

Transpacific Internments:
Constructing "Little America" and Dismantling "Little Tokyo"

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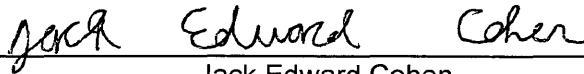
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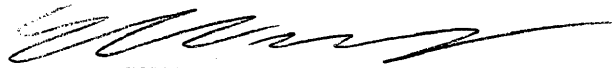


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ABSTRACT PAGE

During World War II, thousands of civilians relocated to internment camps on opposite sides of the Pacific Ocean. Although both white Americans in the Philippines and Japanese Americans in the United States faced dire internment experiences, they ultimately approached their captivities with drastically different objectives. In the Philippines, white American internees rarely collaborated with their Japanese commandants. Instead, they sought to establish communities which relied upon the perseverance and cooperative efforts of the internees themselves, effectively constructing autonomous "Little Americas." In contrast, Japanese Americans in the United States turned outward to integrate themselves into mainstream American society, working hand-in-hand with the War Relocation Authority (WRA). The WRA and Japanese Americans cooperated to dispel myths of treachery and inability to assimilate, as well as to demonstrate that Japanese Americans were no different from white Americans. These internees strove to dismantle the "Little Tokyos" that had so defined their experience in the United States leading up to World War II. My research questions include: How did the roles of citizenship and identity affect how internees approached their captivity situations? What were the goals of internment--as far as the internees were concerned--and how did they work to achieve these goals? Finally, how does the examination of both transpacific internments elucidate a common conclusion, one that could not be accomplished through the study of these two models in isolation?

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**Dedicated to my parents, Lee and Susan Cohen,
for their boundless love and support**

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My final remarks are reserved for family. I am blessed to be surrounded by so many loving and compassionate cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents. My closing sets of thanks go to my parents, Lee and Susan Cohen. They have given me every opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed. I would not be where I am today without their boundless love and support.

Introduction

“We suggest that as much intercourse with ‘white’ Americans be permitted as possible. We do not relish the thought of ‘Little Tokyos’ springing up in these resettlement projects, for by doing so we are only perpetuating the very things which we hope to eliminate. We hope for a one hundred per cent American community.”¹

Four months after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Mike Masaoka, a Japanese American and National Secretary of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), wrote this piece of advice to Milton Eisenhower, Director of the War Relocation Authority (WRA) and brother of General Dwight D. Eisenhower. At the time, the United States of America was embroiled in one of the most destructive conflicts the world had ever seen. Americans, abruptly stirred from their comfortable isolationist tendencies, prepared themselves to face a two-front war against the Axis powers. However, in the midst of this world war, over 110,000 Japanese Americans—most of whom were U.S. citizens—were driven from their homes to internment camps throughout the country. As historian Roger Daniels wrote, “it is the story of a national calamity, a calamity commonly referred to as ‘our worst wartime mistake.’”²

Yet, amidst such a tragic hardship, many Japanese Americans, particularly the Nisei—second generation immigrants and children of first generation immigrants (the Issei)—viewed their internments as opportunities to integrate with the nation’s mainstream. As Masaoka’s writing elucidates, Japanese Americans sought to transform their identities, with the adjective “Japanese” as less significant or meaningful than the noun “American.” Numerous internees collaborated with the WRA not only to dispel

¹ Letter from Mike Masaoka to Milton Eisenhower p. 5, April 6, 1942, Records of Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians 1981-1983, Record Group 220, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

² Roger Daniels, *Concentration Camps USA: Japanese Americans and World War II* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1972), xi.

prejudiced myths of Japanese American treachery or inability to assimilate to society-at-large, but also to prepare their ethnic community socially and professionally for their eventual release from the camps.

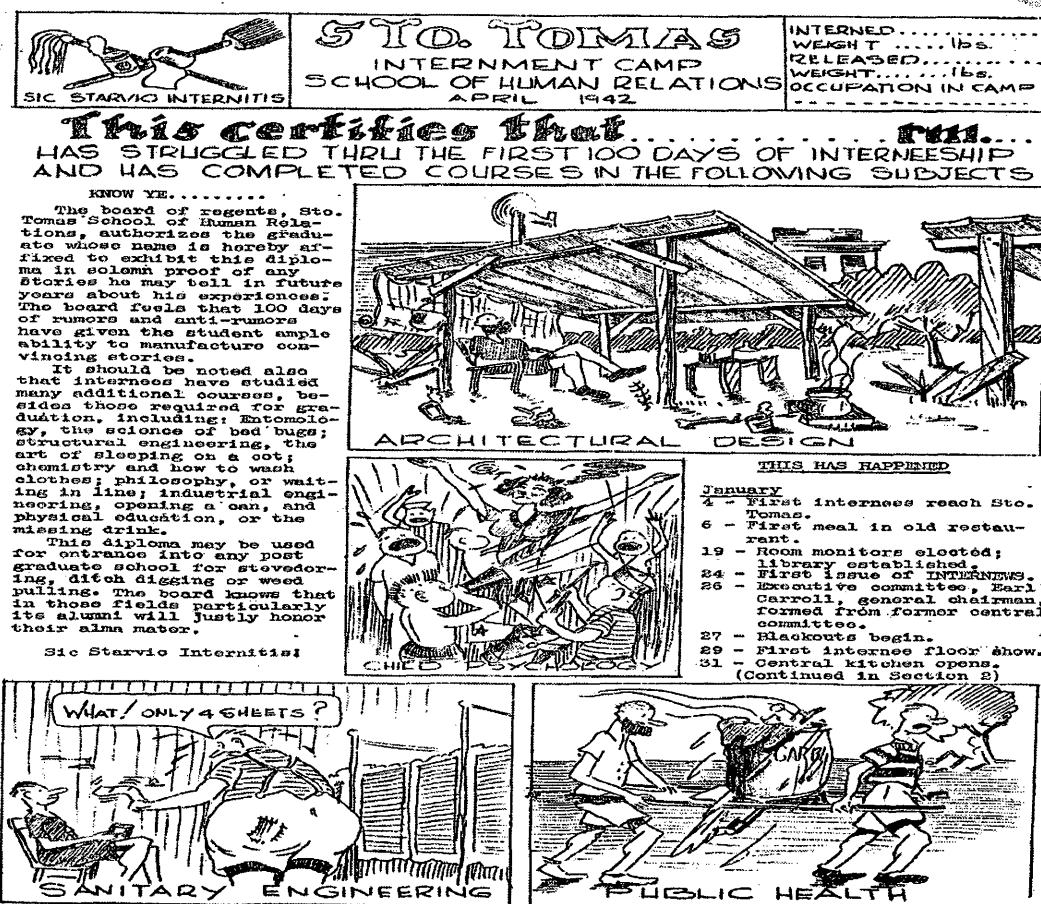
Around the same time that Masaoka's letter was written, American internees at the Santo Tomas internment camp in the Philippines printed a certificate to commemorate their first hundred days of captivity. Following their victory over General Douglas MacArthur in January 1942, Japanese troops had evacuated Allied civilians—mostly Americans, but also British, Dutch, and others as well—to internment camps throughout Luzon. The certificate proclaimed that internees had received education in a variety of disciplines, including architectural design, child psychology, sanitary engineering, and public health, among others.³ Yet, this credential was not a typical diploma. It was a piece of satire, aimed to brighten the day of the internees in the camp. Close inspection of the document reveals that “public health” merely entailed garbage duty and “sanitary engineering” involved the rationing and distribution of toilet paper. At the end of the certificate, the internee is reminded to always remember the motto of his or her old alma mater: *sic starvio internitis*, an intended translation from Latin for “thus starvation to internees.”⁴

In stark contrast to Japanese American internment across the Pacific Ocean, these American internees—who were almost exclusively white U.S. citizens—viewed their captivity with drastically different goals in mind. Whereas the WRA and Japanese Americans closely collaborated, American internees in the Philippines were largely left to fend for themselves. As one internee, Roy Doolan, commented, “the Japanese were not at all interested in organizing or running the camp. All the day to day questions, such as

³ Santo Tomas Internment Camp School of Human Relations Certificate, April 1942, Sawyer Collection, Santo Tomas Internment Camp Papers, Record Group 112, The MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, VA.

⁴ *Ibid.*

where to sleep and how to obtain and cook food, were left to the prisoners to figure out.”⁵ More importantly, the Americans in the Philippines did not seek to remold their identities as the Japanese Americans had. In fact, American internees strove to create an autonomous society organized largely by and for themselves. While Masaoka and countless Japanese Americans intended to dismantle the “Little Tokyos” that had so defined the Japanese American experience in the United States before World War II, Doolan and the American internees proposed to create the opposite: “Little Americas” in the midst of an occupied country. I investigate what accounts for this contrasting reaction and what were the goals and objectives of these two interned groups.



School of Human Relations certificate from Santo Tomas

⁵ Account of Roy Doolan p.10, Roy Doolan Collection, Santo Tomas Internment Camp Papers, Record Group 112, The MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, VA.

⁶ Santo Tomas Internment Camp School of Human Relations Certificate.

This master's thesis compares two transpacific internment experiences during World War II. Between 1942 and 1946, thousands of civilians were incarcerated in both the United States and the Empire of Japan. While some internees faced extreme malnutrition and physical attacks, others encountered widespread racial prejudices and an uncertain future. However, despite their traumatic scenarios, Japanese American and white American internees never lost sight of their identities. In the Japanese American context, many evacuees reinvented their identities by breaking from their Japanese ancestry and embracing personas which mainstream America would approve. On the other hand, white Americans underwent no such alteration. Rather, these captives clung tightly to perceptions of who they were and from where they came. While the incarceration of American civilians in the Philippines under Japanese occupation and Japanese American internment appear to be thoroughly deviating, a comparison reveals the way race and identity were central to the conflict.

In the United States, prejudice against Japanese Americans had existed since their arrival in the mid-1800s. Deemed as inferior and menaces to white supremacy, the ethnic community was largely segregated from the American mainstream. With the internment during World War II, a combination of external pressures and agency from the ethnic community resulted in the transformations of Japanese American identity. Yet, Americans in the Philippines did not experience widespread racial prejudice. In fact, as colonialists in the islands, Americans viewed themselves as the highest racial tier and inherently superior to the native Filipinos. Thus, the long history of discrimination that Japanese American internees faced was not an equivalency for white American evacuees. Certainly, this dissimilarity greatly affected how internees in the United States and the Philippines perceived their captivities; either as phases of momentous alteration or as mere transitory hardship.

Due to the different conditions and challenges faced by internees, this thesis does not suggest that the two models provide a strictly even parallel. Trepidations over hunger and physical assault were much more prevalent in the Philippines than in the United States. Whereas white Americans were technically a conquered enemy, Japanese Americans were feared as potential double agents or fifth columnists. While Japanese American internees primarily associated with civilian officials in the WRA, American internees were much more likely to interact with commandants who were military personnel. In addition, circumstances were not static in either example. In the Philippines, as the war progressed in the favor of the Allies, American civilians encountered harsher conditions. Food became much scarcer, sickness became more rampant due to dwindling medical supplies, and Japanese guards more commonly took out their frustrations on their captives. On the other hand, conditions typically improved for Japanese Americans as the United States gained the upper hand. As the panic that Japan could invade the west coast subsided, most of the white majority recognized that Japanese Americans did not pose a threat to national security. Thousands of Japanese Americans even left the internment camps before Japan's unconditional surrender. Lastly, as will be demonstrated further, Japanese American internees and the WRA collaborated during the captivity to combat prejudices against the ethnic community, easing the resettlement into normal life.

Ultimately, I chose these two examples because they vividly illustrate how communities respond to dire circumstances. Before internment, white Americans in the Philippines typically came from privileged backgrounds. They existed almost exclusively as colonial elites in the Philippines, rather than as ordinary immigrants. With the Japanese occupation of the Philippines, Americans had simply nothing to gain from assimilation because they considered their captivity situations as temporary. Integration provided no advantages; it would bring neither replenished food nor additional medical

supplies. Faced with no incentives, Americans favored an identity that brought with it hopes of liberation and a return to thriving prewar lives.

On the other hand, many Japanese Americans recognized that they had everything to gain by cooperating with their captors. Due to the Great Depression and the segregation of the ethnic economy from the mainstream, many Japanese Americans—especially the Nisei—felt trapped and unable to improve their financial and social standings in American society. As Richard Alba and Victor Nee explain, “as long as ethnic economies are populated by small businesses with limited opportunities for advancement, the direction of job changes will be to secure jobs with better conditions of employment and returns to human capital in the mainstream economy.”⁷ In addition, incarceration irrevocably harmed the Japanese ethnic economy, and thus collaboration with the mainstream seemed the only valid alternative.⁸ Japanese Americans also understood that integration would help counter prejudices against their community, as Milton M. Gordon—an American sociologist renowned for his theories on assimilation—suggested that “differences in extrinsic culture are more crucial in the development of prejudice than those of an intrinsic nature.”⁹ Thus, learning English, playing sports, and joining youth organizations all contributed to demonstrating that the Japanese American community appeared to differ little from the mainstream majority. In contrast to the context in the Philippines, most Japanese Americans did not hail from advantaged backgrounds, and hence cooperation was also synonymous with upward social mobility.¹⁰ Lastly, outside social pressure and a sense of coercion certainly contributed to the change

⁷ Richard Alba and Victor Nee, “Rethinking Assimilation Theory for a New Era of Immigration,” in Charles Hirschman, Philip Kasinitz, and Josh DeWind, eds., *The Handbook of International Migration: The American Experience* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1999), 148.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁹ Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 81.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 46.

in the Japanese American community. Though some Japanese Americans earnestly desired to alter their ethnic society, others merely saw cooperation with the WRA as the only available measure given their circumstance. Pushed against a wall, undoubtedly, countless internees felt intimidated to do and say the “right” things.

