



MANZANAR, DIVERTED

WHEN WATER BECOMES DUST

INTERSECTION FILMS PRESENTS
"MANZANAR, DIVERTED: WHEN WATER BECOMES DUST"

EDITED BY ANN KANEKO & SUSAN METZGER
MUSIC BY LORI GOLDSTON, STEVE FISK, ALEXANDER MIRANDA
SOUND DESIGN & MIX BY BEN HUFF
CINEMATOGRAPHY BY ANN KANEKO
AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARIAH DAVID, JESSE ARCHER
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: TRACY RECTOR, STEPHEN GONG,
FRANCENE J. BLYTHE-LEWIS, SHIRLEY K. SNEVE
PRODUCED BY JIN YOO-KIM
DIRECTED & PRODUCED BY ANN KANEKO

INTERSECTION FILMS



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InterSection Films presents

MANZANAR, DIVERTED: WHEN WATER BECOMES DUST

Directed & Produced by Ann Kaneko

Produced by Jin Yoo-Kim

WORLD PREMIERE:

Big Sky Documentary Film Festival, 2021
Documentary Competition | Closing Weekend Film

OFFICIAL SELECTION:

One Earth Film Festival, 2021 (Midwest Premiere)

Milwaukee Film Festival 2021 (Wisconsin Premiere)

DOXA Film Festival 2021 (Canada Premiere)

CAAMFEST 2021 (Centerpiece Film)

TRT: 84 mins. **Country:** USA **Language:** English

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PRESS STILLS: [GOOGLE DRIVE LINK](#)

TRAILER: <https://vimeo.com/428845064>

Screening link please email manzanardiverted@gmail.com

SHORT SYNOPSIS

From the majestic peaks of the snow-capped Sierras to the parched valley of Payahuunadü, “the land of flowing water,” MANZANAR, DIVERTED: WHEN WATER BECOMES DUST poetically weaves together memories of intergenerational women. Native Americans, Japanese-American WWII incarcerated and environmentalists form an unexpected alliance to defend their land and water from Los Angeles.

LONG SYNOPSIS

An inspired and poetic portrait of a place and its people, MANZANAR, DIVERTED: WHEN WATER BECOMES DUST follows intergenerational women from three communities who defend their land, their history and their culture from the insatiable thirst of Los Angeles. In this fresh retelling of the LA water story, Native Americans, Japanese-American WWII incarcerated and environmentalists form an unexpected alliance to preserve Payahuunadü (Owens Valley), “the land of flowing water.”

Featuring breathtaking photography and immersive soundscapes, the film recounts more than 150 years of history, showing how this distant valley is inextricably tied to the city of Los Angeles. It reveals the forced removals of two peoples--the Nüümü (Paiute) and the Newe (Shoshone) who were marched out of the Valley in the 1860s by the US Army and the Japanese Americans who were brought here from their West Coast homes and incarcerated in a World War II concentration camp. Water lured outsiders in and continues to fuel the greed which has sucked this once lush place dry.

Filmed over five years, MANZANAR, DIVERTED captures stunning and intimate imagery of this valley, combined with archival gems and careful research to narrate this epic story of the American West. It begins before colonizers came to the valley and then shows how the US Army and settlers forced out the Nüümü and the Newe; how the Los Angeles Aqueduct sucked the Valley dry; how incarcerated Japanese Americans made the land green again; how the Owens Lake became a huge health hazard and how this Valley now bears the pain of these stories and the consequences of losing water to diversion.

Manzanar is the name of the former concentration camp that was constructed where an apple orchard community had thrived before the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) took it over. Now, it has become a national historic site where its annual pilgrimage unifies descendants of those incarcerated and activists who strive for social justice. In a David and Goliath fight, Japanese Americans living in Los Angeles and Native Americans and ranchers from the Valley form a coalition that stops construction of a massive LADWP solar facility across the Valley from the historic site. The film offers a hopeful message of how communities can come together to overcome histories of oppression and halt further development and monetization of a land.

