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Making Home Again: Japanese American Resettlement in Post-World War II Los
Angeles, 1945-1955

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

by

Kristen Tamiko Hayashi

September 2019

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Catherine Gudis, Chairperson

Dr. Megan Asaka

Dr. Traise Yamamoto

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The Dissertation of Kristen Tamiko Hayashi is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

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After writing thousands of words on a topic that I've become very passionate about, it would seem that they would flow easily to express my appreciation for the immeasurable support that I have received along the way. Yet, somehow the generosity and constant encouragement that I have received has left me unable to fully articulate my immense gratitude.

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My father Leland Hayashi inspired my interest in documenting the Japanese American experience as he has chronicled our own family history and shared it with visitors at the Japanese American National Museum as a long-time volunteer and docent. He nurtured my interest in history through the books he chose to read to me every night before bedtime, sometimes summarizing adult history books to suit my attention span as a child. As I look back at our family summer vacations to California's missions, historic

house museums, museums, and other historic sites, I realize that the time we spent together visiting these places together had a lasting influence on me. I wish my mother and grandparents could see all that I have accomplished since high school. I hope they know that my ambition is rooted in preserving their legacies. Brian Hayashi, my brother, and Debbie Fagen, my aunt, helped me to stay on track with my personal and professional goals. They've supported my pursuit of a variety of professional opportunities and helped me navigate a few curveballs that life has thrown over the past few years.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Making Home Again: Japanese American Resettlement in Post-World War II Los Angeles, 1945-1955

by

Kristen Tamiko Hayashi

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in History
University of California, Riverside, September 2019
Dr. Catherine Gudis, Chairperson

For Japanese incarcerated during World War II, returning “home” to Los Angeles was daunting. Often, though, Nisei deliberately kept experiences from this time period to themselves, choosing to start at a moment when they felt they attained success. Reticence to talk openly about the early resettlement period has shaped the way that we have understood (or misunderstood) the long-term consequences of the incarceration and the postwar experience of Japanese Americans. For the majority who struggled to reclaim their property, livelihood, family life, and dignity, this period was characterized by discrimination and economic hardship. Seventy years later, with the majority of the Nisei in their final years, a more nuanced investigation into the reestablishment of the Japanese American community in postwar Los Angeles will fill a notable historical gap.

“Making Home Again: Japanese Americans Resettlement in Post-WWII Los Angeles” interrogates ideas of what race, place, and citizenship meant for Japanese

Americans as they reestablished themselves in postwar Los Angeles. Additionally, it troubles the pervasive narrative of “success,” which was a representation that Japanese Americans upheld and the WRA promulgated. Ultimately, this created a monolithic image of the community, which was misleading. Examining this community during this period of suspension underscores the experiences of those who did not easily fit into the category of those who could easily “return to normal living,” a phrase used by former detainees with an optimistic outlook on the future. Instead, resettlement was characterized by a continuation of a long history of state violence. This can be seen through examination of the process of early resettlement in areas outside the West Coast, the social climate that Japanese Americans returned to, challenges to obtain housing, and the navigation of public assistance programs.

Unfolding a more nuanced social history of resettlement and juxtaposing this with the ways in which public memory of Japanese Americans has been crafted is important to see beyond the image of success that has perpetuated the model minority myth. This project intends to navigate the layers of memory, contend with the erasure, and translate the silences that have shaped former incarcerateds’ return to Los Angeles.

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INTRODUCTION

Without a doubt, the stories that my Nisei grandparents, great-aunts, and great-uncles told (or what I gleaned through their silence) shaped my understanding of the Japanese American experience prior to, during, and after World War II.¹ Unlike other Nisei, my relatives spoke of their incarceration experiences. Unfortunately, though, I was too young when I heard these stories and did not think to push the discussion further or to ask the questions that could only come from my increasing knowledge of the history. None of my family members spoke with an inordinate amount of bitterness about World War II, incarceration, their loss of their homes and property, or violation of their civil liberties. Instead, my grandparents, great-aunts and uncles seemed to have an inordinate ability to put an optimistic spin on this undoubtedly painful chapter in their lives. They recounted their experiences with an attitude of *shikata-ga-nai*, which translates into English as “can’t be helped.”²

My maternal grandmother, Misa Hoshino, spoke of incidents of discrimination that she experienced before the war, recalling being able to swim in the local public pool only on days just prior to cleaning or being relegated to sitting in the balcony at movie

¹ Nisei is the Japanese word for second generation. The Nisei generation was American-born while their parents, the Issei (first generation) immigrated to the United States from Japan.

² Issei and Nisei who were incarcerated during World War II have commonly used the phrase *shikata-ga-nai* or “can’t be helped” to explain their wartime experience. *Shikata-ga-nai* and *gaman* (perseverance) are significant to Japanese culture, encouraging individuals to persevere and endure rather than make waves or go against the grain. Japanese Americans incarcerated during WWII often expressed these sentiments outwardly as a way to make the best of the situation, even if they felt differently. In the aftermath of World War II, Issei and Nisei’s response to incarceration with *Shikata-ga-nai* has profoundly shaped the living memory and mythos of this experience and its aftermath.

theaters with other people of color.³ When recounting how World War II impacted her life, though, I cannot recall her expressing bitterness or using words like “injustice” or “irony” to describe her experience. She never shared the pain she must certainly have felt after her brother, Henry Kondo, a member of the all-Nisei 442nd Regimental Combat Team was killed defending his country while his family was incarcerated in one of America’s concentration camp.⁴ Neither did she point to the irony that the man who would soon become her husband—a fellow Japanese American—could visit her at the Gila War Relocation Center in Arizona and then leave to return home to Pendleton, Oregon simply because he lived slightly east of the military zone boundary.

Instead, I remember her telling me “how fun the dances were in camp.” It is hard to fault a 22-year old for enjoying the lighter moments of a mostly objectionable experience or the instant social circle of people her own age. Yet, her focus on the social events and silence on the somber moments is telling of the way she sought to define that

³ Misa Kondo Hoshino, my maternal grandmother, was born in Pasadena, CA in 1918. She was the second oldest of Yasaku and Kiyome Kondo’s four children. Since her older sister was living on her own in 1942, Misa acted as the head of household and registered her family members with the War Relocation Authority. She, along with her parents and two brothers were first sent to the Tulare Assembly Center from their home in Pasadena before they were assigned to the Gila River War Relocation Center. Misa left camp before the rest of her family members to marry Harold Hoshino, whom she had met in Los Angeles in late 1941. Hoshino returned to Pendleton, Oregon after the attack on Pearl Harbor to help with his family’s farm. He remained in Pendleton for the duration of the war, although he did visit Misa at Gila. The Hoshinos moved to Hawaii following the end of the war, in hopes that Hal could revive his professional boxing career. His comeback was short-lived, however. A knock-out during one of Hal’s “comeback” fights, caused Hal to rethink his priorities. Hal decided to retire from boxing to focus on his growing family. Hal and Misa’s son Henry was born in 1945 and their daughter, Carol, was born in Hawaii in 1948. The family moved back to the mainland in the early 1950s and settled in Monrovia, California, where Harold settled on a second career selling life insurance while Misa worked in the local junior high school cafeteria.

⁴“Gold Star Honors Nisei,” *Los Angeles Times*, 18 Nov 1944: 4.

chapter of her life.⁵ When recollecting on the years immediately following the end of WWII, she recalled the discrimination that she and my grandpa encountered when they were denied the right to purchase a home in the upper middle-class neighborhood of Arcadia, California. Although she mentioned these incidents, she had a way of telling her stories with the sense that looking forward was more agreeable than dwelling on negative aspects of the seemingly distant past. My grandmother's approach to making sense of these experiences was typical to the way most Issei and Nisei responded to incarceration with *shikata ga nai* has profoundly shaped the living memory and myths of this experience and the aftermath.

For Japanese incarcerated during WWII, the return "home" or for some, the settlement in a new place and struggle to establish home again must have seemed simultaneously daunting and hopeless in the years after the war. Yet, more than the incarceration, this is a period of time that former incarcerated have often deliberately kept to themselves. So often in my discussions with Nisei, they talk about their recollections of where they were on December 7, 1941 as well as their understandings of the ramifications of Pearl Harbor. They talk about their wartime experiences with varying degrees of detail and sentiment, but most often in my experience, they gloss over the early resettlement period, focusing instead on a moment when they felt like they had

⁵ Misa Hoshino's recollections of "camp" are not unique. While her age during the war is a partial explanation for her interpretation of those years of her life, it is likely also evidence of a coping mechanism. Remembering a select few good memories could be a way to cope with a mostly traumatic event as well as the shame associated with being detained or incarcerated. These types of memories were not the only way that former detainees remembered their experience. Their decision not to talk about their experience is evidence of not wanting to conjure up difficult memories. During the struggle for redress, a significant number of Japanese Americans denounced the War Relocation Authority and Japanese American Citizens League for associating cooperation, assimilation, loyalty and military service with "wartime relocation," revealing more diverse interpretations of the camp experience.

successfully reestablished themselves.⁶ This reticence to talk openly about resettlement in the first few years after the war has shaped the way that we have understood (or misunderstood) the post-incarceration adjustment and resettlement experience of Japanese Americans. Instead, resilience, determination, and rapid success have come to represent Japanese Americans in the years post-incarceration. The Japanese American community promulgated this image, portraying itself as a unified group that embraced American values of patriotism and hard work as a conduit to social acceptance. This image is misleading, however, since it overlooks the intra-ethnic and generational conflicts, varying levels of success, and diverse experiences amongst Japanese Americans.

For the majority who struggled to reclaim their property, livelihood, family life, and dignity, this period was characterized by discrimination as well as social and economic hardship. The resettlement experiences of Japanese Americans were far more diverse and complex than the singular experience of “rapid success” that the War Relocation Authority (WRA), the federal agency that oversaw the incarceration, promoted and Nisei have touted, as well. The WRA’s 1946 study, *People in Motion*

⁶ Government officials used the term “resettlement” in two contexts, creating some nuance in meaning. In 1942, after Executive Order 9066 had been enacted, but before plans for mandatory “evacuation” were announced, government officials encouraged “voluntary resettlement” among Japanese and Japanese Americans living in Military Area 1 to locations much further inland. For Japanese living in California, this meant moving outside of the state. The War Relocation Authority used the term “resettlement” again to describe the movement of “loyal” Japanese Americans from the “War Relocation Centers” to localities in the Midwest or East after they obtained leave permits, beginning as early as 1942. Despite government officials’ early use of the term “voluntary resettlement,” the majority of references to “resettlement” correspond to the moment when internees began leaving the WRA concentration camps. Although 1942 is technically the beginning of the resettlement period for those who were able to obtain clearance to leave, this study will consider 1945 the start of resettlement since this is when most Japanese returned or came to the West Coast after staying temporarily in a location further inland. Additionally, there appears to be no definitive end date to the resettlement period. Some scholars have defined resettlement as the first ten years after the concentration camps closed in 1945. Others have defined resettlement as a much longer period that ends with the conclusion of the redress movement in 1988. Still others would argue that resettlement continues through the present.

noted, “Those who had returned found they were not entirely alone. The ones who had gone out earlier were available to help the latecomers. For many, the homecoming was difficult in the extreme, but not impossible as they feared. With relocation complete, the process of settlement could begin.”⁷ The federal government’s recounting of the incarceration and its immediate aftermath grossly oversimplified the story, suggesting that there was a definitive end to any struggle upon indefinite leave from the wartime detention centers. The federal government’s interpretation of the experience has contributed to a misleading narrative that glosses over the long-term consequences of the incarceration as well as the arduous process of resettlement.

The WRA’s vague description of what subsequently would follow incarceration was an attempt to stifle any suggestions that the “evacuation and relocation” had any negative consequence. This strategy was in defense of the agency’s program as well as for the protection of former returnees who were engaged in the process of reintegrating into mainstream society.

Similarly, former detainees remained silent on the negative aspects of their experience. Instead, many chose to focus on proving their loyalty to the country that treated them like the enemy. The government rewarded those who demonstrated loyalty and good citizenship, even if the Issei remained unable to become naturalized. As a result, many Japanese Americans enacted their role as loyal Americans. They aspired to conform to the social norms that remain staunchly entrenched. They outwardly projected

⁷ United States Department of the Interior, War Agency Liquidation Unit, formerly War Relocation Authority, *People in Motion, the postwar adjustment of the evacuated Japanese Americans*, Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Office, 1947: 11.

an image of success as if this would help them to blend in and gain acceptance. As a result, they remained silent about the hardships, choosing to say *shikata ga nai* and to *gambaru* or persevere. Their mantra became something to the effect of endure and you will be rewarded. This, at least, is what many Japanese Americans outwardly projected.

Just as the selective recounting of the incarceration has shaped the narrative of life after camp, so have photographs of Japanese Americans in the postwar period.



Figure 1.1: Opening day of Richard Kaku's Mobil Gas Station, May 1954. The new business stood at Alameda and Commercial Sts. (From left to right: Pat Kaku, daughter, Richard Kaku (proprietor), Susann and Shirley Higashi, family friends.) Courtesy of the Little Tokyo Historical Society.

A 1954 photograph depicting the grand opening of Richard Kaku's Mobil Gas Station at Alameda and Commercial Streets in Downtown Los Angeles appears to embody this narrative of rapid success. This particular photograph captured my curiosity early on as I started to think about the nuances of resettlement. The photograph embodies the type of image that Japanese Americans wanted to project to mainstream America. In the photograph, large flower arrangements flank either side of the entrance to the gas station, one set atop a Coca-Cola machine, which is an emblematic representation of American culture. Proprietor Richard Kaku is dressed sharply in slacks with pressed pleats, a crisp long sleeve button down shirt, and a bowtie, the typical dress of a service station employee/owner of this era. Kaku stands proudly underneath his name, which appears above the main entrance to the service station. Together, these elements indicate that he successfully opened an American business. Three little girls dressed impeccably in frilly white dresses, stand beside Kaku, signifying the importance of the opening of a new business.⁸ The elements captured in this photograph from the 1950s represent a fresh start and a pathway to success in overcoming the upheavals of wartime incarceration and the challenges inherent to starting over.

Images like this have come to represent post-incarceration, yet they obscure many of the experiences of Japanese Americans who returned to Southern California. Although this photograph was taken in 1954, almost a decade after Japanese Americans began to reestablish themselves on the West Coast, it can be misread as a representative image of resettlement that promulgates a narrative of success. Was this image illustrative of the

⁸ Little Tokyo Historical Society, *Los Angeles's Little Tokyo*, Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2010: 17.

postwar period? Or, do representations exist of those whose experiences did not develop in the way that Richard Kaku's and other more "successful" returnees did?

The post-incarceration or resettlement period was far more complex for Japanese Americans than the monolithic image they presented at the time and have continued to recall and share later in life.⁹ With the majority of the Nisei in their final years, a more nuanced explanation and investigation of the challenges that characterized resettlement and the reestablishment of the Japanese American community in Los Angeles is needed to fill a notable gap in the historical memory as well as the scholarship that spans from the end of the World War II incarceration to redress, which consisted of the federal government formal apology for its wartime actions.¹⁰ Further interrogation of this period

⁹ Mary Oyama, "A Nisei Report from Home," *Common Ground* (Winter 1946): 26-28. Oyama wrote this article for *Common Ground*, a quarterly magazine, published in the 1940s by the Common Council for American Unity, dedicated to exploring issues facing the nation's new immigrants and ethnic and racial minorities. *Common Ground* published numerous articles by and about Japanese Americans, many of which were about their wartime incarceration and subsequent resettlement. Oyama, a journalist and staunch supporter of assimilation in the aftermath of the traumatic experience of incarceration, wrote an article detailing her return and resettlement in Los Angeles. While Oyama describes several encounters of racial prejudice that she and her family experienced upon their return to Los Angeles, overall she depicts her family's transition into their life after camp as being smooth and without great challenge. Although Oyama (or an editorial note) at the end of the article acknowledges the prejudice and violence (in some cases) that Japanese Americans faced when they returned to the West Coast, it is noted that many have had a warm welcome as a result of the work of church organizations and fair play committees. Regardless of whether the details of this account were enhanced or not, readers of Oyama's account could have easily assumed that her experience was representative of all returnees to Los Angeles.

¹⁰ The scholarship on the Japanese American experience during World War II is rather extensive, although most of it has focused on the incarceration since the vast majority of this ethnic community's population was located on the West Coast prior to the war. In the first decade following the conclusion of the war, social scientists, historians, and officials who administered the camps produced reports to shed light on the wartime experience. Sociologists from the University of California, Berkeley produced a study known as the Japanese Evacuation Resettlement Study to examine the effect on internees from a detached position as scholars. See: Broom & Reiner, *Removal and Return* and Dorothy Thomas, *The Salvage*. Mine Okubo's book, *Citizen 13660* was one of the few accounts published in the immediate postwar period that expressed the lived experience of an incarcerated. The dearth of scholarship on Japanese American internment continued until the Asian American Civil Rights Movement in the late 1960s, when a number of accounts came out criticizing the federal government's wartime decisions and treatment of Japanese Americans. Although many of these accounts were third party perspectives, they tried to take evoke the experiences of incarcerated, unlike the earlier scholarship. Despite a few exceptions, very few former incarcerated wrote

will reveal the long-standing and deleterious consequences that resulted from the incarceration and its aftermath. The lack of understanding of these events, however, has invited great misinterpretation of the legacies of the incarceration.

Nearly seventy-five years after the last of America's concentration camps closed, this story should be relegated to a lesson in a history textbook. Instead, flippant talk of activating former detention sites to detain refugees, immigrants, and particular groups today, appear in contemporary news headlines. In 2015, Roanoke Mayor David Bowers suggested the incarceration of Japanese Americans as a historical precedent for what the country could do with Syrian refugees, as he stated: "I'm reminded that Franklin D. Roosevelt felt compelled to sequester Japanese foreign nationals after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and it appears that the threat of harm to America from [the Islamic State] now is just as real and serious a threat as that from our enemies then."¹¹ In a country where civil rights, due process, and equal justice under the law are integral to our shared

about their experiences in the first three decades of the postwar period. Scholars and community-based organizations began to document the stories of former incarcerated through oral history projects and monograph-length books in the 1970s. Simultaneously, a small group of former detainees began to share their stories and document their experiences in personal memoirs. In 1981, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians began an investigation into wartime incarceration and the need for redress. As part of the investigation, hundreds of former internees stepped forward to share their wartime experiences. Many of these former incarcerated had never shared their stories with anyone before. Despite the profusion of the scholarship on Japanese American incarceration, gaps remain in the scholarship around experiences that remained at the fringes of the Japanese American community—in particular the stories of draft resisters, no-no boys, renunciants, Issei bachelors, and others whose identities fell outside of what the Japanese American community deemed as part of the "normative."

¹¹ Amber Phillips, "Virginia Mayor Cites Japanese Internment (Favorably) in Making Case for Halting Syrian Refugees," *Washington Post*, 18 Nov 2015. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/11/18/the-mayor-of-roanoke-va-cited-japanese-internment-camps-favorably-in-make-case-for-halting-syrian-refugees-really/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.9f1a9cbeeda2, accessed 11 Jan 2019. Bowers later apologized for his statement, suggesting: "It's just not in my heart to be racist or bigoted. I apologize to all of those offended by my remarks." Yet, he did not retract his statement or seem to be able to discern that the federal government's actions in 1942 were wrong.

virtues as a nation, there should be no room for such antithetical thinking. Yet, the fact that a comment such as this was made recently reveals that we have not adequately underscored the racism that made way for the incarceration. It also points to the fact that we have not sufficiently studied the long-term consequences of the incarceration.

Although there were a variety of experiences, overcoming hardship was inherent to the process of resettlement, especially for those who returned to the West Coast soon after it reopened to Japanese Americans on January 2, 1945. Although the United States appeared to be winning the war in the Pacific, many Americans continued to associate Japanese Americans with the enemy and proliferate the same hostility that existed before the forced removal and incarceration. Additionally, the same discriminatory *dejure* and *defacto* practices in place before the war—namely the Alien Land Law, limitations on naturalization, and enforcement of housing restrictions remained deeply entrenched when returnees came back to California. Immediately upon return, how were Japanese Americans able to restart their lives, especially if they had liquidated their businesses and given up their rented homes before they were forcibly removed in 1942? Many depended on temporary shelter—whether through hostels or trailer installations provided by the federal government. Employment also was a critical concern upon return, particularly because a large percentage of Japanese Americans worked for others within the community before the war.

For these and other basic necessities, Japanese Americans turned to the War Relocation Authority, the same agency that oversaw the daily operations of the concentration camps. Dependence on the War Relocation Authority, however, was

precarious. The WRA's vision was shortsighted since policy was essentially being created as they went along. Additionally, though, it was also a temporary agency that would liquidate just a few months after the last of the concentration camps closed, rather than once the majority of returnees had become independent once again.

As a result, the resettlement period was a continuation of the incarceration during World War II, albeit without the barbed wire and surveillance of armed guards. The incarceration and subsequent "resettlement" process were part of a longer trajectory of a state-inflicted violence towards persons of Japanese ancestry rooted in the early twentieth century. The oppression that Japanese Americans endured through the slow violence of *dejure* and *defacto* discrimination before World War II accelerated when the United States declared war on Japan. It continued with the subsequent incarceration in America's concentration camps and lingered post-incarceration into the resettlement period as structural inequality continued to encumber social mobility for Japanese Americans before the war.¹² Throughout the resettlement period, the persistence of state-inflicted violence—while gradual and invisible—continued to obstruct the mobility of Japanese

¹² In a brochure entitled: "Uprooted Americans in Your Community," a publication of the War Relocation Authority, Dillon Myer suggested: The Army's decision to reopen the Pacific Coast, the Supreme Court's December 1944 definition of the status of evacuees, and the consistently splendid record of Nisei soldiers on every battlefield have provided their parents and families with legal and moral reasons for living wherever they want to and employing the freedom for which the United Nations are fighting."¹² Here, Myer implies that Japanese Americans had the right to freedoms that other Americans are entitled to. These freedoms that Myer alludes to are likely the Four Freedoms that President Roosevelt put forth. In January 1941, President Roosevelt addressed Congress in an effort to steer the country away from a foreign policy of neutrality. He suggested that all Americans as well as people from all the nations in the world were entitled to four freedoms: the freedom of speech and expression; the freedom to worship God in his own way; freedom from want and freedom from fear. This speech was significant because these four freedoms that he said Americans were entitled to (as well as people in all nations over the world) went beyond the freedoms included in the Constitution and claimed these new rights as American values. The rhetoric sounded race-neutral and progressive, yet it did not include Japanese Americans and other ethnic groups. The state violence that led to the incarceration and persisted afterwards, caused Japanese Americans to remain excluded from President Roosevelt's Four Freedoms.

and Japanese Americans as they navigated the constraints around obtaining permanent housing and mobility through employment.¹³ State violence or structural inequality can be broadly defined as the use of legitimate governmental authority to cause unnecessary harm and suffering to groups or individuals. State violence or structural inequality towards Japanese Americans came in the form of psychological trauma, persistent discriminatory practices, and material loss continued far into the resettlement process, leaving a long legacy that affected subsequent generations.

In addition to returning to a tense social and political climate on the West Coast, the discriminatory legislation that was in place prior to the war persisted. The California Alien Land Law, which restricted land ownership and tenure, remained in effect after the war. These discriminatory laws put limitations on where Japanese could live or obtain employment. Over the next few years, *dejure* discrimination became slowly rescinded, yet *defacto* discrimination remained firmly in place to limit the social mobility of Japanese Americans. As the United States transitioned rapidly from victory against fascism to a new war against communism, classifications of who were considered friends and foes shifted. Japanese and Japanese Americans, became considered a model for other ethnic minorities to strive towards.

¹³ Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and Environmentalism of the Poor*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2011:11. Rob Nixon coined the term “slow violence” to describe the environmental assault on the economic poor that has resulted from the ill-effects of neoliberalism in the twenty-first century. He builds off sociologist Johann Galtung’s theory on “indirect or structural violence,” which has been defined as “silent, it does not show—it is essentially static, it *is* the tranquil waters.” Galtung suggested structural violence “rethinks different notions of causation and agency with respect to violent effects.” Nixon expands on this idea by suggesting that slow violence encapsulates structural violence, “but has a wider descriptive range in calling attention, not simply to questions of agency, but to broader, more complex descriptive categories of violence enacted over slowly over time.”

This ideological pivot transitioned to a tolerance of cultural diversity as long as it did not disrupt the racial hierarchy already in place or the cohesion of the nation. In the desire to develop a unified national identity, the federal and state legislature began to pass legislation in the late 1940s and 1950s that appeared to repeal *dejure* discrimination laws towards Japanese and other ethnic minority groups. The 1952 McCarran-Walter Act extended naturalization to Issei, which had been withheld for over half a century. The Act also restored citizenship to Nisei who had renounced their citizenship during the war. Yet, while legislation was passed at the federal level to extend civil rights and end discriminatory legislation, little changed on a day-to-day basis since racial prejudice towards Japanese and Japanese Americans did not summarily end with the conclusion of WWII. Instead, racism was rampant and anti-Japanese feelings ran high. As a result, competition for jobs and housing, ongoing racial harassment and discrimination severely limited the upward mobility of Japanese Americans upon their return to Southern California.

In response to the *de facto* discrimination that they continued to face, members of the Japanese American community chose to advance a particular image that suggested they were highly Americanized and able to reestablish themselves following the realities of confinement during the war. The mindset of the returnees upon their return and reintegration into mainstream society intimates the psychological impact that resulted from the persistent state violence. The loss of dignity that former detainees felt from the incarceration caused them to suppress memories of their experiences and move on. The

shame they felt for being incarcerated as well as associated with the enemy caused many to feel that they needed to prove that they were 100% American.

Despite it being a pivotal moment in their lives, most former detainees remained silent about their experience for decades, especially in reference to the negative aspects of the incarceration. For many, the first time they spoke about their experience came decades later at public hearings before the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CRWIC).¹⁴ Many spoke of the shame, the lack of privacy, the emotional trauma of being separated from the patriarchs of their families or other relatives, and the material loss that they experienced. Perhaps the CRWIC hearings and the grass roots fight to obtain redress and reparations empowered former incarcerated to tell their story in order to pressure the federal government to right a wrong. The annual pilgrimages to some of the confinement sites, “Day of Remembrance” events marking the anniversary of Executive Order 9066, and the profuse scholarship on the incarceration that continues today has likely also encouraged former detainees to open up about their wartime experience. If nothing else, all of this work around the incarceration has given former incarcerated the template to insert their own details to craft their own narratives. With some minor variations, the incarceration experience was somewhat standard for all of the detainees.

Yet, once they left the confines of the barbed wire, experiences could have differed dramatically from one person or family to the next. Perhaps this explains why

¹⁴ The United States Congress appointed this commission to investigate the circumstances that led up to the forced removal and incarceration as well as the long-term impacts. Over 750 witnesses testified at hearings that were held in multiple cities across the country between July and December 1981.

there has not been as much dialog about post-incarceration experiences. The experiences varied immensely and former incarcerated do not have the framework to describe their experiences.

RESETTLEMENT IN LOS ANGELES

The federal government's objective, through the forced removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast, incarceration and the subsequent relocation or resettlement process, intended to disperse the Japanese American population. In 1940, Los Angeles was home to the largest concentration of Japanese Americans on the continental United States. Yet, Los Angeles once again became home to the largest population of Japanese Americans following the wartime incarceration. This was due in large part to the War Relocation Authority's ineffectual planning. As a result, the War Relocation Authority became implicit in re-concentrating Japanese Americans on the West Coast, following the incarceration. Los Angeles, in particular, became a likely destination for former incarcerated since this was home for many of them before the war. Some individuals and families chose to return to Los Angeles soon after they were allowed to return in early 1945. Others, who remained in the War Relocation Centers on the eve of their closure, returned to Los Angeles as a result of the WRA's policy to issue them return passage to their point of origin.

Los Angeles is the geographic focus of this study because since 1910, it has been home to more Japanese Americans than any other mainland city in the United States.¹⁵

¹⁵ Brian Niiya, ed. *Encyclopedia of Japanese American History: An A-to-Z Reference from 1868 to the Present*, New York, NY: Facts on File, Inc., 2001: 258. Prior to 1906, San Francisco likely had the largest

With nearly 21,000 Japanese Americans in the County of Los Angeles in 1940, the region was home to nearly 25% of the Japanese American population in California.¹⁶ California had the largest Japanese American population on the Continental United States. Post-incarceration, the Japanese American population in Los Angeles County nearly returned to its prewar numbers, albeit slowly at first. The WRA reported that of the 22,224 adults that applied for indefinite leave in 1945, 7047 indicated that they planned to return to Los

Japanese population in the United States. The 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire, however, caused the Japanese population to disperse. Some migrated to Japanese communities in the northwest, namely Seattle or Portland. Many, though, migrated to Los Angeles. By 1910, the area known as “Little Tokyo” in Los Angeles was becoming a burgeoning cluster of Japanese businesses and residences. Historically, Little Tokyo has been the central hub of the economic, social, and cultural life for the Japanese American community in Los Angeles. Although the Little Tokyo Historical Society identifies 1884 as the year in which the business district was founded, it remained a small cluster of homes and businesses near the intersection of First and San Pedro Streets until the 1920s. Between the 1920s and 1930s, Little Tokyo grew in physical size, with businesses extending out to Jackson and Third Streets. By 1930, the majority of the 35,000 Japanese Americans in Los Angeles were living within a three-mile radius of Little Tokyo. Little Tokyo’s offerings included: numerous professional services, restaurants, shops, entertainment venues, and religious institutions. Little Tokyo was the site for the annual Nisei Week Festival in August, which began in the 1930s, summer obon festivals, and other cultural events that brought the larger Japanese American community together. The forced removal of Japanese and Japanese Americans in 1942 caused Little Tokyo to become all but abandoned, which created an opportunity for African Americans who had migrated to Los Angeles in search of work in various sectors of the defense industry. For the duration of the war, Little Tokyo was known as Bronzeville, due to the influx of African Americans. Japanese who returned to Little Tokyo in 1945, encountered a neighborhood that differed from the one they left behind. While Little Tokyo continued to be the main hub of Japanese American social, economic, and cultural life, it was greatly reduced in physical size. Dispersal of the Japanese American population across Southern California caused a decrease in the number of businesses that were reestablished in Little Tokyo after the war. Portions of the neighborhood were identified as areas of blight, which resulted in considerable change from a substantial amount of urban renewal.

¹⁶ Wartime Administration Bulletin 8, 2 May 1942. Curiously, the *Los Angeles Times* published a story on September 8, 1945 that included: “It was authoritatively stated, the Southland, which once had 80% of the nation’s 136,000 Japanese population has been forsaken as “home” for internees released from relocation centers.” If this had been the case that would have meant that there had been 108,800 Japanese Americans in Southern California in the months leading up to the incarceration. This number seems incredibly high, even if Southern California undoubtedly had the largest Japanese American population on the continental United States. This figure remains higher than the statistic that there were 93,717 Japanese Americans in the entire state of California in 1940. This statistic for California was cited in two government publications, including the Wartime Civil Control Administration Bulletin 8, 1942 and the War Relocation Authority Semi-Annual Report, Jan. 1 – June 30, 1946.

Angeles.¹⁷ In January 1946, a year after the West Coast had reopened to Japanese Americans, WRA officials approximated that 15,700 individuals had returned, based on known family addresses. By March, that number had grown to 23,037, which exceeded the 1940 population figure.¹⁸ While these figures are estimates from the WRA, they remain useful in observing overall trends. The continuous spikes in the number of former detainees who returned to Southern California in the early months of 1946 correlate to the timing of the closure of the War Relocation Centers by the federal agency's deadline of January 2, 1946 as well as the WRA's decision to return remaining detainees to their point of origin.¹⁹

Given the sizeable Japanese American population in Los Angeles, it's curious why there has not been a more definitive study on resettlement in the region. This dissertation intends to contribute to this effort by documenting the social history of the resettlement process in Los Angeles, California, in its early stages from 1945-1955. I will

¹⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, 8 Sept 1945. The article suggests that these figures came from the WRA's analysis of indefinite leave applications, which would have likely only accounted for adults over 18. This is not an accurate figure to determine how many former detainees actually returned to Los Angeles County for a variety of reasons. For one, it reflects individual adults who applied for indefinite leave and did not include their family members or dependents. Additionally, these individuals may have returned to Los Angeles County or any of the other counties that comprise Southern California. Moreover, since individuals' plans could have changed between the time that they submitted their application for indefinite leave and when they actually departed, it's not clear that all who claimed to return to Southern California did. Nonetheless, it's a figure to use as a baseline for comparison to the number of former detainees who returned to Southern California the following year after the closure of almost all of the War Relocation Centers.

¹⁸ "Estimates of Major Concentrations of American Japanese in Los Angeles County." Data compiled from WRA records. This is not likely an exhaustive number reported by officials at the County of Los Angeles. Instead, numbers are based on known family address of returnees (found in the C. Bratt Collection, Southern CA Library)

¹⁹ January 2, 1946 was the deadline for closure of all of the War Relocation Centers, with the exception of Tule Lake. Amache in Colorado closed on October 15, 1945. Topaz in Utah and Minidoka in Idaho closed on November 1. Heart Mountain in Wyoming and Gila River in Arizona closed on November 15. Manzanar in California and Poston in Arizona closed on December 1. Rohwer in Arkansas closed on December 15, in advance of the impending deadline set by the WRA. Tule Lake in California, which had a different timetable, closed on February 1, 1946.

examine experiences that bookend myriad ways that Japanese Americans experienced resettlement in Los Angeles. As part of the process, I will examine the particular ways in which Japanese Americans constructed narratives about themselves and their experiences, beginning in the early postwar period.

One of the goals of this dissertation is not merely to “recover” this history, but rather to interpret the materials that document the complexity of the Japanese American experience in the initial years of resettlement. My interest in exploring oppositional narratives of the Japanese American experience will hopefully add complexity to our understanding of the community by challenging the “model minority” stereotype, drawing attention to the immediate and long-lasting impacts of incarceration during World War II, and interrogating the contours of exclusion and structures of power in postwar Los Angeles.

The narrative of “success,” which was the most pervasive, was a representation that Japanese Americans upheld and the WRA and other outsiders promulgated, thus creating a monolithic image of what the postwar incarceration period entailed. Since this certainly was not the full story, being able to unfold a more nuanced social history of postwar resettlement and juxtapose this with the ways in which public memory and historical narratives of Japanese Americans in Los Angeles have been crafted is important to being able to see beyond the frame of the representational image of success that has perpetuated the model minority myth.

I will reconstruct the varying experiences of Japanese Americans who returned to Los Angeles when the West Coast reopened to persons of Japanese ancestry in 1945,

examining the challenges that many experienced in contending with the hostile social climate in Los Angeles, navigating the *dejure* discrimination that continued from before the war, obtaining housing at a time when the national housing shortage was at its peak, and securing public assistance.

In addition to Los Angeles being important to study because of its sizeable Japanese American population, it is important to study because of who returned. For this reason, resettlement in Los Angeles is different than an early resettlement city like Chicago. Of course those who returned to Los Angeles comprised a wide range of experiences. Yet, a significant number who returned to Los Angeles were in a state of despair without anything to return to. On the eve of the closure of the camps, the remaining detainees were expected to instantly become independent, despite being without the resources they needed for housing and employment. Resettlers to Chicago, for example, were mostly Nisei who had resettled early due to an offer of employment or acceptance to a college or university.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

Japanese American internment is perhaps the most well studied topic related to Asian Pacific Islander American history. Yet, while scholars have well documented the wartime experience of Japanese and Japanese Americans, the resettlement period following incarceration during World War II remains remarkably understudied.

Acknowledgment of the challenges that characterized the early years of resettlement following World War II is often glossed over, which has done a disservice to our understanding of Japanese American history since it has overlooked the deleterious and

long-lasting impact of forced incarceration. Instead, the resilience of Japanese Americans, their determination to reestablish themselves after the war, and their success has come to represent the Japanese American community after the war. The Japanese American community crafted this image, portraying itself as a unified group that privileged American values of family, patriotism, and hard work. This image is misleading, however, since it excludes the intra-ethnic and generational conflicts, varying levels of success, and diverse experiences amongst Japanese Americans. Scholars have not promulgated this image. Instead, most scholars of Japanese American history have largely focused their research on other aspects of the Japanese American experience, documenting immigration in the early twentieth century, the wartime incarceration, the civil rights movement, or redress. The relative dearth of scholarship on the resettlement period is surprising given the voluminous literature on the experience of Japanese Americans during World War II. The noticeable silence on resettlement is almost as if to say that the closure of the concentration camps signified an end to the intense racial discrimination that characterized the Japanese American experience in the first half of the twentieth century. This, of course is far from the truth.

In the preface to the Japanese American National Museum's *Regenerations* oral history project, Arthur A. Hansen suggests that while "relocation" and "redress" have been addressed by scholars, "substantial treatment of an intervening historical phenomenon designated by another "r" word" is missing. According to Hansen, the missing "r" word is [post incarceration] resettlement. He goes on to say that with a few notable exceptions, the resettlement experience has been "relegated to the margins of

scholarly literature and popular memory, not only outside, but also within Japanese America.”²⁰ He points to three M.A. studies done at UCLA by Kariann Akemi Yokota, “From Little Tokyo to Bronzeville and Back: Ethnic Communities in Transition” (1996); Leslie A. Ito, “Japanese American Women and the Student Relocation Movement, 1942-1945” (1998); and James V. Gatewood, “A Mission in Our Midst: Religion, Resettlement, and Community Building Among Japanese Americans of the West Los Angeles Community Methodist Church, 1930-1965” (2000) as projects that were beginning to tackle the resettlement period. He also acknowledges Tetsuden Kashima’s 1980 article, which focuses on “readjustment and social amnesia” in the first decade after the war, as a foundational study. Since Hansen underscored the need for scholarship on the resettlement period, several scholars, including: Greg Robinson, Lane Hirabayashi, Valerie Matsumoto, Brian Komei Dempster, Scott Kurashige, Lon Kurashige, Kevin Leonard, Charlotte Brooks, and Alison Varzally, and have begun to make significant interventions within the historiography of Japanese American history by producing important scholarship on Japanese American postwar communities.²¹

Although Greg Robinson is considered to be one of the foremost scholars on resettlement, he acknowledges in the introduction of his 2012 book, *After Camp:*

Portraits in Midcentury American Life and Politics, that there is no definitive monograph

²⁰ Hansen, Arthur A. “Resettlement: A Neglected Link in Japanese America’s Narrative Chain,” preface to *Regenerations Oral History Project: Rebuilding Japanese American Families, Communities, and Civil Rights in the Resettlement Era*, Volume I, *Chicago Region*, Los Angeles: Japanese American National Museum, 2000.

²¹ The effects of internment and the adjustments during the resettlement period were the subject of significant sociological and psychological studies in the postwar period. See: Harry H.L. Kitano, *Japanese Americans: The Evolution of a Subculture*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969; Dorothy Swaine Thomas with Charles Kikuchi and James Sakoda, *The Salvage*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952.

on resettlement and that the topic remains unexplored. In *After Camp*, Robinson presents several case studies or “portraits” on resettlement, which according to Robinson, is a “broad-based investigation of a complex and largely uncovered subject, designed to provide an opening for further inquiry and extended discussion.”²²

Making Home From War, edited by Brian Komei Dempster, comprises a collection of twelve narratives that Nisei wrote after reflecting on their experiences in the post-war period through a series of writing workshops that the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California sponsored. Similarly, the Japanese American Historical Society of Southern California compiled a volume of short memoirs of Japanese Americans, entitled: *Resettlement Years 1945-1955*, which document a variety of experiences of those who returned to Southern California in the postwar period.

In *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Model Minority*, Ellen Wu devotes a chapter to “Nisei in Uniform,” to discuss how the Japanese American Citizens League and the War Relocation Authority promoted racial liberalism, using the Nisei soldier and his willingness to answer the call to arms to prove that Japanese Americans were capable of assimilation and national belonging during World War II.²³ Wu intimates, however, that a large percentage of the detainees maintained great opposition to the JACL’s position to encourage Nisei men to volunteer for military service, revealing a major intra-ethnic tension within the community.

²² Greg Robinson, *After Camp: Portraits in Midcentury Japanese American Life and Politics*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012: 2.

²³ Ellen Wu, *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Model Minority*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014: 80-81.

Charlotte Brooks examines the *dejure* and *defacto* housing restrictions in Southern California that Japanese and other Asian Americans were forced to navigate in the early to mid-twentieth century. She ultimately suggests that Asian American suburbanization was the ultimate marker of “making it” in the United States. While Brooks’ research is invaluable in understanding the obstacles that Japanese immigrants and their American-born children faced in securing housing in an area of the country that became synonymous with the single family suburban home, the work focuses on a particular sector of the Japanese American community that was in a higher socioeconomic position to be able to contemplate the purchase of property.

Collectively, Robinson, Dempster, Wu, and Brooks’s scholarly work has been incredibly important to chronicling the postwar experience. Yet, these works largely focus on the middle-class Nisei experience, which generally follows a narrative of success relative ease due to their age at the time, the military record of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, and their rights as American citizens. They make the argument that Japanese Americans experience a degree of socio-economic mobility and integration after World War II, in part, to Cold War politics and the dismantling of formal anti-Asian exclusionary laws. Yet, since solely focus on a certain sector of the population, Nisei, they are unable to account for the diversity of experiences within the community that resulted from a variety of factors.

In *Japanese American Resettlement Through the Lens*, Lane Ryo Hirabayashi explores a different side of the incarceration and resettlement period through the inclusion of photographs taken by the federal government between 1943-1945. The

photographer, Hikaru Iwasaki, was a Japanese American who endured incarceration and was subsequently employed by the WRA to photo document resettlement. Hirabayashi describes the WRA images as being “an invaluable resource for understanding the struggles that Japanese Americans faced during the 1940s,” despite also acknowledging their limitations as the product of the federal government. Hirabayashi’s two objectives for the book is to understand the WRA’s primary aim for the photographs as well as to analyze the body of work that Iwasaki and the War Relocation Authority’s Photographic Section produced. *Resettlement Through the Lens* provides an interesting contrast to the personal memoirs of former internees in Dempster’s *Making Home From War* and *Nanka Nikkei Voices: Resettlement Years*, a collection of interviews, self-published by the now defunct Japanese American Historical Society of Southern California.

In the final chapter of *City Girls: The Nisei Social World in Los Angeles, 1920-1950*, historian Valerie Matsumoto focuses on the role of Nisei women in reestablishing the community in the early postwar period. Through a discussion of housing, occupations, social clubs, marriage and family life, Matsumoto argues that women “played dynamic roles in regenerating Japanese American families and communities, as well as advancing new economic, social, and political arenas.”²⁴

Historian Scott Kurashige sheds light on the experience of Japanese Americans during the postwar period through a comparison with the African American population to show how the shifting grounds of race, to borrow from the title of his book, played into the social and political struggles that characterized twentieth century Los Angeles.

²⁴ Valerie Matsumoto, *City Girls: The Nisei Social World in Los Angeles, 1920-1950*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014: 222.

Kurashige argues that civic officials pitted Japanese Americans against African Americans during the postwar period, reinforcing the model minority stereotype.²⁵

Hillary Jenks and Kariann Yokota focused their graduate research specifically on Little Tokyo and Bronzeville. Jenks's dissertation, entitled: "Little Tokyo is in the Heart," explores the shifting identity of Little Tokyo from the late nineteenth century through the present. Although she touches briefly on the immediate postwar period, her study focuses mostly on the redevelopment of Little Tokyo through the investment of the Community Redevelopment Agency and transnational business interests from Japan.

Yokota's master's thesis, "From Little Tokyo to Bronzeville and Back: Ethnic Communities in Transition" has perhaps been the most comprehensive treatment on the early post-incarceration period in Los Angeles, although it centered solely on one neighborhood, following the transition from Bronzeville back to Little Tokyo. Yokota suggested that the "resettlement phase should be acknowledged as an extension of the internment process" given the trauma of the incarceration and the difficulties of the post-incarceration resettlement.²⁶ Although Yokota chose not to expand on this topic in subsequent scholarly work, her master's thesis is often referenced.

Janice Tanaka's 1999 documentary film, *When You're Smiling*, remains one of the most comprehensive explorations into effects of the incarceration and the subsequent

²⁵ Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010. Other Los Angeles historians touch on the experience of Japanese Americans in the early postwar period. Kevin Leonard touches on the resettlement of Japanese Americans in Los Angeles in his dissertation and his subsequent manuscript, *Battle for Los Angeles* in the context of the multicultural milieu of Los Angeles in the postwar period.

²⁶ Kariann Yokota, "From Little Tokyo to Bronzeville and Back: Ethnic Communities in Transition," (master's thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1996): 5-6.

resettlement period in Los Angeles. Tanaka approaches the topics through her own family's experience in returning to Los Angeles after the war and the effects it had on her and her sister. She expands the story by looking at the long term psychological effects that impacted *sansei* growing up in the 1960s and 1970s. The pressure that Nisei parents put on their children to perform and live up to the model minority ideal caused great psychological stress and feelings of inadequacy that led to depression, delinquency, and drugs.

Yokota and Tanaka's work has influenced my own, some twenty years later. While Yokota recognized the extension of the incarceration, I take this argument further by suggesting that the long history of state violence towards Japanese Americans that began almost immediately after immigration began, continued through the incarceration and persisted beyond the physical confinement. I wish I had seen Tanaka's film at the beginning of my research rather than towards the end, since it could have helped direct my research. The content of Tanaka's film provides a good introduction to the topic of resettlement in Los Angeles.²⁷

These works, as well as the recognition that the topic of resettlement has not been sufficiently explored has prompted more recent scholarship on the topic. In 2018, Naomi

²⁷ Similarly, there are efforts in Chicago to capture the resettlement story there. Filmmaker Jason Matsumoto is currently working on producing a documentary film on resettlement in Chicago as part of a Japanese American Confinement Sites grant. Several of Matsumoto's colleagues in Chicago are also working on documenting early resettlement there. Lisa Doi's University of Chicago master's thesis compares Japanese American residential patterns in the early/mid-1940s to those in the following decades. The Japanese American Service Committee in Chicago also recently curated an exhibition on the incarceration and subsequent resettlement period at a gallery in the city. In September 2018, all of these projects were showcased at a recent "Resettlement Workshop," hosted by the University of Southern California Shinso Ito Center for Japanese Religions and Culture.

Hirahara and Heather Lindquist published *Life After Manzanar*, a book that chronicles the experiences of fifty individuals in their attempts to reestablish themselves in places like New Jersey, Chicago, Bainbridge Island, WA, and Los Angeles, following their departure from Manzanar.²⁸ Hirahara and Lindquist wondered how they might tell a comprehensive narrative about resettlement through personal stories. They wanted to convey a variety of experience and reflect different decisions that people made and the various paths that they took. Resistance of the former incarcerated in their efforts to reintegrate into mainstream society is one of the main themes of the book. The research required to produce the number of historical photographs that they include in the book was tremendous. The photographs are just as effective as the text they include to convey the personal narratives of each individual.

While numerous former detainees have written memoirs, detailing their lives before the war as well as during the incarceration, most do not discuss their resettlement experience at length.²⁹ There are a few memoirs and other accounts, however, that poignantly detail the challenges returnees faced as they attempted to reestablish

²⁸ Naomi Hirahara and Heather Lindquist, *Life After Manzanar*, Berkeley, CA: Heyday, 2018.

²⁹ Kiyoko Sato, *Kiyoko's Story: a Japanese-American family's quest for the American Dream*, New York: Soho Press, 2009 and Mary Matsuda Gruenewald, *Looking Like the Enemy: My Story of Imprisonment in Japanese-American Internment Camps*, Troutdale, OR: NewSage Press, 2010 are memoirs by two former incarcerated. The amount of detail with which Kiyoko describes her life before WWII is rather incredible. Similarly, Mary Matsuda Gruenewald describes her life before the war in great detail. Both women acknowledge the hardships they, along with their families, endured post-incarceration. Matsuda Gruenewald underscored the fact that she and her brother had been separated from their parents for two and a half years during and after the war. While this was a common situation amongst families, calling attention to this facet of resettlement and legacy of the incarceration is important to understand the hardship that it caused. Given the relatively brief overview that they both give in comparison to their treatment of the prewar period makes it seem as though they are not being completely candid about their postwar experiences. Perhaps the experience was too painful for them to talk about or maybe it is more that the intention of these Nisei memoirs was to describe the incarceration experience. Either way, they make important contributions.

themselves in Los Angeles. Hank Umemoto's memoir entitled: *Manzanar to Mount Whitney: The Life and Times of a Lost Hiker*, interweaves his experience at Manzanar and the post-incarceration with the hiking experiences that he had later in life.³⁰ Throughout his memoir, he interweaves his life story with his hiking experiences, likening his detention at Manzanar to his later hiking experiences, recalling: "I was sixteen in Manzanar, adrift and confused, like a lost hiker in a whiteout." Along with chronicling his life before World War II as well as his experiences in Manzanar, Umemoto vividly describes the difficulties and challenges that came along with restarting life in Los Angeles in the postwar period. He recounts how he and his mother stayed in a hotel in Los Angeles's skid row on a tip from a former neighbor in Manzanar. Neither Hank or his mother had been to Los Angeles prior, but with little to return to in their prewar home of Florin, CA, they chose to start over in a new location. Umemoto is candid about how hard it was to do this. With no other family and few friends to depend on, Hank took on several jobs to pay rent for the low-cost motel that he and his mother shared. Custodial work at a downtown theater was one of his first jobs before he made enough to buy the truck and necessary tools to pickup a few gardening jobs.

Although Gene Oishi's family did not resettle in Los Angeles for very long, his memoir *Finding Hiroshi*, is significant as he describes the challenges that he and his aging Issei parents endured while working side-by-side as field laborers upon returning to

³⁰ Hank Umemoto, *Manzanar to Mount Whitney: The Life and Times of a Lost Hiker*, Berkeley, CA: Heyday Press, 2013: 108. Umemoto was a teenager when his family was forcibly removed from their farm in Florin, CA and sent to Manzanar. While he was incarcerated there, Umemoto became intrigued with Mt. Whitney, which symbolized freedom outside of the barbed wire fences. He knew he wanted to climb Mt. Whitney at some point in his life. Umemoto faced his challenge of climbing Mt. Whitney when he was in his 70s.

Guadalupe, CA. Perhaps more interesting, though, is the way in which he identifies the severe psychological impact that the incarceration had on him. When a friend asked him what conditions were like in camp, Oishi told him “the authorities would strip us naked, tie us spread-eagled to stakes in the desert and pour honey over us so that ants would come and eat us alive.” Several years later as an adult, Oishi realized that this imaginative description wasn’t actually very far off, noting: “I was eaten alive in the desert, not by ants, but by doubts—doubts about myself, doubts about my parents, doubts about being Japanese, and doubts about being American. I was assailed by notions that there was something wrong with me, or with my parents, or with Japanese generally.”³¹ Oishi described the changes that he saw in his father, following his separation and interment in one of the Department of Justice camps. He acknowledged the loss of respect that he had for the patriarch of the family. Oishi recalled that he would always cringe when his father would show photographs of his sons taken at Camp Shelby, Mississippi to clerks at the bank, post office, or a white-owned business, noting: “My boys fight in American Army.”³² Oishi noted that this performance seemed disingenuous because Mr. Oishi would have been opposed to Nisei fighting in the US Army. While the younger Oishi saw his father’s behavior as hypocritical, the senior Oishi used this as a survival strategy in a potentially hostile social environment upon return home post-incarceration.

The psychological impact of self-doubt and self-hatred that many former incarcerated internalized, as evident from Oishi’s memoir, is another consequence of the

³¹ Gene Oishi, *In Search of Hiroshi*, Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Company, Inc, 1988: 10. In chapter 9, Oishi describes his family’s post-camp experience when they first returned to Guadalupe, CA by way of Long Beach, CA.

³² *Ibid*, 83-84.

systematic inequality that continued to characterize the post-incarceration period and shape the experience of Japanese Americans.

Resettlement experiences are additionally captured in art and literature. Issei gardeners captured their post-incarceration experience, in the decades that followed, through *senryu* poetry published in the Southern California Gardeners' Federation newsletter. While *senryu* poetry, like haiku, is a form of Japanese poetry that follows a format of three lines with five, seven, and five syllables, respectively, the subject matter often captures more of life's irony or humor. Perhaps the brevity helps to crystalize the irony of each Issei man's situation, as the following poems demonstrate:

*I yearned to come to America,
But now I am just a gardener*³³

*Upon turning 60,
I had to start all over
As a dishwasher*³⁴

In the first *senryu*, the poet expresses disappointment in his current situation, representing a significant shift from his initial positive outlook on what his life could be like in America. He hints at the shame he feels in being “just a gardener,” putting judgment on what this occupation means to him. In the second *senryu*, the author

³³ Sanyaku Seki, *Gardeners' Pioneer Story as Preserved in Senryu Poems*, Southern California Gardeners' Federation, 2007: 19. One of hundreds of *Senryu* poems that Japanese gardeners from Southern California wrote and published in the Southern California Gardeners Association's monthly newsletter. *Senryu* poems, like haiku, are comprised of a seventeen syllable structure, grouped in three lines that follow a 5-7-5 syllable format. While haiku poems are usually about nature, *Senryu* poems encapsulate the human condition more generally, incorporating a satirical, ironic or humorous tone. Sanyaku Seki, a poet, artist, and photographer translated the poems from Japanese to English, not always keeping to the seventeen syllable count for the English translation.

³⁴ *Ibid.* An Issei man wrote this *Senryu* poem as he attempted to restart his life. Sanyaku Seki translated the poem into English.

captures the irony of having to reestablish himself, taking on menial work to make a living, at a time when many individuals were retiring from their professions. Despite being comprised of a relatively few number of words, these *senryu* poems convey so much content “in between the lines” about the thoughts and emotions that ordinary Issei men had as they reflected on their situations post-incarceration. In just a few words, the poets convey frustration over the ways in which the obstacles they have faced since arriving in the United States, especially the wartime incarceration, have had deleterious effects on their livelihoods. For many Issei men, their hopes of what opportunities lay ahead in a new country were dashed as a result of the many setbacks and obstacles that limited their occupational options. The war extended that upheaval.

In *Lone Heart Mountain*, a book of sketches by artist Estelle Ishigo, a Caucasian woman who voluntarily accompanied her Japanese American husband Arthur to Heart Mountain, she captured scenes from daily life during their detention and resettlement. She provided a rare glimpse into daily life in the temporary trailer installation in Burbank, CA where she and Arthur lived upon their return. She captured the residents at the trailer installation, focusing mainly on the young children who resided there since their parents faced adversity in securing housing or employment upon return to Southern California. The frantic strokes that form the outlines of the individuals and the backdrop evoke the stress, frustration, and interruption that characterized life in the concentration camps and continued in the trailer installations that became the next stop for some indigent returnees that needed more than a short-term hostel stay.

