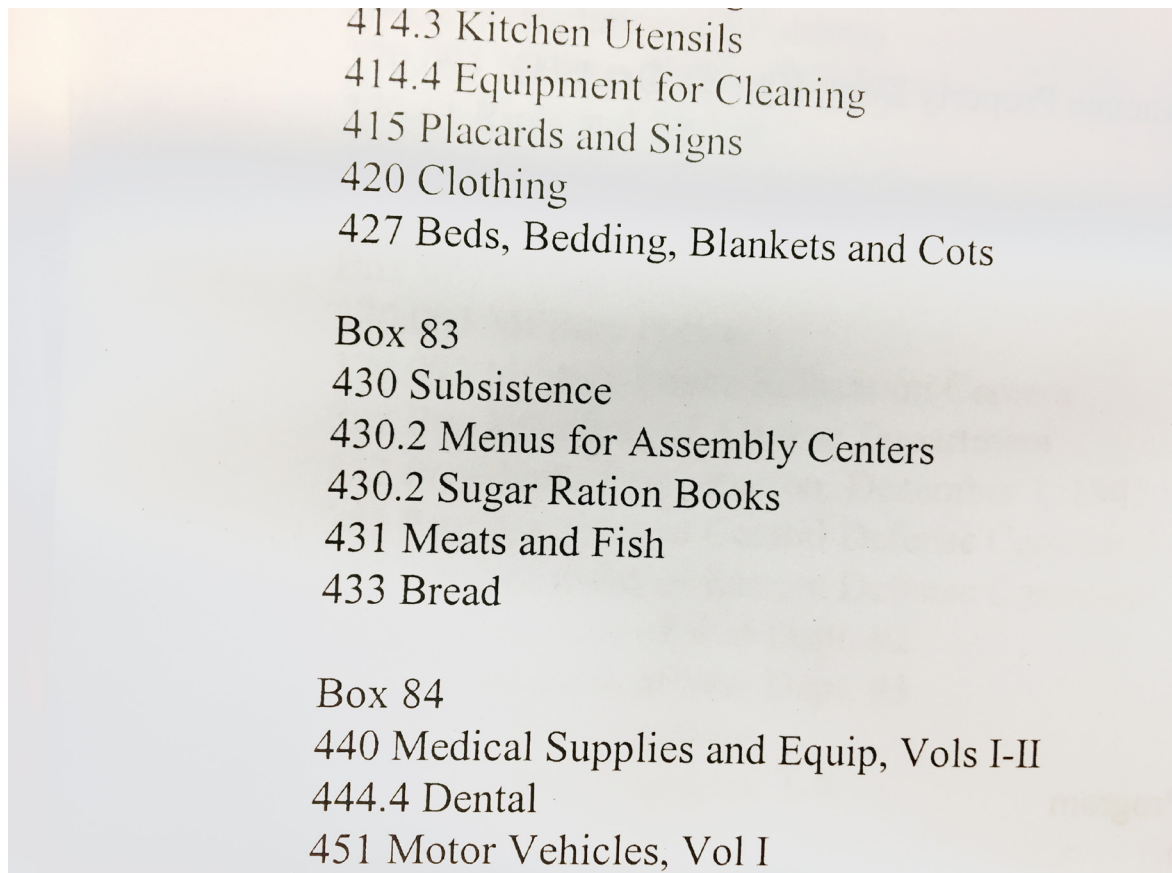


CENTER for EXPERIMENTAL LECTURES

June 11, 2017 — Interstate Projects, Brooklyn, NY
<http://experimentallecures.org>

Camp Harmony Assembly Center for Japanese American Internment, Puyallup, Washington

by Jason Hirata



Snapshot of a finding aid for Records of U.S. Army Defense Commands (Record Group 499), National Archives, College Park, Maryland. Photo: Jason Hirata

May 29, 1942. Friday.

Breakfast:

Apples.

Shredded Wheat.

Hot Cakes, Syrup, Butter.

Coffee, Milk.

Lunch:

Washington Chowder.

American Cheese.

Baked Lima Beans.

Rice.

Fresh Tomatoes.

Pineapple.

Tea, Bread, Milk.

Dinner:

Japanese Soup (I think I read that they served Miso Soup at this Assembly Center, or I read that they bought it).

Fresh Fish.

Shoyu.

Rice.

Cauliflower.

Bread, Jelly.

Tea, Milk.