Finally, these two models are dissimilar due to the power relationships between captive and captor. In the Philippines, American internees were treated as subservient to their conquerors. It was mandated for internees to bow before Japanese guards, for instance, as symbolic of respect and submission. Though cooperation did exist between these two forces, it should be viewed more as a yield of worthy, admirable enemies and less as equal, collaborative partners. By contrast, Japanese Americans and the WRA did participate in a more equalized relationship. Both parties shared the same goal of racial acceptance for the internees and both labored collaboratively to achieve that objective. Japanese American community leaders worked hand-in-hand with internment camp directors to improve camp conditions and increase the number of job and skill opportunities available to the community. Yet, simultaneously, the WRA did act as a paternal organization, encouraging and even assisting with the Americanization of the internee society. Thus, while evacuees in the Philippines felt little or no pressure from their captors to assimilate, internees in the United States seemed to be under a constant barrage from both the government and citizenry.

In pursuing this project, I attempt to answer a variety of research questions. First, how did the role of citizenship affect how internees approached their situations of captivity? Ever since the acquisition of the islands at the end of the Spanish-American War (1898), Americans in the Philippines had retained their U.S. citizenship. These colonists predominately served as a caste of elite social and financial leaders throughout

the islands.¹¹ They widely interacted with Filipinos, but typically in a master-servant relationship, with the American serving as a sort of *pater familias*.¹² When the Japanese conquered the Philippines in early 1942, white Americans knew that they could never be accepted into Japanese society due to their skin color, nor did they even desire such an outcome. Thus, interned Americans continuously hoped for liberation from their brethren across the Pacific. Even internees who were born in the Philippines and had never before visited the United States maintained a strong allegiance to the land of their ancestors.¹³ For these captives, American citizenship meant hopefully an eventual deliverance. As a result, internees in the Philippines attempted to simply carry on with their lives to the best of their abilities. A strong, widespread communication of American identity and character made cooperation with Japanese commandants and guards a tolerated compulsion.

In contrast, Japanese American internment in the United States transformed their community by fostering a split between the Issei and Nisei generations. Due to restrictions upon naturalization, the Issei—as first generation immigrants—were denied U.S. citizenship, while their children were U.S. citizens by birthright. The Nisei—who composed over 60% of the Japanese American community in the United States by 1941—viewed the internment as an opportunity to break away from the traditions and ties of their parents.¹⁴ In particular, the Nisei worked to abolish Japanese language schools, replacing them instead with English language learning, and acquired occupational skills such as automobile and electronic repair. Thus, they distanced

¹¹ Frances B. Cogan, *Captured: The Japanese Internment of American Civilians in the Philippines, 1941-1945* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000), 13.

¹² For an extensive account of U.S.-Filipino relations, with particular emphasis on race, see Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, The United States, & The Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

¹³ Interview with former Santo Tomas Internee, September 30, 2010.

¹⁴ Jere Takahashi, *Nisei/Sansei: Shifting Japanese American Identities and Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 35.

themselves from the predominant orientation of the Issei and sought occupations more marketable to the mainstream for after the war. Some internees even volunteered for the U.S. armed forces, serving in both the European and Pacific theaters. Many Japanese Americans tried to make the best of a worst-case scenario, utilizing their internments to prove that they were as patriotic and loyal as the average white American.

Also, it is crucial to understand how the internees perceived their own incarcerations. What were the goals of internment—as far as the internees were concerned—and how did they work to achieve them? From the white American perspective in the Philippines, the primary goals seemed to be physical, mental, and emotional survival. Typically, Japanese commandants—both military and civilians leaders—charged the internees with organizing, feeding, and even policing themselves. Once these necessities were secured, internees were free to recreate their society, as evident through educational systems and even diversions. For instance, sports, satirical publications,—such as the certificate described earlier—and the creative and performing arts flourished in these “Little Americas.” Due to little interaction and collaboration with the Japanese, American internees grew accustomed to relying and fending for themselves.

By contrast, Japanese Americans and the War Relocation Authority (WRA) worked cooperatively towards the goals of racial and professional acceptance for the internees after their eventual release. Japanese American internees and the WRA strove to prove to both the American mainstream and the evacuees themselves that internees could succeed socially after the war. The WRA conducted television specials and press releases, showcasing the “achievements” of Japanese American assimilation. Dillon S. Myer—the Director of the WRA who succeeded Milton Eisenhower in June 1942—was one of the biggest supporters of Japanese American integration. In addition, the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL)—the dominant representative organization for the

Nisei—utilized examples of thriving resettled Japanese Americans to convince those still incarcerated that they could expect the same result for life outside of captivity. As Nisei Chizu Iiyama claimed, the WRA did not act of malice, but instead was concerned with the best interests of the Nisei.¹⁵

Lastly, in the discipline of history, comparative and transnational history has influenced many scholars and their research. How does a comparative examination of two internments enrich our understanding of historical experiences? Ultimately, these internment contexts illustrate the value in recasting history from a transnational viewpoint, instead of an isolated framework from the “nation state.” In the Japanese American example, the period of captivity symbolized a break in the transnational link which had been so integral to the community until World War II. As historian Eiichiro Azuma argued, “transnationalism allowed Japanese immigrants to strategize new terms of national belonging through their claims to their imperial Japanese heritage.”¹⁶ Even as early as the late 1800s, Issei immigrants had developed an identity which had strong ties to the homeland. They also encouraged their children to imitate these same personas through such roles as transnational educators and serving as “bridges” or goodwill ambassadors between East and West. Yet, Azuma also demonstrated that the transnational identity was as much a curse as it was a benefit for the Japanese American community. Japanese American transnationalism exacerbated white prejudices and fears of the ethnic community since “what took place after December 7, 1941, was an amalgamation of nationalism and racism, which culminated in a complete polarization between things Japanese and things American in each warring state.”¹⁷ Thus, placed under the adversity of internment, Japanese Americans—especially the Nisei—looked

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁶ Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 14.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 209.

upon transnational identities as encumbrances, and instead, sought identities that no longer maintained allegiances to two nations.

Conversely, transnationalism remained integral to the identities of American internees in the Philippines. Not only were American holidays such as Thanksgiving celebrated, but internees—even those that were born overseas—found pride and admiration in their heritages. Just as Madeline Hsu demonstrated that Taishanese sojourners in the United States “employed a cultural repertoire of organizational practices and affiliations adapted from traditional structures of society and politics in China,” so too did American internees dream of home and the connotations of liberation that came with it.¹⁸ For internees in the Philippines, American identities inspired pride and resilience to overcome the hardships of incarceration. For Japanese Americans, maintaining identities with Japan only instilled the discrimination and racism of white Americans. Thus, through the examination of a comparative model, I intend to demonstrate how perceptions of transnational forces affected captivity scenarios, albeit in opposing respects.

The sheer amount of historiography on the Japanese American internment can seem daunting for any historian to tackle. Venerable scholars such as Roger Daniels, Greg Robinson, Brian Masaru Hayashi, and John Howard have done much to further research in the field, chiefly focusing on the unreasonable and racist prejudices held by the white majority, climaxing in the relocation. These scholars have argued that the internment during World War II was America’s most infamous hour, a veritable derailing of the democracy. I certainly agree with both of these assertions. Yet, they have also generally portrayed Japanese American internees as passive victims, not as actors in the shaping of their own destinies. They have relied upon an overly simplistic good-versus-

¹⁸ Madeline Yuan-yin Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration Between The United States and South China, 1882-1943* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 5.

evil bifurcation: ignoring the goodhearted nature of many Americans in their collaborations with the Japanese American community within the historical context of their time. Prior historians have examined the wrongs done to the Japanese Americans, rather than the Japanese American response in combating those wrongs and preventing them from reoccurring. In this sense, this project breaks off from the existing historiographical trend laid out by authors such as Daniels and Robinson, and instead, underscores the well-meaning cooperation of Japanese Americans and their captors.

However, the amount of secondary material dealing with the American civilian internment in the Philippines is sorely lacking. In 2000, Frances B. Cogan provided a pioneering overview of the internment with her book *Captured*. In the same year, Theresa Kaminski examined the role of womanhood, gender, and sexuality among American civilian internees in the monograph *Prisoners in Paradise*. To my investigation, there are only a handful of sources on this subject written by professional historians. This discrepancy in the scholarship is likely due to the relatively small number of American civilians interned—about 5,000 in contrast to over 110,000 in the Japanese American context.¹⁹ Also, there is an overemphasis on American soldiers who became prisoners-of-war in the Philippines, suffering under such brutalities as the Bataan Death March. Though this latter story should certainly receive recognition, it has simultaneously created a void in our understanding of the lives of American civilian internees. Remarkably, this segment of our American history is still largely untold.²⁰ Thus, the secondary material available on the American civilian internment, though groundbreaking, is still foundational. Additional thorough research is necessary to understand how American civilians viewed themselves, their Japanese captors, and how their attitudes largely shaped their internment experiences.

¹⁹ Cogan, 1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Finally, a few notes on terminology, sources, and names. Throughout this thesis I will discern between “Japanese Americans” and “Americans.” The latter term describes the white civilians in the Philippines while the former details the Americans of Japanese ancestry in the United States. Also, even since the end of World War II, historians have debated the appropriate term to describe the privations faced by civilians on both sides of the Pacific Ocean. Most have opted for words such as “internment,” “captivity,” “relocation,” “evacuation,” and “incarceration.” Others have found these terms too belittling, believing that they rob the experience of its seriousness. Certain historians—Daniels as an example—have substituted “internment camp” with “concentration camp,” in order to demonstrate the series of partialities and illegalities culminating in the removal. However, such phraseology problematically carries the connotation of the extermination of the Jews and other ethnic and political groups in the Holocaust, despite the historian’s accurate differentiation of the two situations. In an effort to compare the Japanese American and American contexts, I will use such words as “internment” and its synonyms in lieu of “concentration.” I employ these terms with all due respect to both former internees and historians.

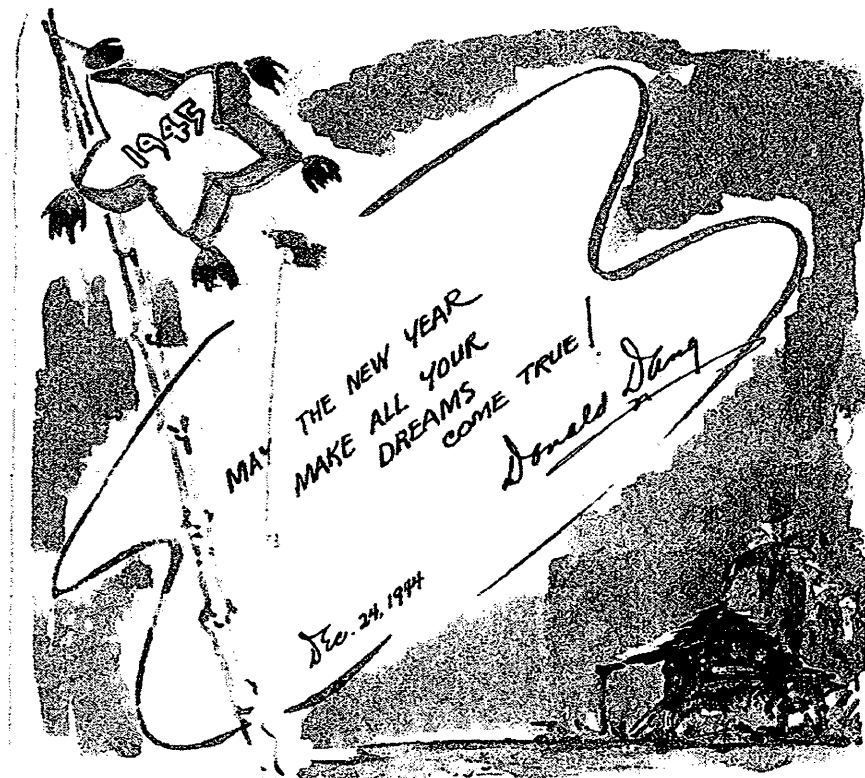
In addition to the archival sources and published primary and secondary material utilized, I have incorporated interviews with former internees—both Japanese American and American—into my research. To protect the identities of these individuals, I refer to them anonymously. Instead of giving an ethnically appropriate alias, I simply denote them as “a former Santo Tomas internee” or “a former Rohwer internee.” Japanese American names are given in the Western custom of first name followed by last name—e.g. Mike Masaoka. The names of Japanese nationals are preserved as to their regional custom of family name followed by given name—e.g. Tomibe Rokuro. Any bracketed statements included within quotes are my own clarifications. While some sources are

composed during the internments themselves, many others are captured in memoirs, testimonies, and interviews decades later. The split in the number examined between these two timeframes is roughly equal. It is certainly plausible, however, that former internees who document their histories after years of separation from captivity may look back upon the past with more optimism than those presently experiencing the dangers and traumas directly.