Playwright Wakako Yamauchi, like her friend and contemporary Hisaye Yamamoto addressed themes of gender and racial discrimination, intergenerational tension, the trauma of the incarceration, resettlement and assimilation in her literary works. While fictional, John Okada's novel *No-No Boy* delves into the challenges of resettlement for Japanese Americans on the West Coast and reintegration into civilian life for military veterans, but it also unpacks the tension and divide that existed within the Japanese American community over military service in the segregated 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

The limited scholarship on this critical time period, particularly on the impact of the incarceration and its aftermath on Japanese Americans who returned to Los Angeles, has translated to an assumption that resettlement entailed a relatively easy transition back into society. Often narratives of resettlement suggest almost immediate success for Japanese Americans and gloss over the long-term impacts of incarceration and the long trajectory of racial discrimination. Given these gaps in the historiography, my dissertation contributes to the existing scholarship on the Japanese American experience during the latter half of the twentieth century by broadening the focus on a much larger swath of the Japanese American community beyond the middle class Nisei who were able to achieve remarkable levels of success in the postwar period. Additionally, my dissertation will add to discussions related to the origins of the model minority and the contours of exclusion and racial politics in postwar Los Angeles that perpetuated inequality and segregation through systematic racism.

Glossing over the resettlement period in both memoirs and in scholarly works on the incarceration has allowed for the idea of the model minority to become synonymous with Japanese Americans following the incarceration. The Japanese American community responded to systematic racism deeply entrenched in mainstream society by outwardly choosing to prove that they were 100% American. This attitude coupled with the United States Government's suggestion that the project of "evacuation and relocation" was a complete success made it seem as though this community was the "model minority." Yet, further examination of the immediate post-incarceration period reveals a much different narrative.

Several scholars have theorized these forces at play involving different groups of historically marginalized groups at various moments in time. Erika Lee explores how systematic racism has been entrenched throughout the Asian American experience in *The Making of Asian America*. Lee tells the long history of the categorization of Asians as "the other," a label that continues today. While Asians are still regarded as foreign and subjected to institutional racism, they are typecasted as the model minority. Karen Mahajan, who reviewed Lee's book in the *New Yorker*, suggests that this so-called privilege as the model minority causes Asian Americans to be more reluctant to call-out racist acts. As a result, Mahajan suggests, "much of the history of Asians in America, a history that now spans nearly half a millennium, has been forgotten."³⁵ Lee's book and Mahajan's comments encapsulate some of the main points that I would like to address about the resettlement period. The systematic racism that put restrictions on Japanese

³⁵ Karen Mahajan, "The Two Asian Americas," *The New Yorker* 21 Oct 2015, accessed 22 Oct 2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-two-asian-americas>

immigration, excluded Japanese immigrants from becoming naturalized citizens for decades, limited Japanese nationals from owning land, and forcibly removed them from the West Coast during WWII did not end with the conclusion of the war.

The resettlement process was an extension or at least a consequence of wartime incarceration. Systematic racism pervaded the experience of Japanese Americans as they attempted to reestablish themselves in the postwar period. A further examination of this period will reveal that the struggle and hardship that Japanese faced troubles the “minority myth” stereotype, which has done a disservice to the way we understand American history and more specifically the Japanese American experience. It will show that the dominant narrative of “success” of the Japanese American community was not the experience of all, exposing the heterogeneity of the Japanese American community.

Finally, exploring several themes inherent to resettlement will establish a sense of how the forced removal of Japanese Americans in 1942 and subsequent resettlement following WWII altered the contours of the urban landscape in Los Angeles. This study will complicate the postwar narrative of Los Angeles, suggesting that prosperity for the nuclear family living in a newly built tract home in the suburbs, was not a reality for all. Research on this topic also has the potential to shed light on Los Angeles history, by expanding upon themes that Bill Deverell, Scott Kurashige, Kevin Leonard, Mike Davis, and Josh Sides address in their works on the making of a fragmented metropolis. Further examination into resettlement can contribute to dispelling the myth of Los Angeles as the “Land of Sunshine,” and the epicenter of the “California Dream,” where the opportunity for social mobility and suburban home ownership were seemingly equal to all. Japanese

returning or relocating to the West Coast were essentially excluded from the post-war economic boom and forced to rebuild their communities and remake their lives.

TIME PERIOD

Although “resettlement period,” “postwar” or “post-incarceration” are ubiquitous and used interchangeably throughout the following pages, they do carry different meanings in terms of periodization. The year 1942 is technically the beginning of the resettlement period for those who were able to either relocate outside of the Western Exclusionary Zone or obtain clearance to leave the detention centers early. This study will consider 1943 as the beginning of early resettlement since this is the first full year when former incarcerated began to apply for indefinite leave from the concentration camps in significant numbers. The first chapter of this study looks at early resettlement in the Midwestern and eastern portions of the country to provide context for resettlement in Los Angeles. January 2, 1945 is the start of resettlement since this is when most Japanese returned or came to the West Coast after staying temporarily in a location further inland.

Additionally, there is no definitive end date to the resettlement period. Some scholars have defined resettlement as the first ten years after the concentration camps closed in 1945. Others have defined resettlement as a much longer period that ends with the conclusion of the redress movement in 1988. Arguably, 1988 could be determined as the concluding year of the resettlement period with the advancement of a formal apology from the federal government in the form of redress and reparations that brought some symbolic closure to the incarceration. Others might suggest that the repercussions of the

incarceration and resettlement remain through evidence of intergenerational trauma that the children and grandchildren of the incarceration continue to experience today.

Although my initial impetus was to study resettlement from 1945 to 1965 with the passage of the Hart-Cellar Act or the rise of the Asian American movement in the late 1960s, this felt far too ambitious once I began to do research. The inordinate amount of historical documentation that exists to cover the first few years of “resettlement” in Los Angeles is fascinating. The first seven years, bookended by the closure of the concentration camps and the year when the McCarran Walters Act passed and Issei became eligible for citizenship, was of great interest to me. During this seven-year period, the continuing challenges of *de facto* and *de jure* discrimination are apparent, the failures of the federal government to provide adequate support in helping former incarcerated to reintegrate back into society, the attempts of the community to reestablish itself, and the struggle to overcome the continuing state violence are all evident. For this reason, I chose to focus this study on the intervening years between 1943 and 1955. For Los Angeles, specifically, though, the focus is from 1945 to 1955.

METHODOLOGY

To better understand the intricacies of the postwar period and the varied ways that Japanese Americans experienced resettlement, this project sifts through the layers of memory, contends with the erasure, and translates the silences that have shaped former incarcerated’ narratives of their return to Los Angeles and thus formed our understanding of resettlement.

In each chapter I expand on a particular theme—early resettlement in the Midwest or East Coast, social climate in Los Angeles, housing, and public assistance—to foreground the complexities and challenges inherent to the ways in which Japanese Americans navigated resettlement. Two of the chapters—“housing” and “public assistance” are lenses into documenting various facets of the social history of resettlement that challenged the “normative.” In order to do this, I intended to utilize a range of sources that gave just as much weight to the accounts of former incarcerated as the records that the federal government kept. I quickly learned, though, that achieving this would be the biggest challenge of this project.

Since the United States Federal Government orchestrated the forced removal and exclusion of over 110,000 persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast during World War II, along with the subsequent incarceration, there are copious amounts of data chronicling each phase of the project. Frankly there is more information representing the federal government’s actions than those of the former incarcerated. I spent far more time combing through the federal government’s records within the holdings at the National Archives than I did trying to locate historical material from former incarcerated. For the most part, the bureaucratic reports, inter and intra-department memorandums, and quantitative analysis that comprise the bulk of the War Relocation Authority and Civil Defense Command’s documentation at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., provides an overview of the process from a 10,000 foot view. The discussions of the incarcerated are mainly generic in scope, referring to them in numbers rather than as

individuals. Incarcerees are often not referred to individually by name. In the rare case that individuals are mentioned, very few details are given in these broad-sweeping reports.

In 2016, I spent several months conducting research at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History and the National Archives in Washington D.C. Despite being very targeted with my research by looking specifically at documentation related to the War Relocation Authority's Los Angeles Field Office, which was in operation for approximately one year, the information was voluminous. Often times, it was difficult to begin to make sense of all of the information that this bureaucratic agency produced and the impact that resettlement had on a personal level.

One day, I paused my research into the WRA Los Angeles Field Office records to peruse the individual evacuee case file of Reverend Minoru Francis Hayashi, my paternal grandfather.³⁶ I knew that each adult incarceree had a file. Minors were typically included in their mother's case file. Researchers or family members interested in viewing the case files must be able to provide proof that a former incarceree is deceased. If a former detainee is still living, a notarized note giving permission is required. Although I provided the dates of death for both of my paternal grandparents, my grandmother Misao Matsuyama Hayashi's case file contained information about two minors—my uncle and father, who were six and two, respectively when their family was uprooted from Portland, Oregon in 1942. Although I indicated that my uncle had passed away and my father would certainly give me permission to see information about him when he was a minor, an archivist at the National Archives indicated that I would have to provide notarized

³⁶ "Individual Evacuee Case File for Reverend Francis Minoru Hayashi, Family Number 15326," National Archives Record Group 210.

permission. With the understanding that I would have to save research into my grandmother's evacuee case file for another research trip, I proceeded to peruse my grandfather's case file.

I did not know what I would expect to find in Francis Minoru Hayashi's case file. Would there be documentation revealing that the FBI had been keeping him under surveillance around the time of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor? It was entirely plausible given that Hayashi was Issei and a leader of the Japanese American community in Portland, Oregon. Yet, the FBI did not pick him up in their round-ups, separate him from his family, or incarcerate him in a Department of Justice camp like they did with other Issei leaders. While he had influence in the local Japanese American community, his occupation as a protestant minister of the Japanese Methodist Church in Portland must have exempted him from the FBI's round-ups. He was named a block manager in Minidoka for the short time that he and his family was incarcerated there. In June 1943, the Hayashi family received indefinite leave clearance from the Minidoka War Relocation Center, after being there for less than a year. Hayashi had secured a job to teach Japanese to U.S. soldiers at the University of Minnesota.

Given his relatively short detention in a War Relocation Authority Center, why was his individual evacuee case file so thick? The first few pages of the file comprised my grandfather's application for indefinite leave from the Minidoka War Relocation Center, which captured basic information about his life in an attempt to assess his loyalty to the United States. Incarcerates seeking indefinite leave from the War Relocation Centers were required to list their previous residential addresses, prior employment,

hobbies, the types of magazines and newspapers they subscribed to, the organizations they supported through membership or monetary donations, and the names of individuals outside of the Centers who could attest to their character. Additionally, individuals applying for leave were required to list details of their plans following their departure from the War Relocation Centers, including employment and address of their next residence.³⁷

A series of correspondence between my grandfather and WRA staff followed his application for indefinite leave clearance, revealing an aspect of his resettlement experience that I had not expected to come across. In 1943, Rev. Hayashi secured a position at the University of Minneapolis to teach Japanese to American soldiers, which allowed him and his family to leave the Minidoka War Relocation Center by the end of June. Misao's younger brother George Matsuyama, was working towards a doctorate in chemistry at the University of Minneapolis. He was able to provide housing for his older sister and her family, five other siblings and their parents in the house that he rented in Minneapolis.

Once in Minneapolis, Rev. and Mrs. Hayashi sent for their belongings, which were held at a government storage facility in Portland. Prior to their sudden departure, the Hayashis stored the belongings they had to leave behind in a room on the second floor at the Portland Japanese Methodist Church. During their absence, the family's belongings

³⁷ Later, the questionnaire also included the infamous "loyalty questions" also known as "Questions 27 and 28." Question 27 asked if the individual would be willing to sever ties and loyalties to Japan, including allegiance to the Japanese emperor. Question 28 asked if the individual would be willing to serve in the armed forces for the United States.

were transferred to a government storage facility in the city. Although most of the family's belongings arrived safely to their residence in Minneapolis, Rev. Hayashi wrote to the WRA Transportation of Property Office on several occasions to inquire about the outstanding items. Rev. Hayashi describes in great detail where he stored the belongings prior to his family's forced removal from Portland. He acknowledges that the family received the majority of their furniture, clothing, kitchen appliances, children's toys, and some Japanese effects to their new address in Minneapolis. Yet, Rev. Hayashi focuses mainly on the missing items, noting their great value to the family. The assemblage of outstanding items that Rev. Hayashi hopes to get back seems random and rather mundane. Books, a world globe, bathroom scale, table lamp, a bassinette, flower vases, electric clocks, Christmas tree lights, canister sets, and a green hamper are just a few of the items that he describes as still missing. While they may seem generic and easily replaceable, they speak to the comfort that material objects—regardless of how mundane—provide at a time of great upheaval.

The correspondence between Rev. Hayashi and the WRA office reveals the immediate challenges of the resettlement process for former incarcerated as well as the indelible disruption that the incarceration had on the lives they had established in the years leading up to the war. Since the incarceration stripped the detainees of their dignity as well as their material possessions, being reunited with familiar objects in the postwar period established a sense of normalcy. For the Hayashis, reclaiming their personal possessions, despite remaining uprooted, intended to help them contend with the continued upheaval during their reintegration back into mainstream society. The missing

crib that was on my grandparents' list was likely for my father Leland, who was a toddler at the time. The strands of Christmas lights and lamps would have made their house in Minneapolis feel like home even though they were hundreds of miles from Portland.

This anecdote represents one of a great variety of resettlement or post-incarceration challenges that are discussed in the forthcoming pages. Reverend and Mrs. Hayashi's difficulty in receiving their belongings represents former incarceratedees having to come to terms with the material loss as well as the loss of dignity that resulted from the wartime incarceration and lingered into the resettlement period. Their story reflects the importance of materiality, loss, disruption, upheaval, and lack of rootedness that characterized post-incarceration. For many former incarceratedees, the great indignity and shame that resulted from the wartime detention seemed insurmountable. As they simultaneously confronted the incomprehensible challenge of restarting their lives, the comfort of their prewar possessions—regardless of how mundane—made this daunting task seem more possible.

When I embarked on this dissertation topic, I never imagined that I would be impacted in such a personal way. I did not expect to find so many direct references to my family as I delved into the archives for my research. While sitting in the grand reading room at the National Archives with the United States flag at Navy Memorial prominently in view through the large windows, a flood of emotion engulfed me as I looked through my grandfather's case file. Here, I sat in reading room of the repository that houses the United States Constitution, the Magna Carta, Declaration of Independence, and countless other foundational documents that have established the values our nation upholds. The

fact that I could research my own family history in the holdings of the National Archives was incredibly meaningful, despite the intent behind why this information was captured.

As I perused my grandfather's completed application for indefinite leave clearance, I kept reminding myself of the intent of the questionnaire. This was the federal government's way of determining loyalty to the United States of individuals excluded from citizenship as well as citizens who knew no other nation. Yet, my mind kept returning to how fascinated I was with his answers. Here was a treasure trove of information about my grandfather in his early 40s and the father to two young boys. Since I only knew my grandfather when he was mature in age, this historical document gave me a completely different impression of him.

For a community that has long been marginalized from the mainstream historical narrative of our nation, the War Relocation Authority's archive at the National Archives is important. Despite the intention of the record keeping, the historical documentation is open to interpretation. While federal government employees and military personnel used the data to support their policies at the time, contemporary historians can use the data in a completely different way. The types of questions that the federal government posed and the corresponding answers from the incarcerated make it easy to humanize the individuals that were deemed "the enemy" and subsequently incarcerated. This body of information complements the material catalogued in community archives like those at the Japanese American National Museum.

My understanding of my family's resettlement narrative is somewhat complete, although the gaps punctuating the details that I have strung together remind me that there

is likely still more to their story that I have yet to uncover. Nonetheless, it is this recovery work that I sought out to complete for many of the families and individuals that resettled in Los Angeles through this dissertation. The challenge that the Hayashi family experienced is one of myriad narratives that characterize the post-incarceration period and resettlement process.

A variety of newspapers, U.S. Census data, municipal records, Los Angeles City Directories, and Japanese American directories have been immensely helpful in getting a sense of the community who returned to resettle in Los Angeles. The bulk of the historical material that I have consulted have been records at the National Archives in Washington, DC, kept by the War Relocation Authority's Los Angeles Field Office, which opened in Los Angeles in 1945 and operated for one year. Since the federal government engineered and oversaw the relocation of Japanese during the war as well as their reintegration into society during the resettlement process, mining the official records of the War Relocation Authority will be central to the research for this project. Although these types of records will reveal statistics necessary to reconstruct a snapshot of the community after the war, they do not capture the lived experience of the

Oral histories from the Japanese American National Museum's (JANM) ReGeneration project, Densho, Cal State Fullerton's Oral History Program, and the Go For Broke National Education Center have provided the opportunity to tell stories of specific individuals and or families.³⁸ Archives and material culture collections from the

³⁸ Oral histories provide an invaluable lens into the way that memory on resettlement has been constructed. As Alessandro Portelli has noted, memory functions as an active process in the creation of meaning. He states in his introduction to *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), "the way that an individual tries to make

Japanese American National Museum, University of California Los Angeles Special Collections, Smithsonian National Museum of American History, University of California, Berkeley Bancroft Library, Japanese American Citizens League, Los Angeles Public Library, Los Angeles City Archives, Southern California Library, Huntington Library, and the University of Southern California Special Collections contain historical materials necessary to chronicle these personal stories.

I find that personal stories are often what are missing from the existing, albeit important scholarly works on resettlement. As a social historian interested in public history, I firmly believe that including the experiences of ordinary individuals is absolutely essential. Not only do I believe that ordinary individuals have extraordinary stories to tell, but I also feel strongly about incorporating their voices into my work since they represent a population that has been systematically marginalized from the traditional narrative of American history. When I first embarked on this research, I felt poised to take on this challenge given my strong ties to the Japanese American community in Los Angeles through my affiliations with the Japanese American National Museum, the Little Tokyo Historical Society, Go for Broke National Education Center, Kizuna, Japanese American Cultural and Community Center, and Southern California taiko community.

sense of the past...give a form to their lives, and set the interview and narrative in their historical context can be a subject of historical analysis. While the interview may not reconstruct what exactly happened, “it can help us to understand why people subscribe to a particular belief about the past and why they represent their belief in specific ways.” Additionally, Michael Frisch notes the usefulness of oral history in *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990): 188, suggesting that this methodology can help scholars explore how people “connect individual experience and its social context, how the past becomes part of the present and how people use it to interpret their lives and the world around them.

Together, all of these methods and materials have helped me to create a more comprehensive portrait of the experience of Japanese Americans who returned to the greater Los Angeles area post-incarceration as a scholarly contribution to this understudied topic. I would be remiss, however, if I didn't spotlight the challenges that I encountered while conducting research. While I poured over thousands of documents produced by the War Relocation Authority, there was far less in archives and special collections that captured the perspective and experiences of the returnees.

Oral history interviews with former incarcerated individuals intended to be an integral part of my research. I reviewed numerous oral histories that have been conducted over the years by the Japanese American National Museum, Densho, and Go For Broke National Education Center. It appears that these interviews intended to focus on the wartime experiences of these individuals, which might explain why most linger on the prewar period and extensively cover the period from 1941-1945. Given the emphasis on this period, most oral history interviews skip over the post-incarceration period, choosing to move to a point in the interviewee's life when he/she felt more settled. The JANM's REgenerations project, which focused on capturing oral histories of resettlers in Los Angeles, Chicago, San Jose, and San Diego, is the exception. The oral histories from this project have been immensely helpful, although the individuals interviewed in Los Angeles were some of the more visible members of the local community. What about women who worked as domestics or seamstresses? Or how about individuals who lived temporarily in the trailer installations that were set up throughout the Southland? What about the individuals or families that required public assistance upon their return? Since

these stories were not sufficiently captured, I sought to conduct some of my own oral histories. I learned very early on, though, that this was going to be more challenging than I thought. There's still a stigma associated with experiencing challenges after postwar. A couple of the women who were worked as domestics and seamstresses post-incarceration politely refused my request to interview them, stating that their story wasn't interesting and that I should talk to a friend of theirs instead. Also, those that are still living that have memory of the incarceration and its aftermath were relatively young at the time and likely not fully aware of the challenges of their parents or older members of their families.

In 2018, Densho received a California Civil Liberties & Education grant to conduct oral history interviews with former incarcerated that focus on their resettlement experiences. While I have been asked by Densho to help identify participants for the project and conduct the conversations, the resulting interviews will not be available to help inform my dissertation. Nevertheless, they will be immensely valuable for future studies on the experiences of those who returned to California, following incarceration.

The absolute goldmine is Tom Sasaki's field notes, which offer transcripts of interviews that he conducted with returnees in Los Angeles in 1946. The content of the interviews are extremely candid, revealing the frustrations experienced upon return without the added filter of hindsight that often puts a positive spin on past events. During the wartime incarceration and in the period immediately following, government officials and academics from the University of California, Berkeley conducted several studies to understand the immediate impact of the wartime experience. Leonard Broom and Dorothy Swaine Thomas, sociologists from the University of California, Berkeley,

produced a study known as the Japanese Evacuation Resettlement Study to examine the effect on incarcerated from a detached position as scholars. Sasaki worked for the project that Dorothy Swain Thomas to ascertain what life post-incarceration entailed. Although Sasaki worked for an institution of higher education, his identity as a member of the community allowed him to solicit frank responses from his interviewees. Responses from former incarcerated to an insider provide would seem to allow for a candidness that is occluded when the WRA or other government agency acts as a mediator to collect information.

At the start of my dissertation research, I assumed that some of the richest material would come from various personal collections from former incarcerated. I expected to mine the closets and garages of ordinary families as a way to produce materials that would contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the resettlement process amongst Japanese Americans in the greater Los Angeles area. I planned to use material culture and oral history from ordinary individuals in tandem with government documents as a way to more fully understand the diversity of experiences that Japanese Americans endured.

I've had the opportunity to go through various Japanese American families' personal collections in my role as collections manager at the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, California. As the head of the Collections Management and Access Department, I manage the permanent collection. We consistently receive a high volume of artifact donation offers, the equivalent to one per workday. The majority of the donation offers that we receive are associated with early immigration and the WWII

incarceration. It is remarkable that so many of these items still exist, considering all of the upheaval and movement that has taken place over the years. Steamer trunks that carried important personal belongings—sometimes across the Pacific and later during the wartime incarceration—are one of the most common objects we are offered. Bird pins carved and painted in camp, photographs taken during WWII, and U.S. military uniforms probably are also commonly offered. We rarely receive offers of objects or ephemera that represent the first few years following the incarceration. Surely artifacts from the postwar period would be more plentiful than objects from the incarceration or before, given the incredible upheaval, movement, and loss that occurred. Perhaps this void is because people feel that anything postwar seems too contemporary to be considered history? Or maybe it goes back to the shame that comes with the incarceration and its aftermath. Or it is possible that the experiences were so varied, that it is hard to know what is significant to this period?

Despite having researched this topic, however, I still cannot think of the quintessential three-dimensional material culture object that could encapsulate the resettlement period. As I continue to reflect on this, I hope that Sansei and younger generations who are cleaning out their Nisei parents' and grandparents' homes will set aside items from the postwar period that might help to tell their family's experience. These artifacts also belong in the permanent collection at collecting institutions that are dedicated to telling a complete story of the incarceration.

GUIDING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What was the return to Los Angeles like for the thousands of Japanese Americans that returned, beginning in 1945? How did Japanese Americans returning to Southern California make home again in those first few years? Where did Japanese Americans live immediately upon their return to Los Angeles? How did *dejure* and *defacto* discrimination affect settlement patterns of Japanese Americans in Southern California? How had the neighborhoods that were home to a vibrant Japanese community before the war changed? These were just some of the many questions that piqued my curiosity and guided my research as I sifted through thousands of documents and sources across several different archives. Within a few years, Japanese Americans returned to the West Coast in great numbers, convinced that the process of reestablishing their lives was not any easier in the Midwest or East. By 1947, the West Coast was once again home to the majority of the mainland Japanese American population.³⁹

Resettlement on the West Coast, however, came with its own set of challenges. Although for many, the return to the West Coast signified coming home, the region and its demographics had changed during the war. For many, the return home entailed having to start over. A detailed understanding of how Japanese returning to Southern California fared during this initial resettlement period has been largely overlooked by scholars, and thus forms the basis for this study. A better understanding of this period will help to articulate how the impacts of wartime incarceration did not summarily end when the concentration camps closed. Additionally, more information about the intricacies of the

³⁹ Greg Robinson, *After Camp: Portraits in Midcentury Japanese American Life and Politics*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012: 4.

resettlement period can further our understanding of race relations, particularly in Los Angeles, and the underlying power dynamics during the postwar era.

ORGANIZATION

Each of the four chapters of this dissertation will cover an aspect of resettlement that profoundly impacted the lives of returnees to Los Angeles, while simultaneously revealing the multitude of experiences of Japanese Americans in the early postwar period. While the particulars of the forced removal and incarceration worked to undermine the strength of the family unit, the nuclear family became the representative image of normativity in the postwar period. For those whose identity was considered transgressive, including; Issei bachelors, aging Issei couples, Nisei widows, and families with several dependents, they did not fit in within what was considered normative for the community. The experiences of those considered part of the “normative” as well as those that were in the margins of the community, will be juxtaposed in each chapter. Together, the four chapters will act as a lens to interrogate ideas of what race, place, nation, and citizenship meant for persons of Japanese ancestry in postwar Los Angeles. Each identifies the choices that Japanese Americans made as well of the lack of choice as they attempted to reestablish their lives while navigating the contours of exclusion from full integration into mainstream society in postwar Los Angeles. The four chapters or case studies explore the challenges of early resettlement, housing opportunities and restrictions, navigating *dejure* and *defacto* discrimination, and reestablishing themselves through social networks or government public assistance.

Each of the following four chapters foregrounds the complexities inherent to the ways in which Japanese Americans navigated the post-incarceration period. The first two chapters provide context for early resettlement in the midwest and eastern parts of the country as well as in Los Angeles, once the West Coast reopened to persons of Japanese ancestry. The following chapter on housing will document the varied experiences regarding the logistics of securing shelter—one of the most basic elements necessary to reestablishing life after the war. Issues related to employment are also interweaved within the chapter since the two are intrinsically linked. A chapter on public assistance and the role of community institutions to reduce the demographic considered to be destitute, addresses the varying experiences as well as to trouble the images or cultural representations that have come to symbolize the aftermath of wartime incarceration and the process of resettlement. “Making Home Again: Japanese Americans Resettlement in Post-WWII Los Angeles, 1945-1955” will interrogate ideas of what race, place, and citizenship meant for persons of Japanese ancestry and the choices that they made as they reestablished their lives in postwar Los Angeles.

Chapter one, “Early Resettlement and the Road Back to Normal Living,” provides context for early resettlement before the West Coast was reopened to Japanese Americans. It begins to layout what the process of resettlement looked like when former incarcerated began to leave the concentration camps indefinitely. The Department of the Interior’s “evacuation and relocation” program was designed to remove all persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast, house them temporarily in relocation centers until they could be released to disperse widely across the country. By 1943, the federal government

began to reward those deemed “loyal” Americans by granting them indefinite leave from the relocation centers and re-entry into mainstream society. Yet, the upheaval that Japanese Americans experienced from their forced removal from their homes on the West Coast, isolation from mainstream society while detained in the relocation centers, and the anxiety-producing thoughts of the unknown that came with resettlement in a new city, created great apprehension for many. To help aid Japanese American “evacuees” in this complex process of resettlement, the War Relocation Authority produced a body of literature intended to instruct Japanese Americans on how to reintegrate into mainstream society, developed curriculum for school-aged individuals in the camps, and instructed War Relocation Authority staff members to help each family develop a relocation plan before they stepped outside the confines of the War Relocation Centers indefinitely.

Through these resources, the War Relocation Authority tried to prepare Japanese Americans for life that was essentially the antithetical to the life they’d been living since 1942 by providing instructions and presenting models through staged photographs that showcased examples of “successful” resettlers in the “how-to-guides,” putting together concrete resettlement plans for each family, and providing opportunities for incarcerated to simulate or role play real life situations they could potentially encounter on the outside. Yet, by promoting certain cities and providing examples of well-adjusted resettlers in these cities, the WRA’s literature aided the re-formation of Japanese American communities, albeit in cities away from the West Coast. The chapter looks at the body of literature that the War Relocation Authority produced to help prepare for their reentry into mainstream society and instruct them how to be “model citizens.” While this may

have been the intention of the WRA's how-to-guides, closer examination of these materials reveals how the general advice and mandate to move further east to new communities did not show a clear way back to normal living.

Despite the intention of the WRA's resettlement program to disperse the Japanese population throughout the country and repeated urgings from the Japanese American Citizens League to comply with these instructions, Japanese Americans returned to the West Coast, and to Los Angeles, specifically, in numbers that nearly rivaled those of the prewar era. Once again, Los Angeles became the site of a vibrant Japanese American community. The substantial number of Japanese Americans returning to their former home or coming to Los Angeles for the first time, helped to re-establish the largest Japanese American community in the United States. Chapter two, "Returning to Los Angeles: A Nisei Report from Home," identifies the choices or lack of choices that Japanese Americans faced as they attempted to reestablish their lives while navigating the contours of exclusion from full integration into postwar Los Angeles. It examines the long history of *dejure* and *defacto* discrimination that intended to restrict the mobility of Japanese American, pointing to the ways in which the state violence continued after Japanese Americans had been forcibly removed from their communities on the West Coast. Upon return to their former home, Japanese Americans continued to face the discrimination that existed before the war. Yet, the material loss that they faced plus the psychological violence from the forced removal and incarceration took its toll.

Chapter two: "Returning to Los Angeles: A Nisei Report from Home" explores the social climate that Japanese Americans returned to, beginning in 1945. The chapter

looks back at the causes of the lingering *dejure* and *defacto* discrimination that continued to restrict the actions of Japanese Americans upon their return, by unfolding the efforts of nativist groups to influence the equivocating positions of elected officials and civic leaders to increase exclusionary legislation. This chapter chronicles the return of Japanese Angelenos, which was slow at first until the WRA made the decision to return remaining incarcerated to their point of origin, which for many was Los Angeles. Throughout the chapter, the struggles and opportunities in Los Angeles—despite and as a result of the lingering state violence are examined.

Chapter three, “Making Home Again: Securing Housing in Los Angeles,” examines the housing situation that Japanese Americans faced upon their return to Los Angeles. Despite returning to their former “home” in Los Angeles, Japanese Americans faced further transition and upheaval. Rather than providing a sense of relief, returning home to Los Angeles engendered further upheaval. This can be seen through the process of obtaining permanent housing when former incarcerated returned to the greater Los Angeles area. While physical movement was no longer restricted, *dejure* and *defacto* discrimination remained firmly entrenched to limit the social mobility of returnees.

Like with “Making Home Again: Securing Housing in Los Angeles,” Chapter four, “May Resettlement Assistance be Granted?: Public Assistance for Returnees to Los Angeles,” provides an additional case study to follow the continuation of state violence into the post-incarceration period. Public assistance, in its various forms, is an important topic to cover since the necessity of it illustrates the deleterious impacts of the incarceration. Those who received public assistance disrupt the idea of the minority myth.

Together, the following four chapters of this dissertation begin to contend with the multifaceted story of early resettlement in Los Angeles. A re-examination of the early years of resettlement will reveal that various sectors of the Japanese American community were actively constructing a narrative of triumph in response to the power dynamics and racial politics at play in postwar Los Angeles. Interrogation of the unifying narrative that leaders of the community created, however, will undoubtedly reveal fissures, suggesting that there is a much more complex narrative below the surface.

While the long process of rebuilding their lives must have been a daunting reality, Japanese and Japanese Americans began negotiating various forms of *de jure* and *de facto* discrimination that they faced upon returning to the West Coast. Beginning in 1945, Japanese Americans who resettled in Los Angeles started, out of necessity, to engage in activities that included: creating specific forms of community memory, physically reimagining an idealized community, establishing economic and professional organizations to support Japanese in specific occupations, and initiating landmark court cases to challenge discrimination.

Those that are now beginning to tell their story of resettlement admit that it is much harder to talk about resettlement than the incarceration itself. This is a result of the extreme adversity inherent to reintegration back into mainstream society as well as the particulars of the situations of those returning to Los Angeles. The incarceration did not equivocally end with indefinite leave from the concentration camps. Instead, it persisted. Perhaps the contemporaneous work on this important topic will help to inspire former incarcerated to share their resettlement stories.

CHAPTER ONE

“EARLY RESETTLEMENT AND THE ROAD BACK TO NORMAL LIVING”

Our prime objective in WRA, as always, is to restore the people residing in relocation centers to private life in normal communities.”⁴⁰

-Dillon Myer, “A Message from the Director of WRA,” 1944

What does relocation offer? It offers a chance for a fresh start; a chance to profit from the heartaches of the past; a chance to enter a locality where you and your children are accepted as Americans; a chance to prove that the second generation is not Nisei or Japanese-American, but just plain American.”⁴¹

-“Why Relocate?,” a WRA publication, 1943

In 1944, Arthur Okusu, an eleventh grader at the Rohwer War Relocation Center in Arkansas, imagined a post-war life for Japanese Americans free from limitation in the 4’ x 16’ mural that he painted, entitled: “Relocation.”⁴² Okusu’s panel was one of eight murals that Japanese American students in Ms. Mabel Rose Jamison’s high school art class created in response to the Rohwer Public Works Division’s request for artwork to

⁴⁰ Dillon Myer, “A Message from the Director of the War Relocation Authority,” 1945.

⁴¹ War Relocation Authority, *Why Relocate?*, 1943: 4.

⁴² Government officials used the term “resettlement” in two contexts, creating some nuance in meaning. In 1942, after Executive Order 9066 had been enacted, but before plans for mandatory “evacuation” were announced, government officials encouraged “voluntary resettlement” among Japanese and Japanese Americans living in Military Area 1 to locations much further inland. For Japanese living in California, this meant moving outside of the state. The War Relocation Authority used the term “resettlement” again to describe the movement of “loyal” Japanese Americans from the “War Relocation Centers” to localities in the Midwest or East after they obtained leave permits, beginning as early as 1942. Despite government officials’ early use of the term “voluntary resettlement,” the majority of references to “resettlement” correspond to the moment when internees began leaving the WRA concentration camps. Although 1942 is technically the beginning of the resettlement period for those who were able to obtain clearance to leave, this study will consider 1945 the start of resettlement since this is when most Japanese returned or came to the West Coast after staying temporarily in a location further inland. Additionally, there appears to be no definitive end date to the resettlement period. Some scholars have defined resettlement as the first ten years after the concentration camps closed in 1945. Others have defined resettlement as a much longer period that ends with the conclusion of the redress movement in 1988. Still others would argue that resettlement continues through the present.

display in the camp's new auditorium. Together, these eight murals depicted the events that led to the forced removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast and their subsequent incarceration at Rohwer, one of ten American concentration camps scattered across the interior of the country.⁴³

While some of the murals by Ms. Jamison's students captured the pain of experiences that recently transpired, Okusu's mural differed from the rest. In a black and white panoramic photograph of Arthur Okusu standing beside his finished mural, he beams with a sense of accomplishment and optimism, which similarly comes across in his depictions of "relocation."⁴⁴

The imagery in Okusu's mural suggested that post-war life for Japanese Americans could be characterized by accomplishment. At the far left of the mural, a mother and son wave goodbye to individuals on board a train to leave camp permanently and begin the process of restarting their lives beyond the barbed wire. Following this opening image, the remaining people, albeit all men are depicted in a series of vignettes of them at work in their postwar occupations. Okusu seemed to assume that the reintegration process into mainstream society would be relatively seamless since this

⁴³ "Lasting Beauty: Miss Jamison and the Student Muralists (exhibition)," *Densho Encyclopedia*, http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Lasting_Beauty%3A_Miss_Jamison_and_the_Student_Muralists_%28exhibition%29/ Accessed 16 Aug 2017; "A Thing of Lasting Beauty: The Evolution of the Japanese American National Museum's School Programs," *The Journal of Museum Education*, Vol. 30, No. 2/3, The Field Trip: Enigma or Paradigm? (Spring/Summer – Fall, 2005): 4-8; "Lasting Beauty: Miss Jamison and the Student Muralists," *Japanese American National Museum*, <http://www.janm.org/exhibits/lasting/>, Accessed 16 Aug 2017. "December 7th" by Mac Kinoshita, "Evacuation" by Teruyo Kishi, "Assembly Centers" by Mary Ihara "To Rohwer" by Nobi Tanimoto, "The New Home" by Kik Toyofuku, "Community Life" by Michi Tanaka, "Center Occupations" by Motohiko Hori and "Relocation," by Okusu depicted the shared experience amongst Japanese Americans from the West Coast from the point of view of high school-age students.

⁴⁴ Photograph of a mural entitled: "Relocation," by Arthur Okusu, JANM 97.292.17C, Gift of the Walter Muramoto Family.

departing scene fluidly transitions into a series of depictions of Japanese Americans at work in highly respected occupations. A scientist, surgeon, welder, land surveyor, and military personnel are depicted at work, suggesting that Japanese Americans would be able to secure respectable careers and make positive contributions to society once they got on with their lives on the outside of the barbed wire that confined them through the duration of the war.



Figure 2.1: Arthur Okusu standing in front of his mural "Relocation" at Rohwer War Relocation Center. Courtesy of National Archives, Records of the War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210.

Okusu envisaged the future for Japanese Americans with great optimism, full of opportunity. Yet, while the occupations of the individuals in the mural were recognizable, their geographic locations were not. Did Okusu ultimately envision “relocation” for Japanese Americans as an eventual return to their pre-war homes or resettlement in a town in the Midwest or East, necessitated by the ongoing restrictive ban from the military zone on the West Coast? How did other Japanese American incarcerated see life after camp? Okusu’s outlook on life after barbed wire was optimistic, perhaps as a result of the longevity that lay ahead for him. For many Issei, though, the prospect of starting over at such an advanced age, in the face of great prejudice and without the protections granted to American citizens made many fearful of what might await them on the “outside.” For Nisei with families, starting over may have seemed less daunting due to their relative young age, yet they still feared the unknown on the outside. What would life be like once they rejoined the mainstream population again? How would they start over and make home again?

Two years after the U.S. Military enacted the West Coast exclusion order and hastily incarcerated Japanese Americans in detention camps, the War Relocation Authority suddenly rolled out its policy to reintegrate them back into mainstream society. The agency released an annual report that provided a statistical overview and description of the War Relocation Authority’s relocation program. This phase comprised indefinite departure from the relocation centers and reintegration into mainstream society. In releasing the report, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes explained the policy of the War Relocation Authority, now a civilian agency under the Department of the Interior.

Ickes suggested that the WRA's policy entailed encouraging the "evacuees" to scatter widely in areas away from the West Coast exclusionary zone and avoid congregating in concentrated clusters. The purpose of the policy was to encourage Japanese Americans "to integrate into the normal social and economic life of the communities where they relocated."⁴⁵ What did "normal life" mean for these individuals following several years in confinement and the mandate to establish a new home elsewhere?

Japanese American staff members of the *Rohwer Outpost*, the camp newspaper, also utilized the term "normal living" to describe life after camp. In a commemorative publication, entitled: "Lil Daniel: One Year in a Relocation Center," newspaper staff at the Rohwer Relocation Center reflected on life that transpired that year through the experiences of "Lil Daniel," the fictional mascot for the Rohwer newspaper. In a graphic on the inside back cover of the publication, Lil Daniel leans up against a sign post surrounded by a directional compass. The signpost reads: "Relocation: The Road Back to Normal Living" as the many points around the compass suggest that relocatees could embark on a journey in an endless number of directions.⁴⁶

How did Japanese American incarcerated define "normal living" and the road back to this ideal? Did this interpretation align with the War Relocation Authority's idea of what "reintegration into normal life" would entail? "Normal" to the WRA would have meant that Japanese American "evacuees" would disperse widely and ultimately become absorbed amongst the population in cities throughout the midwestern and eastern portions

⁴⁵ *Rohwer Outpost*, 25 March 1944, Vol. IV, No. 24. Found in the Archives Center at the National Museum of American History.

⁴⁶ "Lil Daniel: One Year in a Relocation Center," 1943, Found in Collection 0305, Box 4, Folder 2, at the Archives Center at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

of the country. Japanese Americans also used this same descriptor of “normal” to reference life after camp, however, their definition likely included the re-formation of Japanese American communities since living in close proximity prior to and during the war had become the norm. Yet, despite the common usage of the phrase, life for Japanese Americans after the war would be anything but normal given the upheaval that the mass incarceration caused.

Although the federal government may have intended for “evacuees” to have a relatively short stay in the War Relocation Centers, the great upheaval that the incarceration created, caused the resettlement process to be far more complex and multifaceted than these descriptions suggest. For most, the distress that characterized their forced removal from their homes on the West Coast, isolation from mainstream society while detained in the relocation centers, and the anxiety-producing thoughts of the unknown that came with resettlement in a new city, produced feelings of great apprehension. To help Japanese American “evacuees” navigate the complex process of resettlement, the War Relocation Authority produced a body of literature intended to instruct Japanese Americans on how to reintegrate into mainstream society, developed curriculum for school-aged individuals in the camps, and instructed War Relocation Authority staff members to help each family develop a relocation plan before they stepped outside the confines of the War Relocation Centers indefinitely.

Through these resources, the War Relocation Authority attempted to prepare Japanese Americans for life that was essentially antithetical to the life they had been living within the confines of the relocation centers. Yet, despite the freedom from the

barbed wire, the incarceration continued in a sense. Early resettlers did not have a choice on where they settled after receiving indefinite leave clearance. In 1943, when incarcerated began leaving the camps, returning to the West Coast remained prohibited. Settling in a new city in the Midwest or East extended the distress. Soon, they would no longer be a racial majority in their places of residence, be shielded from the widespread prejudice that associated them with “the enemy,” or expect to have the daily necessities of life provided to them, regardless of how austere they had been. To aid the transition, the WRA produced “how-to-guides” that included staged photographs, showcasing examples of “successful” resettlers and provided commonsense information on what to expect, developed concrete resettlement plans with each family.

While the various aspects of the WRA’s resettlement program outwardly appeared to prepare former incarcerated on how to reintegrate into society, it ultimately extended the incarceration. The WRA’s policy to disperse the Japanese population throughout the United States was a continuation of the state violence that led to the forced removal and incarceration. The brochures containing photographs of seemingly happy, well-adjusted Japanese Americans in Cincinnati, Chicago, Detroit, and other cities far from the West Coast suggested a seamless resettlement. Yet, state violence that once confined them within barbed wire continued to limit their social mobility as early resettlers navigated reentry into mainstream society.

QUALIFYING FOR EARLY INDEFINITE LEAVE

The U.S. government and military never intended for segregation of the Japanese American population to be indefinite. In a 1943 report on relocation, Secretary Ickes

explained that the War Relocation Centers would cease to operate once it was possible to segregate those who sympathized with Japan from those who aligned with the United States.⁴⁷ During this vetting process, Ickes explained that the War Relocation Authority had the responsibility to provide shelter and subsistence for all of the individuals in the relocation centers, until they could demonstrate the potential to be self-sustaining and make home outside of the exclusion area on the West Coast. This initial phase or resettlement period followed the War Relocation Authority's plan, which intended to break-up the "Little Tokyos" concentrated in various cities throughout the West Coast and disperse the population further east.⁴⁸

Simultaneously, Dillon Myer, Director of the War Relocation Authority, went on a publicity circuit similar to Ickes' to promote the federal agency's proposed relocation plan. Myers described the intentions of the relocation process as part of a luncheon address to the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco. He noted that the concentrations of Japanese, which existed in Little Tokyos throughout California, Washington, and Oregon before evacuation was an important, yet overlooked point in discussions that had been taking place on the West Coast. Myer explained further suggesting:

I have found no one who thought that these concentrations of population were desirable even in peacetime, let alone in time of war... What will happen when the war is over? One alternative that has been suggested by some is to send all of them to Japan, regardless of citizenship and regardless of loyalty. I cannot conceive of either the American conscience or the Constitution permitting such

⁴⁷ *Rohwer Outpost*, March 25, 1944, Vol. IV, No. 24. Found in the Archives Center at the National Museum of American History.

⁴⁸ In the greater Los Angeles area alone, Japanese American communities existed in Little Tokyo in Downtown Los Angeles, Boyle Heights, Pasadena, Hollywood, Seinan (Crenshaw), Gardena, Torrance, Redondo Beach, Huntington Beach, Terminal Island, San Pedro, and Venice.

an act. The thing, which most likely would happen would be that the evacuated people would return to the place they called home—and the Little Tokyos would probably spring up again, with all their undesirable features. But if the leave program is successful, a large number of the evacuees will re-establish themselves in other parts of the country, where they can be absorbed readily. It is hoped that the bulk of the relocated people will stay where they strike root. It is hard to understand why residents or officials of California or other west coast states would oppose rather than support a program of relocation and dispersion which provides the only sensible answer to one of the most pressing social problems which the West Coast and the Nation has faced.⁴⁹

In his address to the members of the Commonwealth Club, Myer provided an overview of the WRA's objective for the relocation program to disperse the population widely across the midwestern and eastern regions of the country in an attempt to prevent the reformation of concentrations of Japanese that formerly existed on the West Coast. By acknowledging the former concentrations of Japanese in his keynote speech, Myer alluded to the existence of the "Japanese Problem," which was neither a World War II phenomenon nor unique to Los Angeles. Rather, anti-Japanese sentiment on the West Coast had a long history that originated soon after the arrival of Japanese immigrants increased exponentially at the turn of the twentieth century.

Local and federal legislation targeted at Japanese immigrants, beginning at the turn of the twentieth century, deemed them aliens ineligible for citizenship. Legislation soon followed with the intention of putting limitations on their economic mobility and restrictions on further emigration from Japan. Like the Chinese immigrants who came before them to fill a labor need, Japanese soon became the scapegoats as white laborers saw them as competition for jobs in the agricultural sector and railroad industries. In an

⁴⁹ Dillon S. Myer, "The Truth about Relocation," (Address at a luncheon meeting of the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, CA," 6 Aug 1943. Melvin P. McGovern Papers, Collection 2010, Box 119, University of California, Los Angeles Special Collections.

attempt to combat the “Japanese Problem,” leaders from Japan and the U.S. agreed upon the 1908 Gentleman’s Agreement, which put restriction on further immigration of laborers from Japan. Loopholes in the law allowed family members to join the head of the family who immigrated in advance, which allowed for the arrival of scores of picture brides. The 1913 Alien Land Law in California, which prevented aliens ineligible for citizenship from owning land, was subsequently strengthened in the 1920s to tighten up loopholes in the legislation. Finally, the 1924 Immigration and Nationality Act abruptly halted all immigration from Asia.⁵⁰ The widespread anti-Japanese sentiment from members of groups such as the Native Sons of the Golden West, American Legion, and Veterans of Foreign Wars was persistent and powerful in convincing influential California politicians to implement a plan to remove persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast within a few months of Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor.

Although the Department of the Interior did not specify how long the War Relocation Centers would be in operation, the government never intended for them to be open indefinitely. In an address to the Tuesday Evening Club in 1943, Myer suggested

⁵⁰ In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act halted immigration from China to the United States, which eliminated a major source of cheap labor. Recruiters looked towards Japan as a new source of labor. Recruiters focused on recruiting laborers from prefectures known for agricultural production, including Kagoshima, Fukuoka, Hiroshima, and Yamaguchi. While the laborers that they recruited to work on plantations in Hawaii and in agricultural production on the mainland came legally, they were ineligible for naturalization. Despite limitations on their rights as aliens ineligible for citizenship, nativist groups lobbied politicians to control the Japanese problem. Their efforts were reminiscent of nativist groups’ campaigns from several decades earlier that ultimately led to restriction of further Chinese immigration. In 1907, the United States and Japan negotiated the Gentlemen’s Agreement to put limitations on further immigration of Japanese to the United States. Laborers would no longer be recruited in an attempt to slow down immigration. The agreement had a significant loophole that allowed for family members to join the male laborer in the United States. An influx of picture brides, who were technically already married through an arrangement in Japan, came to the United States to join their husbands. As families began to put down roots and form communities, the anti-Japanese sentiment only increased. In 1913, California passed the Alien Land Law, which prohibited aliens from owning land. Immigration legislation became more stringent in 1917 to further slow immigration. By 1924, Japanese immigration was halted completely.

that the War Relocation Centers were “intended only as way-stations where the evacuees could reside while arrangements were made for them to relocate in normal communities outside of the exclusionary zone.”⁵¹

Federal government officials began to reward individuals who demonstrated their “loyalty” to the United States, despite contestation from nativist groups who made great efforts to persuade legislators to prevent the release of persons of Japanese ancestry during the war as well as their return to the West Coast. Beginning in 1943, approximately a year after President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which gave the U.S. military the right to exclude “any and all persons” from the West Coast and forcibly relocate persons of Japanese ancestry to America’s concentration camps, Dillon Myer provided reassurance that resettlement would not perpetuate the Japanese problem in the United States. Instead, by widely dispersing the population wide Myer suggested that they would assimilate within three generations since they would marry out of their race. Soon there will be no more Japanese blood.”⁵² This was rather perplexing considering federal anti-miscegenation laws prohibited Asians, and members of other racial groups, from marrying whites until 1967.

Despite protest against the release of Japanese Americans, the War Relocation Authority began granting individuals indefinite leave from the detention centers and re-entry into mainstream society, if they met the criteria of an offer of employment, college

⁵¹ Dillon S. Myer, “Relocation Problems and Policies,” 14 March 1944. Found in the Melvin P. McGovern Papers, Collection 2010, Box 119, Special Collections, University of California, Los Angeles.

⁵² Newspaper clipping from the “Tule Lake Folder, Warren Papers,” image folder. Found in F3640: 17566, Earl Warren Papers, Federal Files, War Department, War Prisoners, Tule Lake, 1943-45, California State Archives.

admissions, and housing. For those fortunate to have family, a job opportunity, or a college acceptance established outside of the exclusionary zone, life after relocation seemed promising. Director Dillon Myer of the War Relocation Authority encouraged “all loyal American citizens and law-abiding aliens” in the relocation centers to obtain employment or apply for college admission in preparation to resettle in “normal communities outside the Pacific Coast area,” and begin their lives again. Myer’s description of who was allowed to obtain indefinite leave at this time reflected the federal government’s recent exercise to prompt each detainee to declare his/her undivided loyalty to the United States.

As if Issei and Nisei’s general cooperation with “evacuation,” which entailed being forcibly removed from their homes, dispossessed of their property and livelihoods, and subjected to isolation and emasculation behind barbed wire were not enough to prove their loyalty, they were required to document their undying allegiance to the United States through ink on paper. In early 1943, the War Department’s Adjutant General’s office issued a questionnaire, entitled: “Application for Leave Clearance” to all incarcerated over the age of seventeen. Although the title of the questionnaire suggested that indefinite leave was pending, it was clear from the lengthy questionnaire that demonstrating loyalty would be essential to obtain permission. Questions 27 and 28, in particular, were obvious in their intent to gauge loyalty. The questionnaire was identical for each detainee regardless of gender, citizenship status, or age.

Question 27 asked: “Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty wherever ordered?”

and

Question 28 read: “Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, to any other foreign government, power or organization?”

These two questions created great consternation amongst detainees and often divided families. Expecting Japanese American women, regardless of age, to answer in the affirmative to “Question 27” put them in an unusual predicament since requiring women to serve in the United States armed forces was not customary. Similarly, Issei men were beyond the typical age for military service and would not normally be obliged to enter combat. Answering in the affirmative would mean that they would be required to bear arms, if called upon. For many, this was an impossible request. Additionally, for Issei, “Question 28” created a significant dilemma. Issei were considered aliens ineligible for citizenship due to exclusionary immigration legislation towards persons of Asian ancestry. Answering this question on the loyalty questionnaire in the affirmative would require them to give up their Japanese citizenship and leave them stateless. Yet, answering in the negative for either of the questions was enough to deem someone disloyal. The questionnaire sparked division between generations and within families, regardless of whether incarcerated based their answers on principle or practicality. Those who answered “no” and “no” to Questions 27 and 28 were sent to the Tule Lake War Relocation Center, which became the concentration camp for those determined to be

disloyal to the United States.⁵³ According to WRA officials, incarceratedees' responses to these questions in the affirmative, created a certification of loyalty that could be used to facilitate resettlement leaves in the future. Those who answered "yes" and "yes" to these two questions, in particular, were essentially eligible for permanent leave. Yet, the title of the questionnaire, "Application for Leave Clearance," provoked anxiety amongst those who felt completely unprepared for the next move, and necessitated strategic thinking on how to answer the questions if affirmative answers meant immediate leave clearance would be granted and indefinite leave would be required.

Once incarceratedees received clearance, indefinite leave from the relocation centers occurred in several groupings or stages. A War Relocation Authority study conducted in 1946, entitled *People in Motion* chronicled the waves of relocation and subsequent resettlement in various cities. Incarceratedees' age, work experience, family responsibilities, and potential connections in resettlement cities largely determined when they were ready to depart from the relocation centers. College and university students were among the first to receive permission to leave the relocation centers. Individuals who felt oppressed by the cramped conditions at the relocation centers comprised the second wave of resettlers. To them, living anywhere beyond the barbed wire enclosure was desirable. By the middle of 1943, the third phase of resettlement got underway as young, highly

⁵³ In recent years, scholarship on the incarceratedees who were relocated to Tule Lake based on their answers to the loyalty questionnaire has proliferated. Incarceratedees at Tule Lake were once labeled "disloyal" by government officials during the war and often ostracized by members of the Japanese American community who supported the Japanese American Citizens League and the organization's push for a segregated unit to allow Japanese Americans to serve in the military. More recently, however, scholars and members of the Japanese American community have begun to see draft resisters and those who answered "no" to questions 27 and 28 on the loyalty questionnaire more positively as advocates for civil liberties. For a discussion of the turmoil that the loyalty questionnaire caused amongst incarceratedees, see: Michi Nishiura Weglyn, *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 2003.

employable incarerees without immediate family responsibilities left the relocation centers indefinitely.

To further encourage others to make plans to resettle and to quell misgivings from the general public, the Department of the Interior developed an informational booklet, entitled “New Neighbors Among Us.” The publication contained staged photographs and profiles of a handful of Japanese Americans who had already made their way to localities outside of the exclusionary zone. Together, the photographs and narratives in the publication personalized the Japanese American population and underscored their contributions to the war effort and the communities that they resettled in. The introduction to “New Neighbors Among Us” provided background on the “evacuation” from the West Coast, described the goal of the process, and explained the questionnaire and the vetting that federal intelligence agencies conducted to assess the loyalty of the detainees and determine leave clearance.

