

Tule Lake Unit

WWII Valor in the Pacific National Monument

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Castle Rock
© Hanako Wakatsuki

Tule Lake Pilgrimage, July 2014

The Tule Lake Committee (TLC) hosted the biennial, four day pilgrimage over Fourth of July weekend to connect pilgrims with the historic Tule Lake Segregation Center and its turbulent and complicated history. There were over 350 participants who made the journey from across the United States and Japan. Pilgrims traveled on buses departing from west coast cities: San Francisco, San Jose, Union City, Sacramento, Berkeley, Seattle, Olympia, Portland, and Eugene. The bus ride is an integral part of the pilgrimage, where pilgrims create a community that reflects on the experience of those who were forced from their homes on the west coast in 1942, and imprisoned in ten War Relocation Authority camps and other detention facilities in remote areas located all over the US, including Tule Lake.

This year's theme was *Criminalizing Dissent: The Tule Lake Jail*. According to TLC, the focus was on segregation and the 12,000 dissidents who were branded as "disloyal" and imprisoned at the maximum-security Tule Lake Segregation Center. Dissent became a crime that led to a lifetime of stigma, a stigma that, to this day, is still felt within the community. The goal of the Tule Lake Pilgrimage is to lift that stigma, validate the experience of those who dissented, and create an environment where understanding, acceptance, and healing can take place.

The program was packed full of activities and sessions. There were viewings of documentaries including: *Cats of Mirikitani*, *From a Silk Cocoon*, *Jimmy Murakami: Non Alien*, and *A Flicker in Eternity*. Many participated in the Castle Rock hike; the oldest person to summit was 84 years old, a teenager when incarcerated at Tule Lake.

The Tule Lake Committee and the National Park Service (NPS) worked together to offer pilgrimage participants two separate options for tours of the historic site. Tour buses staffed by NPS rangers and volunteers visited a latrine foundation, jail, California State Historic Site marker, and Camp Tulelake where interpretive presentations were given. At the jail, pilgrims were greeted by Jimi Yamaichi, who



Pilgrims descending Castle Rock during the 2014 Pilgrimage
NPS Photo

July 2014

spoke about the Army stockade and the jail's construction. At Camp Tulelake, the Tanimoto brothers recalled their detention after their housing block protested the loyalty questionnaire. The other tour was collaboratively conducted by Cultural Resource Manager, Jessica Middleton and TLC's Barbara Takei, and focused on historic use, significance, and potential future uses for the National Historical Landmark area and existing structures. This included the carpenter shop, stockade, and two motor pool buildings.

At the invitation of the TLC, members of the local community attended activities at the Tulelake-Butte Valley Fairgrounds and the Tule Lake Pilgrimage cultural program at the Ross Ragland Theater in Klamath Falls, Oregon.

This year's keynote speaker was Wayne Merrill Collins, son of the late Wayne Mortimer Collins who is revered among Tule Lake's segregants as a passionate defender of Japanese American civil rights. Collins spoke of the government's forced removal and wartime incarceration program as the source of duress that led thousands of US citizens to give up their citizenship, and of his father's 20 year fight to help thousands of Japanese Americans reverse the damage done to them by this unprecedented denationalization and deportation program.

The 2014 Tule Lake Pilgrimage, "*Criminalizing Dissent*," was a powerful and healing event – a gathering that reflected on the injustice of the wartime incarceration and honored individuals who suffered a lifetime of humiliation and stigma.



Jimi Yamaichi addressing the pilgrims at the memorial service
NPS Photo

The National Park Service appreciated the opportunity to participate this year's pilgrimage providing onsite visit and tours. The National Park Service was honored to interact with so many people connected to and passionate about this turbulent part of American history. The Tule Lake Unit is open year round and offers tours on Saturdays in the summer. Please call us in advance to schedule a ranger led tour for other times, (530) 260-0537. The National Park Service hopes to see you in 2016 which coincides with the centennial anniversary of the National Park Service!



Group photo of pilgrims born at Tule Lake
Photo courtesy of Kiyoshi Ina