Shoyu is the Japanese word for Soy Sauce. In this menu, housed in the National Archives Textual Reference Library 2 in College Park, Maryland, the ingredient is recorded using its Japanese language name, but in Roman alphabet characters.

May 30, 1942. Saturday.

Breakfast:

Stewed Prunes.

Cereal.

Ham.

Toast, Jelly, Butter.

Coffee, Sugar, Milk.

Lunch:

Spaghetti with Cheese.

Peas.

Bread, Butter.

Oranges.

Tea and Milk.

Dinner:

Soup.

Pork Shoulder.

Rice.

Beets (pickled).

Sweet Potatoes.

Shoyu.

Tsukemono (which is a kind of Japanese pickled vegetable, I mean, any kind of vegetable pickled in a Japanese style).

Rhubarb Cobbler.

Tea, Bread, and Milk.

Executive Order 9066 was an executive order signed and issued during the Second World War by United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The order authorized the Secretary of War to prescribe certain areas as military zones, clearing the way for the incarceration of Aleutian Unangax, and Japanese, German, and Italian Americans to American concentration camps.

My father is Japanese-American, and his parents were interned. He was not. My mother is Swedish/German-American. Her parents were not interned, nor was she. I think I did a report on the internment in grade school, and I'm pretty sure that I did one in high school also...

In early 1941, Roosevelt secretly commissioned a study to assess the possibility that Japanese Americans would pose a threat to U.S. security. The report, submitted exactly one month before Pearl Harbor was bombed, found that, "There will be no uprising of Japanese" in the United States. A second investigation started in 1940, and submitted in January 1942, likewise found no evidence of threat and urged against mass incarceration.

Both studies were ignored.

May 31, 1942. Sunday.

Breakfast:

Applesauce.

Corn Flakes.

Scrambled Eggs.

Diced Bacon.

Toast, Butter, Coffee, Sugar, Milk.

Lunch:

Baked Beef Heart.

Dressing.

Mashed Potatoes.

String Beans.

Sliced Tomatoes.

Apples.

Dinner:

Roast Pork with Apple Sauce.

Rice.

Lettuce and Tomato Salad.

Celery.

Fruit Cobbler.

Tea, Bread, Milk.

Six months after the signing of Executive Order 9066, 130,000 people had been imprisoned in American Internment Camps.

June 1, 1942. Monday.

Breakfast:

Apple Sauce.

Cornmeal Mush.

Milk.

Hot Cakes, Syrup, Butter.

Coffee, Sugar.

Lunch:

Lettuce and Tomato Salad.

Chili con Carne.

Rice.

Cauliflower.

Oatmeal Cookies.

Tea, Bread, Milk.

Dinner:

Japanese Soup.

Vegetable Salad.

Frankfurters.

Cabbage.

Rice.

Bread Pudding.

Tea, Milk, Bread.

Executive Order 9066 was issued in February of 1942. One month later, after only an hour of discussion in the Senate and thirty minutes in the House, Public Law 503 was approved, which made Executive Order 9066 enforceable. I won't read it but, I'll tell you it's 10 tweets long. It states in very general language that the penalty for any movement or act unauthorized by the Secretary of War in a Military Zone is subject to a misdemeanor fine of \$5000, and up to one year in prison. These were the terms against which American citizens were imprisoned en-masse during the war.

June 2, 1942. Tuesday.

Breakfast.

Rhubarb.

Rolled Oats, Milk.

Scrambled Eggs.

Fried Potatoes.

Bread, Butter, Coffee, Milk.

Lunch.

Beef Stew.

Rice.

Kidney Beans.

Boston Cream Pie.

Tea, Bread, Butter, Milk.

Dinner.
Soup.
Porcupine Balls.
Scalloped Tomatoes.
Tsukemono.
Rice Pudding.
Tea, Milk, Bread