To reassure the general public, “New Neighbors Among Us” suggested, “Of the thousands who have dropped into widely scattered communities without causing an economic or social ripple, the case of Frank and Caroline Shiba is typical. [They], along with all other evacuee residents of relocation centers, filled out questionnaires prepared by WRA...[and] were granted ‘leave clearance’ by the Director of the War Relocation Authority. Frank decided to try Cleveland where a few dozen evacuees had preceeded him... He wanted a job here he could feel that he was helping in some direct way to win the war. He found it, as an apprentice on a grinding machine at the National Tool Company....His wife and baby were content in their new home. They made friends and

with every week the family's roots were more firmly set in the new community."⁵⁴ The publication, provided portraits of Nisei like Frank and Caroline Shiba, in order to highlight their U.S. citizenship, education in American schools, and ability to think and act like Americans in an attempt to generate support for these early resettlers. The emphasis on Japanese Americans' loyalty to the United States and their American values intended not only to create acceptability for them throughout the country, but also to prove that "evacuation" had been a necessary and ultimately successful project.

For Japanese Americans like Frank and Caroline Shiba who left the War Relocation Centers, beginning in 1943, the West Coast remained a restrictive military zone, which precluded their return and forced them to choose a place to resettle in the Midwest or eastern areas of the country. A college acceptance, promise of a job, or sponsorship from a family member already in the Midwest or East was the requirement to leave the concentration camps. Typically, college-age students or young professionals were the first resettlers since they—often with the help of religious organizations like the American Friends, a Quaker organization, were able to find educational or employment opportunities in the Midwest or eastern part of the United States. Despite, the numerous pamphlets that religious or civil rights organizations produced and distributed widely, the reaction from members of the general public towards Japanese Americans was unpredictable. Additionally, although these benevolent organizations provided aid to help resettlers acclimate quickly, they were unable to shield them from re-entry shock.

⁵⁴ Department of the Interior, "New Neighbors Among Us," 1944: 1-3.

WRA LITERATURE ON RESETTLEMENT

Myer acknowledged that living in isolation for a year likely caused internees to require a refresher on aspects of current American life, which the War Relocation Authority felt obligated to provide. In order to fulfill the federal government's directives to ensure that each internee made intelligent, yet expedient decisions for relocation and resettled outside of the exclusionary zone, the War Relocation Authority produced a variety of materials to expedite this process. Together, these publications intended to allay fears that Japanese Americans, who remained isolated behind barbed wire, might have had about re-entering mainstream society.



Figure 2.2: Front cover of *Why Relocate?*, a resettlement publication produced by the War Relocation Authority. Japanese American National Museum (Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Charles Ferguson, 97.177.9.)

The War Relocation Authority developed a set of educational materials, for use in the camps, aimed at preparing school-age children, adolescents, and adults for their

inevitable re-integration into mainstream society. “Why Relocate?” was a booklet that provided vague details on topics related to settlement outside of the War Relocation Centers. In the opening remarks from Manzanar camp administrators, Charles K. Ferguson wrote a forward, noting:

...What does relocation offer? It offers a chance for a fresh start; a chance to profit from the heartaches of the past; a chance to enter a locality where you and your children are accepted as Americans; a chance to prove that the second generation is not Nisei or Japanese American, but just American.

On the pages that follow we have prepared material that will acquaint you with most of the aspects of the life that lies immediately ahead of you in America. You should know that there is a place in America for anyone who wants to stay, and you should know how to get back into a normal world.”⁵⁵

“Why Relocate?” provided useful, albeit basic information related to indefinite leave, terminal leave grants, transportation to final destinations, obtaining employment, temporary housing, and public assistance for individuals and families who planned to resettle early in areas outside the Western exclusion zone. A section providing advice on how to interact with other Americans was included in the booklet, indicating how to respond to racist or uncomfortable remarks during encounters outside of the segregated War Relocation Centers. While perhaps good intentioned, the sample dialogue seemed impractical. It seemed unlikely that a real-life situation would closely adhere to the scripted dialogue included in the “Why Relocate?” publication.

Nevertheless, the WRA attempted to utilize this role-playing strategy throughout its educational curriculum within the Centers to demonstrate to students how they might handle situations as they reintegrated into mainstream society. The WRA provided a

⁵⁵ War Relocation Authority, “Why Relocate?,” 1943: 4.

pedagogical overview, entitled: “The Teacher and the War Relocation Project.” Since the WRA was the agency overseeing the relocation centers, it took on the responsibility to design an education program with two primary tasks. First, all students who matriculated through the educational program in camp should have developed a foundational “understanding of American ideals, loyalty to American institutions, and training for the responsibilities of citizenship, of family, and for economic independence.” Additionally, the educational curriculum was supposed to provide the resources to help all individuals “adjust to the shock of evacuation and to the unusual conditions of life within the relocation centers, and prepare them for reabsorption with a minimum of handicap and friction into normal civilian life.”⁵⁶ The curriculum taught in schools in the relocation centers provided opportunities to role-play potential real-life scenarios that young Japanese Americans might encounter after leaving camp. Although practicing these real-life scenarios intended to make young people feel confident to encounter a variety of situations in mainstream society, the students expressed notable uneasiness, which is evident from the educational materials that students co-created with their teachers.

Students actively participated in creating the curriculum that would help prepare them for reentry into life on the outside of the barbed wire. Sixth grade students at Rohwer developed the script for a play, entitled “Let’s Relocate.” A notation at the beginning of the script indicated that the play was created entirely by the students and was reproduced exactly as they wrote it. While certainly plausible, students intertwined

⁵⁶ War Relocation Authority, “The Teacher and the War Relocation Project,” n.d. Found in the Melvin P McGovern Papers, Collection 2010, Box 119, Folder 12, University of California, Los Angeles Special Collections.

their concerns (or those of their families) with the WRA's central goal into the script, demonstrating a keen awareness of the expectations that awaited them outside of the barbed wire enclosure that isolated them since 1942. The play explored two families' thoughts on the process of resettlement. The Yamaguchi family began to think through their resettlement plans, with the understanding that there was no future for those who planned to extend their time in the War Relocation Centers. When Mrs. Yamaguchi asked her friend Mrs. Matsumoto if her family planned to relocate, she sheepishly admitted that they have decided against it. Mrs. Matsumoto listed the fears that she had of being unable to find housing and encountering prejudice outside of the relocation center. Mrs. Yamaguchi offered up her opinion on the benefits of relocating while Mrs. Matsumoto's two children Martha and Henry suggested to their mother, "it's better on the outside." When Henry asked Mrs. Yamaguchi if her family planned to relocate to Chicago, like so many other families from his block, she indicated that they opted not to since so many other Japanese Americans have relocated there already. "It is not very good to have the Japanese settle in one place," Mrs. Yamaguchi suggests, as if quoting verbatim from one of Dillon Myer's speeches from his public relations circuit.⁵⁷

The difference between the Issei and Nisei's perspectives on the process of resettlement revealed through the characters' dialogue, reflected the divergent mindsets of the two generations. For the young Nisei, despite having some reservations, life beyond the barbed wire had infinite possibilities. This was represented by the kids saying

⁵⁷ War Relocation Authority, "Exhibit I: Let's Relocate," *Teachers' Handbook on Education for Relocation*, Intermediate Grades, Supplementing Manual Section 30.3, 27 April 1944, War Relocation Authority: 2. Found in the Melvin P. McGovern Papers, Collection 2010, Box 119, Folder 2, University of California, Los Angeles Special Collections.

“it’s better on the outside” in the play and Arthur Okusu depicting success in his imagery of life after the incarceration. For the Issei, though, the thought of having to start over again seemed like a daunting impossibility. For members of this immigrant generation, now near or at retirement age and without citizenship rights, the same possibilities that the Nisei envisioned did not seem possible. Inclusion of this differing outlook, though, indicated that Nisei understood and empathized with the limitations and fears of their Issei parents. While Nisei appeared optimistic about the future, they simultaneously embodied feelings of uncertainty, which was evident by the way these junior high school students incorporated this sentiment into their script. Although youth of this age were unlikely responsible for making resettlement plans for their families, they were privy to the sentiments of their parents and adult family members, which influenced their understanding of resettlement.

The War Relocation Authority’s curriculum on “education for relocation” at the secondary school level attempted to help high school-age students come to terms with their insecurities of reintegrating back into mainstream society after being incarcerated for two years. The preface to the educational objectives for the lesson on “relocation,” instructed teachers that “reasons must be given for the fear in their [students’] hearts, for the present discrimination, and for their failure to relocate.”⁵⁸ The curriculum was designed to help students understand typical challenges to relocation including: racial discrimination, fear and feeling of inferiority, financial problems, lack of initiative, age of

⁵⁸ War Relocation Authority, “Exhibit VIII: Relocation Unit – Secondary School,” *Teachers’ Handbook on Education for Relocation*, Intermediate Grades, Supplementing Manual Section 30.3, 27 April 1944, War Relocation Authority: 2. Melvin P. McGovern Papers, Collection 2010, Box 119, Folder 2, University of California, Los Angeles Special Collections.

parents, fathers interned at Department of Justice camps separately from families, the types of jobs and wages available on the “outside” and ignorance about possible resettlement localities. Curriculum entitled “Exhibit VIII,” part of a unit on relocation for secondary- school students aimed to help them understand “evacuation and the resulting problems.”⁵⁹

The curriculum, which enumerated the challenges that resulted from the forced removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast was an indication that the WRA acknowledged the repercussions that this process caused. The goal of this lesson was to help incarcerated understand the intricacies of racial discrimination, the feelings of racial inferiority that young Nisei felt, lack of initiative, financial challenges, types of jobs and wages available outside of the camps, and lack of understanding about potential resettlement cities. Talking openly about these realities and equipping them with solutions was the intended outcome of the curriculum to help students come to terms with them and move forward with resettlement outside of the centers. Yet, talking about them in theory only went so far in preparing these youth for the realities that lay ahead.

Additionally, the secondary school and adult education curriculum intended to provide practical information to help early resettlers navigate immediate challenge, such as travel from the relocation centers to their final destinations as well as interaction with various groups of people that they might encounter once they settled into their new

⁵⁹ War Relocation Authority, “Exhibit VIII: Relocation Unit – Secondary School,” *Teachers’ Handbook on Education for Relocation*, Intermediate Grades, Supplementing Manual Section 30.3, 27 April 1944, War Relocation Authority: I. Melvin P. McGovern Papers, Collection 2010, Box 119, Folder 2, University of California, Los Angeles Special Collections.

communities. The lesson plans, comprised of a detailed outline of topics and subtopics covered in these units, provided just enough information to glean what detainees at the War Relocation Centers learned as part of the “Relocation Unit.”⁶⁰ Subtopics nested under the first topic of: “How to travel and find your way about in strange places,” included: how to use a railroad station, etiquette of travel, including: tipping, conversation, dress, and purchasing tickets, as well as tips on how to find street addresses and landmarks. Some incarcerated may have appreciated the comprehensive information, especially after being removed from mainstream society for over two years. Yet, the thoroughness of the information may have been anxiety producing for other detainees, causing them to doubt their ability to do the types of activities that were once a part of their daily routine like purchase train fare, dress appropriately, or follow directions to an address.

The lesson plan provided detailed instruction on how to land employment, underscoring the importance of attitude and appearance to win over potential employers. The curriculum attempted to prepare Japanese Americans on how to respond to situations of rejection on the basis of their ancestry, suggesting “...I’m an American. I chose this country to live in and work in because I like it better than any other country. I’m out here ready to do my best when manpower is needed and everybody ought to be working hard together, and not fighting each other. How about giving your support to democracy by

⁶⁰ War Relocation Authority, “Exhibit IX: Relocation Unit – High School and Adult,” *Teachers’ Handbook on Education for Relocation*, Intermediate Grades, Supplementing Manual Section 30.3, 27 April 1944, War Relocation Authority: 1. Found in the Melvin P. McGovern Papers, Collection 2010, Box 119, Folder 2, University of California, Los Angeles Special Collections.

working together, now, for a better world?...”⁶¹ Preparing future resettlers to handle potentially discriminatory hiring practices was an acknowledgment of the tense social climate that existed beyond the barbed wire of the relocation centers. While in the confines of a classroom in one of the War Relocation Centers, practicing this dialogue may have seemed like good preparation for the inevitable reintegration into mainstream society, yet it would have been much harder to assert this scripted dialogue when the opportunity presented itself.

Providing tips on how to navigate activities inherent to everyday life demonstrated the significant consequences that resulted from the major disruption that incarceration caused. Having to coach adults on how to go about the tasks of daily living revealed the psychological impacts of the upheaval. It also underscored the reality that school age children required instruction on how to navigate the activities of daily living in mainstream society since they had been sheltered from reality for a considerable period of time. Addressing junior high and high school students was critical to resettlement since these younger Nisei likely needed to help their Issei parents make decisions and direct their reintegration into mainstream society.

In addition to the educational curriculum on “relocation,” the WRA produced promotional literature highlighting myriad reasons why a Japanese American family should relocate to a town in the Midwest or East. Despite the comforting photographs and updates of early resettlers that the WRA circulated in various resettlement-focused publications, many Japanese Americans remaining in the relocation centers felt

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

apprehensive. Starting over in a new city far from home, especially as the war continued, seemed daunting despite the staged photos that were meant to provide encouragement.

“Cincinnati: A City of Families” was one of several promotional guides that the War Relocation Authority published to encourage indefinite leave and dispersal of the population to a variety of cities. Each booklet in the series featured a different city, yet they all contained similarly reassuring rhetoric and staged photographs of well-adjusted Japanese resettlers. WRA Great Lakes Area Supervisor Robert M. Cullum’s forward in a booklet entitled: “Cincinnati: A City for Families,” attempted to provide reassurance to potential resettlers about moving to the U.S.’ seventeenth largest city, noting: “Living there (in Cincinnati) there are several hundred newcomers from Relocation Centers. We thought you might like to know who they are and how they are getting along... Those who have settled in Cincinnati did not hesitate to bring their families out. Issei get along well. The other day, a former Rohwer resident summed it up like this—“Cincinnati is a cordial city. There is opportunity. Like many other places, the outcome depends on you.”⁶² The booklet proceeded to provide a general overview of what one could expect upon arriving in Cincinnati. The literature first noted the two hostels in the city that provided immediate, yet temporary housing for individuals and families.

The following pages provided reassuring information about the availability of housing, job opportunities, and social services in this resettler-friendly city. Unlike other American cities, Cincinnati did not have a severe housing shortage. Additionally, without alien land restrictions, Japanese American resettlers would be able to purchase homes,

⁶² War Relocation Authority Great Lakes Area, “Cincinnati: A Place for Families,” Cleveland, OH, May 1945. Found in the Shimomura Collection, Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

regardless of their citizenship status. Mrs. Yoshio Shimizu was pictured in the brochure, preparing a meal in the duplex home that she and her husband purchased in Cincinnati after relocating from Poston a year earlier.⁶³ The booklet suggested jobs were plentiful, focusing on the opportunities for Issei gardeners and domestics, which often included room and board for couples. Opportunities to own agricultural land were plentiful in the Midwest and Eastern portions of the country without restrictive legislation in place to prevent aliens from purchasing property.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 5.

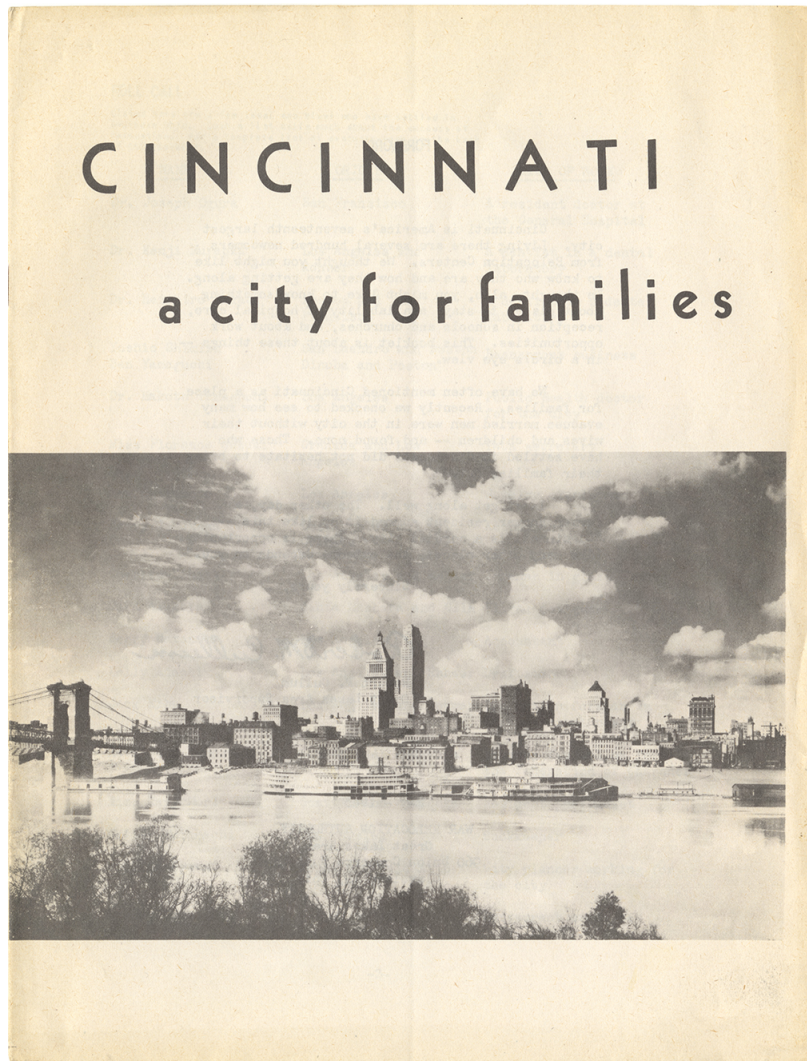


Figure 2.3: Cover of "Cincinnati: A City for Families," a WRA resettlement publication. Japanese American National Museum (Gift of the Estate of Moriso and Asako Nishihara, JANM 94.225.1)

Cincinnati seemed promising, or, at least from the WRA's perspective. The prospect of owning a home and or agricultural land made resettlement in a city like Cincinnati seemed desirable. "Cincinnati: A City for Families" stressed the superior quality of the school system from elementary school through the university level in Ohio. The booklet ended with excerpts from Cincinnati employers who were open to hiring

Japanese Americans. Members of the Young Women's Christian Association provided supportive comments, which was to be expected, given the mission of the organization and the tremendous support that it provided to Japanese Americans throughout the war. Yet, the comment from a representative of Arnoff Galleries, Inc. carried greater significance since it exemplified the opinion of an average citizen—a potential neighbor and employer to resettlers. The proprietor of Arnoff Galleries, Inc. was quoted as saying: “In my opinion these people (evacuee employees) have as much to offer our country constructively as each of the many races and creeds that have contributed to the making of the real American.” Comments like these on the last page of the booklet intended to leave a lasting impression of Cincinnati as a welcoming community to Japanese American resettlers.⁶⁴ While these welcoming comments from residents of Cincinnati were genuine, they were selective. The WRA used “Cincinnati: A City for Families,” which was published in May 1945, to entice people leaving camp to consider a place like Cincinnati, despite having a multitude of destinations to choose from, including the West Coast.

Not only did the WRA staff influence where resettlers decided to resettle, but they also attempted to orchestrate how Japanese Americans reintegrated into society. Once detainees determined where they would resettle, they looked to another WRA bulletin for practical guidance on how to initiate the process. In preparation for incarcerated's departure from the camps, the WRA distributed literature, outlining procedures for leaving the Centers as well as a list of generic resources available to help ease the transition. Incarcerated at the Amache War Relocation Center received a “Resettlement Handbook,”

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 11.

compiled by the Evacuee Information Office as a guide to facilitate the process. The cover of the handbook depicted a man exploring a globe, suggesting the seemingly endless possibilities of destinations for travel and resettlement. Yet, the contents of the handbook failed to provide in depth information necessary to help Japanese secure basic services and needs, like housing or employment once they reached their final destination. Instead, the booklet included empty, broad sweeping statements, such as “there are many services available to help in your transition.”⁶⁵

The vague descriptions in the guides prompted greater anxiety rather than the confidence required to re-enter society. Another WRA instruction booklet, “When You Leave the Relocation Center,” intended to provide further information on the logistics of transitioning back into mainstream society. In a section titled “You Can Help in Many Different Ways,” the WRA suggested that early resettlers could contribute to the success of the relocation program by aiding the subsequent arrivals of others. According to the guide, early resettlers should ideally become settled within a community and make friends. The language in the guide suggested that by following these basic steps, one could establish a “normal, satisfying life,” as well as a favorable impression amongst the general public. Ultimately the guide suggested that following this progression would lead to:

success for the early resettler that may encourage other evacuees who have been hesitant to see opportunities to leave the centers... In your work and in your social contacts, be alert to opportunities for employment for other evacuees. If and when other evaucees move to your community, you can be helpful to them in locating places to live and getting acquainted with

⁶⁵ Evacuee Information Office, Granada Project, “Resettlement Handbook,” Amache, Colorado, 1945. Found in the Armed Forces History Collection, National Museum of American History.

the community and with people you have met. In a sense, you are an “ambassador” for the entire group of evacuated people.”⁶⁶

Here, the WRA encouraged early resettlers to help facilitate the relocation of subsequent groups of former incarcerated. Early resettlers would become proxy agents for WRA staff working in field offices in some of the resettlement cities. Although it may have seemed logical to ask seemingly “well-adjusted” resettlers to encourage others to join them and then to facilitate their resettlement, this ultimately countered the WRA’s intention to break up the population. It encouraged recent resettlers to become dependent on other Japanese Americans and more likely to socialize and live amongst one another, facilitating the re-formation of little enclaves.

⁶⁶ War Relocation Authority, “When You Leave the Relocation Center,” October, 1944: 6. Found in Record Group 210, E-6, Box 5 at the National Archives.



Figure 2.4: map of exclusionary zone, resettlement cities, and WRA field offices from *Why Relocate?* Japanese American National Museum (Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Charles Ferguson, 97.177.9.)

When the Army rescinded exclusion from the West Coast early in 1945 Japanese Americans were initially cautious to return to the West Coast for fear of racial backlash. Although Japanese Americans began to return to Southern California in January, they did not arrive in large numbers until the latter part of 1945. Japanese who returned to Los Angeles after the war were forced to navigate an extremely complex social climate. Conflicting images in the media and popular culture informed Americans' perception of Japanese Americans after the war, perpetuating stereotypes and in some cases, inciting racial violence. Racially-charged political cartoons, initially produced as wartime

patriotic propaganda, loomed large in the social backdrop of American society and continued to associate Japanese Americans with “the enemy,” in the early postwar era.⁶⁷

As the WRA tried to prepare former incarceratedees of what to expect when they left the War Relocation Centers, they initiated a public relations campaign to quell concerns from mainstream America and counter the racial stereotypes of persons of Japanese ancestry that pervaded much of the electronic and print media. The impressive record of the soldiers of the 442nd, 100th Infantry Battalion, and Military Intelligence Service caused the Nisei soldier to be the archetype of the “model minority” image, suggesting that Japanese Americans had successfully overcome racism through the valiant efforts of Nisei on the battlefield.⁶⁸ Additionally, the WRA’s Photographic Section circulated staged photographs of Japanese Americans, taken between 1943-1945 in the “relocation centers” as well in cities in the Midwest, the sites of early resettlement. Captions that emphasized the loyalty of those depicted accompanied the photographs in various publications and newspapers with widespread circulation as a way to engender a more welcoming social climate for Japanese Americans after the war, especially since anti-Japanese sentiment remained heightened on the West Coast. WRA photographers captured thousands of photographs portraying Japanese Americans in a positive light in

⁶⁷ Cartoons and other visual culture created during WWII as war propaganda depicted Japanese in very stereotypical ways and labeled them as “the enemy.” These stereotypical depictions of Japanese continued to appear in long after WWII, although there was a shift in the way Japanese characters were perceived. By 1961, Joe Jitsu, was introduced to American audiences as one of Dick Tracy’s crime fighters, rather than one of his opponents. Despite being “one of the good guys,” Joe Jitsu still maintained stereotypical Japanese mannerisms as he subdued criminals with his signature move of grabbing them by one of their wrists and employing a judo-like move that flipped them back and forth on to the ground while uttering, “So sorry!” and “Excuse, please!” in apology for his actions. See: Dick Tracy – minisode EP 04 “Pearl Thief Grief,” <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ebkHaqK3J50>>

⁶⁸ In contrast, the popular Hollywood film *Go For Broke!* (1951) starring Van Johnson dramatically recounted the accomplishments of the segregated, all-Japanese American regiments.

an attempt to persuade public opinion that the Japanese coming to live in their town were upstanding.⁶⁹ The resulting body of publicity photographs was meant to quell discrimination and eliminate distrust of the Japanese returning to the West Coast. This may have seemed ironic coming from the same branch of the federal government that enforced the theory that the incarceration of Japanese during WWII was a necessary national security measure. The WRA needed to show that the federal government was justified in incarcerating 120,000 individuals as well as successful in its project to “Americanize” the Japanese population.

These WRA photographs were a sharp contrast to the overtly racist images portrayed in mainstream newspapers, motion pictures, and advertisements, creating conflicting images and narratives as to where Japanese Americans fit within the racial hierarchy understood by mainstream society. Despite the attempts of local religious and philanthropic groups as well as government officials to diffuse racial tensions, the majority of Japanese Americans returned to the West Coast feeling that their presence was not welcome.⁷⁰

JAPANESE AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES ON EARLY RESETTLEMENT

Editorial columns within camp newspapers attempted to allay fears of reentry into mainstream society by early 1943. An editorial in the *Gila Courier News* in February urged detainees to “wake up” and shake off feelings of complacency and self-pity.

⁶⁹ War Relocation Authority Photographic Section collection

⁷⁰ See: Japanese American Historical Society of Southern California, *Nanka Nikkei Voices: Resettlement Years* for memoirs that include anecdotes of what it was like to return to the West Coast in the immediate years after World War II, 1945-1955.

Instead of asking the question “why not stay here?,” which was on the minds of so many, the editorial suggested that incarceratedees needed to focus on determining plans for life after camp. The urgency to begin to make plans resulted from the inability to return to their previous lives on the West Coast. Even if this had been an option, the editorial confirmed that their homes and jobs were occupied and held by others. Without the option to return to their lives before the war, incarceratedees needed to put serious thought into future plans.

Complacency behind the barbed wire also masked incarceratedees’ fear of violence from the mainstream population on the outside. A subsequent editorial that appeared in March in the Gila camp newsletter acknowledged that the stories of hostility towards Japanese Americans had been receiving significant attention in part due to evacuees’ pessimism as well as suspicion of the outside.⁷¹ While the editorial recognized that campaigns by special interest groups on the West Coast to prevent the return of Japanese Americans had intensified, the overall volume of “yellow-peril” propaganda diminished, especially in the Middle West and Rocky Mountain states where more favorable opinions of Japanese Americans had been expressed in newspapers there, making them suitable places to resettle. The editorial acknowledged incarceratedees’ fears of physical violence and hostility on the outside, but attempted to assure them that these notions were founded on rumors rather than solid evidence.

The Gila Courier News ascribed to a position of support for the WRA’s official plan, which was similarly espoused in the *Pacific Citizen*, the newspaper of the Japanese American Citizens League. Editorials in these newspapers encouraged incarceratedees to

⁷¹ “Editorial: Abolish Fears of Resettlement,” *Gila News Courier*, 20 March 1943: 2. Found in Folder 2, Box 5 in Collection 0305 at the Archives Center at the National Museum of American History.

comply with the WRA's relocation program, put down roots in a city in the midwest or east, and help to create a positive image of Japanese Americans for the general public. Regardless of the encouragement from editorials like this one and reassuring letters from early resettlers, many maintained fears of the reception they would receive upon leaving camp. Despite assurance that the WRA and its relocation offices, church groups, and other benevolent organizations would be on hand to help with the transition back into society, early resettlers knew that they would ultimately be responsible not only for their own welfare, but to create a positive image for all persons of Japanese ancestry that would soon follow in their departure from the camps.

In an editorial for *The Pen*, the newspaper for the Rohwer Relocation Center, K. Harper Sakaue suggested that the onus for creating a positive image was on Japanese American resettlers. He acknowledged the intense social climate on the West Coast and suggested that the majority of Americans would develop their impressions based on the interactions they would have with early Japanese American resettlers. Despite acknowledging this responsibility, he rhetorically asked: "where do we go from here?" Sakaue provided reassurance for those about to begin the process of resettlement by sharing one Nisei's opinion that no one was more understanding than those in the eastern states. This same individual who had recently undergone the process of resettlement suggested that Nisei had the obligation to "fight hard, work hard, and show them [White Americans east of the exclusion zone] what Californians said about persons of Japanese ancestry was wrong. Sakaue additionally suggested: "When we relocate, let's shoulder our responsibility and see that our conduct, conversation, and committal to work will find

us commendable. Where do we go from here to take our rightful place in our American society? The key to the answer is up to each of us. Let us grow and build a pleasing personality that will find acceptance...”⁷²

Sakaue’s urging to Nisei to make a good impression on members of the mainstream population was an indication that he subscribed to the WRA’s objective for Japanese Americans to disperse widely throughout the Midwest and Eastern portions of the country as well as become fully integrated into mainstream society. Sakaue indicated that each individual had to do much more than focus solely on his/her own situation. Since the majority of ordinary Americans throughout the country had never met a Japanese American, the early resettlers would become crucial ambassadors for all Japanese Americans. Although former incarcerated shouldered the seemingly daunting burden of creating a favorable impression for all of the Japanese Americans who would eventually integrate back into society, Sakaue seemed to maintain a positive disposition towards resettlement in the Midwest or Eastern United States.

Additionally, Sakaue’s optimism intended to quell feelings of apprehension that many Issei mothers experienced in thinking about their college-age children, especially young women, beginning the process of resettlement alone. Many Issei mothers expressed great concern since this was the first time that their Nisei children would be separated from the family. One young Nisei woman who resettled in St. Louis commented that while her father urged her to resettle, her mother was more reluctant, given the worrisome rumors that Issei women swapped of “girls going wrong after they

⁷² K. Harper Sakaue, “Where Do We Go From Here,” *The Pen*, Rohwer Relocation Center, 1943: 67. Found in Collection 0305, Box 4, Folder 1 at the Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

got out of camp.”⁷³ Although the young Nisei reminded her mother that she was still a nice girl and always would be, it seemed as though her mother was finally reassured upon receiving a good report from resettlers who had passed through St. Louis and noted her situation. Although Issei parents may have worried how their daughters or sons might act without constant reminder of the cultural values that they had grown up with, they also were highly concerned over sending their children into a hostile social climate that existed beyond the confines of the camp.

Sakauye’s column functioned as a mouthpiece of the WRA, espousing the agency’s resettlement policy from an insider. To many Issei and Nisei, Sakauye’s advice might have sounded comforting. They had grown up honoring Japanese values, which discouraged making waves or calling attention to their actions. If early resettlers were only required to uphold those values, in order to seamlessly blend into the greater society, this sounded feasible. Editorials like Sakauye’s or those of Mary Oyama or Bill Hosokawa gave resettlers a sense of confidence to set out for new places to start over. Hosokawa assured his readers that settling eastward offered “unexpected possibilities for advancement and social assimilation...in the long run, the integration and acceptance of Japanese Americans would be speeded by wide dispersal.”⁷⁴ While statements like these were reassuring, they glossed over the realities of the challenges that lay beyond the barbed wire.

⁷³ Setsuko Matsunaga, “The Adjustment of Evacuees in St. Louis,” Washington University Study on the resettlement of Japanese Americans in St. Louis, November, 1944: 2. Found in the National Archives, RG 210, E-8, Box 8, Folder: Setsuko Matsunaga.

⁷⁴ Bill Hosokawa, Editorial, *Pacific Citizen*.

Tomi Kobata had optimism about the future, but unlike Arthur Okusu's imagination of what life after camp could entail or advice from the many editorial columns, his sentiment was based on actual experience. Following his arrival in the Midwest, Kobata wrote a letter to his former teacher in Sacramento, Miss Cox, describing the sense of relief that he felt following his departure from camp. No longer was he subjected to the constant worry and fear that detainees shared of the perceived prejudice towards them. Kobata confirmed that he did not experience any mistreatment on the train ride to his new home, instead finding that passengers on the train were "like those back in California pre-war." Upon arrival to his final destination in the Midwest, Kobata noted that Midwesterners in general received Americans of Japanese ancestry well. His positive experience led him to encourage others to "take opportunity of outside employment approved by W.R.A. for those in camp and mingle with others and let them see for themselves [sic] they are not too different instead of having others just believe of what they read."⁷⁵ Testimonies like Kobata's as well as the editorials that appeared in Japanese American newspapers set the tone for early resettlers while continuing to advance the WRA's objective, whether consciously or not.

CHALLENGES OF EARLY RESETTLEMENT

Although camp newspaper editorials indicated that cities in the midwest and east, like Chicago would be ideal for early resettlement, Charles Kikuchi's "Interim Report of Resettler Adjustment in Chicago," revealed a different reality. His report laid out the

⁷⁵ "Tomi Kobata letter to Miss Cox," part of the "Gerald Lamboley Collection of Japanese-American Letters, 1942-43," found in Collection 0450 in the Archives Center at the National Museum of American History.

struggles that early resettlers faced upon arrival in their new city. Kikuchi indicated while the WRA and other relief organizations intended to help resettlers obtain housing and employment, they struggled to keep up with the demand. In February 1943, Japanese Americans arrived in Chicago with the understanding that the newly formed WRA relocation office would be able to assist them with all matters necessary to get them established. Some resettlers needed help obtaining another job when the first that they secured was the wrong fit. These unexpected needs further taxed WRA staff as they attempted to help other new arrivals look for their first job. Resettlers expressed frustration at the lack of expediency from the WRA staff, which resulted from the limited number of staff and the overwhelming need for assistance.

At the request of the project director at the Topaz War Relocation Center for resettlement assistance planning, an “insider,” observed and commented on the acclimation process outside of the relocation centers. The Japanese American “observer,” presumably identified as “Dr. Goto,” listed challenges of early resettlers like himself. In April 1943, Dr. Goto observed, the reformation of “Little Tokyos and Little Yokohamas seemed to be the trend of resettlement. This is not the fault of the evacuees because the same old problem of racial prejudice relative to residents of any city is cropping up. Therefore, people going to various cities are more or less forced to live close to each other.”⁷⁶ In this overview of challenges that Japanese Americans faced reintegrating into

⁷⁶ “Report for the War Relocation Authority Community Analysis Section,” 3 April 1943. Found in the Japanese American Relocation and Resettlement Collection at the Bancroft Library. Although the author’s name is not officially included anywhere on the document, there are prominent clues that the observations are those of a Japanese American given repeated instances of “we” and “our,” as in “we cooperated” and “our loyalty.” Someone handwrote “Probably Dr. Goto” at the top of the document. Could this be Dr. Goto,

mainstream society, the author pointed out that it was not the resettlers who were actively orchestrating this, but rather a natural tendency in response to the racial prejudice towards persons of Japanese ancestry, spurred by the ongoing war with Japan.

Researchers at the University of Washington conducted a study on the adjustment of resettlers in St. Louis. The results of the study, which were published in a report in 1944, revealed a great amount of prejudice that Japanese Americans encountered in this midwestern resettlement city, particularly in terms of securing employment. Resettlers described encounters with potential employers who bluntly asked for the applicant's race and made it clear that the person would not be hired in response to revealing his/her Japanese ancestry. The report indicated that resettlers' residences were scattered, causing them to encounter individuals of other races more frequently and therefore experience more tense encounters. As a result, Japanese American resettlers made a conscious effort to congregate together to provide support for one another.

Although the WRA, sympathetic White Americans and editorials in the Japanese American Citizens League's newspaper, *The Pacific Citizen* urged early resettlers to become integrated into their new communities, Donald and Sophie Toriumi, Christian missionaries who were instructed to assess the early resettlement process noticed that resettlers tended toward the distinctive formation of resettler communities in cities including Chicago, Cleveland, and New York. In their summary report, the Toriumis noted: "the settlement of relocatees in fairly concentrated areas is not primarily by their

who had a medical practice in Los Angeles before and after the war? This makes some sense since the author discusses the difficulty that Japanese American professionals are encountering in obtaining the licenses necessary to practice their profession.

own choice... Here and there we found whole apartment buildings completely occupied by Japanese American families who had come one by one. In several cities where they are few in number, the relocatees told us they felt lonely and wanted social contact with other relocatees. Unless their jobs were especially congenial, many relocatees, particularly young people, in the sparsely relocated areas expressed this view.”⁷⁷

Although though resettlers’ residences in St. Louis were scattered, they socialized mainly with one another, forming a small Japanese American social network in response to the presumed prejudice directed towards them. A similar process took place in other resettlement cities. Japanese American resettlers began to look inward to develop networks for social activities, such as attending religious services or engaging in YMCA programs. Given their unique wartime experience and the tensions that remained for the duration of the war, it seemed natural that Japanese American resettlers would seek out one another in their new places of residence.

In a sense, though, the WRA publications aided the reformation of Japanese Americans communities, countering the agency’s objective to disperse the population widely throughout the country. The WRA highlighted the community institutions that were beginning to form—the Japanese American religious institutions that became established, the Japanese American businesses that were opening, and listing the names of individuals who already settled in a particular resettlement city in the guides that they produced. By doing this, the WRA ultimately encouraged the redevelopment of small, yet tight-knit Japanese American communities in a variety of resettlement cities.

⁷⁷ Donald and Sophie Toriumi, “Re-Living Americans,”: 7.

As a result of being isolated from the mainstream population while they were incarcerated and now separated from their family and friends, severe discontent settled in amongst early resettlers. The isolation caused many to turn to other Japanese Americans for opportunities to socialize in the resettlement cities. In St. Louis, the Young Christian Womans Association's programs and the Christ Church Cathedral-sponsored InterAmerican Open House became central to the social life of these new resettlers.⁷⁸ Although there was criticism that these organizations were encouraging Japanese Americans to congregate in their attempt to bring them out of isolation, they fulfilled a social need for this new population.

Reports of the challenges of resettlement deeply influenced detainees that remained at the relocation centers, causing them to explore alternatives to the WRA's plan for dispersed settlement. The Rohwer Committee for [the] Study of Relocation Problems, comprised of a group of Japanese American incarcerated at the Rohwer Relocation Center, issued a statement in an article for the November 1943 issue of *The Rohwer Outpost*, entitled: "Resettlement News by Committee." The article detailed incarcerated' fears about abiding by the WRA's plan for dispersed resettlement, especially for farmers. The members of the Rohwer Committee for Study of Relocation Problems feared that simmering tensions would continue to worsen, as action in the Pacific Theater was increasingly becoming the main focus of the war. The Committee determined that the WRA was currently failing to provide for the continued safety of those who had already begun to resettle outside the camp and feared what would happen if increasing

⁷⁸ Matsunaga: 6.

prejudice warranted a second “evacuation,” more disastrous than the first. Fearing that the WRA would not be able to adequately safeguard the Japanese American population if this concern became a reality, the committee put forth a suggestion that a “group relocation” program would be the best solution.⁷⁹ Under this proposal, 20-30 families would comprise a relocation group. They would form a self-sustaining community outside of the relocation centers. The committee assured that this idea would not conflict with the WRA’s resettlement aim, although the group’s statement was thin on an explanation of how 20-30 families clustering together outside of the camp did not conflict with the idea of dispersed resettlement.

The committee suggested that the WRA’s objective of dispersal of the population worked more seamlessly with Issei bachelors and individuals without family networks, yet argued how difficult it would be for single persons to become self-sustaining without the support of a network. Issei bachelors, too old, sick, or emotionally broken to work would have a difficult time supporting themselves and reconstructing their lives. Moreover, the Committee suggested that even for families, the arduous task of re-establishing themselves amidst strangers without support of a network was an unrealistic expectation. As a result, group relocation would minimize government dependence and create the conditions necessary for successful resettlement.

⁷⁹ The Rohwer Committee for Study of Relocation Problems, “Resettlement News by Committee,” *The Rohwer Outpost*, 20 Nov 1943, Found in Collection 0305, Box 4, Folder 8 in the Archives Center at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

ESTABLISHMENT OF JAPANESE AMERICAN COMMUNITIES IN RESETTLEMENT CITIES

In March 1944, Secretary of the Interior Ickes publicly shared a report summarizing the current status of the resettlement project on the eve of the second anniversary of the establishment of the War Relocation Authority. Ickes used the occasion as an opportunity to tout the progress of the wartime agency in working towards its goal of successfully resettling all who were put in the federal government's custody. The War Relocation Authority reported that 22,400 or approximately one-fifth of the 112,000 that were formerly living on the West Coast before they were sent to War Relocation Centers, were supporting themselves outside of the centers.⁸⁰ The report further detailed "19,000 had established themselves in communities scattered from the eastern boundary of the exclusion area to the Atlantic Coast."⁸¹ The remaining 2,000-3,000 others were on seasonal leave, mainly as farm workers...engaged in the agricultural job of contributing to the nation's food supply than in any other occupation." It was further noted that many were helping to relieve the manpower shortages in factories while others had volunteered for service in the United States Army.

Although most of the early resettlers were Nisei, or native-born Americans who had never been to Japan, the report emphasized that both citizens and aliens ineligible for

⁸⁰ Not all of the 112,000 were eligible for early resettlement. Those labeled disloyal due to the way they answered the loyalty questionnaire were deemed ineligible for indefinite leave. Instead, they were sent to Tule Lake, a camp that was designated for individuals and families being detained until their loyalty could be proven or awaiting to be repatriated. Additionally, elderly Issei, young Nisei families, and young mothers whose husbands were serving in the military, comprised the majority of the population that were unable to resettle early.

⁸¹ "Two Years: 22,400 Relocate Dept. of Interior Releases Annual Report," *Rohwer Outpost*, 25 March 1944, Vol. IV, No. 24: 3-5. Found in Collection 0305. Box 4, Folder 13 at the Archives Center, Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

citizenship (Issei) had been carefully screened and determined to be loyal, before they were granted permission to relocate. Secretary Ickes pointed out that the relocation program had been successful in moving people of Japanese descent from a comparatively narrow strip along the Pacific Coast. While there was truth to Ickes' statements, he glossed over the incredible obstacles that early resettlers faced. He also failed to mention the complications inherent to the resettlement policy that the agency set.

Despite the movement away from the West Coast, the resettlement patterns of former incarcerated did not preclude them from establishing tight knit social networks or congregating together upon resettlement. According to Ickes' report, approximately "7,000 of these former West Coast residents relocated in the Rocky Mountain states, with Utah and Colorado receiving the largest numbers. More than 12,000 have sought homes in states farther east, particularly in the Great Lakes region. Illinois, Ohio, and Michigan, in the order named have been favorite mid-western states for relocation. The most popular city was Chicago, where more than 3,500 were living by 1944. Other cities where considerable numbers of relocated according to WRA records, included Denver, Cleveland, Salt Lake City, Detroit, Minneapolis, New York, and Washington, DC.⁸²

⁸² *Ibid*, 3-5.

Resettlement City	Number of Japanese Americans who resettled as of March 1944
Chicago	3500
Denver	1083
Cleveland	787
Salt Lake City	740
Detroit	531
Minneapolis	464
New York City	406
Greater Washington, DC area	350

Table 1.1: Number of Japanese Americans Resettled in Cities in the Midwest and East Coast by March 1944.

While these numbers were small given the former size of Japanese American communities on the West Coast before the war, the individuals who resettled in these cities were enticed there in large part by the War Relocation Authority guides. Once there, though, they developed tight-knit communities as a way to navigate the challenges that starting over in a new city entailed. They formed religious institutions, cultural clubs, and sports leagues.

CONCLUSION

In accordance with the War Relocation Authority's relocation plan to disperse the Japanese American population widely across the United States, early resettlers left the War Relocation Centers and headed to cities in the Midwest and East. While the War Relocation Authority provided material intended to prepare former incarcerated to reenter mainstream society, the guides and curriculum fell short of preparing Japanese Americans for the obstacles ahead. "The Road Back to Normal Living" as it may have been perceived by the War Relocation Authority staff, columnists for some of the camp newspapers or the *Pacific Citizen*, or even some of the optimistic incarcerated proved to

be far more complex in reality. The challenges inherent to resettlement in cities across the Midwest and East caused resettlers to rely on one another for support, disregarding the WRA's instructions to avoid congregating together.

In 1945, once the West Coast reopened to Japanese Americans, the WRA's relocation plan continued to unravel. Despite having sizeable Japanese American populations in the early resettlement period, cities like Chicago, Denver, Cleveland, and Salt Lake City were not the only cities that Japanese Americans called home. Although the War Relocation Authority did not produce a version called "Los Angeles: A City for Families," Los Angeles became a common resettlement destination since it was home to the largest Japanese American population on the mainland United States before the war. The majority who remained in the camps, when the WRA made the announcement of impending closure of the relocation centers, included mainly elderly Issei, young Nisei families, and young mothers whose husbands were serving in the military. Many of these remaining incarceratedees comprised the population who came back to the West Coast. For those who remained in the relocation centers until the eve of their closure, each was issued train fare to the point of "evacuation," or the locality of their pre-war residence. For many who relocated to locations in the Midwest or East during the war, their early resettlement localities felt temporary as they never felt settled. Regardless of where they departed from, many looked towards the West Coast with hopes of cobbling together the lives that they maintained before the war.

With each trauma that persons of Japanese ancestry experienced throughout the war, beginning with their forced removal from their homes on the west coast, followed by

their stay in the temporary assembly centers, and finally their detention in concentration camps that were hastily constructed in remote parts of the interior of the country, they persevered. “*Shikata ga nai*,” which translates to “can’t be helped” was often the phrase that was often uttered in response to the series of traumas that characterized the Japanese American experience during the war.⁸³ Of those who resettled in the Midwest or East during the war, many felt settled, or at least as much as they could be as the unsettling times continued. Despite the obstacles they continued to face while making home in a new city, they persevered.

Many, especially those in professional lines of work, felt that they had attained opportunities that might not be available to them on the West Coast. Donald and Sophie Toriumi, Presbyterian missionaries, who left the Heart Mountain Relocation Center to assess early resettlement, noted that as a result, many early resettlers, particularly professionals in the medical field felt they were well received by their colleagues and patients. Similarly, many of the hundreds of resettlers working in the war industry felt that they had found acceptance. Many of these professionals and specialized workers decided not to return to the West Coast, at least not immediately after the exclusionary ban was lifted.

⁸³ Issei and Nisei who were incarcerated during World War II have commonly used the phrase *shikata-ga-nai* or “can’t be helped” to explain their wartime experience. *Shikata-ga-nai* and *gaman* (perseverance) are significant to Japanese culture, encouraging individuals to persevere and endure rather than make waves or go against the grain. Japanese Americans incarcerated during WWII often expressed these sentiments outwardly as a way to make the best of the situation, even if they felt differently. In the aftermath of World War II, Issei and Nisei’s response to incarceration with *shikata-ga-nai* has profoundly shaped the living memory and myths of the World War II detention experience.

Many, however, found that it was not easy to enter into an unfamiliar community, establish roots, and gain acceptance, particularly when their prior frame of reference about Chicago, Cincinnati, or Minneapolis may have been limited to the frigid weathers that were so unlike the climate they were used to on the West Coast. Some of these individuals never established a comfort level in their first stop outside of confinement. A nation-wide housing shortage made it difficult for many of these newcomers to find acceptable housing in urban areas in the Midwest or east. Some were not as lucky to land job opportunities equivalent to their skill, talent, or experience. As a result, it seemed many thought they had less to lose by returning to their prewar hometowns on the West Coast, even if the rumors of how they had changed in their absence proved to be true. They joined those departing from the relocation centers in returning home to the West Coast.

Perhaps the greatest challenge awaited those who returned to their former homes on the West Coast. Reports of a hostile social climate on the West Coast prepared future returnees to prepare for an arduous experience ahead. The remaining chapters focus on the story of those who returned to Los Angeles, which once again became the largest Japanese American community on the mainland. Although those who arrived in Los Angeles following the re-opening of the West Coast, carried on with a sense of “gaman,” (perseverance) making home again in Los Angeles would not be without significant struggle.

CHAPTER TWO

“RETURNING TO LOS ANGELES: A NISEI REPORT FROM HOME”

“Will 1944 be the year when a Nisei can walk down Main Street without being eyed? Even in Los Angeles? Will the whole world be united in one big brotherhood next year?”⁸⁴

-Editorial Hope of a New Year, Rohwer Outpost, January 1, 1944

“...Shattered dreams lie mute on the eroded, barren rows. With the closing of the ten concentration camps, what will our neighbors, now without land, do? Where will they go? How will they support their families? Why couldn't they have been allowed to keep a part of their farms?”⁸⁵

-Kiyō Sato

“We want you and other citizens of Japanese ancestry who have relocated here to feel secure in your homes and in your community life. Everything which local government can do to make your relocation smooth and pleasant is being done.”⁸⁶

-Los Angeles Mayor Fletcher Bowron, January 20, 1945

In July 1945, the *Pacific Citizen*, the national newspaper of the Japanese American Citizens' League reported the birth of Steven Jin Kawa to Toshiko and Taro Kawa of Los Angeles on June 8, 1945, shortly after the couple returned from the Gila River War Relocation Center in Arizona.⁸⁷ While the *Pacific Citizen* regularly ran announcements of births, engagements, marriages, and deaths of Japanese Americans nationwide, Steven's birth made news since he was believed to be the first Nisei born in

⁸⁴ “Editorial Hope of a New Year,” *Rohwer Outpost*, 1 Jan 1944, Vol. IV, No. 1

⁸⁵ Kiyō Sato, *Kiyō's Story: a Japanese –American family's quest for the American Dream*, New York: Soho Press, 2009: 244.

⁸⁶ “Mayor Bowron of Los Angeles Welcomes Japanese American Evacuees Back to California: Pledges City's Aid in Resettlement of Returning Nisei,” *Pacific Citizen*, 20 Jan 1945.

⁸⁷ “Report First Nisei Birth Since Evacuation in Los Angeles,” *Pacific Citizen*, 7 July 1945.

Los Angeles since 1942. Kawa's birth, nearly six months after the exclusionary ban on the West Coast was lifted, warranted attention since it signified a symbolic rebirth of the Japanese American community in Los Angeles.

Just a month after his son was born, Taro Kawa also brought new life to Enbun Company, the grocery and fish market that he operated in Little Tokyo prior to the war. In July 1945, Kawa removed the temporary construction boards covering the windows to his new grocery in preparation for its re-opening at 248 East First Street, next to Uyeda's 5-10-25 cent store and a few doors down from Enbun Company's pre-war location. More than half a year after Japanese Americans began returning to prewar homes on the West Coast, Enbun Company became the second business to become established in Bronzeville, formerly the predominantly Japanese American neighborhood known as Los Angeles's Little Tokyo.

Kawa, unlike many other Japanese Angelenos, had a livelihood to return to Los Angeles. Kawa monitored assets, inventory, and supplies related to the family business housed in storage facilities in Los Angeles in preparation to restart operations immediately after the war. Kawa's business acumen and diligence to keep tabs on the essentials to operate Enbun Co, which is documented through considerable correspondence with WRA officials, helped him to re-open the business quickly after he returned to Los Angeles.

The War Relocation Authority's file on "Enbun Company" indicated that unlike many other shopkeepers who sold their belongings prior to the forced removal in 1942, Kawa stored much of the contents of the store at the Mutual Trading Company building

at 333 East Second Street and later at the War Relocation Authority's storage facility on nearby Santee Street.⁸⁸ Lists on file with the WRA, provide an itemized inventory of the items that Kawa kept in storage. Although it was a risk that Kawa took, his decision to store his belongings combined with his luck that they were left untouched and easily accessible, helped him to re-establish himself upon his return.

Meanwhile as Kawa returned to Los Angeles to restart his life, Hisataro Yanai, also a Japanese Angeleno, remained at the Manzanar War Relocation Center with his wife Satsuyo and their four young children. Despite having the option to return to the West Coast, the Yanai family did not have the means necessary to immediately re-establish themselves anywhere on the "outside." Given their circumstances, the Yanais, just like many other remaining incarcerated opted to delay their terminal departure from the War Relocation Centers until they could secure a lead on housing or employment.

Since arriving in the United States in 1918, Hisataro Yanai worked numerous jobs, including: as a cook at a restaurant, a wholesale manager, and truck farmer in Los Angeles. In the immediate years before the war, Yanai and a business partner opened and operated a wholesale liquor business on 1st Street, along the edge of Los Angeles's Little Tokyo.⁸⁹ The type of business that Yanai owned may have been the reason why he was picked up by the FBI following the attack on Pearl Harbor, separated from his family, and sent to a Department of Justice detention center. Meanwhile, wife Satsuyo worked as a store clerk. Although Hisataro and Satsuyo managed to support their young family

⁸⁸ War Relocation Authority, "Enbun Co. Property" file, 1943-45. Found in the National Archives, RG 210, E-47, Box 80, Folder 513.88.

⁸⁹ Interview with Frances Yanai Wong, 12 Oct 2018. Frances is one of Hisataro and Satsuyo Yanai's children.

before the war, they struggled initially to re-establish themselves after the war.⁹⁰ The Yanais expanded their family of four during the war to include two more children. By February 1946, the Yanai family had left Manzanar and returned to Los Angeles. K.L. Yetter wrote a memorandum to Helen D. Davis, a colleague in the War Relocation Authority's Welfare Unit and noted: "the (Hisataro) Yanai family, with four young children were staying at the Koyasan Hostel in Little Tokyo, along with single Japanese men, without any leads on permanent housing."⁹¹ The ancillary detail about the presence of single Japanese men was as if to suggest the young Yanai children were at risk in this environment, as if it was a different situation from the concentration camp where they recently arrived from. Staff of the Welfare Unit monitored the Yanai family in hopes that they would be able to transition out of the temporary hostel as soon as possible. The Koyasan Hostel operated out of the Koyasan Buddhist Temple at 342 East First Street,

⁹⁰ An individual named "Hisato Yanai" appears in the 1930 Census as a boarder in a residence on East Second Street in Los Angeles. The date of birth and immigration date closely matches the information for Hisataro Yanai that was listed on his internee data file. In 1930, Yanai appears to be unmarried. Neither he nor his wife Satsuyo Yanai appear in the 1940 Census, although their oldest son Frank was born in the "Pacific States" in 1940, according to his internee data file. Hisataro Yanai did not share the same "individual number" with his wife and children. The "individual number," also referred to more colloquially as the "family number" was assigned when an individual registered the members of his/her family at a Civil Control Station prior to "evacuation." Hisataro Yanai was assigned 00232A while Satsuyo and her children Frank T. and Frances H. were assigned #01105, #01105B, and #01105C, respectively. The difference in number is an indication that Hisataro was picked up by the FBI shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor and separated from his wife and children for a time before they were reunited at Manzanar. "Records About Japanese Americans Relocated During World War II, created, 1988-1989, documenting the period 1942-1946 – Record Group 210" < <https://aad.archives.gov/aad/fielded-search.jsp?dt=2003&cat=WR26&tf=F&bc=,sl>> Accessed 5 Nov 2017. The author requested to see Hisataro Yanai and Satsuyo Yanai's "Evacuee Case File" at the National Archives. There was no problem in viewing Hisataro Yanai's file, but since Satsuyo Yanai's contained information about minors (her children) who could still be living, the author was not allowed to see the file without notarized written permission from each of the children or proof that they are deceased.

