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Dancing Alien, Enemy and Ally:

Yuriko Amemiya's Negotiations of Race, Gender and Citizenship

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Culture and Performance

by

Mana Hayakawa

2018

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Dancing Alien, Enemy and Ally:

Yuriko Amemiya's Negotiations of Race, Gender and Citizenship

by

Mana Hayakawa

Doctor of Philosophy in Culture and Performance

University of California, Los Angeles, 2018

Professor Janet M. O'Shea, Chair

This dissertation examines Japanese American dancer Yuriko Amemiya's navigation of shifting legislation regarding race, gender, and citizenship between the 1920s and 1950s. I argue that Amemiya's training as a dancer allowed her to construct a versatile identity equipped to traverse discriminatory conditions and confront significant changes in the social location of Japanese Americans. I consider her dance training in pre-World War II Japan and analyze performances that took place in wartime and postwar America. This project reviews the social conditions of this period, including the interwar years, as second-generation Japanese Americans sought to establish a sense of belonging up-against the enforcement of anti-Asian laws, wartime incarceration, and the postwar period, during which the Cold War and the enactment of new immigration policies drastically altered the demographic of Asians in the United States.

Mindful of the tensions that erupted in these decades as U.S.-Japan relations vacillated, and as Americans faced job loss, war, racial segregation, and contested definitions of immigrant

and citizen, I contend that dance allowed Amemiya the opportunity to re-choreograph her image away from harmful Orientalist representations. Yet, despite her increased social mobility, she continued to confront limitations as an artist and cultural critic working within the confines of American modern dance. This examination of Amemiya's early life as a performer reveals a complicated narrative that demonstrates the compelling ways in which a dancer negotiated restrictions and opportunities during periods of profound legislative and social change.

The dissertation of Mana Hayakawa is approved.

Anurima Banerji

Lucy M. Burns

Valerie J. Matsumoto

Janet M. O’Shea, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2018

This dissertation is dedicated to
my *Okasan*

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Outside of my department I have taken coursework and served as a Teaching Assistant in Asian American Studies. Thank you to Victor Bascara, Lane Ryo Hirabayashi, and Purnima Mankekar for providing encouraging feedback on my work. Thank you to Susan Kim for creating a wonderful teaching experience with the undergraduate course, Asian American Literature and Culture. I also want to thank members of the Southern California Asian American and Pacific Islander History Group who have always been positive and enthusiastic about my work. My thanks to Constance Chen, Alfred Flores, Jean-Paul R. deGuzman, Adria Imada, Lon Kurashige, Valerie Matsumoto, and David Yoo for their supportive mentorship. Additionally, I am also very grateful to my mentors in the growing field of Asian American Dance Studies including Yutian Wong, San San Kwan, Rosemary Candelario, Meiver de la Cruz, Cynthia Ling Lee, J. Lorenzo Perillo, Heather Rastovac Akbarzadeh, and Carolina San Juan.

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As an undergraduate student at the University of California, Santa Cruz, I discovered my passion for ethnic and gender studies, and arts activism. I want to thank Noriko Aso, Rosie Cabrera, Nancy Kim, Ann Lane, Alice Yang and Judy Yung for nurturing my curiosity and providing me with the knowledge and heart to move forward. Thanks also to Maurianne Adams, Pat Griffin and Ximena Zúñiga at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst's Social Justice Education program for pushing me to deepen my analysis on issues of power, privilege, inequity and oppression.

For several years before beginning a Ph.D. program, I surrounded myself with amazing friends and mentors who have shaped the way I treat others, work, teach, rehearse, dance, and engage with the world. My thanks to Maria del Carmen Rodriguez-Larrain, Talya Kemper,

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INTRODUCTION

Seeking Ground:

Japanese American Dance Genealogy

Sitting on my heels in the dark, I stare at the floor in front of me. My shoulders fall inward, and my hands lie quietly on my lap. As the lights warm, three vertical barbed wires are projected across my body. The discordant sound of a high-pitched flute pulses through the space. A woman's voice reads, "The Japanese were given directions to relocate." My hands begin to slide away, the movement so subtle and quiet it remains unnoticed. I stay seated with my eyes downward. The speaker slowly names the location of each World War II incarceration facility by state.[1] "Two in Arkansas, one in Colorado, two in California, one in Wyoming, two in Arizona…." As the list goes on, my hands gradually speed up, moving up and down my lap, pressing firmly into my thighs. The pace quickens until my whole body rocks vigorously back-and-forth. My torso sways uncontrollably, until I throw my hands out in front of me. The speaker declares, "The root of this movement was clearly based on fear." I look at my hands, surprised, as if they belong to someone else. Then, quickly, I collect myself, fix my hair back into place, and sit with my hands in my lap.

My performance of choreographer Claudine Naganuma's *Fences* took place in 2007 at

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[1] I use the term "incarceration" instead of "internment" to more accurately represent the mistreatment of Japanese Americans during World War II. Internment is a legal term to mean the detention of an enemy alien in a time of war. Being that two-thirds of those who were incarcerated were American citizens, the term does not accurately represent the population. Incarceration reflects the prison-like conditions and punishment Japanese Americans faced. See Japanese American Citizens League, *Power of Words Handbook: A Guide to Language about Japanese Americans in WWII; Understanding Euphemisms and Preferred Terminology*. (San Francisco, CA, 2013), https://jacl.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Power-of-Words-Rev.-Term.-Handbook.pdf

the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco. Naganuma created *Fences* in 1992 based on her father's experience as a young boy incarcerated in Gila River, Arizona during World War II. As in many Japanese American families, the experience of incarceration was not directly addressed in the Naganuma household. Her father tried to move forward so as to "not dwell on the past." She remembered him saying, "What good is it to get mad?" Naganuma recalled at the age of nine she told her family, "I met someone that went camping with Dad."[2] While the family laughed, she knew something was wrong. Naganuma sensed that "camp" was something upsetting that brought up shame. Utilizing modern dance and butoh movement vocabulary, Naganuma choreographed *Fences* to grapple with her relationship with incarceration, an event that "silently haunted" her family for years. *Fences* moves through a range of complex emotions from rage, sadness, fear, and shame, to resolution and peace. *Fences* has remained in Naganuma's repertoire for over twenty-six years and has been performed in the San Francisco Bay Area, New York, Hong Kong, and Tokyo. Naganuma performed the piece in 2011 at a show dedicated to activist Yuri Kochiyama and again in 2017 at an event entitled "Threading Resilience." This performance was dedicated to her father, who was in hospice care. With each performance, *Fences* remains socially relevant as the United States government continues to profile, surveil, and incarcerate marginalized communities in the name of national security.

Naganuma credits Japanese American dancer June (Tsukida) Watanabe's piece *EO 9066* for inspiring her to develop *Fences*. Watanabe created seven pieces, over a period of twenty-one years, addressing her incarceration experience. *EO 9066,* choreographed in 1989, grappled with the "words that took us to camp:" *gaman,* meaning to withhold from expressing painful emotions

[2] Claudine Naganuma, e-mail message to author, April 11, 2018.

as a means to persevere, and *shikata-ga-nai,* meaning it cannot be helped.[3] Her choreography explored the emotional resonances of these words that on the surface might read as passive, but in actuality, served as a coping mechanism to endure the seemingly impossible.

Born in Los Angeles in 1939, June Watanabe spent her childhood from the age of three to six in the Heart Mountain incarceration facility in Wyoming. After her family returned and resettled in southern California, she began to take ballet classes leading her to the Los Angeles Conservatory of Music and Arts. At the age of sixteen, Watanabe was invited to perform in the 1955 film version of *The King and I*, in which she danced alongside famed Martha Graham dancer Yuriko Amemiya in the piece "Small House of Uncle Thomas." For twelve weeks on set, Watanabe took ballet class with Jerome Robbins and Graham technique with Amemiya. Watanabe continued to study modern dance at the University California, Los Angeles, understudied at the Graham Company in 1962, and developed her own company. In 1975, Watanabe joined the faculty in the dance department at Mills College where Naganuma attained her MFA.

Credited as one of Watanabe's mentors, Yuriko Amemiya was born in San Jose, California in 1920. She was born into a decade of anti-alien legislation that prevented Japanese immigrants from owning land, establishing businesses, and gaining citizenship. She was educated in Japan, where she also lived and trained with modern dancer Konami Ishii. In her early twenties, upon her return to California, Amemiya and her family were incarcerated when the United States entered war with Japan. With the end of war, Japanese Americans were deemed less of a threat, and former inmates were re-introduced as allies. Following her release,

[3] Nancy MacKay, "June Watanabe Oral History," *Mills College* video, December 5, 2006, https://archive.org/details/csfpal_000018.

Amemiya developed a successful career as a modern dancer, most famous for her work with Martha Graham, and as Eliza in the original Broadway production of *The King and* I.

When I performed in *Fences*, little did I know that I would be a part of this genealogy of Japanese American modern dancers with nearly a century-long history of dancing their reflections on their exclusion as immigrants and inmates. Amemiya inspired Watanabe, who then mentored Naganuma, who invited me to dance in *Fences*. Although less known, Amemiya also choreographed a dance, *Thin Cry,* in 1945 based on her experience of wartime incarceration. (The piece was later re-named *The Cry* in 1963.) Like Naganuma's father, Amemiya was confined in Gila River, Arizona. While Amemiya, Watanabe, and Naganuma each choreographed works addressing incarceration, their identities as Japanese American women and their memories of war vary and reflect the dynamic history of our community. Amemiya is nisei, or second generation, born in the United States in the early twentieth century to Japanese immigrants. Watanabe's father was issei, or first generation, and her mother was nisei, making Watanabe both nisei and sansei, or third generation. Naganuma's paternal grandparents were also of different generations: her grandfather was issei and grandmother was nisei from Hawaii, making her father nisei and sansei like Watanabe. He married a Chinese American woman, and they raised Claudine as a multi-ethnic Asian American. I, too, am nisei, but being that my family immigrated post-1965, my generation is called shin-nisei, or new nisei. We represent different aspects of Japanese American history, immigration, labor migration, citizenship, and community development. Our experiences are diverse, but each of us found, in modern dance, a means to complicate our identities as women of color in the United States.

Following her wartime incarceration, Yuriko Amemiya joined the elite world of American modern dance in New York City and broke new ground for Japanese American

women. She blazed a trail for other Asian American artists to follow and changed the face of modern dance. Over seven decades have passed since Amemiya performed *Thin Cry,* and her dance continues to incite questions. While her accomplishments as a member of the Graham company have been widely celebrated, there has been much less examination of Amemiya in relationship to early-to-mid- twentieth century Japanese and Japanese American history and politics. In her lifetime of work, how did Yuriko Amemiya continue to dance while her identity as a Japanese American confronted great instability? How did a Japanese American dancer succeed in taking the stage with a painfully honest solo about wartime incarceration in 1945? And, how did American modern dance both provide and foreclose spaces for racial minorities in the mid-twentieth century? These critical questions inform this study.

This dissertation examines Yuriko Amemiya's navigation of shifting legislation regarding race, gender, and citizenship between the 1920s and 1950s. I argue that Amemiya's training as a dancer allowed her to construct a versatile identity equipped to traverse discriminatory conditions and confront significant changes in the social location of Japanese Americans. I consider her dance training in pre-World War II Japan and analyze performances that took place in wartime and postwar America. This project reviews the social conditions of this period, including the interwar years as second generation Japanese Americans sought to establish a sense of belonging up-against the enforcement of anti-Asian laws, wartime incarceration, and the postwar period during which the Cold War and the enactment of new immigration policies drastically altered the demographic of Asians in the United States. Mindful of the tensions that erupted in these decades as U.S.-Japan relations vacillated, and as Americans faced job loss, war, racial segregation, and contested definitions of immigrant and citizen, I contend that dance allowed Amemiya the opportunity to re-choreograph her image away from

harmful Orientalist representations. Yet, despite her increased social mobility, she continued to confront limitations as an artist and cultural critic working within the confines of American modern dance. This examination of Amemiya's early life as a performer reveals a complicated narrative that demonstrates the compelling ways in which a dancer negotiated restrictions and opportunities during periods of profound legislative and social change.

Literature Review

I am not the first to consider how Asian American subjects have negotiated their contingent inclusion in American culture. To grapple with Amemiya's experience as a modern dancer, I build on scholarship by Karen Shimakawa and Lisa Lowe that addresses the political potential of Asian Americans as simultaneously embraced and rejected by dominant culture.[4] Shimakawa extends Julia Kristeva's definition of abjection, to assert that Asian Americans, as abject, are neither a part of, nor apart from, determining American national identity. Legal and cultural acts to exclusion Asian Americans, therefore, work to make them "present and jettisoned" and bolster the "symbolic coherence" of the nation.[5] Similarly, Lowe focuses on immigration as a lens of analysis to flesh out how abjections and erasure function in Asian American identity formation. Lowe argues that immigration standards vary in accordance with the needs of the State, and she brings to light American geo-political interests in maintaining economic power in the world. Immigration legislation, therefore, reflects the defining contradiction of which Lowe speaks: Asian Americans are valued in the nation's economic development but are dismissed from the formation of a national cultural identity. Lowe suggests, however, that their occlusion from dominant culture does not need to be regarded as a failure, but

[4] Other scholars have looked at film, television, fashion and online media to analyze the paradox of the feared and desired Asian American. See Dorinne Kondo (1997), Robert G. Lee (1999), and Lori Kido Lopez (2017).
[5] Karen Shimakawa, *National Abjection: The Asian American Body Onstage* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 3.

rather, this exclusion can be considered an opportunity for Asian Americans to define culture on their own terms. Asian American culture, thus, should not be regulated or constrained by dominant cultural norms, and instead exist as “heterogeneous, hybrid and multiple.”[6] In this vein, Shimakawa and Lowe call for a destabilized, strategically mobile and generative Asian American subjectivity.

My project extends Lowe’s and Shimakawa’s theorization of the embraced and expelled subject to include the polarizing extent to which this paradox operates on the dancing body. Performing through profound political transgressions, Amemiya’s proficiency in an elite dance form as a domestic racial minority in the United States granted her access to specific cultural locations; however, her autonomy was limited. Amemiya’s experience as both a constrained and mobile subject—as demonstrated by her training in Japan and the United States in the pre-war period, her unjust incarceration in Gila River, and her appearances on proscenium stages in New York City– affirmed her shifting affiliations and revealed the disparate terrain she learned to navigate between the late-1930s to early 1950s. Amemiya’s contingency as a Japanese American dancer compounded her ambiguity and ambivalence on the modern dance stage. This project is attentive to how Amemiya mediated these unstable spaces of simultaneous acceptance and abjection. While Amemiya worked to remain visible through such negotiations, her labor reflects the demands placed on her gendered and racialized body–as a dancer and a domestic worker–to endure shifting expectations, under changing social conditions.

This study also examines how Amemiya was influenced by the complicated relationship between the United States and Japan in the early twentieth century. As a result of their economic and political development, Imperial Japan garnered enough power to negotiate an agreement on

[6] Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 60.

immigration with the United States in 1907. With the anti-Asian climate in the West Coast, Japanese immigration was limited, but not completely halted. This policy allowed Japanese and Japanese American artists like Amemiya to have mobility between the two nations, at the same time that tensions grew in the lead up to World War II. In these decades, Japanese Americans endured the consequences of the soured diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Japan. While Japanese immigrants benefitted from the influence of Imperial Japan in the early 1900s, the same source of power had grown and positioned all people of Japanese ancestry in the United States as potential enemies in the 1940s. In my study, I grapple with this distinct history of mobility and restraint that not only facilitated Amemiya's access to modern dance training, but also shaped her sense of belonging, or lack thereof, in the nation of her birth.

To develop my analysis of Amemiya's artistic negotiation of U.S.- Japan relations prior to, during, and following World War II, I look to scholarship that theorizes performances that reveal and conceal histories of empire. Several Asian American scholars have provided a critical intervention into the understanding of empire and its relationship with quotidian and staged performances.[7] Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns' examination of "splendid dancing" turns to the body to show evidence of the internalization of empire, which authorizes dance as the means to mediate perplexing positions.[8] Burns examines how Filipino laborers learned to master American

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[7] See works by Stephanie L. Batiste, *Darkening Mirrors: Imperial Representation in Depression Era African American Performance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Joshua T. Chambers-Letson, *A Race So Different: Performance and Law in Asian America* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); Adria L. Imada. *Aloha America: Hula Circuit Through the U.S. Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012); Josephine Lee, *The Japan of Pure Invention: Gilbert & Sullivan's The Mikado* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Sunaina Maira, *Missing: Youth, Citizenship, and Empire after 9/11* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.); Fiona IB Ngô, *Imperial Blues: Geographies of Race and Sex in Jazz Age New York* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Priya Srinivasan, *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012); Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up The World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[8] Lucy M.S.P. Burns, *Puro Arte: Filipinos on the Stages of Empire* (New York: New York University

popular dance as a result of U.S. colonial presence in the Philippines. Displayed in California's taxi dance halls in the 1920s and 1930s, the laborers' dance skills were deemed "splendid" by observers, scholars and journalists as they exceeded the expectations that were placed on their "primitive" bodies.[9] Burns argues that as Filipino dancing bodies emerged, their flawless execution of American popular culture could not secure their national belonging.[10] Their fancy footwork and style were determined as "excess." Their dancing that gained the attention of the American public also marked their bodies as outsiders, rarely included in American culture.[11] Identifying cultural imperialism as a lens of analysis, Burns underscores the significant labor provided by minority and colonized subjects to facilitate nation building, despite their experience of discrimination and exclusion from citizenship in the United States.

While Amemiya gained access to superior modern dance training in Japan, her return to the United States demonstrated the limits of her reach as a domestic racial minority. As Burns' "splendid dancing" establishes, mastery of the colonizer's script does not assure greater inclusion or national belonging. Despite Amemiya's execution of superior modern dance, she continued to face Orientalist assumptions in the United States as a dancer, both leading into and following her time with Martha Graham. She took on excess labor, performing in multiple dance forms and working in domestic labor to meet the demands of making a living in New York. Amemiya's "excess," or overwork, was deemed necessary to prove her worth as a productive citizen of the United States and to demonstrate her capacity for moving past memories of incarceration in the

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Press, 2013), 49-73.

[9] Burns references Jeanne De la Moureau's memoir, "Confessions of Taxi Dancer" where she states, "Filipino as a rule are splendid dancers." Burns also references observations by the Associated Filipino Press and Sociologist Paul Cressey. See Lucy M.S.P. Burns, *Puro Arte,* 49-73.

[10] Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934: This Act declared the independence of the Philippines, changing the legal status of Filipinos in the U.S. from national to alien

[11] Burns, *Puro Arte,* 65

postwar era. As this project demonstrates, Amemiya's skills continued to expand, yet her virtuosity did little to remove structural inequalities faced by women of color in dance.

In order to further advance my discussion of Amemiya's negotiation of unequal practices in modern dance, I draw most heavily from Susan Manning and Rebekah Kowal to examine the use of abstraction and universalism. I critically review the use of these two influential choreographic concepts and how these constructs affected Amemiya's performances. Amemiya contended with universalism, abstraction, and Orientalism, each exercised to diminish her presence in a principally white dance genre. Rebekah Kowal states that universalism was a popular ideology in mid-twentieth century modern dance, which aimed to neutralize markers of difference, represented in the body, in order to view everyone as the same regardless of particularities.[12] Universalist ideals flourished in this period when racial inequality and anti-Communist regulations created conflict and division. Choreographers sought to alleviate such tension through a display of common human emotions and spirituality.[13] Such ideals were translated into movement through the choreographic approach of abstraction. Susan Manning describes abstraction as the construction of an unmarked body detached from any form of representation.[14] Abstracted choreography intends to dismiss signs of identity, allowing any dancer to play any role. Despite these seemingly democratic ideals, Manning and Kowal assert that universalism and abstraction performed by white American modern dancers worked in tandem to dissolve difference, dismiss racial tensions, and further affirm whiteness.

Whereas Manning and Kowal look to predominantly African American and white artists' approaches to representation politics, my research focuses on the experience of a Japanese

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[12] Rebekah J. Kowal, *How to do Things with Dance: Performing Change in Postwar America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2010), 10.
[13] Ibid., 36.
[14] Susan Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 118.

American dancer as she participated in and rejected universalist narratives as a means to negotiate the political changes between the United States and Japan. Through periods of alliance, tension, and conflict between these two powerful nations, the representation, and overall treatment of, Japanese Americans in the United States shifted drastically. As a Japanese American dancer, Amemiya did not always have the luxury of fitting into the universal narrative that often centered on dominant white culture. If she were included in a dance with universal themes, it was assumed that she was no different than her white peers, a clear compromise of her identity and personal journey to the stage. However, as I will discuss in chapter two, Amemiya also utilized universalist themes in her choreography when she danced with other Japanese Americans while incarcerated. Considered neutral and apolitical by the War Relocation Authority staff, universalism offered Japanese American inmates an opportunity to dance without triggering great suspicion of dissent while under surveillance. While markers of identity were obscured in both contexts, Amemiya complicates how artists of color leveraged universalism in times of national conflict to remain visible while also upholding a message of unity.

Different from her presence on the modern dance stage, Amemiya's inclusion on the Broadway stage demonstrated how her racial identity was used to fit a reductive Orientalist stereotype. Scholars such as Jane Desmond, Priya Srinivasan, and Yutian Wong identify the lack of critical engagement regarding racial representation by pioneer, white American choreographers and reveal the common, and often unquestioned, use of Orientalist tropes in theater, ballet, and modern dance.[15] Wong argues that the Orientalist consumption of Asian-

[15] See Jane Desmond, "Dancing out the difference: Cultural imperialism and Ruth St. Denis's" Radha" of 1906." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 17, no. 1 (1991): 28-49.; Priya Srinivasan, *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012).; Yutian Wong, *Choreographing Asian America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2010)

influenced physical practices disparages Asian American bodies "by associating them with an imagined past that is both temporal and spatial."[16] In the context of Orientalism, Wong states that harmful stereotypes not only misrepresent Asians in the United States but also obscure their lived experiences, making Asian Americans invisible. I follow Wong's assertion that the labor and contributions of Asian American dancers often go unrecognized by practitioners and choreographers, and this dismissal leads to their continual exclusion from modern dance history.

However, my analysis departs from Wong's theory that Asian American bodies are rendered invisible and unnecessary in the expression of American culture.[17] My project underscores the visibility of Amemiya in modern dance and Broadway productions, and complicates the reading of her representation in dances that spoke to themes of nation building. I follow Srinivasan's analysis that stresses the active presence of multiple bodies in the production of a dance.[18] Srinivasan looks at how the body is trained, what the body produces (callused feet, sweat, blood, and tears), and what the body wears (the sari, bells, jewelry), to reveal the ways Indian dancers participated in debates of labor, economy, and immigration in the United States. She positions South Asian dancers as transnational laborers of the past century to trouble the modes of governance that regulate immigration and citizenship. Although I do not utilize Srinivasan's autoethnographic methodology, I build on Srinivasan's analysis to insist on the visibility of a Japanese American dancer under conditions of Japanese imperialism and American expansionism.

In this project, I examine how Amemiya's racially marked body remained visible despite confronting various forms of discrimination and erasure in the American context. I take a

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[16] Yutian Wong, *Choreographing Asian America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2010), 13.
[17] Ibid., 13.
[18] Priya Srinivasan, *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012).

particular interest in how Amemiya leveraged her modern dance skills to teach dance while incarcerated, and later obtained early release because of her potential to dance professionally. As her performance opportunities increased, Amemiya seemed to collude with Graham's universalist vision and Jerome Robbins' Orientalist choreography in *The King and I*. However, as I argue, the presence of Amemiya was much more complicated than this simple reading, as she also challenged Orientalist expectations and destabilized constructs of whiteness in dance. Clearly, Amemiya was a persistent working artist despite confronting such reductive roles. To contend with her work ethic, I look at the labor endured by the body that must act in response to the changing needs of choreographers and their social conditions. I detail Amemiya's schedule as a worker, dancer, and later wife and mother, to highlight how Amemiya met the multiple demands placed on her, not only as a Japanese American woman in the postwar periods, but also, as a working professional in the elite dance world.

Methodology

Employing the methods of archival research, discourse analysis, and choreographic analysis, I provide a close examination of key performances featuring Amemiya, including a performance in the Gila River incarceration facility, her inclusion in the original cast of Graham's *Appalachian Spring*, and her Broadway premiere as Eliza in *The King and I*. My research relies heavily on archival materials including dance footage, performance reviews, photos, periodicals, and interview transcriptions. Inspired by dance historian Susan Manning's method of "historicizing spectatorship," I utilize "cross viewing," a means of investigation where spectators come to recognize subjects outside their own identity group.[19] Manning cites various sources including the black press, leftist press, and art press to reveal the social-political

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[19] Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance,* xvi.

circumstances that informed the generative experience of “cross viewing.” Manning’s historical analysis speaks against divided narratives that separate the trajectory of black and white dancemakers in the 1930s to 1950s. Instead, she reveals the complicated ways in which performers and spectators, across race, class, gender and sexual identities, reference and/or respond to each other through movement and text. In my study, I utilize Japanese American news outlets, including *The Tulare News* and *Gila News Courier*, and local and national periodicals to examine racialized and gendered representations of Amemiya in the wartime and postwar period. I seek evidence of how Amemiya’s ethnic identity was addressed or ignored in the modern dance press. I analyze the differing narratives that were produced by those outside and within the Japanese American community to grapple with the expectations and limitations mapped on to Amemiya. I also look to the regional political climate to interrogate the enduring relationship between dance, racial construction, and nation building. In addition to performance reviews and dance footage, I review the War Relocation Authority (WRA) archives. In particular, I investigate the comprehensive photojournalism project of the War Relocation Authority Photographic Section (WRAPS) to review how Amemiya was included in the resettlement narrative.

This project also relies on documented oral history interviews to discuss the life history of Yuriko Amemiya. Informed by historian Valerie Matsumoto’s use of oral history methodology, I privilege the experience of second-generation women as a means to complicate modern dance history and Japanese American identity politics. In *City Girls,* Matsumoto provides extensive examination of nisei women’s participation in art, literature, journalism,

dance, and civic engagement leading up to and following World War II.[20] Based on oral history interviews, personal memorabilia, and articles from Japanese American news outlets, Matsumoto provides evidence of a flourishing and distinctive arts community that was neither a reproduction of American popular culture, nor strictly drawn from perspectives of Japanese culture.[21] Matsumoto carefully examines the lives of her informants to suggests that the nisei were "agents of culture," developing their own forms of cultural and political expression. Like Matsumoto, I review interviews included in Amemiya's biography by Emiko Tokunaga, to provide the context for Amemiya's personal decisions as a dancer and how she developed her career in relationship to the changing political climate of the early to mid-twentieth century.[22]

Informed by historian Adria Imada, I approached the archives and oral history interviews with a careful consideration of the misrepresentation of women of color in public discourse. In *Aloha America*, Imada contends with the abundance of print images of hula dancers against the minimal documentation of these dancers' personal lives in historical archives. As a result, she takes a Foucauldian approach recognizing that "subjugated and disqualified knowledge" must be studied to reveal the complex experience of hula dancers of the late 19th and early 20th century.[23] Influenced by performance studies scholar Diana Taylor, Imada develops an "alternative archive" that engages with both ephemeral performances and material documents.[24] In my study of Amemiya, I use legal documents, military photos, oral histories, and personal memorabilia, in order to practice what Imada terms "discrepant readings of official and unofficial archives and

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[20] Valerie Matsumoto, *City Girls: The Nisei Social World in Los Angeles, 1920-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).
[21] Ibid., 31.
[22] Emiko Tokunaga, *Yuriko: An American Japanese Dancer: To Wash in the Rain and Polish with the Wind* (New York: Tokunaga Dance Ko., 2008).
[23] Adria L. Imada, *Aloha America: Hula Circuit Through the U.S. Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 21.
[24] Ibid, 22.

performances."[25] I read images produced by the WRA and incarceration camp newsletters "against the grain," maintaining a critical perspective on their social and political context.

Because I am interested in the social tensions and contradictions deployed through the Japanese American dancing body, my research enriches oral history interviews with choreographic analysis. My project draws on Susan Foster's theorization of corporeality as a subject of analysis.[26] Foster argues against theories that posit dance as a naturalized form of bodily expression that reveals essential qualities of the human spirit. Instead, Foster develops language and structure to analyze the body as a site of knowledge. She places the body in relationship to institutional structures to emphasize that a body's way of moving reproduces aesthetic and political values, and gestures must be read with consideration of these distinctions.[27] To address the complex and contradictory ways Japanese American dancing bodies participated to uphold and challenge social order, I follow the dancers' movement on stage and trace the social and political landscape surrounding specific performances. This methodology builds on Foster's use of Foucauldian discourse that stresses that bodies are not acting on instinct but rather bodies are constructed, responsive to regulation and discipline by social institutions. Foster goes further to foreground the dancing body as capable of negotiating their habitus, which Pierre Bourdieu defines as "systems of durable, transposable dispositions."[28] Bodies working in and against institutions are able to challenge dominant structures and

[25] Ibid, 23.
[26] Susan Foster, "Choreographing History: Manifesto for Dead and Moving bodies." In *Choreographing History: Unnatural Acts: Theorizing the Performative*, ed. by Susan Foster,(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 3-24.
[27] Ibid., 4.
[28] Pierre Bourdieu, *The logic of practice* (California: Stanford University Press, 1990), 53.; For Forster's analysis of *habitus* see Susan Foster*, Dances that Describe Themselves*: *The Improvised Choreography of Richard Bull* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 223.

reconstruct their relationships with such powers.[29] In regards to my study, I examine specific performances that included Amemiya, as advancing and dissenting from policies that regulated immigration and citizenship. Similar to the methodology employed by dance studies scholars studying mid-twentieth century choreographers of color, including Thomas DeFrantz, Susan Manning, and Jacqueline Shea Murphy, I place interviews of Amemiya, audiences, and dance critics within the context of the social upheaval of that period. I differ from these scholars in that my focus remains on a Japanese American dancer and investigates her fluctuating political significance.

To underscore the decisions dancers make in moments of political uncertainty, I build on Janet O'Shea's analysis of choreographic practice as tactics and strategy.[30] Articulated by Michel de Certeau, strategies are associated with property, fixed locations, and places of knowledge. They are eternal and can rule power through governance and visibility. Tactics, however, are ways in which people operate and act within these frameworks. Tactics do not necessary change the framework or shift power but acknowledge "possibilities of circumstance."[31] O'Shea's scholarship on bharata natyam contends that dancers take action by making choreographic decisions to address "social, political and aesthetic concerns."[32] She argues that because bharata natyam has endured periods of regulation and constraint, dancers of this form go beyond strategy and deploy tactics to navigate broader political issues affiliated with the practice. Although my study does not look at a singular dance form, I look to the social conditions that mandate the exercise of strategies and tactics. Drawing from O'Shea, I practice the method of reading choreography through multiple perspectives that address histories of colonization, nationalist

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[29] Foster, "Choreographing History," 14.
[30] Janet O'Shea, At *Home in the World: Bharata Natyam on the Global Stage* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University, 2007), 12.
[31] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 30.
[32] O'Shea, *At Home in the World,* 12.

campaigns, and restrictions on gender. Dissecting various performances and technical forms exercised by Amemiya, I suggest that she worked within a paradoxical framework that operated to simultaneously critique and affirm her sense of national belonging. While social conditions shaped her choices, as a dancer she also used her art to activate a sense of agency in order to navigate rigid structures.[33] As such, through a careful examination of her choreographic choices, I also grapple with how dance enabled Amemiya to negotiate the rapidly changing political landscape.

My study departs from other biographical studies of Amemiya that often center on her achievements as a prominent member of the Martha Graham Dance Company.[34] Instead, I aim to provide a critical biography that examines Amemiya's early life with an eye towards the social political context. As an under-recognized figure in modern dance, often referenced contiguous to Graham, I complicate Amemiya's narrative by analyzing her performances in relationship to the exchange of power between the United States and Japan, and domestic race politics in modern dance. The inclusion of Amemiya as a Japanese American dancer in mid-twentieth century dance history aims to expand discussion of racial representation, the trope of universalism, and themes of American exceptionalism in performance. I aim to contribute to studies of this period by building on Manning, DeFrantz, Murphy, and Kowal's scholarship. Manning argues that abstraction merely reconfigured, not dismantled, the dominance of whiteness in modern dance. While DeFrantz and Murphy do not refute Manning's statement, their texts demonstrate that black and Native American choreographers were able to use universalist strategies to include

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[33] O'Shea cites Cynthia Novak, who paraphrased Marx to, state that dancers make their own decisions within a set of rules that they did not determine. See Cynthia Novak, *Sharing the Dance: Contact Improvisation and American Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 41.
[34] In addition to contributing to Emiko Tokunaga's biography *Yuriko*, Amemiya has provided interviews for Rose Eichenbaum, *The Dancer Within: Intimate conversations with Great Dancers,* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2008) and Robert Tracy, *Goddess: Martha Graham's Dancers Remember* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1997).

racial minorities in a broad range of choreography and therefore gain access to the proscenium stage in the United States and abroad.[35] Following this line of inquiry, I examine how Amemiya both benefited from and was limited by universalist themes. My research seeks to establish an analysis of modern dance beyond notions of representation and to examine links between embodied practice and the enforcement of immigration policy and civil rights for Japanese Americans.

Chapter Overviews

Chapter one, "Dancing Alien," introduces Yuriko Amemiya, her early life with her immigrant parents in California, and her education and modern dance training in Japan. I frame the discussion first by addressing California's early-twentieth-century anti-Asian government rulings and Orientalist discrimination, which co-existed with efforts by the Japanese American community to establish a sense of home. Further confounding the community was Japan's rising imperial power and contentious relation with the United States government. I address how these tensions informed Amemiya's identity as a kibei nisei, an American student studying in Japan, and modern dancer. I discuss how Amemiya constructed her racial, national, and cultural identities from a place of the "in-between." As an American citizen in Japan, Amemiya gained access to elite modern dance training in the 1930s. Her education and training provided her greater mobility in the United States than her parents who were held to more rigid immigration standards. However, kibei nisei like Amemiya shouldered an immense amount of pressure to maintain a connection between the United States and Japan, all the while feeling excluded from both nations. Her ability to be a Japanese American modern dancer also situated her in a position

[35] See Thomas DeFrantz, *Dancing Revelations: Alvin Ailey's Embodiment of African American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) and Jacqueline Shea Murphy, *The People Have Never Stopped Dancing: Native American Modern Dance Historie*s (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

of both privilege and marginalization. I suggest that Amemiya's training in Japan with socially engaged, transnational, avant-garde artists stands in contrast to the restrictions aimed at domestic dancers of color in the United States, and affirms the place of Japanese artists in the vibrant global circulation of modern dance.

The second chapter, "Dancing Enemy," contends with Amemiya's experience during Japanese American wartime incarceration. The discussion centers on a series of performances that featured Amemiya and took place in detainment and incarceration facilities. The first is her crowning as the Victory Queen at the Fourth of July parade at the Tulare detention facility in 1942. I examine the Japanese American detainees' desires to pledge fidelity to the American nation and describe the coronation and parade to identify moments of patriotism and resistance. I then discuss dance performances at the Gila River incarceration facility that highlighted Amemiya as a dancer, choreographer, and teacher. I examine how providing ballet and modern dance lessons and organizing performances in some ways appeased War Relocation Authority officials, as these European and American forms aligned with ideals of "Americanizing" inmates. However, building on Homi Bhabha's theory of mimicry, I suggest that the ability of an inmate to demonstrate proficiency in an elite dance form signals the limits of American cultural domination as the act exposes that the "colonized" can master the "colonizer's tools."[36] Seeking to identify subversive elements in such acts, I argue that Amemiya's skills as a modern dancer permitted her and her dance students to temporarily leave the incarceration facility, as well as facilitated her early release from wartime incarceration.

In the third chapter, "Dancing Ally," I analyze Amemiya's life in New York following her release from wartime incarceration in September 1943. Despite her eventual success as a

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[36] Homi K.Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse." In *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 86.

Martha Graham dancer, Amemiya struggled to resettle as she juggled a demanding work and rehearsal schedule, all the while still processing her unjust imprisonment. To complicate matters, with the end of World War II, the aftermath of Hiroshima, and the start of the U.S. occupation of Japan in 1945, Japanese Americans were re-imagined as allies. As the discriminatory treatment they faced earlier did not disappear overnight, Japanese Americans learned to endure their simultaneous acceptance and abjection. I closely read Amemiya's role as a Follower in Graham's *Appalachian Spring,* performed in this postwar period. I argue that Amemiya's acceptance by modern dance audiences relied on her participation in a piece that celebrated western expansionism and upheld a narrative of American exceptionalism. Outside her role as a Follower, Amemiya was also deemed exceptional by the War Relocation Authority (WRA) press, as she was celebrated for her extraordinary work ethic and ability to overcome adversity. Citing the traumatic affects of incarceration, I trouble these narratives of resilience and hard work. Not only did Japanese Americans suffer greatly while incarcerated, they were also pushed to be productive, patriotic citizens, without any acknowledgement of wrongdoing by the U.S. government. Although Amemiya's image as a productive working artist was circulated by the WRA, she also provided a rupture to the seamless resettlement narrative. Exercising her ability to be both resilient and vulnerable, Amemiya performed an emotional solo entitled *Thin Cry,* based on her experience as an inmate at Gila River. Performed in December 1945 at the 92nd Street Y, I argue that Amemiya performed one of the earliest forms of public testimonials disclosing the hardship of wartime incarceration.

The Epilogue, "Dancing to Belong," provides a summary of Yuriko Amemiya's lifelong commitment to dance, including her tenure with the Martha Graham Dance Company, her involvement with the Broadway show *The King and I*, and the formation of her own company.

This section begins with a description of Amemiya's performance as Eliza in "The Small House of Uncle Thomas," a featured dance in the 1951 production of *The King and I*. My analysis considers the layers of race politics operating, on and off stage, in this Cold War production. I argue that Amemiya's beautifully executed choreography brings to light challenging questions about issues of representation and access to the commercial dance stage. This discussion provides the springboard to examine Amemiya's later works with the Graham company and school. Working in modern dance and on Broadway, Amemiya challenged the perceived split between high art and commercial art, especially as she took on positions of leadership in each domain. Her influence as a dancer, choreographer and director in these fields has extended over sixty years. As a means to close my study, I focus on Amemiya's choreographic works, the establishment of her own dance company, and revisit her influential solo *Thin Cry.*

A scenario or a performance featuring Yuriko Amemiya provides the introduction for each chapter. The first chapter begins with a scenario experienced by Amemiya upon her return to California from her schooling in Japan in 1937. Despite her extensive training in modern dance, Amemiya was encouraged by her dance teacher to also learn Japanese traditional forms to be more "authentically Japanese." I examine the assumptions attached to such expectations and link them to California's prewar political climates, and the history of racism and Orientalism in American modern dance.

CHAPTER ONE:

Dancing Alien:

Japanese Americans as Neither, Nor and In-between

In 1937, seventeen year-old Yuriko Amemiya returned to California after attending school and pursuing modern dance training in Japan. At Dorothy Lyndall's studio in Los Angeles Amemiya continued to study ballet and modern dance and, for the first time, was encouraged to develop her own choreography. Lyndall also persuaded Amemiya to train in *nihon buyo* and martial arts with a visiting master teacher. Amemiya had no interest in classical Japanese forms; however Lyndall felt the training would benefit Amemiya to "promote more authentically [her] connection with Japan."[37]

In the decade that preceded World War II, Amemiya, a second-generation Japanese American, studied German expressionist-inspired modern dance in Japan, then returned to California to be encouraged by her white teacher to learn classical Japanese dance from a visiting Japanese master. What social conditions facilitated young Amemiya's world travel and international training but kept her linked in perception and experience to an essential Japanese identity? Set in a period of Japanese and American expansionism, this chapter examines three social conditions that informed this moment in Amemiya's early modern dance career. First, following a brief biography of Amemiya's family, I review the anti-Asian climate in the American West Coast and discuss how Japanese immigrant parents and their second-generation,

[37] Tokunaga, *Yuriko*, 18-19.

or nisei, children responded to the hostile environment. This section will provide the context for how this generation of nisei children were positioned to act as a bridge between the United States and Japan. Second, I examine the history of Orientalism and discrimination against racial minorities in American modern dance. This analysis brings attention to Amemiya's experience of contingent inclusion, acquiring acceptance on conditional terms, on the modern dance stage. Third, I explore the work of early twentieth century Japanese avant-garde artists who made work in response to their rapidly changing society. These artists, including Amemiya's teachers, remained politically engaged and questioned the role of art in nation building, especially as Japan turned to the global market and grew as an empire. Amemiya's personal story illustrates how social structures shape an individual's choices and access to education and training, as well as how an individual negotiates such structures in nuanced ways. The discussion of each social condition aims to deepen our understanding of the complex set of expectations placed on Amemiya as a young modern dancer, and demonstrates how her experience was not a result solely of privilege, but rather her rigorous dance training reflects the experience of a nisei charged to be a bridge between two rising empires.