White Americans and Japanese Americans approached their internments from drastically different perspectives. In the United States, Japanese Americans viewed their internments as an opportunity to affect change, integrate, and provide themselves with skills that could advance their professional and social security after the war. Japanese Americans made use of their internments as a time to dispel the hysterical and prejudiced claims of white Americans. In contrast to what scholars have asserted in the past, Japanese Americans were not passive victims of internment but rather active agents seeking to mold their own futures. Yet, Japanese Americans also felt compelled to undergo these transformations. Facing external pressure from the U.S. government, WRA, and American citizenry, many Japanese Americans saw assimilation as the only option in bettering the welfare of their community. On the other hand, American internees never felt a widespread allegiance to the Japanese Empire, nor were they even allowed becoming Japanese citizens. As a result, American internees simply dug in and waited for the storm of war to pass. In contrast to the Japanese American internment which involved collaborating and partnering with the WRA, white American internees isolated themselves, forming autonomous societies constructed solely by and for Americans. Whereas Americans in the Philippines only received discrimination from their Japanese guards, Japanese Americans felt opposed by much of the nation surrounding them.

Internees viewed their experiences with different goals in mind. Whereas white

Americans sought survival, organization, and eventually a feeling of comparative regularity, Japanese Americans desired to fully alter themselves socially and professionally into the country which they were relative newcomers. While white Americans quickly established a system of security and normalcy, Japanese Americans discarded these notions for an entirely different social milieu.



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A 1944 Christmas card from Santo Tomas in the Philippines

²¹ Christmas Card designed by Donald Dang, December 24, 1944, Box 2, Folder 5, Papers of Fay Bailey, Santo Tomas Internment Camp, 1942-1959; Record Group 98, The MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, VA.

Chapter 1: Constructing “Little America”

“The camp is run entirely by the internees themselves,” wrote Charles Schafer regarding the Santo Tomas Internment Camp in the Philippines.²² In his testimony, Schafer not only relates the statistics of the camp, varying from the number of internees to the amount of personal space per resident, but also describes a society which appears to be self-sufficient, highly organized, and even full of diversion and entertainment. Not only did Santo Tomas—as well as the other main camps in the Philippines, including Los Banos and Bilibid—include a fire brigade, but also its own carpentry shop, barber and beauty salon, dentist’s office, and a small lending library which rented out books at the rate of ten cents per day.²³ For the American internees in the Philippines, life in internment was certainly a distressing hardship—plagued with hunger, boredom, and fear, among a truly immeasurable range of feelings—but the internees strove to construct a society that would insulate from the war around them. This was a little piece of home, a sense of familiarity to a time before internment.

Ever since the collapse of the Tokugawa Shogunate and restoration of Emperor Meiji in 1868, Japan began to industrialize and militarize at an alarming rate. Following the victories in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), Japan had amassed an extensive empire, incorporating Korea, Taiwan, Manchuria, and a string of islands in the Pacific. Finally, with the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in 1937, Japan initiated the Pacific War, a catastrophic conflict with China, Britain, France, Holland, and eventually the United States. The Pacific War was Japan’s attempt to rid Asia of Western imperialism and colonialism, instead unifying all Asians under the banner of pan-Asian cooperation—the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere.

²² Account of Ed Powers p.3, Ed Powers Collection, Santo Tomas Internment Camp Papers, Record Group 112, The MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, VA.

²³ *Ibid.*

As historian John W. Dower argued, warfare in the Pacific differed greatly from the European contest, primarily due to race hatred. Americans perceived the enemy as subhuman, often using metaphors of cunning monkeys and brutish apes to describe the Japanese. One wartime cartoon, appearing in *Leatherneck* magazine, described the Japanese as lice, and advocated the complete annihilation of “the breeding grounds around the Tokyo area.”²⁴ Conversely, the Japanese did not think of the Americans as subhuman, but instead, thought themselves to be the chosen rulers of Asia. Japanese citizens and soldiers were reminded that “Japan is the divine country. The heavenly ancestor it was who first laid its foundations, and the Sun Goddess left her descendants to reign over it forever and ever.”²⁵ The Japanese took great pride that among all the world powers, only they had never been conquered. An unbroken line existed from Emperor Showa (Hirohito) to Emperor Jimmu over 2,500 years ago.²⁶ Such sentiments between the two adversaries would not only influence the internment in the Philippines, but also greatly contrast it with the Japanese treatment of other defeated peoples.

From December 1941 to May 1942, Allied and Japanese forces waged battle over the Philippine islands. By January 1942, General Douglas MacArthur—seeing that he was outgunned and unable to defend the thousands of Allied civilians—declared Manila an “open city,” withdrawing his forces with the hope that Japanese troops would not harm the noncombatants. When the Japanese moved into Manila, they quickly began to round up enemy civilians, with claims that this was for protection of the Allied civilians.²⁷ In the initial days of evacuation, Americans predicted that they would be repatriated back home, as this was typical procedure for treating civilians in a war zone.

²⁴ John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 185.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 222.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 223.

²⁷ Theresa Kaminski, *Prisoners in Paradise: American Women in the Wartime South Pacific* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2000), 48.

However, Americans soon learned that they were to be retained indefinitely as bargaining chips for the Japanese.²⁸

Yet, despite their interests in detaining civilians, camp organization and management were not high priorities for the Japanese military. “The Japanese were totally unprepared for housing three thousand people,” commented Roy Doolan.²⁹ As a result, Japanese forces improvised. Fortunately for the captors, the majority of the Allied civilians resided in the Philippine capital of Manila. The Japanese utilized the recently abandoned Santo Tomas University—which had once boasted a student body of about 10,000—as the primary internment camp in the region. The Jesuit faculty of Santo Tomas—which had remained at the campus even after the war began—still resided in the Seminary building.³⁰ For much of the captivity, American internees were housed in the classrooms of the University. Santo Tomas, though a place of higher learning, had no sleeping facilities for its resident students. Additionally, the fifty acres of the campus featured only fourteen bathrooms, which now had to accommodate approximately 3,000 permanent evacuees.³¹

About 150 miles to the north, at Baguio—also known as Camp Holmes—the Japanese military utilized the abandoned Philippine Constabulary as the internment camp.³² Conditions seemed to have been somewhat better at Baguio, since internees arrived to find beds once used by the Philippine constables.³³ However, like Santo Tomas, crowding was a problem. The locations of these two main internment camps convey several themes about the American internment. First, the Japanese military did not spend

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Account of Roy Doolan p. 10.

³⁰ In Pursuit of Freedom p.4, Vivian Clark Collection, Santo Tomas Internment Camp Papers, Record Group 112, The MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, VA.

³¹ Georgia Payne and Paul Schafer eds., *Legacy of Captivity: Memoirs of American and British Civilians Interned in the Philippines* (Polk: Payne Prairie Publications, 2001), 60.

³² Cogan, 220.

³³ *Ibid.*

any resources to provide for their captives, as they simply utilized existent structures and ordered the internees to construct whatever else they required. Also, internment camps were established near urban areas that already carried a large population of Allied civilians, since Santo Tomas was in Manila and Camp Holmes was in Baguio. Both of these points demonstrate that holding and providing for prisoners was not a high priority for the Japanese military, and many officers and guards certainly resented the trouble. Though camps were positioned out of convenience for the Japanese military, their location also allowed American internees the opportunity to acquire news and sorely-needed food and supplies from companions—predominately Filipinos—on the outside.

For nearly every American, the preliminary days of internment symbolized an absolute culture shock, not only in terms of physical and mental stress, but also a challenging of the hierarchy that Americans had once enjoyed. “Almost every prisoner was accustomed to being waited on like royalty by [Filipino] servants. In comparison with the local populace, and even with persons of similar salaries in the United States, foreigners in the Philippines were extremely powerful and wealthy persons” explained Roy Doolan.³⁴

Interned Americans faced dire situations at camps such as Santo Tomas and Bilibid. Food had to be produced by the internees themselves, and it was often in very short supply. Some internees bargained with Filipinos to acquire food from outside, often exchanging possessions such as fine jewelry for meager food items. As provisions declined over time, American internees became increasingly desperate. Internee Earl Carroll recalled an incident in which “a gang of starved American boys, all under [ten years old], rushed a Jap guard as he emerged from the mess hall carrying a wooden bucket of garbage. They knocked him down, spilling the garbage on the ground. And

³⁴ Account of Roy Doolan p. 10.

then with both hands they shoved that garbage from the ground to their mouths.”³⁵ When asked in an interview about the food towards the end of the war, former internee Walter Riley responded that it was “almost nonexistent. You would eat and an hour later you were hungry. It wasn’t very nourishing and didn’t have any calories to speak of.”³⁶ Also, dread for the enemy occupied almost every internee’s mind. Though execution and rape were highly uncommon and remained typically as isolated events, internees nevertheless feared their sudden powerlessness.³⁷ Moreover, most Japanese commandants separated internees by gender, with women caring for the children.³⁸ This led to a disintegration of the family unit as well as exacerbating fear for an uncertain future.

Yet, despite their concerns, American internees occupied themselves with steady work and diversion, not only to pass the time but also to keep their minds off of the harshness of their realities. Americans wasted no time in organizing themselves in their internment camps. With less than a week at Santo Tomas, Fay Bailey wrote in his diary that “The Japanese are allowing internal self-government and not imposing many restrictions. Mr. Stanley is interpreter. Mr. Carroll has been asked to represent the internees and he has gathered a group of advisors together called the Central Committee.”³⁹ This Central Committee was the administrative arm for the Santo Tomas residents. Yet, just as bureaucracy was a common trait in United States politics, so it was for that of the American internees as well. In no time, a chain of subsidiary committees were organized: education, sanitation, discipline, and recreation, to name only a few. Vivian Clark, the Secretary of the Discipline Committee recorded that “we had 110 patrol

³⁵ “Smuggled Pesos Saved Captives in Jap Camp p. 1,” by Earl Carroll, Louise Hill Collection, Santo Tomas Internment Camp Papers, Record Group 112, The MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, VA.

³⁶ Interview of Walter Riley p. 8, Walter Riley Collection, Santo Tomas Internment Camp Papers, Record Group 112, The MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, VA.

³⁷ Kaminski, 37-38.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 126.

³⁹ Caroline Bailey Pratt, ed., *Only a Matter of Days: The World War II Prison Camp Diary of Fay Cook Bailey* (Bennington: Merriam Press, 2001), 11.

officers who reported to me every morning infractions of the rules during the previous 24 hours. Our committee established a jail located in the Main Building. There the incorrigibles were confined for a week or more on bread and water until they promised to obey the rules of our camp.”⁴⁰ For these Americans, discipline and good behavior were team efforts as “the internees were informed that good relations between the [Japanese] Commandant and ourselves depended upon the observance of these rules.”⁴¹ In many ways, the committee system connected American internees with their cherished notions of representative government, something even their captors would not abolish. For these evacuees, a national and patriotic connection held firm, in which “internment highlighted the importance of American democratic traditions, defining ‘American’ by focusing on a heritage of participatory politics sacred to Americans since the Revolutionary War period.”⁴²

AM
PM
SANTA TOMAS INTERNMENT CAMP
OCTOBER 1944 MEAL TICKET NO: 3623
NAME: Scurry, Henry
ROOM NO: 60
SIGNATURE:
NOV
OCT 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
AM

43

An internee meal ticket from Santo Tomas

⁴⁰ In Pursuit of Freedom p. 5.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4-5.

⁴² Kaminski, 58.

⁴³ Santo Tomas Internment Camp October 1944 Meal Ticket, Sawyer Collection, Santo Tomas Internment Camp Papers, Record Group 112, The MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, VA.

In addition to forming various committees, American internees divided themselves into labor pools. Philip Salet, who was a teenager when he entered Santo Tomas, stated that “virtually everyone was assigned to some job, from bathroom monitors (who gave out three sheets of toilet paper to each customer), to vegetable cutters, cooks, food servers, garbage collectors, room monitors, repairmen, teachers, and red armband guards (our internal police force).”⁴⁴ For many Americans, internment probably provided the first instance in which manual and even degrading labor was requisite to their own survival. Despite the toils of these former elites, Americans seemed to have accepted their new roles with positive spirits. One of the former internees whom I interviewed was the second youngest of five children at Santo Tomas. Her mother performed quality control on the camp’s food,—including picking out worms of vegetables—her older brother was a manual laborer, and her two older sisters worked as a librarian and infirmary aide. “Somebody had to clean the toilets and somebody had to peel the vegetables” believed this former internee.⁴⁵ With the necessities of camp organization and labor distribution settled, internees turned to recreating their prewar societies.

For the American internees, education was a paramount priority. With a population of around 3,000, Santo Tomas offered a full K-12 educational system, in addition to college courses, and adult and business education.⁴⁶ The overwhelming majority of Santo Tomas’ educators had professional experience before internment: 90% of primary school teachers, 94% of intermediate teachers, and 70% of high school teachers.⁴⁷ Similar to many pursuits of internees, education achieved a variety of goals. For one, it demanded discipline from both its students and instructors. Learning

⁴⁴ Payne and Schafer, eds., 113.

⁴⁵ Interview with former Santo Tomas Internee, September 30, 2010.

⁴⁶ Cogan, 235.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 236.

kept Americans' minds sharp, as "teaching had two advantages: it saved us from becoming rusty in our respective lines of education, and helped students to advance in their chosen subjects and receive credit for this camp study when they were able to matriculate in accredited schools in the Philippines or abroad."⁴⁸ For young students, the typical courses were offered: mathematics, English language, science, foreign languages (Spanish and Japanese were naturally popular), and history (though modern history was forbidden by Japanese authorities).⁴⁹ Despite almost universal shortage of supplies, transcripts were prepared, listing the courses taken, the grades received, and the approval from high-ranking Education Committee officials.⁵⁰ From these records, it is clearly evident that not only was education crucial to the American internees, but also their futures after internment. Parents at camps such as Santo Tomas not only hoped for an eventual liberation, but also wanted their children to be as academically prepared as possible after the war. Incarceration was certainly viewed as no excuse for ignorance.