⁹¹ "Memorandum from K.L. Yetter to Helen D. Davis," National Archives, PI-77 Entry 47, Box 75, Folder 301.3. Yetter describes the Yanai family as having four young children, ranging in age from four to one. According to the internee data file, Frank T. Yanai, the oldest of the children, was born in 1940, which would have made him closer to five or six years old, depending on his birthdate.

just a few doors down from Taro Kawa's Enbun Market. For many others, like the Yanai family's situation illustrated, the return to Los Angeles was fraught with obstacles and challenges that resulted from losing what sustained them in the years prior to the war.

The Kawa and Yanai families' experiences bookend a range of ways in which Japanese Americans navigated their return to Los Angeles, following departure from America's concentration camps. While some returned directly from the relocation centers soon after the exclusionary ban was lifted, others came back after a short stay elsewhere in the midwestern or eastern part of the country. Additionally, a significant number reluctantly returned to Los Angeles at the WRA's instruction upon the closure of the relocation centers. Some came to Los Angeles for the first time after the war, as a result of a lead on employment or housing from someone they knew in the Greater Los Angeles area. A significant number of families had relative ease in re-establishing themselves, thanks to a benevolent neighbor or friend who watched over their home and or business. For many others, though, the return home was fraught with a series of challenges that caused resettlement to be as much of an upheaval as the incarceration itself.

Although some came to Los Angeles on their own volition since this was "home," others returned once the WRA decided to send those remaining in the War Relocation Centers, on the eve of their closure, to their prewar destinations. While many returned, it is significant to note that many did not return to their prewar communities in Southern California. Although Los Angeles was formerly home for many of the individuals who were incarcerated in WRA War Relocation Centers, if potential returnees had little to nothing left to build upon, other destinations seemingly promised a fresh start. For others,

the first opportunity to find employment and housing sometimes was outside the greater Los Angeles area.

Additionally, Hisataro Yanai and Taro Kawa's contrasting resettlement experiences reflect the varying impacts of wartime incarceration on the Issei and Nisei generations, respectively. Yanai, an Issei, was more limited in his opportunities in comparison to Kawa, who was a Nisei. During the war, the Nisei generation assumed the role of leadership from the Issei generation. Although the incarceration had a profound toll on incarcerated regardless of generation, the Issei remained aliens ineligible for citizenship and of an age that made the thought of starting over seem nearly impossible. The Nisei, however, were citizens by birth and at an age that made it easier to re-establish themselves, despite being confronted with the lingering prejudice and discrimination on the West Coast.

RE-OPENING OF THE WEST COAST: THE WRA'S PLAN

Taro Kawa and his family were amongst the first to return to Los Angeles once persons of Japanese ancestry were permitted to re-enter the wartime exclusionary zone, beginning on January 2, 1945. Despite the hostile social climate on the West Coast during the war and numerous suggestions of political leaders and special interest groups to permanently exclude Japanese Americans from returning to their prewar communities, Charles Bonesteel, head of the Western Defense Command began advocating for the end to exclusion in the summer of 1944. Soon, the Ex-parte Endo case reached the United States Supreme Court. Mitsuye Endo's case raised issues of occupational discrimination and argued that the mandatory removal from the West Coast and subsequent detention in

a relocation center prevented her from reporting to her job as a California state employee. Subsequently, in December, the United States Supreme Court ruled that “citizens who are concededly loyal” could no longer be detained in War Relocation Authority centers. This ruling, which diverged from the outcomes of the three Supreme Court cases that contested the constitutionality of the wartime incarceration of American citizens, put an end date on the exclusionary ban on the West Coast. On December 17, 1944, Governor Warren issued a memo to all chiefs of police and sheriffs noting:

The Commanding General of the Western Defense Command at 2 P.M. today has revoked the Japanese mass evacuation order to be effective January 2. In future those who have established loyalty to the satisfaction of army are to be permitted to return. Please take preliminary steps to avoid public controversy wherever possible and prevent any intemperate action that might result in civil disorder...Kindly notify all mayors and other public officials who may be in a position to assist you in bringing about cheerful and adequate compliance with this decision of our military commander.⁹²

Since termination of the exclusionary ban on the West Coast meant the War Relocation Authority’s resettlement program would become broader in scope, Director Dillon S. Myer conveyed a message to Japanese Americans who remained in the war relocation centers as well as those who had resettled in the midwestern and eastern regions of the country, explaining that the continued role of the War Relocation Authority to help return “people residing in relocation centers to private life in normal communities.” This was a seemingly big promise given the significant transformations that took place on

⁹² Earl Warren, “[Memorandum] to all Chiefs of Police and Sheriff,” 17 Dec 1944, Found in California State Archives, F3640, Earl Warren Papers, Administrative Files, Public Works – Race Relations, Japanese, December 1944.

the West Coast during the war. What constituted “normal communities,” for Japanese Americans returning home, especially in the wake of changes that the war brought? The influx of migrants from the South who came to urban industrial centers like Los Angeles to work in the aircraft production plants and shipyards that supplied the war industry, created demographic change in the former Japanese enclaves, like Los Angeles’s Little Tokyo.

When Los Angeles’s Little Tokyo, the center of the Japanese American community, became vacant following the forced removal of its pre-war residents, a sizeable African American community moved in, causing the area to become known casually as “Bronzeville.” Additionally, housing needs for GIs returning from overseas and their families put significant pressure on an already acute shortage. Simultaneously, a significant number of persons of Mexican ancestry who had been deported or “repatriated,” as government officials euphemistically termed it in the 1930s, began returning to Los Angeles. Moreover, an intense social climate on the West Coast that resulted from war hysteria, race baiting, and suspicion of the other, particularly of persons of Japanese ancestry generated a climate that was far from “normal.”

What would the return home mean for Japanese Americans, given these significant transformations? Despite these changes that took place during the height of the war and the objective of the WRA to disperse the population, officials realized that a significant number of Japanese Americans would choose Los Angeles as their final destination. Given this reality, Myer expressed a positive outlook on the lifting of the restrictive ban on the west coast in an attempt to ease the difficulty that would likely

accompany Japanese Americans' inevitable return. In an official message to individuals remaining in the relocation centers following the lifting of the exclusion order, Myer suggested:

The re-opening of the evacuated area and the broadening of the relocation program comes at a fortunate time for the evacuated people... Today, the evacuees as a group have more friends and supporters throughout the nation than at any previous time... The removal of the restrictions that formerly applied in the West Coast area underscores this growing public acceptance and should help to bring about even more widespread recognition of the fact that the great majority of the evacuees are loyal and law abiding people.⁹³

Although Myer provided an upbeat spin on West Coast residents' perception of Japanese Americans, he was quick to provide a disclaimer to potential resettlers, suggesting that they seriously consider all factors before moving back to their former communities. He cautioned them that the West Coast had undergone tremendous change since the beginning of the war, noting the influx of war workers, housing shortage, and the high cost of living due to war rationing. Myer suggested that family members remaining in the relocation centers should consider joining family or friends who have already resettled outside the exclusionary zone and cautioned those who have already gotten established elsewhere from returning to the West Coast immediately. Myer's advice followed the intention of the War Relocation Authority's resettlement program. Ultimately, though, the recent development to allow Japanese Americans to return to the West Coast caused Myer and the WRA staff to make preparations for this scenario. Yet,

⁹³ War Relocation Authority, "A Message from the Director of the War Relocation Authority, Dillon Myer," 1945: 1-2.

despite the War Relocation Authority, government agencies at the state and local levels, and charitable organizations' various attempts to prepare for the return of Japanese Americans to the region, they were unable to prevent the proliferation of discrimination that characterized the social climate in Los Angeles in 1945.

Discrimination towards Japanese Americans did not summarily end with the United States' defeat of Japan. Most Americans feigned an inability to differentiate Americans of Japanese ancestry from "the enemy." Whether they were ignorant or naïve is irrelevant. The ill effects from the resulting prejudice were the same. This was not new, of course. In fact, the intense prejudice that existed before the war accelerated while Japanese were incarcerated behind barbed wire in remote locations throughout the interior of the country. As a result, the same *dejure* and *defacto* discrimination that severely limited the upward mobility of Japanese Americans before the war persisted afterwards. This time, though, the psychological damage from the forced removal and subsequent incarceration as well as the ways in which these processes dismantled Japanese Americans' livelihoods, left many broken, feeling shamed, and penurious upon their return home to Los Angeles. Not only were Japanese Americans forced to navigate a changed landscape and hostile social climate in Los Angeles, they also had to decipher the duplicitous reactions from civic leaders and neighbors. For myriad reasons, the state violence persisted and the resettlement period essentially became a continuation of the incarceration.

WELCOME BACK?

In January 1945, Los Angeles Mayor Fletcher Bowron took a moment for a photo opportunity and to address several of the first Japanese Americans to begin the process of resettlement in the Southland, upon their return from America's concentration camps. Bowron conveyed what was assumed to be the sentiment shared by his fellow Angelenos, noting: "We want you and all other citizens of Japanese ancestry who have relocated here to feel secure in your homes and in your community life...Everything which local government can do to make your relocation smooth and pleasant is being done. We want you to join in with us in our united effort for victory."⁹⁴ Mayor Bowron's assurance of security and words of support were encouraging to the first of the former incarcerated to return to Los Angeles. Since fear of racist backlash influenced the War Relocation Authority's (WRA) decision to prohibit Japanese Americans from returning to the West Coast until 1945, former detainees were apprehensive about returning. Bowron's address conformed to the WRA's mandate for local and state governments to protect Japanese Americans returning to the West Coast from repercussions due to racism.

Yet, the seemingly reassuring words that Mayor Bowron included in his address were deceptive since they suggested that vehement racism and wartime hysteria against Japanese Americans had disappeared almost instantaneously. The information reported in the *Los Angeles Times* article raised a series of questions, such as: Did Bowron's sentiments represent the type of homecoming that Japanese Americans commonly received when they returned to the cities and neighborhoods that they were forcibly

⁹⁴ "Mayor Gives Greeting to Japanese Americans," *Los Angeles Times*, 15 Jan 1945: 7.

removed from three years earlier? What was the return to Los Angeles like for the thousands of Japanese Americans that returned over the next couple of years?

While Bowron may have seemed sincere in his welcome as Japanese Americans began to return to Los Angeles, he exhibited a complete turnaround from his position during the war. Prior to and during the war, Bowron vacillated publically toward the racial and ethnic diversity in the city throughout his tenure as an elected official, making it difficult to discern his personal leanings from his political shrewdness. Just a few a local newspaper amongst a multicultural group of Angelenos at “I am an American Day.”⁹⁵ This celebration, which Mayor Bowron ceremoniously led, was supposed to recognize ethnic diversity as one of the region’s strengths. The event also intended to remind citizens of their power to uphold democracy by voting in an upcoming election. Celebrating the region’s diversity and sending a message to all Angelenos of their voting power was completely incongruous to the various forms of *dejure* and *defacto* discrimination that the region’s ethnic and racial minorities were subjected to in terms of civil liberties, housing, health care, and employment.⁹⁶

This public celebration of multiculturalism intended to mask the realities of injustice that targeted the city’s ethnic populations, but the masquerade quickly faded with the United States’ entry into war. This was especially true for Japanese Americans

⁹⁵ “I am an American Day,” (photograph and caption clipped from an unidentified Los Angeles area newspaper), 1 April 1941, Found in the Clifford Clinton Papers in Special Collections at the University of California, Los Angeles.

⁹⁶ Just a few months prior to the United States’ entry into war, thousands of Mexican Americans were facing deportation from Los Angeles to Mexico due to economic pressures that resulted from the Great Depression. Meanwhile, Japanese nationals living on the West Coast were under FBI surveillance. Historians Natalia Molina, Charlotte Brooks, George Sanchez, and William Estrada are just a few of the scholars that explore these topics.

following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. Local, state, and federal officials rapidly implemented actions in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor that enabled them to forcibly and summarily remove persons of Japanese ancestry from their residences and businesses on the West Coast. With Japan's attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, persons of Japanese ancestry—the majority of which resided on the West Coast, became associated with the enemy.

In Los Angeles County, which was home to the largest Japanese American population in the country, Little Tokyo—located within a few blocks of the city's civic center—became completely deserted. Neighborhoods in the Sawtelle, Crenshaw (Seinan), Boyle Heights, Gardena, and Pasadena also felt the impact of the forced removal of Japanese Americans who made home here. Yet, while Los Angeles had a sizeable Japanese American population, the almost 37,000 residing in the County, was relatively small in relation to the overall population.⁹⁷ While the removal of a relatively small ethnic population may have seemed somewhat inconsequential strictly from a numbers perspective, it remained a crucial issue for many nativist groups. Without knowing when or if persons of Japanese ancestry would return, there was a large contingent of groups and individuals who put forth great effort to deny American born persons of Japanese descent constitutional rights and indefinitely bar them from returning to the West Coast.

⁹⁷ Midori Nishi, "Japanese Settlement in the Los Angeles Area," *Yearbook of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers*, Vol. 20, 1958: 39. According to Table I, which contains data compiled from reports of the United States Bureau of Census, the exact number of Japanese American residing in Los Angeles County in 1940 was 36,866 and the exact number in Los Angeles City was 23,321. *Need to double-check if the 23,321 are also counted as part of the 36,866 because the City of Los Angeles is part of Los Angeles County. For comparison, by 1950, the Japanese American population in Los Angeles County and the City of Los Angeles nearly reached the prewar numbers, just five years after the West Coast reopened. The exact numbers were 36,761 in the County and 25,502 in the City.

While this action was unprecedented, it was the culmination of a long trajectory of state-sanctioned violence. For decades, Japanese Americans had been subjected to discriminatory legislation that first limited and then halted further immigration, barred immigrants from attaining U.S. citizenship, and excluded them from being able to purchase land with the passage of the Alien Land law.

HEIGHT OF OPPOSITION TO JAPANESE AMERICANS DURING WWII

Despite Los Angeles Mayor Fletcher Bowron's earlier public celebration of multiculturalism in Los Angeles, he and other key civic and business leaders in California publicly supported the federal government's actions to summarily remove persons of Japanese ancestry from communities located within the exclusionary zone on the West Coast. Furthermore, they maintained the position that no person of Japanese ancestry should be permitted to return to the West Coast for the duration of the war. Knowing the highest ranking elected officials in the City of Los Angeles and State of California supported the removal was greatly disappointing to the Japanese population who had been removed. If democratically elected officials took this position, who would advocate and protect this vulnerable population?

Nativist groups, like the Native Sons of the Golden West, held a more extreme position, suggesting that Japanese, regardless of citizenship, should be banished from the West Coast indefinitely. The Native Sons of the Golden West, a fraternal organization established in 1875 to "preserve the glorious heritage given into our keeping by our Pioneer Fathers and Mothers," an euphemistic way of saying the members intended to ensure the continuation of an Anglosaxon cultural patrimony in the State of California.

Often, the rhetoric of the Native Sons of the Golden West was much more blatant in their objectives. Clarence M. Hunt's call to action entitled: "Do We?," appeared in numerous editions of the *Grizzly Bear*, the newsletter of the Native Sons of the Golden West. The brief article reminded members of the group's platform on the "Japanese issue." Hunt, speaking on behalf of the organization, was vocal in his opposition to the existence of the Japanese population in the state, which posed a threat to the dominance of the white population.⁹⁸ In his short article, he outlined three actions that the Native Sons of the Golden West supported to rid the state of the "Japanese problem." The first proposed action sought to permanently remove all persons of Japanese ancestry (at least from California). According to Hunt, this meant to "dispossess the Japs of every foot of land, rural and urban, to which they now claim title."⁹⁹ Additionally, the Native Sons advocated to "challenge the citizenship of every Jap—his right to exercise in these United States the voting privilege."¹⁰⁰ Finally, the Native Sons proposed to "close every Jap-language school, and be certain that it is kept closed." The three suggested actions sought

⁹⁸ Clarence M. Hunt, "Do We?," *Grizzly Bear*, June 1942, 6. This article appeared frequently in the *Grizzly Bear*, without change, to remind member of the Native Sons of the Golden West of the organization's stance. Additionally, most issues of the monthly newsletter included articles related to the state of the Japanese population. Most of the articles were misleading or highlighted partial truths. Covering the topic without establishing proper context, likely inflamed members' disdain for the Japanese American population. As an example, the only reports on the War Relocation Center

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 6. Hunt's first suggestion is misleading. Although persons of Japanese ancestry held legal title to land throughout California, the Alien Land Law, which was amended at various points following its passage in 1913, put severe limitations on ownership.

¹⁰⁰ For the third of the population that had immigrated from Japan, this was already a reality since the United States government had did not extend naturalization to Japanese immigrants, leaving them aliens ineligible for citizenship. For the remaining two thirds of the population who were born in the United States, the members of the Native Sons of the Golden West's suggestion would have violated the fourteenth amendment.

to halt the proliferation of Japanese culture in California and ultimately eliminate the entire ethnic group, which posed a threat to the dominance of the white population.

This mindset contributed to the efforts of a variety of nativist groups who lobbied elected officials to put forth legislation intended to further disenfranchise persons of Japanese ancestry. The Native Daughters of the Golden West passed a resolution in June 1942 requesting the appointment of a committee to draft and sponsor an amendment to the United States Constitution that would exclude all persons of Japanese ancestry from citizenship, regardless of whether they were guaranteed this by birth.¹⁰¹ The Open Forum Breakfast Club, the Members of the Peace Officers, and the Grand Court of California of the Foresters of America were three California Clubs that shared an anti-Japanese American position, in response to the ethnic group's ancestral connection to Japan. The members of these groups maintained strong vitriol for Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor as well as the inhumane treatment of American prisoners of war and seemed unable to distinguish between Japanese nationals living in Japan and individuals of Japanese descent living in the United States. Instead, they were convinced that the loyalty of all persons of Japanese ancestry was unquestionably with the Emperor of Japan.

While the long-standing nativist groups on the West Coast steadily voiced their anti-Japanese platforms, public opinion on the issue remained relatively quiescent through much of 1942. Only a handful of individuals stood up for Japanese Americans and the violation of their civil liberties. Carey McWilliams, an advocate for the rights of Japanese Americans, observed a trend by December of that year. Existing nativist groups

¹⁰¹ "Native Daughters Seek Ban on Citizenship for Nisei: Resolution Passed at Oakland Meeting; Funds Appropriated," *Pacific Citizen*, 25 June 1942.

became more active in their fight. Dozens others developed as the WRA began to implement a release program from the war relocation centers that would prevent Japanese Americans from being detained for the duration of the war.¹⁰² Given this new development, Nativist groups lobbied politicians to prevent Japanese Americans from returning to the West Coast. Additionally, nativist groups' increasing agitation began to cause public opinion to mirror this sentiment. The American Institute of Public Opinion conducted a poll in December 1942 that revealed a large percentage of residents in the western states of California, Oregon, Washington, Nevada and Arizona, somewhat echoed this opinion. Of those polled, 97% said they thought the U.S. Army took the right action, while a mere 2% disapproved, and 1% remained undecided on the removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast earlier that year. 33% of the participants indicated that they would agree to allow individuals of Japanese ancestry to return after the war. 26% would agree to allow only those who were American citizens to return. 17% took the harshest stance, indicating they would allow none to return. The remaining 22% of those polled remained undecided.¹⁰³

The results of the poll revealed west coast residents' increasing contempt towards persons of Japanese descent. To many Americans, Japan was the enemy. Those who looked like the enemy were treated as such. Few Americans seemed capable of

¹⁰² Carey McWilliams, "Changing Aspects of the Evacuee Problem on the West Coast," *A Monthly Summary of Events and Trends in Race Relations*, August – September 1944. Found in the National Archives, Record Group 210, Entry 8, Box 7.

¹⁰³ George Gallup, "Poll Shows How Coast Stands on Japs' Return: Large Percentage Doesn't Want Internees to Come Back to Old Posts After War." *Los Angeles Times*, 30 Dec 1942.

distinguishing between Japanese from Japan and Japanese Americans living in the United States.

Nativist groups banded together to guide governmental leaders on the future of persons of Japanese ancestry. Members of the Open Forum Breakfast Club questioned whether American-born Japanese should be permitted to remain in the country while members of the Grand Court of California of the Foresters of America and members of the Peace Officers adopted resolutions that suggested that persons of Japanese ancestry, regardless of birth, should remain interned and should never be allowed to return to the West Coast.¹⁰⁴ Members of the American Legion, California Junior Chamber of Commerce, and the Native Sons of the Golden West were among a contingent of groups to organize a conference around the idea of the “Pacific Coast Japanese Problem” in June 1943 to strategize ways to prevent the return of Japanese to the West Coast.¹⁰⁵

Nativist groups, business associations, as well as private citizens articulated their anti-Japanese sentiment and support for the removal of persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast through letters to elected officials at the local and state level. George M. Havice, president of the Wholesale Florists Association of Northern California, sent a telegram to California Governor Earl Warren in Fall 1943, on behalf of the growers, wholesalers, and retailers associated with the wholesale association. Havice made it clear that the Wholesale Florists Association opposed the return of Japanese Americans since reentry into their prewar occupational niche would affect 5000 growers, wholesalers, and

¹⁰⁴ “California Clubs Oppose Return of Evacuees to Pacific Coast,” *Pacific Citizen*, 27 May 1943.

¹⁰⁵ “Three California Groups Set Up Pacific Coast Conference to Stop Release of Evacuees: American Legion, California Chamber of Commerce, Native Sons of the Golden West Meet in Los Angeles,” *Pacific Citizen*, Vol. 167, No. 22.

retailers. Havice indicated in the telegram that the members of the association would appreciate any efforts from the governor's office to prevent their return.¹⁰⁶ Havice's telegram revealed the anti-Japanese sentiment that business interests as well as the general public maintained even after Japanese had been summarily removed from the West Coast. While some saw Japanese Americans as the current geopolitical enemy, others saw them as an economic threat.

The official response from Governor Warren's office not only reflected the opinion of California's highest elected official, but it also symbolically represented the general sentiment of the majority of Californians. Within a couple weeks, Governor Warren's Press Secretary Verne Soogins acknowledged Havice's telegram, noting: "Governor Warren has asked me to acknowledge your telegram of October 19 concerning the Japanese problem, and to thank you for your comments. He has reiterated many times his opposition to the return of the Japanese to California at the present time."¹⁰⁷ Despite being a public figure and the highest-ranking official in California, Governor Warren did not attempt to keep his opinion on the subject a secret. By openly stating that he favored the "evacuation" for the duration of the war, Warren had the power to influence the people of California, making it acceptable to share this opinion and show it outwardly.

Californians wrote to Governor Warren, praising him for his leadership in the removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast while he served as the state's attorney general in 1942. Without knowing the fate of persons of Japanese ancestry who

¹⁰⁶ "Correspondence between Mr. George M. Havice, President Wholesale Florists Association and Governor Earl Warren's Office," October-November, 1943. Found in the California State Archives, F3640: 3655, Earl Warren Papers, Administrative Files, Public Works – Race Relations, 1942-43.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

were actively being detained in remote “War Relocation Centers,” Californians expressed strong opinions that they remain excluded from the West Coast.

Constituents in California were quick to let their newly-elected governor know of their opinions on the future of their former Japanese American neighbors. In December 1942, just a few months following the mass exclusion and removal, Mr. J.D. Snodgrass, owner of a fertilizer and seed shop in San Marino wasted no time in writing to the governor-elect about his concerns over what might happen to Japanese Americans in the future, inquiring: “Will we blithely open the concentration camp gates and allow them to come back to our cities and farms to start all over again against us?”¹⁰⁸ Similarly, Mrs. George E. Lewis of Corona del Mar, CA wrote of her recent experience in Los Angeles, where she inferred that she was able to gauge the sentiment of ordinary workers and military personnel in the region on the “Jap-question, which was upmost on their minds.”¹⁰⁹ She shared her anecdotal findings in a letter to Governor Warren, noting: “I picked up a sailor today... This new war on the WASP. That war such, he is a very sad man, not a smil [sic] from him. He told me the men over there were of the same mind that they would kill the Japs if they came back after the war. There will have to be laws made to take their citizenship away from them then deport the whole lot after the war is over, or there will be trouble here at home.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Letter from J.D. Snodgrass to Governor Elect Earl W. Warren,” 10 Dec 1942, Found in California State Archives, F3640, Earl Warren Papers, Administrative Files, Public Works – Race Relations, Japanese (Anti), 1943.

¹⁰⁹ Letter from Mrs. George E. Lewis to Governor Earl Warren, 3 Dec 1942, California State Archives, F3640, Earl Warren Papers, Administrative Files, Public Works – Race Relations, Japanese (anti), 1942.

Lewis, like Snoodgrass honed in on the economic implications of Japanese returning to the West Coast for White, protestant males, and the ways in which he would suggest eliminating the problem. Only then, as Lewis noted, “We will then have work for our own men, instead of unemployment.”¹¹¹ To these constituents, Japanese Americans posed a greater threat as economic competition than a security issue to the region.

The opinions in these letters to Governor Warren reveal that many individuals’ opposition towards Japanese returning to the West Coast was rooted in economics. Snodgrass, like businessmen in the nursery or agricultural industry, identified themselves as stakeholders in industries that Japanese became integral to prior to the war. Their opposition to the return of Japanese Americans was rooted in racism and economic competition. R.S. Tredick of Los Angeles wrote to Governor Warren, encouraging him to take an even tougher stance, suggesting: “people in this area are very much opposed to ever have them as neighbors again. Listen, governor, these people are not to be trusted—old or young—during the last 20 years we have given them employment, paid them good wages, and made available all the rights and privileges that belong to free people, What got we in return? Sabotage, insolence, treachery—a Jap is inherently treacherous.”¹¹² Tredick, like many other Angelenos, conflated persons of Japanese ancestry, living in the United States, with the enemy, even though there was not a single conviction of espionage or collusion amongst the Japanese American population.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Letter from R.S. Tredick to Governor Earl Warren,” Feb 1943, California State Archives, F3640, Earl Warren Papers, Administrative Files, Public Works – Race Relations, Japanese (Anti), 1943.

Similar rhetoric had been circulating since the attack on Pearl Harbor, which convinced many that removing people of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast was absolutely necessary, or at least that was the official line from government officials. The forced removal from the West Coast, despite having an open-ended timeframe, did not seem to be enough for a large constituency in California. In his letter to Warren, Snodgrass implored the governor to draft legislation that would “require that all Japanese must leave the United States and its territories within six months after the end of the war and that their permanent residence here shall be forever barred!”¹¹³ The fact that so many individuals like Snodgrass expended so much energy on an idea like this revealed the intensity of the anti-Japanese sentiment on the West Coast.

By 1943, anti-Japanese sentiment reached a precipice even though Japanese Americans had been summarily removed from the West Coast without any indication of when or if they would return. Clarence Hunt’s piece, “Do We?,” which was occasionally republished in the Native Sons of the Golden West’s member newsletter, called for united action from organizations and individuals dedicated to preserving “California as a paradise of the White Man for all time.”¹¹⁴ Hunt used the newsletter column as platform for white supremacy, declared that waiting until tomorrow to act would be too late, which explained why nativist groups took significant action while the Japanese population on the West Coast was absent.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Hunt, “Do We?,” *Grizzly Bear*, June 1942: 6.

The extreme positions of some nativist groups had an impact on elected officials, who passed a series of statewide initiatives that intended to put severe limitations on Japanese Americans—immigrants and citizens alike— if they ever returned to the West Coast. In 1943, legislation to bar Japanese aliens from commercial fishing passed, which intended to cripple an industry that had become a niche for Japanese immigrants throughout the first half of the twentieth century in areas like San Pedro, Terminal Island, Long Beach, and Palos Verdes. That same year, Governor Earl Warren signed the Lowrey Bill, which permitted the State of California to take possession of idle farm equipment through eminent domain. Although Japanese were not specifically named in the Lowrey Bill, it was evident that this was the population being targeted since they had predominantly worked in the agriculture industry, as truck farmers and produce distributors, since the late nineteenth century.

For white farmers, this was their opportunity to crowd out their competition. For Japanese American farmers who maintained ownership of their equipment, a year had gone by, which caused their possessions to be considered idle, according to the Lowrey Bill.¹¹⁵ This was devastating to Japanese American farmers when they got word of this new piece of legislation. With the passage of this legislation it meant that if Japanese Americans ever returned to the West Coast, they would not be able to continue with their agricultural pursuits since their farm equipment had been confiscated. The Lowrey Bill resulted from the intense lobbying of nativist groups.

¹¹⁵ War Relocation Authority Community Analysis Section, "Community Analysis Notes No. 6," 11 Dec 1944. Found in Special Collections at Occidental College.

In the following year, congressional representatives from western and southern states continued to propose stringent legislation to further cripple the economic potential of Japanese truck farmers. One bill authorized investigation of the possibility of prolonging the operation of the war relocation centers as well as other options to address the “Japanese problem” on a long-term basis. Another proposed that all persons of Japanese ancestry living within the United States be admitted to the war relocation centers, even if they lived outside of the exclusionary zone on the West Coast. Additionally, a piece of legislation proposed revoking United States citizenship from dual citizens as well as immediately deporting Japanese nationals and those deemed to be disloyal.¹¹⁶ Throughout 1944, elected officials—with the prodding from many of their constituents—continued to propose anti-Japanese legislation, with the intention to cripple Japanese Americans economically. Nativist groups applied pressure on their elected officials in anticipation of a forthcoming decision to re-open the West Coast to Japanese Americans.

Although Governor Warren was once openly aligned with nativist groups, he suddenly shifted his position on Japanese Americans in advance of their return. It is not entirely clear what caused the shift in his thinking, although perhaps it became clear to him that the return of Japanese Americans to their former homes on the West Coast was inevitable. It is feasible that Governor Warren came to the realization that his former opinions were neither constitutional nor representative of American values. Maybe one of Dillon Myer’s speeches, which suggested that confining persons of Japanese ancestry

¹¹⁶ “The Japanese in America,” *A Monthly Summary of Events and Trends in Race Relations*, August – September 1944. Found in the National Archives, Record Group 210, Entry 8, Box 7.

indefinitely violated the most basic constitutional guarantees of freedoms and justice, influenced Warren. Myers suggested that if the country continued in this direction, “the whole structure of constitutional safeguards that now projects every last one of us against arbitrary governmental action will be weakened and impaired.”¹¹⁷

Or perhaps it was letters like the one from Pasadena resident Walter Godfrey that persuaded Warren. Godfrey wrote to Governor Warren in November 1944, in hopes of persuading the state’s top elected official to change his views. Godfrey reminded Warren of his influence, noting: “You have a responsibility to the people. You may join the race-baiters and live in everlasting disgrace; you may sit on the fence and shirk your responsibilities to uphold the constitution; or you may courageously and positively stand for what is right. If you do the latter, you will make a public statement to the effect that if the army considers it safe for Japanese Americans to return to the coast, you, with the authority invested in you as a public official and servant, will see that the personal and property rights of such persons are upheld.”¹¹⁸ Godfrey’s sentiments were representative of the sector of the West Coast population that was more progressive and tolerant of persons of Japanese ancestry or at least those who were firm believers in the promises of the Constitution.

This support for Japanese added a layer of complexity to the social climate on the West Coast. Pasadena residents, like Walter Godfrey, were largely supportive of Japanese Americans, largely due to the influence of the Friends of the American Way, an

¹¹⁷ Dillon S. Myer, “The Relocation Program,” transcript of an address, 16 November 1943, UCLA Special Collections, Melvin P. McGovern Papers, Collection 2010, Box 119, Folder 1.

¹¹⁸ Letter from Walter Godfrey to Governor Earl Warren,” 17 Nov 1944, California State Archives, F3640: 3671, Earl Warren Papers, Administrative Files, Public Works – Race Relations, Japanese, Jan – Feb 1945.

organization sympathetic to Japanese Americans. In observance of Veterans Day in 1944, several Pasadena organizations supportive of Japanese Americans gathered at the Federated Mission, at 215 N. Fair Oaks Avenue to dedicate a wall of honor for Japanese Americans serving in the armed forces. Dr. John Harbeson, President of Pasadena Junior College, Rev. Clare Blauvelt, pastor of Throop Memorial Church, and William C. Carr, chairman of the Friends of the American Way Society, Rev. Leonard Oechsli of the Pasadena Methodist Church, and Stephen Rayes of the Pasadena Interracial Commission participated in the ceremony to recognize the 109 Nisei soldiers from Pasadena and to honor Henry Kondo, the first Nisei soldier to be killed in action with a gold star next to his name.¹¹⁹ The wall of honor and the accompanying dedication ceremony signified the city's support for its former Japanese residents.

Residents of Pasadena became known for their openness to the return of Japanese Americans, encouraging former incarcerated to return to Pasadena or make the town their new home. Additionally, a fair number of Californians followed their counterparts in Pasadena by declaring their support through letters to Governor Warren. Although the number of letters to Governor Warren in support of Japanese Americans appeared fewer than the number of letters that demonstrated anti-Japanese sentiment, they were compelling, nonetheless. Earlier that year, Hugh Anderson one of the founders of Friends of the American Way, a group dedicated to "helping [to] correct the mistakes and heal the wounds of the forced evacuation from the West Coast of all citizens and aliens of Japanese descent," initiated a plan to carry out the group's mission to ensure civil

¹¹⁹ "Gold Star Honors Nisei Killed in Action," *Los Angeles Times*, 11 Nov 1944 and "First Pasadena Nisei Killed in Action Against Nazis," *Pasadena Star News*, 9 Nov 1944.

rights.¹²⁰ Anderson, along with William Carr and his wife were instrumental in establishing Friends of the American Way in Pasadena, where the two families helped Japanese American families by storing their belongings and monitoring their homes. In 1944, Anderson approached Esther Takei and her family at the Amache War Relocation Center to see if she would be willing to return to California to attend Pasadena Junior College while the West Coast remained an exclusionary zone. Anderson envisioned that Takei would become a test case to gauge the response towards Japanese Americans returning to the West Coast. Anderson wrote to Major General Charles Hartwell Bonesteel, head of the Western Defense Command, about the possibility of allowing Japanese Americans to return to the West Coast. Anderson recollected in his unpublished memoir that “[Bonesteel] had us on the telephone almost immediately and said he was willing to open the West Coast if we went ahead and found someone who wanted to return.”¹²¹

While Japanese Americans knew they could trust members of the American Friends, they were leery of the sudden support from elected officials. When news broke that the exclusionary ban would be lifted on January 2, 1945, Governor Warren continued to show his newfound support for Japanese Americans. He issued memorandums to law

¹²⁰ “Letter from William Carr to Dr. Harold Kinsley, 12 Dec 1944, Hugh H. Anderson Papers, Japanese American Research Project, Box 41, Special Collections, Young Research Library, UCLA. Found in Valerie Matsumoto, *City Girls: The Nisei Social World in Los Angeles, 1920-1950*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014: 176.

¹²¹ Hugh Harris Anderson, “Recollections,” unpublished manuscript in the collection of Esther Takei Nishio (1990), p. 117. Found in Valerie Matsumoto, *City Girls: The Nisei Social World in Los Angeles, 1920-1950*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014: 176.

enforcement and mayors across the state, asking for their cooperation in helping to protect the returnees.

The shift in Warren's stance added to the complexity of the social climate in Los Angeles. Organizations that pledged their support for Japanese Americans volunteered to supplement the work of civic leaders and law enforcement to help returnees reestablish themselves. Immediately after the official announcement, the Friends of the American Way issued a statement "welcoming" Japanese Americans back to the West Coast. Shortly after, Afton Dill Nance, a representative from the organization sent a letter to Governor Warren expressing that members celebrated the news of the removal of the mass exclusion order, noting: "we feel that the cause of justice and democracy has been served."¹²² Also included was Friends of the American Way member Mary T. MacNair's "Report on Democracy in Action," which she submitted on behalf of the organization. MacNair included a summary of the results of surveys conducted with residents of Pasadena as well as excerpts from their comments, which expressed residents' promise of a "spirit of genuine friendship" as well as a willingness to help returning Japanese reestablish themselves by providing housing and employment leads.¹²³ A student from Pasadena Junior College noted: "We would be more than willing to have our fellow students of Japanese ancestry in our midst. We are sending our school paper out to them each week, we carry on a personal correspondence and keep the life-lines of friendship open and now we feel we can help our friends in their readjustment and reintegration into

¹²² "Letter from Friends of the American Way to Governor Warren" and "Report on Democracy in Action," California State Archives, Earl Warren Papers, Administrative Files, Public Works – Race Relations, Japanese, Jan – Feb., 1945.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

a normal pattern of life.” Other individuals spoke in reference to Japanese families from Pasadena, indicating that they would welcome them into their homes. One woman wrote, “This letter is written by one from whose home have gone two men into the service. I should be ashamed to face them on their return had I not fought here for those same rights for which they are fighting away from home.”¹²⁴

Supporters of Governor Warren’s previously tough stance questioned his change in opinion. While a public opinion poll conducted in 1942 revealed widespread prejudice towards persons of Japanese ancestry, popular opinion shifted somewhat as the war progressed. The anti-Japanese hysteria diminished slightly since its height in 1943, largely in part to the heroic record of the members of the 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team, which were segregated units comprised of all Nisei soldiers. Yet, prejudice did not summarily end by the time Japanese Americans began to return to the West Coast. Notwithstanding the significant military triumphs for the United States and its allies, a declared victory in the European theater on Victory in Europe Day on May 8, 1945, the stellar record of the 442nd Regimental Combat Unit, and sound intelligence that Japan’s military was losing strength and on the verge of surrendering, hostility towards persons of Japanese ancestry remained virulent on the West Coast as former incarcerated began to return to their prewar homes. Despite Mayor Bowron’s photo opportunity and outward expression of support for Japanese Americans, Los Angeles was no exception.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

West Coast residents had mixed feelings towards Japanese Americans as well as the U.S. military's decision to re-open the exclusionary zone to them. Roger Baldwin, director of the American Civil Liberties Union released a press statement indicating that his recent tour of the West Coast exclusionary zone revealed, "evidence of hostility to Japanese Americans on the Pacific Coast will disappear with the expected order permitting their return."¹²⁵ Baldwin noted that from his observations, evidence of resistance or possible threats of violence towards returning Japanese Americans were limited to agricultural communities in California, Oregon, and Washington, where farming competition resulted in animosity. Baldwin's observations and predictions were hopeful in advance of the impending decision to reopen the West Coast. Ralph J. Roth, a resident of Pasadena, wrote to Governor Warren in response to this article in the *Los Angeles Times*, suggesting that Baldwin's extrapolation was incredibly optimistic. Roth indicated that he thought he should write to give a "layman's view of this problem. I hope and feel he [Baldwin] is all wrong as I talk to the fellows who have been over to the Japanese war zone and the ones who really know these people. The returning Japanese will not receive very good treatment if returned to the West Coast."¹²⁶

Many ordinary Californians, like Roth, wrote to Governor Warren to express their opinions about the forthcoming announcement of the lifting of the exclusionary ban and the eventual return of Japanese Americans. Letters to the governor were a mix of support for the decision to allow Japanese Americans to return while others expressed vehement

¹²⁵ "Japanese-American Hostility Held Fading," *Los Angeles Times*, 6 Dec. 1944: 1.

¹²⁶ "Letter from Ralph J. Roth to Governor Earl Warren," 8 Dec. 1944. Found in California State Archives, F3640, Earl Warren Papers, Administrative Files, Public Works – Race Relations, Japanese, December 1944.

opposition to their return. Many individuals like Mrs. Leo E. Adams of Long Beach, expressed their unyielding opposition to the return of Japanese Americans in letters to Governor Warren. Like many others, Adams honed in on the economic implications of Japanese returning to the West Coast, suggesting: “if they let those sneaky Japs come back here and have all the good land to farm and make money and send it back to Japan as fast as they can that there is no point in this war and its [sic] a disgrace to every one that has a boy in service to let them come back here.”¹²⁷ Additionally, Mrs. Adams expressed an opinion, common amongst West Coast residents at the time, that seemed to show that the average American conflated Japanese Americans—those who had lived all or much of their lives in the United States of American with Japanese nationals living in Japan.¹²⁸

Many who were opposed to the return of Japanese Americans were affiliated with agricultural production in the area. Their letters included sharp criticism towards Japanese Americans who were successful in their farming operations before the war. Many suggested that the dominance of Japanese American farmers made it difficult for white workers to obtain work, which ultimately caused great financial hardship. Others were critical of those who were sending all of their earnings back to Japan, which they surmised was widespread.¹²⁹ Ultimately, though, instead of only associating Japanese

¹²⁷ Letter from Mrs. Leo E. Adams to Governor Earl Warren, 29 Nov 1944, California State Archives, F3640, Earl Warren Papers, Administrative Files, Public Works – Race Relations, Japanese (Anti), 1944.

¹²⁸ “Letter from Mrs. Leo E. Adams to Governor Earl Warren, 29 Nov 1944, Found in California State Archives, F3640, Earl Warren Papers, Administrative Files, Public Works – Race Relations, Japanese, December 1944.

Americans with a geopolitical enemy, many Americans also saw them as economic competition. The complexity of the social climate was visible at all levels—not just at the level of the general public.

By 1944, while Governor Warren shifted his stance on the Japanese American population, he remained in the minority. Elected officials like Los Angeles Mayor Bowron had not expressed a similar change in their sentiment. Leo Gallagher, a Los Angeles lawyer and proponent of civil rights for all, wrote a scathing letter to Mayor Bowron, criticizing him for “failing to enforce fundamental constitutional rights [for Japanese Angelenos].” Gallagher referenced a comment that Bowron had made, which suggested, “If the Japanese return to the coast, the army must protect them.”¹³⁰ Although it’s not entirely clear what Bowron intended by this statement, it seemed similar in tone to the rhetoric that proponents of the removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast were espousing at the beginning of the war. The argument suggested that persons of Japanese ancestry needed the U.S. military to protect them from vigilante violence. As a result, many argued that they would be safer behind barbed wire in the War Relocation Centers that were hastily being constructed. Gallagher inferred that Bowron’s suggestion echoes the same type of sentiment, although now in reference to their return to the West Coast. Gallagher pointed out that Bowron and the district attorney’s statements suggesting that Japanese Americans would require the army’s protection upon their

¹²⁹ Letter from Mrs. George E. Lewis to Governor Earl Warren, 3 Dec 1942; Letter from Mrs. Leo E. Adams to Governor Earl Warren, 29 Nov 1944, California State Archives, F3640, Earl Warren Papers, Administrative Files, Public Works – Race Relations, Japanese (anti), various folders.

¹³⁰ Letter from Leo Gallagher to Mayor Fletcher Bowron, 20 Dec 1944. Found in the Found in California State Archives, F3640, Earl Warren Papers, Administrative Files, Public Works – Race Relations, Japanese, December 1944.

return, invited “direct incitements to violence.” In other words, Gallaher intimated that intervention from the military could draw unnecessary attention to the return of Japanese that might incite feeling of malice or violence from members of the general public. Ultimately, Gallagher called for Bowron and the district attorney “to repudiate their prior position and affirm publicly that the City of Los Angeles will fully protect the Japanese in their constitutional rights.”¹³¹ Gallagher’s letter to Mayor Bowron in December of 1944 came on the eve of the opening of the West Coast to persons of Japanese ancestry. Returnees were ultimately forced to decipher contradictory sentiments from elected officials as well as members of the general public within the context of an extraordinarily complex social climate in Los Angeles.

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA IN 1945

While many returned to Southern California since it was their home before the war, others came to Los Angeles on a whim. Without many other options available, some followed a tip from a neighbor or friend in the War Relocation Centers on a place to live or a job prospect. Mat Uyeno spent her whole life in California’s Central Valley before she and her family were forced to leave in 1942 and enter the Amache War Relocation Center in Colorado. She left the Amache War Relocation Center ahead of her parents and siblings to obtain employment in Detroit. Her younger sister took responsibility of her parents and decided that Los Angeles was the best place for the family to resettle, based on a lead she received from a neighbor at Amache. Mat never really spoke in detail with her sister about the difficulty in making the decision to go to Los Angeles to “start over.”

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

Wanting to once again be reunited with her family, Mat chose to go to Los Angeles. She marveled, however, at her sister's strength to relocate her parents to a new city. Mat recalled the day she arrived in Los Angeles to join her family and the overwhelming, yet exciting feeling of "the big city."¹³² Arriving in Los Angeles after being accustomed to living in a more rural, agricultural area as well as in one of America's isolated concentration camps must have been overwhelming. Having to negotiate the social complexity of who to trust, where it would be permissible to live, where to apply for a job, and where to shop added further complication. In the case of the Uyenos and other families like them, this was the tradeoff for finally being reunited as a family.

Although anticipation may have characterized the sentiment of many returnees, many felt this way based on what they had heard. Disturbing updates regarding the social climate on the West Coast dotted the pages of the JACL's *Pacific Citizen* newspaper and in the newsletters of the War Relocation Centers. These reports made incarcerated war returnees wary of returning to their prewar communities. Undoubtedly, *dejure* and *defacto* discrimination characterized the experience of Japanese Americans since they first arrived in the United States in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Yet, reports of the vitriol from West Coast residents during the war, the outward anti-Japanese sentiment from civic leaders and elected officials, and the threats of violence that potentially awaited returnees, seemed more insidious than before, as a result of the geopolitics of the ensuing war.

Pacific Citizen columnist Fred Fertig provided an early assessment of resettlement in Los Angeles, depicting it as a somewhat welcoming atmosphere to return to. Fertig's

¹³² Author's interview with Mat Uyeno, 16 February 2018.

article, which in some ways read like a Chamber of Commerce-style advertisement, appeared in the national Japanese American newspaper in April 1945, some four months after Japanese American began to return.¹³³ Although he indicated that it was too early to give an overall assessment on the resettlement experience, he suggested that the general response to the resettlement had been surprisingly neutral, bordering on supportive. While the local mainstream newspapers had been vicious at times towards Japanese Americans, the *Daily News* was beginning to show signs of a pro-Nisei slant, the *Los Angeles Times* had published a few favorable stories, and the Hearst-published papers remained surprisingly quiet in response to the lifting of the restrictive ban on the West Coast.

For much of the article, Fertig focused on various individuals and entities that supported the return of Japanese Americans to Los Angeles. He highlighted the benevolence of Joe Moody, manager and part-owner of the Moody Mattress Co., who provided moving vans to help ease the stress of frantic packing during the “evacuation,” transported donated goods and supplies to the California assembly centers and to the Manzanar War Relocation Center, making close to 75 trips from Los Angeles in company and personal vehicles to make life more bearable. Moody’s benevolence continued as he picked up returnees at Union Station upon their arrival in Los Angeles, and counter-protested at rallies contesting the return of Japanese Americans. In addition to spotlighting Moody, Fertig focused on the support for Japanese Americans that came from charitable and religious organizations like the Catholic Interracial Committee, the

¹³³ Fred Fertig, “The West Coast Situation: Preliminary Report on Los Angeles,” *Pacific Citizen*, 21 April 1945.

Los Angeles Church Federation and the office of the American Civil Liberties Union. Fertig also underscored the general support for Japanese Americans' return that came from Chinese Americans, African Americans, and Filipino Americans. Although, the return of Japanese Americans created complications for members of these ethnic groups that could potentially result in discrimination due to mistaken identity or competition for jobs, Fertig indicated that most individuals of these ethnic backgrounds that he interviewed felt that the return of Japanese Americans was crucial to restoring democracy, which had been suspended during the war. He gave an encouraging jobs report, indicating that Nisei and Issei had begun to secure jobs in garage management, auto mechanics, farming, restaurants, factories, offices as clerical secretaries.

Fertig selectively highlighted the rosy and ignored the harsh realities in his depiction of the social climate in Los Angeles. His motivation was curious since depicting a Los Angeles that was more favorable to returning Japanese would not have been beneficial to them. Fertig indicated that to his knowledge, there had not been a single case of violence reported in Los Angeles unlike in more rural areas of California's Central Valley. Perhaps this was true in Los Angeles, but by ignoring WRA Director Dillon Myer's confirmation of 33 incidents of violence or "open intimidation" directed towards returnees in California within the first six months of their return, Fertig portrayed the West Coast to be more welcoming than it was in reality.¹³⁴ While physical violence may not have been an issue, there were numerous incidents of vandalism in the greater Los Angeles area meant to intimidate returnees and those that supported them. Vandals

¹³⁴ Dillon S. Myer, "Problems of Evacuee Resettlement in California," UCLA Melvin P. McGovern Papers, Collection 2010, Box 119, Folder 1.

targeted Dr. Louis Pauling's house in South Pasadena in March since the Cal Tech professor allowed one of his former lab assistants, who was Japanese American, to stay with him. Although Fertig portrayed a picture that suggested the transition back to mainstream life in Los Angeles had been taking place with relative ease, the article did not overwhelmingly convince prospective returnees that it was a safe place for them.

Insiders' perspectives provide a contrasting account that essentially counters Fertig's rosy one. Well-known Nisei writers Hisaye Yamamoto and Wakako Yamauchi likely used their own post-incarceration experiences as inspiration for some of their most powerful literary works. Hisaye Yamamoto wrote seven short stories between 1948 and 1961 that addressed intergenerational differences between Issei and Nisei, interactions with white and nonwhites in Southern California, and racial discrimination. In Yamamoto's short story "Wilshire Bus," a Nisei woman named Esther boarded a public bus in Los Angeles to visit her husband, a veteran convalescing at the Veterans Administration Hospital on the Westside of town. Even though she has been back in Southern California for a couple years, it's clear that the effects of the war—the racial discrimination that she faced and the forced removal and incarceration are still raw. She seemed thoughtful about where she might sit on the bus to avoid calling attention to herself. Soon, an elderly Asian couple boarded the bus. The elderly Asian man asked the bus driver a question in broken English, provoking a passenger to yell racial slurs at the couple. Yamamoto narrates:

Esther, herself, while believing herself properly annoyed with the speaker for the old couple, felt quite detached. She found herself wondering whether the man meant her in his exclusion order of whether she was identifiably Japanese... Then she was startled to realize that what she was

actually doing was gloating over the fact that the drunken man had specified the Chinese as the unwanted. Briefly, there bobbed on her memory the face of an elderly Oriental man whom she had once seen from a streetcar on her way home from work. (This was not long after she had returned to Los Angeles from the concentration camp in Arkansas and been lucky enough to get a clerical job with the Community Chest.) The old man was on a concrete island at Seventh and Broadway, waiting for his streetcar. She had looked down on him benignly as a fellow Oriental, from her seat by the window, then been suddenly thrown for a loop by the large lapel button on his jacket. I AM KOREAN, said the button.”¹³⁵ Yamamoto suggests that “Esther,” filling in for other Japanese American returnees felt guilty for thoughts of being glad the attention is not directed towards her.

Yamamoto’s description of Esther’s experience on the Wilshire Bus provided a window into her daily life in post-WWII Los Angeles, which was often characterized by encounters with racial discrimination. Yamamoto’s exploration into Esther’s inner thoughts revealed her struggle with issues of identity as a Nisei woman with a face that seemed to forever represent “the other” as well as “the enemy.” Additionally, Esther’s thoughts towards other Asian American groups suggested an unspoken inter-ethnic hierarchy as well as the tensions that came along with it. Esther takes comfort in the fact that the focus is not on her for a change—a thought she immediately felt guilty over. Yamamoto made a Nisei woman’s navigation of the social climate a significant topic of one of her short stories, which signified that racial discrimination was an integral part of the resettlement process in Los Angeles. While perhaps a work of fiction, Yamamoto’s insight as someone who experienced resettlement in Los Angeles, likely influenced her portrayal of her main character. Given this context, it is interesting to compare to Fred Fertig’s impression from an outsider’s perspective.

¹³⁵ Hisaye Yamamoto, “Wilshire Bus,” *Seventeen Syllables and Other Stories*, 1989.

Based on the updates former incarcerated received, which expressed much of the discrimination that Hisaye Yamamoto vividly described in her short story, many were wary about returning to their former home. Nevertheless, many proceeded with plans to return. Although the Japanese American population in the greater Los Angeles area eventually reached the prewar numbers, the return was relatively slow. Nine months after the West Coast reopened to Japanese, the *Los Angeles Times* ran an article on its front page in September 1945 suggesting: “Little Tokyo is coming to life again in Los Angeles as the hub of Japanese activity, but it probably will never reach its prewar Nipponese population.” The *Los Angeles Times* article indicated that WRA projections “authoritatively stated that the Southland, which once had 80 percent of the nation’s 136,000 Japanese population, has been forsaken as ‘home’ for internees released from relocation centers,” pointing to data that the WRA had collected.¹³⁶ Based on surveys that the WRA had conducted while processing applications for permanent leave, the federal agency indicated that of the 22,224 Japanese who left the camps since the beginning of the year, only 7047, or 31 percent, announced intention to relocate to California.¹³⁷ Most of these individuals intended to return to counties within the Southland.

While the *Los Angeles Times*’ reporting made premature claims about the returning numbers, it accurately depicted the hesitation that former incarcerated felt towards the return to the West Coast, and the greater Los Angeles area more specifically. Knowledge of the war hysteria that Los Angeles’s civic leaders and interest groups

¹³⁶ “Little Tokyo Showing Signs of Old Activity,” *Los Angeles Times*, 8 September 1945, A1.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

directed at Japanese Americans in their absence to sway popular opinion likely created fear for former Japanese Angelinos. For returnees, the persistent racism, despite the end to the war, remained incredibly disheartening.

Moreover, the pain of returning to a familiar setting with very little to build upon seemed daunting. The warnings of how Los Angeles had grown demographically to put additional strain on an already acute housing shortage made some think that a fresh start elsewhere would be more advantageous. Individuals who were sponsored by a relative, living in the Midwest or on the East Coast during the war, may not have returned to the West Coast right away. Some families made conscious decisions to relocate permanently in the East or Midwest since the threat of racial violence or thought of returning to the West Coast was too much to bear. These various scenarios of resettlement elsewhere account for these projected figures. Although these were early estimates, the prediction that fewer Japanese would return to Southern California became a reality, at least initially.

