



There was once a Japanese fishing village on Terminal Island, off the California coast near Long Beach, but no trace of it remains today. That's because everything which Japanese-American residents had in the village, before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, was destroyed soon after December 7, 1941.

The area of Terminal Island, where the Japanese lived, was known as East San Pedro. The image, at the top of this page, depicts what was once a thriving area for Japanese-American families to work.

Their way of life, however, was gone forever when the U.S. federal government decided that all Japanese-Americans living in the west-coast regions of the country posed a risk for America's security.

Given that "out of sight" often means "out of mind," one could say that the razed village of East San Pedro no longer matters. It does matter, however ... and not just to the families who lost their homes, their businesses, their dignity and their sense of security.

As we step back in time, to February of 1942, we learn the story of what happened to people who lived in the fishing village of Terminal Island. They called the place "Furusato" which means, literally translated, "the old village."

If we applied modern English to the phrase, however, the translation would be more like "Home Sweet Home."

*In 1941, 3,000 first and second-generation Japanese made their homes in an area of Terminal Island known as East San Pedro. The Japanese Fishing Village was next to Fish Harbor.*

*Most of the local residents worked in the fishing industry. Approximately 250 fishing boats were owned and/or operated by the residents. Most of the local people, not working on the boats, worked in the many fish canneries that were clustered together on Terminal Island.*



*Because Terminal Island was somewhat isolated, the Terminal Islanders developed their own culture and even their own dialect. The people called their close community village "Furusato" which translated literally means "old village." An English equivalent would be "hometown," "native place" or "home sweet home."*

*The village had a Fisherman's Hall where the Japanese martial arts judo and kendo were taught, a Shinto Shrine, ethnic grocery stores, candy stores and billiard parlors. The Island children attended Walizer Elementary School and took the ferry to high school at San Pedro High School in San Pedro.*



Before President Roosevelt issued his Executive Order authorizing the federal government to round-up Japanese-Americans and send them to evacuation centers and/or internment camps, the government was already taking action against the people of Furusato:

*Soon after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the FBI rounded up all of the adult males and jailed them. On February 19, 1942, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066. This Executive Order sent 120,000 Japanese Americans to internment camps.*

*Of the ethnic Japanese people forced into internment camps, about 62% were Nisei and Sansei (2nd and 3rd generation Japanese) and were American citizens by virtue of being born in the USA. The other 38% were Issei (Japanese immigrants) who were either naturalized American citizens or resident aliens.*

*In February of 1942, Terminal Island residents were the first Japanese Americans, on the West Coast, to be forcibly removed from their homes. They were forced to evacuate their homes within 48 hours and had to leave almost all of their possessions behind including all of their fishing boats and fishing gear.*

*Some were able to sell their furniture, fishing gear, boats and other items. Since the residents only had 48 hours to complete the transactions, they were often forced to sell at ridiculously low prices [to] greedy individuals taking advantage of the desperate situation.*

*All of the other residents of Terminal Island were also ordered to leave. The Daily Breeze newspaper dated February 27, 1942 had an article headlined "Whites and Japs Leave Terminal Island" which reported that the United States military had taken over Terminal Island and was patrolling the deserted streets.*

Most of the Terminal-Island residents were sent to the Manzanar Internment Camp. What happened to their village, after the Japanese-American residents were forced to leave? It was destroyed:

*The Japanese Village was stripped of anything of any value and flattened by bulldozers and completely destroyed. The fishing boats were either taken by the military, repossessed, stolen or destroyed.*





The President's Executive Order was challenged in the U.S. Supreme Court, but a majority of the Justices found it to be constitutional.

