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Preliminary Proposal - NEH

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RESEARCH OFFICE

MEMORANDUM

TO: *Rosalie Wax*

DATE: 9/18/80

In a phone conversation yesterday with NEH personnel, I was told that very few new proposals were awarded in FY 80 due to the large number of continuations NEH was obligated to fund. They simply ran out of money. They also stated that the picture appears much brighter, with more funds available for new projects, for FY 81.

In light of this, I would encourage you to consider resubmitting your proposal which was declined last year.

If interested, contact me immediately for applications and deadlines.

Johnna VanArsdale
Sponsored Projects Specialist
Ext. 5808 Box 1054

Revised

Dear Project Director:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your application. For purposes of identification, the log number of this application is RE-00018.

Please use this number in any and all subsequent correspondence.

Division of Research Programs

MS-350

**NATIONAL ENDOWMENT
FOR THE HUMANITIES
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20506**

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Rosalie H. Wax
Social Science Institute
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St. Louis, MO 63130

PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL

Rosalie H. Wax, Washington University, St. Louis, MO

From June of 1943 until July of 1945 I was employed as a staff researcher for the Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Study sponsored by the University of California at Berkeley. For some fifteen months -- February of 1944 to May of 1945 -- I did field research in the Tule Lake Center, where were confined one portion of the Japanese American evacuees, those 18,000 persons who had been categorized as "disloyal" to the United States. During these months I made weekly or fortnightly visits to some thirty Japanese Americans and recorded their views and opinions on current, past, and future events. I visited or talked to many other Japanese Americans on a less regular basis. Some of my respondents regarded me as a friend; others as a sympathetic reporter or recorder. While many respondents were folk who "did not want to get involved in politics", others were anxious leaders of factions: the Coordinating Committee, the Resegregationists, The Daihyo Sha Kai (People's Representative Body), the Sokuji Kikoku Hoshi-dan (Organization to Return Immediately to the Homeland to Serve), the Hokoku Seinen-dan (Young Men's Organization to Serve Our Mother Country). Most of the statements made by these people were recorded verbatim.

I also made frequent visits to members of the administrative staff of the War Relocation Authority, many of whom, like the Japanese Americans, were inclined to voice their frustrations and irritations, and to give me information. Included in these are interviews with the project

director, assistant project directors, the community analyst, division heads, Dillon S. Myer (National Director of the War Relocation Authority), John Burling (a representative of the Department of Justice), and with social workers, school teachers, laboratory technicians, and members of internal security (the police).

In addition I described what I saw and heard as I walked about the camp or as I attended classes, staff meetings, or Japanese ceremonies.

As soon as I typed these notes, I sent the original copy to Dr. Dorothy Swaine Thomas, director of the Study, while retaining a carbon copy for myself. Much of the material collected and written by staff researchers was subsequently deposited in the Bancroft Library of the University of California, but for reasons about which I can only speculate, my extensive field notes on Tule Lake were not included. There is no mention of them in the Catalog prepared by Edward N. Barnhart (JAPANESE AMERICAN EVACUATION AND RESETTLEMENT, Catalog of Material in the General Library, University of California, General Library, Berkeley, 1958).

In consequence, I have today about a thousand pages of typewritten notes, comprising approximately 406,000 words. Except for quotations appearing in The Spoilage (D.S. Thomas and R.S. Nishimoto, University of California Press, 1946), none of this material has been published.

A number of colleagues have urged me to make these notes available to historians, social scientists, and particularly, to scholars interested in the study of extreme situations. I would therefore, like to secure the funds that would enable me to edit and annotate them. Being carbon copies, the notes are not as legible as they otherwise might be. Moreover, the series of events discussed by respondents are very complex,

and explanatory comments are often needed. The Japanese cultural inclination to give important information indirectly or by implication creates ambiguities that should be clarified. Explanations and comments are also required because I addressed these notes to the head of the study and the prose sometimes assume a knowledge of details that should be inserted for the comprehension of the modern reader. Again, during the frequent periods of stress, crises, and even terrorism, I used initials instead of names on the carbon copies of the notes which I kept for myself. (I had been warned that my notes might be stolen or confiscated.)

Colleagues have also suggested that the edited and annotated notes should then be put onto computer tape and copies then be made available to appropriate depository libraries. If this were done with an appropriate computer indexing system, historians and other scholars would be facilitated in their usage of these materials.

Having edited the notes, I would like to interview some ten to fifteen of the Japanese Americans who were my respondents at the Tule Lake Segregation Center. If they consent, I will ask them how the experience affected their lives and how it influenced them as human beings. Which of their experiences now appears to have affected them most deeply, which were traumatic, and which, if any were helpful? What did they learn about their fellow human beings? Would they care to describe the process by which they recovered from the experience?

I have continued to correspond with a number of my respondents. Dr. William T. Liu, of the Pan Asian Mental Health Research Center has told me that he can help me to get in touch with others.

My fieldnotes (which are largely composed of informal interviews and conversations) and the subsequent interviews obtained thirty-six years later, should provide material for a broader understanding of some of the extreme situations in the modern world. They will also provide a great deal of data on how such situations are intensified or how they may be alleviated. It would be illuminating to compare the experiences and attitudes of the displaced and impounded Japanese Americans with those of other dislocated peoples, for example, the boat people or the refugees from Cuba.

The fieldnotes are particularly relevant to an understanding of the development and containment of terrorism. They contain a week by week account of the activities of a group who called themselves Resegregationists, some of whom, when they were opposed, became terrorists. They contain an equally detailed account of how and why some courageous Japanese Americans resisted and were able to put a stop to the violence.