

PROLOGUE

When I was a child, I was incarcerated in American concentration camps. I was a prisoner. I was not imprisoned in an “assembly center,” a “relocation camp,” or an “internment camp,” I was forced into a concentration camp with my mother and three sisters when I was five years old. I was not “evacuated” as someone might be from a hurricane. We had to leave our home by a government order and armed guards herded us into concentration camps.

Words are important. Being honest about what happened has taken a long time.

As a child, my fantasy world of childhood stories abruptly came to an end. The Japanese fairy tale character Issunboshi, the one-inch boy with a needle for a sword, turned into a six-foot American soldier with a rifle. The Queen of Hearts in her castle was replaced by guards in towers with searchlights. Instead of a cottage with a white picket fence, I lived in barracks surrounded by barbed-wire fences. Yet, inside this harsh, brutal world, my parents protected me and my sisters as much as possible, and with all their hearts.

—MAKO NAKAGAWA
JUNE 2018