Following the discussion of social conditions, I provide analysis of the nisei bridge paradox and its relationship to Amemiya's life as a modern dancer. Born in the United States but educated in Japan, Amemiya grappled with her identity as a bilingual and bicultural racial minority. She had greater mobility than her immigrant parents, however; she too experienced discrimination and exclusion from American society. Despite these struggles, Amemiya and her generation were charged to determine the future of Japanese people in the United States. As bridge builders they were expected to provide a connection between two different cultures,

however, like a bridge they were neither one or the other, nor were they allowed to fully embrace both. Amemiya occupied a liminal cultural space of the in-between.[38]

As a modern dancer Amemiya also negotiated a space of the in-between. She confronted racial discrimination but not complete exclusion; she was neither fully accepted, or rejected. By the 1930s Asian dance performances by international artists, as well as white people in yellowface,[39] were not rare in the United States. However, as children of working-class immigrants many Asian Americans had less opportunity to take classes and train to become professional dancers. Not only did they have fewer opportunities, Asian American dancers like Amemiya were expected to be proficient in their respective ethnic dance forms. Such expectations were linked to the illegibility of Asians as Americans with birthright citizenship. Asians were assumed to be foreigners to the United States, or in the case of performers, visiting international artists. This assumption did not stop Amemiya from performing in the United States. She was trained in modern dance and quickly learned traditional Japanese dance forms. However, unlike an international artist, Amemiya was a citizen of the United States and a domestic racial minority. As World War II neared and Japan became a greater threat to the United States, Amemiya could not access the privileged status of an international artist. This chapter ends with discussion of Amemiya's negotiation of her position as in-between alien and citizen, and examines her complex positionality as a nisei dancer in the prewar period.

Yuriko Amemiya: Early life

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[38] Eiichiro Azuma provides an "inter-National perspective" to analyze the "interstitial nature" of the issei generation of the early twentieth century. His examination of issei cultural, political, and economic affiliations provides a model for my analysis of Amemiya's negotiation of her kibei identity. See Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[39] Yellowface refers to the act of non-East Asian people altering their face with make up, prosthetics, and other methods to look East Asian. Often accomplished in an offensive and derogatory tone. See Krystyn R. Moon, *Yellowface: Creating the Chinese in American popular music and performance, 1850s-1920s* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2005).

Yuriko Amemiya was born to Japanese immigrants Chiyo Furuya and Moshige Amemiya on February 2, 1920. Her father was an educated entrepreneur who immigrated to San Francisco from Japan in 1904. He found success running a business importing ostrich feathers used to accessorize hats. Like many first generation Japanese American men he met his future wife as a picture bride.[40] Chiyo Furuya grew up in a Japanese family that appreciated education and the arts. Her stepbrother[41] Tadashige Furuya was an accomplished *samisen* player and singer. Chiyo wanted to be a singer in *kabuki, noh* and *Bunraku* theater but was excluded because of her gender. Instead, Chiyo's family invested in her education. After completing high school she earned a degree as a midwife, or *samba*. Chiyo and Moshige met and married in Japan on February 13, 1917. The couple immigrated together to start a family in San Francisco.

Chiyo and Moshige Amemiya, like many other Japanese immigrants, also known as issei, lived in *Nihonjin –machi* in the Western Addition and South Park area in San Francisco. The ethnic enclave formed after residents moved out of Chinatown and the working-class South of Market neighborhood following the 1906 earthquake.[42] *Nihonjin* means Japanese person and *machi* means town. *Nihonjin-machi* was home to families, small businesses and social, cultural and spiritual organizations. The couple had their first child, a daughter named Chiyeko in 1918 in San Francisco. Chiyo's experience with her midwife was so negative that she saw the need to use her own training to serve the Japanese American community. The family moved to San

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[40] Picture Brides refer to a practice where Japanese women were introduced to their future husbands, Japanese immigrant men in Hawaii or in the continental United States, through the exchange of photographs. See Ethnic Studies Oral History Project, *Women Workers in Hawaii's Pineapple Industry Volume II* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, Mānoa, 1979); Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Issei, Nisei, War Bride: Three Generations of Japanese American Women in Domestic Service* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Ronald Takaki. *Pau Hana: Plantation Life and Labor in Hawaii, 1835-1920* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1984).
[41] Chiyo Furuya's mother Hisa, married her sister's widower and had a stepson Tadashige Furuya.
[42] The Japantown Task Force Inc., *Images of America: San Francisco's Japantown* (California: Arcadia Publishing, 2005), 9.

Jose's Japanese neighborhood to start a small hospital. The Amemiyas, who were educated and had financial means, built their business within the ethnic enclave. Chiyo's ability to speak Japanese and her respect for the cultural beliefs of pregnant issei women were much needed.[43] The hospital was located next to the Japanese language school and demand for Chiyo's services quickly grew. Her husband closed his business and became the hospital manager.

Soon after moving to San Jose, Yuriko was born in 1920, and her younger sister was born in 1922. Yuriko was the middle child but by the age of 3, she lost her father and both sisters to a serious influenza epidemic. Her mother, afraid of losing her only surviving child, sent her to Japan in 1923 to stay with her relatives, Tetaro and Torano Furuya. Her mother remained in California as a midwife and sent money to Japan. Although welcomed and taken care of, Yuriko felt like an outsider amongst her Japanese family. She missed her mother, father and sisters and often felt isolated. At a young age she became keenly aware of her Japanese family's value of education, and the competitive environment that surrounded her eight cousins.[44]

At age six, Yuriko Amemiya returned to California and met her new stepfather, Shoji Kinoshita. Her mother, motivated by her own love for the performing arts, enrolled young Amemiya in piano, dance and painting. Amemiya's mother and stepfather took notice of their daughter's talents in dance but were dissatisfied by the poor quality of instruction in San Jose, California. After attending a performance by Japanese modern dancer Baku Ishii in San Francisco, her parents were inspired to send Amemiya to train in Japan. Amemiya's stepfather contacted Baku Ishii's student, Konami Takahara Ishii who ran her own school and made arrangements for his nine-year-old stepdaughter to be a resident pupil. Yuriko Amemiya lived

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[43] Japanese American midwives played a vital role in early Japanese American community development, especially during a time hospitals did not hire Japanese doctors. See Susan L. Smith, *Japanese American Midwives: Culture, Community, and Health Politics, 1880-1950*. (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2010).
[44] Tokunaga, *Yuriko,* 3-4.

with Konami Ishii and her husband calligrapher Nobuo Takahara in Japan until she was seventeen.

Baku Ishii is often credited as a creator of Japanese modern dance. Born in 1886 in the Akita prefecture in northern Japan, Ishii intended to study opera at Tokyo's Imperial Theater. As an opera student he enrolled in classes with visiting Italian ballet master Giovanni Vittorio Rossi. Ishii changed his focus to dance, and soon wanted to train in forms outside of ballet. In 1915 Ishii decided to leave the theater to study modern dance in Europe. Ishii took classes in Germany, Czechoslovakia and Poland, and trained in Emile Jacques-Dalcroze's system of eurhythmics and German *Neue Tanz.* As a student, Konami Takahara Ishii trained and performed with Baku Ishii and later earned permission to adopt the name of the school. Amemiya was a devoted student of Ishii technique that continued to be inspired by German expressionism. Amemiya performed and toured throughout Japan with the Konami Ishii Dance Company.

In addition to studying dance, Amemiya also attended an all girls' private high school, *Onishi Gakuen* in Kanagawa prefecture, and excelled as a student. The curriculum required young women to learn to sew, embroider, weave and cook–skills Amemiya would later rely on to support her career as a dancer. She worked hard to be the valedictorian and found great pride in succeeding in a Japanese school despite being Japanese American. She explained, "As soon as I entered high school, my mind was made up that I will graduate with the highest honors. The way I accomplished this was being good at everything they asked us to do."[45] Amemiya's mother remained in California to earn an income to pay for Amemiya's tuition but her stepfather left the family. Amemiya, distant from her mother and affected by the loss of her father and sisters, found mentorship from Konami Ishii and embraced dance as her source of joy. As an adult

[45] Amemiya quoted in Tokunaga, *Yuriko,* 17.

Amemiya reflected on this moment, stating, "Dance was my only love and my savior that gave me strength to go on. My thinking was if my dancing improved …maybe it will give me love and happiness."[46] Amemiya finished high school in Japan and returned to California in 1937.

Japanese Immigration to the United States

Chiyo and Moshige Amemiya's marriage and entry into the United States reflected the experience of other Japanese immigrants. While early Japanese immigrants, especially laborers, faced much discrimination in the United States their experience was distinct from other Asian immigrants because of Japan's rise in power as an imperial nation. After Japan was forced to enter international trade by Commodore Matthew Perry of the U.S. Navy in 1853, the Japanese government signed a series of unequal treaties with tariffs that benefitted foreign powers. Despite their coerced entry into the global market, the Japanese government was determined to develop their economy. This period marked the modernization of Japan as the nation engaged with European and American leaders to incorporate new systems of trade, defense and governance.

As Japan developed relationships across the globe, the island nation also affirmed its growing military and imperial power. In 1876 Japan forced Korea into trade, giving Japan access to three of their ports. In 1894 Japan entered the first Sino-Japanese War with the Qing Empire to affirm their influence over Korea. Japan proved victorious, leading the Qing Empire to cede Taiwan, including the Penghu Islands, to Japan. Japan furthered their expansion into Asia following their triumph in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. Defeating Russia's fleet, Japan maintained power over Korea, gained access to southern Manchuria, and asserted their strength as an empire. Furthermore as an Ally to the United Kingdom in World War I, Japan attacked and successfully occupied Germany's Pacific territories—the Mariana, Caroline and Marshall

[46] Amemiya quoted in Tokunaga, *Yuriko,* 14

Islands. Japan also acquired territory in Kiaochow Bay, China. With access to two hundred square miles of land, a naval base, and two railroads, Japan held great economic power over the Shandong Province in China.[47] At the end of World War I, Japan was recognized for their military and industrial power when delegates were invited to participate in the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. Japan joined the United States, United Kingdom, Italy and France in the formation of the League of Nations. In the following decade, Japan continued to build on the power and resources gained through land acquisition and their alliance with the West.

Japan's globally prominent status following their victory in the Russo- Japanese War influenced United States immigration law. The 1907-08 Gentlemen's Agreement serves as a clear example. The Agreement was made to appease the Japanese government's anger over the 1906 San Francisco School Board decision to segregate Asian students.[48] The policy was clearly aimed at Japanese students as Chinese children were already in segregated schools, and the actual number of Japanese American school-aged children was not large. When the Japanese government was made aware of the issue, their leaders expressed their disappointment. As a response, President Theodore Roosevelt intervened to negotiate an agreement. California schools agreed to include English-speaking Japanese students in public schools as long as the Japanese government stopped the distribution of passports to Japanese laborers who may have held aspirations to migrate to the United States. However, the Agreement allowed parents, wives and children of laborers already residing in the United States to emigrate.

The urban and rural Japanese American communities were shaped by the Gentlemen's Agreement and the newly legalized entry of women. Amemiya's mother Chiyo was one of an

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[47] Dickinson, Frederick R., *World War I and the triumph of a new Japan, 1919–1930*. Vol. 39. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). 40.
[48] See also Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States Since 1850* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988).

estimated ten thousand Japanese women who entered the West Coast as picture brides between 1908 and 1920.[49] Prior to the Ladies Agreement in 1921, prohibiting the emigration of Japanese picture brides, the population of females grew, representing 34.5% of Japanese people in the continental United States.[50] Unlike the majority of other Asian immigrants, instead of living in large bachelor communities Japanese immigrants were able to marry and have children in the United States. This allowed them to more quickly build a community with second-generation children.

Although her dance training with Ishii was unique, thousands of young, U.S.-born Japanese Americans like Amemiya were sent to Japan to live with relatives and attend schools. These students were called kibei, which means "to return home to America." Issei parents were motivated to send their nisei children to Japan for several reasons. Like Amemiya, many nisei were educated in Japan to be immersed in Japanese language and culture. Some families could save money if their Japanese relatives helped to raise their children, as the dollar had greater economic value then the yen in the early 1930s.[51] Several issei parents, however, sent their children to Japan out of great concern for their future in the United States. In the decades leading to World War II, Japan became less of an ally and was perceived as a threat. The West Coast passed several anti-Asian legislation and policies that restricted mobility and economic growth for Japanese immigrants and their families. Issei parents feared that racial tensions could escalate

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[49] Japanese Association of America, *Zaibei Nihonjinshi* (History of Japanese in America) (San Francisco: Japanese Association of America, 1940), 90.
[50] Ronald Takaki, *A History of Asian Americans: Strangers from a Different Shore* (New York: First Back Bay, 1998), 46-47.
[51] Exchange rate at this time favored the dollar. See Yuji Ichioka, "*Dai Nisei Mondai*: Changing Japanese Immigrant Conceptions of the Second-Generation Problem, 1902-1941." in *Before internment: essays in prewar Japanese American history,* eds Gordon Chang and Eiichiro Azuma (California: Stanford University Press, 2006), 33-34.

and lead to mass deportation of Japanese people, regardless of their citizenship status.[52] They hoped their children would have greater opportunities if fluent in English and Japanese, and would be able to live in either country. However, despite their parents' best intentions many kibei struggled in Japan and in the United States and, like Amemiya, felt disconnected from their own families. The following section reviews the anti-Asian and anti-immigrant laws that were enacted in the early 1900s and further articulates the dilemmas issei parents grappled with raising Japanese American children in a racially hostile environment.

Anti-Asian Climate in the West Coast

Anti-Asian sentiment brewed in Hawaii and the West Coast with the arrival of laborers in the late 1800s. The Page Act of 1875 was the first federal restrictive immigration law in the Unites States prohibiting the entry of "undesirable" Asian immigrants, which included individuals assumed to be prostitutes and criminals. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 soon followed, placing an absolute 10-year moratorium on Chinese laborers. Organized effort by groups like San Francisco's Asiatic Exclusion League (AEL) worked to limit the rights of Japanese immigrants in early 1900. Similar to the ideas expressed in the anti-Chinese movement, leaders in the anti-Japanese movement believed Japanese laborers threatened the economy and as foreigners lacked the ability to integrate into American society.

The growing anti-Japanese movement gained global recognition when they took aim at nisei children. Following the formation of AEL in 1905, the San Francisco School Board announced in 1906 an order to segregate Japanese American students. While the school board did not succeed in removing Japanese American students from their public schools as a result of the President's intervention, a compromise was reached with the aforementioned Gentlemen's

[52] Ichioka, *Dai Nisei Mondai*, 18-20.

Agreement which restricted the entry of Japanese laborers. As discussed earlier, different from Chinese immigrants, Japanese immigrants had some political leverage, as Japan had gained power following their victory in the Russo-Japanese war. However, as the San Francisco School Board case demonstrated, the influence of the Japanese government was limited and Japanese immigrants continued to faced mistreatment and discrimination.

In the decades that followed several more policies were enforced to limit Japanese Americans from acquiring rights as landowners, tenants, and business owners. Even Japanese Americans who had citizenship were considered too different and incapable of assimilation.[53] Beyond cultural norms, legislation was also shaped by those who believed that Asians were "backwards," "depraved" and "otherworldly," an ideology Edward Said terms Orientalism.[54] In 1913 California enacted the first Alien Land Act prohibiting "aliens ineligible to citizenship" the right to own or long-term lease land. Issei farmers found ways around the law by creating corporations with other Japanese immigrants and purchasing land as a company, or by naming their American-born children, or a sympathetic white colleague, the property owner.[55] However, with authorities recognizing these workarounds, in 1920 the land law was amended to prohibit Japanese immigrants from short term leasing, sharecropping, and purchasing land as a company. Another restriction was written into law in 1923, barring American-born children from holding land in trust for alien parents. In addition to California, fourteen other States enforced similar laws restricting non-citizens from land and property ownership.[56] Alongside restrictions targeting

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[53] Anti-immigrant policy justified the exclusion of Japanese and other Asian immigrants by determining that the race was too different, alien and "unassimilable" to become citizens. See Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal aliens and the making of modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

[54] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

[55] Takaki, *A History of Asian Americans,* 203.

[56] Cherstin Lyon. "Alien land laws," Densho Encyclopedia, last modified December 1, 2017, http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Alien%20land%20laws/

farmers, the California Fish and Game Commission also targeted Japanese immigrants, denying commercial fishing licenses to "aliens ineligible to citizenship."[57] As Japanese farmers and fishermen endured such constraints their concerns grew beyond the stability of their business operations; they also feared for their future in an increasingly hostile society.

On the national level, in the years following World War I, restrictions on immigration and access to citizenship continued. In 1921 the U.S. and Japanese governments reached an agreement, called the Ladies' Agreement, ending the distribution of passports to Japanese picture brides. With the Gentlemen's Agreement already in place, this halted most emigration from Japan. In the following year, in September 1922, Congress passed the Cable Act, which declared that U.S.-born Asian females would lose their citizenship if they married an alien. Two months later the Supreme Court ruled in *Ozawa v. United States* that Japanese immigrants could not become naturalized U.S. citizens based on their race.

Plaintiff Takao Ozawa was born in Kanagawa prefecture in 1875 and immigrated to San Francisco in 1894. He had a record of continuous residency in the United States for over 20 years; he was educated and employed in the United States, spoke only English and was a Christian. The court ruled, however, that Ozawa was not "white" or "of the Caucasian race," deeming him ineligible for American citizenship.[58] The results of the Ozawa case ended the fight for Japanese immigrants to gain citizenship and further stimulated the anti-Japanese movement. With the momentum gained from the alien land laws and the Ozawa case, Congress passed the

[57] See Abe v. Fish and Game Commission in Brian Niiya, *Encyclopedia of Japanese American history: An A-to-Z reference from 1868 to the present* (New York: Facts on File, 2001), 108.
[58] See Yuji Ichioka. "The Early Japanese Immigrant Quest for Citizenship: The Background of the 1922 Ozawa Case." *Amerasia Journal* 4:2 (1977): 1-22.

Johnson-Reed Act, or the Immigration Act of 1924, stopping the entry of new immigrants from Japan, and all Asian nations except the Philippines.[59]

Dai Nisei Mondai: The Nisei Problem

As Japanese immigrants faced limited access to rights, issei leaders confronted what they termed the *dai nisei mondai,* or the "nisei problem." Second-generation Japanese American citizenship was a difficult concept to comprehend by those within and outside the community on the legislative and cultural level. Under the terms of citizenship children born in the United States to Japanese fathers were given dual citizenship; they were American citizens by the rule of *jus soli,* and Japanese citizen by the rule of *jus sanguinis.* Despite access to dual citizenship, many nisei did not feel a sense of loyalty to either nation. Some nisei who did not feel a connection to their parents' home sought to prove their loyalty to the United States by revoking their dual citizenship. Despite such acts of patriotism– or perhaps a strategy to survive a hostile racial climate– Japanese Americans continued to struggle to develop a sense of belonging in the United States.[60]

In addition to questions regarding citizenship, issei leaders mobilized around the issue of nisei education. Many issei laborers did not expect to stay in the United States, and assumed they and their young children would eventually return to Japan. In the 1900s Japanese language schools in the West Coast reflected this idea, preparing students to be able to enroll in their appropriate grade-level in Japan. However, as the nisei population grew from a few hundred in 1900 to nearly 30,000 in the 1920s, issei leaders questioned the role of a Japanese education for American-born children.[61] As children grew up in an increasingly hostile society, issei parents

[59] See Bill Ong Hing. *Making and Remaking Asian America Through Immigration Policy, 1850-1990* (California: Stanford University Press, 1993).
[60] Ichioka, *Dai Nisei Mondai*, 12.
[61] Ibid, 10.

faced a dilemma. If they remained in the United States, would they raise their children as Americans or as Japanese? Leaders in the issei community debated the issue, and over time agreed that if Japanese families chose to remain in the United States, Japanese language schools would be a supplement to an American education. In 1912 Japanese American education leaders declared that nisei children would be "educated as permanent residents" of the United States with the ability to "stand up for the rights and privileges of the Japanese people among Americans."[62] Despite their stated commitment to privilege a child's American education, Japanese educators continued to face challenges by local officials. In 1921 and 1923, the California State Legislature enforced strict policies on private foreign language schools that aimed to control teacher certification procedures, course content, and hours of operation. In 1927 the Supreme Court ruled such regulations were unconstitutional and Japanese language schools continued to run under the leadership of the community.[63] Moving forward, Japanese language educators continued to balance the needs of their students, with the demands of the shifting political climate.

Following the implementation of the 1924 immigration legislation, issei leaders looked to the nisei generation to determine the future of Japanese people in the United States. With immigration halted and access to citizenship denied, the community felt the urgency to re-examine the "nisei problem." Issei parents who were raising their children in the West Coast were concerned about a range of issues facing the next generation, from education and employment, to marriage and children, to the diminishing knowledge of Japanese language and culture.[64] Some parents struggled with communication and felt disconnected from their children.

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[62] Kamada Masayoshi quoted in Ichioka, *Dai Nisei Mondai*, 15.
[63] For details on the 1927 Supreme Court ruling on foreign language education, see Ichioka, 24.
[64] Issei leaders debated Japanese ethics and values, or the "Japanese spirit." Issei leaders did not agree on one definition, however, the "Japanese spirit" was often characterized as loyalty to nation, respect for parents and elders, a strong will in men, and gentleness and tranquility in women. The "Japanese spirit" was debated in relationship to how to include "moral education" in language schools. Heightened after

Others worried that their children were growing up with feelings of rejection, exclusion, and racial inferiority. Many issei leaders believed that their concerns could be alleviated if white Americans could better understand and accept Japanese culture, thereby inviting nisei children to also embrace their Japanese identity. As children of Japanese heritage with U.S. citizenship, the nisei generation was charged to facilitate this exchange of information by acting as the bridge, or *kakehashi,* between U.S. and Japan.

One influential issei leader, Kyutaro Abiko, held tight to the idea that communication and education could resolve misunderstanding and eliminate discriminatory policy.[65] Abiko was the publisher of the widely circulated San Francisco Japanese newspaper, *Nichibei Shimbun.* He believed if nisei were going to act as a bridge they must have first-hand experience in Japan. To increase connection to, and interest in Japan, Abiko and his newspaper sponsored free, cultural exchange trips called *kengakudan*. In 1925, eleven young nisei high school and college students were selected for the first *kengakudan* through a voting system managed by the *Nichibei Shimbun*. En route to Japan the group took classes on Japanese etiquette and social customs with Abiko's wife, Yonako Abiko. Educated in Japan at a private Methodist mission school and Tsuda College, which was founded by her older brother, Yonako was aware of the strict social hierarchies practiced in Japan. She wanted to prepare the nisei students so that they could counter the stereotypes that American-born Japanese were improperly behaved, ignorant and lacked

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nisei criminal activities, including a murder of a white child by a Japanese American in Hawaii. See Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 124- 134.

[65] Abiko believe that Japanese immigrants were different from other racial minorities in that whites were threatened by their potential superiority. See Yuji Ichioka, "*Kengakudan: The Origin of Nisei Study Tours of Japan*," in *Before internment: essays in prewar Japanese American history,* eds Gordon Chang and Eiichiro Azuma (California: Stanford University Press, 2006), 55.

civility.[66] The tour group spent three months seeing cultural landmarks and visiting major cities including Tokyo, Yokohama, Kyoto, Hiroshima, and Nara. Kyutaro Abiko relied on his personal contacts to organize visits with the Japanese elite including members of the Japanese Diet, the Foreign Minister, American ambassador to Japan, and representative from major corporations. Upon their return to the United States, the nisei students were featured at bilingual community events sharing their experience and articulating their appreciation of their parents' culture. The young nisei's enthusiasm influenced their peers to be curious about Japan, and encouraged the development of several more tours sponsored by other organizations into the mid-1930s.

Nisei participants of the cultural exchange tours affirmed that they experienced personal growth from learning more about Japan; however, issei leaders and Japanese government officials expected more. As the bridge generation, nisei participants were expected to educate the American public, increase understanding between races, and thereby alleviate tensions between them. When the Japanese military initiated battles in Manchuria in 1931, and later, with the Republic of China in 1937, the nisei students were also expected to understand and explain international matters concerning Japan. In his 1931 New Year's message, the Japanese Ambassador Debuchi Katsumi directed his attention to the nisei generation, stating, "You are expected to be the most effective of the connecting links between Japan and America."[67] To encourage these discussions in a public forum, the Japanese consul in Southern California organized speech and essay competitions. Nisei students were rewarded if they could express their loyalty to the United States, advocate for Japan, and explain to their American peers why the actions of the Japanese military were justified. Such ideals were articulated by nisei Shizuko

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[66] Some Japanese elites believed that the United States government enacted anti-Japanese legislation because the American-born Japanese were so poorly behaved. In other words, poor nisei behavior was believe to be one of the causes of exclusion. See Ichioka, "*Kengakudan*," 61.
[67] quoted in Ichioka, *Dai Nisei Mondai*, 30.

Sasaki, second prize essay winner, "From our perspective as Japanese-American, we simply cannot afford to stand by idly…[W]e must study the Manchurian question in depth in order to dispel the misunderstandings Americans have and to preserve the peace between the United States Japan."[68]

Most nisei youth, however, were not like Sasaki and did not feel comfortable making statements in support of Japan, or acting as a mediator between the two nations. In a survey ordered by the Foreign Minister of Japan, and conducted by consulates across the United States, the results pointed to the nisei generation's confusion and inability to meet set expectations.[69] The Seattle consul was shocked to learn that some nisei were afraid of, or felt intimidated by, their American peers. Furthermore, some disparaged their issei parents, and were embarrassed about their heritage.[70] Many issei leaders were disappointed by the lack of leadership and confidence by nisei students. The nisei generation, however, were not educated about the actions of the Japanese military and as racial minorities did not feel safe speaking on behalf of a potential enemy nation. Instead of re-evaluating their expectations, many issei leaders made assumptions that nisei students were "afflicted with self-hatred" and too Americanized to take on the role as a bridge between two nations.[71]

Like nisei youth, kibei were also expected to positively represent both the United States and Japan. As American citizens with a Japanese education, kibei students like Amemiya were idealized by issei leaders for their ability to navigate two distinct languages and cultures.[72]

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[68] Ibid, 31.
[69] Ibid, 32.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ichioka, *Dai Nisei Mondai*, 40.
[72] In 1935 nisei middle and high school students were recruited to enroll in Japanese schools by the Japanese Ministry of Education. While the Ministry's outreach efforts were promoted as a transnational bridge-building project, the Ministry's actual plan was to expand Japanese colonial power by education American-born Japanese youth. See Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, 145-151.

However, many kibei felt out of place and struggled in both nations. A number of kibei students felt isolated and some were bullied by their Japanese peers for being outsiders.[73] To make matters worse, the Japanese press and police often scrutinized kibei as well as nisei youth visiting or temporarily living in Japan. For example, in 1933 an Osaka newspaper published an article about a young Hawaii-born, nisei woman working as a waitress in a café, and alluded to how such a job could lead to prostitution. Nisei youth who socialized together in cafes and dance halls were also criticized as hedonistic and lacking social modesty. As the Pacific War neared, nisei social groups that formed in Japan were also questioned and placed under surveillance for their potential anti-Japanese political beliefs.[74] While criminalized by Japanese society, the young nisei felt that their behavior was no different than that of their American peers.

Upon returning to the United States, kibei nisei continued to face challenges. Kibei students who had left as young children fell out of step with their Japanese American peers as their social worlds differed greatly. Some lacked English-language skills and had difficulty finding employment.[75] Unable to meet Japanese social standards, and lacking language proficiency for the American work world, many kibei were caught in a double bind. Struggling to meet the demands of two cultures, kibei young people did not feel empowered to be a bridge of understanding.

In 1937 Yuriko Amemiya returned to California to face similar challenges as her kibei peers. Growing up without her mother, she looked forward to their reunion. She explained, "I imagined that living with my Mother, my life would be less lonely, happier and secure."[76] Amemiya arrived in Los Angeles where she met her mother and was introduced to her mother's

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[73] Minoru Kiyota, *Beyond Loyalty: The Story of a Kibei* (Honolulu. University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 24.
[74] Azuma, *Between Two Empires,* 151-156.
[75] Ichioka, *Dai Nisei Mondai,* 45.
[76] quoted in Tokunaga, *Yuriko*, 18.

third husband, Douglas Mitsuhashi. Despite her desire to reconnect, unfortunately, Amemiya struggled to live with her mother and new stepfather. Amemiya sought to live a more independent life. After two months she left and worked as an au pair to pay for room and board. To improve her career options she took English, history and physical education classes at Belmont High School. She also returned to dance and picked up part-time work as a florist and later as a seamstress.[77] Amemiya took classes at Dorothy Lyndall's dance studio and began to perform throughout Los Angeles as a member of Lyndall's Junior Trio Company.[78] Along with Lyndall's works, Amemiya performed her own choreography and, under Lyndall's advice, also took master classes in Japanese classical dance and martial arts. Amemiya's performance garnered public attention and she was asked to present at Dance Laboratory Theater in Los Angeles in May 1941, and also danced as a guest artist with The Modern Ballet Group of San Francisco in August of the same year. She was also invited to be a guest dancer with the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Dance Club. This granted Amemiya access to take master classes featuring the techniques of Doris Humphrey, Martha Graham and Hanya Holm.

As a kibei Amemiya learned to normalize overwork. She was the valedictorian in her school in Japan. After returning to California, she re-enrolled in an American high school, yet again receiving outstanding grades. She juggled the demands of wage-earning work, while also pursuing her dance career in a predominantly white field. Just as she had as a high school student, she met the demands placed on her by pushing herself to be "good at everything." Amemiya was persistent and driven, and established an extraordinary work ethic.

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[77] Tokunaga, *Yuriko*, 26.

[78] Amemiya's stepfather had connections with the performing arts community. Mitsuhashi took voice lessons with Manuel Galea who was married to choreographer and dancer Myra Kinch. Kinch introduced Amemiya to her dance instructor Dorothy Lyndall. Disconnected from her mother and her former dance mentor Konami Ishii, Amemiya was drawn to Lyndall's compassionate and nurturing teaching.

Amemiya's work ethic was also necessary in an elite and exclusionary dance world. Despite the success by modern dancers in addressing aspects of gender and class inequity, the art form remained less accessible by racial minorities. Amemiya confronted Orientalist beliefs that dismissed Asians as exotic foreigners, or denied them access to the stage. The following section examines how white American modern dance choreographers contended with representation of race, moving from Orientalist objectification to abstraction. This discussion is followed by an examination of Amemiya's dance lineage and training in Japan with avant-garde artists.

Orientalism in American modern dance

In the same historical moment when Asians were denied entry and rights to citizenship — let alone self-representation – the prominent white American, modern dance choreographer Ruth St. Denis sought inspiration from "the Orient." Popular for several decades, St. Denis circulated her own understanding of movement, music and costuming of the East, and in doing so reproduced reductive and objectifying Orientalist ideals. Credited as one of the pioneers of American modern dance, St. Denis' choreography reveals the history of Orientalism and racism embedded in the foundation of the form.

Choreographed and performed in 1906, St. Denis's popular piece *Radha* drew inspiration from a non-specified culture and region within India. Wearing a voluminous skirt, an ornamental top and jewelry around her wrists and ankles, St. Denis featured herself as the goddess Radha. The dance began with St. Denis sitting in silence, her legs folded in lotus position. A procession of South Asian men, playing the role of Brahman priests, surrounded her in a semi-circle. As the music of Delibes's opera *Lakme* played, St. Denis danced combining her training in ballet with large sweeping twirls and an occasional coquettish Indian-inspired pose. The South Asian men watched from a distance and remained silent. Their bodies never came in contact with each other

or with St. Denis.

While her choreography was interpreted as earnest, artistic and groundbreaking, St. Denis's version of Indian dance clearly perpetuated conventional Orientalist ideologies.[79] Edward Said introduces Orientalism as systems of knowledge created to determine European superiority over an imagined Orient.[80] Adhering a fixed location to a tremendous mass of land covering several different systems of beliefs, socio-political histories and cultures, the Orient is defined by both sweeping generalizations and intimate specificities. As a site of study the area is subdivided and dissected, yet the knowledge produced is applied indiscriminately across identities and locations. Orientalism works in these contradictory terms, creating an area of study based on a "confusing amalgam of imperial vagueness and precise detail."[81] St. Denis's practice of Orientalism ignored cultural specificity and conflated diverse identities to a simplified and acceptable representation of "the Other" that was assumed to be subordinate to the West.

St. Denis's *Radha* catered to an American audience that was unfamiliar with South Asians and relied on preconceptions and stereotypes to make her dance and character accessible. Dance studies scholars Jane Desmond, Priya Srininvasan, and Yutian Wong have critiqued St. Denis, juxtaposing her mobility as a white woman against that of the restricted Asian laborer and immigrant of past and present. St. Denis's "innovative" Orientalist choreography allowed her to perform her sensuality and spirituality while Asian women were deemed "undesirable" prostitutes, incapable of acquiring citizenship.[82] St. Denis later employed three South Asian male dancers who also confronted mistreatment through segregationist laws and had been denied

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[79] Jane Desmond, "Dancing out the Difference: Cultural Imperialism and Ruth St. Denis's "Radha" of 1906," *Signs* 17, no.1 (1991): 26.
[80] Said, *Orientalism*, 55.
[81] Ibid, 50.
[82] Yutian Wong, "Towards a New Asian American Dance Theory: Locating the Dancing Asian American Body," *Discourses in Dance* 1, no. 1 (2002): 76.

citizenship under anti-Asian immigration acts.[83] One dancer Mohammed Ismail brought a lawsuit against St. Denis as he never received credit for teaching St. Denis aspects of choreography she performed on stage. The lawsuit was dismissed and her South Asian dancers are rarely credited as innovative choreographers. St. Denis's *Radha* gestured towards "the Orient," yet Asian American bodies, even those that shared the stage with her, remained at a distance.

Dancers of the 1920s and 1930s turned away from the lavish costumes of earlier choreographers like Ruth St. Denis and sought to be politically engaged with domestic and international matters.[84] By the end of the Progressive era the United States had undergone extensive political reform. Having witnessed the aftermath of World War I, rapid developments in science, technology and industrialism, the enforcement of prohibition laws, and the women's suffrage movement, artists were motivated to address the role of art and artistic expression in a changing society. Modern dancers made a distinct contribution through their attention to emotions and use of live bodies. Exploring themes such as U.S. westward expansion, and wrestling with ideas such as the costs and benefits of independence, autonomy, and loyalty, dancers staged dynamic pieces with bodies working with, and against other bodies. They expressed the emotional resonances of a world in turmoil, confronting changes and resolving divisions. Looking inward, choreographers were also committed to conveying their intellectual and affective process. Combining these efforts modern dancers aimed to address "national concerns through a universal framework" of spirituality and human emotions.[85]

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[83] Priya Srinivasan, *Sweating Saris: Indian dance as transnational labor* (Philidelphia: Temple University Press, 2011).
[84] Julia L. Foulkes, *Modern Bodies: Dance and American modernism from Martha Graham to Alvin Ailey*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 15.
[85]Ibid*,* 133.

American modern dancers of this period struggled with questions about the role of dance in nation building.

Choreographers of this era were interested in establishing modern dance as an American art form by affirming its roots in "indigenous" cultures. In "The Dance in America," Graham stated African American and Native American dances were foundational to accomplishing this endeavor. As immigrants Asians were not included in Graham's conceptualization of America. However, she cited African Americans as "indigenous" despite their capture as property and forced entry into the Americans as enslaved people. Perhaps Graham was more interested in exploring primitivism, ideals often attached to inaccurate stereotypes of Native Americans and African Americans. Speaking with great generalization Graham claimed:

> The Negro dance is a dance toward freedom, a dance to forgetfulness, often Dionysiac in its abandon and the raw splendor of its rhythm—it is a rhythm of disintegration. The Indian dance, however, is not for freedom, or forgetfulness, or escape, but for awareness of life, complete relationship with that world in which he finds himself; it is a dance for power, a rhythm of integration.[86]

Graham explored her theory of Native Americans' "awareness of life" in several pieces throughout her career. In 1931 she choreographed and performed in *Primitive Mysteries.* Her examination of Native American religion grappled with the inclusion of Catholicism and Catholic iconography into indigenous practices.[87] Graham continued to be inspired by Native American culture in *Two Primitive Canticles* (1931), *Frontier* (1935), and *Appalachian Spring* (1944).

While Graham may have admired Native American culture, her lack of knowledge and connection to indigenous communities led to the reproduction of problematic stereotypes. Making sweeping generalizations about Native American culture reduced and objectified a

[86] Martha Graham, "The Dance in America," Trend 1, no.1 (March 1932): 5-6.
[87] Jacqueline Shea Murphy, *The People Have Never Stopped Dancing: Native American Modern Dance Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 153.

diverse racial group with different tribal affiliations, languages, religions, histories and geographies. Believing native culture provided a gateway to ancient life or human origins assumed that native people were less developed and evolved humans. The romanticized vision of indigenous people unaffected by history did little to acknowledge the mass genocide committed by white settlers and the ongoing oppression of tribal communities. Additionally Graham did not employ any Native American dancers, further perpetuating the notion that native people only existed in the past. Her desire to preserve Native American dances was not centered on advocating for the rights of indigenous people. She, like other choreographers of the time, expressed an interest on behalf of non-Native people seeking to be inspired or entertained by Native American artistry.

White artists also looked to African American culture and spirituality as a source of inspiration for music, movement and political content. Throughout the 1930s, Helen Tamaris, a white Jewish American choreographer was celebrated for her performances of a suite of dances she entitled *Negro Spirituals.* As a child of Russian immigrants she was an advocate for labor rights and a voice for class struggle. Her desire to dance to black spiritual music reflected her leftist politics as she sought to draw attention to racial injustice and acknowledge the influence of African Americans in shaping the nation.

Despite her politics and the availability of black dancers, however, her group pieces included only white women. Liberal white audiences were impressed by Tamaris's thoughtful choreography and felt sympathy towards African Americans, but not enough to protest her casting choices. Dance studies scholar Susan Manning argues that Tamaris performed "metaphorical minstrelsy," as she took on gestures to signal a racialized body without

embodying overt racialized caricature.[88] Manning states that while Tamaris aimed to honor African American culture she did little to challenge how artistry was consumed and assessed by the dominant white culture. Furthermore Tamaris' decision to choreograph to black spiritual music rather than explore her own Jewish heritage seemed to reflect the anti-Semitism of the time.[89] Dance historian Julia Foulkes suggests that her dances were made in effort to address widespread discrimination that she too experienced; however, her approach allowed her to veil her Jewish identity.[90] Through her performance of blackness, Tamaris asserted her privilege to contain and stand-in for the black body, thereby affirming her proximity to whiteness.