Perhaps most indicative of American hopes for the future lay in a letter prepared by Don W. Holter, Chairman of the Education Committee at Santo Tomas. Every student at Santo Tomas—fluctuating between 500 and 700—was issued one of these notices. Upon liberation and resettlement, students would present these letters to education officials at their new schools. The note explained that "the curriculum followed, shown on the transcripts or grade sheets, has been that of standard schools in the United States with a few exceptions."⁵¹ Moreover, "we do not desire the student to be advanced beyond his training because that might make an academic cripple of him in the future. We believe that most of our students will evidence that they have acquired a good grasp of the work

⁴⁸ In Pursuit of Freedom p. 13.

⁴⁹ Cogan, 237.

⁵⁰ Academic Record of Caroline Jane Bailey, Box 1, Folder 4, Papers of Fay Bailey, Santo Tomas Internment Camp, 1942-1959; Record Group 98, The MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, VA.

⁵¹ Payne and Schafer, eds., 126.

for which we have given them credit.”⁵² Though the document does offer some excuses for underachievement, including malnourishment and lack of educational equipment and supplies, it concludes with an expression of gratitude for “your part in re-orienting our American, British, and other children and young people into normal life.”⁵³ Thus, as demonstrated by this widely circulated letter from the Education Committee, internees viewed their captivities as temporary impediments. The objective for these Americans was to recreate a normal life in internment that would seem similar—even compatible—with life outside walls.

On April 25, 1942, Fay Bailey wrote the following in his diary: “a very nice B’day in STIC [an acronym meaning Santo Tomas Internment Camp]. Presents from Althea toilet supplies and Granger tobacco. Tobacco and matches from the Hamiltons. A jar of Fred’s jam. Cakes from the ‘boys.’ Felipe and Gregorio sent ice cream and cakes.”⁵⁴ In spite of constant food shortages, American internees found ways to celebrate their birthdays. For many Americans, celebrating birthdays with food and presents was just as essential to survival as was organization, policing, and sanitation. Irene Miller Browning, held at Camp Holmes near the Philippine city of Baguio in northern central Luzon, felt that “the birthday cake was a necessary part of an effort by those interned to maintain a degree of sanity in the drab, hungry, austere life of a prisoner of war. It helped confirm the existence of an abundant and comfortable life, now a memory. It gave courage to hope for a future full of family, friends, peace, and the freedom to roam.”⁵⁵

Any internee fortunate enough to receive a birthday cake undoubtedly knew the trouble it took to create such a confection. Browning explained that “it required weeks of

⁵² *Ibid.*, 126-127.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁵⁴ Pratt, ed., 15.

⁵⁵ A Concentration Camp Birthday Cake p.1, Irene Miller Browning Collection, Camp Holmes/Bilibid Internment Camp Papers, Record Group 113, The MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, VA.

planning to gather the necessary ingredients. It had baked into it hours of hard work, days of skillful tracking to locate the needed ingredients, cunning Oriental bargaining to obtain them, and finally hours of labor, to change the assortment into workable ingredients.”⁵⁶

Rice was substituted for flour, bananas replaced eggs, and the leavening agent was a stomach pill handed out by the Japanese—which was later discovered by the internees as containing opium—which “contributed to the enjoyment and relaxation of the birthday party.”⁵⁷ As Browning concludes, not only did birthday presents and desserts help raise the morale of the internees, but they “symbolized in a small way, the courage, fortitude, resourcefulness and optimism of Americans under adverse circumstances. It brought home a little closer.”⁵⁸

Like birthdays, Thanksgiving and Christmas were occasions that replicated normalcy for American internees. Thanksgiving followed the traditional American custom of combining feasting and sporting activities. On November 26th, 1942, internees at Santo Tomas participated in a holiday service, in which patriotic songs such as “America the Beautiful” were sung. Fay Bailey was privileged enough to receive two pumpkin pies to enjoy with his family.⁵⁹ A Thanksgiving banquet was prepared for the residents, consisting of “boiled beef, rice, a local vegetable called sigadalias, pineapple pudding, and tea.”⁶⁰ Though such a menu certainly seems unorthodox and even meager, internees were thankful for such a meal, as it reminded them of home. Eva Anna Nixon reflected that “as the clouds turned pink at sunset, my thoughts wandered home where I knew Thanksgiving Day was just beginning. And I prayed their day might be as rich with thanks as ours had been.”⁶¹

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵⁹ Pratt, ed., 31.

⁶⁰ Delayed Manila p.44, Eva Anna Nixon Collection, Santo Tomas Internment Camp Papers, Record Group 112, The MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, VA.

THANKSGIVING
 DAY
 NOV. 26, 1942
 EAST vs. WEST
 FOOTBALL GAME
 PLAYED AT
 TALINUM BOWL, 2:30 P.M.
 SANTO TOMAS INTERNMENT CAMP.
 OFFICIALS
 BILL HOLDEN REFEREE
 CHUCK LEWIS UMPIRE
 LES DAVIS LINESMAN
 PRICE TEN CENTAVOS
 (PROCEEDS TO GO TO RECREATION COM. FUND)

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Talinum Bowl 1942 program from Santo Tomas

Preceding the Thanksgiving dinner was the first ever Talinum Bowl, a football game between the East and West sides of the Santo Tomas camp. The game earned such a name because talinum was a weed substituted for spinach by the internees.⁶³ As the opposing teams collided and their fans cheered on, Nixon recalled that “an enterprising boy walked up and down with a crate of half a dozen bottles of sugar water calling out, ‘ice-cold pop!’.”⁶⁴ In addition, throughout the game a loudspeaker broadcasted the marching band recordings of such famed American universities as Notre Dame,

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁶² Talinum Bowl Program, November 26, 1942, Sawyer Collection, Santo Tomas Internment Camp Papers, Record Group 112, The MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, VA.

⁶³ Delayed Manila p. 44.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Wisconsin, Illinois, and Texas. Though the competition ended scoreless, the Thanksgiving meal, service, and football game certainly reinvented representations of a normal life for the Santo Tomas internees.

More than any other event or occasion, Christmas in an American internment camp replicated the sensation of normality. Preparation began early, as Eva Anna Nixon described that “a high Christmas spirit pervaded the camp.”⁶⁵ With efforts spearheaded by the Entertainment Committee, internees collected donations and assembled presents, transforming old cigar boxes and scraps of paper into doll houses and Christmas cards.⁶⁶ Besides the traditional religious services and feasts, internees entertained themselves with a variety of Christmas activities. In December 1942—the first Christmas at Santo Tomas—internees held “a musical concert by the men’s and women’s choruses, a party for the children including a Mother Goose marionette show, a movie, a community carol sing, and the reading of Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* on Christmas Eve.”⁶⁷

The following year, Santo Tomas residents decided to alter the holiday’s events. Rehearsals for “The Pageant of the Nativity” began after Thanksgiving. The costumes, lights, and stage used for the pageant were all constructed by the internees themselves. In addition, the men’s and women’s choruses at Santo Tomas decided to embark on a more polished and professional production than the year prior. The choruses chose George Frideric Handel’s *Messiah* to present to the rest of the camp, by no means an easy feat. Onlooker Vivian Clark proudly wrote that “I doubt if the Halleluiah chorus was ever more effectively sung. The chorus was accompanied by a sufficient orchestra made up from our internees. It must be remembered that there was a lot of theatrical talent in camp,

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

and they were very resourceful.”⁶⁸ Despite their captivities, American internees treated the holiday seasons with the same enthusiasm as free citizens. For the evacuees at camps such as Santo Tomas, no expense was too great and no accomplishment too unachievable to replicate notions of life before relocation.

For those in captivity in the Philippines, the recreation of normalcy was not limited to annual events. Instead, internees sought and developed diversions throughout the year that reminded them of their lives before war. For these autonomous societies, organized sports, exhibitions, and professional entertainments were a part of daily life. Sports were perhaps the most popular and pervasive activities in the camps. Overseen by the Recreation Committee, organized sports available to residents at Santo Tomas included baseball, volleyball, basketball, and cribbage, but also less athletic pursuits such as horse shoes, chess, bridge, and checkers.⁶⁹ All Santo Tomas teams shared names with professional American teams such as the Yankees, Athletics, Dodgers, Giants, and Pirates. As Fay Bailey explained, the organized recreations “gave the younger internees opportunity for outdoor exercise and supplied diversion for hundreds of spectators.”⁷⁰ Sports also provided a sort of pressure valve for internee society. Though interaction between internees and their commandants and guards was limited—as this issue will receive greater upcoming discussion—it was not rare for games to be organized between the two groups. Dennis Greene, a former internee at Santo Tomas, recalled that on one occasion the commandant Lt. Col. Yoshie challenged the internees to a baseball game. “Needless to say, that game was well attended! Our greatest challenge was to lose while not appearing obvious. The lack of skill that they [the Japanese] displayed was really

⁶⁸ In Pursuit of Freedom p. 21.

⁶⁹ 1942-1943 Season Championships, Box 1, Folder 3, Papers of Fay Bailey, Santo Tomas Internment Camp, 1942-1959;, Record Group 98, The MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, VA.

⁷⁰ Recreation p.4, Box 1, Folder 17, Papers of Fay Bailey, Santo Tomas Internment Camp, 1942-1959;, Record Group 98, The MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, VA.

comical. Our pitcher had to exercise real restraint in order to allow the opposing team to get a hit,” reflected Greene.⁷¹ Competitions against the Japanese also brought American internees together in their frustrations regarding captivity. Philip Salet noted that “in one [baseball] game the Commandant, as pitcher, decided to play a joke by replacing the ball with a raw egg. Not a good joke to internees on minimum rations. The Japs lost that game.”⁷²

The Santo Tomas hobby show was an exhibition of the internment camp’s artistic contributions displayed before the residents themselves. “Nations have their expositions, farmers their county fairs, and cow-punchers their rodeos. That was one excuse for our hobby show” explained Vivian Clark.⁷³ According to Clark, nearly all of Santo Tomas attended this momentous event during its four day run. Internees opened their paintings, poetry, prose, needlework, woodwork, and models to the approval and criticism of their fellow residents. The hobby show also provided an opportunity for internees to learn more regarding safety techniques such as protecting shanties from fire damage, administering first-aid, and caring for patients. Most importantly, events such as the hobby show instilled pride in the hearts of the American internees. This allowed them to reflect upon what their society—nearly cutoff from the outside world—was able to create in isolation. Clark summarized what many internees felt, “the whole show was a success, and left us with a sense of satisfaction for having put such a thing over within prison walls.”⁷⁴

To combat the boredom of internee life, Americans in captivity entertained themselves in numerous ways. A variety of dances, theater, and movies were organized to simulate normal existence. Paul Schaffer, who was a young boy when detained at Santo

⁷¹ Payne and Schafer, eds., 63.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 114.

⁷³ In Pursuit of Freedom p. 20.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Tomas, recalled that “a barn dance is held once a week for the boys and girls, and we dance the Virginia Reel. But I get more fun out of the internee floor show, which we have every Saturday night. Our performers are very good and some of them used to be professionals before the war.”⁷⁵ Entertainment was so integral to the existence of those at Santo Tomas that a permanent stage was constructed by the Recreation Committee, featuring footlights, wings, a curtain, and was wired for microphone use.⁷⁶ One of the more reoccurring acts to take the stage at Santo Tomas was the internment camp’s own “STIC Stock Company,” which according to Vivian Clark, “made us laugh, cry and applaud their efforts to give us a good time.”⁷⁷ The stage also hosted various musical acts, including instrumental recitals, voice recitals, and vaudeville performances.⁷⁸ Lastly, internees at Santo Tomas constructed their own silver screen on which to show films. Borrowed from the theaters in Manila, American internees particularly favored western and cowboy films.⁷⁹ Even after incarceration, connections between Filipinos and Americans held firm, such that borrowing films, passing along information, and even donating food were possibilities. These various pursuits, whether playing sports, attending a vaudeville performance, or visiting a hobby show, helped to insulate internees from the world around them. Not only did these venues help maintain an internee’s mental welfare, but they also reinforced notions of American identity and belonging to a society across the Pacific.

For an autonomous community of several thousand at Santo Tomas, information was vital and widely circulated. The Philippine internment camp produced its own newspaper: *The Internews*. Staffed by a three-person team—consisting of the editor,

⁷⁵ Memorandum to Monitors p. 4, May 21, 1942, Louise Hill Collection, Santo Tomas Internment Camp Papers, Record Group 112, The MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, VA.

⁷⁶ In Pursuit of Freedom p. 12.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Payne and Schafer, 7.

⁷⁹ In Pursuit of Freedom p. 12-13.

circulator, and cartoonist—this weekly paper was an integral component to everyday life for an American internee. Articles ranged from Executive Committee election results, changing of the post of Japanese commandant, and upcoming sports or entertainment events. More serious articles included a discussion of recently implemented sanitation method, in which the destruction of camp garbage through use of special bacteria would help combat health problems in Santo Tomas.⁸⁰ In addition, an article from the same issue of *The Internews* discussed the shrinking waistlines of Santo Tomas internees coupled with the sewing unit's best efforts to adjust the clothes of those malnourished residents.⁸¹ Yet, *The Internews* was also instrumental in boosting internee morale as well. An issue in September 1942 alerted the residents of Santo Tomas to an upcoming male chorus concert featuring a wide repertoire including "Venetian Love Song," "Gypsy Love Song," "Song of Fellowship," and "Wake Thee Now Dearest."⁸² In addition, a special article was written for Dave Harvey, the usual master of ceremonies for Santo Tomas' Saturday night entertainment shows. Harvey, having recently fallen ill, was "given a dose of his own medicine—or rather subjected to a treat—by a score of young admirers who visited him at the hospital. Meanwhile, rehearsals are underway for another entertainment next [Saturday] night."⁸³ For the American internees, a self-sufficient press reporting on a variety of matters indicated not only a society contained in isolation, but also a coping mechanism for internee difficulties and hardships.

