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## No-No Darkness

Lawrence Matsuda

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Lawrence Matsuda, poet

Suto-san refuses machine guns  
and foxholes in Italy,  
checks “No-No” on  
the loyalty questionnaire.  
Minidoka bunk, young wife  
and two baby girls traded  
for steel bars and hard time  
at McNeill Island Federal Pen.  
His “No-No” brand exiles  
him to purgatory littered with  
conscientious objector leper rags,  
an untouchable pariah.  
Upon his release, old friends  
cross the street to avoid him.  
Others refuse to shake his hand.  
He acts and looks like a regular Joe  
after President Truman’s pardon.  
Gossip pursues him until he dies,  
no forgiveness from Japanese neighbors.  
He never asks for pardon,  
lives his life in joy and celebration,  
concocts his secret *tsukenomo* recipe,  
pickled cabbage full of zest and magic  
fermented under a large stone for weeks in a crock,  
Japanese sauerkraut that fumes noxious fragrances  
when the lid is popped.

He always shares a jar with me.  
In its salty tang.  
I can taste the “No-No”  
depth of his resolve.