Although Tamaris critiqued racism and resisted the sexualization of her white female body, her dances did not greatly increase the visibility of her black colleagues.[91] African American choreographers like Edna Guy and Hemsley Winfield faced challenges from both critics and patrons in their efforts to produce modern dance. Black dancers of this period had to contend with primitivism, the notion that black culture was inferior, simple, under-evolved, and less logical, in comparison to the enlightened and refined European cultures.[92] Brenda Dixon Gottschild argues that the primitive was often featured in contradictory terms, as violent, dangerous, and hypersexual, as well as noble and stoic, or child-like and dim.[93] The primitive stereotype was viewed as "positive" by some white choreographers, assuming that black bodies were more instinctive, and free of restraint. Such beliefs were reductive; they essentialized black

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[88] Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance*, 10.
[89] Foulkes, *Modern Bodies,* 139.
[90] Some parallels can be made here with minstrelsy in that Jewish, Irish and Italian Americans who were not granted the same privileges as white Americans also performed in blackface to gain social mobility. See Eric Lott, *Love & Theft: Blackface minstrelsy and the American working class*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).
[91] Foulkes, *Modern Bodies,* 54.
[92] Brenda Dixon Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996), 35.; Anthea Kraut, *Choreographing the Folk: The dance stagings of Zora Neale Hurston* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 7.
[93] Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance*, 35.

bodies and limited opportunities for artists of color. Black dancing bodies were often naturalized as "primitive," making their acceptance into modern dance at times more challenging than their inclusion in the entertainment industry.[94] Modern dance critics discredited black dancers if they referenced African American vernacular, or accused them of mimicry if they deployed European or American technical forms.[95] African American modern dancers confronted many social barriers including the practice by white critics and choreographers to exclude, abstract, appropriate, and scrutinize their creative works.

The search for American "primitive origins" by white modern dancers reflected a history of erasure and exclusion. While choreographers such as St. Denis wore costumes to make a direct reference to other cultures, Graham and Tamaris referenced their sources of inspiration in more subtle ways. They abstracted the presence of racial identity by evacuating the body of any markers of representation. Manning theorizes how white choreographers simultaneously revealed and concealed racial difference on the concert stage in the early to mid-twentieth century. In addition to metaphoric minstrelsy, she critiques the use of "mythic abstraction," used by choreographers to dissolve markers of "otherness," allowing dancers to inhabit mythic worlds, detached from lived realities.[96] Abstract choreography, like Graham's *Primitive Mysteries*, did not rely on costumes, face paint or impersonation to make reference to non-white subjects. Mythic abstraction invited bodies of color, or white bodies to stand in to represent anybody.

Despite this seemingly equalizing idea, this choreographic strategy did little to address the institutional racism that excluded artists of color from accessing modern dance, and only further empowered white bodies to perform as, or on behalf of, racialized others. As an Asian

[94] See Stefanie L. Batiste, *Darkening Mirrors: Imperial Representation in Depression Era African American Performance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).
[95] Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance,* 38
[96] Ibid, 118.

American modern dancer, Amemiya could not escape her racially marked and gendered body. Regardless of her skill level as a modern dancer and choreographer, she needed to be able to adjust to meet Orientalist ideals. Such expectations proved that, despite efforts by white American modern dance choreographers to abstract and universalize the human experience, dancers who were domestic racial minorities continued to be held to different standards that limited their reach. Manning asserts that choreographic methods to abstract the body aimed to veiled markers of difference to construct an universal body, but in actuality, accomplished to further affirm whiteness.[97]

Amemiya's dance training with Konami Ishii challenged the Orientalism and erasure practiced in American modern dance. The following section discusses Amemiya's experience studying with avant-garde artists who made works in response to Japan's rapidly changing society between the 1910s to 1930s. These artists addressed tensions between national identity, militarism and individualism and created works that spoke against an essentialized Japanese identity.

Amemiya Dance Training with Transnational Japanese Artists

Born during the Meiji Restoration period (1869-1912), and reaching adulthood in the Taisho period (1912-1925), early modernist artists such as Baku Ishii witnessed dramatic changes to Japanese society within a short period. In 1853 Japan's economy was reconstructed as the nation was forced into international trade. In the Meiji era the feudal system was dismantled; the government changed to a cabinet system and the division of land was organized into fifty-one prefectures. Industrial machines were imported to increase the productivity of agriculture and textiles. Technology was also utilized to improve transportation, communication, and currency.

[97] Ibid.

By 1872 a train line connected Yokohama and Tokyo. Most city residents had access to electricity and the use of telegrams by1880. Tokyo's Imperial Theater was also built as a signal of Japan's ability to modernize, industrialize and compete as an equal power on the international sphere.

Baku Ishii (1886-1962) was a member of a cohort of artists influenced by Japan's rapidly changing society and rise in power. Born into a family of sake brewers with a father who was a politician, Baku Ishii had access to an elite education. After his time with Giovanni Vittorio Rossi at the Imperial Theater, Ishii collaborated with composer Kosaku Yamada and theater director Kaoru Osani in 1916 to form a short-lived group called *Shin Gekijo,* or New Theater.[98] Prior to the group's formation Osani traveled throughout Europe to study experimental theater, while Yamada studied at a music academy in Berlin. While in Germany, Yamada saw a performance by Isadora Duncan and was inspired by her "natural" movement. He went on to study Dalcroze's eurhythmics in Hellerau with another Japanese peer, theater designer Kazo Saito. The two also visited *Galerie Der Stur* and befriended the owner Herwarth Walden, a prominent figure of the German avant-garde art movement. Yamada returned to Japan and shared his study of Dalcroze with Ishii, and together they practiced what they called, *buyoshi*, or "choreographic poems."[99] Yamada believed dance should be created through the fusion of sound and movement, while Ishii was more interested in emotional expression seeing "the body as an expressive tool."[100] Inspired by multiple artists and disciplines, Ishii, Osani, Saito and Yamada envisioned New Theater to promote experimental collaborations between dance, music, theater and design.

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[98] Toshiharu Omuka, "Dancing and Performing: Japanese Artists in the Early 1920s at the Dawn of Modern Dance." Experiment 10, no. 1 (2004): 158.
[99] Ibid, 159.
[100] Gennifer Weisenfeld, M*avo: Japanese artist in the avant-garde: 1905-1931* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 234.

New Theater produced three shows in Japan in 1916 to mixed reviews. The first performance took place at the Imperial Theater. Ishii performed a piece entitled *Nikki no ippeji*, or "One page from my diary," with music composed by Yamada, and set design by Saito.[101] Ishii danced with crumpled fingers, creating jagged edges, and held his feet in awkward poses.[102] He was not interested in clean lines and showed his departure from his earlier ballet training. The performance had low attendance and faced some criticism. Takashi Iba, a music director, was not impressed by New Theater and called the production immature and "cosmopolitanism without national ground."[103] Ishii passionately disagreed with Iba stating that his work with Yamada sought to explore truth, not limited by national boundaries and racial distinction.[104] The second production continued to agitate some viewers as New Theater depicted sacred figures wrestling with their unholy desires. Ishii danced against Saito's set design of a temple, while Yamada played piano. Despite some backlash, the artists remained committed to their vision. They were not only highly collaborative, changing how theater was viewed, but also experimented with Asian and European art forms, blurring the lines of division and categorization.

Japanese artists like Ishii found inspiration in European and American artists, however, they were not seeking to simply imitate or reproduce Western ideals. Japanese artists of this period sought to respond to the restrictive feudal system that lingered from the Meiji period, as well as grapple with rapid changes with technology, industrialization and militarism.[105] Their exploration of modernity was not necessarily tied to assumptions of Western superiority, or

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[101] Omuka, "Dancing and Performing," 160.
[102] Dance historian Shiro Kusaka described Ishii's performance in Omuka "Dancing and Performing," 160
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Tsutomu Mizusawa, "The Artists Start to Dance: The Changing Image of the Body in Art of the Taisho Period." in *Being Modern in Japan: Culture and Society from the 1910s to the 1930s*, eds Elise K. Tipton and John Clark (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000)

desires to become more like the West. Rather, these Japanese artists were part of a larger global movement to explore ideas of political engagement, aesthetics and nation building.[106] With his collaborators in theater and design, Baku Ishii explored the body's expression of emotions and sought to make works that challenged assumptions about Japanese culture.

Japanese artists wanted to represent their own experience, including aspects of their everyday life however mundane. Taisho period painter Tetsugoro Yorozu, for example, critiqued works by Japanese artists that mirrored European body aesthetics. In *Nude Beauty* (1912) Yorozu painted an imperfect Japanese woman, comfortably lying on the grass. Countering the depiction of a tall slender woman like Botticelli's Venus de Milo, Yorozu's figure was short, fleshy and had distorted body proportions. Although Yorozu named Vincent van Gogh and Henri Matisse as influencing this piece, he also grounded his subject as Japanese; she wore a red *koshimaki*, a women's under garment that covers half the body, her breast and hips had subtle curves, and the landscape reflected Yorozu's hometown of Tsuchizawa.[107] Yorozu also experimented with the body in motion, finding inspiration from Japanese acrobats and tightrope walkers. Museum curator Tsutomu Mizusawa argues that Yorozu exhibited "the body as a dynamic field of potential power," and his paintings, that drew inspiration from Europe and Japan, challenged and expanded ideals of the body and its aesthetic representation.[108] Mizusawa suggests that Yorozu's paintings set the path for Japanese modern dancers like Ishii, and radical Mavo artist Tomoyoshi Murayama to further explore their bodies as producers of art.

New Theater disbanded after their third production; however, they continued to find opportunities to collaborate with other artists in Europe and in the United States. In 1917, Yamada left to find work in New York and developed projects with dancers Michio Ito and

[106] Weisenfeld, *Mavo*, 2.
[107] Mizusawa, "The Artists Start to Dance," 16.
[108] Ibid, 21.

Toshi Komori. In 1922, Ishii and Saito were drawn to experiment and perform in Europe. In Berlin, artists enthusiastically welcomed Ishii, allowing him to connect with Expressionist painter Erich Waske and dancers Mary Wigman and Rudolf Laban. In 1923 Ishii's acclaimed performance of *Torawaretaru hito* or "The Caught Man," was included in a German film, *Road to Beauty and Power*, featuring Wigman and Laban.[109] Ishii continued to travel in search of performance opportunities in London, Paris, New York, and San Francisco. Ishii's wife's sister Konami Ishii also joined as a performer in Paris. Although much less information is available on the mobility of Japanese female modern dancers, it seems Konami Ishii was able to travel and perform as Baku Ishii's sister in-law. In New York, Baku Ishii connected with Michio Ito and performed in Manhattan in January of 1925. After a show in San Francisco, Ishii returned to Japan to establish his dance school in March 1925.

Baku Ishii and his student Konami Ishii returned home after World War II as Japan embraced greater changes in their political, economic, and cultural landscape. By 1918 the first commoner, Takashi Hara, was appointed the Prime Minister of Japan; he was the first politician not from a "noble family" line. A two-party parliamentary government was also established with the *Seiyukai* and the *Kenseikai* representing the most influential parties of the time.[110] However, other political groups were also vocal, representing a diverse range of organizational affiliations. Some conservatives were against a representational government and believed that public officials should serve the emperor rather than the people. Others sought to return to a feudal system and were empowered to build the military and police state.[111] Socialists and Marxist-leftists were also present amongst workers, artists and intellectuals, and pushed for labor rights. Following World

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[109] Weisenfeld, *Mavo,* 234.

[110] Nazli Choucri, Robert C. North, and Susumu Yamakage, *The Challenge of Japan before World War II and After* (London: Routledge, 1992), 121.

[111] Frank Gibney, Introduction, in *Senso: The Japanese Remember the Pacific War: Letters to the Editor of Asahi Shimbun,* (New York: An East Gate Book, 1995), 5.

War I, unions successfully fought to improve conditions in factories and demanded greater health insurance for workers.[112] Such protections were timely and necessary as Japan's major corporations—Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo and Yasuda– entered the world economy, and the nation benefitted from postwar expansion in trade and industry.

Alongside the economic upswing, Japan's population grew and a new urban consumer culture was cultivated. The official census of 1920 accounted for over 55 million people, which marked a considerable increase from the estimate of 35 million in 1872.[113] Improved technology in transportation and communication encouraged this growing population towards urbanization. This movement was also assisted by an unforeseen natural disaster. Following the devastating 1923 Kanto earthquake, which killed an estimated 140,000 people and destroyed 600,000 homes and businesses, Tokyo was rebuilt with a modern vision.[114] Architects did not merely replace what was destroyed but created a new public environment. Structures were redesigned to meet revised safety standards, and roads, bridges and railways were constructed to ease access into and out of the city. Spacious parks, and chic shopping centers, movie houses and cafes were developed in the likeness of a European metropolis. Fashion trends inspired by Hollywood cinema were featured in storefronts and films, inviting Japanese consumers to develop their own cosmopolitan tastes. The term *modan,* a take on the English word "modern," gained popularity in the mid-1920s, and the phrases *moga* for modern girls and *mobo* for modern boys gained circulation. The moga and mobo took on Western dress and hairstyles and filled the cafes and dance halls. Urban centers would later expand and add railways connecting middle-class

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[112] Ibid, 4.
[113] Nazli Choucri, Robert C. North, and Susumu Yamakage, *The Challenge of Japan before World War II and After*, 119.
[114] John Dower, "Modernity and Militarism" in *The Brittle Decade: Visualizing Japan in the 1930s*, eds John Dower, Anne Nishimura Morse, Jacqueline M. Atkins, and Frederic Alan Sharf (Boston: MFA Publications, 2012), 14.

individuals and families to sports and leisure activities, amusement parks and theaters. With each new outlet, the growing city invited residents to become new consumers in Japan's growing capitalist culture.

However, not all were interested in cosmopolitan consumerism. The mid-1920s saw an increase in conservative State control. The enactment of the Peace Preservation Law of 1925, also known as the Maintenance of the Public Order Act, marked such a turn. The law increased police power to imprison individuals who challenged "nationally polity," threatened "private property" or caused any form of civil disobedience.[115] Conservatives praised the police for their efforts to restrain radical political ideology and curtail "immoral" activities of the younger generation indulging in the cafes, dance halls and theaters in urban centers. Police punished not only leftist intellectuals and artists, but also students, teachers, philosophers, scientists and laborers that criticized State policy, or merely studied communism and/or socialism.[116] The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Home Affairs worked in concert to regulate teacher training and aimed to eliminate dissenting ideas in young people. Dissonance took a violent turn in 1925 when a right-wing railroad switchman fatally stabbed Prime Minister Hara at the Tokyo station.

In 1927 as Japan faced an economic recession, the far right gained momentum. Incorporated into the world market, Japan's economy dropped when the European and American economies faltered. In a depression, Japan's rural population fell deeper into poverty. Young police officers from poor farming families began to resent urban residents for their luxuries and

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[115] Dickinson, *World War I and the Triumph of a New Japan, 1919-1930*, 96.
[116] Shinichi Suzuki. "State policy on innovations for education: implications and tasks for Japan." in *Education and Change in the Pacific Rim: meeting the challenges*. ed Keith Sullivan (Oxford: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 225.

blamed the “liberal” government for their democratic aims.[117] Anger also grew against foreign powers, especially the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union. Dissatisfied with politicians, right-wing groups called for economic development through military expansion.[118] By the 1930s ultranationalist groups gained power by taking action through a series of assassinations of political figures and wealthy business leaders.[119]

Nationalists were further emboldened to act after the Manchurian Incident. On September 18, 1931 Japanese troops staged a bombing, placing explosives on the tracks of the South Manchurian Railway near Mukden, an area of China they occupied. Although the explosion caused minimal damage and the tracks remained intact allowing a train to pass moments later, the event was a turning point for the Japanese military. Blaming the Chinese for the explosion, the action was used as a pretext to invade the northern province of Manchuria. The Japanese military took over the land and its raw materials, and in six months created the puppet state “Manchukuo.” In 1933, however, the League of Nations determined that Japan acted as the aggressor, thereby recommending Manchurian autonomy under Chinese sovereignty. In response Japan withdrew from the League of Nations, isolating themselves from the greater international community. The Japanese government expressed their dissatisfaction with the League and told their citizens that Japan’s military actions were justified as the nation sought to liberate Asia from Western colonialism; a “holy war” needed to be fought on behalf of the Japanese Emperor.[120] School children sang songs thanking soldiers and bowed to a photo of the

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[117] Gibney, Introduction, 5.
[118] Ibid, 6.
[119] Nazli Choucri, Robert C. North, and Susumu Yamakage, *The Challenge of Japan before World War II and After,* 140-141.
[120] Jeff Kingson, “Memories of 1931 Mukden Incident remain divisive,” The Japan Times, Sept 17, 2016, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2016/09/17/commentary/memories-1931-mukden-incident-remain-divisive/#.WpxBKJPwaRw

Emperor.[121] Stories of brave soldiers who died in combat or committed suicide rather than be captured were repeated in celebration of the loyal “samurai spirit.” Military culture flourished as Japan invaded Shanghai, captured Nanking and entered World War II against the United States.

In such a patriotic environment the presence of Western culture was deemed a threat, resulting in the heightened control, and the eventual closure of dance halls and nightclubs. Ballroom dance instructor Kiyoshi Hara recalled before the war there were eight dance halls in the Tokyo area.[122] He taught the waltz, quickstep and tango to young women, some who worked in dance halls, and to men including cadets from the Imperial Navy. In 1925, however, teaching ballroom dance presented more challenges. Neighbors complained to police about “men and women embracing” in his first teaching studio, and police stormed another studio when Hara was hosting a Christmas dance party on December 25, 1926.[123] Earlier that day Emperor Taisho passed away from a heart attack. Dance and music were prohibited on this day of mourning but Hara was not aware of the news. Police imprisoned Hara and the building owner overnight for violating the law. Dancing bodies were also regulated and surveilled. Swinging the hips and buttocks from left to right, and forwards and back was prohibited in 1930,[124] and later dance hall attendees had to identify themselves with their name, age, profession and residency prior to entry.[125] Eventually all dance hall owners were given a two-year notice before their closure, and halls filled to capacity when the last dance was held on October 31, 1940.

Amemiya lived and trained in Japan from 1929 to 1937, during this time of military expansion and authoritarianism. Despite strong state control and policing, leftist visual and

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[121] Gibney, Introduction, 7.
[122] Kiyoshi Hara, “Dancing into the Night.” In *Japan at War: An Oral History* ed Haruko Taya Cook and Theodore F. Cook (New York: The New Press, 1992), 61.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Miriam Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense: The Mass Culture of Japanese Modern Times,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 76.
[125] Hara, “Dancing into the Night,” 63.

performing artists challenged conservative ideologies and provided cultural critique. Tensions between conservative and liberal parties existed in the decades leading to war. This was demonstrated by the passing of the 1925 Peace Preservation Law and the Universal Male Suffrage Law, which increased access to voting rights to men beyond the elite class, in the same year. Artists were at the forefront in revealing these tensions and challenging social norms. Like Ishii's New Theater of the late 1910s, Mavo artists in the 1920s and the *ero-guro-nansensu* (translated to erotic grotesque nonsense) movement of the late 1920s, pushed political boundaries to address issues of nationality, gender, and class.

Mavo was an avant-garde group of young artists and writers who combined their radical politics with modernist aesthetics, and worked "consciously to put contradictions on the front page."[126] Often credited as one of their leaders, Tomoyoshi Murayama was interested in engaging the body to reveal the politics of everyday life in their changing society. He and other artists sought to express their ambivalence towards modernism, addressing it as "liberating yet alienating."[127] These contradictions were felt with changes in their economy, technology and Japan's embrace of the West. With advances in technology the manufacturing of goods increased, and public transportation was improved to allow greater public access to urban centers. Yet, the push to produce more and therefore consume more led to feelings of exploitation. Japanese internationalism affirmed their connection to the global community; however, the overwhelming influence of western ideologies often devalued Japanese cultural practices. Mavo's protest art performed in the streets, on stage, and in print, revealed these

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[126] Giichi Nakamura quoted in Gennifer Weisenfeld, *Mavo*, 1.
[127] Weisenfeld, *Mavo*, 3.

contradictions and destabilized social norms. In doing so Mavo exercised their vision to make the "destructive act" a "form of constructive criticism."[128]

Mavo's theater productions often critiqued the repression and criminalization of sexual desire. In 1924 Mavo artists staged "Dance of Death," a homoerotic piece featuring all men, one shirtless, one in body paint, and others in androgynous drag. Bodies were arranged in a vertical tableau; one man wearing high heels hung from the ceiling; below him a man languidly leaned against the wall with a cigarette in his mouth. Another man balanced on one leg and hovered over a body that lay supine and a couple seated on the floor in a gentle embrace. To the right of the couple, a man in a long coat leaned in, holding a hammer above a dancer's head. Using images of sensuality, eroticism and violence, Mavo confronted the rigidity of "publicly sanctioned morality."[129] Cross-dressing by men was only acceptable in the context of "traditional" kabuki theaters. Any expression of sexual desire was considered damaging to the public, as it was believed such acts of selfish indulgence weakened fidelity to the nation and family. In protest, Mavo artists experimented with their sexuality, including homoeroticism, to affirm desire as a human emotion necessary in any autonomous person. Mavo artist Tatsuo Okada argued that desire was especially needed to motivate individuals to initiate action. Okada articulated, "Where there is no impulse, there are no humans, no daily life, no revolution and no fights."[130]

Erotic desire was also a theme in the *ero guro nansensu* movement (shortened to ero-guro) that began in the late 1920s. Visible in mass culture and in subversive spaces, ero –guro

[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid, 239.
[130] Okada quoted in Weisenfeld, *Mavo,* 241.

played with criminality, decadence, necrophilia and other forms of deviance.[131] While the cultural phenomena seemed like a rebellious reaction to militarism, scholars argue for a more nuanced analysis.[132] Hitting its peak following the Manchurian Incident, ero-guro did not dismiss war culture but rather incorporated war imagery, including depictions of poverty and death, into its aesthetic representation.[133] Inundated by horrific stories of soldier deaths and suicides, readers were drawn to, and repelled by these vivid accounts. Ero-guro experimented with these conflicting emotions of fear and desire. Art historian Gennifer Weisenfeld provides an analysis using the image of the gas mask. Gas masks were advertised as a necessary mechanism for safety and survival. Yet, its function to be used after the release of poisonous gas, triggered great fear and reminded consumers of their vulnerabilities. Aesthetically the mask erased facial features and depersonalized bodies, as depicted in the horde of young women marching in the 1936 Gas Mask Parade. Weisenfeld argues that the endless stream of masked females created a "dystopian futurescape" that stimulated both pleasure and anxiety.[134] As depicted with gas masks or the detailed descriptions of a soldier's death, ero guro spoke to dark fantasies that explored the sensuality of death and erotics of annihilation.[135]

Although not as well documented, it seems modern dance had a larger mainstream following than performances affiliated with Mavo and ero guro.[136] Amemiya recalled that during her multi-city tours across Japan, enthusiastic audiences welcomed Konami Ishii's company.

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[131] For extensive analysis on ero guro nansensu see Miriam Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense: The Mass Culture of Japanese Modern Times,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).
[132] See Gennifer Weisenfeld (2002) and Miriam Silverberg (2006).
[133] Maki Kaneko, "War Heroes of Modern Japan: Early 1930s War Fever and the Three Brave Bombers," in *Conflict of Interest: Art and War in Modern Japan* ed Philip K.Hu (Saint Louis: Saint Louis Art Museum, 2016), 79.
[134] Weisenfeld, Gennifer. "Gas Mask Parade: Japan's Anxious Modernism." *Modernism/modernity* 21, no. 1 (2014): 181.
[135] Kaneko, "War Heroes of Modern Japan," 79.
[136] Weisenfeld, *Mavo,* 234.

Perhaps this was because modern dance represented European refinement as bodies covered by long shapeless dresses moved with grace and control. There was no vulgar hip gyration and no prolonged contact between bodies. Performed on stage by a company of young women who were well trained and disciplined, Ishii's performances were not necessarily viewed as acts of protest like those by Mavo. Still, because Baku and Konami Ishii were influenced by European art movements, they might have received some critique from conservatives calling for an end to engagement with the West. Amemiya experienced performing modern dance in such a nuanced environment where, despite the Japanese government's charge towards regulation and reform, she found acceptance and praise.

Beyond learning technique and gaining performance experience, with Konami Ishii Amemiya learned to dance among other Japanese young women. She was in an environment where she was a part of the ethnic majority. Although she might have felt some degree of difference because of her kibei identity, she was not a racialized other and was not limited by assumptions of an essentialized Japanese identity. Her teacher Konami Ishii did not train in Japanese classical dance and did not expect that of her students. She came from a lineage of elite, experimental, avant-garde dancers who rejected classical forms whether it was ballet or kabuki, and sought to make creative work with their collaborators from Japan, Europe and the United States. These artists were responding to their changing societies and were moved to question notions of tradition. Amemiya's teachers were politically engaged artists grappling with Japanese modernism. Each of them, including Amemiya, was a part of the transnational circulation of modern dance that challenged Orientalist assumptions about the Asian body.

A Place in-between

When Amemiya returned to California the expectation was that she should acquire a more legible identity as a Japanese dancer. Although she would continue to rely on her skills as a modern dancer, she was advised to learn traditional Japanese forms to increase her visibility. Amemiya was not alone in navigating such cultural expectations. While white Americans often assumed that the Japanese enclave in California remained tied to an Orientalist "timeless past," in actuality second-generation Japanese American women formed social clubs to navigate their identities between their family roles, gendered expectations, and American society.[137] Historian Valerie Matsumoto highlights that these organizations provided mentorship, service opportunities, cultural education, social activities, and a safe haven from everyday racism and sexism. Matsumoto argues that through social clubs young women learned to be the "social arbiter" between the Japanese immigrant population and mainstream culture.[138]

Through regular social gatherings, discussion groups, workshops and large public events, young nisei women found ways not only to support each other but also to develop important skills in organizing and mentorship. Although club activities that addressed topics such as maintaining femininity encouraged women to stay within normative gender roles, the club's peer mentorship structure challenged sexism by inviting young women to take on positions of leadership. Alongside the goal of deepening peer relationships, most clubs worked to participate in both American and Japanese cultures. Matsumoto describes how in some clubs members learned Japanese history and etiquette, practiced Japanese language, and developed proficiency in traditional art forms like *ikeban*a. Other clubs took a greater interest in American culture,

[137] Beginning in the 1920s, young Japanese American woman in Los Angeles joined social clubs, often provided by the YWCA or the Buddhist church, to develop friendship and networks of peers support. Valerie Matsumoto's research indicates that the 400 to 600 social clubs of this time were an urban phenomenon as young people had more time to socialize, and had greater access to social venues and transportation than their peers in rural towns. See Valerie Matsumoto, *City Girls*.
[138] Matsumoto, *City Girls,* 51.

learning table manners, discussing the latest fashion and music trends, and hosting dances and roller-skating parties. In the clubs that maintained an affiliation with the YWCA or the Buddhist churches, members also participated in community service by providing meals to families in need, serving lunches for church members, and raising money for the local orphanage. Some clubs also assisted in opening up dialogue between first-generation parents and second-generation children. Many programs allowed nisei women to maintain a connection to their parents' culture and increased opportunities to build mutual understanding. The clubs also served as the main vehicle for socializing. Most issei parents did not permit their daughters to spend time with their male peers unless in a supervised, group situation. Parents often approved of the dances co-hosted by church-affiliated women's and men's clubs, allowing young couples to meet, socialize and show off their dance skills. Matsumoto states that the dances were so popular that the clubs across Los Angeles had to initiate a policy to regulate the number of dances that were scheduled.

In addition to their engagement in social clubs, nisei women also contributed to a flourishing arts community, writing literature, and performing in theater and dance. Japanese Americans in Los Angeles could take lessons in odori, folk dance, tap, ballet, social dance, and ballroom dance. Japanese modern dancer Michio Ito also established a school in the Los Angeles area in the late 1920s. Ito was born in Tokyo in 1893 to a wealthy family with interests in western culture. Like Baku Ishii, Ito's family expected him to attend an elite Japanese university but instead he left for Europe and studied eurhythmics system at the Dalcroze Institute.[139] At his studio students had the unique opportunity to learn Ito's technique that combined gestures

[139] In 1912, Michio Ito arrived in Berlin with the intention to study opera, however, his focus soon changed to dance after witnessing the performances of Isadora Duncan, Anna Pavlova and Vaslav Nijinsky.

inspired by kabuki and noh theater with his training in eurhythmics. His students included local Japanese American youth as well as choreographers Lester Horton and Bella Lewitsky.

In the late 1920s Ito was celebrated his performances in Los Angeles during a period of heightened anti-Asian sentiment in the West Coast. He established a dance school and set grand performances with hundreds of dancers in arenas including the Pasadena Rose Bowl and Hollywood Bowl. Ito represented a European-educated, Japanese artist who could contribute to the cosmopolitan arts and entertainment industry.[140] Yutian Wong asserts that Ito evaded racist scrutiny because, as an "international artist," he was "conceptualized as an individual who was simultaneously exotic in his/her worldliness and familiar in his/her exoticness."[141] His privileged background associated with Japanese and European elites distinguished him from domestic Japanese Americans; he was not held to the same immigration and employment standards as other Asian workers. Additionally, as a professional dancer he was not perceived to be an economic threat. As a desirable Oriental, Ito was exoticized but not excluded. Ito was able to "transcend national borders" as a world traveling artist, which further authorized his status.[142]

Ito's artistic credentials and cross-cultural connections bolstered the image of Los Angeles as a modern and sophisticated city. As an "international artist," the European audiences embraced Ito just as he was "discovered" by Irish poet William Butler Yeats and American poet Ezra Pound in London. As a "French-speaking, Japanese, German expressionist dancer" Ito went on to inspire and perform in Yeats' acclaimed, one-act play, *At the Hawks Well*.[143] As the Hawk-like Guardian of the Well, Ito danced an interpretation of noh and kabuki dance, two Japanese forms he viewed as a child but never trained in. European audiences delighted in his "exotic"

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[140] Yutian Wong, "Artistic Utopias: Michio Ito and the Trope of the International," in *Worlding Dance* ed Susan Foster (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 151.
[141] Ibid, 150.
[142] Ibid, 151.
[143] Ibid, 146.

choreography and Ito's popularity soared, leading to his invitation to New York City,[144] and later Los Angeles. The establishment of Ito's school in California affirmed the nation's interest in developing ties to the Pacific, and simultaneously, veiled the mistreatment of domestic Asian Americans.

Although his Japanese American students in Los Angeles did not have the mobility of an "international artist," Ito's studio provided nisei dancers with a space to negotiate their own identities. Students learned choreography that combined Japanese forms with European and American modern dance technique, yet when they performed in commercial venues they wore kabuki-style costumes. The choreography reflected Ito's signature "East meets West" aesthetic. Beyond the cultural references in the choreography, however, nisei students learned how to cater to American viewers and navigate the limited performance opportunities for artists of color. As modern dancers they actively challenged and reinforced stereotypes as a means to maintain their artistic practice.

African American dancers also found greater opportunities if perceived as "foreign." Black dancers with lighter skin and those who could speak to their mixed-race heritage confronted slightly less discrimination by dance schools.[145] Modern dancer Edna Guy was even asked by a director of a dance camp to try to pass as South Asian rather than African American.[146] Despite enduring such abuse, however, some African American performers played with being "foreign," in particular as West Indian or African, to destabilize racial categories, and assert blackness as a transnational identity. As racial injustice and violence continued in the

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[144] In New York, Michio Ito briefly performed with the Ziegfeld Follies and later performed his own choreography at the Neighborhood Playhouse and Greenwich Village Theater. Between 1923 and 1925, Ito performed with Martha Graham. He later introduced Graham to his friend sculptor Isamu Noguchi, leading to Noguchi and Graham's long-term collaboration of several decades. See Mary-Jean Cowell, *Michio Ito: The Dancer and his Dances* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).
[145] Foulkes, *Modern Bodies,* 55.
[146] Ibid.

domestic sphere, African American leaders formed solidarity with Pan-African movements around the globe. Looking to Ethiopia and Haiti as symbols of black independence, the 1930s invited African Americans to question their national identity and grapple with formations of diaspora.[147] Alongside these political shifts, the flourishing Harlem Renaissance and the inauguration of post Depression era state-funded theater projects offered African American performers new opportunities. In Federal Theater projects such as *(voodoo) Macbeth* (1936), *Haiti* (1938), and *Swing Mikado*[148] (1938), African American performers affirmed their connection to an expansive black diaspora. Both *Macbeth* and *Haiti* dramatized the Haitian revolution and employed strong humanizing characters to present an anti-colonial narrative. Although these productions exploited black bodies in their representation of primitivism, the embellished costumes and pronounced make-up demonstrated that the characters were indeed manufactured.

Although some artists of color gained visibility as "foreign" or "international" performers in the 1930s, they could not find complete acceptance by the American public. Tolerance towards the international artist was temporary and conditional; they were embraced as a long as they did not stay. Historian Robert G. Lee argues that a foreigner with arrangements to leave

[147] Batiste, *Darkening Mirror*, 4.
[148] In the 1938 Chicago Federal Theater production of *Swing Mikado,* African American performers embraced Orientalism. The original Gilbert & Sullivan's comedic opera *The Mikado* debuted in London in 1885, right as Japan opened trade with the West. The play told the story of an imaginary Japanese village, "Titipu," and their leaders Ko-Ko, Pooh-Bah, Pish-Tush and Go-To. Featuring white actors in yellowface, the play's humor hinged on the performance of contradictions, the buffoonery of the Oriental, performed by the enlightened, and civilized white body. *Swing Mikado* continued in the tradition of performing in "yellowface," however the African American performers did not merely perpetuate Orientalism. Theater scholar Josephine Lee (2010) argues that under the conditions of white supremacy, yellowface performed by black actors of this period provided opportunities for them to move way from essentializing stereotypes like that of the primitive. By accessing a trope often exclusive to white actors, African Americans proved their ability to retell and recast a production on their own terms. Despite the use of yellowface and continual reference to the primitive, Lee argues that the ability for the Mikado to be re-staged through White, Black and Asian bodies demonstrated that the performance was an exaggerated performance of race. See Josephine Lee, *The Japan of Pure Invention: Gilbert & Sullivan's The Mikado.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.)

may be perceived as a harmless guest or visitor; however, a foreigner who is visibly an outsider and who remains with "no intention to leave" presents a threat. Their status is rendered as alien. Lee describes an alien is an uncertain presence that conjures suspicion and triggers fears of contamination.[149]

Michio Ito's experience in the prewar period illustrates such a transition. As violence increased in the Pacific, Ito's Japanese identity became a threat. Despite his nationally recognized dance projects, Ito was not immune to wartime anti-Japanese hysteria. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese Imperial Navy on December 7,1941, Ito was questioned by the Federal Bureau of Investigation for espionage and treason. Officials in the U.S. Justice Department were suspicious of his visits to Japan and his personal and political connections. In 1942 Ito was detained in New Mexico with other Japanese Americans deemed "troublemakers" or of "special interest."[150] The facility also held select German and Italian nationals. Barbed wire fences, guard towers, searchlights, and armed officers surrounded the detention center. No longer granted the privileges of an international artist, Ito made the decision to repatriate to Japan rather than remain in detention.

In 1942 an estimated 120,000 Japanese Americans, two-thirds of whom were native-born citizens, were uprooted and incarcerated. In the name of national security, Japanese people in the West Coast were removed from their homes and stripped of their rights. As a citizen of the United States, Amemiya did not choose to go to Japan like Michio Ito. Amemiya, her mother and stepfather were forced to leave their home in Los Angeles and were first taken to Tulare Assembly Center and later to the Gila River Relocation Center in the Arizona desert.

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[149] Robert G. Lee, *Orientals: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1999), 3.
[150] Wong, "Artistic Utopia," 148.

In the evacuation instructions distributed by the Western Defense Command all people of Japanese ancestry were categorized as either "alien" or "non-alien." Japanese Americans like Amemiya were classified as "non-alien," demonstrating an intentional disregard of their status as citizens. Historian Mae M. Ngai argues that Japanese Americans in the prewar period were treated as "alien citizens." Through the process of forced removal, detainment and mass incarceration, citizenship was not revoked; however, all rights of a citizen were nullified.[151] Ngai determines that the seemingly "impossible subject" of an alien citizen, both included and excluded from the nation discourse, brings attention to citizenship as not legally bound but rather culturally contingent.

Yet, while incarcerated Amemiya continued to create opportunities to dance. Perhaps her drive to dance stemmed from her ability to occupy a place in the in-between, simultaneously rejected and embraced by her ethnic community, the forerunners of American modern dance and the State at-large. It was not despite, but rather because of, her ability to live in this space of tension, that she was able to dance in conditions of uncertainty and contingency. Amemiya was a part of the nisei generation that was expected to shoulder the needs of their parents, act as a bridge between two different cultures, and determine the future of their community in a nation that sought to segregate and exclude immigrants. The nisei were called to resolve growing tensions between two nations, each with plans to expand their power on the global stage. As American citizens of Japanese heritage they were charged to represent the best of both nations, claiming loyalty as Americans while simultaneously defending the military actions of Japan. Despite their position as a racial minority, the nisei were expected to appease opposing sides and to accomplish the impossible. Feeling the pressure to please parents, diplomats and policy

[151] Mae M. Ngai. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2014), 175.

makers, nisei like Amemiya survived by striving for excellence, all while knowing their best was still not enough to meet grand, and at times conflicting, expectations. For Amemiya her striving for excellence was directly tied to her trajectory as a modern dancer. The following chapter will discuss the complex terrain Amemiya navigated to confront discrimination, while also asserting a space for her artistic practice.

CHAPTER TWO:

Dancing Enemy:

Japanese American Inmates Perform Patriotism and Dissent

On the Fourth of July 1942, the twenty-two year-old Yuriko Amemiya wore a crown of gardenias and held a bouquet of red roses as she rode around the racetrack in a convertible. Selected as the Victory Queen, Amemiya was the last to be featured in a festive parade at the Tulare Assembly Center, one of the fifteen detention facilities temporarily housing Japanese Americans. The hot desert climate and the clouds of dust kicked up by the vehicle did not stifle the crowd's enthusiasm as they cheered and celebrated Amemiya on Independence Day. This was a day of outdoor revelry before returning to their crude homes.

This chapter examines how Yuriko Amemiya relied on her skills as a modern dancer to negotiate confinement in Tulare Assembly Center in California, the Gila River War Relocation Center in Arizona, and the restrictions enforced by the War Relocation Authority (WRA) during World War II. Through an examination of her role as a Victory Queen in a Fourth of July parade in Tulare Assembly Center, and as a dance teacher and performer at Gila River, I underscore how her training as a modern dancer allowed Amemiya a degree of mobility that eventually resulted in her early departure from wartime incarceration. On stage Amemiya was celebrated for her ability to acquire Western dance forms, while off stage her ability to teach and to take on domestic skills– sewing costumes out of curtains and tablecloths, and nurturing young dancers– was also praised. Her careful movement both to comply with and to challenge State policy and

WRA expectations offers a view into the lives of many and their methods of surviving conditions of incarceration.

This analysis offers a departure from claims of performance as purely recreational, or a presumption of dance as always resistive; instead I examine the practice of dance as a method to negotiate shifting social demands. I begin this chapter with a brief historical overview of World War II incarceration and life in confinement centers. I then examine Amemiya's coronation as the Fourth of July Victory Queen at the Tulare detention center. Drawing on Ann Anlin Chen's pathological euphoria, I describe the elaborate festivities and suggest that the inmate-organized parade was not only a performance of gender socialization and nationalism, but also a potential protest against their detention. Expressing their patriotism in the middle of the desert, the detainees amplified the irony of their situation, showing deep devotion while withstanding injustice. This discussion is followed by an analysis of Amemiya's "Classical" dance concert at Gila River, and in a Phoenix high school. Discussed in relations to other permitted leave policy– college entry, employment, and military service– I demonstrate how inmates as modern dancers enacted Homi Bhabha's theory of sly civility. Similar to parade participants, dancers enacted dissent through the performance of authorized activities. While the inmates acquired and executed an elite, Western dance form they demonstrated their enthusiastic participation in dominant culture. Yet, such acts to carefully mirror the elite also destabilized the assumed superiority of American culture. I end the chapter with Amemiya's departure from the Gila River incarceration facility. My discussion of Amemiya's detention, incarceration and later release aims to reveal how dance provided a means to negotiate, acting within and challenging, WRA policy. Amemiya followed its rigid terms, while simultaneously bringing attention to the State's failures to protect their citizens and uphold democracy.

