

LESSON 4 HANDOUT 4.3 INTERVIEW WITH BETTY TOYOTA

The following is a transcription of an oral interview with Betty Toyota, an internment camp survivor. Betty was interviewed by Kyla Fitzgerald and Mike Abe of Landscapes of Injustice in 2018.

Kyla Fitzgerald: *Would you say when you look back, did the interment have an effect on you at all in anyway?*

Betty Toyota: But I notice one thing with Ron and Gary. When they both decided to marry English. Race never came up with their family. You know Judy's family and Shirley's family. Oh he's Japanese sort of a thing. It never came up. You know they were just like another person. And that's what I was quite thankful about too.

Yeah that's it. That was another thing, everybody knew you.

Betty: But then I faced a lot of discrimination when I came to Creston. I did. It was hard.

Betty: Oh hated. That's why I hated going shopping. Well it was hard. It was hard. Some people are quite rude. When you, that's another thing, when you buy something, not just five ten dollars, when you spend over twenty dollars and you pay cash and they throw the change on the counter, don't even say thank you or anything and they turn their back and walk. I mean, how would you feel. I got that treatment quite a bit too. Or the one store they opened a new dress shop. And I thought, "Oh I'll go in and see what they've got." So I walk in by myself and she looks at me, "We don't carry anything your size." I could have gone in there looking for a scarf or a purse, but when they tell you and say — I'm very sensitive in one way.

[I would] never go in that store again. So there are several stores I won't go in. I don't care who it is. And Tak always used to say you should go to Supervalve and Co-op, there was Overwaitea and I

always shopped at Overwaitea because they were really good and we knew the Overwaitea boss anyway. So always went there. And Tak always used to say, "You should divide your business. Go to Supervalve every now and then and buy something." So I would say, "Okay I'll go to Supervalve today." One of the women there was quite rude to me so I didn't feel like going. But I go to the store and I'm going to get my groceries at Supervalve. I go there I front of the door, my head says, "You got to go in there." My feet say, "No way" and I turned back. That's how it was. It was some stores that I won't go. Like Mrs. Neko, she was my dear closest friend. She was the type that wanted to go to every store just to look around she said. And I'm not the type, if I want something I'll go to the store, buy what I want and come out. I'm not the type to browse. But she was the one that liked to go and "Oh let's go in and look around." So I go in and look around and the storeowner would come and they would show her, "Oh we got this, we got that, new shoes." Completely ignore me, right? And that's why I don't feel comfortable going to any store. That's why I hate shopping by myself. Even in Creston.

Betty: But now if they know me, now I'll go. You know they're kind to me now.

Kyla: *What do you mean?*

Betty: I still get it.

Kyla: *I was gonna say, that stuff never ends.*

Betty: Like if it's a new store I hesitate going in there.

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Kyla: *Yeah and I can also understand you were saying about liking bigger cities because there's more different people in big cities.*

Betty: That's why in the bigger city they don't know you! Yeah my mother used to say, "Oh let's go in there and tease them a bit." And to me if you go to a small store you have to buy something. But no ... that's why I like — that's why I don't mind walking into big store and just look around and come out. And in the small town they know you, they want to know what you want and this and that. So I rarely go shopping, just to get my groceries and come home and go to the bank and come home. That was it. And then most of my friends are all – you know have social life or they're all gone. Nobody's – even the men, they're all gone.

Betty: It was nice when she was living in Creston. They were really Japanese so she would phone up quite often and says, "Oh I've got some salmon, come over and eat some salted salmon and rice," And I would go and that was it. You miss that. In a way I still do.

Betty: Yeah. It doesn't bother me. No, I got used to that.

Betty: Yeah and then this first time this Yamamoto, she's the Japanese lady that used to live here, live in Creston, they moved to Calgary. And she came over quite often just to stay over and visit the friends and she would come and stay with me. The first time she came over she comes walking in, very outspoken women. She says, "Hi Betty I came but I didn't bring any omiyage, you know, you're used to it." You're used to it and I was because the people in Creston never did that. Yeah you get used to it.