

# Silence . . . No More

by Kiku Funabiki

Silence, forty years of silence  
Forty years of anger, pain, helplessness  
Shackled in the hearts of  
Issei, Nisei, Kibei \*

(5) Many died in silence  
Some by their own hands  
Some by others

Today  
The survivors

(10) Stood tall, strong, proud  
Issei, Nisei, Kibei all vowed  
No more enryo, giri, gaman \*\*  
Shattering the silence.

Today  
(15) the survivors  
Cried out redress, restitution, reparations

for  
a father detained in five  
prisoner-of war camps in America  
(20) for the crime of being Japanese  
and joined his loved ones  
in yet another barbed wire compound  
then returned home to die at seventy-three  
in San Francisco \*\*\*

(25) for  
a mother whose demons drove her  
to hammer her infant to death  
now skipping merrily after butterflies  
in the snow

(30) for  
a brother, honor student,  
star athlete, Purple Heart veteran  
now alone in a sleazy Seattle Hotel room  
sitting on the edge of a cot

(35) rocking, rocking

for  
a girl of fourteen  
mother to the Japanese American children  
in Petersburg  
(40) orphaned by the FBI seizure  
of all Japanese adults  
now agonizing in guilt  
at having detoured the jailhouse  
too ashamed at the sight of her father  
waving desperately at her

(45) for  
a baby whose whimpers  
were silenced forever  
in a camp hospital

(50) the Caucasian doctor who never came  
was a father of a son killed  
in the Pacific

Silence  
Silence, no more . . . no more

This poem was written after a public hearing in 1982, held by the Commission on the Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians in ten cities. Many ex-detainees spoke out for the first time. The incidents are taken from actual testimonies at hearings the author attended in San Francisco and Seattle. The author later read her poem with her testimony at a Congressional hearing before the Committee on the Judiciary in Washington, D.C. in 1984.

\* Issei, Nisei, Kibei: first generation/second generation/second generation educated in Japan

\*\* enryo, giri, gaman: deference/obligation/endurance (deeply entrenched cultural values)

\*\*\* Author's father: Sojiro Hori

Excerpted from *Teacher's Guide: The Bill of Rights and the Japanese American World War II Experience* by the National Japanese American Historical Society, pg. 44.