

### Writing Task #3 – tangent to an outside connection to *No-No Boy*

I wanted to write my post this week on an outside tangent to our reading: Julian Saporiti's musical project called [\(Links to an external site.\)No-No Boy](#) [\(Links to an external site.\)](#). Saporiti, a doctoral student and musician, has written folk-style songs representing aspects of Asian American and immigrant experiences, including those of his own family. Using his music as a tool to invoke conversations around the country's complicated relationship with minorities and Asian Americans, Saporiti tours the country and has particularly performed for asylum seekers and aid workers at the US-Mexico border. He has also incorporated specific sounds recorded at places such as the Angel Island Immigration Station and WWII Japanese American internment camps directly into his music, helping those spaces come alive for his listeners.

I was able to listen to a few of his songs, and one that stood out to me as particularly beautiful was "Close Your Eyes and Dream of Flowers." If I am interpreting it correctly, the song alludes to the detention centers and the wrenching experience of trying to make it across the US-Mexico border. The last lines are spoken in Spanish by what seems to be a different voice than Saporiti's, and they struck me as especially poignant:

"En la frontera te das cuenta que la historia

tiende a repetirse:

Un niño es un niño,

Una jaula es una jaula,

Los sentimientos, Las angustias,

Todas son las mismas. Lo único que cambia es la época."

These lines (if I am translating it correctly!) describe the idea that history tends to repeat itself, and essentially that this situation of anguish is not a new one. It reminds me of the ways in which Okada's book *No-No Boy* brings out themes that extend beyond the Japanese American experience, and represent recurring patterns in American history.

One example that comes to mind is also reflected in the song: "They're saying out in El Paso / The prisons filled up to the brim / Now they're sticking them in cages / Just sweep it all beneath the bridge." Those trying to immigrate to the US from Mexico are being kept in detention centers at the border, in many cases facing unjustly prolonged detention times and inhumane conditions, which may show some parallels to the camps where Japanese Americans were forced to stay for prolonged periods of time during WWII, as well as the overcrowded Angel Island immigration station that detained Chinese immigrants hoping to get to San Francisco from 1910-1940. "Lo único que cambia es la época": the only thing that changes is the era. I think Saporiti's song really powerfully emphasizes the connections across time, place, and people-group in the experiences of immigrants and victims of prejudice throughout US history.