After Japanese Americans were released from incarceration, most of what remained were mounds and mounds of paper. Papers that told us about choices the incarcerees made, big and small. About how even in camp, people were still just being people. In this episode we’re talking about paper—the stories it tells, the ones it doesn’t, and what that says about power in historical narratives. See the full transcript here.

Discussion Questions:

1. What kind of “paper trail” do you have? What papers document your life? (Prompts: medical records, school records, birth certificate, etc)

2. Imagine that all of your purchases from a drugstore were saved for posterity. What would these receipts say about you?

Lesson Idea:

Search the Densho Digital Repository for one of the names below and see what you can find out about them by looking at their paper trail.

- George Kida
- Michi Weglyn
- Takami Hibiya
- Walter Matsuoka
[Note: Some students may not be able to read cursive. Point out that handwriting styles have changed over time, making it challenging to read old documents.] 

For tips on how to search the Densho archives, please see Navigating the Densho Digital Repository. Start by typing the name of the person in the “Search” box.

When you have completed your search, write a paragraph about the person, including:

- What kinds of documents did you find?
- What kind of documents or other evidence of the person were missing?
- What questions do you still have that weren’t answered by the paper trail?