

The End of Destruction by Jocelyn Letzer

It started in the early 1800's, as American settlers were migrating to the West for a land of promise. In the area of what is now known as the Tri-Cities, Washington, 14 Native American tribes were promised an abundance of land in order for settlers to create their new lives there. Some settled in an area known as Hanford. The governor of Washington and these tribes came together to create the Treaty of 1855, which was broken very soon after it was signed. The governor deemed the production of railroads and infrastructure more important. The infuriated tribes then rebutted and attacked. This event was known as the Yakama War. To this day, these tribes have yet to regain their rights to fishing, hunting, and gathering.

In 1942, citizens of Hanford received a letter urgently voicing the need for them to clear the area:

“RICHLAND, WHITE BLUFFS AND HANFORD AREA TO BE TAKEN BY HUGE WAR INDUSTRY... MASS MEETINGS CALLED AT RICHLAND TO EXPLAIN THE WAR PROJECT TO RESIDENTS.”

And the destruction began. During World War II, the nuclear development center was created and remains there today. Nuclear bombs were constructed to be dropped on Nagasaki, Japan, for the Manhattan Project, and Hanford Nuclear Site was where they were built. Sixty to eighty thousand civilians of Japan were reported dead, innocent civilians with homes and families, jobs and lives. Their stories will never be heard or even told as they lie silent below the city.

Following World War II, weapons of the nuclear sort were created during the Cold War between the United States and the Soviets of modern-day Russia. The work at Hanford was kept secret, secret from the people residing nearby and secret from the employees themselves. The details about the dangerous, radioactive material were slid under the rug only to be revealed later. Though Hanford played a major part in the production of weapons for the United States, its employees were put in an unsafe position. The lack of reasoning behind the secrecy brings into question the morals of the owners of Hanford.

In the 1980's, U.S. citizens used the Freedom of Information Act to obtain previous documents, and serious flaws were unveiled. Safety wasn't a priority, and leakage in addition to contamination by radioactive waste were revealed. There were even cover-ups of leakages affecting the nearby Columbia River and exposure to the citizens residing around Hanford. Today, after at least 20 years of clean-up attempts, the conditions haven't improved for employees.

The Hanford Nuclear Site has been the basis of destruction countless times. Not only the lives of people residing there but also those halfway across the world have been touched by aspects of Hanford. Somehow the wrong-doings

are vindicated and ignored for years and years. Now is the time for new leaders, new management, a new system. Since the 1800's, people have been hurt by Hanford, and now is time for the flaws to be undone. We can't change what has occurred in the past; we can change what occurs in the future.