IMPACT CAMPAIGN

The impact campaign will have long lasting effects. First, the film will raise awareness and amplify what is happening currently with the rise of hate crimes against the AAPI community, especially targeted at the elderly. These hate crimes illustrate the fear against the Asian American community that is similar to the fear that inspired racist laws to control an entire community of people. The film shows the repeated and shared histories of what happens when entire groups are scapegoated.

Secondly, the film will be utilized by Southern California communities to gain an appreciation of water and land management and a clearer grasp of their impacts on distant communities where water has been extracted for their consumption.

Third, the film will raise awareness of how metropolitan communities can become more water self-sufficient through civic participation and conservation techniques. Nation-wide audiences will have greater understanding of how forced removals of communities are motivated by racism and colonialist desires to control land and resources.

We would love audiences to plug into our upcoming activities centered around these themes. We are currently fundraising to execute our Impact campaign. Our activities will include partnering with different groups and coalitions to hold virtual and pop up outdoor events, digital video and soundscape art installations, and we will be designing toolkits for academic and community partners to hold deeper conversations. Our interactive website will be built out like an archive to house footage that continues to go deeper into the histories. It will also have links and resources like downloadable tool kits, dialogue guide, and curriculum.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



I grew up hearing about “camp” as a child from my parents’ dinnertime conversations, but I never really understood what it was until fourth grade when my teacher called on me to be the spokesperson on the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans. Then I realized that it wasn’t just a fun camp where my parents had been for a few years.

This film is an attempt to make sense of this history and share with audiences an understanding of how this valley so far from Los Angeles has such profound connections to me and to my community. My family was unwittingly

swept into a dark chapter of American history, and this film has become a platform for me to

unravel how our story is entwined in the formation of the West and LA's development as a megalopolis.

During hot autumn days, my friend, Ladan, and I would head up to Mammoth in search of golden aspens and deep blue skies, seeking respite from Los Angeles. Heading up Route 395, I was always stunned by the beauty of this two-lane highway that wended its way along the Eastern flank of the Sierras. The remoteness and lack of development, especially past Mojave always struck me as we made our way through long stretches of open desert until an intermittent town that looked like a holdout from a bygone era forced us to slow down to 35 mph. We always passed Manzanar and sometimes we'd stop on the way home, maneuvering around the unpaved roads, making sure to close our windows so that the dust wouldn't enter. Situated relatively close to Los Angeles, I had visited Manzanar at different points in my life with my parents. I couldn't quite picture how this quiet place had been a "camp," which always seemed like such a bustling place of human interaction, according to my parents' descriptions. I never questioned how or why this dusty, remote patch of land at the foothills of the Sierras became home for over 10,000 Japanese Americans. Of all places, why, here?

As I began to do research on Manzanar and the Owens Valley, which I later came to know as Payahuunadü, I was dumbfounded when I read that the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power owned over 90 percent of the Valley. As a third generation LA resident, I knew that much of our water came from the Sierras, but it was always a vague concept. I didn't fully realize that LA held title to the land and water rights of so much land that was the watershed for the LA Aqueduct. I was embarrassed of my ignorance.

Having grown up in the 1970s, I had lived through drought years, and my mother had a ritual of flushing our toilets with grey water. I learned how precious water was, but I had no idea that the place where Japanese Americans like my mother had been incarcerated was also where we got our water. What had made this a rich homeland for Native Americans was also the reason it was desirable to the LADWP. It was hard to fathom how this municipal entity held title to so much property in Inyo County, outside of the city's boundaries. Now I understood why this Valley was so untouched and dry—it wasn't just a happy accident that it remained undeveloped.

DIRECTOR Q&A

How did you begin making this film?

Although I am Japanese American and the incarceration experience is formative to who I am since both my parents and grandparents were incarcerated in Jerome and Rohwer in Arkansas, I have always been skeptical about making a film about this story without it being really distinct. There have been so many amazing films about this story that I have been hesitant to go down that path, and, besides, I have probably spent a good portion of my life trying to explore other parts of who I am and affirm that this is not the only defining characteristic of my identity. But Stanley Hayami's story and diary fell in my lap over 10 years ago. I felt like *A Flicker in Eternity* was very unique in how it narrated the WWII experience from the first person perspective of a

teenager, which came alive through Stanley's drawings, instead of an older *Nisei* reflecting back on his/her experiences.

