

## Wilderness House Literary Review 17/3

*Charles Hayes*

### **Make America A Turnkey Again**

After a short ferry ride from Seattle across Puget Sound I can hear in my mind the echoes of "send them back" and "build that wall." I am at the Japanese Exclusion Memorial on Bainbridge Island.

In March of 1942 American soldiers with rifles and bayonets herded 250 Japanese men, women, and children farmers aboard a boat to begin their trip to concentration camps in Idaho and California. They were allowed only what they could carry and had been given only 6 days notice. The Japanese had no idea of where they were going nor for how long. Many never returned, their land having been stolen by the vultures that had lobbied for their exclusion. It was not unlike today's desecration of The Bears Ears and other preserved lands handed over to big money donors so that job numbers will not reflect their natural state and hinder a re-election.

However, with the help and support of the people that live here, some Japanese were able to make it back and start over. This memorial is a credit as well to their former neighbors who lived here and loved them.

How different it is here than what they say is now most of this country. To me there is little wonder that most flights would fly over such bounty hunters and profiteers. To the tune of some lily white christian hymn, it is also little wonder that what we again see is the forced degradation and removal of those who might have a dime to fall into wanting hands. I suppose many of those dimes will tinkle into the tithe jar as those aforementioned hymns are heralded. Afterwards, consciences and guilt salved, all good patriots will head to their afternoon barbecues.

Thank God for this place of remembrance and those who keep it. It is here among the evergreen and Northwest fauna of a Puget Sound inlet that only by recall can the glitz and glamor of a hog mouthed conductor slopping his sucklings be heard.

Very wooded, with a record of all those violated, the memorial is quiet.