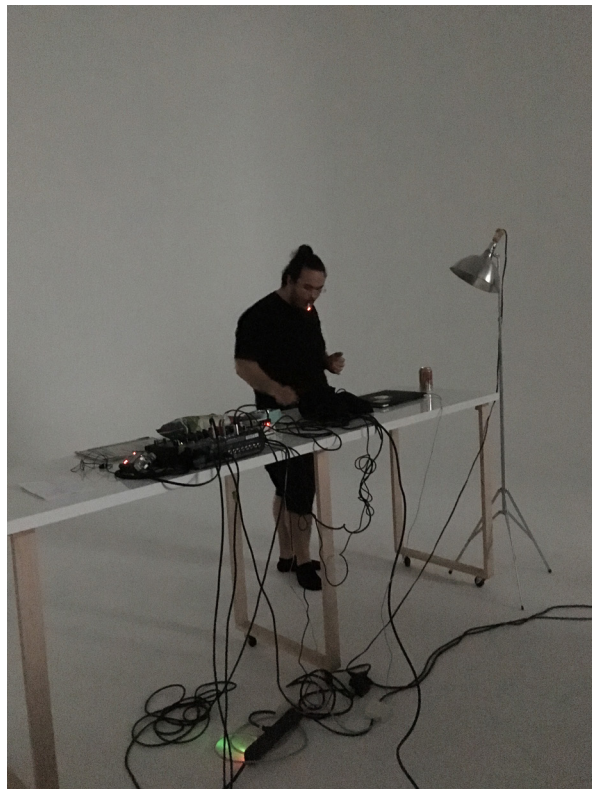
I think I used to eat porcupine balls with my mom. I think she used to make them. Or, someone did, and they'd bake them in a small square casserole dish. They were little balls of meat, with rice sticking out, sort of like spines...

[Looking out at the audience]
Have you had porcupine balls?

Have you had porcupine balls?

[The lights then go out, and, in the dark, Hirata proceeds to eat potato chips. The sound of the crumpling bag and the crunch as he chews the chips are amplified over the PA system. He then lights a cigarette]

[After several moments, Hirata turns on a work light positioned to illuminate his desk, and resumes reading]



Jason Hirata performing at Interstate Projects, June 11, 2017.
Photo: Center for Experimental Lectures

June 3, 1942. Wednesday.

Breakfast.

½ Grapefruit.

Cereal, Milk.

Cornmeal Hot Cakes.

Syrup, Butter, Sugar.

Coffee, Milk.

Lunch.

Chili.

Browned Potatoes.

Lettuce, Beet and Carrot Salad.

Chocolate Pudding.

Tea, Bread, Milk.

Dinner.

Sukiyaki.

Japanese Pickles.

Canned Peaches.

Bread, Tea, Milk.

Rosalyn Deutsche's 2010 essay "Hiroshima After Iraq," describes the continuity between the events of World War II, and the current state of US-led global militarism. She uses Walter Benjamin's term "left melancholy" to describe a mode of discourse that stubbornly insists on the essentialism of this continuity, while seeking to dismantle it.

Wendy Brown writes:

[...] But *left melancholy* is Benjamin's unambivalent epithet for the revolutionary hack who is, finally, attached more to a particular political analysis or ideal—even to the failure of that ideal—than to seizing possibilities for radical change in the present. In Benjamin's enigmatic insistence on the political value of a dialectical historical grasp of "the time of the Now," left melancholy represents not only a refusal to come to terms with the particular character of the present, that is, a failure to understand history in terms other than "empty time" or "progress." It signifies, as well, a certain narcissism with regard to one's past political attachments and identity that exceeds any contemporary investment in political mobilization, alliance, or transformation.¹

June 4, 1942. Thursday.

Breakfast:

Oranges.

Cereal.

Toast, Butter, Jam.

Coffee, Sugar, Milk.

Lunch:

Tossed Green Salad.

Rice.
Kale Chips. [Audience Laughter]
Creamed Peas and Carrots.
Tea, Bread, Milk

Dinner:
Vegetable Stew.
Veal Stew.
Carrots and Raisin Salad.
Rice.
Spice Cookies.
Tea, Bread, Milk.

An excerpt from Rosalyn Deutsche's "Hiroshima After Iraq," 2010:

Antiwar cultural criticism, that is, often uses the urgency of the war to legitimize a return to a totalizing political analysis, and this return has a narcissistic dimension, not only because it idealizes an earlier political moment with which the Left melancholic identifies himself but also because, as Brown argued, this analysis once formed the basis of Leftist self-love, giving "its adherents a clear and certain path toward the good, the right, the true."¹⁴

As a corollary of its impatience with feminism, which has long insisted on the inseparability of the personal and the political and on a politics concerned with subjectivity, melancholic antiwar criticism tries to divide the subjective and the material, the public and the private, and the social and the psychical, as though war has nothing to do with mental life, as though there is no work of the psyche in the waging of war. In this, antiwar criticism mimics dominant discourse about war: recall, for example, President Bush's assertion that he wasn't going to go on the couch about Iraq, or Truman's statement after dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima: "I don't believe in speculating on the mental feeling."²

June 5, 1942, Friday.