Historical background: Wartime Incarceration

On February 19, 1942 President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, authorizing the formation of select military areas that could restrict and exclude any persons. This was followed by a civilian exclusion order issued by the Western Defense Command (WDC) that called for the specific removal of "all persons of Japanese ancestry."[152] Western Washington, Oregon, and California, and southern Arizona were designated military areas, and as such 120,000 Japanese Americans were forced to leave their homes.[153] Justified as a necessary measure for national security, Japanese Americans were isolated and incarcerated in government-run facilities. Japanese American community leaders were arrested and removed from their homes, tearing families apart. Japanese Americans suspended their education and careers. They limited their involvement with social, cultural, and religious practices. Bank accounts were frozen, and families were forced to leave their homes, farmland, and businesses. They parted with personal belongings, friends, neighbors, and pets, to temporarily relocate to remote areas with severe weather and dismal living conditions. Allowed to take only what they could carry, individuals and families were instructed to assemble in a specific location, on a designated day and time. As large crowds gathered in transportation hubs, armed soldiers managed the space, giving everyone, from infants to the elderly, a number tag. Once accounted for, individuals and families stood in long lines, waiting for the next phase of directions. They boarded buses and trains, with the shades drawn closed, and rode for hours to an undisclosed location. Despite no evidence of wrongdoing or criminal activity, Japanese Americans were gathered and tagged to be incarcerated en masse.

[152] Civilian Exclusion order Brian Niiya. "Civilian exclusion orders," *Densho Encyclopedia* http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Civilian%20exclusion%20orders/ (accessed Feb 1, 2016).
[153] People of Japanese ancestry from Hawaii, Alaska, Mexico and several Latin Americans countries, were also removed from their home and confined.

Much debate surrounds the motivation for incarcerating Japanese Americans during World War II. While the greater American public may have supported mass removal and incarceration following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Japanese Americans had been deemed a threat to the United States prior to the onset of war. As laborers from Asia, they were regarded as an economic and cultural threat since their entry into the country in the late 19th Century. Filling the labor shortage in farming left by Chinese workers following the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1884, Japanese immigrants found success as tenant farmers in northern and central California. Their profitable farming methods threatened white agricultural business owners. As a result, the California Alien Land Laws of 1913 and 1920 were passed to prevent “aliens ineligible for citizenship” from land ownership and long-term leasing. Similar to anti-Asian immigration policies of the late 19th Century, these acts hindered many Japanese immigrants from owning property, establishing businesses and cultivating a sense of belonging. As we’ve seen in chapter one, the Supreme Court upheld these restrictions as the *Ozawa vs. United States* case authorized governments to deny U.S. citizenship to Japanese immigrants. As the successive passing of such anti-Asian legislation demonstrates, Japanese Americans were perceived as suspicious outsiders, unable to be trusted, nor be loyal. Such patterns enacted by law and strengthened through social practices enabled drastic measures to be taken following the attack on Pearl Harbor.

In the months after E.O. 9066, Amemiya and thousands of other Japanese Americans from Southern California were taken to short-term detention centers across the country. Amemiya, her mother Chiyo and second stepfather Douglas Mitsuhashi were taken north to the Tulare Assembly Center in the San Joaquin Valley. Assembly centers were temporary camps where inmates lived in converted horse stalls or small barracks quickly constructed with tar paper roofs. The walls barely protected them from the natural elements and the partitions

between each unit did little to muffle the sound of neighbors. Privacy continued to be unavailable outside living quarters, as the public latrines and shower stalls had no doors.[154] With the dry heat and the smell of manure still lingering, inmates stayed until more permanent units could be built. Beyond these physical conditions, the status of Japanese Americans as criminals seemed abundantly clear as a barbed wire fence, guard towers and armed soldiers surrounded the inmates.[155] Four months after their arrival, like most inmates at Tulare, Amemiya and her family were transferred to the Gila River War Relocation Center on the Pima Indian Reservation.

Gila River's incarceration facility (17,125 acres) was constructed in an area with severe weather conditions and harsh environment. In southeast Arizona, the heat, strong winds and poisonous reptiles disrupted daily life in Gila River. In most incarceration camps, barrack space for each family was limited and was determined by counting exposed beams on the ceiling, each four feet apart. Amemiya recalled that she and her parents were housed in the Canal section of Gila River and were allotted a mere four beams.[156] The shared facilities like restrooms, laundry room, and mess halls were often overcrowded.[157] Like other WRA camps, Gila River was fenced in and tracked by floodlights, guard towers and soldiers. However, different from other centers, Gila River inmates were given permission to leave the premise to visit the local town.[158] While still required to gain clearance, Gila River inmates experienced a measure of flexibility as the

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[154] The overall lack of privacy in public and privates spaces made incarcerees spend less time at home with family.
[155] Konrad Linke, "Tulare (detention facility)," Densho Encyclopedia, last modified August 20, 2015, http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Tulare%20(detention%20facility)/.
[156] Tokunaga, *Yuriko,* 31.
[157] The Gila River War Relocation Center was built for 10,000 people but held 13, 000 people.
[158] Most War Relocation Centers were surrounded with barbed wired fences but Gila River had fences without barbed wire. Some facilities had a some measure of flexibility depended on the administration and surrounding cities. See Karen Leong. "Gila River," Densho Encyclopedia, last modified August 20, 2015, http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Gila%20River/.

surrounding city of Casa Grande needed inmates to respond to an agriculture labor shortage, and local merchants hoped to attain new customers.[159]

Despite the uncomfortable climate, the lack of privacy, trouble with electricity and plumbing, infrastructure and support services were made available by the War Relocation Authority to allow each confinement center to operate like a small city. Staffed mostly by white citizens and Japanese American inmates, assembly centers and war relocation centers established schools, hospitals, postal services, fire and police departments, libraries, and places of worship. Many Japanese American inmates, hoping to make their situation more bearable, also organized social clubs, arts and crafts classes, theater groups, gardening programs, and several sport teams. Amemiya was employed by the WRA, teaching dance to children and adults. The incarceration camps regularly hosted talent shows and social dances, and held beauty pageants and body building contests. National holidays were celebrated with parades and gatherings. Amemiya was even voted the Victory Queen at the 1942 Fourth of July parade at the Tulare Assembly Center. The following section examines the parade and Amemiya's crowning as a complex exercise of patriotism that allowed inmates to celebrate their fidelity to the nation alongside expressions of ethnic pride and dissension.[160]

Parades and pageant in the Tulare Assembly Center

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[159] Alissa Falcone, Ron Bischop, "Gila River: A Typical Cross-Section of America" in *Community Newspapers and the Japanese-American Incarceration Camps: Community, Not Controversy*. eds Ronald Bishop, Morgan Dudkewitz, Alissa Falcone, and Renee Daggett (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2015), 132-138.

[160] From their forced removal, to detention, to incarceration, with each step various Japanese American individuals performed subtle and explicit forms of protest and dissent. Individuals who took their case to the Supreme Court include Gordon Hirabayashi, Fred Korematsu, Minoru Yasui and Mitsuye Endo. While incarcerated there were protests to improve labor conditions, living conditions, and to fight against the violence used against incarcerees. When the "loyalty questionnaire" was distributed in 1943 several inmates answered no to both questions regarding loyalty to Japan or to the United States. These men were called "no-no boys" and sent to the Tule Lake facility.

On the Fourth of July 1942, Yuriko Amemiya was selected from a group of ten young women, as Victory Queen. Amemiya was the last to be featured in the festive parade of Tulare Assembly Center workers and social groups. The *Tulare News* described Amemiya's presence as "adding a regal touch" to the lively parade of floats and enthusiastic participants.[161]

In her post-parade interview Amemiya described her experience as "very unusual," memorable and exciting.[162] Demonstrating her poise and honesty, Amemiya's comments were both polite and truthful. "Very unusual" was one way to describe the scene of Japanese Americans celebrating Independence Day in the middle of the desert, among houses made out of converted horse stalls. Such an unlikely occurrence raises several questions. Under conditions of uncertainty, loss and mass surveillance, why would inmates feel the need to crown a Victory Queen? Who was victorious in this moment? Or was crowning a Victory Queen exactly what urban Japanese Americans would have done if they were not incarcerated? This section examines the parade and pageant as serving multiple functions: first an exercise of nationalism and gender socialization, second an opportunity to reproduce life prior to World War II, and third an exaggerated celebration to bring attention to the incongruity of incarcerated citizens observing the nation's independence. In this vein, I suggest that the Fourth of July parade, with Amemiya as Queen, used a performance of patriotism to question how loyalty can be measured and critique the systemic injustice of mass incarceration.

The Fourth of July celebration in Tulare allowed some Japanese American inmates the opportunity to express their loyalty and show their trustworthiness as citizens. This desire to demonstrate allegiance to the United States was felt long before World War II but was heightened during their incarceration. As inmates, the desire to differentiate themselves from the

[161] "Victory Parade Impressive," *Tulare News* (CA), July 8, 1942.
[162] "Introducing the Queen and her Court," *Tulare News* (CA), July 8, 1962.

Japanese enemy was clear and some Japanese Americans worked hard to emphasize their fidelity to the nation and faithfully follow U.S. government demands. Encouraged by white and Japanese American leaders, inmates studied and practiced ideals of Americanism. School curricula and adult education programs were developed to counter the pre-war assumption that Japanese Americans were unable to assimilate. Each morning after eating in mess halls, children attended school and most adults worked in low-paid jobs funded by the U. S. government. Children recited the pledge of allegiance and many adults attended "Americanization classes" intended to teach aspects of American culture and the U.S. legal system.[163] War relocation center newsletters touted the importance of demonstrating loyalty to the United States and maintaining faith in the American way. Reflecting the tone set by the Japanese American Citizen's League (JACL), which also advised Japanese Americans to cooperate with government agencies following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the confinement center press often encouraged inmates to endure the crisis to be better Americans.

As evident in *The Tulare News,* patriotism and cooperation were heavily invoked prior to the Queen's coronation ceremony. In the June 24, 1942, "Column-torial" section inmates were warned that the success of the parade hinged on everyone's "harmony and cooperation" and, thus, everyone needed to follow the rules and respect police officers.[164] The July 4, 1942 issue went further to conflate ethnic cohesion with patriotism by prominently featuring the Declaration of Independence on the cover followed by the National JACL secretary Mike Masaoka's "Nisei Creed." Masaoka expressed his complete devotion to and faith in the nation, stating "I pledge myself to do honor to her at all times and in all places; to support her constitution; to obey her

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[163] Yoon K. Pak, *Wherever I go, I will always be a loyal American: Schooling Seattle's Japanese Americans during World War II*. (New York: Routledge, 2002).
[164] "Column-torial," *Tulare News* (CA), June 24, 1942.

laws; to respect her flag."[165] Declaring unshakeable faith in the very government that incarcerated his family, he set the tone for the celebration. The sequence of articles, including the parade program and instructions for parade participants and viewers, applied Masaoka's call to not only demonstrate loyalty but also uncritically celebrate the Fourth of July, behind barbed wire.

Selecting a young woman to be the parade's Victory Queen based on "beauty, character, and personality,"[166] added a gendered dimension to the patriotic celebration. Although not explicit in the criteria, all nominees were single, born in the United States and held at least a high school diploma. Most had completed a junior college education, were involved in girls' clubs and/or church groups, and had career interests in the service and domestic spheres.[167] Beyond beauty and likability, each of the contestants reflected "feminine" qualities valued by Japanese American leaders—these young women were educated, civic minded, and approachable by Japanese and white Americans alike.[168] As a form of racialized gender socialization, these idealized characteristics were rewarded and reproduced through such social practices. As the winning queen, Amemiya was applauded for her "natural poise and charm" that was well executed through her modern dance practice.[169] The judges recognized her work ethic and commitment to teaching, commending her for designing and making her own costumes for her performances and listening to music constantly to select just the right accompaniment for her class.[170] Highlighting their humility and perseverance, the contestants reflected a Japanese

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[165] "Nisei Creed," *Tulare News* (CA), July 4, 1942.
[166] "Rules on Victory Queen Contest," *Tulare News* (CA), June 24, 1942.
[167] The Tulare News shared the candidate's education and career goals. "Introducing the Queen and her Court," *The Tulare News*, July 8, 1962.
[168] Lon Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict: A History of Ethnic Identity and Festival in Los Angeles, 1934-1900*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 56.
[169] "Introducing the Queen and her Court"
[170] ibid.

American identity that was largely aligned with the hopes and dreams of any white, middle class, all-American girl.

By upholding specific racialized and gendered values, the selection of a queen was not simply a lighthearted celebration; the event rather functioned to socialize women, increase inmate morale, and promote nationalism. To encourage inmates to participate, *The Tulare News* declared, “It's an American privilege to vote. Elect your ‘Victory’ Queen at your Unit Headquarters.”[171] With the coronation culminating on Independence Day, event organizers were able to conflate the inmates’ desires to celebrate their own standards of beauty and accomplishment with ideals of U.S. democratic participation which were temporarily denied. A publicly recognized performer and teacher, and a valedictorian of a private girls’ high school in Tokyo, Amemiya was selected as the Victory Queen to applaud her Japanese education as a kibei, and her ability to excel in a distinctly American dance form. Amemiya’s winning affirmed a collective (inmate) identity that agreed on an idealized feminine figure and upheld the notion that civic participation, through a democratic voting process, could have satisfying outcomes.

Although conveyed through a pageant, Japanese Americans continued to have faith in a democratic system despite their forced removal and detention.[172] While ostensibly an expression of nationalism, the inmates’ eagerness to participate was an earnest response to their circumstance; although held in isolation and confinement, inmates received measured levels of independence and choice. Physical violence was not regularly practiced and inmate lives were

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[171] “Column- torial”

[172] Inmates who were citizens of voting age were given the right to vote in local elections in the state of their prior residency. Absentee ballots were distributed in War Relocation Centers in the fall of 1942, however, there were many barriers to this process including a lack of access to information on the candidates and campaign issues, and suspicious of the citizenship status of voters with a Japanese last name. See Natasha Varner, “Japanese Americans incarcerated during World War II could still vote, kind of,” *Public Radio International (PRI),* October 20, 2016, https://www.pri.org/stories/2016-10-18/japanese-americans-incarcerated-during-world-war-ii-were-still-allowed-vote-kind

not threatened, yet their imprisonment was a blatant violation of civil rights. In comparison to the atrocities experienced by ethnic and sexual minorities, and national “enemies” at the hands of the Axis Powers, Japanese Americans were treated with greater care and goodwill by the American government. Inmates saw the pageant voting process as an extension of American benevolence and were motivated to exercise some degree of autonomy, however minimal as voting for a Victory Queen.

The American press often compared wartime incarceration to death camps in Europe not only to emphasize the nation’s benevolence, but also to assure the public, and to remind Japanese Americans, that their treatment was fair and justified for the good of the nation. The *Los Angeles Examiner* in April, 1942 wrote, “the Japanese were not robbed, not frightened, nor bullied; they were not thrown into concentration camps; they were neither starved nor beaten…This is the American way, the Christian attitude. Decidedly not the way of the Gestapo. We can be glad and proud that justice and fair play prevailed.”[173] The article denied any mistreatment of Japanese Americans, presented mass incarceration as a rational decision by leaders, and declared that ethnic cleansing was the true atrocity. Under these terms Japanese Americans were expected to be appreciative of their “fair” treatment and sufficient living conditions. Any criticism and opposition expressed by inmates were then minimized and heard as complaints by ungrateful and unpatriotic minorities. Such coverage not only silenced critique, but also dismissed the systematic discrimination, economic loss and emotional and physical trauma endured by Japanese Americans.

This cruel exercise of ranking modes of violence reflects the rhetoric of US exceptionalism. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease define U.S. exceptionalism as an ideology

[173] “Japanese Exodus: Great Credit Due Gen. Dewitt, Clark,” *Los Anglese Examiner*, April 11, 1942. Quoted in Emily Roxworthy, *The Spectacle of Japanese American Trauma: Racial Performativity and World War II* (Honolulu: University of hawaii Press, 2008), 115.

that positions the United States as uniquely different from, and more stable than other governments and economies, citing the nation's benevolence and opposition to imperialism as evidence of its superiority.[174] Such an inaccurate and paternalistic ideology omits the United States' of its own imperialist history of territorial acquisition and the subsequent violence against racial, ethnic, and religious minorities and indigenous people. As a benevolent nation, the presence of U.S. forces has been interpreted as necessary or mutually beneficial to address international affairs.[175] In the case against Japanese Americans following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the nation's enforcement of power, with or without the use of physical violence, was often justified or rationalized as necessary in a time of war. The government's action to remove and incarcerate Japanese Americans, without trial or evidence, was carried out under the guise of national security, and even deemed a form of protecting inmates from potential violence. As inmates living in makeshift barracks, Japanese Americans were expected to appreciate the little autonomy they were permitted as a privilege of democracy.

Further examination of one such exercise of democracy, the Queen's election, revealed that in actuality inmate involvement in the selection process was limited. Although inmates submitted names of potential candidates, a small committee selected the representative of each unit out of the top four nominees.[176] The queen was then selected from this list of unit representatives. The voting public identified forty possible candidates, of whom ten were selected to be in the court and one to be the Victory Queen. Furthermore, as the Queen, Amemiya was a symbolic figure who held no decision-making power.[177] The incorporation of a

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[174] Amy Kaplan, "Left Alone with America," in *Cultures of the United States Imperialism*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 12.
[175] Kaplan, "Left Alone in America," 14.
[176] "Rules on Victory Queen Contest," *Tulare News* (CA), June 24, 1942.
[177] Voting structure for Tulare Assembly Center governanace. The Center was organized into ten districts, each were allowed to elect two council members. Five commissioners werw appointed by the Cenrer

voting process into the Fourth of July ceremony therefore granted inmates the illusion of "freedom of choice," while also demonstrating the limits of American benevolence. By conflating ethnic pride with civic participation, the parade and coronation festivities drew attention away from the failures of democracy that shaped daily life, further distracting inmates from critique, let alone organized dissent.

As the Independence Day parade and Amemiya's coronation demonstrate, Japanese American inmates lived in an ambiguous space. Shaped by ideologies of U.S. exceptionalism, the government designed incarceration camps to meet basic food and housing needs, and provide employment and support services. Violence was not a constant threat, yet movement was limited and behaviors were highly monitored. WRA administrators closely regulated communication into and out of the detention center. Outside visitors were allowed if inmates obtained passes on their behalf, and visits took place in a permitted area. Phone calls and telegrams were reserved only for emergencies, as determined by the welfare department.[178] All packages sent to the center were opened and inspected by the postal service.[179] Letters to Japan were not allowed; however, each family was permitted to send one brief cablegram, written in English, to an immediate family member or relative in Japan.[180] Japanese language books and recordings were banned, with the exception of dictionaries and Bibles. The *Tulare News* was prohibited from printing a Japanese-language section and religious services were not to be conducted in Japanese. Published materials echoed WRA rhetoric, school lesson plans were pre-determined, and all social and artistic events in the facility had to be pre-approved. Even sanctioned events remained

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director to be mediators between inmates and administration. Council members had to be twenty-three years of age and needed fifteen signatures from their district to prove community support. Voting right was conferred to all inmates at least eighteen years of age, regardless of nationality. Inmates could not hold office or vote if not a citizen.

[178] "Phone calls for Emergency," *Tulare News* (CA), July 18, 1942.

[179] "Post Office Reconstructed," *Tulare News* (CA), July 11, 1942.

[180] ibid.

susceptible to further investigation. Personal choice was rarely exercised, as schedules were imposed for not only work and school life but also to manage the dissemination of shared resources, such as food and water. Inmates were rewarded and punished by a wage scale that valued proficiency in English language, education and able-bodied labor. Perhaps most invasive was roll call during which patrolmen visited inmates in their assigned barracks twice a day, at 6 a.m. and 11 p.m.[181] This was quickly reduced to one visit a day after inmates proved cooperative.

WRA policy and center wide surveillance disciplined inmates through physical structures and social practices. As theorized by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish,* the lack of physical violence, or the omission of public executions, does not equate to less use of power, but a shift in the mechanism of power. The Tulare temporary detention center had eight watchtowers, a barbed wire fence, and about one hundred military police officers guarding the once public fairground, its structure reminding inmates of the constant threat of surveillance.[182] Different from the 18th century practices referenced by Foucault, a bloody, tortured body was not put on display as the object of punishment– instead, power was embedded in the architecture. With a bird's eye view of the detention center, guards in watchtowers surveyed rows and rows of barracks housing Japanese Americans. Similar to Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, such a structure asserted an economy of visibility, allowing one body to see all. As described by Foucault, the Panopticon had small prison cells curved around a single tower. With the use of a backlight, inmates could see only the shadows of those inside the tower. The identity of the observer in the tower was interchangeable; a guard, an officer, or a machine could enforce punishment, as the surveillance was constant. With the establishment of a hierarchical gaze, the punisher's role was merely symbolic as the prisoners acted out of self-surveillance. Foucault argues that such use of

[181] "Roll Call held twice daily by 25 Men Crew," *Tulare News* (CA), June 17, 1942.
[182] Konrad Linke, "Tulare (detention facility)," Densho Encyclopedia, last modified August 20, 2015, http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Tulare%20(detention%20facility)/

surveillance and discipline to meticulously control the actions and thoughts of individuals was a far more comprehensive exercise of power.

Under wartime incarceration, Japanese Americans followed strict rules, regulations and schedules, and were vulnerable to becoming trained to follow the authority of WRA leaders without question. Japanese Americans learned to scrutinize and discipline their own behaviors, no longer relying on an external force to control their actions. While the mechanism of power remained visible with watchtowers and fences, Japanese American inmates internalized their subordination, extending the authorities' reach of power and the dissemination of control. Social hierarchies were established to reflect the values of WRA authorities. Second-generation Japanese Americans, born and educated in the United States, were granted more opportunity to take on positions of leadership.

Issei men, particularly those who were community leaders and economic providers for their family, felt a great loss of power in this system. Due to their age and lack of English language education, their labor was undervalued and earning capacity deflated. The demand to run each incarceration facility like a city meant various jobs–from service-oriented work, to field work, to clerical jobs–were made available. The pay scale of $19 a month for professionals, $16 for skilled laborers, and $12 for apprentices, meant men and women completing the same job were paid equally. Adult children and parents were employed and fathers were no longer the sole breadwinners. With such changes in employment and daily schedules, many issei parents and elders felt less authority to enforce rules with their children and families. The lack of space and privacy also meant family members spent less time together in their homes. Even eating together in the mess halls created a challenge. As the generation most connected to Japan, issei struggles were exacerbated in an environment that taught their young children English, gave U.S. educated

adults higher pay, and privileged American ideals over Japanese culture. As a result the WRA's system of reward and punishment disempowered issei leaders and inaugurated a shift in power, enabling Americanized inmates to take greater control of family and community decisions.

At the Tulare Assembly Center, this shift in power became evident when fellow Japanese Americans contributed to upholding disciplinary structures. In addition to twenty-four white police officers, forty inmates volunteered (62.5% of the total number of officers) to be members of the "Center Police Force."[183] As in other temporary detention centers, the ratio of police officers to inmates was one officer to 200 inmates.[184] Although inmates provided the labor to run most facilities —from the mess halls, to schools, to the infirmary—as officers, fellow inmates were given the power to impose strict rules and regulations. Despite their increased authority the volunteer officers' maintained their status as inmates. As such, not only did they regulate the behaviors of others, they regulated their own actions. Inmate self-surveillance meant those in power were successful in refining a level of knowledge of the disciplined, further advancing their enforcement of desired behaviors without the use of violence.[185] Such deference towards the military police strained relationships among inmates, as many felt uneasy about law enforcement or felt betrayed and harmed by wartime legislation. After having been violated by the U.S. government, to be disciplined by a fellow inmate intensified ongoing tensions and further isolated dissenters.

Despite these conditions, inmates revealed the limits of such disciplinary mechanisms by appropriating their visibility as a method to draw attention to injustice. Performed in plain view, the elaborate patriotic Fourth of July parade and pageant exposed the painful irony of Japanese

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[183] Ibid.

[184] The police had responsibilities such as patrolling the grounds, inspecting mail, accompanying inmates to the hospital and overseeing the visitor center.

[185] Michel Foucault, *Discipline And Punish: The Birth of the Prison.* (New York :Pantheon Books, 1977), 80.

Americans pledging allegiance to a nation that incarcerated them without due process. Through an arguably exaggerated performance of patriotism, inmates highlighted their extraordinary ability to organize a Fourth of July parade that could take place in any other all-American town. Juxtaposing the pageantry and grandeur with the backdrop of the desolate detention center, participants and onlookers witnessed the perseverance of their ethnic community and found ways to navigate, even perhaps to subvert, their status as inmates.

In the dry summer heat, hundreds of inmates gathered at the grandstand on the morning of Fourth of July, 1942. Marking the official start of the ceremony, the Boy Scouts raised the American flag while playing "To the colors." Then the audience stood to face the flag and placed their right hands over their hearts to recite the pledge of allegiance. Projecting his voice across the field, inmate John Fuyume continued the patriotic theme with a reading of the Declaration of Independence. Next, the audience raised their voices to sing "America,"[186] to welcome the first group of parade participants. From the dusty field the Boy Scout Drum and Bugle Corp emerged, playing horns and beating drums. Then Japanese American war veterans, Tulare detention center administrators, and a man dressed like Uncle Sam greeted the onlookers.[187] Group after group, a stream of enthusiastic parade marchers followed, including mess hall workers, police officers, fire fighters, hospital caretakers, athletes, newspaper reporters, club organizers, religious organization leaders, and the Victory Queen. When the dust cleared, inmates were invited to participate in sports and games, from sumo wrestling, to tug-o-war, to a three-legged race, all taking place around the track and field area. Barracks close to the field featured art exhibits with paintings, needlepoint, woodcarvings, flower arrangements and other crafts made by fellow

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[186] "July Fourth Program," *Tulare News* (CA), July 4, 1942.
[187] ibid.

inmates. The Fourth of July celebration culminated with a special dinner of boiled young hen with country-style noodles, mashed potatoes, garden spinach and fresh ice-cold milk.[188]

Prior to the onset of war urban Japanese Americans organized similar lively and extensive celebrations. Matsumoto's research reveals that second-generation girls and women participated in festivals in the Los Angeles area from as early as the 1920s.[189] Invited to dance in kimonos at events like the "Festival of Nations," the women were often assumed to be from Japan, foreign performers merely visiting for a special event.[190] In 1934, the first notable Japanese American festival, *Nisei Week,* took place in Los Angeles' Little Tokyo neighborhood. Following the passage of several anti-Asian immigration policies, issei business owners collaborated with nisei leaders in the JACL to organize the festival as a means to increase the patronage of second-generation Japanese Americans, and create a "bridge of understanding" between the United States and Japan.[191] Similar to the Fourth of July parade in Tulare, *Nisei Week* hosted multiple events including a parade with floats and traditional Japanese folk dance, a tea ceremony for white American tourists, a baby contest, an essay contest, a fashion show, a talent show, a carnival, and a "Pioneer night" to recognize the achievements of Japanese

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[188] Cold milk was a treat as milk was often served warm or room temperature. The issue of the quality of milk would be later referenced by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt when she visited to Gila River in 1943. Charles Kikuchi documented in his JERS notes that Mrs. Roosevelt commented that the milk was sour. This was a subtle act of support for the inmates especially as the American public were led to believe inmates were being "coddled." See Karen Leong, "Gila River," Densho Encyclopedia, last modified August 20, 2015, https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Gila%20River/

[189] Matsumoto, *City Girls,* 57.

[190] ibid.

[191] Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict,* 24.
Following a series of anti-Asian legislation, the 1924 Johnson-Reid Immigration Act ended immigration from Japan and proved the pervasiveness of anti-Japanese sentiment. Issei merchants, already affected by the Great Depression, wanted to not only quell such antagonistic views but also expand their customer base beyond immigrants. With the festival, Little Tokyo business owners aimed to reach nisei consumers that distanced themselves from Japanese nationalism and were instead enticed by images that romanticized white American consumer culture.

immigrants.[192] Working to address anti-Japanese sentiment, the *Nisei Week* festival celebrated Japanese Americans and positioned nisei as not only patrons but also bicultural citizens who could maintain the urban ethnic enclave.[193]

The Tulare Assembly Center's queen pageant was a legacy of such prewar celebrations. One year after the establishment of the Los Angeles *Nisei Week* festival, the first queen was inaugurated in 1935. The public was able to vote for a queen using a ballot obtained only after making a purchase at a Little Tokyo establishment.[194] Some scheduled their purchase of large items, such as kitchen appliances, to coincide with festival season in order to exercise greater voting power. The ethnic newspapers dramatized the pageant as they printed weekly tallies of the most popular candidates. Festival organizers relied on non-threatening, young Japanese American women to attract shoppers outside the typical customer base. Like Amemiya, the queens were selected for their beauty, charm, and ability to "blend" Japanese and American feminine ideals. As described by the *Rafu Shimpo,* a desirable queen could "wear a kimono" and "look radiant in a white evening gown."[195] One queen was commended for her ability to balance sewing school, koto lessons, Japanese language class, and a full time job as a secretary at a Japanese doctor's office.[196] Beyond investing in local businesses and showing ethnic solidarity, shoppers participated in defining proper Japanese American femininity, which included the ability to integrate into dominant society. The bicultural, second-generation women embodied

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[192] Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict,* 42-62.
[193] The "Buy Little Tokyo" campagin had opposition. Some business owners feared the campaign promoted insularity. Instead they felt Japanese Americans needed to integrate with dominant society and support the national economy. See Lon Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict.*
[194] Rebecca Chiyoko King-O'Riain,. *Pure beauty: Judging race in Japanese American beauty pageants*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 60.
[195] Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict,* 56.
[196] Ibid.

the possibility of racial harmony and ethnic perseverance. Community-sponsored beauty pageants continued to hold significance despite anti-Japanese sentiment in wartime America.

The desire to continue to organize such community rituals while incarcerated can be read, then, as both a performance of patriotism and critique. Seemingly an exercise of nationalism and gender socialization, the Tulare Fourth of July parade and queen coronation also demonstrated a refusal by Japanese Americans to accept life as inmates. The parade, three-quarter miles in length, featured floats by thirty-six groups, and the spectacle "drew howls of laughter and laudable comments from the crowd."[197] This elaborate and meticulously organized affair proved Japanese Americans could be patriotic despite their incarceration, and execute a festival on par with *Nisei Week*. Simultaneously, the extraordinary production highlighted the inmates' undeniable ability to endure hardship and persevere despite living in dire conditions. With their patriotic zeal, Tulare inmates performed the paradox of their positionality as citizen and enemy.

The performance of patriotism by those deemed potential enemies also underscores the intangibility and fragility of citizenship in wartime America. Scholar Anne Anlin Cheng's reading of "Chop Suey," a song and dance number praising the benefits of American citizenship in the 1961 film *Flower Drum Song*, provides a framework of analysis. In the musical number, the Asian American actors set the stage by first acknowledging that the popular Chinatown menu item "Chop Suey" is an American invention, not an "authentic" Chinese dish. They gleefully sing lyrics that are an amalgamation of American popular cultural references, while they skillfully and enthusiastically execute a square dance, a waltz, the cha-cha-cha, the Charleston, and several other Western dances. Cheng posits that, like "Chop Suey" an American identity, particularly for Asian immigrants, is carefully constructed to satisfy the dominant culture. Their

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[197] "Victory Parade Impressive"

performance of citizenship is fabricated to make an alien seem more tolerable. The lyrics and choreography of "Chop Suey" intentionally exclude references to Asia, in order to obscure the identities of the very people promoting assimilation. Extravagance and theatricality emphasize the performance of citizenship, celebrating racial integration as an act to be contained on stage. Cheng argues that the ensemble performed a "pathological euphoria," a heightened expression of joy so great that no sign of pain or loss can be revealed.[198] Cheng emphasizes that each minority figure must maintain "multiple layers of denial and exclusion," both hiding their grief and blurring emotions.[199] In such a performance, Cheng stresses, Asian Americans confront a paradox: in veiling their grief the actors simultaneously deny and uphold racism.

Evoking a similar performance of pathological euphoria, Japanese American parade participants suppressed their sorrow, and instead collectively produced a grand patriotic celebration. Their exaggerated display was necessary to mask and lessen the pain felt from their continual exclusion. While these inmates could not easily express their grievances or dissent in public, through their performance of extraordinary loyalty, they could bring to attention the irony of the circumstance. Incarcerated Japanese Americans could not make a claim to patriotism without signaling their own status as citizens stripped of rights. Waving flags, singing anthems, and reciting nationalist doctrine, inmates announced their devotion to the United States and

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[198] For more on Pathological Euphoria See Anne Anlin Cheng. *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden grief*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 42.
Cheng's central idea of racial melancholia, further underscores this point. Her analysis of melancholia accounts for the experiences of exclusion, invisibility and rejection endured by marginalized communities throughout American history. Cheng builds on Freud's definition of melancholia, described as feeling loss so deep one is incapable of accepting substitution and as such exists in a constant state of self-impoverishment. Cheng reframes Freud's definition and looks to acts of systematic and legisaltive exclusion that lead to feelings of loss. Cheng examines exclusion as not only an individual experience but also that of a collective. She draws on psychoanalysis to further discuss the pervasive process of internalization: consuming loss and later denying its eternal presence. Cheng asserts that the rhetoric of melancholia draws attention to the complicated and contradictory emotions embedded in experiencing loss and in doing so invites "disarticulated grief" to be heard (Chen, 29).
[199] Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race,* 9.

prompted onlookers and authorities to question how Japanese American citizens were deemed disloyal or incapable of racial integration. With their embodied contradiction, as enemy and citizen, Japanese Americans articulated their attempts towards, and constant rejection from, full citizenship. As such, despite their abjection, through their self-produced Fourth of July festivities, Japanese American inmates exposed the very construction of citizenship, and underscored the injustice of their circumstance

Dancing in Gila River Incarceration Camp

Japanese Americans continued to negotiate their status as contingent citizens as they moved from detention center, to incarceration facility, and into resettlement. Following her transfer from the Tulare detention center, Amemiya organized a dance school and performed American modern dance and ballet in Gila River, Arizona. Despite her confinement in crude, makeshift barracks, Amemiya gained popularity and praise for her performance of "classical dance."

This section begins with an overview of Amemiya's work as a dancer and teacher, and examines why modern dance and ballet were so highly regarded under conditions of incarceration. I suggest that these Western dance forms conveyed an affinity for elite culture and civility that demonstrated the inmates' potential to become sophisticated and well-mannered citizens. I address how Amemiya's dance school not only enabled young Japanese American women to gain social mobility, but also assisted in her own eventual release from the confinement facility. My analysis considers the parallels between classical dance training, and three acceptable forms of departure–college entry, manual labor, and military service. Involvement in these permitted forms of departure, including dance, seem to simply demonstrate an inmate's ability to seamlessly reintegrate. However, Japanese Americans participated in these

WRA-sanctioned positions in nuanced ways. Evidence of cross-race activism by college students, threats of workers' strikes, refusal to serve in the military, verbal and physical confrontations with administrators, and resistance to gendered expectations demonstrate that former inmates challenged institutional racism and sexism.

A discussion of Homi Bhabha's theory of sly civility provides further analysis of how the simultaneous participation and subversion of WRA policy generated possibilities of destabilizing dominant power. The brief discussion of modern dance history builds on this argument, and demonstrates how choreographers developed the form contending with questions of democracy and inclusion. Aiming to be both elite and accessible, modern dance invited artists of color like Amemiya to train, perform and teach others; in this case, fellow inmates under surveillance. Earning the praise of American officials, I argue that Amemiya and other Japanese American women authorized modern dance, asserting their bodies in creative ways to navigate shifting expectations of "proper" femininity and citizenship as determined by the WRA.

A month following her Queen coronation, Amemiya and her parents were transferred from Tulare to Gila River, a larger and more permanent incarceration facility in southeast Arizona. By mid-September 1942, Amemiya had coordinated with WRA officials to convert a barrack into a dance studio and negotiated a professional-level salary of $19 a month. Under the management of the Community Activities Section (CAS), Amemiya taught three classes daily, Monday through Friday, for girls and women ranging in age from three years old to the elderly. In addition to establishing a dance school for ballet and modern dance, Amemiya was the president of the Concert Dance Association, managed a junior performance group, and organized

several concerts for inmates. Her first showing, a demonstration of proper walking, standing and leg swings, attracted 200 viewers.[200]

At Amemiya's spring premiere on March 20, 1943, the audience grew to thirty-five hundred. Recognized as the "the city's first classical dance concert," [201] the program of exclusively female dancers included twenty-two numbers, beginning with a rendition of the Nutcracker Suite by the junior performance group, followed by modern dance pieces from the senior group, and solos by Amemiya. Opening with an official greeting in English by CAS Supervisor Hugo Wolters, and in Japanese by CAS executive council member S. Hikida, Amemiya's show was promoted as a rare and exclusive event. The *Gila News Courier* reported of Amemiya's concert, "Perhaps the 50-or -60 piece concert orchestra, the velvet curtain drops, the burgundy colored loges and brass-buttoned ushers will not be in sight for effect, but when tonight's spectacular classical dance concert begins…residents will witness the colony's first classical pageant concert." [202] The article's reference to a formal theater experience signaled that, despite training in a confinement center, Amemiya and her students were comparable to a professional dance company worthy of the proscenium stage, and that Japanese Americans, if given the opportunity, would be amongst those in the audience of a professional performance. As former residents of Los Angeles some inmates may have attended the theater prior to World War II, yet many Japanese Americans, especially those without a discretionary income or from rural regions like central California, may not have been familiar with the practice of viewing staged

[200] "Dance troupe present show," *Gila News-Courier (*AZ), October 21, 1942.
[201] "Classical Dance Concert: Yuriko Amemiya, 70 pupils Perfrom," *Gila News-Courier* (AZ), March 18, 1943.
[202] "Dance Concert under Ariz. Stars tonight with Amemiya," *Gila News-Courier* (AZ), March 20, 1943.

productions.[203] The “classical dance concert” was a rare occurrence not only for the Japanese American audience but also for Amemiya’s students, who, many prior to incarceration, had limited opportunities to take modern dance class, let alone performing in a dance company.[204]

Attracting the attention of so many, “classical dance” may not have been merely a descriptive title but a method to capture the imaginations of incarcerated Japanese Americans seeking security and validation as cultured citizens. Comparing Amemiya’s concert to an exclusive theater show, the press underscored the inmates’ potential for social mobility. They celebrated the classical dance concert as proof that Japanese Americans, despite limited resources, could be consumers and producers of “superior” Western art aesthetics.

“Classical dance” evoked notions of formality and sophistication, and positioned European art, in this case ballet, as the standard of excellence. More specifically, the Nutcracker Suite, which premiered in Russia in 1892, gained popularity in England in the mid 1930s and debuted in New York in 1940. The Nutcracker had yet to acquire a mass American audience prior to World War II. Amemiya’s performance in early 1943, then, may have intended to convey an affinity for elite European ballet culture more than American. While early American modern dancers sought inspiration from a distant and imagined past, and rejected the aristocratic European ballet, Amemiya’s dancers reified the form. Particularly as citizens excluded from American culture, Japanese American dancers may have been drawn to ballet as a form with an established history associated with European nobility. Their reproduction of the Nutcracker

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[203] Gila River residents where taken from homes in Los Angeles, the California Central valley, Sacramento, and Hawaii. See Karen Leong, "Gila River," Densho Encyclopedia, last modified August 20, 2015, https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Gila%20River/

[204] Japanese American young women who grew up in Los Angeles had access to take dance classes in Japanese traditional forms and American popular forms. However dance classes exclusively for, and by Japanese American women were rare outside the urban ethnic enclave. See Matsumoto, *City Girls*.

ballet was perhaps a demonstration of their decorum and an attempt to prove their proper civility despite their confinement by the U.S. government.

Although desires to privilege European culture were expressed, the dancers' proximity to whiteness was denied. Reflective of European imperial histories of trade, the Nutcracker featured dance numbers representing sweets from "around the world," including Coffee in the "Arabian dance," Candy Cane in the "Russian dance," and Tea in the "Chinese dance." The ballet historically performed for and by white bodies (Russian and European), not only excluded dancers of color from entering the stage, but also used reductive stereotypes to represent non-European cultures. As white dancers took on caricatures, their whiteness was further affirmed as they remained in control of the representation of othered bodies. At the Gila River concert the young Japanese American dancers wore costumes and executed choreography gesturing towards each of these cultures and products. However, incarcerated based on false accusations regarding their loyalty to Imperial Japan, these dancers could not escape their racially marked bodies regardless of costumes or choreography. Their bodies aimed to attain a form of neutrality, capable of representing "all nations." Despite efforts to dress up as such, within the context of war, these Japanese Americans could not be neutral bodies. This effortful production—as dancers acquired new bodily techniques, memorized choreography, learned music cues, and made costumes—further marked their difference from a white American ballet company.