On the other hand, satire and humor permeated much of the lives of American internees. From cartoons, to news articles, to poems, Americans used laughter to alleviate the harsh realities of their captivity scenarios. In one instance, Santo Tomas' Sanitation

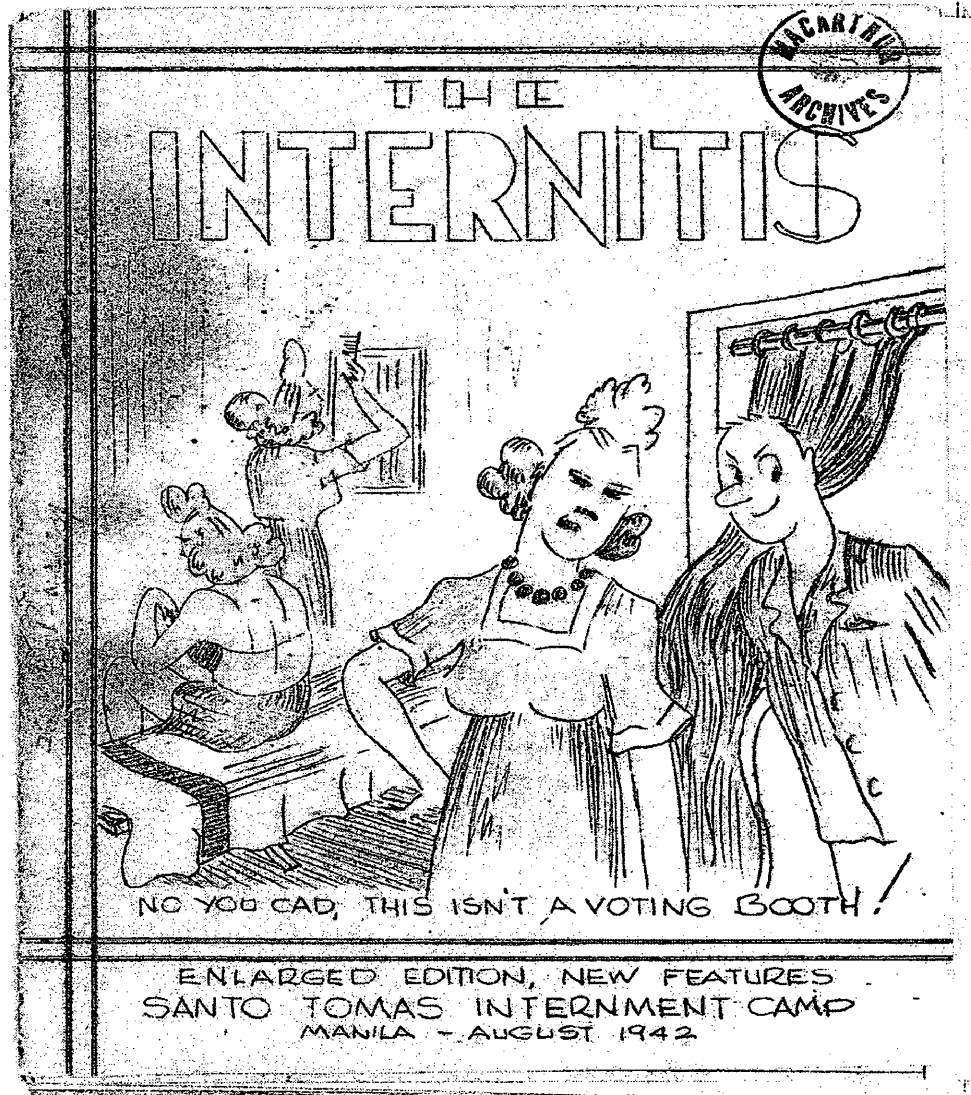
⁸⁰ *The Internews* p.1, March 31, 1942, Sawyer Collection, Santo Tomas Internment Camp Papers, Record Group 112, The MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, VA.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *The Internews*, September 1, 1942, Sawyer Collection, Santo Tomas Internment Camp Papers, Record Group 112, The MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, VA.

⁸³ *The Internews* p.1, March 31, 1942.

Committee designed a poster warning of bedbug infestation. Though informative and instructional, this poster also attracts its readers through an entertaining cartoon and poem. The cartoonist depicts a bedbug sneaking up on a sleeping internee, who is eventually startled by the insect pest.⁸⁴ The poem cautions that “my mother always told me, when I was on her knee, the closest bedbug heaven, was upon an internee!”⁸⁵



Santo Tomas' *The Internitis* August 1942 cover page

⁸⁴ "We Crawl By Night," Sawyer Collection, Santo Tomas Internment Camp Papers, Record Group 112, The MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, VA.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *The Internitis* p.1, August 1942, Box 2, Folder 3, Papers of Fay Bailey, Santo Tomas Internment Camp, 1942-1959; Record Group 98, The MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, VA.

The most widely circulated piece of satire at Santo Tomas was a monthly publication, *The Internitis*. Similar to *The Internews*, *The Internitis* featured news articles and cartoons contributed by a professional staff. However, *The Internitis* strove to lampoon the experiences of life in captivity, ranging from hunger, interactions with the Japanese, living in crowded structures, and the relationship between the genders. In other words, internees made fun of their own hardships. On the cover of the August 1942 edition, a mischievous male internee walks into a women's dressing room, supposedly mistaking it for a voting booth.⁸⁷ Thus, this cartoon satirizes two elements of internee life: the separation of the sexes by order of the Japanese commandants and the existence of democracy in American internment camps. Americans also poked fun at one of the most serious issues for internees: malnutrition. The advertising manager, Dave Harvey, issued a series of quips entitled "From the Slime to the Ridiculum." One read: "the health of many internees is improving by their diet of not eating off someone else's plate."⁸⁸ In a parodied series called "Goldie's Diary," the female protagonist writes that she has fallen madly in love with another internee, Bill. However, the reader soon learns that Goldie's interests in Bill are not solely motivated by Bill's personal traits. Rather, Goldie fancies her beau for "his beautiful teeth and sandwiches."⁸⁹ Yet, Bill is also blame in this instance as well. When he brings Goldie back to his shanty, she informs her diary, "'now, honey,' he said, 'show me how much you care.' My heart did handstands and cartwheels. 'Wha...what do you mean?' I asked. 'Why, take this broom and help me clean up.' Men are such cads!" concluded Goldie.⁹⁰ Thus, American internees were not only quick to satirize issues of undernourishment but also gender relations and expectations. As evidenced by *The Internitis*, humor provided a healthy outlet for

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid* p. 7.

⁸⁹ *Ibid* p. 9.

⁹⁰ *Ibid* p. 15.

Americans to gripe about their internments and the problems caused by it. With the aid of laughter, Americans demonstrated the difficulties faced by internees as well as their efforts to prove their hardiness

“Generally we saw no Japanese except a few guards wandering about in slippers watching the businesslike doings of their incomprehensible prisoners,” wrote Ed Powers.⁹¹ For most American internees in the Philippines, interactions with their captors were limited, not only due to language barriers but also because both sides refused to interact with each other. Roy Doolan, an American internee at Santo Tomas, stated that, “the Japanese guards were instructed to avoid contact with the prisoners. We, in turn, were ordered to bow to every Japanese soldier that we encountered. The idea of bowing is to show respect for a higher authority.”⁹² Thus, the Japanese military wanted to espouse a relationship with themselves as the dominant force. Though Japanese guards rarely harmed their civilian captives, they also “constantly reminded [the American internees] that our very existence was an acknowledgment of the generosity and charity of the Japanese government.”⁹³ For the most part, American internees shared the sentiment expressed by an interviewee: “we were just a pain in the neck for [the Japanese].”⁹⁴

Yet, interactions with the Japanese were more substantial for numerous American internees. Some Americans—particularly children—toyed with their guards as a method of easing the dullness of incarceration. Doolan recalls instances where “one of the kids approached a guard and bowed. After the guard respectfully bowed in response, another child came up and bowed, and so on. This resulted in the guard bobbing up and down like a robot. When the high command heard about this, they prohibited bowing by children.”⁹⁵

⁹¹ Account of Ed Powers p.2.

⁹² Account of Roy Doolan p. 21.

⁹³ *Ibid* p. 10.

⁹⁴ Interview with former Santo Tomas Internee, September 30, 2010.

⁹⁵ Account of Roy Doolan p. 21.

Camaraderie too was felt between opposing sides. Tom Bousman, a resident at Santo Tomas, recalled an occasion when a Japanese guard played baseball with an American internee. Bousman felt reassured that “there was a bit of civilized normalcy in our crazy existence.”⁹⁶ When the American was harmed during the game—as he had accidentally run into a metal flagpole to catch a hit—the Japanese guard exhibited unbridled compassion for his friend. Bousman wrote that “this was quite a scene: the distraught Japanese guard cradling the unconscious American prisoner in his arms, trying to revive him! Muttering obviously encouraging words in Japanese, the guard’s distress and concern were so obvious, even though we could not understand the language.”⁹⁷

This sense of “friendship” is best illustrated through the interactions of Tomibe Rokuro, the Japanese commandant at Camp Holmes, and his American evacuees. When Tomibe was placed on trial for war crimes after the war, the former internees at Camp Holmes—led by Father Sheridan—contributed to Tomibe’s acquittal.⁹⁸ At a reunion over thirty years after liberation, Sheridan and the American internees even invited Tomibe to serve as their guest of honor.⁹⁹ However, this respect and even admiration was shared by both parties. At the reunion, Tomibe spoke to his former prisoners, informing them that “I was most impressed by your common sense, wisdom, organizational power, and will to implement your decision. You were cheerful among the dark and restricted camp life and lived with hope and expectation under your [self-rule] committee.”¹⁰⁰ While Americans believed that their commandant did everything in his power to provide for and protect the internees, Tomibe respected his captives for their self-sufficiency and high

⁹⁶ Payne and Schafer, 6.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Account of Father Sheridan p. 1, Sister Louise Kroeger Collection, Papers of Camp Holmes/Bilibid Internment Camps, Record Group 113, The MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, VA.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Secret Story at the End of the War p. 2, Sister Louise Kroeger Collection, Papers of Camp Holmes/Bilibid Internment Camps, Record Group 113, The MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, VA.

spirits. Ironically, both the Americans and Japanese at Camp Holmes felt that the opposing side contributed to a shared feeling of camaraderie and understanding for the other.

When contrasting overall internee relations with Japanese guards and the nature of the Pacific War, one question arises: why were atrocities such as execution and rape limited, in comparison to the infamous treatment of other defeated subjects such as the Chinese and the “Rape of Nanjing?” Back in the United States, Americans utilized such incidents to fuel hatred for the Japanese and illustrate their depravity.¹⁰¹ As Dower underscores, Japanese perceptions of Americans and Europeans did not match those of other Asians. The Japanese clearly saw themselves as superior to all other Asians, as demonstrated in the 1943 report from the Ministry of Health and Welfare’s Population Problems Research Center: *An Investigation of Global Policy with the Yamato Race as Nucleus* (*Yamato Minzoku o Chūkaku to suru Sekai Seisaku no Kentō*). According to this account, Koreans and Formosans should be employed for physical labor in this prolonged war, while Filipinos were hopelessly corrupted with traits of materialism, extravagance, and corruption.¹⁰²

In many ways, though the Japanese sought to expel Westerners from Asia, they also had a history seeking to emulate them. Japan’s “nation-state” was essentially an imported idea, borrowed from the European Enlightenment. In addition, as Walter A. Skya points out, Japan’s constitution “was a Prussian German style of constitutional monarchy, which was a dual structure of authority between the emperor and the parliament.”¹⁰³ Moreover, particularly in the late Meiji and Taisho eras, Japan began to

¹⁰¹ George H. Roeder, Jr., *The Censored War: American Visual Experience During World War Two* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1993), 126.

¹⁰² Dower, 288-289.

¹⁰³ Walter A. Skya, *Japan’s Holy War: The Ideology of Radical Shinto Ultrationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 135.

adopt Western dress fashions as well as import Western music. To simplify, in the Japanese viewpoint, European and American ideas typically represented progress and advancement, while the rest of Asia symbolized backwardness. During the Pacific War, Japan merely sought to “Asianize” the concepts they had imported from the West. Thus, in the context of the American internment in the Philippines, Japanese guards could simultaneously view their captives as both something to distrust but also to interact with, as “the stranger or outsider always possessed double powers: the capacity to destroy, but also gifts that were entertaining and pleasing, and gifts that could contribute to one’s own self-strengthening.”¹⁰⁴ Such a concept explains how guards and internees could occasionally interact socially but also safely maintain their distances.

On February 3rd, 1945, Allied forces under the command of General Douglas MacArthur liberated the American internees at Santo Tomas. Two days before then, a young satirist composed the following verse: “so we smile and crack a joke—aren’t we eating bread and jam? It’s coming soon we’re sure of that, from good old Uncle Sam!”¹⁰⁵ In many ways, this short quip illustrates the internment mentality of Americans in the Philippines. Through the establishment of autonomous societies, preservation of American cultures, and even some smiles and cracking jokes along the way, American internees hoped to recreate a sense of normalcy while in captivity. Internees visited hobby shows, played sports, attended musical concerts and recitals, and developed a complex society that satisfied their needs to the best of its ability. For these Americans, internment was not an identity-changing experience. In fact, internees in the Philippines revitalized their American personas through satire, internal collaboration and cooperation, and various diversions. An American identity carried with it hopes for an ultimate salvation.

