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I met Shin Mune in a Naha Starbucks. He knew the American teacher I was interviewing, so he came up to talk to us.

Shin was Japanese American and elderly, though much of his cropped hair was still black, and he looked in shape, wearing a slender T-shirt. Seventy-one years old, Shin had been traveling the world alone for two and a half years. A Nisei (second-generation Japanese American) from Northern California, he had started his journey by riding an Amtrak train across the United States to the East Coast, where he had boarded a plane to Europe. He was the kind of person who started sentences like, “When I was in East Africa...” or “When I was in São Paulo....” I asked where he *hadn't* been, and he said when people asked him that he said New Zealand.

Shin had been in Japan for a year, “finding his roots.” He had been in Okinawa three months. He liked to hang around the Kokusai-dori Starbucks, where he could meet and talk to foreigners in English, and the University of the Ryukyus campus, where he liked to drink a can of UCC coffee for lunch and then read books about World War II in the library.

Although he'd only completed one year of college, Shin was a kind of scholar, with a passion for information and ideas. He had an intimate knowledge of all the museums on the island, and was constantly recommending exhibits and books to me. Every day he read the Japan Times and the International Herald Tribune and clipped articles, which he saved and Xeroxed and passed on to others. He also liked to collect the stories of people he met—academics, travelers, anyone he thought was straddling more than one culture like himself.

When I met Shin, he hated Japan. He couldn't wait to leave. It was his seventh time in the country, and he thought it might be his last. One year in Japan was too long, he told me. He hated the language barrier—he had only learned a bit of Japanese from his parents growing up, but people looked at his face and assumed he could speak it. (“You,” he said to me, “have the added advantage that you don't look ‘full’ Japanese.”) He hated being illiterate. When I told him I hated that, too, he asked, “Do you find yourself clenching your jaw?” Shin seemed to have a lot of anger building inside of him.

Later, Shin said it wasn't actually Japan that he hated. The hatred was psychological, born from his

experience in the U.S. internment camps during World War II. No matter what he did, he said, those intense feelings about Japan weren't going to go away.

Shin's parents, the Issei generation, immigrated to California from Wakayama, Japan. Shin, who is the oldest of four children, was born in Santa Barbara in 1937. He was four years old on December 7, 1941. "Pearl Harbor opened up this can of worms," Shin said.

In 1942 his family was sent to Topaz internment camp in Utah, one of the ten sites where during World War II approximately 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry were imprisoned. Shin called Topaz "the most peaceful camp." He was eight years old when the war ended. After being released, his family found a 20-acre piece of land to farm in Palo Alto, California. There they grew tomatoes. Shin remembered this time fondly, especially the feeling of camaraderie working with his family. He described this experience with the Japanese word *ishokenmei*, which he defined as "working together."

"It was 'us' against 'them,'" he said.

The farm grew to the point where his family hired about 20 men at one time. Shin's mother did all of the produce-packing; Shin remembered her working until midnight getting the tomatoes ready to be shipped to Los Angeles. Then she would wake up at four in the morning to make breakfast.

"You know, the Issei were hardy people," he said.

Each November, Shin's family would harvest the tomatoes, and then work until Christmas clearing the ground of vines. In March it was time to get ready for the next growing season. Shin said his family worked so hard that they buried all memory of camp.

The first time Shin traveled he went to Europe. It was 1975, and he was 39 years old. "What a wonderful feeling to be so free," he said. First he'd travel for four months at a time, during the winters, which, as a farmer, he had off. Then he started going away for longer and longer.

"I'm a wanderer," he said.

When I met Shin, he had been on the move for ten years. He had never owned a house; whenever he returned to California he rented a room in someone else's house. He had never even owned a camera. He refused to learn email.

I think Shin liked being impossible to find. It kept people at a distance; he controlled the relationships in his life, who to contact and when. A girlfriend of his once said that he enjoyed having acquaintances, not friends. "She knew me to a T," Shin said.

I had run from California, too. A biracial Yonsei (fourth-generation Japanese American), I had come to Okinawa, Japan to spend a year researching issues surrounding the U.S. military bases. But, like Shin, my real motives were more personal, and intertwined with the past, with traumas that had

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been born many years before.

