



OPINION

## Harada House a witness to history, hope for better future

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By ELIO PALACIOS JR. / Contributing writer  
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*Liberty Enlightening the World*, the name of France's gift to the United States, stands watch over New York Harbor and has welcomed countless immigrants to America. Lady Liberty's symbolism of opportunity for the oppressed was used by activists in the years leading up to World War II in an unsuccessful attempt to increase the immigration of Jews and other refugees seeking to escape Nazi Germany.

Once war broke out, Riverside's own Harold Harada joined the fight as a medic in Europe against the German army. Harold's combat regiment, the mainly Japanese American 442nd Regimental Combat Team, remains one of the most decorated units in U.S. history.

Harold's father, and former schoolteacher, Jukichi Harada, had arrived in San Francisco in 1898, 12 years after the Statue of Liberty was dedicated, to seek his American Dream. His first stop was in the middle of the Spanish American War on board the U.S. patrol steamer ship Grant, where Jukichi served in the ship's galley.

Saving enough money from working on different ships for a few years, Jukichi was finally able to move his wife, Ken, and their first born son, Masa Atsu, to the United States. By 1905, the young Harada family had settled in sunny Riverside. Jukichi and Ken found Riverside a welcoming place and their family grew. The rooming house and restaurant that the Haradas operated provided a good living for the family.

Although Riverside in the early 20th century was mostly welcoming to the Haradas and a vibrant Japanese immigrant community, the rest of California began to worry about growing Japanese American influence. James Phelan, a former mayor of San Francisco at the time, exemplified the growing anti-Japanese sentiment. Phelan told the Boston Sunday Herald in 1907 that the Japanese "must be excluded because they are non-assimilable [sic]; they are a permanently foreign element ... in time of trial they will not fight for Uncle Sam, but betray him to the enemy ... California is white man's country." In 1913, California sanctioned anti-Japanese sentiment by enacting the Alien Land Law, which effectively prohibited Japanese immigrants from owning real property.

Meanwhile, Jukichi and his wife, Ken, crushed by their first-born American son, Tadao's, death from diphtheria in their cramped rooming house in 1913, decided that there was no other option for them than to move their family to a nicer, healthier



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Because the Haradas could not own their house due to the Alien Land Law, they put the title to the house in the name of their three American-born minor children. After complaints from some of their new neighbors, the California attorney general prosecuted Jukichi for violating the Alien Land Law even though the house was owned by his American-born children. The trial started in May 1918 in Riverside County Superior Courthouse. Judge Hugh Craig decided the case in favor of Jukichi by finding that the children were the owners in fact and that due to their being American citizens there was no violation of the Alien Land Law. Jukichi and Ken Harada had finally secured their American Dream on Lemon Street for their family.

That security ended when Japan attacked the United States on December 7, 1941, forcing the U.S. into World War II. Instantly, the loyalty of the Haradas, along with all Japanese Americans, was put into question for no reason other than that they shared common ancestry with the enemy. In 1942, Jukichi and Ken, by then elderly and in frail health, were forced to leave their dream house on Lemon Street and were relocated to an internment camp pursuant to Executive Order 9066. Jukichi and Ken never returned to their house on Lemon Street because they died in the internment camp.

Thanks to a family friend, Jess Stebler, who watched over the Haradas' house during their internment, the Harada family was able to keep their house, unlike many other Japanese American families after the internment. The Haradas' adult daughter, Sumi Harada, returned to the family home after the war and lived there until her passing in 2000. Sumi's brother, war hero Dr. Harold Harada, donated the Haradas' house to the city of Riverside after her death for the benefit of all Americans.

The Harada House, now a National Historic Landmark on Lemon Street, stands like the Statue of Liberty as a monument to America's sometimes imperfect but eventually wholehearted embrace of the oppressed and newcomers who have been making America great since its founding. ♦ But now, there is a shifting wind both nationally and locally that threatens to obliterate reminders of our past. More than ever we must stand up for and save for future generations the inanimate witnesses to history, like the Harada House, so that they may forever pronounce hope for a better future.

*Elio Palacios Jr., an attorney practicing in Riverside, is chair of the Riverside Metropolitan Museum Board of Directors. In 2016, he served on the city of Riverside's Ad Hoc Ethics Review Committee. He wrote this commentary as a private citizen; it does not represent the opinions of the city of Riverside, the Metropolitan Museum or its board.*

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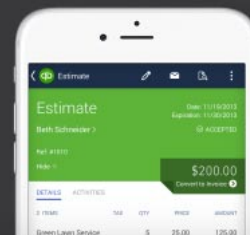
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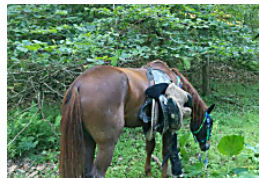
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