¹⁰⁴ Dower, 305.

¹⁰⁵ In Pursuit of Freedom p. 31.

Chapter 2: Dismantling “Little Tokyo”

Before Pearl Harbor and the wartime internment, a young Japanese American named Yoshiko Uchida wrote “as I approached adolescence, I wanted more than anything to be accepted as any other white American. Imbued with the melting pot mentality, I saw integration into white American society as the only way to overcome the sense of rejection I had experienced in so many areas of my life.”¹⁰⁶ Decades later, another Nisei stated that “even in wartime America, the Nisei face more favorable public opinion than their parents did three decades ago. The Nisei thus must forge ahead as individuals rather than as a group so that they will be assimilated into the mainstream of American society.”¹⁰⁷ Most Japanese Americans, particularly the Nisei, shared a common attitude regarding their role as comparative newcomers in a foreign land. Assimilation and integration were truly paramount objectives. For the overwhelming majority of the Japanese American community, the internment between 1942 and 1946 was an identity-altering period. In contrast to internees in the Philippines, Japanese Americans in the United States turned outward to depict themselves as “ordinary” Americans.

The transformation of the internees’ society was in part a response to conflict within the community itself, but also a product of mounting pressure upon Japanese Americans. With exhausted fortunes, shattered homes, and uncertain futures—all results of the incarceration—the internee population certainly felt threatened. Thus, we must view the changing identities of the ethnic community with a two-dimensional perspective. On one hand, some Japanese Americans—mostly Nisei—sincerely welcomed changes within their society. On the other hand, however, we must not mistake that many evacuees felt that they had no other alternative but to conform and bend to the

¹⁰⁶ Yoshiko Uchida, *Desert Exile: The Uprooting of a Japanese American Family* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), 40.

¹⁰⁷ Takahashi, 103.

will of the WRA. Unmistakably, external pressure upon the Japanese American community contributed to the transforming identities of the internees.

As prior historians have shown, the Japanese American internment did not spring forth from nothing. Instead, incarceration was the climactic moment in a long history of racial and social prejudice in the United States. Even since the mass arrival of Japanese immigrants to the west coast in the late 1800s and early 1900s, “Oriental inferiority” was dichotomized against “white supremacy.”¹⁰⁸ Japanese Americans—and other Asian Americans for that matter—challenged not only white dominance in the workplace, but also white notions of masculinity, as Robert G. Lee points out.¹⁰⁹ Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, vandalism and violence broke out against the Japanese American community across the west coast, despite the widespread outpouring of loyalty and patriotism by the ethnic community.¹¹⁰

Finally, on February 19, 1942, heeding the call of overly hysterical military officials, politicians, and common citizens, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed into effect Executive Order 9066, which authorized the evacuation of those suspected of espionage and creation of prescribed military areas.¹¹¹ Thus, with the stroke of a pen, the evacuation of over 110,000 people (the largest group migration in American history) to temporary assembly centers—such as the famed Santa Anita horse-racing track—was carried out.¹¹² The conditions at these “reception centers” were appalling, with Japanese Americans under strict military scrutiny and dwelling in crude animal pens and stables.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Daniels, 3.

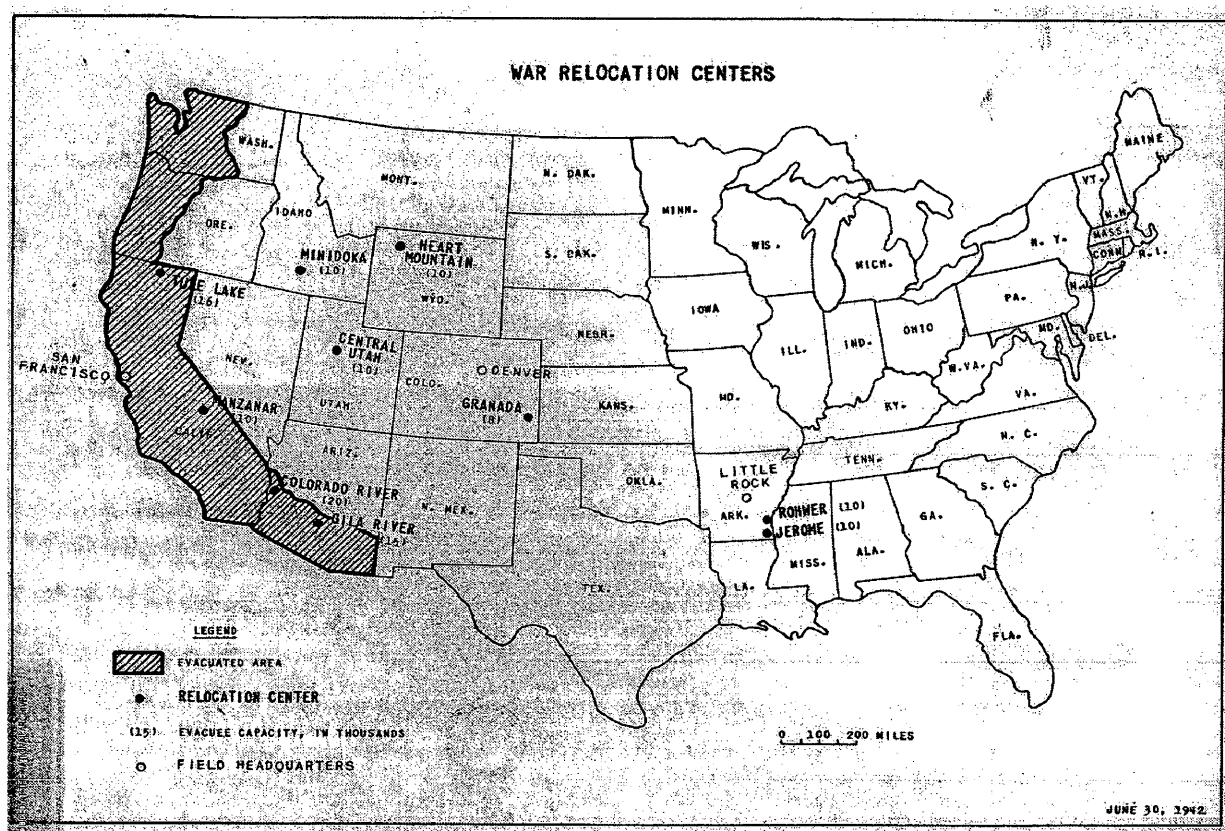
¹⁰⁹ See Robert G. Lee, *Orientalism: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 83-105.

¹¹⁰ Brian Masaru Hayashi, *Democratizing the Enemy: The Japanese American Internment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 71.

¹¹¹ Executive Order 9066, February 19, 1942, Records of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians 1981-1983, Record Group 220, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

¹¹² Greg Robinson, *By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 127.

Those evacuated were forced to sell almost all of their possessions at a fraction of the reasonable value. For these internees, homes were wrecked and fortunes were ruined.



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Map of evacuated area (shaded) and WRA relocation centers

The American government hastily erected internment camps mostly in the western states, such as California, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and Arizona. Two other camps—Rohwer and Jerome—were established as far east as Arkansas. Camps were structured with rows of crude barracks, each roughly a hundred feet in length, with group rooms of about twenty by twenty-five feet. Internees were certainly cramped in these conditions, with almost nonexistent privacy.¹¹⁵ Due to the geographic location of

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹¹⁴ War Relocation Centers, June 30, 1942, Records of the War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

¹¹⁵ Hayashi, 1.

these camps, weather conditions could become extreme. In many cases, Japanese Americans were forced to cope with either several feet of snow, severe aridity, or an unbearable mugginess.

In the midst of World War II, Japanese Americans protested various aspects regarding the constitutionality of the internment. In total, four cases reached the Supreme Court: *Yasui v. United States* (1943), *Hirabayashi v. United States* (1943), *ex parte Endo* (1944), and *Korematsu v. United States* (1944). All four instances involved the Nisei. Together, these cases challenged two measures associated with the relocation: the right to impose curfews on a single ethnic group and the legality of the incarceration itself. For example, in *Hirabayashi v. U.S.*, Gordon Hirabayashi, an American citizen and student at the University of Oregon, deliberately violated the military order and claimed that it “must impose curfew on all citizens or on none.”¹¹⁶ In an unanimous decision, the Court ruled against Hirabayashi, stating that “the issue was not Gordon Hirabayashi’s civil rights but whether the United States had ‘the power to wage war successfully.’”¹¹⁷ In the other landmark case, *Korematsu v. U.S.*, Fred Korematsu challenged that it was unconstitutional for Americans citizens to be confined solely based on Japanese ancestry. Again, the court voted against the Japanese American, this time six to three. Justice Hugo Black wrote in his concurrence that a potential danger to national security justified the internment, especially because of “the impossibility of determining loyalty of individuals quickly,” and the rationalization that “in wartime citizenship carries heavier burdens than in times of peace.”¹¹⁸

The only ostensible victory for Japanese Americans came from the *Endo* trial.

¹¹⁶ Dillon S. Myer, *Uprooted Americans: The Japanese Americans and the War Relocation Authority during World War II* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1971), 260.

¹¹⁷ Roger Daniels, *Prisoners Without Trial: Japanese Americans in World War II* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 59.

¹¹⁸ Daniels, *Concentration Camps USA*, 137.

Issued on the same day as *Korematsu*, the Supreme Court ruled in *Endo* that though the internment was constitutional, it was illegal to detain any citizen who had professed loyalty to the United States. Decided in December 1944, the *Endo* case provisioned for additional Japanese Americans to leave the internment camps and return to normal life. These Supreme Court decisions further convey that the Japanese American internment was not a static process. The cases resolved in mid 1943—*Yasui* and *Hirabayashi*—reflected the still lingering hesitancy of releasing Japanese Americans from captivity. Japanese Americans had been incarcerated for about a year, and internee efforts to counter the prejudices of the mainstream had not yet fully developed. Yet, the case resolved in late 1944, *Endo*, revealed the accomplishments of internees and the WRA in influencing public opinion regarding the integration of the ethnic community. As will be explained further, Japanese Americans strove during their internments to alter common misconceptions of their community.

Whether interned at Rohwer in Arkansas, Manzanar in California, Heart Mountain in Wyoming, or at any of the seven other WRA facilities, Japanese Americans understood that they were relocated on the basis of being culturally different. Not only was the Empire of Japan at war with the United States, but Japanese Americans—predominately the Issei—typically retained their native language and were segregated from the white mainstream. Evacuees such as Kara M. Kondo wrote that Japanese Americans “had our own social, athletic, and religious activities [before the war]; a thriving sub-culture, a community within a community.”¹¹⁹ Kondo and fellow Nisei Gary Morishima felt that these dissimilarities between their community and the American mainstream added to the concerns regarding the incapability of Japanese Americans to

¹¹⁹ Testimony of Kara M. Kondo p. 220, September 10, 1981, Records of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians 1981-1983, Record Group 220, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

assimilate.¹²⁰ As a result, while kept in captivity, Japanese American internees sought to divest themselves from their pasts socially and also professionally as well.

Before internment, Japanese Americans settled along the western U.S. primarily engaged in agriculture. Though prohibited from owning land due to the Alien Land Act of 1913, Japanese American farmers and laborers produced about one-tenth of the total value of California's produce in the 1920s, a truly remarkable figure given the proportional size of the immigrant community.¹²¹ By the 1930s and 1940s, farming acumen had given the Japanese American community a veritable monopoly on several crops. However, this success also aroused suspicion in the white community, which not only fostered a mistrust of Japanese Americans as economic competitors but also as potential fifth columnists. After Pearl Harbor, some white Americans feared that "Japanese farmers, having a virtual monopoly of vegetable production in California, will send their peas and potatoes and squash full of arsenic to the markets."¹²²

Though deprived of their longtime occupation, Japanese Americans in captivity sought new trades and acquired new skills. In collaboration with the WRA, educational efforts during internment focused on a "practical arts" curriculum. Japanese Americans elected courses in the industrial arts (woodworking, auto mechanics, carpentry), commercial arts (typing, bookkeeping, shorthand), agricultural arts (animal husbandry, soil controls, farm mechanics), and homemaking arts (nursing, child care, and household control).¹²³ With such an opportunity, both young and old internees were able to combine classroom instruction with firsthand onsite experience.¹²⁴ One internee, Mary Nakahara,

¹²⁰ Testimony of Gary Morishima p. 136, September 10, 1981, Records of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians 1981-1983, Record Group 220, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

¹²¹ Robinson, 32.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 89.

¹²³ Education Program in War Relocation Centers p. 16, Records of the War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

felt that such occupational opportunities would have been unthinkable before internment, as she commented “I feel I’ve learned more in this [one month] than I could have learned in three to five years if I had continued to live the kind of life I had been living.”¹²⁵ As a nurse’s aide, Nakahara gained experience that would not only benefit her time as an internee but also assist in her employment after resettlement. Internees in the United States sought new, marketable career paths that would benefit them after their release.



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A Japanese American internee at Minidoka learns clock and watch making

More importantly, these new opportunities contributed to an economic split between the Issei and Nisei generations. To a considerable degree, Nisei internees viewed

¹²⁴ *Ibid* p. 16-17.

¹²⁵ John Howard, *Concentration Camps on the Home Front: Japanese Americans in the House of Jim Crow* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 121.