Incarcerates who found it difficult to secure plans remained indecisive about where to resettle and chose to remain in the Centers as long as possible. Others lingered for fear of encountering discrimination on the outside. As victims of state violence that stripped them of their livelihoods and material possessions, many incarcerates did not have the means to reestablish themselves. By August 1945, 44,000 individuals deemed eligible for indefinite leave still remained in the War Relocation Centers.¹³⁸ The majority of these individuals were mostly elderly, infirmed, or responsible for other family

¹³⁸ United States Dept. of the Interior, War Agency Liquidation Unit, formerly War Relocation Authority, *People in Motion: the postwar adjustment of the evacuated Japanese Americans*, Washington, U.S. Govt. Print Office, 1947: 10-11.

members. The remaining population became a serious consideration for the WRA. With the closure of the Centers approaching quickly, WRA staff began to show concern over how they might help to disperse this remaining population of mostly dependent incarcerated. Individuals who were incapable of making resettlement plans on their own received train tickets to their original point of departure. For many, this was a location within Los Angeles County. In the end, they had no choice in the matter. Many who comprised this group were elderly, infirmed, Issei bachelors, or individuals responsible for dependent family members. The WRA's decision to shuttle remaining incarcerated back to their place of residence before the war, contributed to a significant boost in the number of Japanese Americans who returned to Los Angeles County.

Tracing the numbers of when former incarcerated returned to Los Angeles helps to tell a narrative of why they returned. The first available figures corresponded with the projected number that the WRA compiled from the anticipated plans of early resettlers. The WRA estimated that just over 7000 adults would return to Los Angeles in 1945, based on the way that early resettlers answered their indefinite leave surveys. Figures confirming the number of adults who returned to Los Angeles do not seem to exist until January 1946. According to the War Relocation Authority's reports on the "returns to the West Coast," some 15,115 left the War Relocation Centers, destined for Los Angeles County in advance of the system wide closure of the centers on January 2, 1946.¹³⁹ Although the return seemed slow at first, by January 1946, the number of Japanese

¹³⁹ War Relocation Authority, Returns to West Coast, Cumulative Summary, Monthly Reports, 1945, as appeared in Midori Nishi, "Japanese Settlement in the Los Angeles Area."

Americans in Los Angeles County reached 15,698.¹⁴⁰ According to the WRA's official numbers, 15,195 returned to Los Angeles County directly from the War Relocation Centers while 1,977 individuals who were among the early resettlers returned to Southern California after a brief stay outside of the exclusionary zone. In total, by Spring 1946, 17,172 returned to Los Angeles County, which equated to 46.6 percent of the 36,866 Japanese Americans that called the county home in 1940.¹⁴¹ Permanent dispersal of the Japanese American population did occur, of course, as some early resettlers decided to settle in locations outside of the exclusionary zone. In 1946, following the closure of the last of America's concentration camps, the War Relocation Authority determined that 57,251 individuals had returned to California, Oregon, and Washington, which

¹⁴⁰ This statistic of how many Japanese Americans had returned to Los Angeles County by early 1946 is reported differently in various government publications, even though it is always credited as being data compiled by the same agency—the War Relocation Authority. Perhaps, though, the confusion stems from the fact that the exact date of when these figures were compiled is not always clear. According to the War Relocation Authority's publication: *The Evacuated People: A Quantitative Description*, 15,195 is quoted as the total number of Japanese Americans who returned to Los Angeles County directly from the WRA Centers, which was equal to 46.6% of the 36,866 in the county in 1940. The exact date for this figure, however, is not clear (*The Evacuated People*: 46). A report entitled, "Estimates of Major Concentrations of American Japanese in Los Angeles County," suggested that by January 1946, 15,698 had returned to Los Angeles County. Although both of these numbers have nuance to them, they are ultimately helping to determine how many Japanese Americans returned to Los Angeles County. The War Relocation Authority is credited with compiling both of these figures. If both of these figures provide a snapshot of the Japanese American population in Los Angeles County at around the same time, the "15,698" number seems to indicate that approximately 500 of those that had returned to Los Angeles County came from an early resettlement city east of the exclusionary zone (rather than directly from a relocation center). Another WRA publication, *People in Motion: The Postwar Adjustment of the Evacuated Japanese Americans*, suggested that 60 percent of the 94,000 Japanese Americans forcibly removed from California in 1942—some 56,400 individuals—had returned to the state by the end of 1946 (*People in Motion*, 82). *People in Motion* reported that by the end of 1946, 25,000-28,000 Japanese Americans had returned to Los Angeles County, compared to the approximately 37,000 Japanese Americans that lived in the county prior to the war (*People in Motion*: 82). It seems as though this number would have been higher. This number was based on known family addresses of returnees and was compiled from WRA data rather than an official number from the County of Los Angeles or the City of Los Angeles. The latter document was found in the C. Bratt Collection, Southern CA Library.

¹⁴¹ War Relocation Authority, *The Evacuated People: A Quantitative Description*, "Table 13" Washington, DC, U.S. Govt. Print Office, 1946: 46.

represented approximately half of the 112,353 individuals of Japanese American descent that resided there in 1940.¹⁴²

Officials estimated that there were nearly 15,700 Japanese Americans in Los Angeles County, at the beginning of 1946, nearly a year after the West Coast reopened to them again.¹⁴³ This figure is over double the number of individuals that WRA officials had estimated would have returned the end of 1945. By the conclusion of 1946, the WRA determined that 25,000 to 28,000 individuals had returned to Los Angeles County, less than 10,000 fewer than were in the county in 1940.¹⁴⁴ While these are all estimated figures, the significant increase could represent the result of the WRA's decision to send lingering incarcerated back to their point of origin. By March, this number increased to exceed 23,000. While this number kept growing significantly several months after the last War Relocation Center closed, it suggests that early resettlers to the Midwest and East began to return to their points of origins. Perhaps it was their plan to return "home" all along, or maybe they wanted to finally be reunited with family members who had recently arrived in Los Angeles.

¹⁴² United States Dept. of the Interior, War Agency Liquidation Unit, formerly War Relocation Authority, *People in Motion: the postwar adjustment of the evacuated Japanese Americans*, Washington, DC, U.S. Govt. Print Office, 1947: 10-11.

¹⁴³ Estimates of Major Concentrations of American Japanese in Los Angeles County. Data compiled from WRA records. It is unlikely that this is an exhaustive number from the County of Los Angeles. Numbers are based on known family address of returnees (found in the C. Bratt Collection, Southern CA Library)

¹⁴⁴ *People in Motion*: 82.

FAMILIES REUNITED AND FOUND HOME AGAIN IN LOS ANGELES

While scholars and former incarcerated agree that life in America's concentration camps disrupted the family structure, it is important to acknowledge that this process continued into the resettlement period. Families did not necessarily leave the War Relocation Centers together nor did they return to their places of origin together, due to a variety of circumstances. Acceptance to a university, military service, or offer of employment allowed for Nisei to apply for indefinite leave clearance ahead of their family members.

College-age or young working Nisei were typically able to obtain indefinite leave clearance from the War Relocation Centers much earlier than the rest of their family members. Many obtained acceptance to colleges in the Midwest or East Coast. Just before Frances Sasano was about to participate in commencement exercises at Amache High School, she boarded a train for Connecticut where she was accepted to Hartford Junior College.¹⁴⁵ Despite being a minority amongst her classmates as one of the few Japanese American students, Frances adjusted well to her new environment, excelling in her coursework and running a successful election to a position on the student council. Frances likely would have graduated and obtained employment in the area if she hadn't worried about her family's well-being upon their return to Los Angeles post-1945.

¹⁴⁵ The Sakamoto-Sasano Collection at the Japanese American National Museum chronicles the lives of the women of the family, including Taye (Sakamoto) Sasano, her sister Chiyo (Sakamoto) Takahashi, and her daughters Frances Sasano, and Louise (Sasano) Yoshida. The collection is eclectic and comprehensive, including personal effects, schoolwork, scrapbooks chronicling all of the social events at Santa Anita and Amache, photographs, and material culture. Frances's schoolwork from before the war, as well as at Amache High School, Hartford Junior College, and the University of Southern California help to construct her experience during these formative years of her life.

Instead of finishing up her studies, Frances returned to Los Angeles to help support her younger siblings as well as her mother, who was recently separated from her father.

Many Nisei received indefinite leave early upon securing employment advertised in the Centers' newspapers. Misa Kondo left Gila River in 1943, ahead of her parents and brothers, upon receiving an employment offer from a dry cleaner in Battle Creek, Michigan.¹⁴⁶ Misa chose this location since her older sister Yuri had resettled there with her young daughter Melinda while her husband served in the 442nd Regimental Combat Unit. The Kondo sisters hoped to establish themselves so that they could be in a position to sponsor their parents and brothers and become reunited outside of the War Relocation Center. Ultimately, though, they never gathered in Battle Creek Michigan. Mr. and Mrs. Kondo remained at Gila for the duration of the war. Henry, the older of Yuri and Misa's two brothers joined the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and shipped out for the European theater in 1944. During the Battle of Bruyere in France, in October 1944, Henry became the first Nisei soldier to be killed in action. Harvey stayed with his parents at Gila the longest before he was shipped out as part of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Misa, Yuri, and Melinda, subsequently relocated to Pendleton, Oregon (east of the exclusionary zone) after Misa married Pendleton-native Harold Hoshino in 1944. The surviving members of the Kondo family finally reunited in Southern California some seven years later.

Additionally, Nisei who were of high school age often demonstrated an elevated level of maturity and bravery to seize opportunities that offered a promise of mobility for

¹⁴⁶ "WRA Form 126: Indefinite Leave Clearance form for Misa Kondo" National Archives.

themselves as well as their families. Sometimes this meant families had to split in order to seize opportunities outside of the War Relocation Centers. This became a reality for both the Keimi and Shishima families, formerly of Los Angeles and neighbors at the Heart Mountain War Relocation Center in Wyoming. Although the Keimi family left Heart Mountain together to return to Los Angeles in 1945, they soon split up. Mr. Keimi took a job constructing railroad lines in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho to support the family.¹⁴⁷ Al, the older of the two Keimi sons, returned to Hollywood so that he could finish up his last year at Hollywood High School. Younger son Hal and his mother lived for a short time in the Lomita trailer installation, one of several that the War Relocation Authority hastily set up in several locations in Southern California. When Hal's mother obtained a job as a live-in domestic for a family in Sherman Oaks, the two lived there for a time. In 1948, Hal's parents were reunited after having saved enough from their respective jobs to secure housing in Hollywood where they also opened a dry cleaning business.

William "Bill" Hiroshi Shishima was in high school when the West Coast became reopened to persons of Japanese ancestry. Like the Keimis, the Shishimas, left Heart Mountain together as a family to return to Los Angeles. Like their Heart Mountain neighbors, the Shishima family members split up, out of necessity. Bill and his older brother answered newspaper ads seeking a "school boy," a job that offered room and board in exchange for chores around the house. The brothers lived with separate Caucasian families in Los Angeles. Bill graduated from Belmont High School in 1948.

¹⁴⁷ Author's interview with Harold "Hal" Keimi, 29 Aug 2017. Also, a short biography on Hal Keimi can be found in Mia Nakaji Monnier, ed., *Voices of the Volunteers: building Blocks of the Japanese American National Museum*, 2015: 62-64.

Bill's father could not bear to return to the Plaza area (near Olvera Street and Union Station) where the family lived and operated a market and hotel before the war. Instead, he reestablished the family several blocks away. He first opened M&S Café along First Street before he took over the operation of a hotel in the Skid Row area.

While these Nisei stories suggest that that it was relatively easy for American-born Japanese to find opportunities outside of the War Relocation Centers that allowed them to reestablish themselves, their parents often had a much more difficult time. Many Issei by this time were advanced in age, which made starting over seem much more daunting. This population often stayed in the concentration camps the longest. Issei who had younger Nisei children had no choice, but to try to find any opportunities that might help their family.

Although, it was not unusual for families to split at their time of departure from the concentration camps, not all eventually reunited again. Masao "Mas" Yamashita recalls the pain that came with the splitting of his family. When the Yamashita family left the Topaz War Relocation Center, they first resettled in Salt Lake City, sharing a house with two other families. The Yamashitas lived on the second floor of the house and had to contend with a leaky roof that eventually caved in and flooded their living quarters. Without a proper refrigerator, the family filled a galvanized tub with ice and tried to add extra insulation by putting towels over the perishable foods. One day, Mas's mother could not handle the family's penurious situation any longer and left with his youngest sister for Los Angeles. For her, Los Angeles signified an opportunity to start over. Without this same sense of opportunity, Mas's father, generally good-natured became

bitter after his wife left. Mas, too, was deeply affected by his family's situation and became bitter for much of his adolescence.¹⁴⁸ Mas later returned to Los Angeles where he was briefly reunited with his mother and sister before his mother was tragically killed in a car accident.

Nisei Mary Oyama complicated the understanding of what resettlement entailed for returning Japanese Americans. She described the complexity of having to navigate mixed public opinion towards Japanese Americans in an article for *Common Ground*, entitled: "A Nisei Report From Home."¹⁴⁹ Oyama recounted her family's return to Los Angeles in 1946 after briefly resettling in Chicago before the West Coast was open to Japanese Americans. While she described a kind African American friend who watched over the family home during the war and made sure that their homecoming was met with a spic and span house and a stocked fridge as well as Caucasian friends who greeted the family upon their arrival at Union Station and feted their return with dinners and luncheons, she also talked about the incessant discussions of race and what it meant to be American. Oyama explored these discussions of race through anecdotes between her son Rickey and his classmates at school. Rickey's classmates incessantly questioned his identity, which complicated his acclimation to school and life back in Los Angeles. Rickey's classmates besieged him with questions of whether he was "Chinese or Japanese, and Mexican American boys who called him "Chino." He was particularly concerned about the latter. Although his mother assured him that the term simply meant

¹⁴⁸ Mia Nakaji Monnier, ed., *Voices of the Volunteers: Building Blocks of the Japanese American National Museum*, 2015: 128-28. Author's interview with Mas Yamashita, 12 Dec 2017.

¹⁴⁹ Mary Oyama, "A Nisei Report from Home," *Common Ground*, Winter 1946, 26-28.

Chinese. Rickey was adamant that he wasn't Chinese and told his classmates that he was American. If he were from China he would have spoken Chinese and if he were from Japan, he would have spoken Japanese. Rickey's explanation and actions eventually proved to the other students that he was just as American as any of them, Oyama reports. While Oyama pointed to explorations of race on the playground, she also described the equivalent for the Nisei adults. Oyama recounted the frequent invitations to churches, clubs and different organizations' meetings where they were "Exhibit A's in interracial or inter-American friendship projects" where their identity as "American was prefaced by being 'Nisei' or 'Japanese American.'

Oyama's columns, which often encouraged Japanese Americans to integrate with the mainstream population, rather than socializing with only other Japanese Americans, ended this article in a similar way by tempering some of the challenges inherent to the resettlement process. She interpreted the questions about her ethnic background and the role as "Exhibit A's in interracial or inter-American friendship projects," as creating opportunities to help others to see "Nisei in a new light, as fellow Americans rather than as an unknown quantity or as "foreigners." She described "actually feeling more at home and more an integral part of our community than in the pre-evacuation days." Yet, her positive spin on the inquiries that she received upon her return to Los Angeles still provided a glimpse into the complicated social climate that Japanese Americans had to navigate as a part of the resettlement process. Quoting Dillon Myer, Oyama suggested: "the evacuation has helped the Nisei to discover America and America to discover the

Nisei. It has helped me to appreciate more fully our American citizenship.”¹⁵⁰ She seemed to infer, however, that this homecoming was another beginning. She acknowledged distress, but suggested that it was in the past.

Oyama’s comments underscored the optimism that Nisei looking toward the future now that they were back home. Nisei were more capable of reestablishing themselves with greater ease given their age, their level of education, and their identity with American culture. Yet, Oyama failed to address the experience of her immigrant parents or others of the Issei generation who didn’t have the same ability to adapt after the war. Oyama depicted an optimistic view of resettlement, and although she hinted at the lingering discrimination and hiccups that characterized the transition into mainstream society, she overlooked the realities that many others faced in their situations. [Does this need to pair with the Yamamoto section?]

Issei couples who depended on their Nisei children for support following the war found it challenging to reestablish themselves if their sons were actively serving in the military, away at college, or working and living in a resettlement city in the Midwest or East. Yet, it was even more devastating for unattached Issei—either for Issei bachelors who never married or Issei who lost a spouse prior to or during the war. Without a support system readily available to depend on, how would unattached Issei be able to restart their lives? Additionally, Issei responsible for providing for dependents also encountered great difficulty. Regardless of their situation, though, the changes that had taken place in Los Angeles while they were gone caused a shock when they returned.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

RETURN TO BRONZEVILLE (LITTLE TOKYO)

Although many returned to the familiar cityscape in Los Angeles, changes that had taken place during the war became readily apparent. Little Tokyo, the former residential, economic, and social hub of the Japanese American community, now looked different, despite the familiar vista of city hall that remained when one looked east from the corner of Central Ave and First Street. The neighborhood, which became known as “Bronzeville” during the war as African American migrants from the South moved into the area to work in the war defense industry, remained when Japanese Americans returned. Signage for some of the Japanese American businesses remained painted on the sides of some of the buildings.

Yet, signs advertising businesses such as the “Bronzeville 5 and 10” replaced some of the Japanese signs that once dominated the area and marked it as a Japanese enclave. Upon arriving in Los Angeles in July 1946, sociologist Tom Sasaki noted, “the former Iwaki drug store (the former hangout of Nisei businessmen) was now a bar. The former Fuji-kan theatre was now billing [jazz singer] “Lena Horne.” The Tomio building became the Taul Building during the war. New shops stood out while the shabbier negro-owned shops looked a part of the place and the stores no longer patronized solely by the Japanese but in all cases both negroes and Japanese mingling together.”¹⁵¹ Sasaki indicated that familiar businesses, including: Enbun Company, the Murayama Trading Company, the Mikawaya Sweet Shop, The San Kwo Lo, the Taiyo Drug Company and the Nishikawa Watch Shop reopened again, albeit in new locations within Little Tokyo.

¹⁵¹ Tom Sasaki, “First Impressions of ‘Little Tokyo’,” Field Notes, 24 July 1946: 3.

Toyo Miyatake, an Issei photographer who operated a studio in Little Tokyo before the war, returned to Los Angeles in a good position to restart his business rather quickly.¹⁵² With his studio back in operation, Toyo and son Archie captured the overlap of Bronzeville and the reestablishment of Japanese businesses in Little Tokyo.

In a series of early postwar photographs of Little Tokyo, the Miyatakes documented the co-existence between the two ethnic groups who both occupied the neighborhood in the early postwar period as well as the eventual return to a Japanese enclave. In one photograph, a Japanese American couple walks down 1st Street, towards the photographer, with their young family. The woman pushes a stroller while the couple's daughter happily enjoys an ice cream cone. Just a few seconds prior, the Japanese American family passed an African American couple headed towards the S.K. Uyeda department store that had recently re-opened. The photograph captures the African American woman briefly looking back over her left shoulder towards the Japanese American family and the photographer. While this was a candid shot that captured daily life at the time of 1st Street, it captures a neighborhood in the midst of another transition. Perhaps the most iconic photograph of this transitional period between Bronzeville and the return to Little Tokyo, captures an exchange between the Japanese American proprietor behind the counter of his store (renamed the Bronzeville Arcade during the war) as he engages with several African American customers. All of the individuals look

¹⁵² Miyatake left the Manzanar War Relocation Center with his family in 1946. Grandson Alan Miyatake indicated that Miyatake decided to linger at Manzanar to document the lives of incarcerated there as long as possible. Upon arriving in Los Angeles, the Miyatake family returned to their home in Boyle Heights. The Miyatakes were lucky to have a friend watch over their home and the garage that contained much of Toyo's photography equipment in their absence. This fortuitous arrangement allowed Toyo to rebuild his business shortly upon his return.

like they are engaging in a friendly banter. This photograph, likely staged, portrays this period of overlap between Little Tokyo and Bronzeville as being smooth and conflict free, just as the photograph of the Japanese American family and African American couple seems to depict.¹⁵³

Sasaki, though, depicts a far more complicated milieu than these photographs suggest. He notes the presence of African Americans in his vivid descriptions of daily life in Bronzeville-Little Tokyo. He indicates that while there were an equal number of African American and Japanese American-run businesses in the neighborhood in July 1946, the African American population was far greater than the Japanese American population in the neighborhood.¹⁵⁴ Sasaki documented the sentiments of returning Japanese Americans specifically towards the large number of African Americans and Mexican Americans that they would come into contact with in the area. In an interview with the proprietor of Taiyo Drugstore, the unnamed man responds to Sasaki's question about whether Japanese would have done as well as African Americans if the former community hadn't been summarily removed during the war. The proprietor responded with an assumption based on a series of negative stereotypes of African Americans and Mexican Americans that suggested these two groups were less likely to succeed over persons of Japanese ancestry. The Taiyo Drugstore proprietor shared his opinion that

¹⁵³ The two photographs described here are part of the Toyo Miyatake Photography Studio Collection. Alan Miyatake (Toyo's grandson and third generation photographer) has carried on his father and grandfather's legacy by continuing the family's photography studio. His brother, Gary Miyatake, is also a photographer who operates a studio under the Miyatake name. Alan Miyatake's studio in San Gabriel, CA, remains the repository for the Miyatake Photography Studio Collection that contains Toyo, Archie, and Alan Miyatake's photographs.

¹⁵⁴ Sasaki, 10.

members of these other racial groups were unwise to be profligate with their money, which was to the gain of Japanese business owners in the area.¹⁵⁵ This opinion suggested the biases that led to underlying interethnic tensions between the various groups occupying the neighborhood.

Several historians have chronicled the series of demographic changes to the neighborhood as well as the interactions between the two ethnic communities, suggesting there was far greater complexity to this story than these photographs seemingly portray.¹⁵⁶ And just like the larger story of resettlement for Japanese Americans across the country, the transition back to Little Tokyo was not immediate nor was it seamless. Articles that appeared in the *Rafu Shimpo* newspaper during the overlap between Bronzeville and Little Tokyo hint at the underlying tension. The *Rafu Shimpo* reported that occasional muggings, always with elderly Japanese Americans as the victims as they walked throughout the neighborhood. Additionally, there were numerous reports of theft from cars parked in Little Tokyo. Although the articles did not outwardly identify African American residents as the perpetrators, they referred to “Li’l Tokio” as being a likely place for theft and warned visitors not to leave possessions in their car, “or you, too, will receive the well-known Bronzeville reception.”¹⁵⁷ Coining the term “the Bronzeville reception” was an indication of friction between the current population and the previous

¹⁵⁵ Tom Sasaki, Field Notes from an interview with the proprietor of the Taiyo Drug Store, 24 July 1946: 4. Berkeley JERS.

¹⁵⁶ For more on the history of Bronzeville and the overlap with the reestablishment of Little Tokyo, see: Hillary Jenks, Kariann Yokota, Scott Kurashige, Kevin Leonard, and Anthony Macias.

¹⁵⁷ “Nisei Leaves Car Overnight; Robbed,” *Rafu Shimpo*, 16 Nov 1946.

community and the stereotype that many Japanese Americans maintained of the Bronzeville residents.

The proprietor of the Taiyo Drug Store, which re-opened after the war at the northeast corner of 1st and San Pedro Streets, described the buildings of Little Tokyo as becoming run-down during the war, while Japanese were away, noting: “The buildings would not be so run-down [if Japanese had not been removed from the area for the duration of the war] and the general condition of the “Little Tokyo” would be much better. The only places that look kept up are those owned by the Japanese. Everyone else would let their places run down. We had to clean out the place because we can’t stand having a dirty place.”¹⁵⁸ A year after Japanese began returning to Little Tokyo, the Taiyo Drug Store’s proprietor alluded to the fact that the dilapidated condition of the buildings in the area remained. Their “run down” appearance was disconcerting for those who craved the familiarity of their prewar community upon their return. Tom Sasaki, a member of UC Berkeley Sociology Professor Dorothy Swain’s Japanese Evacuation Relocation Survey team echoed the Taiyo Drugstore proprietor’s thoughts.¹⁵⁹ Sasaki noted that the “new shops stood out while the shabbier negro-owned shops looked a part of the place... There were several familiar names: the Enbun Company, the Murayama [sic, should be Maruyama] Trading Company, the Miyakawa [sic] Sweet Shop, The San

¹⁵⁸ Tom Sasaki, Field Notes from an interview with the proprietor of the Taiyo Drug Store, 24 July 1946: 4.

¹⁵⁹ Tom Sasaki was the JERS researcher assigned to Los Angeles. Sasaki’s counterparts from the JERS project were making similar observations of the resettlement process in other cities. Their advisor and the principal investigator for the project, Dorothy Swain Thomas, published her findings on the overall evacuation and “relocation” process in a book called *The Salvage*.

Kwo Lo, the Taiyo Drug Company and the Nishikawa Watch Shop.”¹⁶⁰ According to Sasaki, these businesses, which re-opened in 1946 in new locations, were “newly repainted and stood out like a sore thumb. Other new Japanese stores were also very much in evidence and seemed to be having good businesses.”¹⁶¹

Despite the friction, Japanese proprietors returned to reclaim their former businesses and to reestablish new ones in the neighborhood they affectionately referred to as Little Tokyo. Toyo and Archie Miyatake documented the transition back to Little Tokyo, photographing the reestablishment of numerous businesses that operated in the area before the war. Additionally, Tom Sasaki’s “daily reports from Los Angeles” provide an invaluable first-hand account of the resettlement process, which help to reconstruct the way in which Little Tokyo and the surrounding area returned to Little Tokyo. As a Nisei and a former incarcerated, Sasaki was an “insider” researcher, which informed his observations. He knew the community, which made his reports seem less like outsider observations and more like a personal diary entry. In his reports, Sasaki described what it was like to return to Los Angeles immediately after the exclusionary ban was lifted. He did this by including transcripts of interviews with returnees to get a sense of their experience and what daily life was like. Additionally, he provided a visual inventory of the businesses that reopened in Bronzeville/Little Tokyo.

Little Tokyo certainly was not the only neighborhood that had undergone change during the war. Many returned to neighborhoods all throughout Southern California to

¹⁶⁰ Tom Sasaki, “First Impressions of ‘Little Tokyo’,” Field Notes, 24 July 1946: 3.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

find that strangers had occupied their former homes and businesses in their absence. Others found it unsettling to discover that the belongings or property they left in church basements, barns, or homes had been ransacked or vandalized. Overall, while Little Tokyo—the heart of the Japanese American community—clearly underwent significant change during the war, returnees to Los Angeles faced a different visual landscape while they navigated a social climate that had actually changed very little.

CONCLUSION

Despite the intention of the War Relocation Authority's resettlement program to disperse the Japanese population throughout the country and the Japanese American Citizens' League repeated urgings to comply with these instructions, Japanese Americans returned to the West Coast, and to Los Angeles, specifically, in numbers that closely rivaled those of the prewar era. In accordance with the WRA's objective, there was a noticeable dispersal of the Japanese American population—both across the Southland and across the country. Yet, once again, Los Angeles became the site of a significant Japanese American community. Japanese Americans who returned to their former home or came to Los Angeles for the first time helped to re-establish the largest Japanese American community in the United States. The War Relocation Authority also significantly contributed to the sizeable population that reformed in Los Angeles through its decision to return remaining incarcerated to their point of origin in advance of the impending closure of the Centers. The varying paths that resettlers took when they left the concentration camps caused families to split up. For families that became fractured from the necessity of pinning down opportunities outside of the barbed wire, the process

of reestablishing themselves, without family members to depend on, became incredibly difficult. Faced with the return to Los Angeles, many hoped that the familiarity of home would help ease the transition.

Yet, returning Japanese Americans arrived to find a changed Los Angeles. Little Tokyo, the heart of the Japanese American community transformed into Bronzeville, a mostly African American neighborhood. Additionally, they faced a social climate that seemingly became more hostile towards them in their absence. While the substantial number of returning Japanese Americans contributed to the regeneration of a Japanese American community, lingering *dejure* and *defacto* discrimination on the West Coast continued to restrict the actions of Japanese Americans, who recently returned.

The anti-Japanese sentiment that numerous elected officials in California harbored for decades fostered the state violence that attempted to limit mobility through *dejure* legislation and later remove Japanese immigrants and their children from the exclusionary zone on the West Coast. The state violence continued to oppress Japanese Americans upon their return to Los Angeles. The rise in this anti-Japanese sentiment following the removal of Japanese Americans, with no indication of when or if they would return, revealed the hostile social climate that returnees would encounter upon their homecoming. Top officials at the City of Los Angeles and State of California vacillated between open hostility and extending open arms as the West Coast reopened again, causing returnees to be even more wary of whom they could trust.

This vitriol in Los Angeles caused recent returnees to turn inwards to support one another. Ultimately, these factors contributed to the regeneration of a vibrant Japanese

American community, much to the chagrin of the War Relocation Authority and others who designed the resettlement program. The intense social climate in Los Angeles, combined with returnees' reliance on relationships they had formed during incarceration in America's concentration camps, caused returning Japanese Americans to ignore the WRA's instructions and re-establish concentrated populations across the region.

CHAPTER THREE

“MAKING HOME: SECURING HOUSING IN LOS ANGELES”

It is difficult to determine where the discrimination ends and the housing shortage begins.

– Mike Masaoka (in conversation with Mayor Fletcher Bowron), 1946

A government issued tag tacked onto one of the trunks that Reverend Takeshi Ban constructed from scrap materials while incarcerated during World War II, indicated that he and his family returned home directly upon leaving the Manzanar War Relocation Center on September 18, 1945.¹⁶² Home for the Ban family was a large house at 501 S. Cummings Street across from Hollenbeck Park in Boyle Heights, a diverse neighborhood just east of Downtown Los Angeles where there was a vibrant Japanese American community prior to the war. The Ban family, like numerous other Japanese American families from the greater Los Angeles area, were able to resume their lives, much more seamlessly than others, thanks to benevolent neighbors, friends, and colleagues who rented or looked after their homes and businesses in their absence. Despite being

¹⁶² Two trunks that Reverend Takeshi Ban used and possibly constructed himself at the Manzanar War Relocation Center or at one of the Department of Justice camps where he was detained during World War II are part of the History Department's permanent collection at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County (A.11572.2010-1-2). The trunk with the government tag tacked to the top, indicates that Ban's prewar residence in Boyle Heights was his next and final destination following departure from the Manzanar War Relocation Center. According to the Final Accountability Roster, Ban's date of terminal departure was September 18, 1945. See: *Final Accountability Rosters Of Evacuees At Relocation Centers, 1944-46: Manzanar*. Final Accountability Rosters of Evacuees at Relocation Centers, 1944-46. U.S. National Archives. *Archives Unbound*. Web. 29 Mar 2018. <<http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lapl.org/gdsc/i.do?&id=GALE%7CSC5104584818&v=2.1&u=lapl&it=r&p=GDSC&sw=w&viewtype=Manuscript>>.

apprehended on a train on the day Pearl Harbor was attacked and subsequently incarcerated in several Department of Justice camps due to his ties to political ties to Japan and his efforts to proliferate Japanese culture at film screenings for Japanese farming communities throughout California, Rev. Ban was able to orchestrate plans for his family's home in Boyle Heights from afar.¹⁶³ As a professor of theology at Pasadena College (today known as Point Loma Nazarene College), Reverend Ban was able to procure an arrangement with the school's administration for the college to rent the family's Boyle Heights residence for the duration of the war.

The Ban Family's exceptionally large home was one of the Victorian mansions that characterized the Boyle Heights neighborhood as one of Los Angeles's first upper class suburbs when it was constructed in the late nineteenth century. The Ban's spacious home, which was framed by two mature palm trees planted in the front two corners of the grassy front yard, could have been the subject of a picturesque postcard that would make people on the East Coast, suffering through cold winters, envious. While it was an exceptional residence by any standards, it held extra special meaning for Reverend Ban and his family. The 1913 Alien Land Law precluded Ban, an immigrant from Japan and therefore an alien ineligible for United States citizenship, from purchasing a home on his

¹⁶³ Life interview with Frances (Ban) Hiraoka, 28 July 2010. Conducted by Sojin Kim and Kristen Hayashi. FBI agents intercepted Reverend Ban on a train en route to San Francisco immediately following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor as part of a government surveillance program, which had been monitoring lists of individuals considered "dangerous" due to their extracurricular activities and affiliations with Japanese cultural institutions, leadership roles in the Japanese American community, or ties to Japan. Ban, like many others who were picked up in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, was sent to several Department of Justice camps across the country. Despite being a Christian minister and educator, Ban was singled out for his prominent role in the Japanese American community and ties to Japan. Reverend Ban frequently traveled throughout California, paying particular attention to Japanese American communities in rural farming areas. He spoke to audiences on various topics of Christianity or the need for better relations between the United States and Japan, enticing attendance with screenings of Japanese films during intermission. This work that he engaged in with various Japanese American rural communities led to the FBI surveillance.

own. Yet, Ban was determined to find a home for his wife and their ten children. He, like so many other Issei men, circumvented the discriminatory legislation by purchasing the home in his eldest American-born child's name. The family's residence was always buzzing with activity as the twelve members of the Ban family and their hired domestic staff came and went, guests of the family came to visit for a few days at a time, and students from the *Taiheiyo Bunka Gakuen*, or the Pacific Cultural Institute that Reverend Ban operated out of his home, came to take classes. Daughter Frances (Ban) Hiraoka recalled her family's home in the late 1930s, "People were coming and going all the time, which made it an exciting place to be since you never knew who would be at dinner each night."¹⁶⁴ The Ban family's home was a pivotal gathering place or second home to numerous others prior to their mass removal during World War II.

Like the Bans, most families were desperate to return home after three years away—incarcerated behind barbed wire, relegated to primitive housing in tar-papered, wooden barracks. Upon their return home, the Ban family opened their residence to families and individuals in need of a place to stay while they began the immediate process of reestablishing themselves. While the Ban family may have been in the position to help others struggling to get back on their feet, Takeshi Ban continued to be subjected to the same *dejure* and *defacto* discriminatory practices that limited him before the incarceration, as an alien ineligible for citizenship. Ban was fortunate to be able to return to the home that he purchased prior to the war in his American-born children's names. If

¹⁶⁴ Most of the guests were Ban's students, some of whom he sponsored from Japan. Frances Hiraoka recalled that "Cook-san," (the family's hired cook) was often on the phone ordering groceries from Brotherhood Market, a Japanese-owned store in Boyle Heights [to meet the meal demands of all the people in the house at any one given time].

he had been faced with the challenge of securing a home after the war, he would have been left with few viable options since he remained unable to access his monetary assets and subjected to the Alien Land Law that prevented him from purchasing property in California.¹⁶⁵

The Ban family's story, which represents a sector of the population that had an easier time re-establishing themselves upon their return to Los Angeles, is presumed to be typical, given the way this story is portrayed in memoirs and narrative films. Often in narratives on resettlement, such as memoirs like *Kiyo's Story* or films like *Tadaima*, a family returns together to their prewar home.¹⁶⁶ Yet, the majority of families were not as fortunate as the Bans. Many families were splintered upon their indefinite leave from the concentration camps. While nuances related to class and privilege might pertain to the Ban Family's situation, ultimately a family's prewar situation had little bearing on their resettlement experience upon returning to the West Coast at the end of the war. Some families, who were affluent before the war, lost their wealth when they were forced to end the lease on their homes, close their businesses and liquidate their assets if they had no one to lean on to manage their affairs during the war.

¹⁶⁵ An internal memo amongst staff from the War Relocation Authority's Los Angeles field office addressed the planning that the agency's staff was doing to help Japanese Americans obtain housing upon their return. WRA staff member Paul Robertson answered the question about whether returnees would be able to secure homes upon their return. Although Robertson did not address the continued validity of the Alien Land Law, there was a discussion regarding whether funds were frozen or not. The memo explained that the federal government had frozen funds of all aliens at the time of Pearl Harbor, but licenses had been issued to most of them in order that they might continue with their businesses, allowing withdrawals of small amounts at a time from their accounts. Some alien funds were still frozen at the end of 1945 when this memo was written. "Letter from Paul Robertson to Miss J. Ehlenbach," 30 Nov 1945, National Archives, PI-77 47, Box 75 Folder 301.3.

¹⁶⁶ Kiyo Sato, *Kiyo's Story: A Japanese American Family's Quest for the American Dream* (Soho Press, 2010). Short narrative film on resettlement. *Tadaima*, short narrative film 2015, written and directed by Robin Takao D'Oench.

Unlike the Ban family, many former incarcerated, who hoped to return to their prewar homes or reclaim assets that they left behind, were dismayed to find that luck had not been on their side. Far too often, individuals returned to the sites where they stored their belongings to discover that their material possessions had been ransacked, forcing them to start over. Some returned to their prewar hopes, stunned to find that other tenants occupied them without their knowledge. Yet, many chose to obscure from memory any struggle that they may have encountered while procuring the basic necessity of housing. Nonetheless, starting over to identify housing proved to be even more challenging than it was before the war.

The discriminatory legislation that severely restricted where people settled before the war remained firmly in place when former incarcerated returned home to the West Coast. The Alien Land Law persisted, now with even greater restrictions. Following the incarceration, this had an even more profound impact on the Issei. Since many Nisei children separated from their parents due to earlier resettlement in a different geographic location for employment or education, military service, or continued segregation at Tule Lake because of the way they answered the loyalty questionnaire, Issei were even more limited in their ability to secure permanent housing. Additionally, *dejure* and *defacto* discrimination continued in the form of restrictive housing covenants, limiting where returnees could reestablish themselves.

Additionally, there were others who knew they had little to depend on beyond the barbed wire enclosure that, in a sense, protected them from the reality of the grave

challenges that existed on the West Coast. For this sector of the population, there was little desire to return to the pain of what they lost or left behind several years prior.

Yet, without much choice, many like Kimiko Keimi and her thirteen-year-old son Harold returned to Los Angeles, their prewar home, without plans beyond what the War Relocation Authority could offer in terms of the most basics—temporary housing in one of its trailer installation locations. By fall 1945, Kimiko and Hal were among the last detainees at the Heart Mountain War Relocation Center in Wyoming, upon their impending departure for their former home in Los Angeles. They left a few months after Thomas, Kimiko's husband, departed for the Pacific Northwest to take up employment with the railroad and oldest son Al returned to Los Angeles to work as a schoolboy and finish up school at Hollywood High.¹⁶⁷ Once Hal recovered from the illness that kept him and his mother at Heart Mountain through October, they qualified for indefinite leave with plans to return to Los Angeles where the familiarity of their prewar home would hopefully be advantageous as they worked to reestablish the semblance of a normal life again, despite the absence of the head of their household and older son and brother, Al.

Although Kimiko was distraught over her family's plan to split up, she knew it was necessary if they were to reestablish themselves once again. She planned to return to California, the place of her birth. More specifically, Kimiko and her son Harold would return to Los Angeles, since this is where she and her husband Thomas had set down roots in the 1920s. There, they established Cho Cho Dye Works, a small laundry and dry

¹⁶⁷ 1940; Census Place: *Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California*; Roll: *m-t0627-00398*; Page: *44*; Enumeration District: *60-127*

cleaners at 6093 Sunset Blvd in the heart of Hollywood.¹⁶⁸ Kimiko and Thomas had established home for their family at the rear of their business. Younger son Harold recalled two double beds in the rear of the building where the family slept, just past a small kitchenette where they shared meals together. Although the Keimi's home was modest, it provided an anchor for the family before the war. Kimiko and Thomas Keimi intended to regain that stability for their family, but it would take several years before the family would be reunited.

For the Keimis, the comfort and stability that home once provided was shattered through the continuous upheaval that started with the forced removal from the West Coast, incarceration in temporary detention centers, concentration camps, and continued into the early postwar period. Kimiko and Harold endured a series of continuous upheavals as they moved from one place to another in Southern California in search of employment and a permanent home. Although Kimiko differed from most Japanese women her age since she was Nisei. Given her U.S. citizenship, it would seem as though she would have the advantage that many young Nisei had. Nevertheless, obtaining permanent housing and employment immediately out of camp proved to be quite challenging for Kimiko. As a result, she and her younger son remained itinerant over the course of the next two years, in search of more permanent shelter and employment. Upon arriving in Los Angeles, the mother and son first landed at the Winona trailer installation in Burbank, just a few miles from the Keimi's prewar home in Hollywood. Here, Kimiko and Hal joined hundreds of individuals who, similarly had difficulty in securing housing.

¹⁶⁸ Life history interview with Harold Keimi, conducted by author, Little Tokyo Historical Society, August 2017.

A stay at Winona or any of the other federally-run trailer installations was not supposed to be long term or permanent, which is why Kimiko reluctantly took a domestic job that offered room and board for her and her son in Woodland Hills, an upper-middle class white neighborhood in the San Fernando Valley.

Once again, just like with the structures at Santa Anita and Heart Mountain, home for the mother and son was neither their own or a place of privacy and respite. Instead, it was a shared space—first within the confining space of a trailer and later within another family’s home. Over seventy years later, Harold still recalls in great detail his family’s home and surrounding neighborhood in Hollywood before the war. He reminisced about often taking a large pot next door to the Italian restaurant to buy spaghetti for his family’s supper. He spoke in great detail about what daily life was like at Heart Mountain where he and his family were incarcerated, choosing to focus on the sports activities that were organized in camp. Yet, when asked about his life after he and his mother left camp, his responses were curt and devoid of any detail. While memories from over seventy years ago are understandably hazy, it’s a wonder why memories from an earlier time were more vivid for Keimi. Perhaps, it was the social amnesia that sociologist Testuden Kashima attributed to former incarcerateds’ ability to process the incarceration and its aftermath.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁹ Tetsuden Kashima, “Japanese American Internees Return – 1945-1955: Readjustment and Social Amnesia,” *Phylon* 41.2, June 1980: 107-115. Satsuki Ina has built on Kashima’s work, focusing in the psychological trauma that the incarceration had on detainees, particularly the children. Much of her work focuses on facilitating intergenerational conversations with former incarcerateds and their descendants to begin a dialogue on the experience and how it has shaped the lives of subsequent generations. Sociologist Donna Nagata also explores the psychological trauma that the incarceration caused. Donna Nagata, *Legacy of Injustice: Exploring the Cross-generational Impact of the Japanese American Internment*, Springer Verlag, 2014.

The Ban and Keimi families' experiences bookend a range of experiences that characterize how returnees found home again. Neither family represents a definitive experience of how returnees navigated the challenging housing situation in Los Angeles after the war. Yet, each of these family's stories hints at the various ways in which the lingering state violence directed towards Japanese Americans continued to have an impact after the war. For the majority of Japanese who came to Los Angeles once the exclusionary ban was lifted, the process of resettlement and re-establishing the basic essentials of life, was fraught with significant challenges, which included lasting anti-Japanese sentiment, a continuation of *dejure* and *defacto* discrimination and a critical housing shortage. Additionally, Los Angeles looked different in 1945 than it did three years prior when Japanese Americans were forced to leave their homes behind. Waves of migration in and out of the region and the seemingly rapid shift towards caused neighborhoods to look different, especially those and the war production industry.

For some who thought they had their pre-war homes to return to, they were surprised to find that great changes had taken place while they were away. Komika Kunitomi, along with her youngest children Midori and Tets, decided to return to Los Angeles in the summer of 1945, after learning that the Manzanar War Relocation Center would be closing in a few months' time.¹⁷⁰ With her three oldest sons in the military, her oldest daughter Choko relegated to a sanatorium for tuberculosis, and middle daughter Sue working in Chicago, Komika, widowed and in her mid-fifties, was likely counting on

¹⁷⁰ Sue Kunitomi Embrey, "Call Back Yesterday: Our Family's Story of Resettlement," *Nanka Nikkei Voices: Resettlement Years, 1945-1955*. Japanese American Historical Society of Southern California, 1998: 116.

returning to the familiarity of their home in Lincoln Heights, a neighborhood just east of Downtown Los Angeles and the Los Angeles River. Son Jack Kunitomi recalled that his family returned to Los Angeles to find that their prewar home in Lincoln Heights was gone, appropriated by the Department of Water and Power and razed for the construction of a supply lot.¹⁷¹

Since members of the Kunitomi family were separated, it made it difficult for the more dependent members of the family to reestablish themselves when they learned they could no longer reenter their home. Jack corresponded with his family about their situation while he was on active duty overseas in the Pacific with the Military Intelligence Service, leaving his mother, sister and brother to secure a new place to live on their own. Despite the lack of desirable housing options available, the Kunitomis located what Jack described as a shack-like place on Sunset Boulevard, near Downtown Los Angeles. Detours like this one were inherent to navigating the housing situation in Los Angeles after the war is in many ways typical of the housing experience. Returnees faced unexpected surprises and endured repeated upheavals as they sought permanent housing.

At the close of 1946, the *Pacific Citizen* newspaper ran a special issue looking at the year in review, noting: “1946 was a year of movement.” Although the West Coast had been open to persons of Japanese ancestry since early 1945 and the concentration camps, with the exception of Tule Lake, had closed, continuous upheaval and movement

¹⁷¹ Yoshisuke “Jack” Kunitomi, interview by Michelle Dojiri, April 21, 2002, Go For Broke National Education Center, Los Angeles, CA, accessed 20 Oct 2015, http://www.goforbroke.org/oral_histories/oral_histories_video_display_names_mp4.php?clip=27008

characterized this year. The variety of experiences of those who endured this period of transition and resettlement differed based on age and class. One article in this special edition described returning youth as pliable and adaptable and quick to readjust to their new surroundings while for their Issei and Nisei parents, “it was the early relocation center days all over again.”¹⁷²

The following year, the Department of the Interior reported that for the approximately 26,000 Japanese Americans that returned to Los Angeles, “housing and employment were the most immediate needs, and during the first six months of 1946, Japanese business activity was slow to pick up.”¹⁷³ The intense hostility directed towards Japanese Americans caused their search for housing and employment to become even more difficult in the years immediately following World War II. Additionally, migrants who were attracted to manufacturing job opportunities in Southern California’s war industry, along with returning servicemen created additional competition for housing.

Regardless of generation and socioeconomic level, all of them were intent on making home again outside of the barbed wire. An examination of the housing situation for returnees reveals that the postwar resettlement experiences of Japanese Americans were far more diverse and complex than the typical account that Nisei have chosen to recall about their “return home.” The continuation of the state violence that resulted in the imprisonment of persons of Japanese ancestry during World War II persisted into the postwar period as former incarcerated returned home to Los Angeles. The acute housing

¹⁷² “The Transition – 1946: Year of Resettlement,” *Pacific Citizen*, 21 December 1946.

¹⁷³ Department of the Interior, *People in Motion*: 85.

shortage in Los Angeles peaked towards the end of the war as people began to return home from war-related deployment and displacement, which ultimately put severe pressure on Japanese Americans who either returned or came for the first time to the area.

In addition to the shortage of housing, *dejure* and *defacto* discrimination that intended to limit the social mobility of Japanese immigrants remained firmly entrenched during the war. The boundaries of redlining—though seemingly invisible—replaced the barbed wire that formerly confined persons of Japanese ancestry. Although the former incarcerated received indefinite leave clearance from America’s concentration camps, confinement continued as the state violence that led to the incarceration left many ill-prepared for life afterwards. The closing of the War Relocation Centers and the acute housing shortage in Los Angeles caused many former incarcerated to be in a suspended state—dependent on others for an immediate housing fix. The WRA recognized this as a problem and scrambled to find housing options. Sheltering in the “War Relocation Centers” continued in the resettlement period, this time in trailer installations in various locations across Southern California. For others, hostels and SROs as an initial housing option perpetuated a similar version of the communal living without privacy that characterized daily living in the wartime concentration camps.

Together, the squeeze on permanent housing caused continuous upheavals that forced many recent returnees to move from one transitional space to another. As many Japanese Americans left America’s concentration camps thinking that they would be able to regain a sense of stability and security upon returning “home,” they soon realized the daunting obstacles that lay ahead in securing permanent housing. While physical

movement was no longer restricted, intangible limitations severely crippled the upward mobility of returnees to the West Coast. In many ways, the situation was even worse after the war. Despite returning to their former home in Los Angeles, Japanese Americans faced a daunting transition, a continuation of the great upheaval of the forced removal and subsequent incarceration. Rather than providing a sense of relief, returning home to Los Angeles engendered further upheaval for many who came back once the West Coast was reopened. This is evident through former incarceratedees' experiences in obtaining housing upon their return to Los Angeles.

In theory, the federal government viewed what they termed the "evacuation" and "relocation" of Japanese Americans from the West Coast during the war as temporary. Similarly, this is perhaps how the federal government viewed the outlook of the "Japanese problem" they were faced with. The acute housing situation in Los Angeles at the end of the war determined that the temporary and transitional stopgaps that the federal government hastily put in place would not be enough. As a result, state violence continued through the dissolution of the WRA and continuous upheavals in housing. "Transitional" and "temporary" fixes were not realistic.

As a result, many returnees were forced to move through a variety of short-term stays in hostels or in the homes of extended family or friends, temporary trailer installations established by the War Relocation Authority, single resident occupancy hotels in Skid Row, or obtain room and board within the homes of white, upper middle class families in exchange for domestic labor. The monumental disruption that wartime incarceration created, persisted through a series of upheavals as returnees navigated the

de facto and *de jure* discrimination that established long before the wartime incarceration. My approach to the housing story will focus on the experience of several individuals and families to get a more personal experience of the challenges that Japanese Americans faced in finding home again.

CITY OF HOMES?

The image of the single family suburban home, framed by a neatly manicured front lawn and an automobile parked in the adjacent driveway became the icon for Southern California in the early postwar period. A photo of move-in day in the Southern California suburb of Lakewood, featuring a moving van parked in every driveway, graced the cover of the July 13, 1953 issue of *Life* magazine. The staged image and corresponding article contributed to the misconception that brand new tract homes in the suburbs of greater Los Angeles area were plentiful and easy to obtain.

Yet, while home construction in Southern California increased significantly after the war, causing “Los Angeles to add the new equivalent of two Pittsburghs,” the new construction was not enough to quell the shortage that originated prior to the war. Nor could it keep up with the continual demand that resulted from the influx of 400 new Angels, a term that the *Life* article included to describe the newcomers arriving to the city each day.¹⁷⁴ The housing shortage in Los Angeles peaked towards the end of the war, which put severe pressure on experts to identify a solution. In 1945, experts estimated that the population in the City of Los Angeles had increased by 600,000 people to 3,385,00 over the past five years. Taking into account this growth during the war, the

¹⁷⁴ “...And 400 New Angels Every Day,” *Life*, 13 July 1953, Vol. 35, No. 2, 23.

impending return of veterans, families of servicemen, war workers, and Japanese families, as well as the estimated number of available dwelling units, experts estimated there was a shortage of some 58,000 units.¹⁷⁵

While the dream of home ownership in the sunny bedroom communities of Southern California filled the imaginations of Angelenos and “new Angels,” the suburban ideal was far from attainable for all. In addition to the shortage of housing, *dejure* and *defacto* discrimination limited where persons of Japanese ancestry (and other racial minorities) could purchase homes as well as who could hold title to a home. The difficulty in finding available housing led to a series of upheavals that forced many recent returnees to move from one transitional space to another. As many Japanese Americans left America’s concentration camps thinking that they would be able to regain a sense of stability and security upon returning “home,” they soon realized the difficulty that lay ahead in securing permanent housing.¹⁷⁶ Los Angeles was not unique in enduring this great challenge of a housing shortage, despite the prevalent image of vast suburban housing tracts undergoing construction in neighborhoods all across Southern California.

Housing was the number one issue nationwide, yet it was particularly acute in Los Angeles. On September 12, 1945, the Los Angeles Community Welfare Council called a meeting to discuss the multipronged resettlement program for returning Japanese Americans. Although a variety of private and government social welfare agencies were

¹⁷⁵ George Gleason, Executive Secretary, Los Angeles County Committee for Interracial Progress, “The Housing Crisis in Los Angeles County April 1, 1945,” National Archives, PI-77 47, Box 75, Folder 301.3.

¹⁷⁶ This grouping of people consists of those who were deemed by the War Relocation Authority as eligible for indefinite leave when the exclusionary ban on the West Coast was lifted on January 2, 1945. Individuals qualified for indefinite leave by the way in which they answered the so-called “loyalty questionnaire.”

contributing to this effort, the criticism was that they were essentially working in silos. Paul Robertson of the WRA, Richard Neustadt of the Social Security Board, and Mr. Holsandorff of the Federal Public Housing Authority all stressed the extreme housing shortage in Los Angeles, as well as the inefficiency of their efforts due to lack of communication and central planning.¹⁷⁷ Holsandorff stated that there were 100,000 too few units deemed as decent housing. The return of U.S. servicemen added greatly to the shortage. Service-connected families were given priority for housing, which put even further pressure on returning Japanese families who competed with other racial minorities for a short supply of housing in areas without restrictions. Mr. Holsandorff opened his remarks by stating this meeting had come entirely too late. He expressed his frustration that his agency had not been consulted or included in meetings to help plan for housing for returnees. He indicated that the number of housing applications from Japanese Americans had increased exponentially.

The inventory of available house for returnees to Southern California as well as the growing racial tensions, especially between African Americans and Japanese Americans, competing for housing and employment were of grave concern. Holsandorff suggested that the housing shortage would not likely improve for 6 to 8 months. Mobile trailer units were seen as the potential immediate fix. While a significant number had been requested from the FPHA, Holsandorff noted that his agency could not allow this because it would constitute preference and would likely provoke racial tension.

¹⁷⁷ "Meeting on Resettlement Program," California State Archives; F3729: 11, Department of Social Welfare - War Services - Civilian War Assistance - Corr., County, Los Angeles, 1945-49.

The WRA, which was cognizant of this challenge, began to accelerate efforts to find placements for remaining incarcerated, establishing field offices in numerous cities along the West Coast to help ease returnees' reintegration into mainstream society. Although the WRA field offices offered assistance in securing housing, they were concerned mostly with returnees who were among the last to depart from the war relocation centers, especially those without family or friends to turn to for help. Religious organizations like the American Friends and charitable organizations like the International Institute in Boyle Heights helped returnees find temporary housing placements, as well.