Their determination to train and perform ballet and modern dance, however, cannot be interpreted as simply an outcome of submission to American cultural superiority. Theorist Homi Bhabha defines colonial mimicry as the desire for a refined Other to mirror the behavior of their

colonial authority, to be “almost the same, but not quite.”[205] He argues that while colonial subjects were made to internalize their lack, in doing so, they also gained knowledge of the dominant culture. The colonial subject’s ability to replicate and mimic affirmed the influence of the authority; however, these actions also threatened the source of power. Mimesis, a flawless reproduction, also holds potential to challenge supremacy based on essential difference. The colonized subjects’ ability to acquire authorized behavior not only countered expectations, but also disputed the rationale for colonial domination. Bhabha explains that mimicry and mimesis operate jointly with ambivalence, whereas the colonial subject’s relationship with the authority can shift and vary, working to disrupt the colonizer’s absolute power.[206] The act of reproduction underscores difference and brings attention to the “indeterminacy” of governance and authority.[207]

Amemiya’s dancers closely reproduced classical ballet and modern dance. Proving that elite culture can be learned and acquired by minority subjects, the dancers’ well-rehearsed re-presentation may have unsettled WRA authorities by returning the gaze, forcing “the observer [to] become observed.” [208] With their daily lives under surveillance, an inmate’s capacity to “look back” affirmed that they were not powerless. While Amemiya’s classical dance concert did not present an explicit critique of systemic oppression, the dancers demonstrated Japanese American women could properly represent the status of an ideal citizen—polite, resourceful and versatile. Financed in part by the CAS, publicized by the *Gila News Courier,* and directed by

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[205] Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse." *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 86.
[206] Ibid.
[207] Ibid.
[208] Ibid, 89.

Amemiya, the concert was an inmate-produced celebration of upward mobility. The junior and senior dancers performed over twenty pieces and even made their own elaborate costumes.[209]

By sewing costumes out of existing curtains and tablecloths, the dancers showed a resourcefulness and work ethic that qualified them as not frivolous artists but productive citizens reflecting the values promoted during the war.[210] Despite creating a finite material product (costumes) that only benefited a few, the dancers proved Japanese Americans could adapt to their circumstance of limited resources, manage a theatrical production, and learn to execute ballet and modern dance. Meanwhile, audience members affirmed that they were capable of following theater etiquette and appreciating elite modern art. Amemiya's dance concert offered Japanese American inmates another method to prove their commonality with white Americans. Simultaneously their successful execution of the concert demonstrated not only their resilience and adaptability, but also, their potential to undermine the severe restrictions placed on their structured lives.

Questions surrounding cooperation and dissent were carefully considered as Amemiya's concert was held at a time when inmates grappled with difficult questions regarding their possible release from incarceration and their long-term allegiance to the United States. With the assistance of labor, religious and education advocacy organizations, the WRA began drafting leave regulations as early as September 1942, a month prior to the opening of the tenth, and final, incarceration camp.[211] By January 1943 hundreds of nisei were able to apply for early

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[209] "Dance Concert under Ariz. Stars tonight with Amemiya,"
[210] Inmates were encouraged by WRA authorities and Japanese American leaders to prove their loyalty through productivity. Despite their incarceration, inmates continued to work in the fields and factors to contribute to war efforts. At Gila River inmates were urged to pick cotton in Arizona farms, work at the camouflage net factor on-site, and later join the U.S. military. See Karen Leong. "Gila River," Densho Encyclopedia, last modified August 20, 2015, http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Gila%20River/ .
[211] Megan Asaka, "Resettlement," Densho Encyclopedia, last modified August 20, 2015, http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Resettlement/

resettlement with admission into college outside of pre-determined military zones. Leave was also granted for inmates who gained employment in the same approved areas. For those at Gila River, temporary leave was most commonly granted to those willing to work in agriculture. Serving in the US military eventually became an option. I will provide a brief overview of these three WRA authorized- leave policies and procedures. In each role Japanese Americans could demonstrate their productivity, loyalty, and a desire to belong, thereby justifying their individual release from incarceration.

Although there were many examples of those who faithfully fulfilled their roles, evidence of cross-race activism by college students, threats of workers' strikes, refusal to enlist in the military, and resistance to gendered expectations, reveal that Japanese Americans also challenged how they participated in these sanctioned positions. With each form of departure, I analyze various acts of subversion and dissent, and counter readings of Japanese American inmates as passive subjects. I then return to a discussion of dance, and its relationship with citizenship, and seek to address how modern dance offered women opportunities beyond proving loyalty. Amemiya's dance company, I suggest, provided social mobility, and nurtured a women-centered space necessary to support women facing demands placed on them as daughters, workers, wives, and mothers.

College admission and the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council (NJASRC)

Only a month following E.O. 9066, concerned educators and administrators from colleges attended by Japanese Americans met at the University of California, Berkeley to discuss the fate of 2,500 students. In May 1942, with the support of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), this group grew to have hired staff and volunteers, and came to be known as

the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council (NJASRC). Their first charge was to assist nisei, who were forced to leave West Coast college campuses and to re-enroll in institutions outside of designated military zones.

With the war blazing on, gaining approval to allow Japanese Americans to leave incarceration facilities to continue their education was a complicated and daunting task. The military and FBI needed to authorize the release of "potential enemies," and determine which institutions could safely admit such students. Many universities were not comfortable accepting Japanese American students and feared potential violence by fellow students and local residents, directed towards not only the students but also the university as a whole.[212] Federal financial aid was not made available–not even to cover the cost of travel from incarceration facility to college–as it was interpreted as "coddling" Japanese Americans.[213] As a result, NJASRC staff, mostly white Americans, worked diligently and carefully brokered relationships with several organizations, government agencies, and university administrators to consider the student relocation project an exercise of democracy. The Council emphasized the students' potential to contribute to the U.S. economy and improve relations with "the Orient."[214] With backing from the first WRA director Milton Eisenhower, Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy, and Assistant to the Secretary of the Navy Adlai Stevenson, the Council was able to influence a number of university presidents to admit students, and philanthropic organizations to provide

[212] Gary Y. Okihiro, *Storied Lives: Japanese American Students and World War II*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011). 31-32.
[213] As discussed prior, such an inaccurate accusation risked inciting anger and resentment by the American public.
[214] "Pamphlet published by the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council, Japanese American student relocation: An American challenge, ca.1943, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.," Densho Encyclopedia, last modified August 20, 2015, https://encyclopedia.densho.org/sources/en-denshopd-i235-00001-1/.

scholarships.[215] Schools were limited to smaller institutions, both public and private universities with no affiliation with "classified research." The schools could not be located within twenty-five miles of "power installations, defense factories or railroad terminal facilities."[216] Some schools followed very strict quotas, limiting certain majors and areas of study by Japanese Americans.[217] Despite a difficult start, many Japanese American students were eventually able to transfer to new schools and finish their degrees. Over time, the Council staff eventually managed to place college students, assist high school students with the college application process, and provide emotional support to those admitted through written correspondence.

To limit criticism and justify their release, the Council selected talented Japanese American college students who could demonstrate academic excellence, patriotism and a desire to integrate into the dominant society.[218] Council staff ranked and rated students according to scholastic achievement, personality traits, college transcripts, and responses to a questionnaire. In the fall of 1942, only those who ranked within the top 15% were approved for priority admission.[219] Many college administrators further eliminated students according to gender, religious affiliation, financial status, class ranking, legal residence, and areas of study.[220] The first cohort, including those who were admitted through their own efforts[221] and those that relied on the assistance of the NJASRC, met the highest of standards set forth by the WRA, FBI, military, and various colleges. They represented an elite group of young Japanese Americans

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[215] Okihiro, *Storied Lives,* 35.
[216] Ibid., 41.
[217] Ibid., 32.
[218] Ibid., 38.
[219] Ibid., 39.
[220] Ibid., 39.
[221] 315 or 78.5% of the first group gained admittance to college through their own efforts. See Gary Okihiro, *Storied Lives,* 46.

who could withstand the academic rigor and insure the relocation program could continue for future students.

The nisei students considered themselves “ambassadors of goodwill,” and felt the need to represent a positive image of Japanese Americans, regardless of their mistreatment.[222] They knew the success of the relocation program hinged on their ability to seamlessly integrate at their respective schools. As one student expressed, they viewed their attendance at a majority white college, outside the West Coast, as an opportunity for “disseminating better attitudes towards the Japanese race.”[223] Similar to their time in high school, these students excelled academically and participated in student government and athletics. They took on speaking engagements and returned to incarceration facilities to promote college as a viable option. Invited to join various campus organizations, Japanese American students reported to the NJASRC that they felt welcomed by white American students.

Still, many also faced violence and exclusion to varying degrees. Some students avoided other Japanese American students, fearing that they would be accused of clustering. Instead they associated with white friends to prove their ability to integrate. Many accepted being treated as foreign students. Some endured having rocks thrown at them.[224] Outside the campus, restaurants, barbershops, and even churches refused entry and services to Japanese Americans.[225] Many neighboring business owners made clear that they were not in agreement with university admission policies. Yet, the students often tolerated overt and subtle forms of racism in order to

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[222] Allan Austin, "National Japanese American Student Relocation Council," Densho Encyclopedia, last modified August 20, 2015, https://encyclopedia.densho.org/National%20Japanese%20American%20Student%20Relocation%20Council/

[223] Okihiro, *Storied Lives,* 38.

[224] Barbara Takahashi at Grinnell College in Iowa, said “I had a few rocks thrown at me but we survived.” See Okihiro, *Storied Lives,* 79.

[225] Ibid., 75.

build trust with their white peers and be accepted as loyal citizens. In other words, Japanese American students dismissed the severity of the racism they faced in wartime America, in hopes of changing U.S. race relations.

In this vein, their tolerance of discriminatory behavior cannot be interpreted as passive. Japanese American students were determined to resume their education and finish their degrees, hoping to improve their employment opportunities. As ambassadors they changed dominant attitudes and beliefs, encouraged their younger peers to leave incarceration facilities, and worked to improve conditions for their families' eventual resettlement. Some Japanese American women challenged family expectations and pursued a college degree instead of marriage. Some students joined the fight against racial discrimination. Masuko Kawahara, a student at Mt. Holyoke stated in *Mademoiselle* magazine, "I am acutely aware of the responsibility which rests upon all of us, Nisei as well as other Americans to help create the right kind of world—a world free from discrimination because of color, religion, or nationality."[226] Other Japanese Americans felt a responsibility to be a part of the civil rights movement. Kenji Okuda, a student at Oberlin College, attended the Student Christian Movement Conference in Wooster, Ohio in 1944, and took part in sit-ins with his black peers.[227] While the WRA expected students to resettle and disperse, many Japanese American students affirmed their right to full citizenship, and advocated for racial justice. In a period when any kindness towards Japanese Americans was scorned and deemed a threat to nation building, the students and their allies confronted and challenged anti-Japanese attitudes and prejudicial policy. Away from incarceration and in colleges, Japanese American students demonstrated their ability to skillfully surmount barriers and excel in a hostile environment.

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[226] Masuko Kawahara had to leave Reed College and reenroll in Mt. Holyoke College in Western Massachusetts. Her "I Am an American" essay was featured in *Mademoisell*e in August 1944.
[227] Okihiro, *Storied Lives,* 79- 83.

Agriculture

While white farmers viewed the success of Japanese American farmers on the West Coast as a threat in the prewar decades, their labor became a necessity in the wartime economy. Needing to address a wartime labor shortage and a demand for cotton, the US Employment Service, with the consent of the Western Defense Command and Fourth Army, heavily recruited Gila River inmates to work in Arizona's cotton and beet fields.[228] On September 21, 1942, Army official expected to recruit 3,000 workers, just from Gila River, in a project deemed a "special dispensation" from Washington.[229] The U.S. Employment Service first aimed to reach 400 workers per day. Japanese American men and women were offering free transportation and housing,[230] and were invited to leave with families to work at a farm for an entire season. Most, however were taken to the fields by diesel trucks to work from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.[231] Workers would be paid $1.50 per 100 pounds of short staple cotton, and $3.00 for picking the same amount of long staple cotton.[232]

To further their cause, WRA and JACL leaders promoted fieldwork as a patriotic duty equal to military service. Gila River director E.R. Fryer claimed the work of picking long-staple cotton, a material crucial for the war machine, was just as valuable as "serving in a uniform."[233] He went on to state that the residents of Arizona could not meet the demands alone and that inmates provided the only hope to alleviate the situation. In a plea by *the Pacific Citizen*, the news outlet of the JACL, inmates were urged to take advantage of this "opportunity to visibly

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[228] "Cotton Pickers Begin Work," *Gila News-Courier (*AZ), September 16, 1942. Sugar beets were also popular as the weather got warmer.
[229] "Rivers Residents Absovled," *Gila News-Courier* (AZ), October 21, 1942.
[230] "Colonist asked to harvest Arizona Long Staple Cotton," *Gila News- Courier* (AZ), September 19, 1942. Housing was offered on September 16, however, on September 19 it was annouced that employers have little room to house workers, and workers will be transported by truck back to Gila River.
[231] "Women urged to Work," *Gila News-Courier* (AZ), September 23, 1942.
[232] Ibid.
[233] "Colonist asked to harvest Arizona Long Staple Cotton"

demonstrate their loyalty and devotion to the country."[234] The call insisted that Japanese American laborers could prove to General DeWitt that they can be relied upon, not out of necessity, but rather for their "compulsion, shared by every loyal American, to do his part in the winning of the war."[235]

Despite the WRA's and JACL's heavy-handed efforts to recruit cotton pickers, including publicly praising workers who picked more than 100 pounds of cotton,[236] inmates were reluctant to participate. Two days after the announcement of the US Army's special order, the low numbers forced WRA authorities to develop a "Man power Council" made up of inmates and WRA officials.[237] The Council, under the leadership of Masao Yoshitsu, worked to investigate conditions in the field and treatment of workers. Soon after their establishment, inmates confronted the Council expressing concern over unsafe transportation, the lack of proper clothing for harsh weather and fieldwork, and the high cost of meals.[238] Furthermore, inmates did not feel they could leave their families when their lives together were derailed, and their living conditions were so poor. They felt their labor should be used to improve their own daily circumstance, not to serve other farmers. The inmates demanded change and even threatened a general strike.[239] The WRA responded with lower meal prices, additional clothing and promises to improve living conditions. While recruitment continued and the number of workers slightly increased, numbers remained below 300, far less than the 3,000 expected by the US Army. Merely a month into the

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[234] "Cotton for War," *Gila News-Courier* (AZ), September 23, 1942.
[235] Ibid.
[236] Top recognition was given to an issei from the Canal camp who picked 119 lbs of cotton at the Smith-Thornburg Ranch. The newspaper also featured a letter from a farmer declaring his appreciation for pickers who were "willing and anxious to do their work to the best of their knowledge and ability. See "Canal Camper is Cotton Champ," *Gila News-Courier* (AZ), September 23, 1942.
[237] "Weekend marks upswing of cotton volunteers," *Gila News-Courier* (AZ), September 25, 1942.
[238] Masumi Izumi translation of Japanese section of *Gila News-Courier*, October 24, 1942. Meal price were set at $0.15 for breakfast and dinner. Lunch boxes were priced at $0.25.
[239] Ibid.

recruitment process, on October 21, 1942, residents were "absolved" of their responsibility to address the cotton labor shortage.[240]

Further punctuating their refusal to assist with the State's cotton production, several inmates chose to till the land within the Gila River facility. Approximately 1,000 men and women, many older issei, tended livestock and cultivated over 50 different crops. On 1,194 acres of rich soil, once used to cultivate alfalfa, they grew carrots, beets, turnips, spinach, cauliflower, broccoli, cantaloupe, watermelon, cucumber, squash, and other crops.[241] Historian Masumi Izumi's argues that many issei accepted the low pay ($16 a month), not as an act of submission but in an effort to resist the calls to serve the nation, and redirected their skills to feed their own community.[242] Issei farmers donated seeds to plant Japanese vegetables and herbs, such as azuki beans, daikon, mizuna (greens), and shungiku (edible Chrysanthemum), and applied their special skills to growing familiar food. Vegetables and herbs were also dehydrated and canned onsite to be enjoyed all year long. By May 1943, Gila River farmers produced 2,805 tons of vegetables, of which 1,341 tons were distributed to fellow inmates in all ten incarceration facilities.[243] Issei farmer their own families and friends, beyond the reaches of their own facility. In this vein, the Gila River farmers' success in suspending a national recruitment campaign and cultivating the land to feed fellow inmates was an act of protest accomplished while still under WRA supervision.

Military

In early 1943, as a bloody war continued, the inclusion of Japanese Americans in the US military was considered an option. On February 10, 1943, a seemingly benign government-

[240] "Rivers Residents Absolved."
[241] *A Year at Gila: Anniversary Booklet*, July, 1943.
[242] Masumi Izumi, personal communication, April 28, 2016.
[243] *A Year at Gila: Anniversary Booklet*, July, 1943

issued document entitled, "Statement of United States Citizen of Japanese Ancestry" was distributed to all inmates, regardless of citizenship. Informally called the "loyalty questionnaire," the War Department and WRA intended the form to have two functions: first, as an assessment tool to identify potential recruits for the U.S. military, and second, a means to determine clearance for resettlement. While the military's intension may have been to simply collect information, their hasty approach caused great distress for all Japanese American inmates. As a consequences of the questionnaire, conflict erupted amongst inmates, tensions grew between issei and nisei (citizens), families were torn apart, and men who refused to declare loyalty to either the U.S. or Japan were criminalized.

The issue centered on the two questions in the document that alluded to the military's persisting suspicion of Japanese Americans. Question 27 asked if inmates were willing to serve in the U.S. military (in some capacity including the Women's Auxiliary Corp) and question 28 asked if inmates would "swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and defend the United States" and "forswear any form of allegiance or disobedience to the Japanese Emperor."[244] Isseis, who entered the United States as Japanese immigrants, were ineligible for U.S. citizenship and feared they would be stateless if they renounced their Japanese citizenship. They felt great uncertainty regardless of answering "yes" or "no" to Question 28. Nisei men were also unclear if their "yes" answer was a statement of support for the war, or declaring an actual commitment to serve in the military. Although 65,000 Japanese Americans answered "yes" to both questions,[245] the questionnaire enraged citizens who were offended that their loyalty would continue to be dismissed despite their cooperation with wartime incarceration.

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[244] Cherstin Lyon, "Questions 27 and 28," Densho Encyclopedia, last modified August 20, 2015, http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Questions%2027%20and%2028/

[245] Minutes of "Meeting held to discuss results of investigation," (April 9, 1943), NARA, RG 65, box 81, item 97; Wendy L. Ng, *Japanese American Internment During World War II: A History and Reference*

The questionnaire prompted many to express dissent, as an estimated 20,000 inmates did not answer the question, added a qualifier to their answer, or answered "no" to one or both of the questions.[246] Following the questionnaire in 1943, 9,000 inmates, including those with U.S. citizenship, applied for repatriation and expatriation, and this number grew to nearly 20,000 in 1944.[247] Those who answered "no" to both questions, labeled "no-no boys," were deemed "disloyal" and as punishment were segregated in the Tule Lake confinement camp.[248] Once again inmates saw family members, friends, and co-workers removed from their residence. Conflicting perspectives on the questionnaire strained relationships and caused an uneasiness surrounding the inmates' undetermined yet imminent release from wartime incarceration.

Although the loyalty questionnaire prompted protest and discontent, over a thirty-three thousand Japanese Americans men and women served in the military. From Gila River alone, 994 nisei men volunteered to serve in the segregated 442 Regimental Combat Team (RCT). [249] The 442 RCT took on violent missions in Italy and France. After suffering the loss of 800 men, at the war's end the 442 RCT was the most decorated military unit for its size and length of service.[250] Not to be dismissed, Japanese American women also served in the military under the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) and Women's Auxiliary Corps (WAC). Similar to the process for Japanese American men, women had to be cleared by the military prior to entering basic

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Guide (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 58-61; Brian Masura Hayashi, *Democratizing the Enemy: The Japanese American Internment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 144.
[246] Cherstin Lyon, "Questions 27 and 28," Densho Encyclopedia, last modified August 20, 2015, http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Questions%2027%20and%2028/
[247] Cherstin Lyon, "Loyalty questionnaire," Densho Encyclopedia, last modified August 20, 2015, http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Loyalty%20questionnaire/
[248] For additional research on Tule Lake's Segregation Center see Barbara Takei, "Legalizing Detention: Segregated Japanese Americans and the Justice Department's Renunciation Program," *Journal of the Shaw Historical Library* 19 (2005), 75–105.
[249] Karen Leong. "Gila River," Densho Encyclopedia, last modified, August 20, 2015, http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Gila%20River/.
[250] Franklin Odo, "442nd Regimental Combat Team," Densho Encyclopedia, last modified August 20, 2015, http://encyclopedia.densho.org/442nd%20Regimental%20Combat%20Team/

training; however, because so few Japanese American women volunteered, they were not placed in segregated units. The young nisei in WAC did not engage in combat and instead mostly did clerical positions, assisted with research, and taught and translated Japanese language.[251] Their work was not valued at the same level as men, however nisei WAC members challenged gendered expectations and racial discrimination, further expanding how Japanese American women participated in racial uplift and nation building.

While nisei women were motivated to join the military for reasons similar to those of their Japanese American male counterparts, they faced challenges from within their family and society at large. Many nisei women wanted to prove their loyalty to the nation of their birth. Although some received praise for volunteering, others were criticized for joining a male-dominated industry. Some Japanese American parents worried about their daughters' ability to serve, and others feared mistreatment within their unit.[252] Those who joined the WAC confronted stereotypes of sexual deviance; one rumor claimed women were sexually promiscuous with men,[253] while others alleged that many officers were lesbian.[254] Despite such troubling stereotypes, women were determined to seek new opportunities, to travel, leave home, and gain access to education and job skills. A few enlisted in the military after their release from an incarceration facility. Some women already held a college degree in the medical field, allowing them to serve in hospitals or medical labs.[255] Others improved their language skills, attending the

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[251] Marie Sato, "Japanese American women in military," Densho Encyclopedia, last modified August 20, 2015 http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Japanese%20American%20women%20in%20military/
[252] Ibid.
[253] Brenda L. Moore, T*o Serve My Country, to Serve My Race: The Story of the Only African-American WACS Stationed Overseas During World War II*. (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 19.
[254] Emily Yellin, *Our Mothers' war: American women at home and at the front during World War II*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004). 321-327.
[255] Moore, *To Serve My Country,* 112.

Military Intelligence Service Language School in Fort Snelling, Minnesota, and learned to translate military documents.

Different from other patriots, however, many nisei WACs saw their brothers enlist in the military service while their parents remained incarcerated. They hoped their contribution would bring an end to the war, abroad and at home. Like nisei who left incarceration facilities to attend college, WAC members were driven not only to change the current conditions but also to improve the future. As stated by Frances Iritani, the first nisei to join the WAC, "I want the children that I may have to enjoy the privilege of American rights…they need not be ashamed. They will have the right to be proud of their citizenship."[256] Former Gila River inmate Kathleen Iseri volunteered to express her pride, but also wanted to assist families in rebuilding their lives following incarceration. Such nisei WAC members challenged racial and gender-based discrimination to be included in the military, and through their service worked to improve living conditions for other inmates. Their commitment to both nation and family, and their drive to end further discrimination altered the image of Japanese American women in the postwar era.

As evident from the three forms of sanctioned leave, Japanese Americans inmates had to demonstrate loyalty and productivity to justify their early release. Their freedom had to be earned despite their unlawful incarceration. When inmates were needed to serve in the military, provide agricultural labor or make a purchase in the local economy, standards were developed to permit individuals to leave. Their time and labor outside of incarceration camps was deemed a privilege, sometimes celebrated as an opportunity to prove their loyalty and contribute to the economy. The officials who promoted such "opportunities" often praised an individual's ability to meet necessary standards, but also emphasized the nation's benevolence in influencing and

[256] Frances Iritani, as quoted in Moore, *To Serve My Country*, 98.

grooming such a person. Presenting leave policy as a practice of goodwill, WRA authorities steered attention away from the injustice of wartime incarceration, and dismissed the achievements of Japanese Americans in meeting and exceeding expectations of an ideal citizen.

The ways in which Japanese American inmates interpreted WRA leave policy, simultaneously following and challenging the terms, enacts Homi Bhabha's theory of sly civility. He argues that those in power enforce policy to assume authority over their subjects, yet the extent of their power over individual actions has limitations. Bhabha references British civil servant and East India Company employee John Stuart Mill's mid-nineteenth century testimony to underscore the contradictions and inconsistencies inscribed under colonial rule. While Mill claimed that an individual's ability to participate in "public discussion" was a sign of civility and central to insuring good government in the nation, he did not uphold the same beliefs for the British colonies. Mill stated, "vigorous despotism is in itself the best mode of government for training the people… to render them capable of higher civilization."[257] Mill's ideals of civility assumed British superiority, silenced protest, and justified exclusion. Each strategy countered the core tenets of democracy. Bhabha critiques the power of colonial authority and the meaning of democracy, if by definition it can only be granted to those deemed "trained" and "civilized." Bhabha states that the need to enforce a "colonial substitution" for democracy may be interpreted as an exercise of power, but also, their choice of governance reveals the uncertainty and fear felt by authorities to engage in public discourse with the people of India.[258] In this light, the demand for civility was a supplementary mechanism of control. The authority's desire to maintain power could not be separated from their feelings of doubt and paranoia.[259] Bhabha argues that acts of

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[257] John Stuart Mill 'On Liberty,' quoted in Homi Bhabha, "Sly Civility," *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 96.
[258] Homi Bhabha, "Sly Civility," *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 95.
[259] Ibid., 96.

"deferred address" underscore the limitations of colonial power, and weakens the assumed configuration of dominance.

Bhabha exposes the doubled address of colonial governance, asserting that both colonizer and colonized are in a "process of misrecognition."[260] With their ambivalent relationship, Bhabha identifies how power can be inverted through acts of sly civility: sly resistance towards authority perceived as civil, compliant with authority. Bhabha explains, drawing on the complex relationship between a civilized "native" and British authority. While civility may prove the effectiveness of colonial rule, when an authority demands that the native affirm the colonizer's success, they run the risk of disclosing the "threatening reversal: *Tell us why we are here*."[261] The refined colonial subject brings attention to their position as colonized, subordinate and trained. Bhabha recognizes this careful shift in power, as the sly civilian identifies their political condition within a clear hierarchy, the colonizer questions their own abilities to sustain their influence and leadership. The colonial subject triggers paranoia, as authorities cannot claim complete power.

Working within sanctioned terms of departure, Japanese American inmates took advantage of their positions and challenged the demands and expectations placed on them by the WRA. The Gila River inmates-turned-farmers, who cultivated an abundance of crops to feed their fellow inmates, well-reflect the actions of a sly civilian. Demonstrating resilience and industriousness, the farmers took to the desert land and grew over fifty different crops, and produced millions of pounds of vegetable, fruits, and herbs. Experienced farmers accepted the WRA's low wages and applied their expertise to constructing an irrigation system and harvesting enough food for several facilities. Enduring harsh weather conditions and backbreaking labor,

[260] Ibid., 97.
[261] Ibid., 100.

these farmers seem to mirror the spirit of the American Frontier. Yet, by choosing to be employed within the confinement center these workers protested the poor labor conditions in private farms, and refused to separate their families by providing seasonal labor. Farmers were motivated to grow their own crops in order to nourish other Japanese Americans. Supplying mess halls with familiar food, farmers not only filled gaps left by the WRA, they also proved inmates could be less reliant on the government agency. Far exceeding expectations to produce agriculture and tend to livestock, the WRA had to rely on the skills of the farmers to provide for the center. Gila River farmers altered their role from dependent inmate to skilled provider. As sly civilians, Japanese American farmers, under the supervision of the WRA, cleverly nurtured their community's health and restored a degree of comfort with every meal.

Dance as Departure

In addition to education, agricultural labor, and military service, dance provided a means for temporary leave. After the success of her concert, Amemiya and her company were given permission to exit the Gila River facility when they were invited to perform at a high school in Phoenix, Arizona. As described by Amemiya, "This was the first time any of us were allowed to leave camp. The camp officials were very proud and provided the transportation."[262] Although dance was not actively promoted or written into WRA policy as a sanctioned form of leave, Amemiya and her dancers, as well as other distinguished artists,[263] were given permission to leave with the sponsorship of an established agency. This decision may have been influenced by the fact that many known American modern dance choreographers were involved in patriotic projects such as providing entertainment for the U.S. military and performing in federally funded

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[262] Amemiya quoted in Tokunaga, *Yuriko,* 39.

[263] For more on Japanese American artists during World War II, see Gordon H. Chang, "Deployments, Engagements, Obliterations: Asian American Artist and World War II," *Asian American Art, 1850-1970*. Eds. Chang, Gordon H., Mark Dean Johnson, Paul J. Karlstrom, and Sharon Spain (California: Stanford University Press, 2008), 111-139.

Works Progress Administration (WPA) productions.[264] Speaking to the experience of incarceration, however, the Japanese American dancers' expression of grace, poise, and beauty while surrounded by bleakness may have been a greater motivation for WRA officials to authorize their leave. Yet, in equating their virtue and aptitude with their successful performance of ballet and modern dance, WRA administrators, audiences and inmates further reified the authority of Western culture. While Amemiya and her students danced interpretations of Western classical music, their bodies did little to destabilize Western cultural superiority. However, as Bhabha argues, their mimetic performance of elite dance offered a veiled threat to essential notions of difference.

The practice and performance of modern dance was not solely a demonstration intended to appeal to patriotic ideals. Similar to agricultural workers' use of sly civility, Japanese American dancers also found distinct ways to simultaneously reify and critique WRA policy and ideals of proper citizenship. While modern dance was acknowledged by the WRA as an elite art form, performed by dancers worthy of gaining clearance to leave, many established modern dance practitioners sought to counter such ideals, instead aiming to make the form accessible and relevant to all people. Powered by female choreographers, the discipline of modern dance aimed to challenge the aristocratic order of ballet, and instead explore unrestrained movement and corporeal sensations. Choreographers questioned the role of dance in a democratic nation and developed works to address the tensions between the needs of an individual and the group.

Joining in conversation with such concerns, Amemiya and her dancers may have been drawn to the discipline as a means, not only to access social mobility, but also to explore the prospects and limitations of democracy. Dancers impressed WRA authorities as they elegantly

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[264] Foulkes, *Modern Bodies: Dance*, 157-178

executed their civility, but their rights as citizens continued to be violated. Yet, as articulated by Bhabha, authorities could not affirm their power to influence inmates without considering how such civility was acquired–Japanese American dancers skillfully accessed dominant culture under conditions of strict governance and surveillance. Through their performance the dancers subtly revealed their extraordinary circumstance. The formation of an all-Japanese American modern dance group was made possible because of their unjust incarceration. Dance classes, with a Japanese American instructor, were affordable and accessible in this makeshift city. Dancers may have felt less discrimination from peers or teachers in such a setting. However, their training was made available because they were forced to live in isolation in a racially segregated environment. The following discussion examines the history of American modern dance to identify how the art form grappled with such critical tensions between inclusion and exclusion, elitism and democracy. I consider how the practice at Gila River reinforced American standards of civility but also facilitated a women-centered space that countered rigid gender roles, and enabled Amemiya and her dancers to attend to their complex social circumstance as enemy and citizen.

A brief overview of American modern dance history reveals the efforts of early choreographers to engage with nationalist discourse. In the late 1890s and early 1900s, choreographers like Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis aimed to establish an art form that was uniquely American. Following the end of the Spanish American War of 1898, when the United States gained control of Cuba, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, the popular appeal of both choreographers reflected the nations interest in defining a distinct American identity. While the United States transitioned from a colony to an empire, both produced dances to affirm American superiority. Duncan drew inspiration from ancient Greece, seeking to connect her artistry with

the "birth of civility" and enlightenment. She claimed "natural" movement, unrestricted by corsets and footwear, was developed at the start of western civilization, and such authentic movement could be revived when the body is free. Duncan's followers embraced the sense of freedom and whimsy that was intrinsic to her work, and a contrast to the elite, codified practice of European ballet.[265] St. Denis also relied on other cultures to express her own freedom. Her exploration of "exotic" cultures, including Egyptian, Japanese, and Indian, and use of "brownface," upheld the legacy of minstrelsy and determined that White Americans had the privilege to access, appropriate and profit from marginalized cultures.

While Duncan and St. Denis celebrated American cultural authority, the generation of choreographers who followed explored the efficacy of art in nation building. By the end of the Progressive era the nation had undergone extensive political reform. Having witnessed the aftermath of World War I, rapid developments in science, technology and industrialism, the enforcement of prohibition laws, and the women's suffrage movement, artists were motivated to address the role of art and artistic expression in a changing society. Modern dancers responded with works that grappled with the conflicts and tensions between fostering individualism and showing fidelity to the nation.[266] Company directors like Doris Humphrey and Martha Graham choreographed pieces, often featuring a discernable soloist amongst the group, to explore the difficulties endured by an individual to be a part of, or apart from, a collective. Addressing such themes, these women questioned the power of the group to subsume the individual, and vice versa. They aimed to reveal an individual's internal conflict and psychological turmoil, and presented them as universal themes of human suffering. Similar to other works produced by the Federal Theater in the 1930s, modern dancers did not seek to identify a single solution to resolve

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[265] Ann Daly, *Done into Dance: Isadora Duncan in America*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 30.
[266] For example Doris Humphrey, *Life of a Bee* (1929), and Martha Graham, *Heretic.* (1929).

such struggles, but rather celebrated the unique individuals that each contributed to form the populace.[267] Furthermore, unlike theater, opera, and ballet, modern dancers employed minimalist and abstracted choreography as to not provide a clear narrative. Audiences were invited to interpret the bodies in motion and make their own meaning of each performance. Thus, modern dance embraced public participation, debate, and disagreement, and produced art reflective of American democracy.[268]

Modern dance choreographers of this generation also tackled social issues concerning race, class, gender, sexuality, and religion, and fought against fascism in Europe. White women, many of whom identified as Jewish, white gay men, and African Americans took to the stage as choreographers to bring attention to important matters of inequity. Inspired to take part in worker's struggles, dancers formed the Workers Dance Group (1932), attended protests, and took their disruptive choreography to the proscenium stage. Challenging the elitism of modern dance, the Group also provided dance lessons for European immigrant women living in settlement homes.[269] Choreographers like Helen Tamaris, born to impoverished Russian Jewish immigrant parents, were determined to make modern dance accessible to those who could not afford ballet slippers and leotards. Concerned over the rise in fascism in Spain, modern dancers across the political spectrum raised awareness and funds to aid victims of war, and participated in the boycott of the International Dance Festival in Germany, held in association with the 1936 Berlin Summer Olympics.[270] Driven to address racism in the United States, African American

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[267] Foulkes, *Modern Bodies,* 5.
[268] Ibid.,, 132.
[269] While dance classes in settlement houses invited immigrant women to access creative movement, dance was also taught to teach social skills to encourage assimilation. See Shannon Jackson. *Lines of Activity: Performance, historiography, Hull-House domesticity*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).
[270] Foulkes, *Modern Bodies,* 122.; Graff, Ellen. *Stepping Left: Dance and Politics in New York City, 1928-1942*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 114.

choreographers Edna Guy and Hemsley Winfield produced the "First Negro Dance Recital" (1931) in the Chanin Building in midtown Manhattan.

These choreographers examined the mistreatment of minority groups, expressed solidarity with workers, and brought attention to the atrocities of war. Putting their bodies on the line, dancers asserted their positions on significant national and international affairs, and shaped the political landscape. Despite their engagement in leftist politics, however, most white dancers were not considered dangerous, disloyal Americans. Perhaps this was because many held firm to their faith in the nation's democratic process, while others carefully appropriated the terms of democracy to test the bounds of the ideology.

Although modern dancers were earnest in their efforts to create a new, socially relevant art form that wrestled with ideas of independence, universalism and the accessibility of art, they were not completely successful in realizing their vision. With the establishment of codified movements, schools, and companies, the practice gained prominence through the support of elite art patrons and academic institutions. Artists struggled to uphold progressive ideals and make political statements, while also seeking legitimacy as a respectable art form. For example, communist, socialist, and leftist artists in the Worker's Dance League had to compromise their Marxist ideals to expand their membership and audience.[271] Their name change to "New Dance League" in 1935 followed a move by the Congress of the Communist International to develop a Popular Front, but also weakened the group's advocacy for, and performing with, workers.[272] The New Dance League tempered their critiques of capitalism and solidarity with working-class struggles, and instead promoted a broader ideology fighting against war, fascism and censorship. By the mid-1930s artists of various media made works depicting the violence and loss endured

[271] Foulkes, *Modern Bodies,* 118.
[272] Ibid.

under a fascist regime. Modern dancers choreographed to themes of domination and human suffering, representing the anguish and pain in the body. In the popular anti-fascism movement American values of democracy were idealized, and activism protesting class inequity in the United States was silenced.[273]

Those already marginalized and socially excluded were the most vulnerable in the struggle to politicize modern dance. Dancers of color were not given the same opportunity as white artists. While Tamaris received praise for her series of appropriative dances set to Black spirituals, Guy and Winfield were rarely accepted to take classes, let alone find employment.[274] When dancers like Guy, and later Katherine Dunham and Pearl Primus, found the opportunity to perform, their works received criticism from reviewers and patrons. White critics often dismissed African American choreographers as unoriginal if inclusive of Africanist aesthetics, or deemed their works derivative if European technical forms were referenced.[275] African American dancers contended with a double bind that not only limited their creative range but also assessed their artistry by the standards of the white dominant culture.

Like African Americans, Native American and Asian American dancers were rarely visible on stage, yet their cultures were abstracted, universalized, and performed by white dancers. As choreographers sought to explore universal themes of human emotions, they assumed that all people regardless of their identities shared common characteristics. This notion was not problematic on its own, yet placed in the context of discriminatory policy and social inequity, universalist ideology further excluded and exploited people of color. As dance studies scholar Jacqueline Shea Murphy explains, choreographers like Graham romanticized Native American culture and ritual. However, having little cultural knowledge, she focused on

[273] Ibid., 122.
[274] Ibid., 24.
[275] ibid.

developing her own artistry but did little to recognize the importance of Native American religion or credit indigenous practices as source material.[276] Murphy argues that Graham merely engaged with her own interpretation of "nativeness" that enriched her own vision but did not acknowledge the ongoing oppression of Native people of that time. Despite its seemingly inclusive aims, universalism centered on the values and culture of the dominant social group, and enforced their standards as the common truth.[277] Within such a framework, white bodies asserted their ability to represent anybody, and did little to credit the cultures, often with less social power, from which they appropriated. Performed by white bodies markers of difference were erased, and the abuse and denial of rights based on such differences were also dismissed.

While efforts to democratize dance and universalize human experience fell short on the proscenium stage, incarcerated Japanese Americans appropriated these ideas to grapple with their precarious position. Modern dance's contentious history-- striving to be both elite and democratic, addressing themes of nationalism and universalism—well positioned the dance form to be taught in a confinement center. Respected as a refined, distinctly American movement technique WRA authorities may have approved the practice assuming Amemiya would provide a harmless outlet, inviting dancers at all levels to exercise and learn proper femininity. However, as a dance form led by women, and inspired by physical and emotional exploration, Amemiya facilitated creative and possibly freeing sessions for her students. As she described, "I would ask them to use their imagination to become a tree: begin with the roots, grow into the trunk, move freely… I would help them tap into their imagination and truthfully become the dance."[278] Amemiya was less interested in the acquisition of technique and encouraged her dancers to "give

[276] Jacquiline Shea Murphy, The People have Never Stopped Dancing: Native American Modern Dance Histories (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007) 148-168.
[277] David Palumbo-Liu, "Universalism and Minority Culture," *differences: A journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 7, no. 1 (1995): 188.
[278] Tokunaga, *Yuriko*, 39

voice to their pent up emotions." Her prompts would not directly address the trauma of confinement, but Amemiya was able to guide her students to express their feelings, tapping into sensations bubbling on the surface, as well as those held deep in the body.