¹²⁶ Photograph Q-735, Box 11: Minidoka Internment Camp, Records of the War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210-G, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

the captivity as an opportunity for change, prime time for them to demonstrate their individuality and overall “Americanness.” Economically, Nisei had been strangled before the war, at best working white-collar jobs in the Issei sphere. One Nisei in 1937 lamented his existence, trapped indefinitely as “a professional carrot washer.”¹²⁷ Job opportunities acquired during internment allowed the Nisei to break away from their forbearers and instead carve out their own preferred destinies.

Wartime incarceration also facilitated a social split between the Issei and Nisei as well. Younger internees sought to demonstrate that they were Americans first, and of Japanese ancestry at a distant second. One unidentified Nisei interned at Manzanar wrote to the WRA, explaining that “before the outbreak of the present war [the Nisei] had come a long way toward assimilation into the American scene. They were just arriving at a stage where they can assert independence from the family control by the Issei.”¹²⁸ This internee leader called for a complete physical separation of the supposed “pro-American” and “pro-Axis” factions. He feared that loyal Nisei were being contaminated with the allegedly traitorous thoughts of their parents: “deep down in the heart of every Issei is the desire that Japan be victorious in this war. They follow avidly and agree with all the militarist propaganda about such matters as ‘Asia for the Asiatics.’”¹²⁹ The writer concluded this report with a final request to the WRA: “give the Nisei a chance to reaffirm his faith in America, make him feel that he is part of America, and give him brighter hopes for the future so that he will not have illusions about another future in Japan.”¹³⁰

Though the Nisei may have seemed rebellious and even ungrateful towards their

¹²⁷ Daniels, *Concentration Camps USA*, 23.

¹²⁸ Report Submitted by Block Leader #11 p. 1-2, Ardith Pugh Collection, Uncatalogued Material, Special Collections Research Center at Swem Library, College of William & Mary, Williamsburg, VA.

¹²⁹ *Ibid* p. 5.

¹³⁰ *Ibid* p. 15.

parents, the Issei surprisingly—for the most part—supported the Americanization efforts of their progeny. For decades, despite legal and social discrimination, the Issei carved out existences in the United States for their children’s benefit. The Issei hoped that their offspring could participate in American life as extensively as possible, through school, sports, language, and even religion.¹³¹ Personal interviews with former internees corroborate that the Issei wanted the best possible opportunities for their children at all costs. One former internee detained at Rohwer was instructed by his father to remain loyal to the United States, even if it transcended filial piety.¹³² This former internee’s father believed that he was “too old to become an American” but that his son could fully reap the benefits of citizenship and Americanization.¹³³ Another internee, also held at Rohwer, recalled an instance in which his mother scolded her younger Nisei brother for his feelings of bitterness during the internment.¹³⁴ This latter internee’s family believed firmly in the principle of steadfastness, as the interviewee was often reminded: “we’ve got to continue, we’ve got to get along with life.”¹³⁵ Thus, the break between the Issei and Nisei generations during internment must not be viewed as generational abandonment, but rather as the dominant will of the internee community.

During World War II, the Japanese American community severed its transnational ties to the homeland across the Pacific Ocean. With war, American and Japanese cultures were considered completely incongruous by both powers and internees elected to discard their ancestral identities. In April 1942, Mike Masaoka wrote to Milton Eisenhower, explaining that “it is essential that the American public at large be convinced that we are not the ungrateful, dangerous, treacherous Japs which some

¹³¹ Lauren Kessler, *Stubborn Twig: Three Generations in the Life of a Japanese American Family* (New York: Penguin Books USA, 1994), 133.

¹³² Interview with former Rohwer Internee, October 11, 2010.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ Interview with former Rohwer Internee, September, 21, 2010.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

persons would have them believe.”¹³⁶ To rectify this wrong, internees endeavored to dutifully serve in their nation’s armed forces, demonstrating that—despite the internment—they were as patriotic and devoted to their country as white Americans.

Most Nisei who served in the European and Pacific theaters did so out of a pure sense of duty and a pressure to prove themselves because of the incarceration. Mitsuo Usui, who was interned in Colorado, experienced a fall out with his parents because of his willingness to serve. Even though he was excommunicated from his family, Usui explained that “it was my duty to volunteer as a citizen of this country, and as a citizen must fight for our country, even die for it.”¹³⁷ Detained at Manzanar, Hisako Kobayashi witnessed four of her brothers leaving the internment camp for war. In an article in *The Washington Daily News*, Kobayashi mourned that “one of our brothers was killed serving America in this war, another was wounded in France, one has received a medical discharge and a fourth is about to go overseas. Can there be any doubt about our patriotism?”¹³⁸

The War Relocation Authority also used examples of Japanese American military service to quell the fears of mainstream Americans. As historian Naoko Shibusawa demonstrates in *America’s Geisha Ally*, Americans have consistently utilized the media to control the public, “a matter of changing bigoted minds to become more tolerant.”¹³⁹ Such is the case with a *Santa Barbara News Press* article, in which Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes is quoted, as saying: “many of the evacuees’ Nisei sons are fighting the Japanese enemy in the Philippines, at Okinawa and in other Pacific combat areas.

¹³⁶ Letter from Mike Masaoka to Milton Eisenhower p. 5.

¹³⁷ Testimony of Mitsuo Usui p.5, Ardith Pugh Collection, Uncatalogued Material, Special Collections Research Center at Swem Library, College of William & Mary, Williamsburg, VA.

¹³⁸ *The Nation’s Press Views “West Coast Incidents...A Partial Roundup of News Clippings and Editorial Comments”* p. 7, May 17, 1945, Records of the War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

¹³⁹ Naoko Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 278.

They are far more in the American tradition than the race-baiters fighting a private war safely at home.”¹⁴⁰ If this statement was insufficient in convincing Americans to alter their views on Japanese Americans, the WRA used the opinions of white American troops as influence as well. During a speaking tour in Eagle Pass, California, WRA Director Dillon S. Myer railed “some of [the white American troops] have already come back with the highest indignation, not against Japanese Americans but against the people who are pushing them around. When the boys who have known the Nisei soldiers in combat return, that sort of thing will not long be tolerated.”¹⁴¹ Such collaboration between Japanese Americans and the WRA was valuable in dissipating the irrational prejudices that had resulted in the initial decision to intern.

The WRA and Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) also supported Japanese American military efforts through a radio series entitled *They Call Me Joe*. Consisting of eleven parts, each segment was narrated by a fictional American serviceman as he discussed his family history. Each of the eleven characters was from a different religious, racial, or ethnic background. Thus, this was a demonstration of the rich ethnic makeup in the United States.¹⁴² In the final episode of *They Call Me Joe*, George Norimitsu, a young Nisei soldier serving in Italy, learns about his grandfather who left Japan over a hundred years ago. When George’s grandfather returns to the land of his birth, he is scorned as an outcast and threatened with execution. From the WRA and Japanese American standpoint, the purpose of this episode is to demonstrate to mainstream Americans how separated Japanese Americans are from Japanese nationals.

¹⁴⁰ The Nation’s Press Views “West Coast Incidents...A Partial Roundup of News Clippings and Editorial Comments” p. 13, May 22, 1945.

¹⁴¹ Problems of Evacuee Resettlement in California p.6-7, Address by Dillon S. Myer at Eagle Pass, CA, June 19, 1945, Records of the War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

¹⁴² Judith F. Smith, “Radio’s ‘Cultural Front’ 1938-1948,” in *Radio Reader: Essays in the Cultural History of Radio*, Michelle Hilmes and Jason Loviglio eds., (New York: Routledge, 2002), 219.

George's grandfather, Bunjii, is brought before his own father and uncle for trial. When questioned about his travels to America, Bunjii staunchly replies that "[America is] a free country. In America, I worked in their great forests. I chose that work myself. I was free to come to it and free to leave it. Their Shogun does not rule them—they regard him more as their servant. For it is they who rule."¹⁴³ Facing near death, Bunjii scorns his Japanese relatives, "all you have been condemned, not I. To be born a Japanese in Japan!"¹⁴⁴ Similarly, the Japanese relatives ridicule Bunjii, professing their trust in an all-powerful autocrat: their Shogun.¹⁴⁵ In a final act of humiliation, Bunjii's relatives strip him of his Japanese identity, declaring "whosoever leaves this land, his Japanese spirit departeth also."¹⁴⁶ The purpose of such dialogue is clearly evident. By departing Japan, Japanese Americans have discarded their allegiances to the emperor. Like Bunjii, Japanese Americans appreciate their new lives in America, experiencing a sense of freedom and opportunity that had previously been unavailable. With such media, Japanese Americans sought to differentiate themselves from their unfamiliar ancestors across the ocean and promote their singular allegiances. Though a propaganda piece, *They Call Me Joe* provides an example of Japanese Americans demonstrating to the rest of the nation that they were patriotically incomparable to Japanese nationals.

Japanese Americans struggled to create an internment experience which mirrored mainstream American life on the other side of the barbed wire. Internees hoped to educate their entire population with the English language, especially youths. Mike Masaoka noted that "one thing is certain: there should be no Japanese language schools. All classes should be so integrated that every student will be inculcated with the spirit of

¹⁴³ Episode 11: *They Call Me Joe* by Henry Kleiner p. 8, NBC University of the Air, October 7, 1944, Records of the War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid* p. 7.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Americanism and democratic processes.”¹⁴⁷ Both internees and their captors understood that such education, along with the “practical arts” curriculum, would ease Japanese American resettlement. At the Topaz Camp in Utah, one Nisei believed that a wide range of prospects were offered, as students were either taught a college preparatory education or a more technical education for those not college-oriented.¹⁴⁸ Comparable to the context in the Philippines, interned Japanese American children were taught with the intent that they would not academically fall behind their white peers after liberation.¹⁴⁹



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Japanese American internees at Jerome turnout to vote

Internees also played competitive sports, joined organizations, and revitalized their faith in the democratic process. As Masaoka believed, not only would sports improve internee morale and foster a competitive spirit, but also “be used as a method of

¹⁴⁷ Letter from Mike Masaoka to Milton Eisenhower p. 6.

¹⁴⁸ Takahashi, 107-108.

¹⁴⁹ Education Program in War Relocation Centers p. 9.

¹⁵⁰ Photograph E-270, Box 9: Jerome Internment Camp, Records of the War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210-G, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

keeping in ‘touch’ with the ‘outside’ world.”¹⁵¹ Though Nisei youths had participated in sports since the early 1900s, including baseball, basketball, football, and bowling, the entire Japanese American community saw the significance of such pursuits, as they exhibited an inherent attraction to Americanization.¹⁵² Japanese Americans also became involved with youth organizations, such as the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), and the Boy Scouts. Like sports, membership in youth organizations gave younger Japanese Americans a sense of belonging to the mainstream polity.¹⁵³ Even existing Japanese American organizations, namely the Young Buddhist Association, adopted characteristics similar to the YMCA, in an effort to renovate towards Americanization.¹⁵⁴ National organizations also served a more practical purpose, as membership in such groups could aid employment, networking, and resettlement efforts after liberation.¹⁵⁵

Lastly, democratic participation was another conduit in demonstrating that Japanese American internees were no different from society at-large. In comparison to white America, internee voter turnout was much higher. For instance, on Election Day 1942 in Jerome, Arkansas, 73 percent of Japanese Americans voted in comparison to roughly 60 percent of those citizens free from incarceration.¹⁵⁶ Such a dramatic difference was representative of a sustained faith that Japanese Americans held for their government. One Nisei, Robert Hosokawa, commented that “life in the camps was not easy. But never in those months did we lose faith in America.”¹⁵⁷ Monica Sone reiterated

¹⁵¹ Letter from Mike Masaoka to Milton Eisenhower p. 8.

¹⁵² Stephen S. Fugita and Marilyn Fernandez, *Altered Lives, Enduring Communities: Japanese Americans Remember Their World War II Incarceration* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 30-31.

¹⁵³ Uprooted Americans in Your Community p. 9, May 1945, Records of the War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ When You Leave the Relocation Center p. 1, October 1944, Records of the War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

¹⁵⁶ Howard, 89.

the sentiment expressed by Hosokawa, “I used to think of the government as a paternal organization. Now I know I’m just as responsible as the men in Washington for its actions. Somehow it all makes me feel more at home in America.”¹⁵⁸ For Japanese American internees, a certain necessity of political engagement existed. Since these Americans knew the bitter experience of having their rights revoked, they clung to their national identities that much more tightly. They also anticipated that as a community composed primarily of American citizens, they were expected by mainstream Americans to vote and to engage in republican actions.

In further contrast to the American internee experience in the Philippines, Japanese Americans worked closely with the WRA even after the dismantling of the relocation camps. The WRA assisted its former captives in traveling to new regions of the United States, finding work, and getting settled. By early 1945, the WRA began to publicize stories of successful resettlements to those that were still interned. Though certainly propagandistic, these stories also were informational and encouraging for Japanese Americans still behind barbed wire. The Yamazaki family, who settled in the suburbs of D.C., lived in California before World War II. Yet, after internment, the family’s opportunities were seemingly endless. The eldest daughter, Miye, continued her education with graduate work at the University of Maryland, earning a prestigious position with the university’s laboratory.¹⁵⁹ The older Issei family members were fortunate enough to retire to a life of leisure. The family was pleased that they had gotten acclimated quickly, making new friends “both among the older residents and other evacuees who have settled there. All of them agree that they have found a good place to live.”¹⁶⁰ Another family, the Koiwais, living in Germantown, Pennsylvania, were able to

¹⁵⁷ Takahashi, 103.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ New Homes for the Issei p. 1, February 1945, Records of the War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

return to a life of relative familiarity. The family enjoyed traditional Japanese meals and had “not too much trouble in finding sacks of rice, soya sauce, and many of the kinds of fish to which they had been accustomed.”¹⁶¹ Mrs. Koiwai proudly reported that she had recreated her family’s home and that she would assist any of her interned friends with settling into Philadelphia, gladly “teaching them the ropes.”¹⁶² With such stories, the WRA illuminated examples of professional and social successes in the Japanese American community, positing that those still in captivity could expect the same fruitful rewards.