Additionally, Japanese American realty companies like Saito and Kashu Realty offered returning Japanese assistance in identifying and securing housing. Given the shortage of housing and limitations on where Japanese could lease or buy property, a Japanese American realty provided an important service to the community by helping returnees navigate discriminatory practices, which created obstacles to securing property for residency or business.¹⁷⁸

PROPOSITION 15

While changes to neighborhoods were apparent to returnees, the *dejure* discrimination they faced before the war remained unchanged. The 1913 Alien Land Law remained in place when Issei returned, which continued to bar them from purchasing land.¹⁷⁹ When this law was enacted in 1913, it initially paralyzed many Issei as they

¹⁷⁸ "Ad for Saito Realty," *Pacific Citizen*, 31 August 1946.

looked for ways to establish themselves upon their arrival to the United States. Soon, they found ways to skirt the law by purchasing property in their American-born children's names or through older American-born Nisei friends or relatives. Yet, when they returned in 1945, the Issei faced this monumental hurdle once again as they looked toward reestablishing their residence and livelihood. Although the Issei had been able to navigate this legal obstacle a couple decades earlier, their mature age made it difficult for them to reestablish themselves once again, especially on their own. Many who had been dependent, in varying degrees, on their Nisei sons before the war, found themselves somewhat helpless if their sons were unable to provide support due to being overseas on military duty, attending university in another part of the country, or incarcerated at Tule Lake.

Additionally, the political and economic scapegoatism against Japanese escalated while Japanese were absent from the West Coast during the war without certainty of when or if they would ever return. Groups like the Native Sons and the Native Daughters of the Golden West actively lobbied California State Senators in 1943 to sponsor

¹⁷⁹ In *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends: Asian Americans, Housing, and the Transformation of Urban California*, Charlotte Brooks devotes a chapter to the struggle for housing and property rights in postwar California, providing a substantive overview of the housing situation that Japanese Americans faced in their return to California in the postwar period. Yet, since she looks at both San Francisco and Los Angeles and compares the experiences of multiple ethnic groups, it is a challenge for her to go in depth on the housing struggles of Japanese Americans in Los Angeles from 1945-1955. While she has located and utilized a wealth of governmental records to document the housing situation, this causes her analysis to be broad in scope. In addition to Charlotte Brooks' work, Valerie Matsumoto discusses the housing shortage that Japanese Americans encountered upon their return to Los Angeles in her chapter on the postwar period, entitled: "Reweaving the Web of Community in Postwar Southern California, 1945-1960," in *City Girls: The Nisei Social World in Los Angeles 1920-1950*. She details some of the housing options that became available in the early years of the postwar period and suggests that sharing housing and splitting costs with others became a strategy to thwart the housing shortage. She also briefly describes how Little Tokyo became a much smaller residential area in the postwar period as Japanese Americans looked to areas like Seinan for affordable and available housing.

amendments to strengthen the Alien Land Law.¹⁸⁰ State lawmakers left it to the voters of California to validate the legislation's most recent amendments by putting Proposition 15 on the ballot in November 1946. Proposition 15 proposed further strengthening the 1913 and 1943 Alien Land Law legislation to make it even more difficult for Japanese immigrants to buy or lease property for their place of residence or business.

Simultaneously, while employment ads sought Japanese labor for domestic and landscaping work, often offering room and board as an added benefit of the work, legislation was in the works to make housing restrictions even more stringent. Somehow it was acceptable for Japanese to live within the confines of their white employers, yet not reside next door as their neighbors. The Japanese American Citizens League took immediate action, realizing the detrimental impact that this legislation would have on civil rights. They initiated a robust campaign to oppose the passage of Proposition 15, appealing to racial minorities, labor sympathizers, and those with strong religious morals and convictions. The *Rafu Shimpo* newspaper urged Nisei in California to vote "No" on Proposition 15, arguing that the economic status of all Japanese Americans (regardless of

¹⁸⁰ In addition to seeking tighter provisions to the Alien Land Law, groups like the Native Sons of the Golden West and Native Daughters of the Golden West led campaigns in support for legislation that would systematically exclude all Japanese from the West Coast, strip American citizens of Japanese descent of their voting rights, and revoke citizenship from those who were born in the United States. Members of these groups suggested that although the Naturalization Law of 1790 had evolved over time, "white persons" had remained constant when defining who counted as citizens. Ultimately, this would violate the Fourteenth Amendment, stripping American-born Nisei of their citizenship and ultimately leaving them stateless. The *Pacific Citizen*, the Japanese American Citizens League's national publication kept their readership, which included Japanese who lived freely outside of the federal government's concentration camps, informed of how anti-Japanese sentiment on the West Coast could influence their lives. "Native Daughters Seek Ban on Citizenship for Nisei: Resolution Passed at Oakland Meeting; Funds Appropriated," *Pacific Citizen*, 25 June 1942. "Native Sons Begin Legal Fight to Strip Nisei of Citizenship," *Pacific Citizen*, 2 July 1942. "Native Sons Favor Movement to Expel All Japanese from U.S.," *Pacific Citizen*, 17 Sept 1942, and "California Clubs Oppose Return of Evacuees from the Pacific Coast," *Pacific Citizen*, 27 May 1943.

generation or citizenship status) was at stake since it would have much bearing on what the future would hold for Japanese returnees to the West Coast.¹⁸¹ Those in opposition to Proposition 15 faced a setback days before Election Day, when the California State Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Alien Land Law in the *Oyama v. California* case, which was a dispute over the legitimization of a Japanese American family's property rights in San Diego County.

In the end, California voters decisively defeated Proposition 15, prompting JACL Executive Secretary Mike Masaoka to declare: "The unprecedented action of California voters in rejecting Proposition 15 may well presage a new era which will be free of legislation for persons of Japanese ancestry, not only in California but throughout the nation... The lesson of the vote on Proposition 15 is that the war is over and the people of California will not approve of discriminatory and prejudiced treatment of persons of Japanese ancestry."¹⁸² Masaoka rightfully underscored the presumed shift in many Californians' sentiment towards persons of Japanese ancestry. Yet, his inflated sense of hope merely put a veil over the odious sentiment of nativist groups who successfully lobbied elected officials in the state to further tighten the legislation that intended to restrict the social mobility of individuals returning to their prewar localities in the Golden State.

Defeat of Proposition 15 may have nullified the proposed amendments, but the Alien Land Law remained firmly in place for another eight years. Although *Shelley v.*

¹⁸¹ "Vote No on 15," *Rafu Shimpo*, 4 Nov 1946.

¹⁸² "People's Mandate Has Upset 50 Years of Anti-Orientalism in California, Says Masaoka," *Pacific Citizen*, 09 Nov 1946.

Kramer, the 1948 landmark Supreme Court case outlawed restrictive covenants and the 1954 *Sei Fuji v. California* case overturned the Alien Land Law, *de facto* discrimination persisted. For Japanese Americans and other minorities, racial housing covenants continued to exclude them from certain neighborhoods.

In the early postwar period, the Alien Land Law continued to prevent Issei from being able to purchase land since they remained aliens ineligible for citizenship.¹⁸³ In 1954, although the *Sei Fuji v. California* overturned the Alien Land Law, *de facto* discrimination persisted. For Japanese Americans and other minorities, racial housing covenants continued to exclude them from certain neighborhoods, which dictated settlement patterns in the postwar period despite the passage of legislation that made this practice illegal. *De facto* discrimination limited where Nisei could buy homes. When Nisei veteran Hitoshi Sameshima bought a home in his hometown of Pasadena after he returned from serving the American occupation of Japan, he recalled seeing “For Sale”

¹⁸³ In *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends: Asian Americans, Housing, and the Transformation of Urban California*, Charlotte Brooks devotes a chapter to the struggle for housing and property rights in postwar California, providing a good overview of the housing situation that Japanese Americans faced in their return to California in the postwar period. Yet, since she looks at both San Francisco and Los Angeles and compares the experiences of multiple ethnic groups, it is a challenge for her to go in depth on the housing struggles of Japanese Americans in Los Angeles from 1945-1955. While she has located and utilized a wealth of governmental records to document the housing situation, this causes her analysis to be broad in scope. In addition to Charlotte Brooks' work, Valerie Matsumoto discusses the housing situation for Japanese Americans returning to Los Angeles in her chapter on the postwar period, entitled: “Reweaving the Web of Community in Postwar Southern California, 1945-1960,” in *City Girls: The Nisei Social World in Los Angeles 1920-1950*. Matsumoto discusses the housing shortage that Japanese Americans were susceptible to when they returned to Los Angeles. She details some of the housing options that became available in the early years of the postwar period and suggests that sharing housing and splitting costs with others became a strategy to thwart the housing shortage. She also briefly describes how Little Tokyo became a much smaller residential area in the postwar period as Japanese Americans looked to areas like Seinan for affordable and available housing.

signs go up on surrounding properties in contestation of the two Japanese families that moved into the neighborhood.¹⁸⁴

While the Sameshimas successfully purchased a house in their neighborhood of choice, Harold and Misa Hoshino and many other young Japanese American couples had to look elsewhere when their offers to buy homes in predominantly white, suburban neighborhoods, were denied. Instead of being able to buy a home in affluent Arcadia, CA, Harold and Misa looked in a non-restricted area of the neighboring town of Monrovia. Instead of acquiescing to the *defacto* discrimination, there were others who agitated for equal housing opportunities in the postwar period. Similarly, Nisei Fred and Frances (née Ban) Hiraoka wanted to buy a home in Newport Beach, close to the Heliport Aerospace campus where Fred worked as an engineer. Unlike the Hoshinos, the Hiraokas took legal action after their offer on a home was denied. Although they were successful in winning their case, they chose to purchase a home in Pasadena. The Nisei Progressives were a leftist political interest group that also challenged unfair housing practices towards Japanese Americans. These legal efforts confirm that discriminatory housing practices were a reality for Japanese Americans and reveal the varying ways that Japanese Americans attempted to navigate the obdurate and invisible municipal boundaries that divided the Southland.

While housing challenges lingered well into the postwar period, the immediate situation upon return was particularly dire. Many returnees' approaches towards finding

¹⁸⁴ Oral history interview of Hitoshi Sameshima, Go for Broke National Education Center, accessed 20 Oct 2015, http://www.goforbroke.org/oral_histories/oral_histories_video_display_names_mp4.php?clip=24907

home again were seen as transgressive. In some cases, coming back to reclaim home from a current renter was seen as insensitive. For others who had to live separately from their families—fathers who found work in areas distant from home, children who worked as schoolboys and schoolgirls—they were viewed as operating outside of the conventional. For many, one of several transitional spaces such as a short-term stay in a hostel or with extended family or friends, temporary trailer installations established by the War Relocation Authority, or room and board within the homes of white, upper middle class families in exchange for domestic labor. At a time when the single-family house was the symbol of postwar suburban living in Southern California, those navigating the capriciousness of transitional housing were seen as operating outside of this ideal. Ultimately, the intangible confines of the continued incarceration through *dejure* and *defacto* discrimination that severely limited the mobility and options caused returnees to navigate options that were viewed as beyond the normative.

RECLAIMING HOME; THE UCHIDA FAMILY’S EXPERIENCE

For those who had homes to return to, reclaiming occupancy often came with significant challenge, due to the acute housing shortage and lingering racial discrimination. The struggle to establish a home again was sobering for the majority of returnees. Some returnees like Taro Kawa were exasperated to find that the arrangements they made with acquaintances or neighbors were not honored during their absence from the West Coast. Kawa quickly reestablished Enbun Market, his family’s prewar business in Little Tokyo. Yet, reoccupying his former home at 216 S. Soto Avenue proved to be far more difficult upon his return to Los Angeles. Prior to the forced removal, Taro made

an agreement with Fred O. Retting for him to reside in the Kawa family's home rent-free. In exchange for a place to stay, Retting agreed to watch over the property as well as pay the taxes and utilities while the family was away. Once Kawa resettled early in Chicago, he began to make plans for his family's return to Los Angeles. Kawa served his tenant proper notice, indicating that he would be returning to occupy his home in a month. When he arrived in February 1945, however, Retting refused to vacate. Kawa wrote an emotional appeal to his tenant, detailing the needs of his family who would be joining him soon. When that didn't work, Kawa turned to the War Relocation Authority to help him evict his tenant.

Just three days after Japanese were permitted to return to the West Coast, the *San Francisco Examiner* detailed the friction that resulted from Japanese American families, like the Uchidas, returning to their homes in California. Just a few days following the lifting of the exclusionary ban on the West Coast for persons of Japanese ancestry, Setsuko Uchida intended to return with her husband Frank and their young daughter, to her family's home. Her father purchased the home 820 South Fair Oaks Avenue in Pasadena fifteen years earlier legally in her name. Prior to the forced removal, the Uchida family gave power of attorney to F.W. Parsons, a local Pasadena businessman and member of the Friends of the American Way, to administer the property in their absence. Before leaving the Gila River War Relocation Center, Parsons gave 30-days notice to the Fernandez family, the tenants who occupied the Uchida's home for the duration of the war.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵ *San Francisco Examiner*, 04 Jan 1945.

Despite acknowledging the Japanese American family's ownership of the home as well as the advanced notice that Setsuko Uchida gave the Fernandez family, the *Examiner* article portrayed the returning Nisei as rather heartless, underscoring that she was a "business woman and owner of considerable property."¹⁸⁶ Minimal detail in the article about Setsuko left readers to think she was a shrewd woman, solely intent on advancing her financial position. Just a few basic details about Uchida's situation would reveal that she was a wife and mother, trying to find a home for her young family as well as her parents and younger siblings.

In contrast, the article depicted the Fernandez family as the victim in the situation, choosing to exclude the family's racial background, socioeconomic level, and the fact that Mrs. Fernandez was raising eight children, including four minors, on her own. Instead, the article underscored the patriotism of the Fernandez family, emphasizing that Mrs. Fernandez's late husband was a WWI veteran and four sons were Navy veterans. The article mentions that Ms. Uchida's two brothers were serving in the U.S. military, yet the Uchidas were not portrayed as patriotic nor was their need to secure housing seen as dire or as critical as the Fernandez family's situation. The *Examiner* suggested the Fernandez's efforts to find alternative housing were earnest.¹⁸⁷ Quotes from members of the Fernandez family suggested that the Japanese returning from wartime incarceration were heartless and cold, "forcing occupants out of their homes." One of the Fernandez sons commented: "I'll admit this one is a toughie. We have to move by January 26, and

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

haven't found any place yet. We've always been a happy family, and we always will be—even if the Japs force us out into the street.”¹⁸⁸ The *Examiner* article incited sympathy for the Fernandez family, pitting them against a Japanese American family seeking to secure the same basic need of housing.

The house at the center of this controversy also figured prominently as the cornerstone of two immigrant families' shared dream. Kuniyoshi Uchida built the house for his wife Sayo and their five children in 1939, adjacent to the small house that they had outgrown and steps away from Bellefontaine Nursery, the business that Uchida had also established that year. Since Kuniyoshi, an immigrant from Japan, was unable to purchase property under the Alien Land Law, he circumvented the law by acquiring the property in his oldest daughter Setsuko's name since she had turned 21 (or 18?) While Kuniyoshi accomplished his goal of attaining a home for his family and property for their nursery business, their occupancy was short lived before they were forcibly removed from the West Coast. Although the family made plans to return directly to Pasadena as soon as they received word of the reopening of the West Coast, their desire for home—which they likely shared with so many other Angeleno families, was seen as transgressive.

The criticism of the Uchida family's decision to return to their home may have stemmed from the acute housing shortage that had been an issue in Southern California since before the war. The fluid movement of people in and out of the region during the war as GIs left for active duty, migrants from the South came to Los Angeles to work in the war industry, Japanese Americans were forcibly removed and persons of Mexican

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

ancestry came through the Bracero Program on temporary stays, caused the housing situation to remain at an equilibrium. Yet, as the war drew to a close and the population began to swell as returning GIs and Japanese Americans joined the recent migrants to the region, the housing crisis became more severe.

“THE WRA HAS A TASK. NO ONE WILL SAY IT IS AN EASY ONE”

Securing housing was exponentially more difficult for single individuals, especially Issei who were too elderly to work, sometimes infirmed, and often more comfortable speaking Japanese. Couples incapacitated by poor health or families receiving financial assistance from the Bureau of Public Assistance with no employable members as well as mothers with small children defined the type of individuals who struggled the most with obtaining permanent housing.

Just as the U.S. federal government scrambled to devise and carry out a plan, in 1942, to “relocate” and house 110,000 persons of Japanese ancestry for the duration of the war, the WRA became tasked with overseeing the subsequent “relocation” as incarcerated became eligible for indefinite leave. While the task was monumental, the WRA lacked the foresight, staff resources, and time to conceive of and execute a well-thought out plan. This became apparent as the closure of the War Relocation Centers was drawing near and the remaining incarcerated required significant assistance to start over again. WRA LA Area Supervisor Paul G. Robertson outlined the agency’s task at hand in a speech in September 1945, noting:

The 15,000 who haven’t come out yet are the old and the very young. Employers don’t want old people with a lot of children. So there you have

our problem—the relocation of these Americans and their parents, all of Japanese descent... Their homes were in California, but they are gone. Why, “Little Tokyo” is now Bronzeville, jammed with thousands of Negroes—there are only a handful of Japanese Americans there now. There is no room for them. WRA has a task. No one will say it is an easy one. Some of you may have had to hunt for a house—you know: Imagine finding houses for thousands of people—especially people of Japanese descent. WRA asks your support in this problem. For it is your problem. Not because you want to help these returnees, necessarily. But because you want to promote basic Americanism... So WRA has to help these relocatees find housing, get jobs, refinance themselves. I repeat, they are broke, homeless, jobless. Not all, but most of them.¹⁸⁹

With a directive to close the War Relocation Centers at the end of 1945, the federal agency in charge of the welfare of the incarcerated had little time and few options available to conceive of a well-thought out plan for the 15,000 individuals who remained when the War Relocation Centers closed between October 1 and December 15, 1945. Detainees remaining on the eve of the closure, without housing identified in Los Angeles, where the majority were destined, were sent to one of the trailer installations that the War Relocation Authority and Federal Public Housing Authority hastily set up in various locations across Southern California.

HOSTELS

Faced with the daunting transition back into mainstream society, many former incarcerated did not have a lead on permanent housing when they left camp. Hostels provided transitional living spaces mimicked the communal living that they were coming from. Typically, community organizations such as churches, temples, YMCA/YWCA facilities, and in some cases private homes served as temporary hostels for returnees. Given the immediate need for temporary hostels, rapid mobilization was necessary to

¹⁸⁹ Paul Robertson’s Speech, 18 Sept 1945,” National Archives, PI-77 47, Box 76 Folder 315.

ensure facilities were ready to receive the returnees. Although the WRA furnished furniture from some of the War Relocation Centers to hostels that opened up throughout the greater Los Angeles region, the federal agency did not take a major role in setting up or operating the hostels, despite the necessary service it provided.

While incarcerated at Poston, Issei Presbyterian minister Sohei Kowta worried over where his parishioners would live upon returning to Los Angeles's Little Tokyo. Kowta, the minister of the Union Church of Los Angeles, made it his mission to secure housing for his wife and children as well as members of his congregation. Together with assistance from the Presbyterian Church and Esther Rhodes of the American Friends organization, Kowta secured the former Forsyth Memorial School for Girls in Boyle Heights as a hostel for Japanese Americans. In 1945, as Union Church members returned to Los Angeles, a core group found a place to stay at the Evergreen Hostel in Boyle Heights.¹⁹⁰ The residents, which numbered between eighty and one hundred, paid a dollar a day and assisted in chores, in exchange for a room furnished with furniture delivered from the former concentration camps. Kowta led Christian services throughout the week at the Evergreen Hostel, providing spiritual guidance to the tenants as they regained their footing once again. Like in the case of the Evergreen Hostel, critical support came from

¹⁹⁰ Interview with Tad Kowta on 17 October 2015. Tad Kowta was fifteen when he and his family began their three-year stay at Evergreen Hostel. Tad recalled that his father noted in his diary, while at Poston, that he planned for his family to return to Los Angeles ahead of the others so that he could establish accommodations for Japanese to live in the former Forsyth Memorial School for Girls in Boyle Heights. In 1914, the local Presbyterian Church established the Forsyth Memorial School for Girls as an institution to "Americanize" young Latinas. Through the 1920s and 1930s, the Presbyterian Church For further information on the Evergreen Hostel, see: Brian Niiya, "Evergreen Hostel," *Densho Encyclopedia* <http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Evergreen%20Hostel/> accessed 17 Oct 2015 and Paul Spitzerri, "The Forsyth Memorial School for Girls/Evergreen Hostel," *Boyle Heights History Blog*, 8 Oct 2015, <http://boyleheightshistoryblog.blogspot.com/2015/10/the-forsyth-memorial-school-for.html>, Accessed 10 Oct 2015.

religious institutions—Christian, Buddhist, Shinto, and Tenrikyo, along with benevolent organizations like the American Friends and American Legion to provide housing options for Japanese Americans returning to the Los Angeles area.

For those without friends or family to depend on and few leads to go on, hostels provided a temporary option. Issei Presbyterian minister Sohei Kowta worried over where his parishioners would live upon returning to Little Tokyo. Kowta, the minister of the Union Church of Los Angeles, made it his mission to secure housing for members of his congregation. Together with assistance from the Presbyterian Church and Esther Rhodes of the American Friends organization, Kowta secured the former Forsyth Memorial School for Girls in Boyle Heights as a hostel for Japanese Americans. As Union Church members returned to Los Angeles, a core group found a place to stay at the Evergreen Hostel in Boyle Heights.¹⁹¹ The residents, which numbered between eighty and one hundred, paid a dollar a day and assisted in chores, in exchange for a room furnished with furniture delivered from the former concentration camps. Like in the case of the Evergreen Hostel, religious institutions, along with benevolent organizations like the American Friends and American Legion opened hostels as a housing option for Japanese Americans returning to the Los Angeles area. Individuals who sought room and

¹⁹¹ Interview with Tad Kowta on 17 October 2015. Tad Kowta was fifteen when he and his family began their three-year stay at Evergreen Hostel. Tad recalled that his father noted in his diary, while at Poston, that he planned for his family to return to Los Angeles ahead of the others so that he could establish accommodations for Japanese to live in the former Forsyth Memorial School for Girls in Boyle Heights. In 1914, the local Presbyterian Church established the Forsyth Memorial School for Girls as an institution to “Americanize” young Latinas. Through the 1920s and 1930s, the Presbyterian Church For further information on the Evergreen Hostel, see: Brian Niiya, “Evergreen Hostel,” *Densho Encyclopedia* <http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Evergreen%20Hostel/> accessed 17 Oct 2015 and Paul Spitzerri, “The Forsyth Memorial School for Girls/Evergreen Hostel,” *Boyle Heights History Blog*, 8 Oct 2015, <http://boyleheightshistoryblog.blogspot.com/2015/10/the-forsyth-memorial-school-for.html>, Accessed 10 Oct 2015.

board in the hostels upon returning to Los Angeles, typically only needed support from others for a short period of time. They likely had leads on employment and a place to stay, albeit however temporary that might have been.

The WRA reported statistics related to the number of hostels in operation and the total number of residents staying at them on a weekly basis, which pointed to the fluidness of this type of accommodation. Hostels were not intended to be in operation permanently nor did the residents intend to settle there indefinitely. While rent typically included two meals each day, the \$1-1.50 charge per night required that residents also had a reliable source of income that would additionally allow them to save enough to transition into a more permanent housing situation. Between October and December 1945, the number of hostels in operation ranged from 22 to 34, increasing rather than decreasing over time. The number of individuals who sought shelter in the region's hostels hovered around 1500 at any given time, according to the WRA's records. By August 1946, of the over 22,000 returnees to Los Angeles County, approximately 1000 remained in need of housing in temporary hostels.¹⁹² Eventually, as they found leads on full-time employment and more permanent housing, returnees were able to transition out of the temporary hostels. Regardless of their ability to leave the hostels and move into more permanent housing, these individuals still faced immense challenges ahead in feeling secure again.

¹⁹² "22 Thousand Evacuees Back in L.A. County: 1000 Still Living in Hostels, 900 at Winona Camp," *Pacific Citizen*, 26 Aug 1946.

HOTELS

Residential hotel apartments with low, affordable rates in Little Tokyo/Bronzeville and in Los Angeles's Skid Row provided housing for returnees who were seeking modest housing for the long term. In these dilapidated and worn buildings, returnees shared space with a variety of Angelenos—working poor, disabled, and unemployed—all of whom had long been marginalized by city officials and residents. In these neighborhoods, state violence through intentional neglect left residents without the upward mobility that they needed to thrive. Japanese Americans who settled here upon their return to Los Angeles, recalled the shock of reentry into mainstream society. George Takei recalls his younger sister crying out in a desire to return to the safety of “home” when she saw belligerent individuals on the streets of the Skid Row neighborhood that the family resettled in. “Home” to young Reiko Nancy Takei was the “safety” behind barbed wire—the only environment that she as a young girl only knew.

The Shishima family lived in the Eugene Hotel, one of the many residential hotel apartments in the area that housed Japanese American returnees. Siblings Keiko and Bill Shishima recall memories of the “colorful characters” that called their shared neighborhood, around Stanford and 6th Streets downtown Los Angeles's Skid Row, home.¹⁹³ Son Bill, a high school student at the time, recalled that the residents of the neighborhood looked out for Bill and siblings and scolded anyone who tried to mess with

¹⁹³ Author's interview with Keiko Ohara [nee Shishima] 15 Jan 2018.

any of the Shishima kids, warning them “to leave Papa-san’s kids alone.”¹⁹⁴ Mr. Shishima managed the Eugene hotel after the war. Although the Shishima family managed a hotel and grocery store near the Los Angeles Plaza, prior to the war, the Shishima children recall that their father did not want to return to that neighborhood given the pain that it caused him. Since he had to start over, looked elsewhere to the Los Angeles Skid Row, where he came to manage the Eugene Hotel. In addition, to providing a space where the Shishima family could reunite and live, after being separated in the early resettlement period, numerous other Japanese American families resettled at the Eugene Hotel. Hotels in the area provided a place to stay at affordable rates, which was greatly welcomed by returnees who struggled to support themselves. Keiko Shishima recalls that her Japanese American friend’s father managed the nearby Polk Hotel. Rates at these hotels compared to temporary hostels throughout Southern California, ranging from 75 cents to \$2.50 per day or \$3.00 to \$12.00 per week (meals not included). Reservations were required as well as payment in advance.

¹⁹⁴ Author’s interview with Bill Shishima.

Table 3.1: List of hotels in the greater Little Tokyo area.

Name of Hotel	Address	Manager	# of Rooms
Arlington Hotel	611 East 5th St	Mr. Saimoto	130
Boss Hotel	547 San Julian Street	Mrs. T. Okazaki	75
Digby Hotel	503 E. 1st Street	Bill Christmas	
Gilbert Hotel	417 1/2 S. Main Street	Yoshimitsu Morimoto	
Indiana Hotel	315 E. 4th Street		
Moline Hotel	131 1/2 S. Broadway	Mrs. Wm K. Yamamoto	54
Nokkow Hotel	321 E. 2nd Street	Mrs. Fong	
Hotel	224 Boyd Street	Terusaburo Shimizu	
Hotel	1205 E. Sixth Street	Hikotaro Toda	
Hotel	416 S. Main Street	Chiyeko Nakatank	
King Hotel	206 1/2 South Broadway	Kura Kai	
Nile Hotel	106 S. Hewitt	Josephine Noblitt	
Belmar Hotel	140 E. 1st Street	Tajuro Oki	
Apartment House	124 North Boylston Ave.	Mr Tagawa	
Eugene Hotel	Stanford & 6th Streets	Katusuke Shishima	
Polk Hotel	Near Stanford & 6th Streets		
Weldon Hotel	Near Stanford & 6th Streets	Tok Taira	

In his memoir, “From Manzanar to Mount Whitney,” Hank Umemoto described his mother’s decision to resettle in Los Angeles, rather than the family’s prewar home in Florin, CA, on a tip from a friend she met at Manzanar. Hank and his mother rented a room in a single resident occupancy hotel along Skid Row. The Issei mother and son had nothing to return to in Florin. When one of their neighbors at Manzanar suggested they

resettle in Los Angeles and provided a tip about a hotel where they could stay, this became their only option.

WRA employee Tom Sasaki's interviews with recent returnees, which he referred to as "Sasaki's Daily Reports from Los Angeles," gives an authentic account of the resettlement process. His interview with Tok Tiara [sic] (perhaps a typo. It's probably Taira), manager of the Weldon Hotel at Maple and 5th Streets, addresses the intersection between housing and employment, providing a rare glimpse into the perspective of the interactions with the type of clientele that also frequented the low-rate hotels in the Skid Row area of downtown Los Angeles—not out of necessity for living, but for a temporary meeting place for illicit affairs. He talks about the uncouth veterans that come in demanding a room due to having a fight with their wives. They want a place to bring another woman for the night. Tiara refers to them as "ignorant S.O.B.S," Tiara responded by saying:

"This was a respectable hotel, my home. Since housing was so critical, I had to make this my home. We bought the hotel so that we would not only be in business, but could have a roof over our heads at the same time. He tried to tell me that he was a vet, and that he was having a difficult time getting adjusted. I said, "so what!" I'm a vet, too, with four and a half years and 23 months overseas...Hell, I don't have to have anybody's business. People come in all the time looking for rooms, and if I don't like the looks of a customer, I tell him where the door is. These winos are another bunch of bastards. They come in drunk, and make all kinds of racket when everyone else wants to go to sleep. The minute they make any racket, I call the cops and have them thrown out. Another reason I don't like to have them in the hotel is because they urinate all over the beds. They can take their business someplace else. They try to put something over on me just because they know I am a Japanese. They start by saying, "you're a Japanese, aren't you? Then that burns me up. I just say, "so what?" I served in the U.S. forces, fought for the same things you did, and by God, I'm entitled to just as much of America as you are. It is not always that way. These guys will talk to you, and pretend that they don't have any discrimination, but when they get up against it, and then find out that business is business, they blow up and all of their prejudices come out."¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ Tom Sasaki, "Economic Discrimination," *Sasaki's Daily Reports From Los Angeles*: 34-35.

Although Sasaki nor Taira (“Tiara”) explicitly talk about race, it seems from context that the brash customers are white men. Here, in these low-rate hotels in the Skid Row area, these men—albeit temporarily—mixed with Japanese and individuals of other racial groups, who lived here out of circumstance rather than choice. Taira’s remarks are raw and unfiltered, which is unique in revealing the social tensions that Japanese Americans experienced in spaces such as these upon their return.

TRAILER INSTALLATIONS

For the elderly Issei, couples without children, or young families, who remained in the War Relocation Authority centers into late 1945, essentially penurious and without leads on resources outside of the barbed wire, the process of making home again seemed like a near impossibility. Without a support network of family or friends to depend on for assistance with the process of resettlement, or leads on permanent housing and promise of employment, many chose to remain in the concentration camps. Since the WRA established that incarcerated who remained in the camps upon the eve of the closure would return to their point of origin, for many, this was Los Angeles. Despite the WRA’s official plan and instruction to former incarcerated to disperse widely to locations throughout the country, the government agency went against its own policy by re-concentrating former incarcerated back on the West Coast. As a result, the problem of where these individuals and families would be housed upon return to Los Angeles became an issue for the federal government as well as local government agencies. The WRA opened several field offices in Los Angeles to provide staff to help ease the challenges that accompanied immediate transition back into mainstream society.

Housing was the most acute need for the most indigent returnees. The federal government scrambled to provide barracks in El Segundo and trailers in Burbank to Japanese Americans who had difficulty finding housing options upon their return to the Southland. A *Los Angeles Times* article from November 1945 reported that a married couple could rent a room in one of the barrack buildings for \$10 a month if they were unable to find housing after sixty days.¹⁹⁶ Although the one-room apartments had indoor plumbing and a few other amenities, in many ways they were not unlike the barracks in the concentration camps.

By September 1945, the WRA classified the housing situation for former incarcerated as desperate due to the continuous return and the acute shortage of lodging, particularly on the West Coast. WRA staff member H.W. McCanlies alerted his colleague Earl L. Kelley to the continuous return of men, women, children, dependents, and invalids to the greater Los Angeles region and their immediate need of housing.¹⁹⁷ He revealed that since his last update on September 7, which he reported 750 existing applications for housing, returnees from the concentration camps continued to pour into Los Angeles seeking assistance. McCanlies disclosed that he felt the agency was helpless in its ability to help the applicants, who were coming in great numbers with more desperate problems. He warned: "...While the demand has grown in volume since our last report to you, it has grown even more in seriousness, and the almost tragic nature of

¹⁹⁶ "Army Readies Barracks for Returning Japanese," *Los Angeles Times*, 15 Nov 1945: 6.

¹⁹⁷ Memorandum from H.W. McCanlies to Mr. Earl L. Kelley RE: Current Housing Demand, National Archives, PI-77 47, Box 75 Folder 301.3.

the present applications is little short of alarming.”¹⁹⁸ With the impending closure of the War Relocation Centers, McCanlies anticipated greater pressure on staff working in the district office. McCanlies proceeded to pose several questions about the prospect of additional housing and ask for advice on how the agency could be more effective.

McCanlies admitted defeat and admitted that the War Relocation Authority was ill equipped to handle this imminent crisis. He did not accept full responsibility for the WRA’s ineptitude, noting that the agency lacked the information and resources on the current housing situation in the greater Los Angeles area. Without this information on how to deal with the pressure, he proclaimed that district staff of the Housing and Registry unit remained in an untenable situation.¹⁹⁹ McCanlies failed to accept responsibility for the WRA being ill prepared to handle the numbers of returnees. Behind the scenes, however, the WRA had to take action, despite their lack of preparedness. McCanlies’ memorandum to Earl L. Kelley suggested the War Relocation Authority staff members found themselves scrambling, just as they did three years prior, to determine a plan forward for a large number of individuals, many of whom had been left economically crippled as a result of the wartime incarceration.

To address the critical issue of immediate housing, the WRA assumed responsibility and determined it had to intervene to assist their charges. Once again, the federal agency scrambled to determine how to establish temporary, large-scale housing. This time, though, they had to figure out how to accommodate the flood of individuals

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

that were about to depart from the concentration camps, destined for Southern California. By mid-November 1945, 158 returnees were housed in army barracks on Pico Blvd, immediately upon their return from the War Relocation Centers.²⁰⁰ The WRA acknowledged that this was a fraction of the housing that was needed. By the end of the month, nearly a year after the persons of Japanese ancestry began to return to the West Coast, the WRA devised a temporary fix for the immediate housing need of returnees who remained in camp. They appealed to the War Department to secure military barracks and trailers. The WRA transformed the military installations into lodgings for families. These accommodations were intended to be just as impermanent as the barracks in the concentration camps that former incarcerated were coming from.

Unlike the concentration camps that were constructed on government or military property in remote locations throughout the interior of the country, these trailer installations lay hidden in plain sight in Burbank, Lomita, Hawthorne, Santa Monica, and El Segundo.²⁰¹ Returnees qualified for lodging in the temporary trailer installations if they could prove that they had been unsuccessful in securing housing for over sixty days.

While the WRA offered subsidized accommodations in the barrack or trailer installations, residents were still required to cover considerable cost.

²⁰⁰ "Pico Boulevard is Home of 158 Santa Monicans," *The Newell Star*: 3.

²⁰¹ "Letter from Paul Robertson to Miss J. Ehlenbach." Source also includes some useful statistics in this source along with an interesting commentary on persons of Japanese ancestry being dependent upon the Federal Government for the past 3 1/2 years.

Food (per person)	Rent for a single occupancy room	Rent for a family	Total expenses	Avg. salary for a domestic worker or gardener
\$1.05/day	\$0.33/day	\$1.00/day		\$100/month
\$7.35/week	\$2.50/week	\$5/week		\$100/month
\$29.40/month	\$10/month	\$15 (for 2); \$17 (for 3); \$19 (for 4); \$20 (for 5 or more)	\$39.40/month (for one person)	\$100/month

Table 3.2: Room and board costs per day, week, and month in relation to average salary.

Returnees who qualified for shelter at the trailer installations faced the challenge of securing enough money to compensate for the monthly rent, even though it was subsidized. Single persons or a married couple could rent a room in one of the barrack buildings for \$10 a month.²⁰² Families up to five persons could expect to pay between \$15- \$20 for monthly rent. Food expenses came out to an average of \$29.40/per person. Given that the average salary for a domestic worker or gardener was \$100.00 a month, a substantial amount of a person's take-home pay went to rent and meals, making it challenging to save enough for a down-payment on a permanent home, let alone a rent that was not subsidized. For this demographic of the population that had fewer leads on permanent employment, this was a substantial obstacle. Most Issei, due to age and health concerns, were unlikely to find work. Initially, Issei had trouble accessing any money they may have had tucked away in bank accounts since their assets remained frozen into the early postwar period.²⁰³ Shirley Barshay of the WRA Reports Division described the Issei men that she helped to process upon their arrival at the Winona trailer installation in

²⁰² "Army Readies Barracks for Returning Japanese," *Los Angeles Times*, 15 Nov 1945: 6.

²⁰³ "Letter from Paul Robertson to Miss J. Ehlenbach."

Burbank, noting: “Most of the applicants were old Issei bachelors. They stood in line quietly, and the naked ceiling light made the deep creases in their faces even deeper. As their turns came to hand over their rent money, they counted with some difficulty the crisp dollar bills obviously given them as grants when they left the centers. Since they paid a month’s rent in advance, as well as a deposit, that tiny nest egg was almost gone immediately. Then they would shuffle away from the receipt desk, bowing ceremoniously to all familiar and unfamiliar faces.”²⁰⁴ The stress from the upheaval that these men and the other residents continuously faced over much of their lives was evident from Barshay’s description of the men as visibly aged, dazed, and almost hollow shells. The crisp dollar bills that Barshay described as being part of their terminal grant prompts the question of how they would continue to pay rent once this one-time payout ran out.

Perhaps these former incarcerated were dazed from the overwhelming transition from behind barbed wire to mainstream society. It seems more likely, though, that they felt numb from another upheaval that took them from one camp to yet another of sorts. Although the barracks and trailers in the installations throughout Southern California had some privacy, indoor plumbing and other necessary infrastructure like gas stoves, in many ways they were not unlike the barracks in the concentration camps. In fact, since the temporary camps were hastily set up, there was a disparity of services when returnees first arrived. Trailers may have had small kitchenettes, but without working natural gas

²⁰⁴ Shirley F. Barshay, WRA Reports Division, “Observations on the Return to Los Angeles,” National Archives, RG 210, E-16, Box 223.

hookups and running hot water, the accommodations were inadequate in comparison with the facilities that returnees had just come from.

Residents of the trailer installations had little time to get settled in before the upheavals continued. Given the temporary status of the trailer installations, WRA officials were constantly consolidating residents from one installation to another or to a more permanent residential facility. Without the ability to find a more permanent housing arrangement on their own, Issei men were often at the mercy of the decisions of WRA officials. As an example, a cryptic letter from E. Price Steiding, a WRA official to his colleague, mentioned the need to transfer Dahei Ogawa (68 years old), Susumu Idogawa (62), Chikazo Watanabe (59), and Keitaro Matsuura (70), unemployable men from Lomita to El Segundo due to being ill or elderly.²⁰⁵ There is no further justification of why El Segundo was a more appropriate facility for this demographic than the Lomita trailer installation. Separate documentation suggests that Lomita was going to be used for veteran family housing, which required consolidation of the Japanese American returnees who were scattered amongst numerous trailer installations. In four years, these men likely experienced at least four moves, more if they had been incarcerated at Department of Justice Camps or segregation at Tule Lake. Without family or others to advocate for them, the State intervened in ways that was most advantageous for the state, rather than for the individuals involved.

The continuous movement of residents, especially elderly single men, suggested that government officials lacked a well thought out, long term plan for this demographic.

²⁰⁵ Letter from E. Price Steiding to Mr. Stanley L. Abel RE: aged or ill and consequently unemployable men, 26 Feb 1946, National Archives, PI-77 47, Box 75 Folder 301.3.

The federal government likely saw this demographic as a scourge on society, deciding to essentially hand them off to another entity. The WRA looked to Los Angeles County as the inheritor of this “problem.” In April 1946, WRA officials transferred 139 single men, mature in age, from the various trailer installations to Rancho Los Amigos, a Los Angeles County health facility. According to the WRA’s cryptic summary, “the men were not satisfied initially. Some tried to wander away.” The toll from this constant upheaval was apparent from the WRA’s brief description. The stress from the prospect of further upheaval was apparent as the WRA discussed the unresolved issue of how to help elderly couples. WRA staff indicated that a few were admitted to LA County General Hospital, albeit temporarily.²⁰⁶ There seems to be no further follow-up on the welfare of these men, nor are they traceable in a Japanese American directory, published in 1949. While they survived the incarceration under some of the harshest environmental conditions, circumstances under resettlement proved to be increasingly difficult.

With the impending deadline to transition all returnees out of the temporary trailer installations quickly approaching, the WRA continued to move out the most dependent sectors of the returnee population. With the elderly and infirmed residents settled, the WRA looked to transition the rest of the population out. With the liquidation of the War Relocation Authority pending, Dillon Myer announced in December 1945 that all returnees were to be transitioned out of the trailers and barracks into permanent housing by March 1, 1946, around the time of the planned closure of the WRA’s field offices.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ “Memorandum from Helen D. Davis, Welfare Unit to Mr. E. Price Steiding, District Relocation Officer RE: Progress Report for Week Ending April 6, 1946,” National Archives, PI-77 47, Box 72 Folder 106.

²⁰⁷ WRA L.A. Area Reports Office – Meeting No. 16 “Human Relations Committee,” 12 Dec 1945, National Archives, PI-77 47, Box 71 Folder 101.

This announcement from Myer came just weeks after the WRA's trailer and barrack installations first opened and recent returnees moved in, which undoubtedly prompted great consternation amongst the recent arrivals. Certainly the deadline to transition the entire population of returnees out of the trailer installations with such speed was completely unrealistic. Ultimately, the threat of continuous upheavals severely hampered the mobility of the returnees. It was another example of the continuum of state violence that while perhaps unintended initially, became acrimonious and ultimately had the same deleterious effect.

In some ways, it was easier for WRA staff to make arrangements for the most dependent sectors of the population, turning them over to other government agencies to handle. Making arrangements for those who just needed more time to acclimate proved to be much harder. Staff from the WRA's Los Angeles Field Office met immediately after Myer's announcement to discuss how they would help to accomplish this mandate, yet were unable to arrive at any definitive solutions. Ultimately, the only consensus came around identifying the paramount issue of transitioning returnees out of the trailer installations and into permanent housing. They agreed that each WRA staff member would take responsibility for a certain number of families. Yet they also acknowledged the inherent challenge in making a difference since Japanese would face great obstacles in obtaining bank loans, despite having some collateral, due to their ancestry.²⁰⁸ It became entirely apparent that WRA staff was unable to work fast enough to help remaining residents of the trailer installations find permanent housing. This became

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

increasingly damaging for the relationship between WRA staff and the trailer installation residents.

By February 1946, angst amongst the residents at the trailer installations peaked, due to a combination of the upheaval they continued to experience, the frequent notices of impending closure dates, and frustration with the WRA agency. Just a couple months prior, residents of the trailer installations received a letter from the WRA announcing closing dates for the various installations, which caused great panic. Newell Steward of the American Friends Service Committee and Clarence Gillette of the Committee for Christian Democracy wrote a memorandum assuring residents that the WRA letter was not a legal eviction notice.²⁰⁹ The memorandum assured residents that the WRA would be required to serve legal eviction notices and obtain a court order to force them out. The American Friends Service Committee's literature intended to help trailer installation residents understand their rights. The circulated memorandum also informed residents that any unauthorized person going into a resident's trailer or apartment without consent could be arrested for illegal entry. The memorandum reassured residents that they still had a fifteen-day grace period following a formal eviction notice and advised them not to let anyone remove their property if proper actions were not taken to do so. Steward also informed residents in his memo that the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) agreed to handle court cases that arose from civil rights violations.²¹⁰ The ACLU's offer to intervene suggests that it felt the government's handling of the housing of the recent

²⁰⁹ Memo from Newell Steward, Social Industrial Secretary, American Friends Service Committee Southern California Branch and Clarence Gillette, Executive Secretary, Committee for Christian Democracy, Oct 1945, National Archives, PI-77 47, Box 75, Folder 301.3.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

returnees was further threatening their civil rights. This reassuring news came at a time when WRA staff was putting significant pressure on remaining residents in the trailer installations to secure subsequent accommodations before the WRA field offices and their services ceased to exist.

Together, the continuous upheavals and external support caused a change in attitude amongst residents from acquiescent to disgruntled. An internal memorandum from February 26 between Los Angeles field office staff members S.S. Selsky and E. Price Steiding revealed this shift. Selsky noted that staff had made more than 300 visits to over 200 families in the trailer installations with the intention of helping them to develop subsequent plans as they prepared to leave the trailer installations. Selsky concluded that the residents' outlook switched from cooperative to recalcitrant due to the continuous interviews that WRA staff conducted with them, noting them as:

“outwardly quite warm, particularly on our first visits. Lately, however, we have become increasingly aware of the reluctance of individuals to cooperate with interviewers. This, of course, is not surprising when the numbers of interviews [also involving staff from other agencies] to which these people are being subjected are added up. All ask the same questions and cover the same ground over and over again... I am also included to the belief that even if some of the information is of value that more harm than good is being done by the succession of interviews and interviewers with which each family is confronted. Reactions from interviewed persons as well as from parties in whom they have confided indicate that they are “fed up” and are of a rebellious state of mind at least where future interview are concerned. This is evident in the refusal of some to open their doors to interviewers and, in others, the sudden loss of their ability to speak English...,” Selsky concluded.²¹¹

²¹¹ Memorandum from S.S. Selksy, Section Head, Urban Employment Section to Mr. E. Price Steiding, District Relocation Officer, 26 February 1946, National Archives, PI-77, 47, Box 72, Folder 106.

This candid commentary from a WRA staff member reveals the trailer installation residents' lack of confidence in the agency's ability to provide support as well as the angst that must have been building for several years from the continuous upheaval and the constant feeling of the unknown. The residents' response indicated the trauma of the resettlement and the continuation of the lengthy indefinite leave interviews that the WRA conducted with returnees while they were still detained in the War Relocation Centers. For these individuals, being asked repeatedly about their impending plans (or lack of) was a constant reminder of the trauma that came from being in a suspended state. Additionally, Selsky's memo also revealed the WRA staff members' feelings of doubt regarding their understanding of the agency's directives and plan. The doubt that Selsky poses in his memorandum regarding the effectiveness of the WRA's methods, and later about what will happen following the dissolution of the WRA field office in Los Angeles shows the lack of a thoughtful plan that will help resettlers reintegrate into mainstream society.

Residents of the trailer installations became increasingly incensed towards the War Relocation Authority from the psychological paralysis they continued to endure. With the bleak housing situation in the region, it seemed impossible for trailer residents to find a way out. Tired of the seemingly never-ending state of suspension, the frequent upheavals, and the constant uncertainty over what the impending future held for them, a few individuals like Mr. Kobayakawa took action. Kobayakawa, a resident at the Burbank camp wrote to E. Price Steiding, WRA district relocation officer presented a

resolution that he and his peers drafted. In this resolution, the residents of the Burbank camp laid out their grievances, articulating:

“Resolved: We are now facing a great problem and are very uneasy for we are in an entirely helpless condition which is caused by the acute housing shortage. The housing shortage is now a national problem and we Japanese feel that we are entirely helpless; therefore we are now under care of the WRA. Many of us have been transferred from the Burbank camp and only given a few days’ notice. Now we are told this Hawthorne camp is going to be closed in the near future. We ask and inquire where we can go. There is evidently no answer from any sources. Therefore, we are really desperate. Therefore, we gathered together and held a mass meeting to discuss this matter. We have elected a committee of thirty and hereby resolve that this duly elected committee shall represent us in all matters and problems that deal with authority and housing conditions. We hereby resolve that we will not deal with any question of evacuation or transfer of camp or vacate trailer or barracks without the advice of this committee. The purpose of electing this committee is to make clear our position and to cooperate with authorities who try to help us in the time of calamity.”²¹²

The elected committee’s resolution to the WRA demonstrated the resolve of the residents to have agency over the outcome of their situation. Additionally, the committee of trailer installation residents effectively underscored the War Relocation Agency’s ineffectiveness in providing help to recent returnees. Through the committee’s resolution, the residents effectively expressed their grievances over the poor treatment they received since returning to Los Angeles. By pointing to the detrimental psychological effects that resulted from being shuffled from one trailer installation to another, the residents exposed the WRA’s poor planning.

²¹² “Letter from Mr. Kobayakawa to E. Price Steiding containing a resolution generated by members of the Burbank Camp,” 1946, National Archives, PI-77 47, Box 75, Folder 301.3.

Without a well-established plan, undoubtedly the root of the many insufficiencies of the WRA's resettlement assistance efforts, the agency was unable to adhere to the previously announced schedule. Despite Myers' warnings, the trailer installations did not close at the beginning of April, as he had previously indicated. As of April 1, 1946, the WRA reported that 1,913 evacuees remained in temporary housing installations. While the closure of the trailer installations did not have a hard deadline, the date upon which the WRA would dissolve was firm. Once again, remaining WRA staff scrambled to begin implementing a plan to turn over the operation of the trailer installations to the Federal Public Housing Authority (FPHA) in advance of the WRA's impending termination. The FPHA intended to use several of the existing trailer installations to house service-connected families who were impacted by the Southland's housing shortage.

As a result, the WRA and FPHA decided to consolidate the remaining Japanese American returnees who were scattered throughout the temporary housing installations across Southern California. The FPHA determined the Winona camp in Burbank would become a permanent federal housing project.²¹³ These agencies decided that the remaining populations of Japanese Americans at the various WRA trailer installations would be moved once again and consolidated at the Winona camp. In mid-April, WRA staff, including Kiyoharu Anzai, a Japanese American relocation officer for the WRA's Los Angeles Field Office spoke to a meeting of the County Committee for Interracial Progress to explain the final phases of the "relocation program" for the hundreds of returnees to the region still without homes. In their remarks, Anzai and WRA area

²¹³ "Returnees Hustled into Winona as WRA Rushes to Close Projects by Deadline," *Rafu Shimpō*, 10 May 1946.

supervisor James Shelly promised they would house the 1750 still remaining in the temporary trailer installations by the end of April, reassuring that “all will be taken care of to the best of our ability.”²¹⁴ They suggested that the Winona facility would house approximately 1000 returnees in 300 trailer units.

The WRA and FPHA’s decision caused further turmoil and trauma for the trailer installations’ residents. For some, it was a second or third move in less than year, and the fourth, fifth, or sixth move over the course of four years. These policies, developed on behalf of the federal government by agencies such as the WRA and FPHA were created without much foresight. While it may have made sense for the

Despite the reassurance from WRA officials that immense care would be taken as they proceeded, in practice the process to consolidate Japanese American returnees caused great consternation amongst residents. When WRA officials began consolidation at the Lomita installation, they ordered elderly couples to split up in order to house more individuals in fewer trailers. This action intended to free up more trailers that were needed at the Winona installation.²¹⁵ This was a cruel policy that wasn’t enforced in the War Relocation Authority centers where the returnees had come from. As an added incentive to force residents at the Lomita trailer installation to leave on their own, camp administrators often threatened that the water and electricity would be turned off. The uncertainty of if or when this might happen was thought to be enough to urge residents to find shelter elsewhere. For those without a choice of being able to leave, they were forced

²¹⁴ “WRA Officials Tell Housing Plans to County Members,” *Rafu Shimpō*, 8 April 1946.

²¹⁵ “Residents Protest Over Family-split Deal at Lomita,” *Rafu Shimpō* 13 April 1946, “WRA Acts to Provide Housing for Evacuees in Emergency Projects in Los Angeles Area: Temporary Shelters will be Closed by April 30 Deadline,” *Pacific Citizen*, 20 April 1945.

to face the consequences. In mid-May, WRA district supervisor John McClendon ordered the shutoff of water in the trailer installation, leaving some 160 Japanese American residents without drinking, washing, or bathing water for several hours.²¹⁶ These decisions were made with intention to create inhospitable conditions that would force residents to leave the trailer installation at Lomita. The WRA's decisions were acts of violence that violated the basic rights of residents. Most did not have the means to leave the trailer installations. Instead, these acts only fueled the anger of residents, ultimately worsening the WRA's problem.

The turmoil continued as the WRA hastily made the decision to uproot approximately 900 Japanese residents from the various WRA housing installations and transport them up to the Winona Camp in Burbank, two days before the electrical, sanitation and food preparation infrastructure was to be completed. Burbank officials and Los Angeles County Supervisors criticized the U.S. Department of the Interior and the "ill-managed staff of the WRA" for irresponsibly "dumping" 900 individuals at the Winona trailer facility, which was not yet ready to receive them as well as requiring the WRA to close when it remained accountable to its charges.²¹⁷ Officials scrambled to make arrangements to have staff at the nearby Olive View Sanitarium prepare three meals a day off-site. Residents were without cooking or sanitation facilities for 11 days.

The level of the WRA's disorganization and the resulting stress on residents was reminiscent of the temporary detention centers and concentration camps when incarcerated

²¹⁶ "Stranded Lomita Residents Go Without Water Supply," *Rafu Shimpo*, 20 May 1946.

²¹⁷ "WRA Life Extended Until Friday; Winona Returnees Continue Under Hardship," *Rafu Shimpo*, 15 May 1946.

first arrived there in 1942. When one Nisei couple found that their trailer installation lacked lighting and cooking facilities, making it impossible for them to warm milk for their infant baby, the wife exclaimed: "It's just another 'evacuation' of May 1942."²¹⁸ The Bureau of Public Assistance intervened at Winona to provide basic services for the residents and additionally took charge at Lomita, as a result of the incompetence of the WRA.²¹⁹

Dylan Myer responded defensively to the criticism by suggesting: "I believe this organization has done more to house the returning evacuees than has been done for veterans or any other group...It is true that they are still living in undesirable houses, but this situation can be improved only by solving the overall housing problem. At this time, I am told, there still remains a few returnees in Lomita under the sponsorship of the LA County Charities. There is housing elsewhere for these people, but they won't move as long as they can live on charity at Lomita..."²²⁰ Within a month of Myer's pernicious comments about the residents of the trailer installations, the remaining 163 individuals from Lomita were placed in trailer units located on property at the California Sea Food Company in Lomita or at King's Family Nursery in Torrance. Myer attempted to cover up the federal government agency's incompetence by suggesting Japanese American returnees preferred to live off of government subsidies. Myer cowered from the reality

²¹⁸ "Returnees Hustled into Winona as WRA Rushes to Close Projects by Deadline," *Rafu Shimpo* 10 May 1946.

