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INTRODUCTION

And yet words on a parchment would not be enough to deliver slaves from bondage, or provide men and women of every color and creed their full rights and obligations as citizens of the United States. What would be needed were Americans in successive generations who were willing to do their part—through protests and struggles, on the streets and in the courts, through a civil war and civil disobedience and always at great risk—to narrow that gap between the promise of our ideals and the reality of their time.

... I believe deeply that we cannot solve the challenges of our time unless we solve them together—unless we perfect our union by understanding that we may have different stories, but we hold common hopes; we may not look the same and may not have come from the same place, but we all want to move in the same direction—towards a better future for our children and our grandchildren.

Barack Obama, "A More Perfect Union," March 18, 2008

Sumi Harada's old house on Lemon Street is now a National Historic Landmark with an American story to tell. For much of the twentieth century, members of the Harada family, Americans of Japanese ancestry, lived in this modest California house on Lemon Street in Riverside, working to realize the American Dream of aspiring to happiness and fulfillment by owning a home of their own. Like some of the more familiar landmarks representing the experiences of Americans with an immigrant heritage—Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty come to mind—or other places in our country where people of color took their struggle to the streets,

this American home tells the story of a fight for the rights of immigrants and their citizen children facing long-established attitudes and legal actions questioning their participation in American life.

In the early 1900s, father Jukichi, mother Ken, and their firstborn son came across the Pacific to the United States from their ancestral home in Japan. The young family settled in Riverside, a place of promise where hundreds of other Japanese immigrants were finding work in California's burgeoning citrus industry. As more children were born, the Haradas supported their growing family with small profits from their Washington Restaurant and a rooming house where they lived in Riverside's downtown commercial district. Because of the untimely passing of their second son in 1913, Jukichi and Ken vowed to move their surviving children from the stuffy and crowded rooming-house lodgings to a better home of their own in a good neighborhood just as soon as possible.

Two years later, Mr. Harada finally found an affordable thirty-year-old six-room house for sale, freshly painted and conveniently located in a white middle-class neighborhood on Lemon Street. The little house was less than a ten-minute walk from the Haradas' downtown restaurant and close to the family's church and the children's school. Jukichi and Ken decided to purchase the property because they believed it would provide a safe and healthy place for their children to live. However, just as the sale neared completion, white neighbors objected to the Haradas' move to the new neighborhood because of their Japanese ancestry.

When the Harada family decided to move to Lemon Street, California's Alien Land Law of 1913, later described in the US Supreme Court case *Oyama v. California* as "the first official act of discrimination aimed at the Japanese," denied real estate ownership to aliens ineligible for citizenship. According to the new law, because they had come from Asia and were not allowed to become citizens of the United States, young fathers and mothers like Jukichi and Ken Harada from Japan could never own real estate in California. For those who believed the Golden State had been and should always be "White Man's Country," the prohibition of real estate ownership by those who could never become citizens was desirable, because it was hoped that these immigrants should only be in California temporarily to harvest oranges or hoe weeds between the row crops.

Thinking of the future of his youngest children and aware of their rights as native-born citizens of the United States, Jukichi attempted to circumvent the new law. He bought the house on Lemon Street by recording ownership of the property in the names of the three American citizens in his family, his two young daughters and an infant son. Mr. Harada knew his three youngest children were citizens because they had been born on American soil, but most did not care that some in the Harada family were American citizens. Regardless of the Haradas' citizenship status, many people in town were more concerned that the parents and their children had Japanese faces. When the Haradas bought the house on

Lemon Street in 1915, many Americans across the nation still believed that any immigrant from Asia and all the other people of color already living within its borders should never be allowed to take part in the American Dream.

Within days of the Haradas' purchase of their new house, local newspapers printed the alarming news that a Japanese family was moving to Lemon Street. The Haradas' white neighbors quickly formed a committee and asked Jukichi to accept a small profit on the sale and move to another part of town. Harada refused. The anxious neighbors and other concerned citizens soon convinced California's attorney general to file suit against Harada to oust his family from the house on Lemon Street, charging he had violated the Alien Land Law. Before too much longer, with some prominent white people in town taking his side in the battle, Mr. Harada was seated in the witness chair at the Riverside County Courthouse, defending himself and his family against the State of California in the first Japanese American court case testing the 1913 Alien Land Law, *The People of California v. Jukichi Harada*.