Breakfast:
Prunes.
Cereal, Milk.
Hot Cakes, Butter, Syrup.
Coffee, Milk.

Lunch:
Vienna Sausage.
Rice.
Beets.
Green Vegetable Salad.
Canned Apricots.
Tea, Bread, Milk.

Dinner:
Soup.
Fish.
Shoyu (which is soy sauce).
Rice.
Sliced Tomatoes.
Tsukemono.
Chocolate Cake.
Tea, Bread, Milk.

“The ocean turns deadly.. Fisherman have died. Food produces panic. The food of a whole city is thrown away. The food of a whole city is buried. A whole city rises in anger. What is the target of this anger? The principle of inequality advanced by certain peoples against other peoples, by certain races against other races, by certain classes against other classes... Listen to me, I know what it is to forget.” “No. You do not.”

June 6, 1942, Saturday.

Breakfast:
Bananas.
Cracked Wheat.
Boiled Eggs.
Bread, Butter, Sugar.

Lunch:
Tomatoes (Sliced).
Pinto Beans and Ham Hock.
Bread, Butter.
Butterscotch Pudding.
Tea, Milk.

Dinner:
Cold Meats.
Rice.
Carrots.
Rutabagas.
Shoyu.
Sliced Pineapple.
Tea, Bread, Milk.

[Hirata begins tapping the microphone in a ceaseless, consistent, and fast-tempoed beat]

The vague and fuzzy boundaries of Executive Order 9066 haphazardly grapple with the fearful concern that the enemy abroad may be a mirror copy of the domestic state and imprint that fear on the closest possible subject, who is then segregated and condensed to a controlled inert form. That form - the concentration camp - in its ideological conception, functions as a city in relief to dispersed diffused communities. In the case of Executive Order 9066 we see a tactical deployment of the city-form. And in the case of contemporary imprisonment we see the institutionalization of this tactic. It is both a way of producing a target/enemy, and a way of substantiating that production. It substantiates its production by stigmatizing the identity of the prisoner in the outside world and exposing the prisoner to that stigma within the walls of the prison. Ultimately the prisoner is cast as unpatriotic by way of deeming their activities, social

relations, or political and national affiliations counterproductive to the American project and subject to grounds for exclusion.

June 7, 1942. Sunday:

Breakfast.

Bananas.

Cereal.

Ham.

Potatoes.

Toast, Butter.

Coffee, Sugar, Milk.

Lunch:

Veal Stew.

Rice.

Carrots.

Fruit Salad.

Fruit Jello.

Tea, Milk, Bread.

Dinner:

Cream of Tomato Soup.

Tempura.

Japanese Pickles.

Oranges.

Tea, Milk, Bread.

Agamben writes in Means Without Ends:

[...] an apparently anodyne place (such as the Hotel Arcade near the Paris airport) delimits instead a space in which, for all intents and purposes, the normal rule of law is suspended and in which the fact that atrocities may or may not be committed does not depend on the law but rather on the civility and ethical sense of the police that act temporarily as sovereign.³

Andrew Robinson in Ceasefire Magazine on Agamben:

[...] The camp (which preceded the Holocaust by a long time) was a turning-point for Agamben because it made the temporary state of exception permanent, locating it in space instead of time (unlike the declaration of a state of emergency), and local to the core area of power, within its territory but outside its law (unlike the colony or warzone).⁴

June 8, 1942. Monday.

Breakfast:

Bananas.

Rolled Oats.

Scrambled Eggs.

Bread, Butter.

Coffee, Sugar, Milk.

Lunch:

Chili Con Carne.

Carrot-Apple Salad.

Fried Potatoes.

Chocolate Cookies.

Bread.

Tea, Milk.

Dinner:

Miso Soup.

Tsukemono.

Fish.

Rice.

Stewed Tomatoes.

Fruit Cobbler.

Bread.

Tea, Milk.

When President Harry Truman says he doesn't "believe in speculating on the mental feeling" of dropping an atomic bomb on a metropolitan area he engages in a form of dehumanization that Sayers S. Rudy examines in his analysis of socio-political conflict in Algeria during the 19th and 20th centuries. He calls this form of dehumanization "subjective compression."

June 9, 1942. Tuesday.

Breakfast:

Stewed Nectarines.