Under conditions of incarceration and forced ethnic segregation, such emotional exploration took on a different significance. Rather than a universalist approach that often diminished the marginalization of minorities, in a rehearsal setting of exclusively Japanese American women, students were invited to identify feelings that were particular to their experience as wrongfully imprisoned citizens. In less than a year Japanese Americans had been forcibly removed from their homes, businesses and neighborhoods, transported to undisclosed locations, and crammed into small barracks built on desolate land. While racial harmony was far from a reality prior to the war, the bombing of Pearl Harbor triggered new levels of harassment, rejection, and mistreatment. As inmates Japanese Americans endured incredible loss, stripped of rights, possessions, and a sense of self. While held under surveillance, the opportunity to examine their emotions were limited; many internalized their feelings of uncertainty, fear, shame, anger, confusion, and deep sadness. Amemiya encouraged her students to identify their emotions, and tap into them to generate movement, stating, "You have to learn to look inside your body, even though you are looking out."[279] Although their daily lives remained highly monitored, perhaps in the studio dancers were able to grapple with the tensions surrounding their circumstance, as dancers sensing both freedom and restraint, strength and vulnerability.

The popularity of Amemiya's modern dance class also emphasizes the importance of a women-centered space in the carceral setting. Similar to the girls' clubs established prior to, and during incarceration, dance classes allowed for cross-generation mentorship, socializing, and

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[279] Ibid.

leadership development.[280] Such an outlet was much needed to confront complex and contradictory emotions that accompanied the changing role of Japanese American women. As discussed, gendered employment discrimination was far less in incarceration facilities, and the flat pay scale meant Japanese American men and women in similar positions earned equal wages. Despite their low pay, women were able to earn an income and contribute to their families inside and outside their homes.[281] However, having greater access to economic independence did not change gendered expectations. Community leaders, pastors and teachers, as well as contributors to the camp newspaper, emphasized heterosexual dating and marriage. To prepare for dating, young women were given advice on ways to improve their attitude, attire, and complexion to attract the attention of the right boy. School curriculum for girls included home economics, teaching techniques for how to cook, sew, and run a household on a budget. Weekly dances invited young men and women to meet and mingle. And community members celebrated engagements and weddings regularly, averaging four per month.[282]

While marriage was emphasized, premarital sex was highly monitored and stigmatized. American studies professor John Howard's research on the regulation of sexual behavior found that youth groups attended talks on "proper boy-girl relations," the value of monogamy, and the correlations of abstinence with good hygiene.[283] Beyond preventative measures, patrol officers also tracked the activities of seemingly promiscuous single women and their associates. Following orders passed down from Washington, officers were to target such women to eliminate potential acts of prostitution and the spread of "venereal disease" as both were threats

[280] Matsumoto, *City Girls,* 156.
[281] Ibid.
[282] John Howard, *Concentration Camps on the Home Front: Japanese Americans in the House of Jim Crow*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2008), 106.
[283] Ibid.*,* 105.

"against peace and security."[284] Thus, the simultaneous disruption to family structure and increased access to economic mobility did not translate to greater autonomy for women. Despite significant changes in their social position, female independence continued to be restricted as marriage was promoted as a necessary means for individual and communal stability.[285]

Amemiya's dance company, through regularly scheduled practices and rehearsals, offered an opportunity for women to be in the company of only women. Taking Amemiya's instructions and improvisation structure, women had control of their bodies. They were encouraged to experiment with movement, and they did not need to define themselves exclusively by the male gaze. Those who were driven to seek opportunities for autonomy, and to meet social expectations may have relied on such a women-centered space for embodied practice. Dancers moved with each other to seek support, validation, and perhaps relieve pressures directed at them from their family, community and WRA officials.

While the rehearsal space may have allowed for experimentation, in public performances dancers' emotions may have been abstracted, expressed through universal themes such as references to nature, that obscured their actual experience. Perhaps movement vocabulary inspired by the distinct experience of mass incarceration was not made explicit in the dances. Instead, such gestures may have been uncredited source material, abstracted and veiled to present unifying modern dance choreography. Similar to the patriotic Fourth of July parade where participants expressed pathological euphoria to simultaneously express and repress their grief, universalism worked to reveal and conceal each dancer's intimate emotional state.

Amemiya's Departure

[284] Ibid., 108.
[285] Ibid., 106.

To the WRA, Amemiya's skills as a modern dancer and her potential to improve the image of Japanese Americans seemed to justify her release, which was not necessarily granted to her as a citizen's right. In the spring of 1943, Amemiya applied to the Eastern War Relocation Authority for clearance and planned to join friend and dancer Rhoda Johnson in Detroit, Michigan. Gila River WRA employee Clara Clayman, familiar with Amemiya's talents as a dancer, encouraged her to apply instead for a job in New York so that she could be closer to professional dance schools. Clayman sponsored Amemiya and set her up with a job interview to be a seamstress; thus, Amemiya's skills as a seamstress and modern dancer facilitated her release. While her distinction as a dancer gained Clayman's attention, Amemiya also needed a wage-earning skill to gain access to New York, where she could further develop her dance career. In September 1943, after 17 months of incarceration, Amemiya left the Phoenix Railroad Station and traveled to New York, where she later joined the Martha Graham dance company.

Conclusion

The mass incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II clearly violated the civil rights of thousands, but far worse, their forced removal and imprisonment fractured families, ended careers, destroyed spirits, and ruptured entire ethnic communities. Carried out by local law enforcement, and supported by State and Federal government, the events that followed Pearl Harbor demonstrated the devastating consequences of racism and xenophobia in a time of war. While wartime incarceration continues to be recognized as a tragedy in American history, what is often overlooked are the nuanced ways Japanese Americans expressed their emotions, and asserted dissent in order to survive their incarceration and eventual resettlement. This chapter focused on Yuriko Amemiya's wartime experience to bring attention to how a young performer strategically navigated her extraordinary circumstance. Amemiya relied on her skills as a modern

dancer, choreographer and teacher to gain the support of her community to be crowned Victory Queen, earn the trust of WRA administrators to perform outside the Gila River confinement center, and acquire permission for permanent leave. Seemingly her journey reflects her ability to follow terms set by the WRA, but, as Bhabha's theory of sly civility argues, Amemiya's onerous execution of proper citizenship also reveals the contingency of citizenship and the fragility of democracy.

Amemiya's classical dance concert at Gila River, and recital in Phoenix, Arizona each serve as examples of ways Japanese American performers reified and challenged WRA regulations. Approved under the surveillance of the WRA, these events functioned to socialize women, boost inmate morale, and promote patriotism. Yet, given the opportunity to perform for thousands inside and outside of the confinement center, the praise they received for their delightful, well-rehearsed performance of modern dance could not be dissociated from their status as inmates. Their company could not exist in wartime America, if not for their incarceration. Trained in barracks to execute refined western forms of dance, Japanese American performers endured dismal living conditions to nurture their creativity, and prove their value as citizens. While these dancers were idealized for their perseverance, viewers also witnessed the hypocrisy of war, and were pressed to question who can identify as American, and what constitutes protection.

Japanese American performers followed regulations set by the WRA and often far exceeded their expectations. Excess and exaggeration was a strategy employed by inmates to not only prove their capacity to contribute to the nation, but also to draw attention to their unjust treatment. In the Fourth of July parade inmates pledged allegiance to the American flag, cited the Declaration of Independence, marched with veterans, waved flags and beat drums to perform

their loyalty and patriotism while held in a detention center. On the Gila River farm, industrious inmates cultivated an abundance of fruits, vegetables and herbs, exceeding millions of pounds, to feed their families and fellow inmates held in other incarceration facilities. Japanese American inmates worked tirelessly to gain visibility in order to alter their image tainted by institutional racism and wartime hysteria. Their efforts seem to demonstrate their complicity with the government that violated their rights. Their labor continued to contribute to the national economy, especially as the pressure to be productive citizens only increased as the United States affirmed their role as a leader of global capitalism. However, exaggeration and excess was an available strategy for inmates living under conditions of surveillance. Although demanding on the body, their enactment of excess demonstrated that no amount of civility and patriotism could prove their right to belong in a nation that exercised selective democracy.

Amemiya's excellence and versatility, including both domestic skills and proficiency in dance, allowed her to exit Gila River and live "freely" in New York City. Approved for early release, Amemiya was held to high standards, she needed to appease the WRA, and to be a role model for other Japanese Americans seeking departure. She was expected to excel in her artistry, athleticism and work ethic while also maintaining feminine ideals of grace and poise. Although, exploitative and unsustainable, in highlighting her versatile body her extraordinary efforts and labor could not be dismissed. Her multiple responsibilities and obligations bring to view the impossible expectations placed on Japanese American women to accommodate, adapt to and reconcile the contradictions written into policy and cultural practices.

Japanese American women were pressed to maintain their versatility in post-war America. The next chapter considers Amemiya's resettlement in New York, early career in Graham's company, and her New York premiere as a solo artist. Highlighting specific dances, I

examine the significance of Amemiya's performances alongside critical moments of wartime and postwar nation building. Following the end of World War II, the United States occupied Japan, turning the once enemy nation into an ally. On the domestic sphere, American veterans returned seeking to re-build the nation, Japanese Americans struggled to resettle, and new immigration and labor laws allowed Asians to gain greater access to citizenship. In the realm of dance, Graham's company gained worldwide recognition as a symbol of democracy and multiculturalism, and Broadway musicals re-introduced Asia and the Pacific Islands as a geopolitical location desperate for U.S. aid and intervention. In this new era, Japanese American women endured labor as interpreters–bridging differences, easing transitions, and alleviating anxieties–between U.S.-Japan relations, and managing the personal and political re-integration of Japanese Americans.

CHAPTER THREE:

Dancing Ally:

Contingent Inclusion in the Cold War Era

On October 30, 1944, Yuriko Amemiya entered the stage as one of four Followers in Martha Graham's *Appalachian Spring*. Amemiya leads the group as they walk in unison, their hemlines swinging with every step. They circle the Husbandman and settle in formation in front of the Revivalist. They wait for their cue. While she danced in the Performing Arts Reading Room in the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., Amemiya's mother and stepfather remained incarcerated in Gila River, Arizona.

Following her release from the Gila River incarceration facility in September 1943, Amemiya was accepted into the Martha Graham Dance Company, toured extensively as a company member, and became a class demonstrator and instructor. She also developed her own career forming a dance company and appearing in several Broadway productions. How did Amemiya, a Japanese American dancer and a former inmate, perform with Graham during the war and develop a flourishing career? How did American modern dance audiences embrace Amemiya on stage? While the previous chapter provided an analysis of her experience dancing as a wartime inmate, this chapter focuses on Amemiya's entry into Graham's company, her role as a Follower in *Appalachian Spring,* and a performance of her own choreography, a solo entitled *Thin Cry*. In considering these three moments I examine the social conditions that informed Amemiya's inclusion in the elite modern dance world during a period of significant global shifts.

As World War II bled into the Cold War,[286] Japanese Americans' efforts to resettle coexisted with the pressing needs of the U.S. government to establish a capitalist ally in Asia. Under U.S. occupation, Japan quickly transitioned from enemy to ally. American leaders were able to build on Japan's pre-established industrialized infrastructure and educated workforce, and continued to exploit resources in Southeast Asia to redevelop Japan. The American people accepted U.S. involvement in Japan as their presence was viewed as an exercise of power over a defeated nation in need of a benevolent leader. Alongside the U.S. occupation of Japan, American immigration policies also changed, softening citizenship restrictions for Chinese, Indian and Filipino people[287] as well as "alien" brides married to American soldiers.[288] These political maneuvers reveal how postwar U.S. exceptionalism was executed through economic redevelopment in Japan and the seemingly benevolent act of allowing Asian immigrants, particularly women, access to American citizenship.

Although Amemiya confronted many challenges as a working dancer and choreographer, her presence and visibility on the modern dance stage were not as improbable as they might first appear. With the war's end Japanese Americans were re-imagined from once suspect enemy to loyal ally. The WRA initiated campaigns to encourage resettlement and praised Japanese Americans who were able to successfully rebuild their lives. Former inmates experienced

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[286] Asian American studies scholar Jodi Kim suggests that the use of the atomic bomb by the U.S. military marked the beginning of the Cold War as the attack sent a warning to the Soviet Union against their planned involvement in Japan. Kim's analysis triangulates the war and stresses Asia as the site of occupation and violence where U.S.-Soviet tensions were played out. See Jodi Kim, *Ends of Empire: Asian American Critique and the Cold War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010), 5.

[287] Significant postwar immigration and citizenship policies include Second Powers Act (1942), Chinese Exclusion Act Repeal (1943), Luce-Cellar Bill (1946), Immigration and Naitonality Act (1952), Immigration and Nationality Act (1965)

[288] The War Brides Act, passed on December 28, 1945, expedited the admission into the United States "alien" wives and children of citizen members of the U.S. military. The Alien Fiancées and Fiancés Act, passed on June 29, 1946, facilitated the admission into the United States "alien" fiancées or fiancés of members of the armed forces. The Chinese War Brides Act, passed on August 9, 1946, placed Chinese wives of American citizens on a non-quota basis.

significant political and economic changes that altered their access to housing, employment, education and social services. Their social acceptance, however, was contingent on maintaining a high level of industriousness, discipline, and the suppression of dissent. Through an examination of Amemiya as a worker, Graham dancer, and solo artist, I analyze how dance provided a means to navigate the unstable racial climate of the postwar period. I argue that her affiliation with modern dance enabled Amemiya to meet the standards of an ideal citizen dictated by the State. However, careful attention to her grueling work and rehearsal schedule reveals how meeting such standards further suppressed the trauma of incarceration and the veiled complex ways Amemiya, like other Japanese Americans, sought to rebuild their lives. Her efforts to resettle and express her loyalty to her employer could not overshadow her commitment to empowering her partner, family and community. Closing with an analysis of her solo *Thin Cry,* based on her experience as an inmate at Gila River, I aim to recuperate Amemiya as a dynamic citizen and dancer who fought to remain visible despite State-powered efforts to silence and repress acts of protest.

Amemiya as worker

On September 23, 1943, after eighteen months of incarceration, Amemiya arrived in New York City with one suitcase and $100 in cash. A WRA official greeted her at Grand Central Station and escorted her to her room on 114th Street and Broadway. Amemiya worked as a seamstress and, with the assistance of WRA employee Clara Clayman, she joined the International Ladies Garment Worker's Union #38 as the first Japanese American worker.[289] She was assigned to work at the Alteration Department of Jay Thorpe boutique and was paid $25 a

[289] Tokunaga, *Yuriko,* 45.

week. She soon moved again to a room on Sixth Avenue between 55th and 56th Street and made a life for herself in New York.

From September 1943 to September 1944, Amemiya was employed as a seamstress, factory floor manager, assistant to a costume designer, nanny, Graham company member and class demonstrator. Her work ethic and affiliation with Graham captured the attention of the WRA and she was featured in their March 1944 newsletter. While the WRA preferred to credit her hard work as the key to her success, I question this narrow interpretation that discredits the operation of formal and informal social structures that may have also supported Amemiya. In closely examining Amemiya's transition from Gila River inmate to Martha Graham dancer, I aim to bring attention to how Amemiya's work ethic and reliance on ethnic support networks operated simultaneously to enable her resettlement in New York City. This examination challenges the WRA's efforts to individualize successful workers and aims to reveal how racial minority artists relied on personal and political relations to persevere in wartime America.

A month after arriving in New York, curious about the availability of dance classes, Amemiya stepped onto the fourth floor of the 66 Fifth Avenue building. Martha Graham greeted her at the door and invited her to take a class. Demonstrating her deference, Amemiya declined the offer and insisted she train in the Graham technique prior to taking a class directly from "the Master." Graham made arrangements for Amemiya to train with company members Jane Dudley and Sophia Maslow at the Neighborhood Playhouse. As they ended their conversation, Graham told Amemiya, "Yuriko, be strong. If you are good you will be accepted by everyone and will be successful like Isamu Noguchi and Sono Osato."[290] Amemiya walked home with tears in her eyes. She recalled, "I cherish that evening with and thank Martha for giving me the courage to go

[290] Quoted by Amemiya in Tokunaga, *Yuriko*, 47.

on."[291]

Following her brief meeting with Graham, Amemiya began to juggle a demanding schedule as a seamstress and dancer. After a full day of work in the alterations department, she trained with Dudley and Maslow. Both active members of the New Dance Group, Dudley and Maslow were performers, teachers and choreographers who supported workers' rights and racial justice in the 1930s. Different from many of her peers from working-class backgrounds, Dudley was from an upper-middle-class family. She was educated with radical politics at the Walden School in Manhattan, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and the Wigman School.[292] As a child of Russian Jewish immigrants, Maslow could relate to the struggles of working people and ethnic minorities. Both women mentored Amemiya and recommended that Graham invite her to be a member of the company.

In December 1943 Amemiya left her position with the Jay Thorpe boutique to assist Edythe Gilford, Graham's costume designer for the premier of *Death and Entrances*. Although Amemiya expected her role to be temporary, she developed a strong partnership with Gilford that granted her access to Graham in unexpected ways. After receiving a scholarship to Graham's school in February 1944, Amemiya worked from 9am-3pm as a floor manager of a dress factory, took two technique classes between 4:00pm to 7:30pm and a repertory class from 8:30pm to 10:00pm. When the commute between her work place and the dance studio became too exhausting, Amemiya requested more work hours with Gilford. Amemiya's schedule included sewing during the day, learning technique in the afternoon, on occasion sewing again in

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[291] Ibid., 48.
[292] Graff, *Stepping Left*, 42.

between classes, and taking repertory class at night. Gilford and Amemiya also scheduled costume fittings with Martha Graham that extended past midnight.[293]

Once established in the company, Amemiya continued to straddle the lines between domestic and artistic labor. By March 1944 Amemiya was asked to perform with the company on a trial basis. Amemiya made her stage debut in the revival of *American Document*, followed by *Every Soul is a Circus*. Held at the Central High School of Needle Trades, the show was billed as a preview of Graham's retrospective season set to open on Broadway in May of the same year.[294] By June 1944, Amemiya was invited to be an official member of the Graham Company. Just prior to her company membership Amemiya started a short-lived business making leotards for dancers. During her first summer with Graham, Amemiya discontinued this work as she received another scholarship to attend Graham's June classes.

Graham also requested that Amemiya attend the company's summer training at Bennington College. However, in contrast to how she provided for the other dancers, Graham did not provide funding for Amemiya. In order to cover room and board, Graham made arrangements for Amemiya to stay in the College President's house, working as a housekeeper and nanny while also training and rehearsing with the company. Despite these terms of additional labor, Amemiya enthusiastically agreed to take part in Graham's excursion to Vermont. After Bennington, Amemiya returned to temporary wage-earning work as an au pair for a family in New Jersey. When the company resumed in September 1944, Amemiya was asked to be a class demonstrator and she continued to work part time making costume alterations.

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[293] Tokunaga, *Yuriko*, 57.
[294] Amemiya performed in *Primitive Mysteries* at the show in May, 1944.

Amemiya's determination and dedication to her craft elicited public praise from the WRA. Her positive attitude and successful integration were circulated as a model for Japanese American early resettlement. In a March 27, 1944 press release, Relocation Officer Mary H.S. Hayes commended Amemiya's busy schedule and lauded her work ethic as a seamstress and dancer. Beyond finding employment, Amemiya had built a life for herself as an artist and engaged citizen. Hayes quoted Amemiya who stated that she felt at home in Graham's studio and that "She [Graham] told me to think not of my racial background, but of my determination to be accepted as an individual interested in dancing as a career. When I worked in the dress shop, no unkindness was ever shown to me."[295] Amemiya, in her own words, celebrated her busy work life, expressed her gratitude to her employers, and denied the experience of discrimination.

Amemiya was one of hundreds of Japanese Americans who received high praise from the WRA for their determination and ability to integrate into the work force. Extending the reach of the Americanization classes taught in the incarceration facilities, the WRA insisted that after their release from confinement, Japanese Americans not cluster. In the "When you leave the Relocation Center" booklet, the WRA stressed that "you must accept the initiative in adjusting yourself" and that WRA services would be best utilized by those "who actively try to help themselves."[296] Japanese American felt pressure to "adjust" by masking their ethnicity in an effort to distinguish themselves from the enemy. Markers of Japanese identity, whether expressed through dress, language, or religious practice, were concealed to blend into the dominant society as much as possible. Their successful resettlement was often marked by their ability to find stable employment and contribute to the U.S. economy. Privileging their occupation over their status as former inmates, Japanese Americans were represented in a new

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[295] Tokunaga, *Yuriko,* 57.

[296] "Booklet: "When You Leave the Relocation Center"," Densho Encyclopedia, last modified April 22, 2018, https://encyclopedia.densho.org/sources/en-ddr-densho-274-15-1/

light as diligent college students, decorated soldiers, driven professionals, courteous servers, and industrious farmers. These success stories were both encouraged and documented by the WRA Photographic Section (WRAPS).[297]

Beginning as early as 1943, WRAPS collected images of Japanese Americans successfully resettling into their post-incarceration life. Alongside informational campaigns that addressed inmate loyalty,[298] WRAPS supported WRA director Dillon Myer's three-point agenda: first, to close the controversial war relocation centers; second, to encourage Japanese Americans to resettle throughout the Midwest and East Coast; and third, to persuade the American public to support inmate reintegration.[299] In this way, WRAPS worked to appease two distinct audiences: the greater American public that continued to mistrust Japanese Americans, and Japanese Americans who feared they would return to a hostile and racist environment.[300] Furthermore, Myer relied on WRAPS and other similar campaigns to represent the United States as a nation that fights discrimination, declaring that the public's acceptance of Japanese Americans would be the "true test of American democracy."[301] Myer faced a difficult challenge, because as the director of the WRA he had called for the segregation and incarceration of potentially dangerous Japanese Americans; now the same agency declared inmates were loyal Americans worthy of re-integration.

In their efforts to promote racial integration, WRAPS pictured former inmates happily working and socializing with their white colleagues and peers. Japanese Americans were not

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[297] Lane Ryo Hirabayashi, *Japanese American Resettlement Through the Lens: Hikaru Iwasaki and the WRA's Photographic Section, 1943- 1945*. (Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2009), 7.
[298] Alice Yang Murray, *Historical memories of the Japanese American internment and the Struggle for Redress*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 86.
[299] Hirabayashi, *Japanese American Resettlement Through the Lens,* 4.
[300] Ibid.
[301] Yang Murray, *Historical memories of the Japanese American internment and the Struggle for Redress*, 85.

"suspiciously clustering" in urban enclaves but instead were seen as starting fresh in cities like Buffalo, New York, Des Moines, Iowa and St. Louis, Missouri, where there was very little history of Japanese American community. Whether capturing Japanese Americans at work, at home, or at a social gathering, each photo was accompanied by a description of each person's prewar home, place of incarceration, and resettlement location and occupation. Tracing their trajectory, these images debunked a prominent prewar stereotype of Japanese Americans as insular and celebrated those willing to distance themselves from their ethnic community. Photos featured those who were able to "overcome" discrimination and find acceptance and success, concealing their losses and the circumstances that led to their new life. Photographs were reproduced en masse and distributed to various news sources and print media in order to reach the general American public.[302] Photos were also proudly displayed in WRA offices to alleviate concerns held by Japanese Americans regarding their imminent resettlement. Doubling this effect, photographs of Japanese Americans in WRA offices cheerfully reviewing select WRAPS photos were also re-circulated to illustrate the value of the project.

Beyond promoting racial harmony, WRAPS disseminated images of productive, working Japanese Americans who were able to rebound from incarceration and effectively contribute to the U.S. economy. For the many Americans who believed Japanese Americans should remain incarcerated, these images provided some justification for their release. From their perspective, Japanese Americans needed to earn their rights as citizens by proving their labor could assist to re-build the U.S economy. In other words, tolerance and acceptance of former inmates had an economic motivation. WRAPS's successful re-imagining of Japanese Americans, from suspicious enemy to loyal contributor, played a crucial role in postwar nation building with the

[302] Hirabayashi, *Japanese American Resettlement Through the Lens,* 28

U.S. occupation of Japan, and the re-introduction of Japan as a capitalist ally in Asia.

In January 1944, Thomas Parker, program director and photographer for WRAPS, took three photos of Yuriko Amemiya, two shot in the dance studio, and one image of her sewing at the dress shop. The dance photo was accompanied by the following caption:

> Yuriko Amemiya is studying interpretive dancing on a scholarship at the famed Martha Graham School in New York. Back in her home in Hollywood, California, she started dancing when she was six. After the evacuation of all persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast, Yuriko went to the Gila River Relocation Center, where she taught dancing to center children. An accomplished seamstress, she earns her way in New York by working mornings for a Manhattan dress manufacturer. Her parents still reside at Gila.[303]

And similarly, the caption that accompanied the photo of her working as a seamstress read, "Yuriko Amemiya is a seamstress for a mid-Manhattan dress manufacturer since she relocated from the Gila River Relocation Center. Her evenings and all spare time she spends studying interpretive dancing at the Martha Graham School, where she holds a scholarship."[304] The captions seem to simply describe Amemiya's journey to New York. However, the language used in the caption neutralized the experience of forced incarceration, labeling her and her parents' time at Gila River as taking "residence" in Arizona. Such phrasing masked the struggles one might face upon release, and minimized Amemiya's move to New York as merely a change in address, rather than a life change that came as a result of her exclusion from her home on the West Coast.

Furthermore, WRAPS featured Amemiya in the dance studio and in the dress shop to capture the extent of her busy schedule and her ability to integrate into an East Coast city.

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[303] Tom Parker, *Yuriko Amemiya is studying interpretive dancing on a scholarship at the famed Martha Graham School in New York.* January, 1944. War Relocation Authority Photographs of Japanese-American Evacuation and Resettlement, University of California, Berkeley, Bancroft Library.
[304] Tom Parker, *Yuriko Amemiya is a seamstress for a mid-Manhattan dress manufacturer since she relocated from the Gila River Relocation Center*. January, 1944. War Relocation Authority Photographs of Japanese-American Evacuation and Resettlement, University of California, Berkeley, Bancroft Library.

Deeming Amemiya a model citizen, WRAPS emphasized her hard work and self-sufficiency. The caption reminded readers that not only did she work as a seamstress, but also "all spare time" was spent studying dance. They recognized her for being on a scholarship at the Graham Company and for "earning her way in New York." Her industrial skills seem to be privileged and were necessary to justify her participating in the arts. This pattern of providing domestic service as a means to support her dancing was repeated while Amemiya was in Bennington College where she was expected to provide domestic labor for the President while she took workshops with Graham during the day.

The resilience of, and hard work by people like Amemiya and those photographed cannot be dismissed; however, the selective press coverage had harmful consequences. Because those granted early release were individuals who secured admission to college, enlisted in the military or attained employment, the WRA was able to conveniently locate Japanese Americans who fit the criteria of a productive citizen. Young, single, healthy, second-generation workers like Amemiya were able to find employment and housing, but this was not true for those who left relocation centers later. Families, in particular, were financially insecure following incarceration and faced loss of homes, employment and community. While they attempted to piece their lives back together, they confronted discrimination from banks and neighborhood groups. Most needed the support of social services to survive. Although it was noted that WRAPS photos were not manipulated or altered, each subject and their surroundings were carefully selected and paired with a descriptive caption of their work and/or family life.[305] The collection excluded images of people crying, expressing anger, mourning loss, or confronting rampant racism. Photographs of families living in poorly kept trailer parks and temporary housing projects in

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[305] Hirabayashi, *Japanese American Resettlement Through the Lens*, 9.

California and Colorado were taken in late 1945 but were not widely distributed.[306] Such efforts to ignore wartime injustice further failed former inmates as they received false promises of social acceptance and were also held to often-unattainable expectations of succeeding and prospering. Steering attention away from struggling Japanese Americans allowed the American public to avoid confronting the troubling consequences of incarceration and instead exposed them to a very narrow, inaccurate scope of resettlement. Anthropologist Lane Hirabayashi further argues that WRAPS idealized the seamless reintegration of Japanese Americans as proof that incarceration did not cause harm and was therefore justified.[307]

In Amemiya's new home of New York City former inmates met with resistance, yet the city's prior history with immigrant populations also provided unique support services. Concerning racial discrimination, when George Rundquist, executive secretary of the Committee on Resettlement of Japanese-Americans, announced a new resettlement hostel for Japanese Americans on April 18, 1944, the decision sparked public protest. The hostel in Brooklyn, sponsored by the Brethren Service Committee and the American Baptist Home Mission Society, aimed to provide affordable, short-term housing for Japanese Americans seeking jobs in the area. The inmates would join an estimated 800 formerly incarcerated Japanese Americans already integrated into the New York boroughs. Rev. Ralph Smeltzer and his wife were appointed to manage the hostel, and were in talks with other faith organizations to sustain the organization. The hostel was set to open on May 10, 1944.

In opposition to the establishment of the hostel, residents of Brooklyn Heights presented a petition with over a hundred signatures to Republican Representative John J. Delaney.[308] The petition was addressed to the War Relocation Authority. New York City Mayor Fiorello La

[306] Ibid., 185-191.
[307] Ibid., 14.
[308] "Hostel for Japanese in Kings Protested," *New York Times,* April 25, 1944.

Guardia agreed with the protesters and stated his fears about inviting a large number of Japanese Americans to the area. His concerns centered on the access Japanese Americans would have to "military installations, war plants and shipping facilities"[309] and the violent racial tension that was sure to erupt as a result of their presence. Mayor La Guardia stated that Japanese Americans would "form their own colony," and cause racial tension with other minority groups.[310] La Guardia requested to know the citizenship status of the 800 Japanese American already in the area as well as the status of each new hostel resident. Other mayors of cities and governors of states in the eastern seaboard shared La Guardia's anti-Japanese beliefs and xenophobic attitudes.

In response to La Guardia's discriminatory politics, an inter-racial group formed under the leadership of Justice William F. Hagarty to support Japanese American resettlement. Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes also stated his disappointment in the Mayor and the Governors of Ohio and New Jersey for their undemocratic behavior. He was critical of their opinions, stating that they "seem ominously out of tune in a nation that is fighting for the principles of democracy and freedom."[311] Ickes targeted La Guardia as his behavior seemed out of line with his inviting policies and compassionate attitude towards Italian and German Americans during World War II. Civil rights organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the Citizen's Union also criticized Mayor La Guardia and voiced their support for the resettlement hostel. Immediately following the rise in criticism, La Guardia went silent and had no comment for the

[309] Paul Crowell, "Mayor Protests Japanese in East," *New York Times*, April 27, 1944.
[310] Ibid.
[311] "Ickes Hits Mayor on Loyal Japanese," *New York Times*, April 28, 1944.

press. The development of the hostel moved forward and provided shelter for a few hundred Japanese Americans over a period of two years.[312]

A story about Amemiya also circulated to oppose the Mayor's intolerant statement. A week prior to her performance with Graham on Broadway in May 1944, left-leaning *PM* magazine interviewed Amemiya. Reporter Natalie Davis highlighted Amemiya's charm, likability, beauty and perfect English. Written in response to Mayor La Guardia's stated opposition, Davis' article aimed to promote tolerance and acceptance. She wrote, "I wish the citizens of Brooklyn who signed the anti-Japanese protest and the Mayor himself, could have seen how happy she [Amemiya] was. Or could see her apartment on Jane St. with all its records—the same records they own."[313] Davis humanized Amemiya and gently challenged the Major to judge her as no different from any other "all-American girl." *PM* magazine did not critique the injustice of incarceration, nor address the real problem of racial discrimination; instead, the tone of the article promoted ideals of inclusion and cooperation.

Despite the hostility expressed by some local officials, New York City's prewar history as a home for several immigrant populations, including Japanese American intellectuals and artists, allowed for a measure of safety and potential growth. With the establishment of settlement housing in the late 1880s immigrants were slightly less isolated and stigmatized in urban cities like New York and Chicago. As demonstrated by the initial reception of the Brooklyn resettlement hostel, discrimination was still widely experienced, yet both Japanese and non-Japanese organizations were present to provide assistance and social services. Furthermore, different from the West Coast, New York City's pre-World War II Japanese American

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[312] Greg Robinson. "Resettlement in New York," Densho Encyclopedia, las modified June 12, 2012, https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Resettlement%20in%20New%20York/

[313] Davis, "Introducing to our Mayor a Japanese-American Girl," PM magazine, May 3, 1944, quoted in Tokunaga, *Yuriko*, 63.

population was largely issei, educated, and did not face the same legal restrictions on interracial marriage, and property and business ownership.[314] Japanese immigrants established social and financial institutions and managed Christian and Buddhist organizations. Decades before the war Japanese artists, intellectuals, diplomats, and leftist political dissidents flocked to the city's cosmopolitan atmosphere. Artists such as dancer Michio Ito, writer Yone Noguchi, and his son sculptor Isamu Noguchi[315] all found camaraderie in New York City. With the start of World War II, several hundred Japanese American leaders were detained, Japanese-owned businesses closed, and travel restrictions were implemented; however, New York was outside the restricted zone established by Executive Order 9066. As a result, organizations like the antifascist Japanese American Committee for Democracy (JACD) survived and supported unemployed Japanese Americans.[316] When former inmates like Amemiya resettled in New York in 1943, they were able to rely on established social, political and artistic networks and organizations. Some were even able to open their own small businesses like grocery stores and restaurants that then supported other resettlers.[317] After time in resettlement hostels many found homes in one of two Japanese American ethnic enclaves, both established near community churches, on the West Side between 106th to 110th and in Inwood in northern Manhattan.

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314 Robinson, "Resettlement in New York"

315 Isamu Noguchi during wartime incarceration. As an internationally trained sculptor and a resident of New York, Noguchi was not forced to leave his home during WWII. However, after a visit to the west coast with his friend Larry Tajiri and their establishment of a radical artist organization, Nisei Writers and Artists Mobilization for Democracy, Noguchi volunteered to join fellow Japanese Americans in a War Relocation Center in Poston, Arizona, as an act of solidarity. Being that he was an established artist he met with John Collier Commissioner for Bureau of Indian Affairs, in charge of Arizona centers, to teach art in Poston. He found fellowship with some Japanese Americans but also felt like an outsider, as an artist, leftist and mixed-raced person. As his discomfort increased he requested to leave, returning to New York after six months. See Greg Robinson. "Isamu Noguchi," Densho Encyclopedia, last modified February 20, 2017,
http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Isamu%20Noguchi/

316 Greg Robinson, *After Camp: Portraits in Midcentury Japanese American Life and Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 55.

317 Ibid., 56.

Considered in relation to established Japanese American artistic networks, Amemiya's acceptance into the modern dance world was likely facilitated by a number of factors beyond her work ethic and adaptability. Prewar Japanese American artists set a precedent for young performers to find their footing in New York, but progressive non-Asian artists also eased resettlement. Amemiya was first introduced to the Graham technique by dancers Jane Dudley and Sophie Maslow at the Neighborhood playhouse. Despite being members of an elite modern dance company, Dudley and Maslow believed dance should be accessible to the masses. Both held tightly to politics far left of Graham and investigated issues of class struggle in content and form.[318] Perhaps the lack of discrimination Amemiya declared in her WRA interview was not only because she was a strong and committed dancer but also due to the relationship she had with Maslow and Dudley, both compassionate and politically conscious dancers.

Martha Graham's fascination with the East also complicated Amemiya's integration into the company. In her autobiography *Blood Memory,* Graham expressed her deeply held connection with "the Orient." Raised in Santa Barbara, California, Graham had Chinese and Japanese neighbors and felt surrounded by their warmth and kindness. Graham described her small eyes and dark hair as making her "less beautiful" than her two younger sisters, and as a result she compared herself to Asian women. Speaking about her childhood Graham asserted, "Curiously I always felt more Asian than American."[319] In her late teens Graham danced in Ruth St. Denis's "A Night in Japan," as a geisha with 36 other (white) young women.[320] Graham later studied Zen Buddhism with friend Ramiel McGehee and claimed, " I learned as much as anyone can ever learn about Zen. This knowledge served me in good stead, in terms of self-discipline

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[318] Foulkes, *Modern Bodies*, 109-11.
[319] Martha Graham, *Blood Memory: An Autobiography*, (New York: Double Day, 1991), 44.
[320] Graham also recalled St. Denis wore a kimono and spoke "gibberish" to the group and the group responding back in the same made-up language

and clarity and focus, and simple, pragmatic behavior."[321] Although she did not re-choreograph the Orient through costumes and gestures, like St. Denis, Graham essentialized "the Orient" in reductive terms as merely a source of ancient wisdom and romanticized Eastern philosophy.

Graham's compassion for, and desire to access, "the Orient" may have influenced her decision to mentor Amemiya. Graham did not fear or exclude Asian artists, having collaborated with many, including her longtime professional partner Isamu Noguchi. However, her embrace of Amemiya may have been based on more than just Amemiya's strong dance skills. The young Graham's assertion that she "felt more Asian" indicated that she essentialized this racial identity, was ignorant of her own privilege as a white woman, and lacked an understanding of U.S. race politics. She admired the discipline affiliated with Asian bodily practices and took to Amemiya's diligence and work ethic. Graham conceivably naturalized Amemiya's deference, focus, and determination and did not consider this behavior in the context of Amemiya's prior experience of isolation and incarceration. Under narrow Orientalist ideals, Amemiya and her cultural history were understood as static and unaffected by ever-changing political conditions. Her experiences with American racism were discounted or disparaged. Despite her inviting Amemiya to become a company member, Graham's exotification of Asian cultures and inaccurate assumptions about an entire racial group still constituted a form of racism that Amemiya could not escape.

While the WRA pressed for reintegration and employment as the means for successful resettlement, Japanese Americans in New York demonstrated that additional social supports were necessary to counter multiple forms of discrimination. WRA rhetoric emphasized the individual's responsibility to "adjust" and dismissed the need for collective attitudes and exclusionary policies to change. Publications highlighted the achievements of productive former

[321] Graham, *Blood memory*, 161.

inmates to justify their release and encourage social acceptance. Yet in doing so Japanese Americans were valued solely for their industriousness and economic contribution in postwar America. Amemiya was idealized for her rigorous commitment to domestic and artistic labor. Focusing on her work ethic as the source of her success erased the personal and political relationships she maintained despite racial discrimination. Her work ethic alone, no matter how rigorous, could not resolve discrimination and racist mistreatment. In actuality, Amemiya survived thanks to her network of support that included politically progressive women seeking to end class inequality, disrupt patriarchy, and halt racial injustice. These relationships continued to be of great importance for Amemiya as she would later choreograph her own pieces for fellow Graham dancers exploring themes of repression and exclusion.

Amemiya as a Follower in *Appalachian Spring*

Four months following her official entry into the company, Yuriko Amemiya performed in *Appalachian Spring* at the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. The event took place on October 30, 1944 in honor of Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge's 80th birthday. Scored by Aaron Copeland with set design by Isamu Noguchi, *Appalachian Spring* drew inspiration from the American frontier and the U.S. land expansion following the American Revolutionary War. The dance centers on a newlywed couple settling into their new home in a 19th-century Pennsylvanian Quaker community. The dancers explore themes of individuality, unity, family, and the development of an American identity. Although the birthday performance included two other original works commissioned by the Coolidge Foundation--*Imagined Wing* and *Herodia*--the joyous choreography and relatable narrative of *Appalachian Spring* inspired audiences, making it the clear highlight of the evening. At the New York City performance of *Appalachian Spring* in May 1945, *Appalachian Spring* continued to garner praise and granted Graham great

popularity in the postwar period. Over time Appalachian Spring would become one of Graham's most iconic pieces.