So in 2014 when Jim Lee, a colleague and friend who teaches Asian American Studies at UC Irvine, asked me to join a group of humanities scholars to think about the Manzanar Pilgrimage as an interfaith, intercultural gathering for a Religion and Global Festivals Project, I already had one Japanese American World War II film under my belt. I was still skeptical about films on Japanese American incarceration. What could we unearth that was new? I asked him what the video for the project should be about, and he said, "You're smart. You'll figure it out." I rolled my eyes and thought, "Great. No guidance." What story could I tell that was new about Manzanar in particular--the camp that has been an icon for the Asian American movement and which was the center of so many important films?

What was I curious about? The two things that came up for me was the land and ties to indigenous communities. I vaguely knew that the War Relocation Authority (WRA) was run by many who had worked for or went on to work for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. And so I began doing research. Through my research, I was stunned and fascinated by the implications of what seemed like minor footnotes in American history. During the scare of Trump's Muslim Ban, many pointed to Executive Order 9066, but I realized that the real precedence for this racist mentality in the United States was not Japanese American incarceration--it was the violent forced removal and confinement of Indigenous people and the unfathomable trafficking of enslaved Africans to this continent. All in the name of colonization and racism.

As I continued researching, I was shocked to read that the WRA originally wanted to house all West Coast Japanese Americans in the Valley since it was publicly owned land that was relatively close, but far enough away from the Pacific Ocean, where Japanese Americans were deemed a national threat. But the LADWP would not have this. The WRA, instead, demanded use of Manzanar, but LADWP again balked because of its proximity to the LA Aqueduct, afraid that Japanese Americans might sabotage LA water. Finally, the federal government overruled the LADWP, and Manzanar came to be.

I was fascinated by these details of history. I considered myself fairly knowledgeable about Japanese American incarceration, and I decided that if I didn't know about any of this, then many others would not either. The film began as a short video to fulfill the grant requirements of the humanities project, but then it grew and grew.

How do you think this film is different from other environmental films? What were you trying to do differently?

I have watched many environmental films and the overall feeling I always got was how important the topic was, whether it dealt with climate change or water. They are perfect for learning and dissecting issues that need experts and a take away message. I believe all of these things are important, but I wanted to make sure this documentary felt inspiring, hopeful, and left the audience with a cinematic experience with evocative images and immersive sound.

Although the history is fraught, I wanted people to get a glimpse of how beautiful our world is and gain a deep understanding told through real people who live their lives with the knowledge of what this place means. Some have told us that our film is not an environmental film, and I have been puzzled by this. This documentary is structured like a ballad about land and water. We try to seduce viewers with the beauty and majesty of this place and then sharply contrast that with the heart wrenching story of how man has altered the land through extraction and colonization.

What have been your influences in making this film?

Although very different in content, Raoul Peck's film, I AM NOT YOUR NEGRO, has been a huge inspiration in how to tackle an ambitious story elegantly and poetically. I love the film's use of archival and visuals. I have always been a great fan of Patricio Guzman, and a colleague suggested watching NOSTALGIA POR LA LUZ. In this film, his portrayal of the land has also been very influential in the way that it uses metaphor and depicts people in the midst of the immense Atacama Desert.

How has diversity and representation been important in making this film?

Given that the film is about different communities, we tried to find creative partners and crew that reflect the diversity of those in front of the camera as well. Most of the people in the film are women, and the principal makers of this film are also women.

Can you describe your approach to using sound and music in the film?

I love the immersive qualities of sound so I have really tried to incorporate soundscapes to travel back to different times in history. I wanted to give audiences the feeling of being in different eras at the same time as being in this one place. I attempt to time travel, contrasting the sounds of insects and birds with the violence and songs of the different communities who have lived in this place. The score has also been very important to creating a meditative and reflective experience. It attempts to eulogize the past and give space for pondering this arc of history, reminding viewers of the beautiful and horrific possibilities that are the legacy of this place.