During World War II, my grandfather and his family were interned at Tule Lake in California, and my grandmother and her family were imprisoned at Arizona's Gila River. Growing up, I never heard them talk about the experience. I learned about the internment camps in grade school, about how tens of thousands of families were uprooted from their homes and forced to live in desolate conditions behind barbed wire, but I never heard my grandparents tell their versions of the story. They referred to that time only as "camp," as if the experience had been as benign and pleasant as summer camp. Later, after they passed away, I spent a lot of time wondering what they hadn't said.

Shin has this memory from Topaz in which he's watching a movie with a group of other internees. In the movie, probably one called "Flying Tigers," John Wayne is shooting Japanese fighter pilots and blood is spurting out of the pilots' eyes. Everyone watching the movie, all the interned Japanese Americans, saw this and cheered.

"I think camp did something to us as Nisei," Shin said. "The Issei could not be changed." He thought his parents' generation survived internment better because they had the attitude that "maybe you had every right to lock us up." Nisei, however, had been born in the United States and felt like Americans. They were much more conflicted and damaged. The war was "very cruel" to the Nisei, he said.

When Shin was in third grade, right after the war, there were two other Japanese American students in his class—a girl and a boy who hated each other. Shin thought it was because when you've been locked up together and are freed, all you want to do is separate. Shin himself had white friends, white girlfriends. He wished he could be white.

I never articulated it, even to myself, but at times I wished that, too. I grew up in an area that was predominantly Caucasian, and I hated being different. I hated my first name—no one could pronounce it, and it immediately stamped me as Other, as Foreign. I screamed at my parents: *Why did you give me this name?* After high school, I moved across the country for college, and then spent five years bouncing around the United States and Asia. It took me ten years to come back to California to stay.

In 1981 Shin testified in the hearings on the constitutionality of the internment, where he heard other former internees say they were wanderers, too. They said it was because of their experience in the internment camps. Shin said he couldn't remember the details, but this cause and effect makes sense to me. If the government made you limit all your belongings to two suitcases, and imprisoned you behind a barbed wire fence in the desert, when you didn't do anything wrong, one way to cope might be never feeling trapped again, even in your own home. You might not want any material possessions worth

losing—or any human relationships worth losing, either.

The first time Shin realized how much the camps had affected him—the first time he started thinking about the camps at all—was when he was 42 years old, and in India, and about to join his parents in Japan for the first time. He didn't want to go. He was so “ashamed” and “afraid” to come to Japan that he waited until he reached Bangkok to buy the plane ticket.

Since that first trip, Shin has visited Japan many times. He's considered starting a business guiding other Japanese Americans who want to visit the land of their ancestry. In 2000, at the age of 63, Shin started studying Japanese. He said, however, that he had trouble picking it up. It was that psychological block, he thought. Just like Japanese people have a psychological block against learning English, he had a psychological block against learning Japanese. Both blocks, he believed, were linked to World War II.

I said goodbye to Shin in March 2009, before he left for Fukuoka. After that he was headed to South Korea, then to Beijing and through Russia by train. He had planned to fly to California directly from Japan, ending his traveling, but he couldn't do it—he was going to go “home” the other way around the globe instead. He couldn't stop wandering.

“When am I going to change?” he asked me. “I've been doing [this] for 34 years.”

Shin and I were on similar journeys, despite the 45 years and two generations that separated us. As I child, I had learned, indirectly, that there was shame associated with being Japanese. I learned this from the silence surrounding my grandparents' time “at camp;” from the way relatives regarded my part-white appearance; from the absence of many Japanese customs, foods, and words at family gatherings. As an adult, I've worked to fill these silences and gaps by learning about the internment, hearing people's stories, and acquiring knowledge of Japan. In college, I studied Japanese, spent a year in Kyoto, and began what would be a long-running research project in Okinawa. I traveled to Hiroshima, where, four generations earlier, my relatives had worked as farmers. The more I learned, the more I felt some deeply ingrained anxiety begin to lift. I began to confront and diminish that inherited shame.

Shin was confronting the shame, too, but Shin had grown up in a different America. He had direct experience of the internment camps, and had dealt with more racism in his life. Although he'd made progress in creating a positive ethnic identity, he still seemed haunted, troubled, and restless. His mind and his body couldn't stay still.

Perhaps only Japanese Americans of later generations can end the cycle of shame that began with the Issei and Nisei. With exploration, awareness, and reflection, Yonsei and Gosei might break free of those negative memories, building instead a positive Japanese American identity, one that will be passed on to the generations to come.