While Amemiya took the stage in the nation's capital, her mother and thousands of other Japanese Americans remained incarcerated. The following section examines Amemiya's inclusion in one of Graham's most widely revered pieces *Appalachian Spring.* Critics and audiences embraced Graham's optimistic dance, increasing her popularity and influence as an innovative mid-twentieth century artist. Yet, analyzed alongside postwar social inequities experienced by those like Amemiya, *Appalachian Spring* had limitations. The dance did not reflect the hopes and desires of all Americans universally. As *Appalachian Spring* was introduced in 1945, those with less access to rights and resources prior to the war continued to struggle. Like Japanese Americans, many continued to confront discrimination, faced great economic uncertainty, and could not relate to the hopeful message expressed in the dance.

In my examination, I begin with a descriptive reading of the opening sequence. I discuss how critics and audiences alike adored the dance as the homecoming narrative set in the American frontier resonated with the public's expression of postwar patriotism. I then analyze the roles of the Bride and Follower to discuss how the dance revealed and concealed postwar, anti-Communist, race and gender politics. I suggest that the role of the Bride offered a much-needed critique of the subordination of white, heterosexual, middle-class women, and questioned expectations placed on women to acquiesce to the needs of others. However, casting Amemiya as a Follower did little to improve conditions for Japanese Americans. Although rare to see a Japanese American dancer included in a professional company, as a Follower Amemiya's role was controlled and limited. As most former inmates continued to confront discrimination in their process to resettle, the Follower role perpetuated the idea that foreigners can be tolerated if

willing to conform. Placed in the context of postwar domestic renewal and housing development, I argue that *Appalachian Spring*'s popularity reflected patriotic desires to rebuild the nation, and was accomplished through masking racial discrimination and exclusionary practices.

Graham's choreography in *Appalachian Spring* echoed the piece's theme of individuality within a group by keeping all eight cast members on stage creating "insularity unbroken by entrances and exits."[322] The original cast included Graham as the Bride, Erick Hawkins as the Husbandman, May O'Donnell as the Pioneer Woman, Merce Cunningham as the Revivalist, and four dancers in the roles of the Followers: Nina Fonaroff, Marjorie Mazia, Pearl Lang and Yuriko Amemiya. Bodies moving in unison or following one another in a circular pattern, similarly reflected in the arcs of flowing dresses, reinforced the themes of cohesion and unity. Individuality was also celebrated through solos and duets in the foreground. The stillness of supporting performers, without their exit from the field, further enhanced the moving bodies on stage and added to the tensions felt in the narrative of individuals within a community. Sculptor Isamu Noguchi's minimalist set design used slivers and outlines of walls and furniture to represent the homestead with little distraction from the dancers' visual performance.[323] Copeland's Pulitzer Prize winning orchestral music and familiar narrative expanded the appeal of Graham's work to audiences unfamiliar with modern dance.

The production begins with the Revivalist, entering from stage left, his hands folded in front of him and torso stretched long. He makes a large arc around stage right and walks onto his pulpit. He stands tall, his body facing forward, his head looking beyond his left shoulder and his hands remain folded below his waist. The Pioneer Woman follows with her hands folded in front of her, walking softly and gracefully as if she is floating onto stage. She walks into a structure

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[322] Foulkes, *Modern Bodies,* 154.
[323] Don McDonagh, *Martha Graham: A Biography,* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 1973), 178.

symbolizing a home and sits regally on a thin rocking chair that faces the audience. She too folds her hands and places them on her lap. The Husbandman enters with arms to his sides and his steps firm. He turns to acknowledge his new homestead, represented by a standing clapboard wall, and presses his palm again the grain of the panels. He walks past the building and stands down stage, taking in the expansive space that lies in front of him. The Bride enters with folded hands; her eyes are curious and they examine the homestead. She makes eye contact with her husband and in a moment of hesitation she shuffles back a few steps before running towards him. They embrace for a moment and then she leaves to enter the home. She gestures towards her lover as he walks away and she sits in the home facing the Pioneer Woman. As she exits the foreground the four Followers enter, encircling the Husbandman and they uncurl into a straight line. Their hands are folded in front of them and they turn in unison to face the Revivalist.

Copeland's music makes a dramatic transition and as the string instruments launch the four Followers drop to their knees and raise their clasped hands upward towards the Revivalist on the pulpit. The four women, wearing voluminous skirts and head bonnets, remain in tight formation as they explore various levels in space. They transition from their knees to a slide on the floor, back to their knees and up to a standing position only to bend forward with their torsos towards the ground. They are energetic in their expansive jumps and swift spins as they celebrate their devotion to the church and to each other. In a moment of calm the four Followers stand tall, their hands folded and angelic faces looking skyward. The Pioneer Woman enters and weaves through the four women, pausing to stand behind each body. Her right palm spreads wide, cradles their heads from a distance, and she shakes her hand as if to bless each Follower. The Followers slowly, with great control, hinge backward toward the ground, their upper body unaffected by their knees bending. They remain flat against the floor while the Pioneer Woman

addresses the audience. Her body expands with a high leg extension accompanied by grand circular gestures of her arms. Her sweeping movements carve out a space between the Followers and the Husbandman, and invite a transition to take place in the choreography. The Followers softly rise from the ground, shuffle towards a thin bench and, one by one, sit flat against the clapboard wall of the homestead. The space clears for the Husbandman's solo and a duet between the Husbandman and Bride.

Through her opening sequence, Graham carefully choreographed each character's persona and role in the narrative. The Revivalist walked rigidly as his body made angular geometric shapes with each step. His inflexible body and sharp gestures reflected his approach to a sermon, a lecture full of bold statements and hyperbole. The Followers' enthusiasm and playful choreography demonstrated their youth, optimism and indisputable devotion to the charismatic Revivalist. The Pioneer Woman's weightless glides and graceful footwork, emphasized by her tall stature and billowing skirt, signified her as a revered and sacred figure. The Husbandman, in contrast to the Revivalist, was expansive and at times soft with his movements. He investigated his new homestead, leaning on the fence to take in his surroundings, leaping in circular patterns to travel across the stage, and digging his feet into the ground as if to mark the earth. His dynamic choreography, that included sustained inversions, open arm turns and rotating jumps, established his strength, athleticism and vigor along with this optimism. His body also asserted kindness through his tender interactions with his wife. As the Bride, Graham expressed trust and vulnerability through her partnering and solo work. Her delight and curiosity about her new life were expressed alongside her anxiety concerning marriage. Such recognizable characters set *Appalachian Spring* apart from other Graham productions and invited viewers to connect with the narrative.

Following *Appalachian Spring's* performance in Washington DC, Graham's spring 1945 season won tremendous praise from critics, including positive reviews from those who once disparaged her work.[324] In May 28, 1945, in an article entitled "Aaron and Martha" *Newsweek* proclaimed, "Though no one knows for sure from what brooding Muse Miss Graham draws her inspirations for new modern dance works, the one which hovered over 'Appalachian Spring' was in a softer, less frustrated mood than usual. There was little of the 'doom eager' frenzy with which Miss Graham is so closely associated."[325] The reviews went on to say that attending a Graham dance production "has become fashionable."[326] On the same day *Time* magazine printed in their music review section "Last week she [Graham] found herself virtually a popular success. She brought to Manhattan her *Appalachian Spring,* a pleasant good-humored ballet with no hidden meaning at all."[327] *New York Times* dance critic John Martin enthusiastically agreed, stating, "Nothing Miss Graham has done before has had so much deep joyousness about it."[328] In response to such positive reviews Graham's popularity grew both nationally and internationally. In New York Graham extended her season by a week to meet the public's demand and her company was later invited by the State Department to travel throughout Asia.[329]

Dance scholar Rebekah J. Kowal points out that the press made no comment on the aesthetic quality of *Appalachian Spring* but rather applauded its optimism and comprehensible storyline.[330] Featuring a cast of familiar subjects, the dance shared an inviting tale that read differently than Graham's prior works that often explored the psychology of the human condition

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[324] Kowal, *How to do Things with Dance*, 22.
[325] "Aaron and Martha," *Newsweek*, May 28, 1945, 106-107.
[326] Ibid.
[327] "Purely Symbolic," *Time*, May 28,1945, 60.
[328] "Guides to Special Collections in the Music Division of Library of Congress, 2007," Library of Congress, last modified December 20, 2011, http://memory.loc.gov/service/music/eadxmlmusic/eadpdfmusic/2010/mu010008.pdf
[329] Kowal, *How to do Things with Dance*, 22.
[330] Ibid.

through rather obscure choreography. With *Appalachian Spring* Graham earned praise for moving away from abstract narratives, and instead producing an optimistic piece that spoke to an anxious public that, just three weeks prior to her New York premiere, saw Germany surrender to end the war.[331] The deadly war that killed millions, caused famine and disease, and triggered immeasurable losses was nearing an end, and U.S. troops were making their return. The re-telling of a story set on the American frontier spoke to themes of homecoming, conquest, and renewal, and was embraced by a nation eager to re-establish normalcy domestically, and assert power and superiority globally.

As the nation healed from the tremendous loss of young lives, the frontier narrative provided an attractive template to re-establish a distinct American identity. In the frontier period the United States expanded their domain, acquiring territory by forcibly removing indigenous people from their land in the Southeast, and through wars claiming Texas, Oregon, California and New Mexico. Clearly the Frontier narrative was birthed from acts of exclusion and genocide. Yet, told from the perspective of white settlers the narrative served to reinvigorate U.S. power, romanticizing their battles, and inciting sentiments of renewal. Fredrick Jackson Turner claimed that the frontier was the land west of the Appalachians open to European settlers seeking to escape the east, explore freedom, and establish home. He deemed the frontier the space where "savagery and civilization" met to shape American ideals regarding autonomy and self-perseveration.[332] Graham analogized the frontier era to the postwar era to celebrate the nation's

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[331] Ibid., 23.
[332] See George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*, (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1998); Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), 225- 226.

history of conquest. The narrative inspired audiences to once again embrace expansionism, rugged individualism, and the establishment of families.[333]

Appalachian Spring's staging of an open homestead also spoke to the many young adults who hoped to find a home away from the crowded city. Evident from the frontier narrative, European settlers sought to build their homes in isolation, away from indigenous people, freed slaves and any foreign subjects. Their concerns brought to light a critical contradiction; the imperialist expansion of the mid-19th Century increased the nation's territorial domain, yet the inclusion of foreign people into the republic threatened the national identity. In her chapter "Manifest Domesticity," Amy Kaplan theorizes that the home and the maternal women nurtured the simultaneous expansion and contraction of national borders. She argues that the discourse of domesticity, popularized by white women writers, was deployed to re-imagine "the nation as home."[334] Women's magazines, household manuals, and fiction writing encouraged women to civilize the savages and heathens, and in doing so "transformed conquered foreign land into the domestic sphere of the family and nation."[335] Kaplan explains that the home included and

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[333] Setting *Appalachian Spring* in the frontier further conceals the experience of native people and their profound loss of lives, land, and culture. Graham initially acknowledged this troubling history and attempted to pay homage to native people in *Appalachian Spring.* Dance scholar Jacqueline Shea Murphy (2007) notes that in her early drafts Graham planned to include a Pocahontas inspired "Indian Girl" and a storyline of her mixed marriage to John Rolfe. Copeland requested that the Indian Girl character be removed and Graham accepted stating that the Indian can be "conveyed through other means," the most prominent being that she is the inspiration for the title. Murphy critiques Graham for representing the native body as an invisible, mystical figure of the past. Murphy asserts that Graham's approach to "displace and replace" the native figure reflects U.S policies regarding American Indians in the 1940s. During this time the federal government relinquished regulations over Indian affairs and moved to an assimilation model. Furthermore WWII efforts to recruit soldiers, shifted the image of the mythic native to that of the exceptional and assimilated (American) warrior. *Appalachian Spring* therefore contributed to the culture of invisibility that doubly dismissed the contribution of native people in this nation. See Jacqueline Shea Murphy, *The People Have Never Stopped Dancing: Native American Modern Dance Histories*, (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 157-168.
[334] Amy Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity," *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 19.
[335] Ibid., 25

expelled the racialized foreigner, and these practices of domestication eradicated the evidence of violence.

A century later in the postwar period once again Americans desired to establish home domestically, as the United States expanded their power abroad. With the resettlement of Japanese Americans outside the West Coast, the migration of African American war workers, and an increase in housing assistance for all veterans, Americans across racial and economic backgrounds sought to buy homes. Discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, such a shift in the population of potential property owners meant neighborhoods had to be reconceived. While new residential communities broke ground, white Americans– in particular real estate developers, politicians, and bankers –continued to enforce racial segregation. White, middle-class families again sought to establish home as a means to protect their families from racial integration. As such, through romanticizing the frontier homestead, *Appalachian Spring* reflected dreams of suburban homeownership, as well as echoing values of upholding whiteness.

The Anxious Bride

Similarly, Graham's choreography of herself as the Bride in *Appalachian Spring* well reflected the concerns of many working- and middle-class women of her time. Very early in the dance the Bride embodied her hesitation over her imminent marriage, by shuffling back a few steps before embracing her Husband. In her second solo the Bride travels frantically between four areas on stage marked by the Followers, the Revivalist, the Husbandman and the Pioneer Woman. She spins towards and away from each figure until she reaches upstage. She turns her body to each person, bending her right leg behind her to kneel, and uncurling her right arm, as if to make an offering. She stands to bow and her arm peels open to the right, then repeats the gesture to the left. As she lifts her torso from her second bow, both arms circle upward and her

hands land on her shoulders. She quickly marches forward and back, her hands constantly tapping her shoulders as a reminder of the demands of the community. Once positioned in the center her arms flutters up as her body leans to the left, and her right leg lifts, then she switches to her right side, and back again. The pace quickens and she hops towards upstage, then downstage, twisting her torso back and forth eight times. Kowal reads the quick directional changes as Graham's anxiety over the obligation and commitment expected of women to meet the needs of the church, their partners, and their home.[336]

The pressure to meet social expectations was further emphasized through interactions between the Bride and others. Following a jovial and tender duet between the Bride and Husbandman, the Revivalist expresses his deep disapproval. As the two sit in their home, the Revivalist glares and aggressively points at them, forcefully extending his arms from behind his head. The couple, feeling shame, turns their gaze downward, and then kneels to pray. The Revivalist reminds the couple that they must police their behaviors to uphold the sanctity of their new community. In the Bride's final solo, she also conforms to her husband. As the entire cast faces upstage, the Bride runs downstage looking outward. Her hands touch her lips and expand towards the open space. Her husband follows from behind, opens his arms, and pulls the Bride's arms back in to her smaller frame. Although in the end the Bride conforms to the needs of her husband and family, Graham's choreography reveals the Bride's feelings of doubt, overwhelm, and points to sacrifices a woman must make for her partnership and her community. These feelings of ambivalence towards marriage and children were often silenced in the postwar era as much emphasis was placed on rebuilding the nation through the family. In this light, Graham offered a subtle but significant critique of rigid gender roles as women transitioned from their

[336] Kowal, *How to do Things with Dance*, 65.

role as workers to wives.

World War II marked a rupture in female gender identity as war efforts recruited more than six million women, across socio-economic class, to enter the industrial workplace as their patriotic duty.[337] As American men left to serve in the military, workers were needed in factories and steel mills to build weapons, ships, and planes. Women were recruited in mass to meet the demands of the war. Initially young, single women were recruited, but soon wives and women with children were also encouraged to work.[338] African American women, too, embraced new job opportunities, allowing many to leave domestic service for the first time. White women and women of color also joined the Women's Army Corps (WAC) and Army Nurse Corps, although both had segregated units for black women.[339] While many women retained their jobs in the service industry during the Great Depression,[340] the entry of women into factory labor and military service during the war created a period of greater flexibility in regards to gender and sexuality. Women earned higher wages, and were encouraged to be self-reliant, serve in industrial positions, and succeed in male-dominated fields. Socially women worked together and formed support groups to maintain a positive attitude in a time of war.

However, temporary wartime employment did not change patriarchal structures and practices. Public policy did not sufficiently respond to the needs of working women. Although Congress passed the Lanham Act in 1942, to allot government funding towards building child care facilities, many Americans did not trust public care centers and believed children were best

[337] Yellin, *Our Mothers' War,* 39.
[338] Ibid., 45
[339] Ibid., 200
[340] During the Great Depression women retained jobs in the service industry as teachers, nurses, clerical workers, and phone operators. Men lost jobs, and were no longer breadwinners. Choreographer Ted Shawn interpreted this shift as a threat to masculinity. See Foulkes, *Modern Bodies,* 100-101

raised by their mothers.[341] Only 10% of working women relied on public childcare facilities.[342] Most women made arrangements with family members for support. In the military, industrial labor was feminized as workers were complimented for their "delicate fingers" and precise, detailed-oriented handling of materials.[343] Army and Navy nurses were praised, not for providing lifesaving medical aid, but rather, their tender care of wounded soldiers. As such, despite accomplishments as workers in male-dominated fields, women were expected to remain "feminine," nurturing, dainty, and subordinate to men.

With the end of the war and the return of male soldiers, many wounded in combat, rigid surveillance of gender roles re-emerged through cultural and institutional practices. Women were expected to tend their homes, as men returned to their role as the breadwinner. However, disabled veterans challenged such ideals of the able-bodied male provider. Over 600,000 American soldiers with non-fatal battle wounds arrived home with injuries from explosive projectiles, bullets, shrapnel, and other foreign objects lodged in their bodies.[344] Army doctors recorded 9,343 major amputations, with most involving the removal of a lower limb.[345] In 1945, the army recorded over 1,700 accounts of blindness and 250 cases of deafness or partial deafness.[346] Many also suffered from unidentifiable infections and long-term medical conditions. Although the number of soldiers with physical injuries could be somewhat accounted for, the massive number of soldiers returning with some form of mental health or psychiatric disorder

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[341] Yellin, *Our Mothers' War,* 60
[342] Ibid.
[343] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 71.
[344] Mark D. Van Ellis, *To Hear Only Thunder Again: America's World War II Veterans Come Home*, (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2001), 97
[345] Ibid.
[346] Ibid., 98.

could only be estimated to be over one million.[347] The nation, unprepared to meet the need of disabled veterans after World War I, needed to re-define how disability was addressed.[348] Although services for disabled veterans increased following World War II, their needs were often dismissed. Disabled veterans were also socially stigmatized, labeled "broken," "weak," or "less of a man," for deviating from ideals of masculinity. As depicted by the virile Husbandman in *Appalachian Spring*, the image of able-bodied soldiers reuniting with their wives was idealized as a symbol for rebuilding the nation.

Just as masculinity was regulated and policed, so too was femininity. Women were expected to leave their jobs, return to their homes and raise families.[349] Most positions, especially those that did not require extensive training or specialized education, had been established as temporary and did not allow women to continue. Upward mobility and job security were never offered. Furthermore, women were not represented in many unions and did not have bargaining power to protect their jobs. Some women protested their dismissal, stating that their contribution as a worker remained the same regardless of the return of men. Others fought to stay employed because of their family's financial needs.[350] In most situations, however, women were not expected to remain at work. In fact, women had very little incentive to stay. Wages for women decreased, and men who performed the same job as women were paid more for their labor.[351] Female veterans were rejected from jobs despite receiving extensive training, and were also denied benefits as they were considered dependents and not the family's primary provider.

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[347] Ibid., 107.
[348] Walter K. Hickel, "Medicine, bureaucracy, and social welfare: The politics of disability compensation for American veterans of World War I." in *The new disability history: American perspectives,* Eds Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 236-267.
[349] May, *Homeward Bound,* 67.
[350] Yellin, *Our Mothers' War,* 68.
[351] May, *Homeward Bound,* 67.

With the war's end and new hope for prosperity the establishment of families took priority. The autonomy women had gained during the war quickly subsided, as the focus shifted to domesticity. Both men and women married at a younger age, and the birth rate increased reaching a 20th-century high after a one hundred year decline.[352] Between 1940 and 1960, young people not only married earlier and had more children, they also were less likely to divorce than couples in previous decades.[353] Following the war, college enrollment increased for white, middle-class women, yet they were discouraged from completing their degrees because of the lack of job prospects in their field of study.[354] Instead women were expected to attend college to marry upwardly mobile, educated men. African American women, too, embraced the possibility of raising their own families, rather than working for other families. African American men who found work in the war economy or served in the military could potentially earn enough to provide for their household.[355] Asian Americans also formed families as new immigration legislation allowed Asian American men to invite wives and war brides into the country.[356] Despite gaining greater access to employment and education, women and people of color embraced the homemaking trend that hinged on upholding strict gender roles.[357]

Read alongside the political climate, the motivation for young people to form families seems to have been informed by a number of factors, and was not merely a response to the prospect of peace and economic growth following the Great Depression. Historian Elaine Tyler May states that the nation's domestic renewal was driven by the need to establish family and

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[352] Ibid., 1.
[353] Ibid., 3.
[354] The number of African American women in college was much less than white women, however they graduated at a much higher rate. Over 90% of African American women completed their college degree because their education greatly improved their employment prospects. See May, *Homeward Bound,* 77.
[355] May, *Homeward Bound,* 27.
[356] Facilitated by the end of the Chinese Exclusion Act, 1946, and the passing of the War Brides Acts, The Alien Fiancées and Fiancés Act, and the Chinese War Brides Act.
[357] May, *Homeward Bound,* 8.

home as a source of security.[358] Anti-communist rhetoric of the Cold War period triggered uncertainty and fear, and further heightened such desires. Citizens witnessed the effect of the atomic bomb and feared the destructive power of advanced science. The Soviet Union was viewed as a dangerous enemy with the potential to cause great harm. Closer to home marginalized communities and labor unions continued to face discrimination and mistreatment. More than the cause of their dissatisfaction, politicians were concerned that activists critical of a broken democratic system might turn to socialism or communism. They also worried that visible protest would weaken the image of the nation, and thereby invite communist infiltration. As sexually deviant, gays and lesbians were thought to "lack emotional stability" and maturity, and therefore to be easily swayed by communism.[359] Surrounded by potential and perceived threats, citizens sought stability. Public figures aimed to alleviate the anxieties of the populace and advance their own agendas by promoting home as both a refuge and an entity that needed protection. More specifically, homes in suburban neighborhoods were expected to provide security and a safe haven from the demands for social change, acts of sexual rebellion, the spread of communism and threat of nuclear attack.[360]

With the focus on the family, any challenge to heterosexuality was interpreted as an act of perversion that could potentially invite communist infiltration. In the 1950s homosexuality was not only viewed as a sociopathic personality disorder,[361] but also regarded as a threat to the patriarchal family structure, and by extension the nation. Likened to communism, strict measures

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[358] Ibid.,9.
[359] Ibid.,91.
[360] Contractors offered various models for underground bomb shelters but not many families built them. As an alterative the Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA) provided guidelines aimed towards women, instructing them on how to turn their basement into a well stocked bomb shelter. See May, *Homeward Bound,* 100.
[361] As determined by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-1) in 1957.

were put in place to contain the "poisonous spread" of same-sex desires.[362] Government employees deemed suspicious were questioned and purged. Their termination was justified as they were considered a "security risk."[363] Members of the Women's Army Corp (WAC) who were suspected of questionable relationships with other women were isolated and interrogated.[364] At the end of war the Army enforced the dishonorable discharge of gay service members, denying them GI benefits. In order to survive the hostile environment and avoid harassment, many gays and lesbians hid their identities and tried to pass as heterosexual.

The desire for security, combined with a housing shortage, resulted in the mass development of suburban neighborhoods. By 1945, a housing shortage was declared in 98% of American cities, and by 1947, six million individuals were living in multi-family households.[365] Displaced war workers and growing families sought to leave cramped cities and purchase their own home, assembled with a yard and a garage, and equipped with modern appliances. Veterans received assistance from the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (also known as the GI Bill) to purchase newly built homes. Financial support from the Veterans Administration (VA), the Federal Housing Authority (FHA), and private investors made home ownership more affordable than renting an apartment.[366] Adult children of European immigrants who grew up in urban ethnic enclaves, including Greek, Polish, Italian and Jewish Americans were also able to join Anglo Saxon Protestants in white suburban communities. Economic mobility was made available to ethnically European communities through land and home ownership. In other words, children of European immigrants who prior to the war were excluded from identifying as white were now given the opportunity to be white and middle-class Americans.

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[362] May, *Homeward Bound,* 91
[363] Ibid., 92.
[364] Yellin, *Our Mothers' War,* 322.
[365] May, *Homeward Bound,* 160.
[366] Ibid., 161.

News coverage and popular culture celebrated the migration of young couples into suburban neighborhoods and depicted middle-class homeownership as a sign of advancement and progress following the war. *Appalachian Spring*'s narrative and choreography further affirmed such ideals. Throughout the dance the Bride, Husbandman, and Pioneer Woman enter and exit the abstract structure of the home to seek comfort and safety. Early in the dance the Husbandman faces his home and gently glides his hand along the wall. He proudly walks downstage towards a fence, places his arms along the wooden panel, and stands firmly to guard his homestead. The fence protects the community from the unknown elements but it also allows the settlers to look optimistically outward to the expansive land they occupy. As the nation confronted a housing shortage and changing demographics, the dance offered a hopeful message to those seeking life away from the crowded city.

These images celebrated the upward mobility of white working-class families, but veiled the continued exclusion of people of color. Although a multi-racial cast settled into the Quaker community in *Appalachian Spring*, off-stage homeownership was not available to all veterans and ethnic minorities. African American men and women returned from World War II to promises of equality yet, were denied access to government welfare programs, employment and homeownership. In the early 1940s, the demand to support the war effort was so great that large numbers of African American men and women enrolled in military service. Military studies scholar Brenda Moore's research reveals that approximately 824 women were members of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, the only African American Women's Army Corps to serve overseas.[367] Her research indicates that many African Americans joined the military service in hopes of increasing their education and employment opportunities. Job opportunities

[367] Moore, T*o Serve My Country, to Serve My Race,* 4-5.

did increase; however, African American men and women assigned to industrial labor often performed the most dangerous jobs, handling explosives and shoveling hazardous materials.[368] Their compensation for their service was often less than their white counterparts, and their resettlement experience proved race- and gender-based discrimination did not decrease in post-World War II America.

The GI Bill assisted millions of GIs to attain degrees in higher education, gain employment, open small businesses and buy homes. Over eight million soldiers took advantage of the GI Bill to attend college and gain employment in professional sectors.[369] With their professional degrees, many could demand higher wages and were able to afford homes. Between 1946 and 1960, wages grew enough to allow for a 22% increase in buying power, giving most Americans some discretionary income.[370] Anthropologist Karen Brodkin has called the GI Bill the largest affirmative action program for white men. These benefits, however, were not afforded to many African American GIs who shared similar hopes of attaining upward mobility. African American soldiers serving under white officers faced a much greater chance of receiving a dishonorable discharge, terminating opportunities to receive benefits. Additionally, external factors limited equity for African American GIs. Ku Klux Klan members targeted African American servicemen attending public schools during and after the war. Lynching targeting African Americans increased during the war and anti-Black riots surged in 1943.[371] Furthermore the U.S. Employment Service (USES), VA and FHA offices worked in collusion to deny African American GIs their rightful benefits.[372] With the support of the FHA, builders denied African

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[368] Yellin, *Our Mothers' War*, 205.
[369] Karen Brodkin, *How Jews Became White Folks: And What that Says about Race in America*, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 25-52.
[370] Ibid., 37.
[371] Ibid., 43.
[372] Ibid.

American families access to homes in predominantly white neighborhoods, resulting in racially segregated neighborhoods.[373] The cumulative effect of denying African Americans bank loans made home ownership virtually impossible.[374] As renters, GIs were not able to accumulate wealth or pass on valuable property to their children. This further effected how African American families accumulated wealth across generations.[375]

Asian Americans also confronted racial tensions in seeking housing. Historian Cindy I. Cheng argues that during the mid-twentieth century, segregated neighborhoods reflected the ongoing efforts of American leaders to maintain whiteness. In 1946, Chinese American combat photographer Tommy Amer learned that his neighbors filed an injunction against him after he moved into a white housing tract in South Los Angeles. According to his neighbors, the injunction was not meant to be personal but was made in an effort to protect their property value from decreasing. A Korean American Los Angeles resident named Yin Kim experienced a similar kind of discrimination. Beyond individual mistreatment, a restrictive measure aimed at limiting property ownership by Asian immigrants was included in the November 1946 ballot. Proposition 15 pushed to include in the California state constitution anti-Asian land laws that denied property ownership by aliens eligible for citizenship.[376] The campaign was written to discourage Japanese Americans from returning to California. While Proposition 15 gained support in rural areas, the majority of California voters rejected it. The united efforts of organizations such as the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

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[373] Ibid., 47.
[374] Rebecca Blank, "Tracing the Economic Impact of Cumulative Discrimination," *The American Economic Review* 95, no. 2 (2005): 99-103.
[375] Ibid., 99.
[376] Charlotte Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends: Asian Americans, Housing, and the Transformation of Urban California* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 175.

(NAACP) and the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) worked together in solidarity to fight this anti-Asian policy. The mistreatment of individuals, anti-Asian proposition, and subsequent movement to defeat the campaign highlighted the ambivalent positions of Asian Americans in the shifting construction of race in the postwar era.

As a means to defend the sanctity of the home, policy makers not only enforced racial segregation but also regulated behaviors in the home. Heterosexual female sexuality was policed and controlled by public figures and society at large. Politicians, implicating families in the fight against communism, determined that the success of women as homemakers served to strengthen the moral integrity of the nation. In the decade that followed the war, over 90% of men and women in their mid-twenties were married, and many had two to four children.[377] Young women were expected to follow this social trend and successfully perform their duties as wives and mothers. It was assumed that women should stay home, and if they did do wage-paid work their responsibilities outside the home should not interfere with their obligations to their family. As a way to restrain female sexuality, popular magazines published articles written by psychologists who criticized women for causing male sexual deviance. Unaffectionate wives led husbands to have extramarital affairs, and neglectful or overbearing mothers were to blame for sons that commit crimes. Experts suggested that these issues could be resolved with a strong husband who asserted "economic and sexual dominance."[378] With their bodies and behaviors controlled women had limited autonomy in the domestic sphere. They were praised and punished based on their ability to successfully support their husbands and raise their children. Defying these standards was dangerous as any form of dissent was seen as a threat to masculinity, family structure, and nation building.

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[377] May, *Homeward Bound,* 23.
[378] Ibid., 93.

Graham's performance as the anxious Bride provided a necessary challenge to these rigid gender roles during a time when heteropatriarchal families were celebrated. Graham questioned the influence of authority figures, like the Revivalist, to regulate relationships and shame expressions of desire. She confronted the loss of autonomy felt by married woman, and hesitated to accept a role as wife and mother. This was also true in her own life as she did not marry her then partner, Erick Hawkins, until 1948 when she was in her early 50s.[379] She never gave birth to a child and never remarried after her marriage to Hawkins ended. Likewise, as an artist she found multiple opportunities to interrogate gender through several choreographic works.

Amemiya as the Silent Follower

While an analysis of the Bride's choreography points to Graham's timely critique of the regulation of gender, her casting of Amemiya as a Follower raises questions regarding postwar race dynamics and the representation of Japanese Americans. While Japanese Americans were forcibly removed and incarcerated soon after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, they were subsequently released and re-imagined to fit the postwar nationalist narrative. To counter assumptions of Japanese Americans as untrustworthy, and to simultaneously veil any wrongdoing by the U.S. government in incarcerating innocent people, inmates were re-presented, as loyal citizens and diligent workers who could help grow the economy. The WRA press circulated stories celebrating the achievements of second-generation Japanese Americans, like Amemiya, who held faith in the nation's democratic process, exercised a strong work ethic, and consumed American popular culture.

Accepted by Graham's New York audiences without much negative or positive

[379] Kowal, *How to do Things with Dance*, 57.

reaction,[380] Amemiya as the Follower reflected the newly re-imagined and tolerable Japanese American. Sharing the stage with three white dancers similar in height, build, and dress, Amemiya blended in with her peers. Their playful choreography, often executed in unison or in pairs, displayed their fidelity to the group, and their devotion to the church. The group's acceptance of Amemiya, an outsider with the ability to mirror the actions of the others, paralleled the new role of Japanese American in the United States, no longer an enemy but rather a compliant racial ally. As a submissive and disciplined citizen, opportunities for social integration increased, but such a narrow representation concealed the range of ways Japanese Americans responded to incarceration. From silence and submission, to advocacy and activism, Japanese Americans found various strategies to rebuild their lives and re-establish their community. While on stage, Amemiya demonstrated her ability to conform; however, her own life reveals that she too, like other Japanese Americans, struggled with resettlement and found ways to challenge expectations to forget the past and seamlessly integrate.

Despite casting Amemiya in a passive role, Graham's choice to cast her in the original production of *Appalachian Spring* was not without risk for both Graham and Amemiya. Graham's embrace of Amemiya during the time the United States was still at war with Japan showed integrity and fearlessness. She acknowledged that Amemiya might not be well accepted by the public but took the chance to feature the dancer whom she felt best suited the role.[381] Amemiya, too, could have faced harsh criticism from audiences and reviewers. However, the Follower was a relatively safe role for Amemiya to play in a dance about the domestication of the wild frontier. As Followers Amemiya and the others expressed absolute loyalty to the

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[380] Susan Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance*, 200.
[381] Prior to Amemiya's debut in May, 1944 Graham addressed her company, advocating for Amemiya's inclusion despite the nation's political climate. "The war is still on, and I just want to know if anyone objects to my using Yuriko. To me she is the best." Quoted in Tokunaga, *Yuriko*, 68.

Revivalist, following his every move, shuffling towards him, encircling him, and falling at his feet to pray.[382] The Followers happily responded to the Revivalist's needs, they held him up when he leaned back, cradled his head when he fell to the floor, and gathered their hands to collectively hold his hat when he performed his sermon. Amemiya fell in line with her peers prancing, jumping, twirling, and kneeling in union. Amemiya was never a soloist–with the exception of one moment when she was lifted by the Revivalist–and did not stand out from the group. She never seemed to question her position within the group, and dutifully stayed in formation. When sitting still against the homestead wall, her bonnet-covered head and light-colored dress allowed her to disappear into the background. Her performance as a Follower clearly demonstrated her capacity to conform. Amemiya's role in *Appalachian Spring* therefore embodied the silenced and disciplined Japanese Americans who worked to conceal their community's unjust incarceration and struggled to resettle in post-World War II America.

Prior to the official end of World War II in September 1945, Japanese Americans who met the proper requirements and were deemed loyal like Amemiya were given permission to leave incarceration facilities. With the U.S. Supreme Court's decision on Ex parte Endo[383] on December 18, 1944, the WRA could no longer legally incarcerate Japanese Americans against their will, freeing all inmates from each facility. The exclusion order barring Japanese Americans from the West Coast was also lifted on January 2, 1945. Japanese Americans were released from incarceration with feelings of uncertainty. More than relief, they felt disheartened by the daunting task of rebuilding their lives while also confronting a hostile nation. Inmates had little

[382]Amemiya described, "Martha reminded us: When the Preacher passes you, you should feel goose bumps. When you hold his hat, you should feel honored and blessed. When he wants to talk to you, you should dash as fast as you can to be the first one there." Quoted in Tokunaga, *Yuirko*, 83.

[383] For additional research on the Ex Parte Endo Case see Peter Irons. *Justice at War: The Story of the Japanese American Internment Cases*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); and Patrick O. Gudridge, "Remember "Endo"?." Harvard Law Review 116, no. 7 (March 2003): 1933-1970.

time to reflect on their experience as they had to find housing, employment, health care, and means to take care of both young children and elderly issei.[384] Following instructions from the WRA to not cluster with other Japanese Americans some individuals and families moved to the Midwest and East Coast. There were also families that left the United State for war-torn Japan.[385] Most Japanese Americans, however, returned to their homes on the West Coast.

While many former inmates complied with WRA authorities, obeyed directions to quickly resettle, and suppressed their anger, their motivations to do so were much more complicated than mere capitulation. Attempts to integrate into dominant society allowed some former inmates to feel safe in their invisibility, and in some cases facilitated upward mobility. Many nisei children raised in confinement denounced the Japanese language and culture, and did not pass on their knowledge to their sansei (third generation) children. Many nisei veterans participated in postwar educational and employment opportunities and for the first time found white collar and professional occupations.[386] With economic success these families were eventually able to move into predominantly white suburbs where they joined white social networks. In this light, efforts to integrate and be included into white neighborhoods were a means for Japanese Americans to cope and to protect their families, while also working to reestablish and build their livelihoods.

While educated nisei and dedicated workers were idealized by the WRA, they did not represent most Japanese Americans. The WRA's focus on quick recovery masked the psychological trauma induced by institutional racism and incarceration. Many struggled with complicated feelings of self-hatred, guilt, shame and humiliation in conflict with their anger,

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[384] Yasuko I. Takezawa, *Breaking the Silence: Redress and Japanese American Ethnicity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 114.
[385] Some Japanese Americans were forced to leave, while others chose to leave for Japan.
[386] Yang Murray, *Historical Memories of the Japanese American Internment and the Struggle for Redress,* 191.

grief and resentment towards the actions of the U.S. government. Elderly issei, no longer the heads of households, had to learn to depend on their nisei children. This shift in power, combined with the inability to find work, led some to feel a lack of purpose, and in some extreme cases triggered suicide.[387] The report produced by the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (1997) found that most nisei avoided discussion of their incarceration experience. [388] Individuals rarely expressed their emotions or grieved their losses, giving the community few resources to collectively process their memories. Although some denied and repressed their emotions, others quietly coped with their sadness, fighting thoughts of self-harm, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).[389] Internalizing their pain, studies showed nisei experienced higher rates of stress, anxiety, depression, and ulcers.[390] Former inmate and professor of social work, Amy Iwasaki Mass explained that Japanese Americans had to use "psychological defense mechanisms such as repression, denial, rationalization, and identification with the aggressor" to make sense of, and cope with, the rejection and isolation felt during WWII.[391]

Furthermore, an inmate's response to their abuse was often informed by their gender. Seeking acceptance into mainstream culture, many formerly incarcerated women chose to marry white men. For some these partnerships provided distance from the harassment that targeted their community. Others sought to cut off ties, blaming their own community for causing their

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[387] Gwendolyn M. Jensen, "The Experience of Injustice: Health Consequences of the Japanese American Internment" Ph.D. diss., University of Colorado, 1997.

[388] Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians* (Washington D.C.: Civil Liberties Public Education Fund and Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 299 .

[389] Donna Nagata. "Psychological effects of camp," Densho Encyclopedia, last modified March 20, 2017, http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Psychological%20effects%20of%20camp/

[390] Amy I. Mass, "Asians as Individuals: the Japanese Community," *Social Casework* (March 1976), 163.

[391] Amy I. Mass, "Psychological Effects of the Camps on Japanese Americans," in *Japanese Americans: From Relocation to Redress* (revised edition), Eds. Roger Daniels, et al. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 160.

incarceration. As one woman explained to anthropologist Yasuko I. Takezawa, “I turned my anger against them [Japanese Americans] rather than the government… I literally left the Japanese community. I married twice, but both of my husbands had been whites.”[392] Moreover, racist and sexist attacks by white peers reinforced the subordination of both Japanese American men and women. One nisei man recalled a disturbing interaction in his childhood with a white schoolmate: “I was playing in a sandbox. Then I saw two shoes stepping on what I was making. He asked me if I had any sisters. When I asked why, he said, ‘Because I want to f-ck them.”[393] Threatening sexualized violence, the young white boy reminded the Japanese American boy that he could not protect his own sisters. While both males benefitted from patriarchy, the young white boy asserted his racial and sexual dominance over both Japanese American women and men. Under such conditions of intimidation and threat, former inmates felt compelled not to draw attention to themselves. Efforts to reintegrate, despite feeling rejected from dominant society, functioned as a form of defense against enduring further isolation and pain.