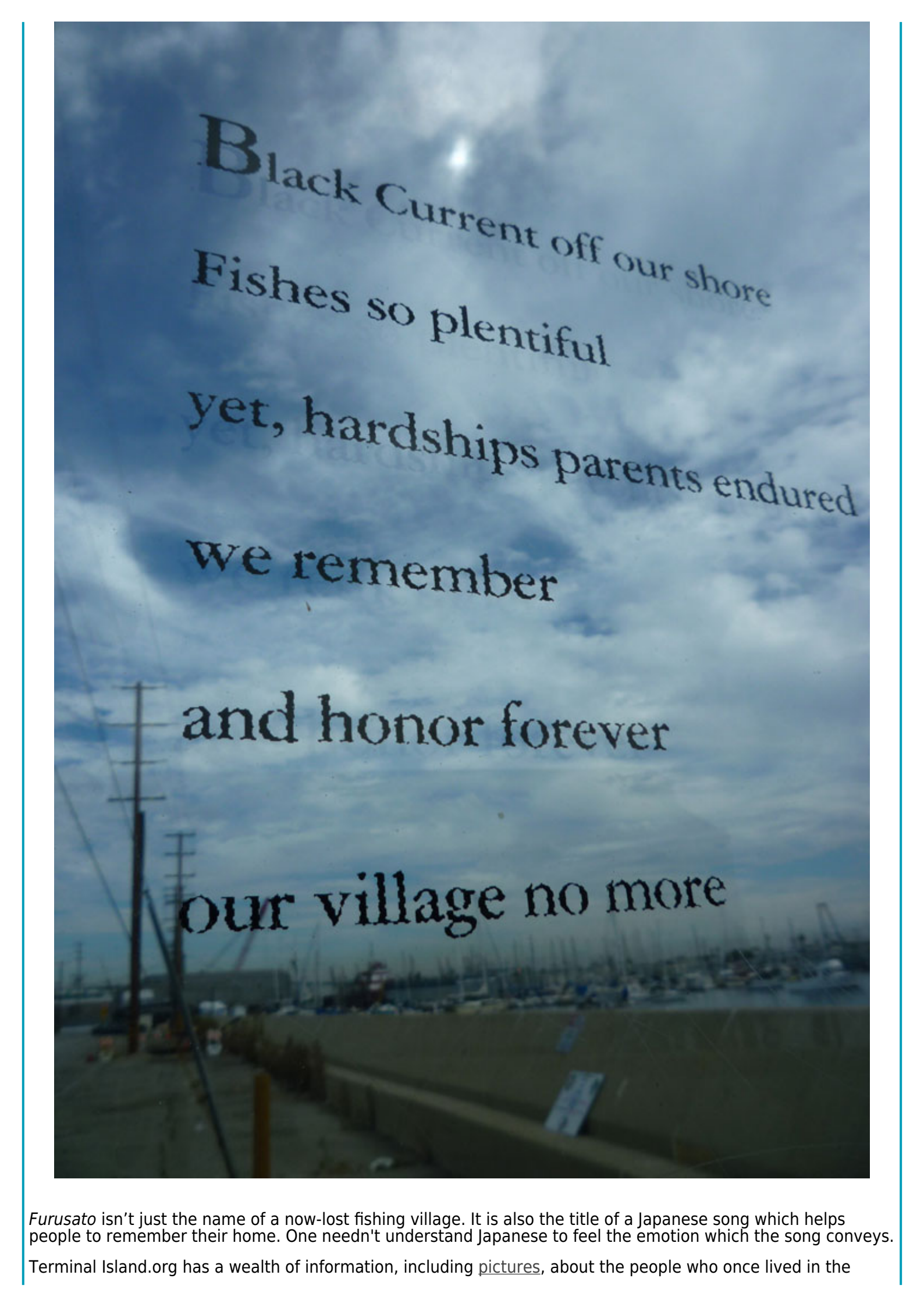
About eight months before the war in the Pacific ended, the federal government rescinded the exclusion order. When the Japanese-Americans returned to their former residences, what did they find? They didn't even see their village, let alone anything in it:

*On January 2, 1945, the exclusion order was rescinded. The internees were released with \$25 and a ticket home.*

*They returned home to find nothing. Furusato was gone without a trace. The canneries were still operating and a few people went back to work there. The rest of the former residents were scattered.*

Some years after the war was over, California State University at Long Beach attempted to obtain oral histories from a few evacuees. Those interviews are available to hear online via CSULB's University Library website.

People who remembered, and did their best to stay in touch with their now-scattered friends and neighbors, built a memorial on the island. It contains poignant words about the life they once had, but lost.



Black Current off our shore  
Fishes so plentiful  
yet, hardships parents endured  
we remember  
and honor forever  
our village no more

*Furusato* isn't just the name of a now-lost fishing village. It is also the title of a Japanese song which helps people to remember their home. One needn't understand Japanese to feel the emotion which the song conveys.

Terminal Island.org has a wealth of information, including [pictures](#), about the people who once lived in the

fishing village of Furusato, and much of it is available online. In addition, David Metzler tells the story in his documentary, "[Furusato: The Lost Village of Terminal Island.](#)"

Credits:

Image of the fishing village, at the top of the page, online via Cal State University at Long Beach.

All other in-text images, described in the text, online via [Terminal Island.org](#)

Quoted passages from San Pedro's article on "[Terminal Island Japanese Memorial.](#)"

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)  
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Japanese-American-Fishing-Village-Destroyed-at-Terminal-Island>

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Media Stream



Terminal Island Village Homes  
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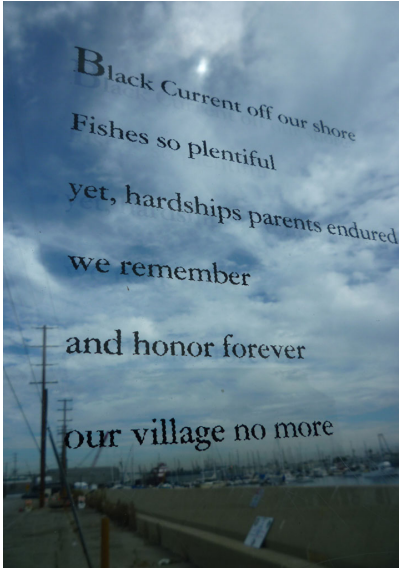


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### Japanese-American Fishing Village Destroyed at Terminal Island

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