How did you shoot this film?

This film has many stunning shots of the valley since it was shot over five years and many trips. Serendipity has allowed me to capture many of these. Every trip, there would be something new. Each vacation, I would pack up the car and take my daughter along to go camping, finding an excuse to do another interview, more research and shoot more imagery.

Although I often find drone shots and time lapses to be overused, I knew that aerial photography would be important to portraying the land. I was very lucky since I met local photographers Mariah David and Jesse Archer from the Big Pine Tribe to help with this. Since they know and love the place intimately, I feel like we share the same sensibility. A lot of drone photography looks so commercial and slick instead of intimate. It's a very different gaze.

Can you talk about language and terminology in the film?

During World War II, the US Government employed many euphemistic terms to describe the incarceration of Japanese Americans to minimize the injustice of their actions. We have chosen to use the terms that are more accurate and don't distort the reality, and we encourage everyone writing about this history to do the same. Here is a short list of some key terms:

“forced removal” v. “evacuation”

“incarceration” v. “internment”

“concentration camps” v. “relocation camps”

“assembly centers” - only use as proper nouns

The US Government also failed to distinguish between “Japanese Americans” and “Japanese,” who were the enemy at the time, conflating a community and a nation through language. This use of language has been an ongoing concern and discussion within the Japanese American community, and the film tries to reflect this language. Many older Japanese Americans who have lived this chapter of history don't use these terms because they still refer to these experiences based on the names that the US Government used at the time of their incarceration. [Densho has a great explanation about why language matters.](#)

Equally important, we also wanted to think through the use of language used during settler colonialist times. We have refrained from calling the conflict that happened in the 1860s between settler colonialists and indigenous people the Owens Valley Indian War because the term “war” implies parity and a recognition of sovereign states, which was not the case. It also romanticizes an unjust takeover. We have also tried to use the indigenous names of “the people” alongside the official names (for example, “Nüümü” / “Paiute” and “Newe” / “Shoshone”). In the same way that the name “Denali,” which stems from the Koyukon language in Alaska, came to be officially recognized in the place of “Mt. McKinley,” we use the name of “Payahuunadü” along with the name, “Owens Valley” (also “Patsiata” / “Owens Lake”) in the hopes that these names may also be reclaimed. Although many North American indigenous people call themselves “Indians,” we have refrained from using this term, given its ties to colonizers. We have also tried to minimize the use of the term, “tribe” in lieu of “nation.”

Can you talk about the archival?

Archival was really important in this film and required tons of research. Fortunately, the Japanese American World War II story was quite well-documented and most of this is in the public domain. However, it was difficult to try to find images that hadn't been overused. Black and white photographs by World War II War Relocation Authority (WRA) photographers like Dorothea Lange, Ansel Adams, Clem Albers and Francis Stewart always loomed large in my mental library of photographic giants, especially since I had studied photography in college. I find it ironic that the federal government put so much energy in documenting this mass incarceration, but I am also grateful for the work that these photographers did so that there is a record of this infamy. Many of these images have now been etched in our minds like a memory. I am also amazed by Toyo Miyatake's dedication to documenting Manzanar life, and his images reflect his insider perspective. It was super important for me to show the work of all of these

photographers as well as snapshots from family albums. The Embree family contributed amazing images of Sue Embrey.

The Eastern California Museum was a very important source of photographs of those living in the Valley, both of ranchers and indigenous people. Photographs of the construction of the Second LA Aqueduct were harder to come by.

What were the biggest challenges in making this film?

It was challenging making a film about so many different communities. Many funders were doubtful about how such a big and complex story could be told. It was also definitely a dance navigating between the different communities.

What was it like making a film during a pandemic? Were there the pluses and minuses?

