



DEPARTMENT OF ASIAN STUDIES

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

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March 11, 2016,

To Whom it May Concern,

I'm writing to provide a letter of support for Mr. Sam Mihara, who delivered his excellent multimedia presentation entitled *Memories of Heart Mountain* here at the University of Texas at Austin on Friday February 12, 2016. Let me say at the outset that this is an absolutely terrific and engaging talk that would be appropriate for a wide range of audiences, from high school students to community groups. I am a tenured associate professor of Japanese history at UT and invited Sam to deliver this talk to an audience of approximately one hundred undergraduate students of History and Asian-American Studies.

In his talk, Sam draws upon his own family photographs and boyhood experiences of incarceration at Heart Mountain to provide a moving firsthand account of the traumatic experience of being removed from one's home, stripped of possessions, and sent to live in a remote prison camp under harsh conditions of privation. He also knowledgeably recounts the political processes that led to the release of the internees and the continuing racism they encountered after the war. The students gave very positive reviews for the talk and were especially appreciative of the personal nature of Sam's story, i.e. that he represented a living eyewitness to history. A group of twelve students were invited to have lunch with him afterwards and had a meaningful follow-up conversation.

Recently the media has reported that as many as a third of American polled believe that the mass incarceration of Japanese-Americans during World War II was a necessary and appropriate measure. Sam's moving presentation provides an invaluable resource for helping convince audiences that the U.S. government must never again engage in such unjust racially-based discrimination again. His talk also included important observations and photos illustrating how "Family Residential Centers," operated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to detain women and children who have entered the U.S. illegally from Mexico and Central America, actually resemble Japanese internment, holding innocent civilians against their will in prison-like conditions. By making this tie, Sam reminded students how easily the state can slip into repressive and authoritarian modes even in our own time. Nevertheless, the presentation ended on an upbeat note, describing how his friends and family members overcame hardship and led successful, productive lives and how Japanese-Americans gained reparations under the Reagan administration.

In summary, Sam Mihara provides a lively, well-informed, and well-illustrated introduction to the Japanese-American incarceration experience that is personal, approachable, and highly effective. I recommend him to you with great enthusiasm. If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact me by email at nancy.stalker@austin.utexas.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy K. Stalker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Nancy K. Stalker

Associate Professor, Departments of Asian Studies and History
Core Faculty member, Center for Asian American Studies and Center for Women's &
Gender Studies
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