During the resettlement, no man was more enthusiastic about getting the Japanese American community thriving again than Dillon S. Myer, Director of the WRA. Myer prepared guidebooks, spoke at several internment camps, and traveled throughout the country to make certain that the Japanese American community prospered. Myer agreed with most Japanese Americans that the resettlement should occur as soon as it was prudent. Internees feared that, despite their best efforts, young Japanese Americans would resent the United States for the wrongful incarceration, as a Nisei commented “this Manzanar may be part of America, but I certainly would not like to bring up my own children, who are American citizens, in this kind of atmosphere.”¹⁶³ Myer concurred, explaining that the sooner internees resettled themselves, the sooner life could return to normal. If, however, internees refused to leave the camps, the bigoted prejudices which had caused the evacuation would always remain.¹⁶⁴ In other words, Myer and the Japanese American community feared that all the transformation efforts would be in vain if the internees were too afraid to step outside the camps.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid* p. 8.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ Report Submitted by Block Leader #11 p. 8.

¹⁶⁴ Letter from Dillon S. Myer to Mr. Hideshima in regard to the ALL Conference p. 3, July 14, 1945, Records of the War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

To encourage resettling, Myer interacted with Japanese Americans on a personal level. While visiting the Poston internment camp in March 1945, he explained to the internees that white Americans wanted to make amends for the wrongful internment. He reassuringly declared “the rest of the country now understands that a lot of the poison that they have been fed for years was pure bunk; and some of them are feeling a little ashamed about it.”¹⁶⁵ At Poston, Myer also assured internees that the WRA would continue to advocate on behalf of the Japanese American community, even after the closing of the camps. The director stated “we are not mad at you folks and I think you know that. We are mad at some of your [American] enemies, and have been for sometime.”¹⁶⁶



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WRA Director Dillon S. Myer (right) inspecting the work of Ikuro Wada (middle)

¹⁶⁵ Speech from Dillon S. Myer to the people of Poston p. 7, March 6, 1945, Records of the War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ WRA Director Visits Produce Workers, Records of the War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

As Japanese Americans resettled across the country, former internees encountered some resistance from other Americans, though only in isolated incidents. Physical assaults and rudeness were rare, but nevertheless petrified some recently resettled Japanese Americans. Myer traveled through resettlement communities, remarking in an interview “I spent a lot of time urging people to stay put. I drove all the way from Los Angeles clear up to Sacramento to visit people who’d been shot at. The internees had sense enough to know what was going on and they weren’t going to be bluffed out.”¹⁶⁸ Even as the war ended and the country’s inhabitants gradually returned to normal lives, Japanese Americans and the WRA continued their alliance. According to Myer, “everytime we got an opportunity to testify on anything that had to do with laws, we were available, and the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] knew of course we were. Property claims, for example, we testified on the property claims bill.”¹⁶⁹ Even as late as the 1950s, the WRA and Japanese American community maintained a tight allegiance, as both groups depended upon the other in righting the wrongs of wartime captivity.

Though I have largely examined testimonies and traced the transformations of the Nisei, it must be understood that these accounts do represent the greater Japanese American community. For one, the Nisei generation composed the majority of the internee population, over 60% in fact.¹⁷⁰ Also, as demonstrated by both the written and oral sources, the aspirations of the Issei are best viewed through the actions of the Nisei. Even before Pearl Harbor and the incarceration, most Issei parents steered their children towards Americanization, as Nisei Yoshiko Uchida recalled having her English language skills reinforced even at a Japanese church.¹⁷¹ Uchida commented that even though her

¹⁶⁸ Interview between Dillon S. Myer and Mr. Fry p. 36, , Records of Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians 1981-1983, Record Group 220, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid* p. 37.

¹⁷⁰ Takahashi, 35.

parents could never enjoy American citizenship, they maintained a great patriotic fervor towards the United States. “My parents’ Japaneseness,” she noted, “was never nationalistic in nature. And their loyalty and devotion to their adopted country was vigorous and strong. [My father] hung with great pride an enormous American flag on our front porch.”¹⁷² Undoubtedly, every immigrant community sees its growth and prosperity in its descendants. In many ways, the undertakings of the Nisei mirrored the goals of both their ancestors and the community at-large.



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Japanese American Executive Committee meets with director at Jerome Internment Camp

¹⁷¹ Uchida, 32.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁷³ Photograph E-261, Box 9: Jerome Internment Camp, Records of the War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210-G, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

Nearly four decades after the incarceration in the United States, former internee Gary Morishima claimed that “in terms of economic status and academic achievement, you might say that the assimilation movement was a success.”¹⁷⁴ Japanese Americans, unlike the white Americans in the Philippines, altered their identities drastically during World War II. Japanese Americans realized that transnational identities—amalgamations of American and Japanese culture—were no longer viable. Even after World War II, white Americans increasingly associated the ethnic community with the “model minority” paradigm. Somehow, whites maintained, Japanese Americans were able to “overcome” the drawback of “being Asian” in the United States, marking them as successful, prosperous, and accepted as mainstream white Americans. Ultimately, the Japanese American community did not regain its transnational connections until the efforts of the Sansei generation—children of the Nisei—during the Civil Rights Era of the 1960s and 1970s. For internees, transnational identities appeared ineffective since most Japanese Americans were not intent on returning to Japan. Conversely, transnationalism only made the lives of Japanese Americans more difficult due to discrimination from the mainstream. In contrast to the context in the Philippines, outside pressure and the wartime internment in the United States forced Japanese Americans to choose between their two identities and deliberately select one over the other.

As a result of unlawful incarceration, internees spared no expense in proving their exclusively American identities. The Japanese language was mostly retired, with English assuming its place. New, marketable skills and occupations were acquired, including the mechanics of autos, metal work, electrical work, bookkeeping, and appliance repair. Japanese Americans brandished their singular allegiances by fighting and dying for their country. After losing a son in battle, Issei Toyosuka Onedera at the Minidoka relocation

¹⁷⁴ Testimony of Gary Morishima p. 136.

center stated: “if the death of my son will contribute toward a greater understanding of the loyalty of the Japanese in this country, then I shall be comforted. I am sure that his death will not have been in vain.”¹⁷⁵ For the Japanese American community, proving such devotion was truly the paramount goal. In contrast to internment in the Philippines, internees in the United States viewed their captivities as a pivotal moment in the life of their ethnic community. Though these changes were certainly results of external pressure upon the internees, we must not mistake that many Japanese Americans consciously recognized the necessity of modifying their own ethnic community. For numerous evacuees, internment symbolized a time to break away from the past and mold their own destinies for a hopefully brighter future.

¹⁷⁵ Excerpt from Speech of Dillon S. Myer to the Woodlawn Kiwanis Club of Chicago, September 20, 1944, Records of the War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

Conclusion

After their emancipations, former internees from the United States and the Philippines sought to carry on their lives, despite the years of incarceration. Yet, internment had a tremendous effect upon its former captives, even as they struggled to revitalize their prewar existences. For some former internees, new opportunities became available after the war. For others, the wartime incarceration created a sense of fraternity, a similar trait commonly shared by soldiers who experience the horrors of combat together. Ultimately, because Japanese Americans and white Americans approached their internments with different objectives and mindsets, each community was affected in a number of significant ways.

For those detained in the Philippines, internment was an event that only strengthened the already existing bond of American patriotism. After liberation from Santo Tomas and settling in California, one internee commented that “America was like heaven.”¹⁷⁶ Even decades after World War II, internees from the Philippines still maintain tight-knit bonds. Former internee reunions are common, as evident from the Camp Holmes gathering and the special invitation for Japanese commandant Tomibe Rokuro to attend such a function.¹⁷⁷ Similar to the fraternity that often develops among soldiers, white internees maintain special bonds of friendship that still hold to the present day. Despite over fifty years of maturation, some internees still consider the friendships made during incarceration to be their closest and strongest.¹⁷⁸

Internment has also turned some white Americans inward, as not everyone in the Philippines came to highly respect their Japanese commandants and guards. In the mid-1970s, one former Santo Tomas captive moved to Japan due to her husband’s career

¹⁷⁶ Interview with former Santo Tomas Internee, September 30, 2010.

¹⁷⁷ Account of Father Sheridan p. 1.

¹⁷⁸ Interview with former Santo Tomas Internee, September 30, 2010.

placement. In four years living at Yokohama, this former internee interacted exclusively with other American and British citizens, not making a single Japanese friend. This white American was tragically scarred by her wartime experiences, even refusing to entertain any Japanese in her home.¹⁷⁹ On the other hand, other internees have gradually learned to forgive and forget. Grace Ribas, who spent six months in Japan for language immersion, felt that the postwar Japanese were doing everything possible to atone for wartime atrocities. She noted that “each and every [Japanese] apologized to me. Some with tears in their eyes....because they have never been told the true facts of the war years. Post-war Japan is one of ‘Revisionism.’”¹⁸⁰

Conversely, many Japanese Americans recognized that certain opportunities existed after internment that were not available before World War II. Due to the professional skills accumulated during internment and the growing outside perception of the ethnic community as the “model minority,” younger Japanese Americans increasingly pursued occupations in the mainstream sector. Gary Morishima and his two brothers all earned doctorates after resettlement and the former internee understood that “it was really the hard-working perseverance of the Japanese Americans that enabled them to get back on their feet.”¹⁸¹ Sanae Moorehead expressed a similar sentiment to Morishima, as she believed that internment “made me stronger and enlarged and enriched my own world.”¹⁸² After the war, Moorehead moved to New York City and became an actress, dancer, and writer. Such opportunities likely would have been unavailable to the Japanese American community before its transformation. For these former evacuees, reclaiming their Japanese identities was an incredibly slow and gradual process.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Payne and Schafer, 107.

¹⁸¹ Testimony of Gary Morishima p. 136.

¹⁸² Testimony of Sanae Moorehead p. 1, Ardith Pugh Collection, Uncatalogued Material, Special Collections Research Center at Swem Library, College of William & Mary, Williamsburg, VA.

In our contemporary era, many Japanese Americans believe that their community has become as integrated and assimilated as much as white American society. Such attitudes are especially apparent when examining the Sansei generation—the children of the Nisei. One former Rohwer internee commented that his children, nieces, and nephews have intermarried with several other ethnic groups, including Germans, French, Italians, Japanese, Hawaiians, and Caucasian Americans.¹⁸³ Another interviewee felt that most Americans, including Japanese Americans, were “ahistoric,” preferring to forget the difficult events of the past instead of dwelling upon them.¹⁸⁴ Whereas internees in the Philippines began commemorating their captivities soon after the war, the Japanese American community was much slower in reexamining its past. When Tom Kometani decided to testify before the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) in the early 1980s, his Nisei mother questioned “why do you want to bring all that up again? It’s over. Forget about it.”¹⁸⁵ Typically, as sociological studies have demonstrated, former Japanese American internees have been reticent to demand reparations, a task largely left to the Sansei generation.¹⁸⁶ With the upward professional and economic ascendancy of the Japanese American community in the 1950s and 1960s, there has been a trend among Nisei with the intention to not “rock the boat.”¹⁸⁷ Compensation for the unlawful internment came only after the maturation of the Sansei, who came of age during the Civil Rights Movement. These younger Japanese Americans viewed their struggles for redress as compatible with a greater “Third World

¹⁸³ Interview with former Rohwer Internee, October 11, 2010.

¹⁸⁴ Interview with former Rohwer Internee, September 21, 2010.

¹⁸⁵ Testimony of Thomas Kometani p. 482, July 16, 1981, Records of Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians 1981-1983, Record Group 220, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

¹⁸⁶ Testimony of Richard M. Aoki p. 86, August 13, 1981, Records of Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians 1981-1983, Record Group 220, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

¹⁸⁷ Takahashi, 113 and 152.

consciousness,” a common effort from the African American, Chicano American, and Asian American communities to combat racism and achieve equality.¹⁸⁸

Despite the geographic location of the camps, transpacific internees worked to prove something, both to themselves and their captors. For Americans in the Philippines, internment was a dire matter of physical survival. White Americans feared starvation, sickness, and even the bayonet of their guards’ rifles. Yet, above their own fear, internees wanted to demonstrate their pride in being American. Through their cultural demonstrations of sports, artistic performances, and holiday events, they upheld their own identities and citizenships. Not only did this allow internees in the Philippines to maintain their conceptions of society and regularity, but it was also a safe method for expressing contempt for their conquerors.

Japanese Americans, on the other hand, faced widespread external pressure to assimilate from the nation’s government and citizenry. Undoubtedly, many of the alterations in the internee community were influenced by this intimidation. Yet, Japanese American internees still had the agency to demonstrate that despite being relative newcomers, they would not be considered analogous to every other ethnic community. In fact, Japanese Americans struggled greatly to change their perceived identities, particularly in regards to language, professional skills, national loyalties, and geographic distribution during resettlement. As one former internee commented shortly after the war, “you began to forget that you are of Japanese ancestry, or any other ancestry, and remember only that you are an American.”¹⁸⁹

Ultimately, these actions—either the preserving or transforming of identities—were social defense mechanisms in an era of great uncertainty and danger.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 104.

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