We were very fortunate in that we had completed principal photography and were editing when the pandemic hit. It definitely was more inconvenient since I could no longer work face-to-face with the editor Susan Metzger. My intention was to pass the reins to her at that phase of the edit, but because of the pandemic, we ended up passing the film back and forth. Both Susan and I are mothers so homeschooling and editing became our new reality. We had a very creative and exciting period when I would edit in the early morning into the early afternoon and then pass the project back to Susan, who edited at night. We would riff off of each other's ideas, and it was like Christmas everyday when I opened up the project to see how she had reworked sequences.

The pandemic also created some amazing opportunities in terms of the score. Lori Goldston put together an amazing composing team and got some great people to play for the film. Matt Chamberlain, who has played with many of the greats like Bob Dylan, David Bowie and Fiona Apple put down percussion tracks based on the cadence of the temp track music. Then Lori improvised cello and guitar tracks, and Alex Miranda played mbira and guitar. Then, magically, Steve Fisk would mix and edit all of these tracks into something amazing. We also had amazing contributions from Susie Kozawa, George Abe and Sage Romero among others. This process was a bit nerve wracking at times, but it was so organic, fun and creative. The pandemic forced everyone to work separately, but it created something really amazing.

What are your hopes for the film?

We hope the film helps to create a paradigm shift around land and water use and the need for a real rethinking of our resources and environment.

PRINCIPAL CAST

KATHY JEFFERSON BANCROFT
SUE KUNITOMI EMBREY
MONICA EMBREY
BRUCE EMBREY
ROSE MASTERS
MARY ROPER
NANCY MASTERS
BEVERLY NEWELL
DANELLE GUTIERREZ
MADELON ARAI YAMAMOTO
HENRY NISHI
ANDY LIPKIS

PRINCIPAL CREW BIOS



ANN KANEKO (director/producer/editor/cinematographer) is known for her personal films that weave her intimate aesthetic with the intricacies of political reality. She is an Emmy winner, and her work has screened internationally and been broadcast on PBS. She has been commissioned by the National Endowment for the Arts, the California Endowment and the Skirball Cultural Center. Her credits include *A FLICKER IN ETERNITY*, based on Stanley Hayami's diary; *AGAINST THE GRAIN: AN ARTIST'S SURVIVAL GUIDE TO PERU*, highlighting Peruvian political artists; and *100% HUMAN HAIR*, a musical for the AFI Directing Workshop for Women. Fluent in Japanese and Spanish, Kaneko has been a Fulbright and Japan Foundation Artist fellow. She is a member of New Day Films, a distribution cooperative. She has an MFA from UCLA, teaches at Pitzer College and is the artist mentor for VC's Armed with a Camera Fellowship.



JIN YOO-KIM (producer & impact producer) is a Korean Bolivian American independent film producer. She co-produced *A WOMAN'S WORK: THE NFL'S CHEERLEADER PROBLEM* (dir. Yu Gu, Tribeca '19), and *K-TOWN '92* (dir. Grace Lee). She is currently developing her first food docuseries, co-writing a feature comedy, and developing a feature documentary about SPAM. She is a 2020-21 Sundance Creative Producers Fellow, a 2020 Film Independent x CNN Original Series Docuseries Intensive Fellow, and a 2020 Film Independent Doc Lab fellow. She pitched at Big Sky Pitch at Big Sky Film Festival 2020, and was a 2017 Firelight Media Impact Producing Fellow. She received her MFA in Film from USC and a BA in Psychology and Cinema & Media Studies from Wellesley College.



TRACY RECTOR (executive producer) is a filmmaker, curator, community organizer of Choctaw/Black/Jewish descent. She brings two decades of experience as a community organizer, educator, filmmaker, film programmer, and arts curator. Her work has been featured on Independent Lens, National Geographic, Cannes Film Festival, ImagineNative, Toronto International Film Festival, and the Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian. In addition, Tracy is the co-founder of the nonprofit Longhouse Media and recently completed 8 years as a Seattle Arts Commissioner. She is the Managing Director

of Storytelling at Nia Tero.