²¹⁹ "163 Residents Leave Lomita as Last of WRA Temporary Camp Taken Over by Army," *Rafu Shimpo*, 27 June 1946. "Winona Residents Get Cooking Stove Facilities," *Rafu Shimpo* 22 May 1946. "Winona Camp," *Rafu Shimpo*, 20 May 1946. "Lomita Camp for Evacuees Finally Closed: 163 Persons Moved to Trailer Quarters at Cal Sea, King's," *Pacific Citizen*, 23 June 1946.

²²⁰ "Myer Defends WRA on Winona Incident," *Rafu Shimpo*, 5 June 1946.

that his agency continued to fueled the state violence that long crippled the mobility of Japanese Americans.

Shortly after the fiasco at Winona started to settle, word of further upheaval continued to rattle residents of the trailer installations. Within less than a year of the termination of the War Relocation Centers, these temporary trailer installations were also facing impending closure. As the termination of these housing installations drew near, the fate of 161 single, penurious men and women became of grave concern for authorities from numerous agencies at the local, state, and federal levels.²²¹ Helen D. Davis, a staff member of the WRA Los Angeles Field Office's Welfare Unit wrote a memo to District Relocation Officer E. Price Steiding, informing him of the upcoming visit of Rex Lee, Relocation Division Chief of the Washington, D.C. office. Davis hoped that Lee would be able to develop and allocate resources that would meet the welfare needs of these individuals. Housing, according to Ms. Davis, was the most immediate concern for returnees to Los Angeles.²²²

Nearly a month past Myer's announced deadline, the Winona Project in Burbank closed, leaving many of its former residents in the lurch. Provisions for welfare cases had not been completed prior to the closure. There was an advantage for service-connected families who were given special consideration at the permanent federal housing authority project in Long Beach. Some employable persons with farm work experience were matched with employment opportunities in agriculture as well as housing

²²¹ Memorandum from Helen D. Davis, Welfare Unit to Mr. E. Price Steiding, District Relocation Officer Regarding Progress Report for Week Ending March 2, 1946," 11 March 1946, National Archives, PI-77, Box 72, Folder 106.

²²² *Ibid.*

accommodations. These individuals were likely able-bodied, single men without children or couples that could both handle the farm labor. A few families were able to move to the Hawthorne Housing Project for a finite period of two weeks or to the Lomita Installation for a slightly longer period of time.²²³ For these families, it was yet another disruption and further uncertainty. Special arrangements had to be made for elderly individuals since they required additional assistance. Others were placed in hostels or private homes until they felt stable on their own. These temporary fixes were part of a continuous cycle of getting moved from one temporary location to another without an end in sight.

At the close of 1946, the *Pacific Citizen* newspaper dedicated its last issue of the year to reflect on what it called “The Transition – The Year of Movement.” The various articles discussed aspects of the return. The overview of the trailer installations best reflected the theme of the year of movement, noting: the children, pliable and adaptable, were quick to readjust themselves to their new homes, but their parents continued to look for homes. They were tired of coping with insufficient room, inadequate equipment, and inefficiency. For them, it was the early relocation center days all over again.”²²⁴

The turmoil continued far beyond the liquidation of the WRA. The FPHA’s lease on the Winona property was only valid for a year, which caused residents to face yet another transition. For many of the residents, it was their fourth or fifth move since they were ousted from the War Relocation Centers in November 1945. When news of the impending closure broke in March, 1947, over 850 residents remained at Winona. They

²²³ Memorandum from Helen D. Davis, Welfare Unit to Mr. E. Price Steiding, District Relocation Officer RE: Progress Report for Week Ending March 23, 1946, 27 March 1946, National Archives, PI-77 47, Box 72 Folder 106.

²²⁴ “The Transition – 1946: Year of Resettlement,” *Pacific Citizen*, 21 Dec 1946.

were told that they would be evicted by June 30. Moving from shelter to shelter was traumatic, but the repercussions went deeper for the young residents who were in school as well as their parents who had to commute to their jobs. Returnees who were “dumped” by the now defunct WRA nearly a year earlier, lamented that they had been kept in the dark about the year’s time limit on their stay at Winona.²²⁵ The *Rafu Shimpo* reported: “public sentiment is against the continuous ‘shoving around’ of Winona residents, more than half of which is constituted of minors under 18 years of age.” The same article revealed that one Caucasian official asserted: “if the WRA knew the lot had only a year’s lease, the agency should have done something about it before they closed their offices in Los Angeles.”²²⁶

These trailer installations, while pivotal to relieving the housing shortage, continued to concentrate and segregate Japanese Americans, which ultimately stunted reintegration into mainstream society. Yet, the abrupt closure of the trailer installations, created a population that wasn’t prepared to face the realities of re-entry into mainstream society. Federal housing officials looked to local cities, such as Glendale to designate as a site to continue to house Japanese American returnees. Glendale City Council members were not in favor of the suggestion, indicating that the federal government was ultimately responsible for the resettlement of returning Japanese. It was, after all, the federal government who moved the Japanese in the first place, “one Glendale city council members suggested.²²⁷ The City of Glendale, just like Burbank previously, masked their

²²⁵ “Winona Talk with Myer On,” *Rafu Shimpo*, 8 April 1947.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

discomfort with the presence of Japanese Americans by stating it was the federal government's responsibility to procure housing. Ultimately, the back and forth on which level of government was on the hook for this population of people was a foil for the bottom line, which was that Japanese were not welcome in these communities. Instead, each entity tried to push the responsibility onto someone else.

The WRA and FPHA also initiated a program to rent trailers to Japanese American families who could set them up. While this program provided yet another temporary housing plan, it promised Japanese Americans the independence to re-establish their lives outside of the boundaries of a federally-administered camp. Yet, there was no guidance as to where would they be able to obtain land—whether by lease or sale—to place the trailer that they purchased. It was another idea that lacked any significant analysis of its viability.

CONCLUSION

For recent returnees to Los Angeles, securing a place to call home again would have been one of the most urgent and essential needs. After becoming nearly shattered from removal from the West Coast and the subsequent incarceration, the prospect of returning home would have brought a sense of relief. Nevertheless, former incarcerated would not have been naïve to the challenges inherent to making home again.

In reality, the extreme difficulty that came with making home again took a toll on former incarcerated. Shirley Barshay observed this shift as part of her analysis for the WRA Reports Division. In her summary report, Barshay noted that when she

²²⁷ “800 Returnees Face Eviction from Winona Trailer Unit,” *Rafu Shimpo*, 15 March 1947.

accompanied former incarcerated from Heart Mountain to Los Angeles, there was general excitement among the returnees as familiar landmarks in Los Angeles came into view. Several months later as Barshay and her WRA colleagues were making final preparations to close the Los Angeles field office, she came across one of the women from that return train ride to Los Angeles. While she recalled the woman's face shining with excitement upon return, now "she was weary, and the excitement had been wiped off of her face. This was the reality of being back. One of the Nisei secretaries at the WRA muttered, kind of wistfully, "this is just like another center."²²⁸ Any relief that former incarcerated may have felt from leaving the barbed wire behind and returning to life in mainstream society evaporated instantaneously. Upon return, the challenge of the seemingly simple task of finding housing caused returnees to feel jaded and distressed.

This recent returnee's commentary was indicative of the discontent inherent to a return where the future was just as limiting as it had been some three years earlier when they were being forcibly removed from their homes and communities. Despite returning to their former home in Los Angeles, Japanese Americans faced further transition, a continuation of the great upheaval of the forced removal and subsequent incarceration. Rather than providing a sense of relief, returning home to Los Angeles engendered further upheaval and uncertainty. Securing the most basic need of housing proved to be one of the most difficult challenges for returnees.

The War Relocation Authority's limited foresight and planning for resettlement assistance as well as the short supply of available permanent housing in Southern

²²⁸ Barshay, "Observations on the Return to Los Angeles."

California extended the incarceration for recent Japanese American returnees. The lack of a cohesive plan for returnees caused continuous upheavals that forced many recent returnees to move from one transitional space to another in a short time span. For those who endured these endless upheavals, the process of making home again was nearly unbearable. As a result, the state violence that led to the mass incarceration continued as government agencies failed in their ability to provide essential assistance to recent returnees.

This chapter examined the immediate obstacles that Japanese Americans faced in securing housing upon their return to Southern California and into the postwar period. For many, this included a temporary stay at a trailer installation, hostel, or single-room occupancy hotel room. More systemic issues of housing restrictions that dictated where racial minorities could put down roots succeeded these immediate challenges. As people of color, Japanese Americans faced the reality of a segregated Los Angeles, long into the postwar period, that restricted groups based on race, ethnicity, and religion. While some returned to Little Tokyo and Boyle Heights, two localities that had large concentration of Japanese before the war, the majority of returnees to the greater Los Angeles region settled in new areas, including Gardena, Torrance, and Sawtelle. External pressures such as the continuation of *dejure* and *defacto* discrimination caused the dispersal of the Japanese American population. The wartime transition of Little Tokyo to Bronzeville, the limited supply of available housing in the region, and restrictive housing covenants caused the returning Japanese population to disperse throughout the greater Los Angeles region.

The time period of this study is limited to the first few years following the return to Los Angeles, yet it establishes the context for the continued struggle for housing. Although the immediate housing challenges for returnees upon their return were characterized by continuous upheaval, these impediments continued for years to come. It is the intent of this chapter to encourage future studies that will extend the narrative on housing challenges that Japanese Americans faced upon return to Los Angeles.

Understanding these immediate housing challenges helps to explain how the state violence continued to imprison former incarcerated. With this context in mind, it becomes more apparent why returnees moved away from Los Angeles's Little Tokyo neighborhood as well as why they sought to remain silent on their early resettlement experience. Nevertheless, Japanese American returnees' determination, despite the continued prejudice and profound challenges that they faced, showed the community's resilience to make home once again.

CHAPTER FOUR

“MAY RESETTLEMENT BE GRANTED?: PUBLIC ASSISTANCE FOR RETURNEES TO LOS ANGELES”

“The camps are closing and everybody has to get out by the end of the year, Tochan tell us. I just heard that the Inouyes have no place to go. With nine young children and only one able adult, no one wants them. Mr. Inouye is not well, I hear.”

--Kiyō Sato²²⁹

“These persons of Japanese ancestry have been dependent upon the Federal Government for the past 3 ½ years and it is, therefore, difficult for them to break away from this dependency and enter into normal channels of life. It is, therefore, up to local community organizations to assist the evacuees in making the adjustment to normal living.”

–Paul Robertson, WRA Los Angeles Field Office²³⁰

In January 1946, California State Department of Social Welfare staff member Ruth E. Rogers drafted an internal memo, presenting case studies pertaining to three Japanese American families struggling to reestablish themselves upon their return to Southern California from America’s concentration camps. Rogers sought advice from her colleague Bertha Underhill, indicating that staff from the County of Los Angeles requested that the California Department of Social Welfare make a decision on resettlement assistance for three specific cases.²³¹ All three case studies similarly

²²⁹ Kiyō Sato, *Kiyō’s Story: A Japanese American Family’s Quest for the American Dream* (Soho Press, 2010), 266.

²³⁰ Letter from Paul Robertson to Miss J. Ehlenbach, 1945 Nov 30, National Archives, PI-77 47, Box 75, Folder 301.3

²³¹ Memorandum from Ruth E. Rogers to Bertha S. Underhill, RE: Eligibility for Resettlement Assistance – Los Angeles County, January 1946, California State Archives; F3729: 11, Department of Social Welfare – War Services – Civilian War Assistance – Corr., County, Los Angeles, 1945-49. A brief summary of each family’s situation, included in this memorandum, formed the basis for further research. 1920, 1930, and 1940 census records helped to provide background on each family, leading up to the forced removal from the West Coast. Data collected on each incarcerated at the time each family had to register in 1942, provided some additional background information.

consisted of an older Issei parent or married couple with an adult son who was unable to support the family due to being detained at Tule Lake, the only concentration camp still in operation at the time.²³² Each also shared the similarity of being an entirely new public assistance case, exposing one of the many consequences that resulted from the complete incapacitation of the wartime incarceration. Some were more vulnerable, especially those who were dependent on others, as this memo revealed.

Rogers first unfolded the situation of “Tahiki” [sic] and Hana Kato, an Issei couple representative of many other elderly immigrant couples, who faced extreme difficulty in reestablishing themselves upon their return from the Manzanar War Relocation Center without the help of their Nisei son.²³³ At the age of 65, T. Kato was

²³² Even though families may have registered, left their former homes and communities, and entered a temporary detention center (assembly center), and concentration camp together, it was not uncommon for them to become separated over time for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to military service, college acceptance, or employment in the Midwest or East Coast. Additionally, families were physically separated based on they responded to the “loyalty questionnaire” that the War Relocation Authority administered in 1943 to each incarcerated over the age of 18 detained in the concentration camps. Responses to Questions 27 and 28, in particular, were used to determine an incarcerated’s loyalty to the United States. “Question 27” asked if the individual would be willing to serve in the armed forces. “Question 28” asked if the individual would be willing to sever all ties with Japan and the Japanese emperor. These questions posed a great dilemma for a large proportion of the incarcerated. For some, answering “yes” to “Question 27” seemed like an impossibility for the elderly as well as women. For the Issei, who were barred from U.S. citizenship, answering “yes” to “Question 28” would leave them stateless. For others, the lack of due process and suppression of their human rights and civil liberties caused them to answer “no” out of principle. Individuals who answered “no” and “no” to these two questions were deemed “disloyal” and transferred to Tule Lake in Northern California, which became known as a segregation center. The “loyalty questionnaire” divided the community as well as families. In these three cases, the Nisei sons likely answered “no” to the two questions on the loyalty questionnaire or resisted the military draft, which caused them to be separated from their parents and sent to Tule Lake where they remained detained into March 1946 after all of the remaining War Relocation Centers had permanently closed. Officials assumed most of the incarcerated would choose to repatriate to Japan. Although incarcerated at Tule Lake could apply for indefinite leave clearance and return to the West Coast in January 1945, many chose to stay at Tule Lake for fear of the hostility on the outside. At the time of the incarceration and up until very recently, the WRA, the Japanese American Citizens League, and members of the Japanese American community itself associated individuals who said “no” and “no” with a negative stigma. Recently, there has been a shift towards viewing those who responded “no” as standing up for social justice.

unemployable. Since Kato was unable to work, his wife, Hana had to become the family's primary wage earner at the age of 53. Rogers indicated that Hana had to give up her job in a Long Beach cannery because the couple could not locate housing close by. At the time of Rogers' report, Hana was actively seeking other employment since the couple owed three weeks' back rent and the cost of meals at the hostel where they were presently staying. Now, however, the couple had no other form of income. Mr. and Mrs. Kato remained aliens ineligible for citizenship, without an advocate to help them restart their business since their adult son was still incarcerated at Tule Lake. Their son, Tsugio, was described as a 21-year old [sales] clerk with two years of college completed as of 1942. Both of his parents, according to the government's profile on him, worked in the "service" industry prior to the start of the war. Prior to the war, the Katos operated their own restaurant in Los Angeles and were able to support themselves. That seemed irrelevant now. Tsugio's record notes that he spent at least 10 years of his life in Japan. The Katos may have gone back to Japan together as a family, which could explain why they are not

²³³ Tracing the Kato family has proven to be difficult. Ruth Rogers refers to Mr. Kato as "Tahiki" Kato. This spelling of his first name is unusual. No records with this spelling can be located. "Takichi and Hana Kato" appear in the 1920 census as living on San Pedro Street in Little Tokyo. Takichi Kato was described as a 39 year-old proprietor of a restaurant. Hana Kato did not have an occupation at the time the census was taken, perhaps because she had just given birth to the couple's first-born child earlier that year. The information handwritten on the census page is extremely difficult to read, which makes reading the baby's name nearly impossible. The census taker noted that the child was a daughter in the census record. Although Hana Kato is listed as 37 years old in the 1920 census, there is a notation in the transcribed summary in the ancestry.com record that suggests that she was born in 1893, which would have made her 27 years old in 1920. "Hana Kato" appears in the 1940 census as lodger at 101 E. 1st Street in Little Tokyo. She is described as married, but neither her husband nor her child is listed as living at the same residence. It's not clear why her husband and child were not listed. "04620A" was the number the government assigned to Hana Kato when she registered her family with the Wartime Civil Control in 1942. "04620B" corresponds to Tsugio Kato, a male born in 1920. He was the Kato's only child. This matches the 1920 census record, although the names are slightly different. It's possible that the FBI picked up Mr. Kato in the days following the attack on Pearl Harbor. He might have been separated from the family and incarcerated in a Department of Justice Camp for a period of time before reuniting with his wife and son (presumably). This explains why there isn't a record of him having been assigned a family number.

traceable in US Census records between 1920 and 1940. Nonetheless, prior to the incarceration, the Katos were seemingly able to support themselves without dependence on others, including their American-born son.

The second case centered around Tsuru Okida, a 61-year-old Issei widow, who was representative of many widows without family in the area to lean on. Tsuru returned to Southern California, her prewar home, shortly after her husband Naoichi passed away at Tule Lake. The unsettling feeling of being dependent on others outside of her family gnawed at her as she returned home alone. Mrs. Okida's 22-year old son Jimmy (Masaru) remained segregated at Tule Lake and her daughter Fujiko settled in Denver with her husband. Prior to the war, son Jimmy worked as a farmer in Long Beach, while his parents remained self-sufficient. Mr. and Mrs. Okida managed a retail grocery in Los Angeles prior to the war. The Issei couple had been industrious to establish this business in the prewar years. Restarting the business again now seemed like an impossibility now as Mrs. Okida was without her husband and nearing retirement age. Rogers indicated that Mrs. Okida had been on temporary resettlement assistance and asked if it could continue.

Lastly, Rogers outlined another typical situation of a widowed Issei woman expected to take on the responsibility of becoming head of the household and caring for her family. Mrs. Kimiye Suruki recently became a widow with three minor children ranging in age from 9 to 14. Kimiye's husband Keiji passed away in 1944, at the age of 54, while the family was incarcerated. Kimiye and her three youngest children left Manzanar in November 1945 and returned to Los Angeles, their prewar home. Rogers described 46-year old Kimiye as "not very strong and also needed at home to supervise

the children.” Her physical condition and responsibility to provide childcare prevented her from being eligible to work outside the home. Her adult son, Tetsu, remained incarcerated at Tule Lake. Her other adult children, daughter Iki, son Yetsu, and daughter Sachiko born in 1924, 1926, and 1928, respectively, were recorded in the 1930 census, but were not assigned a variation of the family number in 1942. It seems as though these three siblings were not incarcerated in a WRA center. It is entirely possible that these siblings, essentially adults at the onset of the war were in a different part of the country or else in Japan at the outbreak of the war. Either way, Rogers does not mention them in her summary as possible resources for Kimiye to rely upon to support the family. Rogers inferred that temporary resettlement assistance had been granted to the Surukis and requested that it continue.

At the end of each of the cases, Rogers acknowledged that these families were in desperate need of help as they tried to reestablish themselves, asking: “May resettlement assistance be granted?” Yet, handwritten annotations to the document indicate that qualifying for public assistance was determined by criteria far more complex than basic need. A handwritten note at the bottom of the memo just a couple days after it was originally drafted reads: “In other words could these persons be considered as dependents of internees under the EA (Enemy Alien) program?” A stylized “Bea” or “Bec” is noted as the source of the handwritten note, likely for Bertha Underhill, whom the memorandum was addressed to. In the same handwriting, there are notes next to each case study, “rehab yes” next to the Katos, “no dependents” next to Mrs. Okida’s case, and “AWC” next to Mrs. Suruki’s, which could mean “Aliens with Children.” Either way, the

annotations seemed to provide justification for how each family could qualify for public assistance.

Bertha Underhill's official response hinted at the complexities inherent to navigating the public assistance system, which prolonged the anguish of people in sufficient need post-incarceration. She indicated these individuals called out in the memo would be eligible for temporary assistance under the Resettlement Assistance program. The available assistance would only be "temporary," however long that actually meant. Ms. Underhill continued by saying, "None of the three cases would appear to be eligible for enemy alien assistance on the basis of the "internment" of the adult sons, since none of them had been supporting their families before the war. Therefore, it would be difficult to establish that the need of the sons for assistance [for the parents] could be related to the restrictive action of the Government in continuing to detain the sons."²³⁴

Here, the staff of the various public assistance agencies concluded that since the Issei parents had not been dependent on their adult sons before the war, the fact that the sons remained detained in the concentration camps was not considered a factor in the parents' ability to re-establish themselves. Underhill proceeded to suggest ways in which these families might qualify for assistance. She indicated that the Kato family would be eligible for assistance until Mrs. Kato obtained employment. Since it appeared that Mrs. Okida would be permanently dependent, she would be eligible for temporary assistance until residence and eligibility for "indigent aid" could be verified. At that time, she would

²³⁴ Memorandum from Ruth E. Rogers to Bertha S. Underhill, RE: Eligibility for Resettlement Assistance – Los Angeles County, January 1946, California State Archives; F3729: 11, Department of Social Welfare – War Services – Civilian War Assistance – Corr., County, Los Angeles, 1945-49.

apply for long-term assistance. Finally, the Suruki family would qualify for long-term assistance as part of a program called “Aid to Needy Children.” Temporary assistance would remain while their application for this program was in process.

Most Issei, including those profiled in these case studies, supported themselves and their families before the war even when additional obstacles, including being ineligible from citizenship and subjected to discriminatory legislation, severely handicapped their social mobility. Although the same obstacles remained, the time that had elapsed created new challenges. Yet, their situations post-incarceration had changed significantly. While details of their current and pre-war situations were laid out in this memo, there was no acknowledgment of the consequences of the incarceration. Nor was it stated explicitly that many had surpassed retirement age. The memos and reports failed to acknowledge that many Issei’s bank accounts remained frozen nor mentioned how the process of liquidating assets in the days prior to their forced removal left them with little to no material wealth.

While Underhill offered temporary solutions to help these families in the immediate, she failed to recognize the sizeable challenges inherent to their situations, which would outlast the short-term fixes she suggested. If Underhill acknowledged that the Issei were likely too elderly or infirm to work, that families became fractured for myriad reasons through the incarceration and resettlement processes, or that the Issei continued to be aliens ineligible for citizenship and subject to discriminatory legislature, she would have underscored that rebuilding was a debilitating struggle that would far exceed the temporary aid that she could provide for each family. There wasn’t an

emotional plea or really even a plea at all from Underhill. Instead, pithy handwritten notes sporadically appear in the margin, which prompts curiosity over whether much effort went into any of the public assistance cases that came through the state welfare agency. The War Relocation Authority gave little thought to these cases, which were a by-product of the social catastrophe that the forced removal and subsequent incarceration created. Given the impermanence of the WRA, public assistance cases like these fell to state or local agencies, all of which were even less prepared to intervene in this situation than their federal counterpart.

The wartime incarceration, which crippled the detainees economically, produced welfare applicants who had never previously depended on government assistance. The time that had elapsed and the toll that the incarceration took caused the situation of many Issei to change drastically. For some, this meant having to lean on government public assistance for survival. The forced removal and detention also exacerbated the situations of individuals who were just barely making it before the war. The public assistance programs intended to help individuals and families in need following their departure from America's concentration camps. Yet, the various public assistance entities involved perpetuated the state violence towards persons of Japanese ancestry by providing temporary fixes that continued to leave incarcerated dependent.

The Issei were amongst the most vulnerable within the community. Although Issei incarcerated were ultimately granted indefinite leave clearance to escape the barbed wire enclosure and the surveillance towers with sentry guards pointing their rifles inwards, many were unable to break free from total confinement, particularly in an

economic sense. As a whole, Issei were unable to return to the lives they had built over time in their adopted country. Many had nothing to return to since discriminatory legislation caused them to rent their homes, farms, and shops before the war. Others hastily liquidated their assets and their businesses in the moments leading up to the mass exclusion from the West Coast. This trajectory continued into the post-incarceration period. The same *dejure* and *defacto* discrimination that intended to cripple the upward mobility of Japanese immigrants before the war remained firmly in place. Despite the freedom to leave the barbed wire-enclosed detention centers behind, the incarceration continued.

The state violence that led to their wartime incarceration was perpetuated in the form of penury for many who were too elderly or sick to restart their lives. The same entities that were implicit in their forced removal and incarceration were also involved in administering public assistance, albeit temporarily. The impermanent nature of the War Relocation Authority and its field offices like the one in Los Angeles, combined with the absence of a well-thought out plan prolonged a continuum of state violence. Ultimately, there seemed to be no plan to ensure that those dependent on public assistance would ever be able to sustain themselves in the long term.

These cases of public assistance underscore the debilitating effects of the wartime incarceration. They also counter what has come to be known as the model minority myth, which has its antecedents in the postwar period. Focusing on elderly Issei and families with young children was intentional in this chapter to give insight into the demographics that researchers of this post-incarceration period have not previously addressed using

source material that has been overlooked. Uplifting the experiences of these sub-groupings of people provides a much different perspective on the prevalent resettlement story, which has largely chronicled the experience of young Nisei who received an early indefinite leave clearance from the War Relocation Centers upon receiving promise of employment and housing in the Midwest or East Coast. These Nisei ultimately had an easier time reestablishing themselves after the war. These were the stories that were privileged because they fit the narrative of success. These experiences proved that the government project of “evacuating and relocating” this population, “Americanizing” and protecting Japanese Americans was achieved. Yet, the stories of the “successful Nisei” diminish the experiences of the sectors of the community that the government left behind.

Individuals within the Japanese American community deliberately chose not to draw attention to the challenges and struggles post-detention, at a time when extreme shame from the incarceration caused many to emphasize how American they were and how they were able to reintegrate into mainstream society with relative ease. Similarly, the War Relocation Authority chose to downplay the issue for fear that it would invite criticism of the effectiveness of the government agency’s wartime project of “evacuation” and “relocation.” Yet, these newly drawn patterns of poverty dramatize both government failure to support its citizens and residents and the continuing economic and social trauma that would extend the incarceration into the postwar years. The public assistance cases are a lens into a much broader experience of former incarcerated who returned to the West Coast to find significant impediments to hamper their social and economic upward mobility.

FAILURES OF THE NEW DEAL WELFARE STATE

Examining the failures of the New Deal Welfare State is useful to understanding the context for the obstacles that Japanese Americans continued to face upon return to Los Angeles. Over a decade earlier, in the midst of the Great Depression, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt delivered hope to the American people in his 1935 State of the Union Address. Since the majority of the nation had been severely impacted by the Great Depression, he reaffirmed his commitment to his “first and continuing priority” to provide for the “security of the men, women, and children of the nation.”²³⁵ Roosevelt introduced emergency legislation to reduce unemployment, relieve destitution, create better housing, regulate industry and provide a safety net for citizens as they matured in age. With the multipronged approach of the New Deal, Roosevelt suggested: “we must preserve not only the bodies of the unemployed from destitution but also their self-respect, their self-reliance and courage and determination.”²³⁶ After outlining his plan, he suggested: “This is the method which I propose to you in order that we may better meet this present day problem of unemployment. Its greatest advantage is that it fits logically and usefully into the long range permanent policy of providing the three types of security which constitute as a whole an American plan for the betterment of the future of the American people.”²³⁷ The confidence of the President of the United States was

²³⁵ “Reading Copy of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s 1935 State of the Union Address,” <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/17343505>: 4-5.

²³⁶ *Ibid*, 9.

²³⁷ *Ibid*, 14.

comforting to Americans, who entrusted that the federal government would pull the country out of the worst economic crisis in its history.

The drastic unemployment rates forced a large proportion of the unemployed and their dependents onto relief rolls, creating a significant burden on the federal government. Relief rolls and handouts were not the answer, according to the President, noting: “To dole out relief in this way is to administer a narcotic, a subtle destroyer of the human spirit...It is in violation of the traditions of America...The federal government must and shall quit this business of relief.”²³⁸ Putting Americans back to work rather than giving the unemployed and destitute perpetual handouts seemed logical and in line with the American way of thinking that hard work would be rewarded. The federal government shifted away from providing handouts to destitute individuals, as part of the New Deal, which likely impacted policy and available welfare programs when former Japanese American incarcerated returned after incarceration during World War II. If putting the destitute back to work was the answer, this panacea wasn't necessarily applicable to all returning Japanese Americans, especially those who were too elderly, sick, or care givers to young children.

Yet, no matter how destitute returning Japanese Americans were when many of them returned, the idea of accepting a handout from the government was seen as anathema. For Japanese Americans, the shame of the incarceration as well as their intention to blend in and prove they were loyal Americans revealed the possessive investment in whiteness. Cultural theorist George Lipitz has elaborated on the destructive

²³⁸ *Ibid*, 9.

consequences of the possessive investment in whiteness that surreptitiously shaped U.S. Society as a result of being so pervasive. For the American-born Nisei, (and other ethnic groups), whiteness became the standard when trying to prove just how American they were. In his book, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, Lipitz suggested “race is a cultural construct, but one with deadly social causes and consequences. Conscious and deliberate actions have institutionalized group identity in the United States, not just through the dissemination of cultural stories, but also through the creation of social structures that generate economic advantages for European Americans through the possessive investment in whiteness.”²³⁹ According to Lipitz, “contemporary racism has been created anew in many ways over the past half century, most dramatically by the putatively race-neutral, liberal, social democratic reforms of the New Deal Era.”²⁴⁰ Lipitz argued that policies related to social security, home loans, unionized work widened the gap between the resources available to whites and those available to aggrieved racial communities. Lipitz suggested that contemporary institutional racism could be traced to the failures of the New Deal Welfare State. Racial discrimination and *dejure* or institutional racism has equated state violence.

Although all persons involved—from WRA officials to the former incarcerated themselves—downplayed the consequences of the wartime detention, the reality was that the forced removal from the West Coast and the subsequent incarceration of people of Japanese ancestry produced a significant number of new welfare dependents. The number

²³⁹ George Lipitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998), 2.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

of Japanese Americans on government-administered welfare rolls prior to the war was paltry in comparison. Los Angeles County Manager Wayne Allen reported to the board that there had only been on average 25 on relief before the war, a number that he described as being “very low” in comparison to other ethnic groups.²⁴¹

Although discriminatory laws in place before the war created blocks to economic and social mobility for Japanese immigrants, a variety of mutual aid associations were established within the community to provide monetary loans or other assistance. Since Japanese immigrants continued to find it nearly impossible to qualify for a bank loan or obtain property since the Alien Land Law remained firmly in place in California, public assistance was necessary for a substantial number of those who returned to Los Angeles, unable to reestablish themselves on their own. County officials suggested the greatest challenge related to the resettlement program in Los Angeles was the number of families who were able to obtain housing, yet needed furniture. While this may have seemed like an immediate need, it seemed to lack the foresight of how this might be of long-term benefit to prevent Japanese Americans from remaining dependent on public assistance indefinitely.

²⁴¹ “Los Angeles County Officials Call on Federal Government to Pay For Evacuee Relief: Believe Emergency Aid to Returned Group May Cost Million,” *Pacific Citizen*, 26 Jan 1946. The statistic included in this article is without context. When Los Angeles County Manager Wayne Allen suggests that there were 25 Japanese Americans on relief before the war, it’s assumed that he is referring to the number in all of Los Angeles County.

THE MOST VULNERABLE

Through a publication entitled *Uprooted Americans in Your Community*, WRA staff reached out to community agencies and members of the public to secure assistance for Japanese Americans in advance of the federal agency going out of existence. The publication noted that of the 60,000 detainees that remained in the War Relocation Centers likely lacked the financial security as well as the courage to reestablish themselves without at least some temporary assistance, which at the very least comprised of a terminal leave grant that included \$25 and a bus or train ticket to the former incarcerated's final destination.²⁴² The War Relocation Authority would administer some of this assistance for the time being, depending on other agencies, organizations, and members of the public to carry on this work.

The most vulnerable, including: aging Issei men who never married, aging Issei women who were widowed, single mothers, and families with young children comprised the population that lingered in the War Relocation Centers. Despite having the opportunity to apply for indefinite leave, they often lacked prospects for housing or employment beyond the barbed wire. They most often made up the demographic that likely required government assistance upon their arrival to their final destination, which was often Los Angeles. As the closure of the War Relocation Centers was pending towards the end of 1945, Beryl E. Cox from the State Department of Social Welfare issued an office memo stating that 216 referral summaries had been received by the County of Los Angeles since the end of September. One month later, there were 321

²⁴² War Relocation Authority, *Uprooted Americans in Your Community*, 31 May 1945.

open cases. 288 of these cases received aid during October, which covered a total of 731 individuals, totaling \$14,539.40 or an average of \$50.48 per case.²⁴³

By January 1946, Los Angeles County officials reported 84 confirmed cases of public relief and 916 temporary relief cases.²⁴⁴ Los Angeles County supervisors approved an extra \$65,000 to help the California State Bureau of Public Assistance as it attempted to provide support for returnees from the War Relocation Centers. Additionally, the supervisors requested additional money from the federal government to extend aid beyond the 60 days, which it reimbursed the County. Los Angeles County Supervisor John Anson Ford anticipated that it would require \$1,000,000 to provide aid to the returnees to Los Angeles County.

In addition to County officials, California State Department of Social Welfare staff as well as individuals at the WRA's Los Angeles Field Office closely monitored the public assistance situation in the local area. Earl L. Kelley, WRA District Relocation Officer reported on the activity of the Los Angeles Field Office for the month of December 1945, pertaining to the categories of welfare, hostels, property, public relations, and employment. Under the category of welfare he noted: "195 individuals were pending [for approval of welfare] at the first of the month [of December]; 56 received from centers; 56 referred to Los Angeles County; 10 Accepted; 1 Rejected; 3 Returned to

²⁴³ "State Department of Social Welfare Office Memorandum from Beryl E. Cox to Bertha S. Underhill, RE: Resettlement Program – Los Angeles County," 29 Nov 1945, California State Archives. California State Archives; F3729: 107, Social Welfare - War Services - Resettlement Assistance, Assistance Standards

²⁴⁴ Ibid. The differentiation between public relief and temporary relief cases is not explained in this article.

Center for additional information; 2 withdrawn; 235 pending at end of month.”²⁴⁵

Although Kelley did not clearly explain what these sub-categories referred to, it appeared that public assistance efforts on behalf of Los Angeles County and the War Relocation Authority’s Los Angeles Field Office operated simultaneously, yet separate from one another. As a result, these two entities worked parallel to one another, managing different cases. Together, the statistics presented by these two agencies added up to a number significantly higher than the number of people on public assistance in the prewar period. Nonetheless, they remained far below the 4000 cases that the Hearst-run Herald Examiner newspaper falsely reported.²⁴⁶

Overall, the total number of individuals in need of public assistance as the County and the War Relocation Authority collectively reported was significantly higher than the equivalent before the war, even though the population had not returned to the same numbers. By the close of the first full year since the exclusionary ban on the West Coast was lifted, the WRA’s Los Angeles Field Office reported that 20,000 individuals had returned to Los Angeles County, which equaled approximately 54% of the 36,886 that

²⁴⁵ “Memorandum from Earl L. Kelley, District Relocation Officer to Paul G. Robertson – Statistical Report on the Activities of the Los Angeles District Office for the Month of December, 1945,” 4 Jan 1946, National Archives, PI-77 47, Box 72 Folder 106.

²⁴⁶ “Distorted Hearst News Story About Evacuees on Relief Rolls Challenged by L.A. Officials: Herald-Express Reported 4,000 Getting County Aid but Welfare Official Says Only 84 on Relief with Thousand Cases Reported Pending in Los Angeles,” *Pacific Citizen*, 19 Jan 1946. The *Pacific Citizen* article indicated that the 4000 referred to individuals living in emergency public housing. The sensational news story in the *Herald-Express* claimed that large number on relief rolls resulted from Japanese returnees saying they were unable to obtain “suitable employment.” The newspaper suggested that the returnees be put to work building roads or else they should be sent back to Japan. The inaccurate statistics and intolerant commentary was a continuation of the anti-Japanese sentiment that the newspaper had long been publishing.

resided in the County prior to the war.²⁴⁷ Issei men who never married, Issei women who lost their spouses due to illness during the incarceration, Issei couples too elderly or infirmed to work, families with young children, and women with children whose husbands were off at war were the most likely to need public assistance. They typically comprised the population that lingered at the War Relocation Centers, despite the ability to apply for indefinite leave clearance and return to mainstream society to restart their lives beyond the barbed wire.

Many of the individuals who embodied one of these categories had little to nothing to depend on for support outside of the rudimentary provisions that the War Relocation Authority provided in the detention centers. For many, the fear of how they might obtain the essentials to sustain themselves on their own on the outside kept them from taking the steps necessary to obtain leave clearance. In early 1945, as the various detention centers announced their impending closures at the end of the year, the War Relocation Authority distributed forms for incarcerated to list their desired departure dates and destinations. By September, there were a significant number of individuals who had not made concrete resettlement plans. Officials at Manzanar published an article in the *Manzanar Free Press* informing the detainees that involuntary relocation was scheduled to start in mid-October and be completed by November 30.²⁴⁸ The article noted that if the remaining 1000 residents did not promptly submit information about when and where they intended to resettle, WRA officials would set dates for them and make arrangements

²⁴⁷ United States Department of the Interior War Relocation Authority Los Angeles District "Final Report," 31 Jan 1946: 1, National Archives, RG 210, E.4 Field Documentation Relocation Center Records - Southern California, Box 11

²⁴⁸ *Manzanar Free Press* Newspaper, 28 Sept 1945, Vol. 16, No. 4.

to return them to their legal residence or point of departure, which for many of them was Los Angeles.

This, in large part is what differentiated resettlement in Los Angeles from early resettlement in the Midwest, like in Chicago for example. Resettlers to Chicago typically were younger Nisei who received an early indefinite leave clearance since they secured an offer of employment and housing. In contrast, those who remained in the camps did not have the prospect of employment or housing to help them restart their lives. Instead, they comprised a demographic that was left dependent.

Even though War Relocation Authority staff at the detention centers attempted to help families establish a “relocation plan,” to guide their reentry into mainstream society, they quickly realized that the residents who remained in the centers were more likely to require welfare assistance upon resettling on the outside. A bulletin to all project directors in February 1945 suggested that WRA staff should help each family who required outside welfare assistance in getting in touch with the appropriate welfare agency at their final destination. The bulletin suggested that approval of each family’s plan should not be held up by pending completion of local welfare planning, except in cases where families needed immediate and continuing financial assistance to obtain food, shelter, and medical care. WRA staff was to ensure that every effort was made to complete welfare arrangements for a family before they left the center, but this was not feasible nor a reason to hold up departure plans, if everything else in the plan appeared satisfactory.²⁴⁹ Plans that met the WRA’s approval included housing and a means of support. The latter

²⁴⁹ “Post-Exclusion Bulletin No. 6,” 10 Feb 1945, National Archives, RG 210, E-G, Box 4, Folder: “Post Exclusion Materials.”

included employment, a hospitality offer or evidence of the ability to live without working.

The WRA acknowledged that there would be a great need for welfare following the imminent closure of the War Relocation Centers after assessing the remaining incarcerated's tentative and often inadequate resettlement plans. In response, the WRA's Los Angeles Field Office staff scrambled to develop immediate plans on how to help these individuals. Their plan, however, was rather shortsighted. They expected families and individuals would be able to move off of public assistance, on their own, rather quickly. They put pressure on individuals to accept employment or housing, regardless of whether this was a desirable situation or not. This stipulation was an attempt to help them establish the financial independence that would prevent them from becoming chronically reliant on public assistance.

Although the War Relocation Authority vowed to help draft an initial plan to help dependent returnees, the emphasis was on the immediate rather than the long term. If a family required welfare assistance in order to obtain temporary housing immediately, for example, it would seem imperative to help families to determine strategies on how to become self-sufficient in securing long term housing. This did not seem to be part of the WRA's strategy, however. Perhaps this was because WRA staff knew that it was a temporary agency that would soon dissolve. When the WRA ceased to exist, the dependence of the former incarcerated would become another agency's responsibility and therefore it was not necessary for the WRA to develop and implement long-term strategies for each family. Or, perhaps the WRA wasn't prepared to handle this task. As

an ad hoc agency, the WRA made up policies, as it went along, to administer the War Relocation Centers.

As a result, though, the WRA's seemingly shortsighted vision caused other public assistance agencies to step up since the temporary agency would soon dissolve. From here, the Bureau of Public Assistance and the State Department of Social Welfare filled the role that the WRA once provided. Beulah L. Lewis, Director of the Bureau of Public Assistance wrote to her counterpart Charles M. Wollenberg at the State Department of Social Welfare in January 1946 to update him on the status of returnees in Los Angeles as well as to outline the roles of the two agencies moving forward. Lewis provided Wollenberg an overview of the present caseload, which at 4000 persons, included individuals receiving assistance plus those receiving medical care or counseling services.²⁵⁰ She felt that until more detainees at Tule Lake would be released, the number of those requiring assistance had peaked. With a large number of former detainees back in Los Angeles, many of whom were staying in hostels, trailer installations, and or other temporary situations, Lewis suggested bringing on five additional resettlement assistance counselors, dedicated to helping Japanese Americans secure the resources necessary to reintegrate into mainstream society. The additional counselors would be based in strategic locations in Southern California, including: Santa Monica, Glendale, Long Beach, and Inglewood. The resettlement counselors would help recent returnees secure

²⁵⁰ "Letter from Beulah L. Lewis, Director, Bureau of Public Assistance, Los Angeles to Mr. Charles M. Wollenberg, Director, State Department of Social Welfare, Re: Resettlement Assistance Counselors," 29 Jan 1946, California State Archives; F3729: 10, Department of Social Welfare - War Services - Civilian War Assistance - Corr., County, Los Angeles, 1945-49

employment, “so not to “further dependency [on public assistance resources.]”²⁵¹ Since the WRA established trailer installations in these and neighboring cities, it made sense to locate help in these areas for easier access by those who needed it the most. While Lewis stated the intention to prevent Japanese American returnees from depending on public assistance for the long term, her letter to Wollenberg at the State Department of Social Welfare did not include a detailed plan of how this would be achieved.

The various public assistance agencies at the local, state, and federal level expressed intentions to provide counsel to help returnees secure employment and housing. While securing these immediate basic needs seemed logical, it was not a realistic objective for many of the most vulnerable. Following the departure from America’s concentration camps and return to the West Coast, the loss of dignity from the forced removal and incarceration experience caused many to remain silent about the experience and overemphasize their loyalty to the United States, in hopes of seamlessly integrating into mainstream society. Given this mindset, seeking assistance from the government would have generated great shame, which caused many to remain silent about their material need.

As aliens ineligible for citizenship, Japanese immigrants faced *dejure* and *defacto* discrimination that excluded them from obtaining bank loans and purchasing, or in some cases, leasing land as well as obtaining the permits necessary to reestablish their prewar businesses. Prior to the war, the Issei developed *tanomoshi*, financial support networks to provide loans and other assistance to fellow members of an occupational niche, *kenjinkai*

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

organization representing the prefecture where they were from in Japan, a social or community group, or religious institution. These networks of support helped to compensate for the severe hindrances firmly entrenched on the West Coast. The ways in which members of the Japanese American community provided financial and material support for one another, from the time of their early settlement up to World War II, eliminated the need for dependence on government assistance. The Issei took extreme pride in the fact that they were not dependent on external assistance or welfare from the government in the decades following their arrival in the United States, despite the impediments they faced. While they encountered *dejure* and *defacto* discrimination in all areas of their daily lives, they leaned on one another for survival in times of struggle. While these private support networks provided financial assistance again after the war, it took time for them to become reestablished once again. For those who required immediate assistance, they had to turn to established public assistance agencies or charities.

Many of these Issei did not want a helping hand from a government entity. It was unrealistic, however, to think that Issei men and women could easily secure steady, permanent work given their mature age. Nisei Kiyoharu Anzai, a special relocation officer for the War Relocation Authority's Los Angeles Area Field Office, observed the predicament of many of the Issei and their feelings toward accepting public assistance, suggesting in his field notes, "my people do not want to take relief. They look down upon

a beggar.”²⁵² In an internal memorandum from April 1945, Paul Robertson recapped a conversation he had with a 70-year old Issei man who expressed the strong desire to work rather than receive public assistance. Prior to his removal from the West Coast, the unnamed man worked as a foreman on a lettuce farm. He continued to be employed while he was incarcerated as a night watchman for the War Relocation Center’s poultry farm. With the impending closure of the camp, the Issei man sought assistance from the WRA in securing a lead for potential employment, noting that he was willing to go wherever and do whatever for employment. Although the WRA staff member indicated that the Issei man was in good health, he noted that any potential work could not be strenuous due to the man’s age.²⁵³ Despite being well into retirement age, he could not bear the thought of receiving a handout when he was capable of earning his keep. His spirited attitude or perhaps his sense of dignity influenced his sentiment. Robertson didn’t offer any suggestions or indicate any job leads in the memo, which further underscored the uncertainty of the Issei man’s situation, especially if he wasn’t able to secure a reliable

²⁵² “Minutes from the Twenty-fifth monthly meeting of the Los Angeles County Committee for Interracial Progress,” 8 April 1946, National Archives, PI-77, Box 75 Folder 301.5. Kiyoharu Anzai, a Nisei who the *Rafu Shimpō* referred to as the former “Mayor of Manzanar” is an interesting figure. In the post-incarceration period, he worked as a relocation officer for the WRA’s Los Angeles field office. On occasion, he made statements, on behalf of the War Relocation Authority, regarding the agency’s policy. His statements often include reference to his identity as a Japanese American who was formerly incarcerated. He often acknowledged the predicament and hard times that JAs went through as a result of incarceration and resettlement. In statements, he underscored that many lost material possessions upon removal and now were facing difficulty in obtaining housing. His experience and identity as an “insider” helped to convince former incarceratedees to trust the efforts of the War Relocation Authority and likely helped to provide much needed insight to the federal agency as they seemingly crafted their policies as they went along. Anzai’s experiences deserve further exploration as well as those of other Nisei, like Helen Hirata, who worked for the War Relocation Authority. How did Japanese American returnees perceive Anzai and Hirata for their resettlement assistance work and affiliation with the same agency that was charged with their forced removal and incarceration?

²⁵³ “Memorandum from Paul G. Robertson to District Relocation Officers RE: Employment Possibilities,” 24 April 1945, National Archives, RG 210, E-47, Box 78, Folder 400.

source of income. He was not alone in his situation or his mindset. Since his name was not revealed in the WRA's internal memorandum, it is impossible to follow the outcome of his resettlement story, but for others like him, on the verge of penury without the prospect of long-term employment, the insecurity was unnerving. For returnees, the precariousness of their situations was one of the ways that the state violence persisted. As a result, relying on government assistance remained the only viable option.

In order to find employment opportunities, Issei and Nisei had to look outside the Japanese American community, which was a significant shift from the prewar period. Although Japanese-owned farms and small businesses became reestablished after the war, they returned in smaller numbers, which narrowed the employment opportunities. Before the war, the majority of Japanese Americans, especially members of the Issei generation depended on employment in agriculture, floriculture, domestic service, and small businesses within the Japanese community. For Issei, prior to the war, the most ubiquitous jobs were as farm hands, truck farmers, and foremen, gardeners, and retail managers while Issei women were employed as cannery workers, maids, and sales clerks in Japanese-owned businesses. Job discrimination before the war was apparent as the most ubiquitous job classifications for Nisei men and women essentially paralleled those of the Issei. Despite many Nisei completing college degrees, they often found that jobs related to what they studied were not open to them. This caused one Nisei, an alum of the University of California, to refer to himself and his Japanese American college graduate friends as "white collar farmers." Prior to the war, Nisei men were most commonly employed as farm hands, chauffeurs, and gardeners while Nisei women were most likely

to find employment within canneries, clerical and sales work, and laundering.²⁵⁴ The most common occupations, available to Japanese Americans, were often quite labor intensive and wouldn't have been sustainable for the aging Issei after the war. Nisei continued to face a dearth of employment opportunities due to lingering discrimination.

Despite returnees expressing the desire to find work to support themselves and their families, the job offers were limited and staff representing the United States Employment Service (USES) and the War Relocation Authority Los Angeles Field Office worked to help returnees find job placements. A document, entitled: "Typical Job Offers Received in Los Angeles County" appeared to have been circulated internally through the War Relocation Authority Los Angeles field office, suggesting a wide range of job opportunities. While the majority of the postings were unskilled jobs including working for a wiping rag company, paint company, shoe factory, or laundry as a presser, there were a few job listings for professionals such as physicians or pharmacists. Despite this range of job postings, the USES reported that the majority of the job listings that they received were for domestics, gardeners, chauffeurs, and railroad car cleaning and repair workers.²⁵⁵ The "Typical Job Offers Received in Los Angeles County," disclosed that single domestics earned anywhere from \$40 to \$125 per month for general housework, likely depending on whether room or board was included. A domestic earned \$480 to

²⁵⁴ *Evacuated People*. The War Relocation Authority captured prewar employment data through the registration process that they required all persons of Japanese ancestry on the West Coast to complete in the short time leading up to the forced removal. The author re-categorized some of the occupational niches listed in the data tables included in *People in Motion*, by combining like categories together based on her own logic. See "Table 22" in *People in Motion* for the original categories.

²⁵⁵ "USES Narrative Comments on Job Placement of Minorities," Found in the Charles Bratt Collection, MSS 034, Box 1, Folder 16, Southern California Library.

\$1500 on average annually. Meanwhile a gardener earned \$1.50 per hour. Although the job description suggested the work occupied three or four hours a day, it's likely that many gardeners strived to work full days in order to earn more money. At \$1.50/hour, a gardener could earn \$12/day or \$60/week, \$240/month and \$2880 annually.²⁵⁶ In reality, the work was not always consistent and the physically taxing labor of gardeners meant that they were not always able to work a full 40-hour workweek.

Although the pay for both of these typical occupational niches was far greater than the \$16-19 a month salaries that incarcerated earned through employment in the War Relocation Centers, the postwar salaries were paltry in relation to the essential monthly necessities that likely included: housing, utilities, gasoline, food, car payments, and insurance. In 1945, the average cost for house rent was \$60.00/month. The cost of gasoline was \$0.15/gallon and the average cost of a new car was \$1,020. If rent alone cost nearly \$720/year, half of a domestic worker's salary (on the higher end of the range) would go towards housing. Given the low-wages that correlated to the types of jobs that were available to returning Japanese Americans and the cost of the various goods that represented consumption in the early postwar period, it is rather remarkable that there weren't more individuals who required public assistance.

For some, employment was not an option due to long-term illness, mature age, or responsibility for dependent children. Like the Issei man who sought the WRA's assistance to secure employment as a way to avoid dependence on public assistance, Issei bachelors or widows were often left penurious upon arrival at their final destination from

²⁵⁶ War Relocation Authority, "Typical Job Offers Received in Los Angeles County" National Archives, RG 210, PI-77 47, Box 77 Folder 401.

camp. Esther Wood, a WRA relocation adjustment advisor for Southern California provided a welfare summary that documented the first eight months after incarcerated began returning to the region.²⁵⁷ In August 1945, Wood reported that 403 families had been referred to the appropriate welfare department representing the nine counties in Southern California. Of the 403 families, eight had been rejected on the basis of residence or the determination that level of need was not substantial enough to warrant assistance. 206 of these families had been confirmed as legal residents and, as a result, their applications for assistance were moved forward. Another 168 were still pending determination of residence. The verification process was held up because the volume of new referrals increased that month due to a wave of new arrivals from the War Relocation Centers. The remaining 21 summaries were also pending due to the need for further information about residence.

Approval of aid was tied to verification of residence and citizenship status, both of which were nearly impossible for many returnees to provide. These requirements underscored the problem of the welfare state and the racial and ethnic discrimination embedded within that made it exclusionary for entire groups of people. Wood pointed out that regardless of how dire returnees' situations were, they had to endure an investigation period. The wait due to an investigation was standard for all forms of public assistance, regardless of the urgency. The Issei, the group most in need of assistance, were ineligible for old age assistance in California since there was a citizenship requirement. Instead, the Issei had to compete with a much larger pool of applicants for general relief, which came

²⁵⁷ "Strategic Southern California Welfare Front: Inside Facts on Outside Help," WRA Information Digest, September-October 1945: 13. National Archives, RG 210, 5B Folder "WRA Information Digest."

from county funds that varied from county to county. Legal residence was also a requirement for public assistance.²⁵⁸ WRA officials helped to verify where incarcerated last lived for a full year (prior to the wartime incarceration). Former incarcerated returning to the county that they lived in were eligible if they had been there for over a year. However, incarcerated who relocated just prior to the forced removal in 1942 to be closer to other family members, for example, may not have been able to meet the legal residence requirement. Additionally, former incarcerated who came to a new county with hopes of a fresh start may have had to wait a year to meet the legal residence requirement if they required public assistance.

Wood noted that there were a variety of sources of public aid that both non-citizen and citizen returnees would be eligible for, including aid to the blind, to dependent children, and the aged. These funds came chiefly from the Social Security Board public assistance funds. Wood explained that counties administered these Social Security funds as well as those from the county and state, under the supervision of the State Department of Social Welfare. She went on to suggest that Los Angeles County has provided “complete maintenance” to elderly persons who are unable to work, although there is no further explanation of what this exactly means.²⁵⁹ Wood provided reassurance that those who required medical care received the appropriate hospital or clinic care, including numerous tuberculosis patients who needed immediate treatment, despite not being able to prove legal residence in the county they settled in. Additionally, widows and families

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 13.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 14.

with “incapacitated” male heads of household received resettlement assistance under aid for dependent children. She suggested that public agencies had stepped in to provide counseling and other type of special aid to handicapped returnees as well as minors without family support. Wood admitted that greater progress was imperative to meet the needs of the chronically ill. Most of the cases involved elderly men who required nursing care. The majority of them were in Los Angeles County and since Rancho Los Amigos was the only available institution, a wait list had developed since the need exceeded the number of vacancies.

RANCHO LOS AMIGOS FOR THE SICK, ELDERLY, AND DEPENDENT

Without family to depend on, many Issei men and women required assistance in navigating the resettlement process. A significant number of Japanese men and women were identified for admittance to Rancho Los Amigos, a health facility operated under the County of Los Angeles.²⁶⁰ A few Issei bachelors resided at Rancho Los Amigos before the war, suggesting that although some Issei men who never married were dependent on external help prior to the war, the situation was exacerbated with the passage of time and the debilitating effects of the wartime incarceration. Yojiro Machida, Heitaro Matsuo, Yutaro Arimura were amongst a group of nine single Issei men who required public assistance in the form of medical care following their return to Los Angeles. Staff in the Public Assistance Bureau of the Los Angeles Field Office advocated for these single men

²⁶⁰ Rancho Los Amigos began in the 1880s as the Los Angeles County Poor Farm. For over a century, the institution’s mission evolved first as a hospital for indigents and then as a center for rehabilitation for chronic diseases.

who were without family or friends to depend on.²⁶¹ Staff in the Public Assistance Bureau focused on identifying a quick fix rather than a long-term solution.

