out of toasting our orange sodas and relishing in lavish short cake (no whip cream or strawberries) but, even 50 years later, it was a sad reminder of the conditions that imprisoned Japanese Americans, most of whom were US Citizens. Many of you have heard how many Issei and Nisei generations often did not talk about their camp experiences with their children and grandchildren. Such was my case and experience and one of the reasons why I think that creating the World War II Japanese Camp Network is so critical and important. We must continue to strengthen the network and continue to connect the dots through the network so this tragic and very important lesson in history is never forgotten.

As I said I have committed 45 years of my life to service and the conservation corps movement. This commitment I believe comes from the lessons, both good and bad, that my parents and grandparents taught me about humility and the power of self.