SUSAN METZGER (editor) is an Atlanta native, and her credits include CITY RISING—THE INFORMAL ECONOMY and MOTHER X ARTIST for PBS SoCal, which won 2019 LA Press Club Journalism awards and were nominated for Emmys. Other credits include Magdalena + Michael and Right Footed. She began her career assisting for Academy-Award winning documentary editor Kate Amend on such films as JIMMY CARTER: MAN FROM PLAINS, THERE WAS ONCE..., and BIRTH STORY: INA MAY GASKIN AND THE FARM MIDWIVES. Susan has edited a range of short

content—from cheeky environmental webisodes for Darryl Hannah, to interviews with golf caddies in Scotland. Susan has an MFA in film production from USC’s School of Cinematic Arts.



LORI GOLDSTON (composer) is an American cellist and composer. Accomplished in a wide variety of styles, including classical, world music, rock and free improvisation, she came to prominence as the touring cellist for Nirvana from 1993–1994 and appears on their live album MTV Unplugged in New York. She was a member of Earth, the Black Cat Orchestra and Spectratone International and also performs solo. Lori is known in large part for her improvisational work and draws on musical styles from around the world.



STEVE FISK (composer) is an American composer and record producer, born in 1954 in Long Beach, CA. While he is widely regarded as one of the midwives of the Northwest 90’s music scene, he has been writing and releasing his own music since 1979. He was a member of Pigeonhed, Pell Mell and The Halo Benders. In 2007 he and Ben Gibbard wrote the score for *About A Son*, winner of the

Maysles Brothers award for best documentary at SFFF. He currently lives in Tacoma, WA, with his wife, outsider artist Anne Marie Grgich.



ALEXANDER MIRANDA (composer) is a contemporary Payómkawichum artist from Southern California. Miranda pushes the boundaries of Native American art through a multitude of art forms and media with a focus on songwriting, music composition, photography, painting and poetry. His portfolio honours and celebrates the power, resilience and beauty of Indigenous people, incontestably aligning his work with world-wide Indigenous resurgence. He is a current member of the band Underpass and has been commissioned by Julian Klincewicz, Virgil Abloh and others for various projects.



DAWN VALADEZ (consulting producer) is a queer, Xicana, filmmaker, social worker, artist, youth development specialist, resource wrangler and impact strategist. She produced and co-directed *THE PUSHOUTS* (2018) and *GOING ON 13* (2008), funded by Latino Public Broadcasting, ITVS, California Council for the Humanities, Chicken and Egg Pictures and the Fledgling Fund. She co-authored the study guide and led youth and adult dialogues on the film. She is currently producing *TEACHER LIKE ME*. She consults on fundraising, program development and strategic planning.

CREDITS

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ANN KANEKO

Producer
JIN YOO-KIM

Editors
ANN KANEKO
SUSAN METZGER

Executive producer
TRACY RECTOR

Executive producer for CAAM
STEPHEN GONG

Executive producer for Vision Maker Media
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SHIRLEY K. SNEVE

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STEVE FISK
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KATHY JEFFERSON BANCROFT

In order of appearance

KATHY JEFFERSON BANCROFT
SUE KUNITOMI EMBREY
MONICA EMBREY
ROSE MASTERS
WARREN FURUTANI

BRUCE EMBREY
MARY ROPER
NANCY MASTERS
KEITH BRIGHT
BEVERLY NEWELL
MADELON ARAI YAMAMOTO
HENRY NISHI
SHON K. SUNDER, MD
JAMES YANNOTTA
ANDY LIPKIS
MARK LACEY
DANELLE GUTIERREZ
SHANNON ROMERO
HARRY WILLIAMS
TERI RED OWL
PAUL HUETTE
CHRISTINA NOONAN

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JOSHUA WILKINSON
LUIS MOLGAARD

Sound design / re-recording
BEN HUFF

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MATT CHAMBERLAIN
SUSIE KOZAWA
ROSANNA MARUJO
TERI RED OWL
SAGE ANDREW ROMERO, AKA-MYA CULTURE GROUP
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TOM STONE
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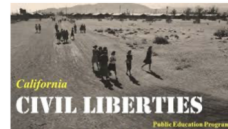
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