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They Turn Their Eyes Away

Lawrence Matsuda, poet

Minidoka barbed wire
snags hope like tumbleweed.
One thousand miles away
Shoichi Okamoto, at Tule Lake California*
twists and falls, a bullet in his head,
cost of disbelief of a guard.
The soldier walks free,
fined a dollar for “unauthorized use
of government property”.
Wind blows alkaline dust
through the tarpaper barrack.
Bachan prays for freedom,
strikes her singing bowl.
Minidoka crumbles in her dreams
when black rain splatters Hiroshima
and sunlight sparkles silver
through thin barrack doors.
Freedom will not be open arms
and welcome banners.
Red rose petal showers
reserved for *real* Americans.
We are the vanquished foe
walking thorough the victor’s lair,
gauntlet of 1000 eyes.
Anxious to pass unnoticed
in our yellow skin,

we will turn away from
Remember Pearl Harbor remarks.
Mushroom clouds inhabit
the irises of our eyes.