By the time Harada's trial began, interest in the house on Lemon Street had expanded far beyond Riverside. Reports of the case were published in big-city newspapers on both coasts. It was also claimed that the proceedings against Mr. Harada had even aroused the concern of the Japanese government. Whatever the outcome of their court trial and the rest of their family's American journey, when they would, one day, find themselves exiled behind the barbed-wire fences of an American concentration camp, the Haradas and others like them soon understood that despite hard work, perseverance, and good behavior, the American Dream would not always be easy to come by.

In 2008, when presidential hopeful Barack Obama was struggling to maintain his political future with his speech "A More Perfect Union," delivered not far from the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall at Constitution Center in Philadelphia, he spoke of the "successive generations" of Americans willing to do their part to narrow the distance "between the promise of our ideals and the reality of their time." The tall son of a mother from Kansas and a father from Kenya said we all had the same hopes, and even though we all do not look the same and have not come from the same place, "we all want to move in the same direction—towards a better future for our children and our grandchildren."

Despite candidate Obama's optimism about the overarching good intentions of the American people, change has often been difficult to accept. As too many children and grandchildren experienced, for some in our divided land at the time of the Civil War it had been far too soon for anyone to deliver slaves from bondage. In 1915 it was impossible for others to imagine that a Japanese family might be coming to live next door. In another generation, more thought it was simply unacceptable for Rosa Parks to take a seat on a bus in Montgomery or to have nine well-dressed young men and women ascend the steps of Little Rock's Central

High School. Within our borders in our own time it has been difficult for some of our neighbors to believe that babies born to migrant workers who have come here without permission should become American citizens by virtue of our Constitution's Fourteenth Amendment. And it has not been all that long since many more among us refused to accept an Islamic community center rising too close to the ashes of Ground Zero.

If, as Barack Obama had said in Philadelphia, “words on a parchment” alone have not always been sufficient to “provide men and women of every color and creed their full rights and obligations as citizens of the United States,” then the risky protests and struggles accompanying the story of our country, and the often confrontational practices of citizenship exercised in pursuit of the American Dream, have always been essential ingredients for the progress and success of the American people. For immigrants from Japan, their early efforts to purchase homes of their own in what they believed to be decent neighborhoods of respectable families were met with open hostility and challenges to their desire to become permanent residents of the United States and to join others in the country as equals. Those in authority who urged the government's forced removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast during World War II, implemented by President Franklin Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 in 1942 in response to advice that the removal was a military necessity, ignored official information saying that the Japanese Americans living on the West Coast were of little threat. Instead of a wartime action required by immediate concerns over national security, the expulsion was, as others in authority would one day recognize, a culmination of nearly fifty years of discrimination and legal harassment aimed at Japanese immigrants and their American citizen children. The story of the house on Lemon Street and the Harada family's quest for acceptance illuminates the deep underpinnings of anti-Asian animus setting the stage for Executive Order 9066 and recognizes fundamental elements of our nation's anti-immigrant history that continue to shape the American story today.

Candidate Obama's words resonated for many who know that the fight for the American Dream cannot be taken for granted. Some of them closest to the struggle in time and living memory remember the family stories of confrontation lived by the pioneers among us who faced their neighbors to take our country's promises out into the open air from their workingmen's shacks or migrant camps on the other side of the railroad tracks. With children and grandchildren on their minds, the most courageous ones among us marched into the daylight across our bridges, up and away from the hot fields and factories, onto our streets and into our jails and courtrooms. Some made inspiring speeches to defend the dream; others were lynched. Some were removed from their homes and forced to live beneath the guard towers of America's concentration camps, and some lived long enough

to see a family of color move into the White House. However, despite the years of struggle and victories accomplished in pursuit and defense of the American Dream, some people around us today still know little of these patriotic efforts. And others who have learned nothing from the many lessons of this quest are already repeating some of the mistakes of our past.