Cornmeal Mush.

Bacon.

Bread, Jelly, Butter.

Coffee, Sugar, Milk.

Lunch:

Meatballs with Tomato Sauce.

Kidney Beans.

Sliced Beet and Onion Salad.

Oranges.

Bread.

Tea, Milk.

Dinner:

Miso Soup.

Round Steak.
Shoyu.
Rice.
Carrots.
Tsukemono.
Bread, Butter.
Tea, Milk.

Sayres S. Rudy on “subjective compression”:

State-citizen violence in Algeria was never a battle
[...]

between modernity and identity, as the leading theories suggest. Rather, concentration camps and terrorism intensified conflict over a radically exploitative social regime. The contrapuntal killing machines of the citizenry and the state, or the terror-camp complex, emerged following the suppression of peaceful resistance. State coercion thus precipitated the carceral regime by defending market-statist absolutism from the realization, or even pursuit, of Algerians’ social needs and rendering citizens material and political objects, a condition I call subjective compression. Between 1957 and 1992 Algerians rejected this suffocation, violently rebuffing extremist market-statism. The state then deployed mass internment, torture, extrajudicial executions, and disappearances: its immanent and ideal carceral form.⁵

Breakfast, on June 10, 1942. Wednesday:

Oranges.
Shredded Wheat.
Scrambled Eggs.
Toast, Jelly, Butter.
Coffee, Sugar, Milk

Lunch:

Tomato Soup.
Baked Hash.
String Beans.
Rice.
Bread, Butter.
Butterscotch Pudding.
Tea, Milk.

Dinner:

Sukiyaki (which is a kind of sweet, sauce-braised meat and vegetables. It’s soy sauce-based).
Tsukemono (pickles).
Spiced Cake.
Bread.
Tea, Milk.

Is it the slippage of language that causes people to be technically included in a *demos*, but politically excluded? Or, is oppositional difference and suppression a known and sought-after requisite of the democratic struggle that Chantal Mouffe describes between a liberal non-state and an authoritarian military state? Mouffe says at one point in a group discussion printed in the Winter 2001 issue of *Grey Room* that she believes the capacity for democracy to fundamentally bear opposition is its “great strength,” while also insisting that “humanity is not a political concept.”⁷

The group contends with her rhetoric to try and access a foundational problem of politics by focusing on the refugee, the non-citizen, the stateless, also the imprisoned: The privilege to partake in the democratic struggle, and the wealth necessary to fund and enact that privilege (within a global-capitalist market-space), necessarily exploits anyone who can be politically overwhelmed, spoken for, or bought out. Outside of the inclusionary borders of the dominant nation state, the counter-Schmittian pluriverse that Mouffe famously describes happens to encompass many people and peoples with little-to-no say in how their environment affects them—this, despite the fact that these peoples are intrinsically linked and materially necessary to the liberties and rights from which they are excluded.

June 11, 1942. Thursday.

Breakfast:

Applesauce.

Cracked Wheat.

Pancakes, Syrup, Butter.

Coffee.

(There was no milk that day I guess).

Lunch:

Hot Meat and Onion Sandwich.

Toast.

Stewed Tomatoes.

Lettuce Salad.

Fruit Cobbler.

Bread.

Tea, Milk.

Dinner:

Egg Soup.

Beef Heart.

Rice.

Boiled Onions.

Shoyu.

Cabbage Pickles.

Fresh Strawberries.

Tea, Milk, Bread.

[Hirata continues tapping for several seconds and then ceases. He turns out the light]

[Applause]

1. Wendy Brown, "Resisting Left Melancholia," *Boundary 2* 26:3 (Fall 1999): 20.
2. Rosalyn Deutsche, "Hiroshima After Iraq: A Study in Art and War," *October* 131 (Winter 2010): 5, and 6.
3. Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without Ends: Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 42.
4. Andrew Robinson, "Giorgio Agamben: the state and the concentration camp," *Ceasefire*, January 7, 2011.
5. Sayres S. Rudy, "Barring the Algerian Subject: Carcerality and Resistance Under Market-Statism," in *Policing and Prisons in the Middle East: Formations of Coercion*, eds. Laleh Khalili and Jillian Schwedler (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 98.
6. Chantal Mouffe, Rosalyn Deutsche, Branden W. Joseph and Thomas Keenan, "Every Form of Art Has a Political Dimension," *Grey Room* 02 (Winter 2001): 106.