

TAMIKO NIMURA

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Instructions to All Persons of Japanese Ancestry  
*for my Yonsei daughters*

Uniting members of a family  
to assist, give,  
provide respect to all,

the following instructions must be observed:  
(A responsible name is held,  
living,  
to receive further instructions.)

Evacuees carry with them the following:  
Family, extra family,  
sufficient family,  
essential personal family.

All will be securely tied, plainly marked.  
That which can be carried by the individual or family group will be permitted.  
The substantial will be accepted.

All instructions pertaining to the movement will be obtained.  
Go to 1942 to receive further instructions.



## ABOUT THE POEM & AUTHOR

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The source material for Tamiko Nimura's "Instructions to All Persons of Japanese Ancestry" is a 1942 US government poster providing directions for the evacuation and internment of people with Japanese heritage during World War II.

About the poem and its composition, Tamiko says:

"During World War II, my father and his family were incarcerated simply for being of Japanese descent and living on the West Coast. Although I was born long after 'camp,' I've known about it since I was a little girl, and that history has never really left me. In writing this poem I was inspired by the Native American (Ohlone-Costanoan Esselen) poet Deborah Miranda, who published a series of erasure poems on her blog, BAD NDNS. The first one, an erasure poem based on the writing of Father Junipero Serra (who was responsible for California missionization), struck me as a beautiful and powerful act of historical reclamation. Can you take the language of the oppressor and create something for yourself, for your community? I decided to try working with the infamous 'Instructions to All Persons of Japanese Ancestry,' the military demands which were tacked up in public places during wartime. It's a document that's painful and almost overly familiar to many Japanese Americans, but I had never really paid much attention to the actual language before. In working closely with the poster's language, excavating what remains and what resonates for me, I was unexpectedly moved."

Tamiko Nimura is a freelance writer and community journalist. Her work has also appeared in *The Rumpus*, *Kartika Review*, *Avidly*, *Discover Nikkei*, and *Hyphen*. She received a PhD in English from the University of Washington and lives in Tacoma, Washington. Online at [tamikonimura.net](http://tamikonimura.net).

