

## Morgen Young's Research Trip to Idaho June 18-23, 2013

With a grant from the Idaho Humanities Council, "Russell Lee in the Pacific Northwest: Documenting Japanese American Farm Labor Camps" project director Morgen Young was able to take a research trip to Idaho, June 18 through 23.

The trip began in Boise, where Young spent time researching at the Idaho State Archives and Boise State University's Special Collections. At the latter, she discovered a copy of the *Rupert Laborer*, a monthly newsletter published at the FSA mobile camp in Rupert. Through that single publication, she was able to identify the names of nearly seventy Japanese Americans who had lived in the camp, as well as the members of the camp council and staff. Time spent at the Idaho State Archives was especially fruitful as she was able to research collections pertaining to the history of Japanese and Japanese Americans in Idaho as well as state newspapers. These included the major newspapers from the three Idaho campsites, the *Times-News* in Twin Falls, the *Shelley Pioneer*, and the *Minidoka County News* in Rupert. More than three hundred articles were found among the publications and often headlines pertaining to the camps and Japanese laborers working with the sugar beet crop made the front page. Names of other camp residents as well as staff members were gleaned from the articles. Currently, approximately 450 individuals who at one time resided in the four camps are known, as well as hundreds of individuals associated with the camps. The latter includes known camp employees, sugar beet company representatives, and members of Japanese families residing in the areas surrounding the camps prior to World War II.

Other relevant materials located at the Idaho State Archives included oral history transcripts, WWII era Governor Chase A. Clark's papers, articles from the journal *Idaho Yesterdays*, and archival materials related to Minidoka. Lastly, the archives held a select number of microfilm reels from the Farm Security Administration-Office of War Information Written Records. Few repositories on the West Coast hold copies of these materials, so Young was able to locate Russell Lee's typed and handwritten notes to FSA Information Division Chief Roy Stryker regarding his work documenting the Japanese American farm labor camps in Oregon and Idaho. Such notes provide greater insight into the development of the images as well as Stryker's censorship of some. By having access to Lee's notes, Young will be able to write more fully fleshed out captions to the images, than those displayed in the FSA-OWI catalog on the Library of Congress' website.

While in Boise, Young was able to meet with Dr. Robert C. Sims, considered by many the preeminent historian of the Japanese in Idaho. Sims had previously published scholarly articles that mentioned the use of Japanese labor during World War II. Young has been in communication with Dr. Sims and during their meeting, she shared many aspects of her research that were previously unknown to him. He has and will continue to provide valuable contacts in Idaho.



**Morgen Young [right] discusses the back-breaking work of harvesting sugar beets with a former Minidoka incarcerated who also volunteered for farm labor work in Montana.**

Young then traveled to Twin Falls to attend the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Civil Liberties Symposium at the College of Southern Idaho. A partnership between the college, Boise State University, and the National Historic Site of Minidoka, the interdisciplinary conference examined the relationship between immigration and civil liberties, both historically and currently. By attending the symposium, Young was able to network with several individuals, including Stuart Ishimaru, currently the Director of the Office of Minority and Women Inclusion at the U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau; Dr. Russ Tremayne, professor of history at the College of Southern Idaho; poet Larry Matsuda, born at Minidoka; historian Hanakao Wakatsuki; and Emily Momohara, president of the Friends of Minidoka. Minidoka pilgrimage participants attended the second day of the conference. Young was given a table at the conference [see photo above] at which to share her research findings as well as to encourage symposium attendees to identify those individuals in Lee's camp photographs. She was able to speak with many former incarcerated and their family members about their memories of labor camps during World War II.

Following the symposium, Young traveled to the Minidoka Historical Site. From there, she visited the campsite in Rupert as well as the Minidoka County Historical Society. Through time spent at the latter, she was able to secure a hosting site for the exhibition in 2015. ∞