Facing emotional trauma, immense financial losses, and social discrimination, many Japanese Americans did not prioritize reintegration but rather focused on their community’s survival. Japanese American families relied on community resources such as churches, hostels and one another’s homes to aid in rebuilding their lives. Most hostels housed 10 to 20 individuals, however, some like the facility run by the American Friends Service Committee in Los Angeles and the Buddhist hostel in San Francisco housed between 90 to 150 people.[394] When all the incarceration facilities closed in mid-1945, thousands who needed housing ended up relying on the very government that had incarcerated them. The culminating effects of

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[392] Yasuko I. Takezawa, Breaking the Silence: Redress and Japanese American ethnicity (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 121
[393] George Tsukuda, *The long-term effects of internment on pre-adolescent Japanese American males*, Dissertation Smith College, 1998, 158.
[394] Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends,* 165.

housing shortage and discrimination in southern California led over 2,000 Japanese Americans to live in trailers and barracks provided by the WRA.[395] The trailer parks closely resembled conditions of wartime confinement with unsanitary communal bathrooms, leaking boilers and stoves, and children playing by piles of trash. Located outside of central Los Angeles, residents found it difficult to search for jobs and to secure housing. Residents who remained in the Winona Trailer Park in Burbank until 1949 were mostly elderly issei and older nisei with children. While the nation turned to domesticity and consumer culture, Japanese Americans, like other communities of color, fought to secure basic housing and employment.

Japanese American women took on great responsibilities in the home, workplace and community to alleviate the hardship of resettlement.[396] Before the end of war, young college-aged women, who received permission from the WRA for early departure, acted as community representatives speaking to high schools, church groups and local organizations. As ambassadors they attempted to humanize Japanese Americans, demonstrating that they were not the enemy but rather "all American."[397] Despite their efforts to ease the transition and increase social acceptance, securing employment in the postwar period was a challenge. Many families had lost their farms or small businesses, and others experienced employment and education discrimination.[398] Many women became domestic workers and men worked as gardeners for well-to-do white families.[399] Outside these roles, women also found work as factory workers, clerical assistants, and beauticians, and those with appropriate degrees became nurses and teachers.[400] A small number of women entered the field of journalism and covered community

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[395] Ibid.
[396] Matsumoto, *City Girls,* 182.
[397] Ibid., 170.
[398] Ibid., 190-191.
[399] Ibid., 190.
[400] Ibid., 192-95.

news in the ethnic press. Once married, many women assumed the role of mother, wife and worker. Some continued to contribute many hours of unpaid labor to redevelop the community.[401]

Similar to other Japanese American women in the postwar period, Amemiya worked several jobs to make ends meet, acted as an ambassador for the community, and became a wife and mother. As discussed earlier, upon her release from Gila River in September 1943, Amemiya worked as a sewing factory floor manager, an assistant to Graham's costume designer and a nanny, all while training to be a Graham dancer. After her acceptance as an official member in June 1944, Amemiya rehearsed and performed like her colleagues, but also acted as a class demonstrator and continued to assist Graham's company costume designer Edythe Gilford. Amemiya also supplemented her income by performing in two Broadway productions, the *King and I* (1951-1954), and *Flower Drum Song* (1958-1960), and an off-Broadway production entitled *Sandhog* (1954).

Amemiya's career as a dancer remained central even after her marriage and entry into motherhood. Amemiya stated that she was able to go on her first date with her future husband Charles Kikuchi[402] because he happened to ask her out on her only day off from rehearsing *Cave of the Heart.*[403] She would not see him again until the completion of the show. She maintained this level of commitment to her career throughout their partnership. They married in September 1946, only four months after meeting. Kikuchi was very supportive of Amemiya's desire to have both a career and a family. His salary from his job as a Veterans Affairs (VA) counselor was their primary source of income, allowing Amemiya to accept low wages as a teacher and class

[401] Ibid., 195.
[402] Charles Kikuchi (1916-1988). See *Diary of Charles Kikuchi* and Mathew Briones, *Jap and Jim Crow.*
[403] Tokunaga, *Yuriko,* 198.

demonstrator.[404] While pregnant, and soon after giving birth to Susan Kikuchi in 1948 and Lawrence Kikuchi in 1955, Amemiya continued to work. In 1954, when the Graham Company was on tour in Europe, young Susan accompanied her mother. When Amemiya was on stage, Susan stayed in the dressing room and Graham would watch over her when not performing. In 1955, Amemiya had a contract to perform in the film version of the *King and I*. She gave birth to her son Lawrence on August 2,1955, and she was on set in Hollywood a month later on September 1st. As she described, "I took Susan to the studio with me every day. When I returned from rehearsal with Susan, I had to be a mother and stayed up all night feeding Lawrence."[405] Her husband Charles would later join her in California to assist with the children. Meeting the needs of her employers and the demands of parenting, Amemiya worked tirelessly to maintain her career while also raising her family.

As her work ethic and commitment to her family demonstrates, Amemiya like other Japanese Americans participated in a culture of overwork in postwar America. After her acceptance into the Graham Company Amemiya expressed her drive to overcome new challenges, stating,

> "Time and time again, I reminded myself that nothing could stop me now and that nothing could compare with the concentration camp experience, which made me so downhearted. I was beginning to understand the costs of being free and how *gaman* and *on*/ obligation to Martha included responsibility to self, which helped guide me through foreboding adverse situations."[406]

Amemiya interpreted her ability to survive her unjust incarceration as evidence of her resilience. She accepted that freedom could be taken away, and her response was to fully embrace opportunities that were made available. While gratitude and obligation motivated Amemiya,

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[404] Paid $4.00/ hr per class as demonstrator. Nominal pay for performance and teaching. Tokunaga, *Yuriko,* 200.
[405] Tokunaga, *Yuriko,* 202.
[406] Tokunaga, *Yuirko,* 76.

many former inmates committed long hours and excelled in their jobs to prove their loyalty. In George Tsukuda's 1998 research based on interviews with 40 nisei men, he found a pattern of overachievement and a need to assimilate coupled with feelings of inferiority and intimidation by the dominant white society. Even men who seemed successful, playing sports and getting good grades in higher education, admitted feeling inhibited and self -conscious.[407] Their involvement in school was an attempt to show their classmates their ability to be equal, and not a "disloyal Jap." By staying late and doing a little extra in school and in the work place, many hoped not only to impress their peers and supervisors, but also gain social acceptance.

Although employers and the WRA praised diligent Japanese American workers, their grueling schedules took a toll. Dr. Setsuko Matsunaga Nishi, the chair of a commission panel on the long–term effects of wartime incarceration, explained that Japanese Americans who felt the need to live by such standards suffered from "workaholism, overconformity, constant search for others' approval and chronic anxiety about their achievements and fragility of acceptance."[408] In this vein, overworkers may have obtained approval from their peers and gained social mobility, but their methods to achieve this had grave consequences. In additional to physical and mental health concerns, former inmates also felt disempowered. Yet, overwork was a safe strategy used by some Japanese Americans to attain acceptance by whites and make economic advancement. As such, although self-harming and exploitative, overwork allowed former inmates to make small gains under conditions of discrimination.

While the WRA promoted postwar employment and overwork as key markers of success, a small, but vocal, population of Japanese Americans sought avenues for social justice.

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[407] George Tsukuda, *The long-term effects of internment on pre-adolescent Japanese American males,* 159.

[408] Yang Murray, *Historical Memories of the Japanese American Internment and the Struggle for Redress,* 200.

Continuing to confront harassment and discrimination in the housing and job markets, many felt that the WRA's message to "adjust yourself," did not address institutional racism. For many, a critical examination of identity politics could not take place while incarcerated. However, upon their release many reflected on their mistreatment and questioned the urgency to rebuild and resettle when much of their livelihood was taken away. Identifying contradictions and connecting their experience with other forms of systematic discrimination, Japanese Americans recognized that their experience was a part of ongoing patterns of injustice carried out by the U.S. government against marginalized people. Individuals refused to blame themselves for causing their abuse. They retreated from shame and instead cultivated a sense of ethnic pride, exercising their right to critique the government's action to imprison innocent people.

Many former inmates sought to reconnect and proudly rebuild their lives with other Japanese Americans. In February 1945, seven months before the official close of the incarceration facilities, Japanese Americans organized an All Center Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah.[409] Representing seven of the ten WRA incarceration facilities, Japanese American leaders addressed their concerns regarding the lack of support and resources for former inmates. They also critiqued the actions of the federal government in forcibly removing and incarcerating Japanese Americans, and then once they were released, providing little assistance for resettlement. Attendees prioritized the closing of the camps, and proposed ways to support individuals seeking food, shelter and employment. However, the overall tone of the meeting demonstrated the community's dissatisfaction with the government, and many agreed that some form of reparations was necessary to pursue in the future.[410]

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[409] Mitchell T. Maki, Harry H. L. Kitano, S. Megan Berthold, *Achieving the Impossible Dream: How Japanese Americans Obtained Redress.* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 52.
[410] Ibid.

Journalists, writers and illustrators also contributed to local and national publications to denounce incarceration and articulate their own hope for community redevelopment. Young nisei writers discussed actions of the government, approaches to resettlement, and the value of living outside the West Coast. They agreed about the injustice of incarceration but debated on approaches to reintegration. They grappled with the issue of how to maintain a sense of Japanese identity but also engage with other communities of color.[411] Southern California Japanese American ethnic newspapers such as the *Rafu Shimpo* offered much needed community support and local networking. With an enthusiastic staff that included a number of women, the newspapers addressed community concerns, discussed political issues, printed job listings, posted calls for volunteers and offered stories of racial uplift.[412] Nisei publications encouraged their readers to support fellow Japanese Americans, to become involved in the community and to cultivate a socially minded political identity. Organized by and for Japanese Americans, these newspapers provided the space for Japanese Americans to represent themselves in more complex and nuanced ways beyond focusing on the community's need to quickly resettle.

Japanese Americans were also motivated to build alliances with other ethnic minorities to address institutional discrimination. For example, in 1945 writer Ina Sugihara worked with leaders of the NAACP to demand congressional reauthorization of the Fair Employment Practice Committee (FEPC), and throughout the 1950s Bill and Yuri Kochiyama's home in Harlem served as a meeting place for civil rights organizations such the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and Revolutionary Action Movement. Amemiya's husband Charles Kikuchi, too, was amongst the Japanese Americans who fostered such alliances. While Kikuchi's concern for his community was articulated through

[411] Robinson, *After camp*, 86-93.
[412] Matsumoto, *City Girls*, 200-201.

his work as a researcher with the Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Study (JERS), his passion for racial justice led him to a career in social work.

Kikuchi understood discrimination and exclusion from a very young age, and remained an advocate for social change all his life. He was born in Vallejo, California, the second eldest child, the first boy, in a working-class family with eight children. At the age of eight, after several fights with his father, he was taken to a Salvation Army orphanage, where he grew up in a multi-racial environment until he left for college. After earning a degree in social work from San Francisco State in 1939, he worked alongside Mexican American and Filipino American laborers. During World War II, Kikuchi reunited with his family at Gila River and he worked with JERS to document the experience of those incarcerated. He would later continue his research interviewing resettlers in Chicago. Living on the South Side, he would befriend African Americans also struggling to make a living in the postwar era. These friendships remained important as he worked for twenty-four years in New York at the VA hospital, counseling primarily African American veterans.[413] Kikuchi stayed in social work, believing in the efficacy of direct service and immediate care. Despite his difficult relationship with his own father, he deeply valued his friendships that cut across lines of race and class. Kikuchi hoped for a unified, multi-racial America, and maintained that true democracy could not be realized without greater inclusion and equity for African Americans.

Amemiya's *Thin Cry*

Despite her participation in overworking, Amemiya, too, did not simply move on and quietly blend into American society. On December 30, 1945 Amemiya took a sabbatical from Graham's company to premiere her own choreography at the 92nd Street Young Men's and

[413] For extensive history of Kikuchi and his engagment with the African American community see Matthew M. Briones, *Jim and Jap Crow: A Cultural History of 1940s Interracial America*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).

Young Women's Hebrew Association (92nd St. Y) in New York City as a part of the "Major Subscription" series. Accompanied by the music of award-winning composer John Cage, Amemiya performed an emotional solo entitled *Thin Cry,* based on her experience as an inmate in Gila River. In a defining moment Amemiya held a contorted contraction. She hollowed out her torso and let out a silent scream. With her eyes tightly closed shut, she conveyed anguish and grief. In this production, Amemiya revealed her emotions of loss, rage, and deep sadness during a time most Japanese Americans had to focus on their everyday concerns of personal and economic resettlement.

In her first class with Martha Graham, Amemiya had watched as Graham demonstrated a contraction. Standing with her feet in a wide stance, her chest caved in and her spine pressed outward. Her shoulders rolled forward and her arms followed its trajectory downward. The weight of the torso pushing towards the spine forced the head and neck to stretch in the opposite direction. As the spine curved, from the top of the head to her tailbone, her legs slowly bent, knees falling slightly inward. Amemiya learned that Graham's contraction was initiated from a breath and radiated from within the body and out towards the extremities. She identified with Graham's artistry that placed an emphasis on human emotions and drama over precision and technique.

Amemiya drew inspiration from Graham's contraction in her choreography of the *Thin Cry*. In a wide bent-knee stance Amemiya held a contraction.[414] Her upper body twisted slightly as her left foot took on greater weight. Her torso pitched forward as her shoulders folded inward, her elbows and fingers inverted, twisting the forearm and freeing her palms to face skyward. Amemiya showed full commitment to the choreography; with her abdominal muscles held tight

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[414] Photographic documentation of Amemiya's *Thin Cry* in Tokunaga, *Yuriko*, 119.

and compressed against her spine, her head extended outward, away from her misaligned shoulders, her upper body remaining rigid and tense.

Amemiya explained that *Thin Cry* "was the release of my feelings, which were pent up by being in Camp. I was in a strangle hold and my crying did not produce tears…I was choking realizing that, like me, the internees really could not remember or express what happened to them."[415] Although limited to those in the audience at the 92nd St Y, Amemiya's performance of *Thin Cry* offered an early public testimony of her experience as a prisoner of war in Gila River. Amemiya's tense and disoriented body expressed anger, confusion and rage. Her disfigured arms evoked her dislocated and divided self. Her concave torso, hollowed out and empty, communicated loss, and expressed the visceral feeling of neglect and rejection. Amemiya's *Thin Cry* lamented not only her own loss but also that of a silenced community.

Amemiya's narration of her choreography brings attention to her suppressed emotions and memories. Her struggle to recall reveals that she and other inmates had to endure a process of forgetting in order to move forward. In his analysis of "circum-Atlantic performances," Joseph Roach offers the phrase "forgotten but not gone" to articulate such a phenomenon.[416] He argues that the present moment is produced as a result of actively forgetting, in particular forgetting those histories that conflict with the dominant narratives. Similar to the inmates who qualified for early release, those who left with the closure of each incarceration facility were pressured to quickly resettle, find work, and rebuild their lives. Those who found employment and housing were praised for their ability to reintegrate by agencies like the WRA and JACL. Furthermore, with the war's end in 1945, the U.S. government did not offer a formal apology or acknowledge the injustice of mass incarceration. Any admission of fault or misconduct would

[415] Ibid.
[416] Joseph Roach, *Cities of the dead: Circum-Atlantic performance*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 2.

have countered postwar nation-building projects that declared American democracy was superior to, and more equitable than, fascism and communism. Pressed to forget and move forward, from within and outside the Japanese American community, incarceration remained an unresolved trauma for thousands. Amemiya's *Thin Cry* was perhaps a response not only to her incarceration but also an act of protest against the hurried process of resettlement. Her choreography to recall her painful memories interrupted efforts to minimize the lingering affects of wartime incarceration.

Thin Cry was also significant as the performance took place only four months after the U.S. military dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, leading to the official end of World War II, and years before the approval of legislation that recognized incarceration as discriminatory and unlawful. Amemiya disclosed her pain publicly before the passing of the Japanese-American Evacuation Claims Act of 1948, the call for redress resolution by San Francisco State professor Edison Uno in 1970, and, pressured by a grassroots nation-wide Japanese American campaign for redress, the creation of the federal, bipartisan Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) in 1980. The CWRIC was directed by Congress to research the impact of Executive Order 9066 on the lives of U.S. citizens and permanent resident aliens. They heard testimonies from more than 750 witnesses who provided the evidence necessary to seek reparations.[417] Much like the verbal testimonies shared by participants of the CWRIC hearings, Amemiya asserted the complex emotions previously silenced during her incarceration

[417] Mitchell T. Maki, Harry H. L. Kitano, S. Megan Berthold: Achieving the Impossible Dream: How Japanese Americans Obtained Redress. (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

While the enactment of policy took many years of effort by the redress movement,[418] modern dancers like Amemiya found opportunities to perform choreographies of social protest in the war and postwar period. I suggest that Amemiya was able to disclose the trauma of incarceration in a public space in late-1945 because she had the support of a politically liberal arts community, while the ambiguity of modern dance allowed her to express her emotions without clear signs of condemnation and dissent. As discussed in the prior chapter, modern dance practitioners of the early 1930s were motivated to engage with social issues and found patrons supportive of such works. This legacy continued in spaces such as the 92nd Street Y*,* a venue initially established to enrich Jewish life that went on to support community programs for immigrants and experimental performances by local artists.[419] In such a welcoming space *Thin Cry*'s initial performance was likely in front of an audience sympathetic to issues of wartime violence and trauma.

Many modern dancers often performed ambiguous choreography to challenge ballet's use of familiar narratives; however, for queer artists and artists of color, ambiguity was also utilized as a form of subversion, a method to critique dominant power structures without great risk. For example, in 1943 when African American dancer Pearl Primus debuted *A Man has been Lynched*, later re-named *Strange Fruit*, she explicitly addressed the horrific history of whites lynching African Americans through the use of Abel Meeropol's poetry (published under his pseudonym, Lewis Allan) printed in the program. Her choreography, however, was developed

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[418] For additional research on Japanese American Redress see Carol L. Izumi; Eric K.Yamamoto; Margaret Chon; Jerry Kang; and Frank H. Wu, *Race, Rights, and Reparation: Law and the Japanese American Internment* (New York: Wolters Kluwer, 2013); Mitchell T. Maki, Harry H. L. Kitano, S. Megan Berthold, *Achieving the Impossible Dream: How Japanese Americans Obtained Redress.* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Alice Yang Murray, *Historical memories of the Japanese American internment and the Struggle for Redress*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008);

[419] For discussion on the history of The 92nd Street Y as space for artists and activism see Naomi M. Jackson, *Converging Movements: Modern dance and Jewish Culture at the 92nd Street Y* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan Press, 2000).

from the perspective of a member of the lynch mob responding as a witness to the brutal murder. Primus positioned the central subject in flexible terms, inviting multiple readings of an experience closely identified with the black community. Primus's approach humanized the experience of racialized violence and compelled a wider audience to connect to the social issue. Similarly, although Amemiya's choreography was in response to an injustice that targeted Japanese Americans, she featured universally shared emotions of repression, sorrow and loss. Amemiya's choreography did not critique the U.S. government or push forward an agenda for reparation; instead she invited viewers to witness her pain without taking a political stance.

Holding with one hand the high praise and endorsement by the WRA, and grasping her connection to family and community with the other, Amemiya urged her viewers to examine more complex resettlement narratives. Amemiya demonstrated that a former inmate could find work, resettle, and follow the rules of the WRA, and still suffer greatly. Reintegration was not a means to forget the humiliation and injustice of incarceration, but was rather a necessary strategy to survive, protect families from further punishment, and prevent future generations from facing discrimination. As such Amemiya asserted her right to a more complex minoritarian identity, and through her vulnerable corporeal expression, she took a risk in critiquing the institutions that refused to see her beyond their rigid ideals.

Conclusion

As Japanese Americans recovered from wartime incarceration, their efforts to reestablish their lives were complicated by the U.S. occupation of Japan and the new alliance between both nations. Despite the challenging postwar climate of simultaneous tolerance for, and rejection of Japanese Americans, Yuriko Amemiya focused on developing her career as a dancer, choreographer and member of the Martha Graham Dance Company. Through an examination of

the social and political conditions informing three significant moments in Amemiya's post incarceration life— her entry into Graham's company, her role as a Follower in *Appalachian Spring,* and her solo *Thin Cry*— this chapter reveals how dance provided Amemiya the tools to navigate the tremendous demands placed on Japanese American women. Upon resettling in New York Amemiya quickly took to working as a seamstress and rehearsing as a dancer. As documented by the WRA press Amemiya successfully resettled in a city outside the confines of the West Coast and happily embraced her strenuous work schedule. WRAPS circulated images of the young, fresh-faced Amemiya in the dance studio to celebrate her achievements as an ideal, and perhaps reformed, former inmate. And in Graham's *Appalachian Spring* Amemiya beautifully executed group choreography and embodied seamless integration as a devoted Follower.

While Amemiya found acceptance by modern dance audiences, as the discussion on *Appalachian Spring* details, her integration into postwar New York was contingent on upholding rigid ideals of a loyal citizen. As a Follower Amemiya fell into her place in Graham's choreography that spoke to the nation's desire to return to an imagined norm that privileged white, able-bodied, heterosexual families. Amemiya's role then as a silent Follower can be interpreted as her acceptance of her subordinate position. Represented through the WRA and popularized by cultural works like *Appalachian Spring,* their stereotype as loyal and disciplined set up Japanese Americans to be caught in a double bind. They were forced to choose between a seemingly "positive stereotype" that dismissed the injustice of incarceration and their ongoing struggles, or return to their pre-war status as the suspicious foreigner. As loyal and compliant citizens, Japanese Americans were also discouraged from enacting dissent and participating in activism. Furthermore, as the nation marched towards the civil rights movement the proliferation

of such a stereotype misinformed the public and fostered greater misunderstanding, resentment and distrust among racial minorities.

Yet, despite Amemiya's participation in WRAPS and her role as the Follower, she also challenged the construction of the complicit submissive Japanese American through her affiliation with radical activist dancers, her personal relationships with other community-engaged Japanese Americans, and her own artistry. Although moving forward without a fight seemed the most viable solution, many nisei, like Amemiya were unwilling to be so submissive. Many Japanese Americans felt more comfortable with each other and continued to seek the company of their community. Although they continued to have feelings of intimidation by and subordination to whites, these nisei resisted complete passivity, finding social, artistic and political ways to remain engaged with their community. Building on each other's strengths these Japanese Americans expanded the narrow, rigid definitions of the loyal American, learned to look critically at their incarceration, and acquired leadership skills to inspire others.

Amemiya's solo *Thin Cry* expressed her political consciousness and set out to challenge nation building projects that dismissed nuanced resettlement experiences. Her visceral performance expressed her emotions of loss, rage, anger and hope during a time when such dissent was improbable and inconvenient. However, her ability to gain access to the stage relied on her participation in Graham's elite dance company and credibility as an idealized citizen. As such, Amemiya learned to occupy multiple positions, asserting her versatility to insist on being present, refusing to be invisible despite the shifting demands of the State. Drawing from her own technical background in Graham and Ishii techniques, she released a deep cry that reverberates beyond the walls of the 92nd Street Y, inspiring others, across racial identities, to question the motives and outcomes of Japanese American incarceration. Her capacity to traverse the local,

national and global terrain reflects her abilities as a choreographer as well as her effectiveness as a performer not only to produce a dissenting body but also strategically uphold and challenge postwar expectations.

EPILOUGE:

Dancing to Belong:

Yuriko Amemiya's Legacy

In April 1952, after performing at The Juilliard School as the Moon in Martha Graham's *Canticle of Innocent Comedians*, Amemiya was driven to the St. James Theater to perform as Eliza, in *The King and I*. In the car she took off her Graham performance make-up and put her hair in a bun. She would arrive at the theater just in time to transition into her Eliza role and enter the stage for the second act of the Broadway musical.

*"*Run, Eliza, Run*."*

Over a period of three years (1951-1954), Yuriko Amemiya danced the role of Eliza in "The Small House of Uncle Thomas," a play featured within the Broadway musical *The King and I*. For over twelve hundred shows, Amemiya found her way to freedom across the frozen Ohio river as Eliza, an enslaved, racially ambiguous, African American mother featured in Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* While scholars have written about "The Small House of Uncle Thomas,"[420] much less attention has been paid to Amemiya's role as Eliza in the original production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical set in Siam, later known as Thailand. In this role Amemiya continued to complicate representation politics as she, a Japanese American modern dancer, played the role of a Thai royal dancer, performing as an enslaved

[420] See Berlant, Lauren. *The female complaint: The unfinished business of sentimentality in American culture*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Jacqueline Shea Murphy, "Unrest and Uncle Tom: Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company's Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin/The Promised Land." In *Bodies of the text: Dance as theory, literature as dance* Eds. Ellen W. Goellner and Jacqueline Shea Murphy (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press,1995): 81-105.

African American woman running from her violent master in a scene based on a novel written by a white female abolitionist. In fact, white authors dominated this narrative. Stowe's novel was highlighted in Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein's play based on Margret Landon's fictionalized account of British educator Anna Leonowens' memoir of her time serving the King of Siam in the 1860s.[421] Furthermore, while the play was set in Asia, and had a strong anti-slavery message, Amemiya was one of only a very few Asian people in the original Broadway production.[422]

Veiling violent histories of colonization, slavery, and American racism under the guise of multiculturalism, *The King and I* satiated postwar desires to celebrate the virtues of American democracy domestically, and its relevance to postcolonial Asia. Amemiya's performance of Eliza-- including her off stage labor to fulfill the role --well reflects her ability to gracefully execute dances that bring attention to the complicated position Japanese American occupied in the Cold War cultural imaginary. Similar to Graham's *Appalachian Spring*, American audiences embraced *The King and I* in the postwar period, perhaps for parallel reasons. *Appalachian Spring's* narrative centered on community conflict and internal struggle, particularly in regards to questions about marriage, gender and religion. The subtext of domestic territorial expansion,

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421 The Broadway version of *The King and I* was based on texts written in the mid-19th century, and reflected histories of European colonialism and American missionary projects in Asia. In 1860 King Mongkut of Siam, now Thailand, opened his country to trade with the West, and employed Anna Leonowens, a widowed, British teacher to educate his children. Leonowens, who was born and raised in colonial India, wrote two books loosely based on her experience working for the royal court, *The English Governance at the Siamese Court* (1870), and *The Romance of the Harem* (1873). In the 1940s Leonowens' books inspired Margaret Landon, an American who accompanied her husband on a decade long educational missionary project in Thailand, to write *Anna and the King of Siam.* Landon's fictional biography that combined Leonowens' text with her own research gained great popularity in 1944, and was turned into a film with the same title by Twentieth Century Fox in 1949. Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II transformed the story into a musical for the stage in 1951, and a film in 1956. See Christine Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California, Press, 2003).

422 From the 1951 Playbill for *The King and I*, the following East Asian names were listed as members of the original cast Yuriko, Michiko Iseri, and Baayork Lee.

however, remained in the backdrop. In *The King and I*, western colonialism and intervention into Asia were affirmed. Both performances celebrate the West as a site of independence and progress. American studies scholar Christina Klein explains that through theatrical productions like *South Pacific* (1949*)* and *The King and I* (1951)*,* Americans encountered a "re-introduction" of the Asia Pacific region as an area that needed Western intervention in order to develop culture and civility.[423] The United States insisted that their brand of leadership was necessary to protect this area of the world from the spread of communism. The American public not only accepted the concept of U.S. benevolence and superiority, but also learned to normalize the idea that a nation is not mature or worthy of self-governance until the nation is perceived as "modern, liberal capitalist, and democratic."[424]

Although postwar paternalistic campaigns were effective, a challenging question remained, how can the United States claim to be a non-imperial world power, yet justify expansion during a time of decolonization?[425] Klein argues that noncommunist Asian nations, like Japan and Thailand, were not marked solely as different but rather reconfigured to be sites of exchange. Different from Said's Orientalism, where the East and West exist in binary terms, with the West as superior and the East as subordinate, Klein argues that Cold War Orientalism relies on the "logic of affiliation."[426] Cultural productions like *The King and I* denied the presence of

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[423] Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California, Press, 2003).
[424] Naoko Shibusawa, *American's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 5.
[425] Klein compares pre and post-war literature to address the United States' cultural approach to this paradox. Klein asserts that unlike pre-war literature, post-war works made three key distinctions: first, they featured Asia as a contested territory between the United States and the Soviet Union; second, they focused on the experience of Americans in Asia, rather than describing "exotic natives"; and third, racial equity played a key role in the justification for American expansion.
[426] Klein, *Cold War Orientalism,* 16.

imperialism, and instead created what Mary Louise Pratt terms "narratives of anti-conquest."[427] The American public was led to believe that U.S. occupation took place within the context of democratic reciprocity, an exchange that benefitted all involved. Klein asserts that middlebrow texts, often operating under a sentimental framework, represented such exchanges, whether economic, emotional, or cultural, as mutual and equitable.

While Anna Leonowens, the white teacher, takes center stage as the benevolent educator, Asian women and children demonstrate the efficacy of sentimental exchange. For example, Leonowens develops a special relationship with Tuptim, a newly acquired young wife from Burma, who speaks and reads English. Throughout the play Leonowens advocates for Tuptim, giving her Stowe's book to read and even helping her meet her lover in secret. When the news arrives that the British are threatening to colonize Siam, Leonowens convinces the King to host them for an evening of refined entertainment. This includes a staging of Tuptim's play inspired by Stowe, "The Small House of Uncle Thomas." The theatrical production based on an American abolitionist tale would prove that Siam desires to be democratic and modern, therefore justifying their continual independence. While the play delights the British, Tuptim also takes the performance as an opportunity to criticize the King for "enslaving" her, keeping her from her true love. Tuptim's drive for freedom is mapped onto Eliza in the play. Eliza hops, glides and leaps away from the slave master, ultimately killing the master, to reunite with her husband. Taking Stowe's words to heart, Tuptim and Eliza are viewed as ideal pupils. Not only do they promote Stowe's anti-slavery message,[428] they attempt to flee servitude to embrace a

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[427] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. (New York: Routledge. 1992), 7.

[428] Under Cold War rhetoric, the anti-slavery message was in line with anti- communism. See Sharon Aronofsky Weltman, "The King and Who? Dance, Difference, and Identity in Anna Leonowens and The King and I." In *Conflict and Difference in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 171-185.

heterosexual, monogamous relationship. Tuptim risks death to escape the King's "barbaric" practice of polygamy. Tuptim's fighting spirit, embodied by Eliza, is viewed as a testament to Leonowens' compassionate tutelage of Western ideals of equality.

However, much is lost when an African American story of enslavement is retold through Asian bodies. African American struggles are projected onto Asian Americans, giving little attention to the significant history, and distinct forms of racism experienced in both communities. In "The Small House of Uncle Thomas" slavery is conflated with concubinage.[429] Both cause great harm but the two are very different forms of servitude. The false equivalence masks the perpetual and accumulative effects of slavery in this nation. Beyond the erasure of African Americans from the narrative, Asian women are granted little autonomy. They are represented as naïve children and obedient wives who are so simple-minded that they do not question their life in bondage, even ridiculing the one wife who seeks an education. Their choices are to respond to oppressive men or seek help from benevolent white women. If granted autonomy their greatest ambition is to be in a monogamous, heterosexual relationship. Their subordination is so great that American women feel reassured about their own supposed liberation. With the primacy of white women as saviors, Leonowens and Stowe remain empowered, affirming their superiority over women of color, domestically and abroad.

Despite reductive stereotypes and an imperialist storyline, Amemiya worked diligently to be included in the Broadway production of *The King and I*. She extended herself in the spring 1952, accomplishing the feat of performing in two productions in one night at The Juilliard School and the St. James Theater. On one hand, her absolute commitment to both modern dance and commercial dance seems to demonstrate again her extraordinary work ethic and her

[429] Kaplan, Caren. "'Getting to Know You': Travel, Gender, and the Politics of Representation in Anna and the King of Siam and The King and I." *Late imperial culture* Eds Roman De La Campa, E. Ann Kaplan, Michael Sprinker (London: Verso, 1995): 41.

willingness to yield to the needs of her white employers. However, as my research reveals, Amemiya's performances must be examined in the context of social conditions and personal circumstances. On the Broadway stage as Eliza, Amemiya achieved a level of visibility unattainable by most Asian American dancers in the Unites States. In the mid-twentieth century production, while the majority of the cast members were in yellowface, Amemiya was the only Asian American dancer with a featured solo. The "The Small House of Uncle Thomas" was also considered the main feature of the production. Amemiya received praise from reviewers resulting in not only much-deserved accolades but also, a pay raise to $175 a week.[430] And perhaps Amemiya, too, admired Eliza as she fought for her emancipation, actions analogous to her own struggle enduring the hardship of wartime incarceration to find her way to the proscenium stage.

While visibility in an Orientalist postwar production might not be enough to challenge institutional racism, Amemiya's presence on stage had a ripple effect in changing future opportunities for her, her family and other Asian American dancers. The success of *The King and I* and her strong relationship with the show's choreographer Jerome Robbins led to Amemiya's involvement as a choreographer–and a few times as a director–in seventeen re-staged productions. In 1976 Amemiya attempted to hire an all- Asian cast except for the role of Leonowens and her son. Although most of the actors did not get selected for the final cast, she made efforts to limit the use of yellowface. Amemiya's daughter Susan Kikuchi also began to perform in *The King and I* as a child in 1955. She was in several productions and followed her mother's footsteps to dance the role of Eliza in 1972. After Yul Brynner who played the original King died in 1985, Amemiya and her daughter took over re-staging *The King and I* in theaters all

[430] Tokunaga, *Yuriko,* 152.

over the world. In 2004, Asian American Broadway performer, and original cast member, Baayork Lee invited Kikuchi to restage Robbins' choreography. Kikuchi hired her own daughter, Cassey Kivinick, to serve as the Assistant to the Choreographer. For over fifty years, Amemiya devoted herself to fostering new generations of Asian American dancers and choreographers in hopes of shifting the leadership and politics of representation on the Broadway stage.

Similar to her involvement in *The King and I*, Yuriko Amemiya cultivated a lifelong relationship with the Martha Graham Dance Company, and continued to engage with race politics on the modern dance stage. In 1951 two African American dancers from the University of Wisconsin, Mary Hinkson and Matt Turney, joined Amemiya in the company. With the three women of color, Graham's company was one of only a few modern dance companies with a racially diverse membership in the early 1950s. Their presence was significant with the start of the civil rights movement, as well as the formation of the State Department Tours. In the mid-1950s these tours sent American artists abroad to recuperate the image of nation as the U.S. government attempted to manage the Cold War, the civil rights movement, and the Korean War. The diversity of the company was put on display to promote the benefits of democracy, yet, in doing so veiled the reality of institutionalized segregation and racialized violence.[431] Although Graham's universalist approached did not destabilize the centrality of European and white American narratives, Graham proved that women of color could succeed in leading roles.

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[431] Rebekah Kowal in *How to do Things with Dance*, addresses the Cold War climate in which dancers participate in cultural diplomacy managed by the State Department. She argues that the political climate dictated the deployment of companies with universalist ideologies domestically and abroad, as a means to contain artistic expression and political thought. Using Graham's repertory as an example, Kowal argues that State Department artists often addressed human emotions in their pieces. This worked to promote U.S. foreign policy that puts forth the idea that America is a nation that believes in valuing the commonalities of the "human experience." In actuality, however, American modern dance was a convenient vehicle to emphasize the superiority of the United States through the perceived benefits of American democracy, artistic freedom and capitalism.

Hinkson took on the title role in *Circe* and *Death and Entrances*, and Turney was most well known for her performance as the Pioneer woman in *Appalachian Spring*.

Amemiya remained a distinguished company member from 1944 to 1967. During her tenure she was in the original cast of several renowned Graham dances including *Cave of the Heart* (1946), *Night Journey* (1947), *Clytemnestra* (1958) and the film *Dancer's World* (1957). Amemiya was an instructor at the Graham school and inherited two of Graham's roles, One who Seeks in *Dark Meadow* and Mary in *Primitive Mysteries*. With her extensive experience with the company Amemiya became the Founder of the Martha Graham Ensemble (MGE) in 1983, and the Rehearsal Director of the Graham dance company from 1984-1991. Her daughter, Susan Kikuchi also danced with Graham and she, too, took on positions of leadership as the Director of the MGE in 1999, and Artistic Program Manager of the dance company from 2005 to 2006. Both Amemiya and Kikuchi continue to teach reconstructions of Graham's classic pieces to professional ballet companies and to students in university dance programs.

Outside of her work with Graham and on Broadway, Amemiya developed her own choreography. While still a member of Graham's company, Amemiya made her premiere performance with her own company in October 1949 at the 92nd Street Y. Her first full-length program included solos and group pieces, performed before a full-capacity audience. While directing her company provided greater autonomy, the means to get there involved compromise. Her first show was self-financed. She later relied on the income generated from her time on Broadway in *The King and I* and *Flower Drum Song*, to support her work.[432] This was a difficult but intentional decision. Amemiya was not comfortable performing as "Miss Ireland" in a Chinatown Nightclub scene in the *Flower Drum Song*, but decided to stay with the show, a run

[432] Tokunaga, *Yuriko,* 124.

of six hundred performances, to accumulate the money necessary to support her family and her own projects.[433] Amemiya as an Asian American woman had limited performance opportunities in the commercial realm and had to compromise in order to eventually make dances that were more aligned with her vision. This again reflects Amemiya's careful negotiation of the social constraints mapped onto her as a woman and racial minority. She demonstrated how working in popular entertainment assisted in funding "high art." In this way, Amemiya, like other choreographers of color of the same period, challenged the perceived division between the "high art" of modern dance and popular dance.[434] Their choices increased opportunities to foster their own projects. In 1960, she produced an entire show based on Japanese themes that drew from noh and kabuki theater. In 1967, Amemiya received a Guggenheim grant, providing the impetus to leave the Graham company to further her career as a choreographer and director. In her lifetime Amemiya choreographed over seventy dances.

Yuriko Amemiya engaged with dance in complex ways to navigate the nation's social and political climate, creating solo works that explored subjects directly related to her Japanese American identity. In October 1946 Amemiya choreographed a solo entitled, *Shut Not Your Doors*. With set design by Isamu Noguchi, the dance was performed at the Central High School of Needle Trade as a part of the Student Dance Recital concert. The dance's title was inspired by two Walt Whitman poems, one of the same title, and the second *Turn, O Libertad* (1865). In the dance, Amemiya extends her left arm, as she looks outward pasted the ropes that were used to represent barbed wire, like those at the Gila River incarceration facility. In the piece she

[433] Ibid.,166.
[434] For discussion on how modern dancers performed in commercial dance projects in the mid-twentieth century, See Stephanie L. Batiste, *Darkening Mirrors: Imperial Representation in Depression-Era African American Performance*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Gay Morris, *A game for dancers: Performing modernism in the postwar years, 1945-1960*. (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2006).

struggles with her own feelings of guilt and shame, and asks her neighbors for acceptance and inclusion. As expressed in her program notes, "she experiences the futility of maintaining crushed beliefs until her rediscovery of human freedom and dignity is finally achieved."[435] Amemiya contends with the fear and disappointment she feels as her fellow Americans support the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans. Yet as a freed citizen, she looks to them again to renew her faith in democracy. While she continues to confront discrimination, she holds out hope that she will find a sense of belonging. Amemiya's approach to expressing her conflicting emotions of despair and hope allows audiences to grapple with the simultaneous rejection and acceptance felt by Japanese Americans for decades.

Yuriko Amemiya's most enduring solo piece is *Thin Cry*. As discussed in chapter three, *Thin Cry* was performed in 1945 as a testimonial of her incarceration experience. Amemiya reconstructed and retitled the pieces *The Cry* in 1963. Outside the United States, audiences learned about Amemiya's wartime incarceration when *The Cry* was performed in England in 1976 and in India in 1974. *The Cry* continued to be performed at important events including a tribute to Evelyn Okubo, a young Japanese American woman who was killed at the bicentennial National JACL convention, in 1970; Charles Kikuchi's memorial service in 1988; and Amemiya's honorary doctorate celebration at The Boston Conservatory in 2006. Performed for over six decades and across national borders, *The Cry* is still to be deeply personal, political and accessible. Inspired by her wartime incarceration, Amemiya's choreography connects to those who have experienced confinement and repression. Such themes remain relevant as marginalized communities continue to be detained, isolated and punished in the name of nation building. The dance mourns the lives lost in the desolate camps, and grieves for the countless people who face

[435] Tokunaga, *Yuriko,* 121.

state violence. Yet, birthed from a place of pain, Amemiya's simultaneous visibility and occlusion has inspired others to share their stories. In her continuing presence and enduring legacy Amemiya allows us to examine the political and choreographic possibilities of works like June Watanabe's *EO 9066* and Claudine Naganuma's *Fences,* passionately developed by other Japanese American dancers to create new paths to negotiate ever-shifting demands for social justice.

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