



August 27, 2020

## Tule Lake Committee Mourns the Loss of Lane Hirabayashi

The Tule Lake Committee lost a treasured friend and advocate when Lane Ryo Hirabayashi died earlier this month.

Lane Hirabayashi was a scholar and activist who recognized the importance of community organizing to give Japanese Americans a voice about how our history is remembered. For the past decade, the TLC was grateful for his support and validation in our work to preserve the story of Japanese American grassroots dissent during the WWII incarceration.

In 2010, Hirabayashi worked with the Tule Lake Committee to support two legendary Nisei women, archivist/activist Aiko Yoshinaga-Herzig and Seattle educator/advocate, Mako Nakagawa, who promoted the use of accurate terminology to describe America's concentration camps. He convened key scholars and community activists for a seminal 2011 symposium on terminology, to consider language and euphemisms that minimized the human civil rights violations of the WWII concentration camps, especially of Tule Lake. (Before closing in 1946, the Tule Lake Segregation Center became a Department of Justice internment camp, part of a program to denationalize, intern and deport Japanese American protesters.)

For the remainder of his life, Hirabayashi urged scholars and mass media representatives to use accurate, non-euphemistic terminology. He especially eschewed misuse of "internment" to describe the mass incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans. "Internment" is a **selective** and **legal** process governed by the Geneva Conventions, used by the Department of Justice and the Army to detain "enemy aliens." The indiscriminate herding of Japanese Americans into concentration camps and their loss of freedom is accurately described as "incarceration" or "imprisonment."

The Tule Lake Committee will remember Hirabayashi as a lead actor in revising 75 years of government propaganda that demonized the thousands of men and women segregated to Tule Lake for the "crime" of protesting injustice.

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Hirabayashi was a treasured friend and advocate who promoted the understanding that grassroots dissent is a courageous response to oppression. He gave the academic imprimatur of the UCLA/AASC Suyama Project - [www.suyamaproject.org](http://www.suyamaproject.org) - to Tule Lake's stories of dissent, sponsoring and organizing programs about Block 42's protests against registration, on Tule Lake's No-Nos, and, *Tule Lake, America's Worst Concentration Camp*, a book in progress by Roger Daniels and Barbara Takei.

He recognized the moral and political courage it took to respond to the injustice of the wartime incarceration, and gave important validation to a long-stigmatized part of Japanese American history — our community's civil rights heroes at Tule Lake.

We cherish our memories of Lane Hirabayashi's social justice advocacy and scholarship, and will miss him deeply.

Tule Lake Committee Board of Directors