Tracing these men's lives before the war reveals that they were independent and able to support themselves before the war. The incarceration crippled them of the ability to live independently afterwards due to mature age and illness. Census records show that Yojiro Machida, an immigrant from Japan had been able to support himself since he arrived in his adopted country in his early twenties. Machida, likely not the first-born son in his family, left his native Japan for the United States in the years leading up to the turn of the twentieth century. He likely settled on the West Coast, along with the majority of early immigrants from Japan. Machida first appeared in the U.S. Census in 1920, where he was described as widowed and living with a cousin. A decade later, he was listed as a boarder/lodger in Glendale, CA, working as a gardener. Although he did not appear in the 1940 Census, WRA records indicate his "pre evacuation address was Beverly Hills" and gardener remained his occupation. He likely received room and board as a gardener for an affluent family in Beverly Hills.

Machida's situation was not unique. Many Issei men without family lived a somewhat precarious existence before the war, just barely scraping by taking up any employment that was available to them. Employment that included room and board was a critical perk. Machida was incarcerated at Manzanar and given his final departure date of November 20, 1945, he remained there until the eve of the closure of the camp.

Machida's late departure is an indication that he chose to remain in detention likely

²⁶¹ "Correspondence between Charles M. Wollenberg, California State Department of Social Welfare and Paul G. Robertson, RE: Case Summaries for 9 Issei Men," National Archives, PI-77 47, Box 77, Folder 318.

because he had little promise of housing or employment on the outside. He received a terminal departure with a grant, which meant a \$25 travel stipend to return back to his point of origin. “El Segundo” was listed as his final destination after Manzanar, which likely meant the WRA/FPHA trailer installation established there. Machida received a terminal leave with grant from Manzanar, which presumably meant he could live on his own, once he had help identifying temporary housing. He might have been able to support himself if he had been able to find employment or permanent housing. Yet, since he was in his mid 70s and without family to support him, the chance of him being able to find employment or take care of himself on the chance that he got ill meant he would have to depend on government-administered public assistance. In this case, receiving care at Rancho Los Amigos was the form of public assistance that he required. Machida lived for nearly a decade more, presumably under the care of staff at Rancho Los Amigos.

Single, Issei men like Heitaro Matsuo and Yutaro Arimura, 70 and 79 years old respectively, in 1942, represented a demographic that depended on assistance from the County of Los Angeles prior to the war. They returned to Southern California following their mandatory removal, likely in poorer health, and still dependent on the County for a continuation of medical and residential care. Both men had been residing at Rancho Los Amigos in the years leading up to the war. In 1900, Matsuo, a 24-year old farmer from Japan was listed as a passenger on a ship list from Hawaii to the mainland. Four years later, 41-year old Arimura, a Japanese national, arrived in the United States. Neither appeared in the U.S. Census until 1940 when they were both listed as patients at Rancho Los Amigos. Although both were likely infirmed to necessitate admittance and a long-

term stay at Rancho Los Amigos, they were still required to follow the orders of removal from the West Coast. Both men were incarcerated at Rohwer, Arkansas for the duration of the war. Without the ability to reestablish themselves on their own on the outside, both men remained at Rohwer until November 16, 1945 when they were forced to return to their prewar destination under the WRA's mandate. Matsuo was 73 and Arimura was 82 when they returned to Los Angeles. They may have landed in a FPHA trailer installation before WRA public assistance staff assisted in getting them readmitted to Rancho Los Amigos. The series of upheavals likely harmed their health and welfare further without attentive medical care.

If they had been dependent before the war, it is likely the incarceration and the series of upheavals that left them to fend for themselves, caused greater detriment. The WRA took on the responsibility to find additional care for these Issei men, but were confounded by the referral process. WRA staff member Paul Robertson wrote to Charles M. Wollenberg of the State Department of Social Welfare to determine how to get the appropriate referrals. Robertson indicated that there was some confusion over which public assistance agency was ultimately responsible. Since the elderly men's residence requirement had been verified, which made them eligible to receive aid from the County of Los Angeles, medical necessity needed to be confirmed. In the meantime, these elderly and infirmed men waited in suspension in anticipation of yet another upheaval.

The dearth of information to chronicle the final years of these Issei men who were admitted to Rancho Los Amigos suggests a form of violence that they experienced. They seemingly disappeared from the historical record, which is symbolic of an erasure or near

obliteration of their postwar existence. Sufficient government documentation through immigration, census, and WRA records exists, help to piece together these Issei men's lives before World War II. Yet, the historical clues to reconstruct their lives post-incarceration end abruptly with a brief memo from WRA staff, suggesting their admittance to a County of Los Angeles health facility. No further documentation exists to piece together how they fared afterwards until the conclusion of their lives.

The government's neglect of dependent Issei men did not summarily end there. While the WRA and others involved in public assistance demonstrated intention to help elderly Issei secure housing, they ultimately failed them through their ultimate decision to focus on a younger sector of the returning population. Staff from the public assistance agencies scrambled initially to find housing for elderly Issei who did not qualify for services at Rancho Los Amigos. Beryl E. Cox of the California State Department of Social Welfare expressed to her colleagues a need for a home for 50-80 Japanese men who were mature in age. There had been a proposal to establish a home for the men in Gardena, a neighborhood in the South Bay that attracted a significant Japanese American population in the early postwar period. Yet, the plan was abandoned when planners determined that the greater need and more effective plan would devote resources towards a hostel for younger returnees.²⁶² Cox suggested that the agency felt that younger individuals had a better aptitude for becoming self-sufficient while the aged would likely be dependent on public assistance. She went on to suggest that the American Friends

²⁶² "Memorandum from Beryl E. Cox, State Department of Social Welfare to S. Frances Wallace," 17 July 1945. California State Archives; F3729: 11, Department of Social Welfare-War Services-Civilian War Assistance-Corr., County, Los Angeles, 1945-49.

Service Committee expressed interest in establishing a home for aged men, although there had not been movement on the initiative at that time. The American Friends, like other social and religious organizations sponsored hostels across the region, although these were intended to be temporary. Perhaps the American Friends or another social service organization aided to these dependency cases in the interim. If these men were like many other Issei bachelors who remained capable of taking care of themselves, they lived out their final years in single resident occupancy lodging, in and around Los Angeles's Little Tokyo. The trail of records documenting the outcome of their situations ends abruptly with this brief government memorandum, which makes it impossible to know exactly what happened to these individuals. Like with other dependency cases involving elderly men, the erasure of their stories, just short of their conclusions reveals the structural violence that the federal government utilized to make them seemingly invisible.

WELFARE OF THE WRA'S WELFARE UNIT

As a temporary agency that was dissolving imminently, the WRA Los Angeles field office staff insinuated they remained paralyzed in their actions to make great change. WRA staff remained ill-prepared to develop or carryout a long-range plan for dependent returnees. Faced with a surmounting workload from a steady stream of new arrivals that included many new dependency cases, staff in the Welfare Unit of the War Relocation Authority's Los Angeles field office felt overwhelmed by their responsibilities. In terms of capacity, staff of the Los Angeles field office was never adequate enough to meet the demands of their work. On July 10, 1945, Frances Steele, newly appointed to the WRA

Los Angeles Field Office summarized her assessment of the overall problems affecting the welfare unit. She indicated that the daily volume of work exceeded the capacity of two full-time employees, noting the time required to follow up on details related to each welfare case. Additionally, she suggested the need for at least two full-time interviewers to begin to process each new welfare case. Steele's hire and on-the-fly assessment of the welfare unit's process underscored the WRA's lack of thoughtful planning.

The WRA Welfare Unit's assessment that their work was voluminous was anecdotal, yet the data provided by the State of California corroborated this sentiment. The number of returnees on the state's public assistance rolls by mid-1945 was significant, especially considering the first wave of returnees chose to come to Los Angeles soon after the West Coast was re-opened. By June 1945, Charles Wollenberg, California state director of social welfare reported to Governor Warren's cabinet that 700 returnees were on the state's public assistance roll, which was approximately 14% of the 5,000 that returned to Los Angeles in the first six months since the West Coast was reopened.²⁶³ 14% was particularly significant, especially considering that this was before the War Relocation Authority began to direct former incarcerated back to their point of origin. These former incarcerated likely chose to return to Los Angeles because they had some promising opportunity related to employment or housing. Even with a lead, though, many returnees faced great adversity. Once the WRA implemented their policy, the number of returnees to Los Angeles requiring public assistance would logically increase significantly since this demographic lacked opportunity outside of the barbed wire.

²⁶³ "700 Evacuees Get State Aid in California," *Pacific Citizen*, 30 June 1945.

Wollenberg additionally noted that about 4500 individual cases had been researched to determine if they required public assistance. Given estimates of increasing numbers of dependent cases, the War Relocation Authority never seemed to explore the possibility of increasing staff in the field offices of cities on the West Coast to help with the transition as their staff in the War Relocation Centers decreased.

Although the WRA's claim that the volume of their work was overwhelming, lack of long-term solutions was in large part due to avoiding conversations around civil rights. The WRA sought temporary fixes that would address the most immediate needs like housing, furniture, and clothing. While this assistance provided temporary relief, it wasn't enough to counter the *dejure* and *defacto* discriminatory practices, which were the most inimical to Japanese Americans returning home. The WRA staff was not blind to the redlining and unfair housing practices that restricted housing options for Japanese Americans or the discriminatory employment practices that limited Japanese Americans to mostly low-skilled jobs in the domestic sphere or in gardening. Yet, these were fights that the WRA or other social agencies were unwilling to take up. Instead, they attributed the limitations of their influence to being overwhelmed by the volume of cases. They also placed blame on the returnees, themselves. Paul Robertson, area supervisor of the WRA's Los Angeles field office revealed this sentiment in a letter to his colleague J. Ehlenbach, suggesting: "these persons of Japanese ancestry have been dependent upon the federal government for the past 3 ½ years and it is, therefore, difficult for them to break away from this dependency and enter into normal channels of life. It is, therefore, up to local community organizations to assist the evacuees in making the adjustment to normal

living.”²⁶⁴ In response to the claim that former incarcerated were encountering difficulty in securing housing, Robertson informed Ehlenback that this was not true, implying instead that: “they have shown a tendency to not push for their rights if by so doing it would arouse antagonism.”²⁶⁵ Here, he picked up on the nuances of Japanese culture to avoid making waves. In contrast to the calculated statements that Robertson made to the public, here he spoke candidly, revealing some of his own personal biases as well as his sense of the WRA’s responsibility on the eve of its impending closure. Robertson failed to acknowledge the detriment of the agency’s abbreviated timeline as well as the shortcomings of the War Relocation Authority in helping former incarcerated navigate the challenges of reestablishing themselves. Instead, he placed blame on returnees for their inaction and reluctance to advocate for themselves.

The realities of the WRA’s final days called into question who would be responsible to help former incarcerated navigate ongoing legal and civil rights obstacles, lingering social problems inherent to resettlement, employment challenges, and housing shortages once the federal agency dissolved. A group of community leaders met in advance of the WRA’s May 1, 1946 closure to discuss which organizations might be equipped to provide assistance in response to these issues facing returnees to Los Angeles.²⁶⁶ The leaders who attended this meeting congregated out of concern, acknowledging that no single agency or even a combination of agencies existed at the

²⁶⁴ Letter from Paul Robertson to Miss J. Ehlenbach, 1945 Nov 30, National Archives, PI-77 47, Box 75, Folder 301.3

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁶ “Program Agenda – Action Meeting of Community Leaders – The American Japanese – An Emergency Program,” N.D., Southern California Library, MSS 034 Charles Bratt Collection, Box 1, Folder 1: 15.

time that would be equipped to handle the persistent challenges for returnees, following the termination of the WRA. While Charles Bratt, minority specialist for USES, and LeRoy Edwards, the two keynote speakers for the meeting, underscored the role of the agencies present to ensure that the “lamentable relief picture” did not persist, they did not seem to put forth a plan on how this might be avoided.

Despite the repeated suggestion that the intention of the aid was short-term, Bratt’s assessment of the existing public assistance programs as “lamentable,” suggested that without a long-term plan, dependent returnees would remain reliant on aid from social agencies. A few months earlier, an article within the March 1945 issue of the WRA Information Digest, entitled: “Among the Answers,” recognized the inherent challenges of resettlement and the WRA’s shortfalls given its impending closure. In the article, the WRA announced a solution through the Social Security Resettlement Assistance program. Although this program was considered to be promising, the article noted that neither the WRA nor the Social Security viewed this solution as “relief in the accepted sense.”²⁶⁷ Instead, it was meant to be an extension of support for returnees immediately after they left the War Relocation Centers. While the WRA provided welfare assistance to incarcerated at the War Relocation Centers during the war, the Social Security Resettlement Assistance program would extend and supplement this aid, albeit on a short-term basis “in a normal community until a family was able to make it on its own again.”²⁶⁸

²⁶⁷ “Among the Answers,” *WRA Information Digest*, March 1945, No. 77, p. 3-4, National Archives, RG 210, 5B, “WRA Information Digest.”

The paradox inherent to the Social Security Board's program, however, was apparent. This government assistance program was necessary because the federal government created the need through its decision to forcibly uproot members from mainstream society, move them to another part of the country, and hastily release them back to "normal living," seemingly with very little planning. Need was the primary basis for the program. The Social Security Commission suggested the program was for "a particular group [meaning people of Japanese descent—citizen as well as alien], its assistance was the right of that group, restricted by government action and helped in rehabilitation by the same government."²⁶⁹ The Social Security Board defined "need" as anything that created an obstacle to resettlement of the family or individual. Need could be small or extensive, acute, or chronic.

The broad definition of need, according to the Social Security Board, conflicted with the narrow one that Ruth E. Rogers and Bertha Underhill of the State Department of Social Welfare were working from for the Issei couples without a male breadwinner. This added to the confusion. The article suggested that assistance could be indefinite if necessary, although there was no indication that there was long term planning for this. Additionally, the article promised that aliens and citizens alike were eligible for many kinds of aid under this program. The Social Security Commission could serve as a state agency to administer general assistance, old age assistance, aid to dependent children and child welfare services. These forms of welfare intended to ameliorate challenges resulting

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

from chronic illness, loss through fire or theft, maternity, difficult circumstances brought about through travel, locating housing, moving, and storage of belongings. The monetary aid through these programs could be used to purchase clothing or household furnishings as well as pay for rent. Since these challenges were so commonplace, they could have applied to every single returnee, regardless of their socioeconomic status upon return to Los Angeles.

Clarification later in the article suggested, however, that there were a complex set of qualifications. Illness alone was not enough for an applicant to qualify for assistance. Instead, illness had to be coupled with an individual's inability to pay for medical treatment or rent, revealing a nuance in the program that was not entirely clear from the initial description of the assistance program. Concerned with the welfare of the unemployable, chronically ill or aged, the staff of the Welfare Unit of the WRA's Los Angeles Field Office compiled a list of the "unattached" individuals or elderly couples at the Winona trailer installation project in Burbank. Each of the individuals shared a commonality of being mature in age, somewhere between the ages of 60 and 70, in addition to contending with an ailment or chronic medical condition. Some were also identified as being Buddhist, which is curious since it seems to have no correlation as to why they would qualify for welfare assistance.²⁷⁰ This particular example underscored the complexity that resulted from determining qualification for assistance.

As a federal agency, the Social Security Board felt an obligation to pick up where the War Relocation Authority left off as individuals received indefinite leave clearance.

²⁷⁰ "Memorandum from J.M. Hollenbeck to Mrs. Helen D. Davis RE: Single Persons in Winona Project, Burbank," National Archives National Archives, PI-77 47, Box 75 Folder 301.3A.

The Social Security Board acknowledged that the final phase of the WRA program consisted of more than 60,000 (half of the total number of incarcerated) finding a place to resettle in the remaining nine months before the War Relocation Centers closed permanently. Given the inherent challenge in this final phase, the Social Security Board vowed to close the vast gap between life in the War Relocation Centers and the reintegration to mainstream society by providing support that would help returnees secure the basic necessities inherent to restarting their lives. The Social Security Board touted its success thus far with the program, noting that the assistance provided had alleviated a host of problems. For some recent returnees, the program provided a month's rent to carry adult returnees through their first payday. While the Social Security Board's program suggested that anyone enduring any of these challenges qualified for assistance, the disclaimer at the end of the article suggested that the effectiveness of the program would hinge upon proper dissemination of information to returnees. Confusion amongst returnees over the various welfare program requirements and which agencies were responsible for services were indications that information was not properly disseminated.

When the War Relocation Authority disseminated information to former incarcerated, it was typically simplistic and vague, making processes sound much simpler than they were in reality. A WRA memo circulated in mid-January 1945, entitled: "Post-Exclusion Bulletin No. 4," indicated that aliens residing in a number of states (including California) were eligible for some categories of aid administered by the Federal Security Agency, such as "old age assistance." The memo also noted that Congress had appropriated funds to the Social Security Board for a special Resettlement Assistance

Program, which intended to assist individuals, “citizens or aliens, affected by restrictive governmental action.”²⁷¹ According to the memo, these programs were not supposed to be subject to program variations at the state level, but if the California State Department of Social Welfare’s internal memorandum at the opening of this chapter was an indication of how these programs operated in practice, there was great complexity involved in securing assistance for non-citizens. In reality, the program’s benefits were not as plentiful or abundant as advertised.

While it seemed as though there were several sources of assistance, it was difficult for returnees as well as staff of public assistance agencies to discern the role of each organization. Ambiguity over what resources were available and what agencies might provide resettlement assistance led to significant confusion for returnees as well as staff of these public assistance providers. The confusion was most likely unintentional rather than calculated and a consequence of the impromptu planning. The inefficiency that resulted from the debacle, however, was detrimental. The significant confusion that resulted from the difficulty in navigating the bureaucracy of the various public assistance agencies was an example of the state-inflicted, slow violence that returnees faced upon their arrival in Southern California.

The confusion was an indication of the ambiguity over responsibility for administering public assistance. A memo between the staff from the State Department of Social Welfare and War Services program provided a perplexing overview of the various

²⁷¹ War Relocation Authority, “Post-Exclusion Bulletin No. 4,” 13 Jan 1945, National Archives, RG 210, E-6, Box 4, Folder: “Post Exclusion Materials.”

resources available to provide social welfare assistance to returnees.²⁷² The American Red Cross and National Jewish Welfare Board employed case managers to provide guidance to families and individuals, navigating the system. The Red Cross as well as the American Legion Service Department provided financial assistance while families awaited a pending claim adjustment for their financial losses. Several organizations, including the Veterans of Foreign Wars assisted returnees in completing claims for their financial losses. The efforts of the WRA's field office staff overlapped in all of these areas of service, as well, creating duplicate efforts as well as confusion over which organization provided the most effective assistance.

Numerous organizations, including the American Federation of Labor, Congress of Industrial Organization, Selective Service, United States Employment Service (USES), Board of Education, and Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation worked with the WRA to help returnees receiving public assistance obtain employment. The WRA and USES staff intended to assist these individuals in becoming independent, yet the job placements were most often relegated to unskilled, low wage jobs almost entirely in the service industry, agricultural sector, or needle trades. In a letter from Harold S. Choate, Acting District Relocation Officer from the WRA's Los Angeles Field Office to Luther Hoffman, Project Director at the Topaz War Relocation Center, Choate suggested that the predominance of service job placements as domestics and gardeners resulted from the fact that they were the only types of offers that the WRA could refer individuals to directly. Choate

²⁷² "Memorandum from Beryl E. Cox, State Department of Social Welfare to Bertha Underhill, War Services Supervisor, Re: Japanese Resettlement Program – Los Angeles County," 18 July 1945. California State Archives; F3729: 11, Department of Social Welfare – War Services – Civilian War Assistance – Corr., County, Los Angeles, 1945-49.

elaborated that the WRA staff placed applicants with individual employers to comply with the stipulation that “any business employing eight or more persons comes under the War Manpower Commission and must have all employees cleared and referred by the United States Employment Service.”²⁷³ The result was often placements in domestic jobs with private employers, which often included room and board. This arrangement intended to ensure that returnees could support themselves. Yet, the good intentions from these two government agencies ultimately hemmed Japanese Americans into a lower socioeconomic bracket, which was reflective of the unskilled work that they directed returnees towards.

Feeling the pressure of the impending closure of the trailer installations in the greater Los Angeles region, the residents there were forced to make difficult choices regarding employment and housing in an attempt to support themselves and avoid further dependence on public assistance. In a February 1946 memo, Dorothy Dieman, head of the Needle Trades Section of the Los Angeles USES, reported that she had many unfilled requests for Japanese hand finishers from garment manufacturers in Beverly Hills.²⁷⁴ Dieman worked with Mr. George Okuda, manager of the Santa Monica housing installation to identify potential candidates. Mr. Okuda acknowledged that he was trying to recruit workers for Ms. Dieman, but was having a difficult time convincing tenants to show an interest in any type of permanent work in the area without permanent local housing. He reported that tenants felt that since the housing project was about to close,

²⁷³ “Letter from Harold S. Choate, Acting District Relocation Officer to Luther T. Hoffman, Project Director at Topaz,” 21 June 1945, National Archives, RG 219, E-47, Box 78, Folder 400.

²⁷⁴ “Memorandum from Mary Jones to Mr. S.S. Selsky, Subject: Attitude Toward Employment at Santa Monica,” National Archives, RG 210, E-47, Box 78, Folder 400.

they should accept only casual, temporary employment until they could locate permanent housing elsewhere. He had employers come to the project seeking to employ workers who could be trained for permanent work, but had been unable to interest any applicants in the openings because they did not feel they could commit themselves to the acceptance of permanent work. Mr. Okuda requested that there be a clarification of the status of the housing installation so that tenants did not miss out on any potential employment opportunities. In October 1945, the War Relocation Authority staff documented people “on the verge of panic due to their imminent exhaustion of personal funds without the possibility of employment in the near future.”²⁷⁵ WRA and USES staff went to the Lomita trailer installation on several occasions to try to allay the anxieties of the residents. They also decided to register the residents in order to create a profile of individuals living in the trailer installation in hopes that it would help with future job placements.

The WRA staff sensed that residents at the temporary trailer installations had lost faith in their efforts to assist them in finding job and housing placements. They noted that residents often chose not to answer knocks at the door or pretended not to be able to understand or speak English when government employees would stop by. One weekly summary alluded to the fact that there was little faith in the USES abilities and that returnees were asking friends or acquaintances for job referrals, instead. Anecdotally, it seemed as though returnees were relying more on personal or community networks rather than these government agencies for assistance in securing jobs. Other residents feared discrimination at the USES office in applying for job placements. Additionally, some of

²⁷⁵ “Memorandum from S.S. Selsky to Mr. Earl L. Kelley, RE: Progress Report – Week ending 10/26/1945,” National Archives, PI-77 47, Box 72, Folder 106.

the residents at the trailer installations passed up temporary job opportunities for fear that if they left the trailer installation and subsequently lost their jobs, they would be without housing. Worry over this potential scenario caused many to extend their subsidized housing in the trailer installations instead of taking a promising job offer elsewhere. WRA staff expressed concern over these responses from trailer installation residents, assuming that this trend would lead to further dependence on public assistance.²⁷⁶

As a result, the Welfare Unit staff of the WRA's Los Angeles Field Office leaned heavily on support from organizations beyond just the American Friends Service Committee. Steele indicated that she had initiated conversations with the Los Angeles Council of Social Agencies, the Red Cross, as well as County, State, and Regional Welfare representatives to solicit their help in easing the burden on the WRA's Welfare Unit.²⁷⁷ The State Department of Social Welfare intended to open a War Services Unit in Los Angeles, which would attend to the needs of anyone found ineligible for County and State assistance.²⁷⁸ Additionally, service organizations such as the Red Cross, American Federation of Labor, American Legion Service Department, National Jewish Welfare Board, and Disabled American Veterans attempted to fill a gap in services left by the various federal agencies such as the United States Employment Service, Department of Charities, Welfare Council of Social Agencies under the Community Chest Fund and

²⁷⁶ "Memorandum from Interviewers Clarabel Cole and Margarette Fillerup to Mr. S.S. Selsky, RE: Visits to Several Housing Installations," National Archives, PI-77 47, Box 75, Folder 301.3A, [NA 140]; NA 209; 389.

²⁷⁷ Memorandum from Frances Steele, Welfare Unit to Harold S. Choate, Acting District Relocation Officer, Re: Welfare Unit, 10 July 1945. National Archives, RG 210, E-47, Box 78, Folder 330.1

²⁷⁸ "Memorandum from Beryl E. Cox, State Department of Social Welfare to Bertha S. Underhill, War Services Supervisor, Re: War Services Program," 6 June 1945,

Selective Service. Perhaps more influential, however, were local, community organizations that took on the responsibility of providing assistance to struggling returnees.

When the liquidation of the WRA finally occurred in the late Spring 1946 and additional federal support began to wane, Japanese Americans who continued to struggle were forced to turn elsewhere for relief. Community organizations like the International Institute provided multi-tiered support for Japanese American returnees. In addition to providing social welfare counseling services that helped to refer recent returnees to the appropriate agency for assistance, staff and volunteers at the International Institute established a referral committee to assist returnees in obtaining information related to jobs, welfare, medical attention, housing or legal counseling. Elsie Newton, executive secretary at the International Institute, suggested that the work of the International Institute would be similar to that of the WRA, extending the services after the federal agency folded.²⁷⁹

Yet, given the International Institute's long history in the community, it—unlike the War Relocation Authority—would not be fleeting. Staff of the referral committee, who had a background in sociology, fluency in Japanese language, and cultural familiarity, would be available daily from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm to assist returnees. Staff of the referral committee also made themselves available to Japanese Americans who had settled outside of Boyle Heights, where the International Institute was located. Staff of the International Institute offered their services in Torrance, Hawthorne, Gardena, Lomita,

²⁷⁹ “Referral Committee at Institute,” *Rafu Shimpo*, 8 May 1946.

and Burbank, making them a much more accessible resource than the staff at the WRA field office.²⁸⁰ Additionally, the organization offered a space for Nisei to develop a sense of community. Women's social clubs used the International Institute as their base for meetings and events, providing a space where they felt welcomed.

Community organizations provided social services far beyond the life of the WRA's Los Angeles field office. The Buddhist temples and Christian churches sponsored a variety of programs designed to help families. In December of 1946, the "Christmas Cheer" charitable program began in Los Angeles with support from the *Rafu Shimpo*, the local bilingual Japanese-English newspaper, the Los Angeles chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), as well as some of the reestablished businesses in Little Tokyo, including: Enbun Co., Uyeda Co., Granada Fish Co., Miyako Hotel, and the Bamboo Café. The charitable program solicited donations of food and gifts to hand out to "underprivileged" Japanese American children in the local area. During this time, 238 individuals received aid in time for the holidays. Two years later, the number of individuals served increased to 367.²⁸¹

While it is not surprising that such a program would be needed within the Japanese American community in the aftermath of wartime incarceration, the need for charitable assistance is not an aspect of the resettlement process that many Issei or Nisei would openly discuss. The reticence of former incarcerated to talk openly about the first few years of resettlement has shaped our general understanding of the postwar experience

²⁸⁰ "Referral Staff Set to Assist Returnees," *Rafu Shimpo*, 29 June 1946.

²⁸¹ Sue Takimoto Joe, "Ten Years of Christmas Cheer," *Rafu Shimpo*, 20 Dec 1957: II-3, 14.

of Japanese Americans. As the need for the “Christmas Cheer” charity suggested, this period was characterized by struggle and hardship for those who tried to acclimate to life post-incarceration.

CONCLUSION

As these various dependency cases demonstrate, the policies and philosophies of some of the most influential officials within government-operated public assistance agencies as well as staff on the ground, contributed to systems that continued to lock Japanese Americans in place and make it incredibly difficult for them to increase their social mobility upon return to Los Angeles. Administering various forms of welfare on a short-term basis arguably helped returnees secure the most basic needs, but ultimately left former incarcerated on a trajectory to remain dependent on public assistance in perpetuity. While the planning of these governmental agencies and service organizations left many still struggling, the failure was due to imprudence. The short life of the War Relocation Authority’s Los Angeles field office as well as relief from other government agencies sustained the state violence that extended from the forced removal and incarceration. As a result of these temporary resources, returnees were left on their own to navigate the deeply entrenched systems that persisted in preventing them from upward mobility.

The dependency cases that relied on housing, medical, or emergency financial assistance slowly disappeared from the traceable record as the government agencies and social organizations that initially swooped in to provide aid vanished almost as quickly due to short-sighted planning that focused on the immediate rather than the long term. Most of the most indigent returnees lived below the radar, fading into the social milieu of

postwar Los Angeles. Without the continuing support, Issei bachelors occupied rooms in the SROs in Los Angeles's Skid Row or Little Tokyo neighborhoods. Families left penurious from the forced removal a few years prior, likely scraped enough together through domestic or service work to cover rent in a house in neighborhoods like Crenshaw or West Adams in South Los Angeles. Individuals who initially occupied the trailers in temporary installations or hostels across Southern California, eventually found more permanent housing scattered across the Southland, far outside the radius of Little Tokyo, the heart of Los Angeles's Japanese American community.

Social institutions within the Japanese American community, including churches, temples, community centers, sports leagues, "all-Nisei" women and men's social clubs like the Luknes or the Cougars, Girl and Boy Scout troops, martial arts clubs, and Japanese language schools created support networks that provided services that continued to help returnees acclimate to mainstream life again.

Although they were likely able to make it without continued support from the federal, state, or local government, their stories did not constitute the stories of resettlement success that the Japanese American community as a whole proudly touted. Yet, these stories are incredibly significant because they reflect the devastation of the wartime incarceration of persons of Japanese ancestry that led to a perpetuation of intergenerational trauma long after World War II.

CONCLUSION

An early 1970s photograph captures Sansei Nick Nagatani carrying an elderly Issei man down the steps of a mobile health clinic on Weller Street in Los Angeles's Little Tokyo, following a free chest x-ray screening. Inspired by 1960s social movements for civil rights, Sansei like Nagatani became involved in grassroots programs like "Pioneer Projects," which provided greatly needed services, including medical care for Issei. The photograph, which is commonly associated with the Asian American civil rights movement also poignantly captures the ongoing process of resettlement for many aging Japanese Americans. Additionally, it documents the ways in which community organizations shouldered the responsibility of caring for the most vulnerable. Some twenty years later after the incarceration, the elderly Issei continued to face grave difficulty in reestablishing themselves and navigate ongoing threats of upheaval.

Sansei-led groups like Little Tokyo People's Rights Organization (LTPRO) formed to advocate for poor Issei under threat of eviction from SROs in the neighborhood.²⁸² As the City of Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency launched a "revitalization" project in Little Tokyo, LTPRO members saw a connection between the upheaval from the mass removal and the ongoing challenges of resettlement for the most vulnerable within the Japanese American community. Through their efforts, Sansei members of LTPRO and other groups like it sustained the legacy of grassroots support that aided dependent returnees and helped to reestablish the community post-

²⁸² "National Coalition for Redress/Reparations," *Densho* Digital Repository, http://encyclopedia.densho.org/National_Coalition_for_Redress/Reparations/ Accessed 1 July 2019.

incarceration. Some twenty years later, the consequences of the forced removal, subsequent incarceration, and reintegration remained apparent. The lingering post-incarceration challenges made it quite clear that the resettlement process was far from over.

Back in January 1945, *Pacific Citizen* columnist Larry Tajiri identified challenges that former incarcerated would face for several decades following their return to the West Coast. In his editorial entitled “Nisei USA: Undoing the Evacuation,” Tajiri perceptively stated that not all would be able to transition or resettle easily, noting: “The resettlement of this landless and homeless majority outside the relocation camps bids to be a back-breaking job for the War Relocation Authority and its cooperating federal and private agencies. The job of wholesale relocation of some 70,000 persons into normal communities is one which will require even more than the tremendous energies which were necessitated by the original evacuation.”²⁸³ Tajiri’s editorial underscored the enormity of the task ahead for the same agency that oversaw their removal and wartime detention. He suggested that oversight of the resettlement process, especially for former incarcerated without the means to reestablish themselves, would almost be more difficult than the WRA’s initial task. He also alluded to the significant number of incarcerated that remained in the concentration camps. Together, these factors would impact the return and reintegration of former incarcerated to Los Angeles.

Despite the War Relocation Authority’s objective to disperse the Japanese American population widely across the continental United States from the ten detention

²⁸³ Larry Tajiri, “Nisei USA: Undoing the Evacuation,” *Pacific Citizen*, 13 Jan 1945.

centers it oversaw, the population in the greater Los Angeles region nearly returned to its prewar numbers by 1947. Many former incarcerated arrived in Los Angeles in early 1946 due to a WRA policy to send remaining detainees to their place of origin. Most remained suspended in a dismal state of penury and despondency upon arrival in Los Angeles. The wide range of experiences that characterized the post-incarceration resettlement process suggests a variety of factors and forces shaped how Japanese Americans made home again in Los Angeles.

Some returnees had an easier time reintegrating back into mainstream society than others. Ultimately, though, the long trajectory of structural inequality that resulted from *de facto* and *de jure* discrimination persisted, affecting all returnees. The laws and practices that intended to halt social mobility of Japanese immigrants before World War II, led to the wartime incarceration of Japanese Americans, and continued to place severe limitations on former incarcerated as they returned to Los Angeles to restart their lives afterwards. Faced with the same discriminatory legislation that limited their economic and social mobility before the war, Japanese Americans additionally faced an acute housing shortage as well as limited opportunities for employment as they navigated a tense social climate upon their return. While many of the Issei had experienced discrimination for decades, starting over again seemed more daunting this time since they were more mature in age and the incarceration left them destitute and emotionally broken. Restarting again after essentially losing so many of their tangible and intangible achievements—homes, businesses, automobiles, pets, friendships, security, and community—did not seem feasible for so many who returned to Los Angeles following

the incarceration. More than anything, the uncertainty of what the next week would entail provided significant anxiety.

Many returnees wondered how they would pick up the pieces of their lives and reestablish themselves after being forcibly removed from their communities, incarcerated for several years behind barbed wire, dispossessed of their material belongings and stripped of civil rights. When the War Relocation Authority dissolved later that year and its Los Angeles field office closed its doors indefinitely, scores of former incarcerated remained in dire need of support to obtain leads on housing, employment, and public assistance. The WRA's plans for the "evacuation and relocation," (or forced removal, detention, and resettlement) of Japanese Americans were hastily conceived and incredibly shortsighted, which had a deleterious impact on all incarcerated.

For many Issei, starting over after the war was exceedingly more difficult than when they first arrived in the United States. For Issei men who never married or Issei women who became widowed during the war, their ability to reestablish themselves was severely affected by their age and health. For the Issei men who were admitted to a Los Angeles County health facility upon return, due to chronic illness, each lived out his final days institutionalized. For others who needed transitional housing upon return, many bounced from one government-established trailer installation to another until more permanent housing was available. Many of these individuals were poor, single men and women who found more permanent shelter in single resident occupancy rooms in Los Angeles's Little Tokyo. Less than a decade later, the City of Los Angeles utilized eminent domain to claim several blocks of Little Tokyo, where many elderly residents

lived in SROs, for the site of a new police station. Once again, these individuals were displaced. This eviction perpetuated a cycle of upheavals that seemed to characterize their lives. Many of them became virtually untraceable as time progressed and neglect from service agencies essentially resulted in an erasure from the historical record.

For others, it was the hardship of their situation that essentially became forgotten. In the case of the Yanai family, their dire situation upon returning to Los Angeles became relegated to the WRA memos, tucked away in archival boxes at the National Archives. One memo in particular expressed concern for the Yanais, a young family with four children ages four and younger, upon arriving in Los Angeles from Manzanar.²⁸⁴ Like so many of the thousands of Japanese Americans who would eventually make home again in Los Angeles, Hisataro and Satsuyo Yanai faced grave obstacles in their ability to secure the essentials necessary to reestablish their young family post-incarceration. The War Relocation Authority's welfare department noted it was paramount for the husband and wife to obtain housing and employment to provide for their growing family. With some initial prompting on the details of her family's situation, oldest daughter Frances was able to fill in the gaps in the historical documentation that essentially ended with the WRA memo.²⁸⁵

While Frances acknowledged that her family was poor when she was a child, she noted that they were grateful for what they had. She recalled that they were more

²⁸⁴ "Memorandum from K.L. Yetter to Helen D. Davis, [WRA] Welfare Unit" 20 Feb 1946, Found in the National Archives, PI-77 47, Box 75, Folder 301.3.

²⁸⁵ Frances Yanai, in discussion with the author, January 2019. Also see: "Yanai, Hisataro" in the War Relocation Authority, United States Final Accountability Rosters of Evacuees at Relocation Centers, 1942-1946.

fortunate than other families that they knew, including her parents' friends, the Takakis. In 1944, Shigetoshi Takaki, Hisataro Yanai's prewar business partner, died of tuberculosis at the age of 44 while he was incarcerated at Heart Mountain Relocation Center. Shigetoshi died two months before his wife Natsuko gave birth to the couple's fifth child. At the age of twenty-nine, Natsuko faced the daunting task of supporting five children under the age of eight when the family left Heart Mountain on October 24, 1945, less than a month before the camp's final closure.²⁸⁶ The Takakis returned to Los Angeles, under the direction of the WRA's policy to return to their prewar point of origin. Natsuko Takaki likely qualified for public assistance as a single mother with multiple young dependents. Although Natsuko did not work outside the home before the war, her situation demanded that she obtain employment, in her late husband's absence, to support her young children.

Frances recounted that her father was unable to restart the liquor distribution business that he and Takaki operated before the war, which left him unemployed for a while, as the WRA noted. Following the WRA's memo, Hisataro Yanai worked in a fish cannery in San Pedro for several years. Yanai's paychecks from the unskilled work he did at the fish cannery were hardly large enough to support his own family, which now comprised seven children. Nonetheless, he often made his paycheck stretch a little farther to purchase groceries for his former business partner's family. Frances recalled that her father felt responsible to look after Natsuko Takaki and her five children in the absence of their husband and father, who was formerly the breadwinner for the family. Frances

²⁸⁶ "Heart Mountain, Takaki, Shigetoshi." U.S. Final Accountability Roster of Evacuees at Relocation Centers, 1942-1946, Heart Mountain, 333.

didn't remark on moments of struggle that her parents endured. Instead, she described memories, like the anecdote of helping the Takaki family, which showed her family had reestablished themselves. Additionally, she skipped over several years, picking up the story of her family's resettlement experience at a point when her father was able to start his own business selling dried fish—a product that he studied while he worked in the canneries soon after returning to Los Angeles. At least from the WRA's documentation and the family's recounting of their experience, it seemed as though in just a few years, the Yanais went from being a scourge to a success story.

MODEL MINORITY

Suppressing moments of hardship and instead focusing on a more uplifting memory is how many former incarcerated chose to remember this period of time. Although Frances Yanai and her siblings were young children in the postwar period and likely shielded from the stress that her parents endured to reestablish the family upon return to Los Angeles, the trauma from these experiences around the incarceration and its aftermath reverberated. As psychotherapist Satsuki Ina has suggested, the human brain tries to prevent future harm by avoiding triggers of trauma. Japanese Americans, regardless of age, adapted a unique coping style in response to their trauma.²⁸⁷ Instead of dwelling on the traumatic moments, many focused on the lighter moments in camp and suppressed anything unpleasant. Also, many never looked back. Instead, they looked towards the future. This way of coping with hardship embodies Japanese philosophies of

²⁸⁷ Satsuki Ina, "Children of the Camps," Tule Lake Reunion Symposium, June 1998, <https://www.pbs.org/childofcamp/project/remarks.html>. Accessed 4 May 2019.

gaman and *shikata ga nai*, which encourages perseverance and looking to the future rather than dwelling on the past since hardship “cannot be helped.”²⁸⁸

This selective memory has reinforced the federal government’s official line during World War II, which suggested the “evacuation and relocation” were necessary to help the Japanese population in the United States assimilate into American culture and gain acceptance within society. This position has ultimately perpetuated the idea that Japanese Americans transformed from the inassimilable to the “model minority” rather quickly.²⁸⁹ This concept that a minority group can be a model for others to emulate is problematic because it has insinuated that Japanese (and other Asian American groups) overcame racism and achieved success with relative ease. The idea that minorities could be a “model” underscores the egalitarian ideal that any immigrant group can make it in America. While this is a basic ideal that the United States was founded upon, in reality it

²⁸⁸ Subsequent generations of Japanese Americans have interpreted these philosophies that guided their grandparents and great-grandparents’ response to the continuous obstacles they encountered as being non-confrontational and meek. Yet, the 2019 production of *Tales of Clamor*, a play that centered on the psychological trauma from camp to redress that took a toll on former incarcerated as well as subsequent generations, suggested that clamor doesn’t necessarily have to be loud. In this way, these philosophies gave former incarcerated agency to move past the camp experience.

²⁸⁹ For further analysis on the “Model Minority” stereotype, see: Keith Osajima’s work, which pinpointed the creation of the Model Minority myth to a group of white journalists who wrote articles for the *US News and World Report* and *New York Times* in 1966 in response to the tumultuous events of the Civil Rights Movements. The articles, equated Asian Americans with the model minority with the intention of creating a stark contrast to the socioeconomic status of African Americans, emphasizing that a significant percentage of them were dependent on federally-funded social welfare programs. Ellen Wu’s book, *The Colors of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority*, complicates the periodization assigned to the origins of the “Model Minority” stereotype, suggesting that it began with racial liberalization ideology that emerged during World War II. Wu argues that leaders of the Japanese (and Chinese) communities embraced assimilation and integration as a way to obtain the full benefits of U.S. citizenship. Two chapters in the anthology *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader* address the misconceptions inherent to the “Model Minority” stereotype. Keith Osajima’s chapter entitled, “Asian Americans as the Model Minority” and Lucie Cheng and Philip Q. Yang’s chapter entitled, “The “Model Minority” Deconstructed” point to the shortcomings of the Model Minority stereotype, suggesting that the diversity within the Asian American demographic and the disparities that exist reveal the inaccuracy of this label.

has played out much differently. Instead, systematic inequality has been deeply entrenched within US society with structures in place to keep minorities in a subordinate position. The “model minority” theory, which came into prominence in the early 1960s, ignored the discrimination that was deeply entrenched within American society. Instead, it touted the “success” of Japanese Americans, comparing them to other ethnic minorities.²⁹⁰

Additionally, this concept has inaccurately homogenized Japanese Americans to make it seem like all have achieved the same level of success. The model minority label ignored the cultural difference that resulted amongst the Issei and Nisei generations and failed to take into account the distinctive challenges that the immigrant generation faced in comparison to their children. As people of color, all Japanese Americans were severely limited in terms of the types of opportunities available to them. Yet, there was a great disparity between opportunities, which correlated to generation. Since the immigrant Issei were aliens ineligible for citizenship until 1952, they lacked rights that ultimately impacted levels of “success.”²⁹¹ Even within the generations, there was great conflict between allegiance to the United States or to Japan. Yet, those that touted their loyalty to

²⁹⁰ Proponents of the theory, who were mostly outside of the Asian American community, pointed to higher rates of education and greater family household income to prove the theory. Critics of the stereotype have pointed to the inaccuracy of the empirical data that was used to connect Japanese and Chinese Americans to the model minority. Despite high rates of higher education, the empirical data that was provided failed to point out that the higher rates of higher education have not been proportionate to income.

²⁹¹ This was apparent between the types of occupations that Issei had before the war in comparison to their American-born children. For a comparison of the occupations that Issei and Nisei had in 1940, see: War Relocation Authority, *The Evacuated People: A Quantitative Description*, “Table 22”, 70-78. Anecdotally, sisters Taye and Chiyoko Sakamoto’s lives exemplify this disparity. As a toddler, Taye emigrated with her parents from Japan. Although she grew up in the United States without knowing her birth country of Japan, she was restricted from opportunity in comparison to her American-born sister, who became the first Japanese American woman to become accepted to the California Bar Association and practice law.

the United States were rewarded. They became more visible, overshadowing those with conflicting opinions. Additionally, those that were able to reestablish themselves after the war with greater ease became representative of the community, causing those who were slower to bounce back, or completely dependent to become relegated to the background.

While it may have seemed as though the community was homogenous, below the surface there were significant tensions and a variety of experiences that created diversity. Although wartime incarceration in America's concentration camps may have seemed to have been a shared experience that in some ways unified Japanese Americans living on the West Coast, it also revealed the diversity that existed within the community. Divides between generations, socioeconomic class, political affiliations, and affinity for Japan became more apparent, in some ways, during the resettlement period as Japanese Americans tried to rebuild their lives.²⁹² Highlighting the diversity within the Japanese American community in the postwar period is important since the Japanese American Citizens League, Nisei Veterans, and other influential voices within the community were the main proponents of a narrative of success that long excluded those who did not experience immediate "success," silenced those with dissenting opinions, dismissed the experiences of those who challenged the "norm," and ignored those whose lives did not conform with the idyllic narrative of national loyalty, economic progress, and community

²⁹² Historian Lon Kurashige tracks the history of ethnic identity within the Japanese community in Los Angeles in his book, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict: A History of Ethnic Identity and Festival in Los Angeles, 1934-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). He establishes that the Japanese American community was far from monolithic prior to the war by identifying the inner conflicts that were apparent by the 1930s. Kurashige points to the differences between the Issei and Nisei. While the community may have seemed tight knit, Kurashige notes that not everyone was accepted. Those who lived well below the "middle-class" lifestyle—particularly those living in single resident occupancy hotels, boarding houses, and labor camps (likely bachelor Issei or poor families) were not integral to the community [and thus were essentially rendered invisible.] (p.53)

cohesiveness. Leaders within the Japanese American community were able to project an image of returnees as being adroit and resilient to overcome the disruption that wartime confinement caused, yet this impression was deceptive since it suggested that all Japanese Americans shared a homogenized experience following the war. The promulgation of success and the silence on struggle that has come to represent the resettlement period almost suggests that hardship and discrimination summarily ended with the closure of the camps in 1945. Yet, this response revealed the efforts of the community to push back against residual discrimination and the power dynamics at play within racial politics in postwar Los Angeles. Behind this false sense of success, numerous Japanese Americans endured immense struggle in order to reestablish themselves.

This misleading image informed sociologist William Pettersen's 1966 *New York Times* article "Success Story, Japanese-American Style," which is credited as being the first to label Japanese Americans as a "model minority." In his article, Pettersen acknowledged the long history of discrimination and injustice towards ethnic minorities in the United States, suggesting that "cumulative degradation on these communities made it difficult to reverse the trend." Yet, he argued that the history of Japanese Americans challenged such generalizations about ethnic minorities. He pointed out that twenty years after the closure of the wartime camps, Japanese Americans "established a remarkable

record, moreover, by their own almost totally unaided effort. Every effort to hamper their progress resulted only in enhancing their determination to succeed.”²⁹³

While Pettersen may have been one of the first to apply this label to this specific group of individuals, Japanese Americans had long embraced and embodied this identity. Japanese values of *ganbaru*—to do one’s best, *gaman*—to persevere, and *shigata ga nai* guided their work ethic and response to the discrimination they faced in the United States. As *de facto* discrimination led many to prove they were one hundred percent American and *de jure* discrimination caused many to *gaman* (persist and carry on) and comply with

²⁹³ William Pettersen, “Success Story, Japanese-American Style,” *New York Times*, 9 Jan 1966: 180. The “Model Minority” concept is quite problematic because it has insinuated that Japanese (and other Asian American groups) overcame racism and achieved success with relative ease. The idea that minorities could be a “model” countered the claim that America is a fundamentally racist society that has structures in place to keep minorities in a subordinate position. The theory, which came into prominence in the early 1960s, ignored the discrimination that was inherent to society and instead focused on the success of Japanese Americans, comparing them to other ethnic minorities. Proponents of the theory, who were mostly outside of the Asian American community, pointed to higher rates of education and greater family household income to prove the theory. Critics of the stereotype have pointed to the inaccuracy of the empirical data that was used to connect Japanese and Chinese Americans to the model minority. Despite high rates of higher education, the empirical data that was provided failed to point out that the higher rates of higher education have not been proportionate to income. Additionally, this concept is flawed since it has homogenized the Japanese American community to make it seem like all have achieved the same level of success and overshadowed the great struggle that Issei and Nisei endured as a result of the lack of equal opportunities available to them. For further analysis on the “Model Minority” stereotype, see: Keith Osajima’s work, which pinpointed the creation of the Model Minority myth to a group of white journalists who wrote articles for the *US News and World Report* and *New York Times* in 1966 in response to the tumultuous events of the Civil Rights Movements. The articles, equated Asian Americans with the model minority with the intention of creating a stark contrast to the socioeconomic status of African Americans, emphasizing that a significant percentage of them were dependent on federally-funded social welfare programs. Ellen Wu’s recent book, *The Colors of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority*, complicates the periodization assigned to the origins of the “Model Minority” stereotype, suggesting that it began with racial liberalization ideology that emerged during World War II. Wu argues that leaders of the Japanese (and Chinese) communities embraced assimilation and integration as a way to obtain the full benefits of U.S. citizenship. Two chapters in the anthology *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader* address the misconceptions inherent to the “Model Minority” stereotype. Keith Osajima’s chapter entitled, “Asian Americans as the Model Minority” and Lucie Cheng and Philip Q. Yang’s chapter entitled, “The “Model Minority” Deconstructed” point to the shortcomings of the Model Minority stereotype, suggesting that the diversity within the Asian American demographic and the disparities that exist reveal the inaccuracy of this label.

the laws, these individuals were acting as model minorities. Upon their return to Los Angeles following the incarceration, Japanese American returnees continued to carry themselves in this manner in hopes of being able to fade into the backdrop and avoid drawing unnecessary attention to their situation. It was a means of survival in a hostile social climate. It seemed that the Japanese American community lauded the veterans who served valiantly in the military, Issei chose to become naturalized as citizens of a country that incarcerated them without due process and continued to contribute to society. All of these actions were seen as characteristics of the model minority.

Certainly not all Japanese Americans adhered to these actions. Yet, those that did became representative of the community. In many ways, this identity of the model minority fit in with the image that the Japanese American Citizens League promoted and the US government rewarded. Patriotism, loyalty, assimilation, and success were all traits that the Japanese American Citizens League prescribed for Japanese Americans, during and after World War II. During testimony before the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians in 1980, Amy Iwasaki Mass explained the phenomenon by saying: “The more we proved what good people we were, then the government would recognize us. I think that was the dynamic that was operating with the denial, rationalization and the conforming behaviors.”²⁹⁴ This rationalization contributed to the pressure to hide any signs of struggle. Dependency on public assistance or a stay at one of the WRA’s trailer installations wasn’t something that anyone boasted about. Of course,

²⁹⁴ Amy Iwasaki Mass, “Testimony to the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians,” 6 Aug 1982. https://50objects.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Iwasaki_testimony.pdf Accessed 2 June 2019.

not all aspired to embody these characteristics nor did everyone attain this status. Even for those that did, “success”—however that was defined—certainly was not instantaneous, especially given the lack of government assistance.

As the case studies covered in this dissertation have shown, the transition to life beyond the barbed wire was not easy for former incarcerated. The social climate on the West Coast seemed more hostile than it was prior to their removal. The housing situation was extremely competitive on top of the ongoing racial housing covenants, and employment opportunities remained bleak. All of these factors made the process of starting over extraordinarily difficult for Japanese Americans upon their arrival to Los Angeles. Many returned to Los Angeles by the mandate of the War Relocation Authority’s policy. Many were penurious from before the war and the incarceration experience did not give them the chance to come out ahead. Instead, the meager pay for work in camp left them unable to increase their social mobility. Others chose to return to Los Angeles because it was their home, although being familiar with prewar Los Angeles didn’t necessarily provide an advantage to resettlement. Los Angeles had changed in their absence, making it hard for them to become settled again.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The trail of government intervention into the lives of members of the Yanai family seemingly ended with a single memo. Perhaps WRA staff members’ concern for the Yanai family’s ability to become independent again resulted in short term counseling for employment and housing opportunities. Yet, just as the WRA memo concluded abruptly without closure on the Yanai family’s situation, government assistance also

stopped short for returnees since the WRA essentially left them vulnerable. Following the closure of the WRA's Los Angeles field office in 1946, Hisataro and Satsuyo worked towards reestablishing themselves through the support of friends, neighbors, and Japanese American community organizations. Despite the constant challenge of supporting a growing family, with the birth of several additional children as well as the arrival of Mrs. Yanai's daughter from a previous marriage, the family made great strides in becoming self-sufficient.

From an outsider's perspective, the Yanais like so many other families seemingly went from being a major scourge to the model minority. Or, at least that is what they portrayed. The image of rapid success was an illusion, though. The recounting of the family's experience collapsed a significant amount of time to make it seem as though success came quickly. In truth, it took numerous years before the markers of "success"—Hisataro starting his own business, Frances Yanai becoming Nisei Week Queen and her younger brother David becoming a prominent men's head basketball coach at both the high school and college levels—became realized. In order for the Yanais to truly gain their footing again, the onus was on the family as well as the community that they were apart of. When the federal government left the returnees vulnerable, individuals, social and spiritual organizations, and institutions within the Japanese American community worked to lift each other up. Since families were often separated as a result of differing resettlement plans, former incarcerated had to form new networks for support.

Despite lingering discrimination, warnings to avoid congregating and socializing, and significant obstacles that continued to hinder social mobility, Japanese Americans

remained resilient in their ability to reestablish a sense of community in Los Angeles. When the aid of government agencies and public assistance organizations began to diminish, local community-based organizations stepped in. Social institutions helped to rebuild the community and ease the struggles of returning Japanese Americans. Historian Valerie Matsumoto underscores the role that young women's organizations played in rebuilding the community during the early postwar period in her book, *City Girls: The Nisei Social World in Los Angeles, 1920-1950*.²⁹⁵ Girls' social clubs and those of their male counterparts provided networks of support, in addition to opportunities to gather and socialize. Both of these services were highly significant for young adults who feared encountering prejudice when they mixed in with the mainstream public.

Even though the International Institute was not specifically a Japanese American organization, it was a critical resource for returnees since it provided counseling as well as a space where they could gather, socialize, and establish a sense of normalcy again. Volunteers of the organization provided counseling to returning Japanese Americans regarding employment and other types of assistance that were available to them at a time when other resources had become scarce. The International Institute provided a meeting space for girls' social clubs and a venue for dances and other social events, just as it had before the war. Additionally, it also provided social activities for younger Nisei. Students at local area colleges were recruited to be advisors to clubs and organizations for Nisei youth ranging in age from junior high school to college. Mary Oyama described the opportunity as "important work—We sincerely hope that the Nisei have not been

²⁹⁵ Valerie Matsumoto, *City Girls: The Nisei Social World in Los Angeles, 1920-1950*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 208.

forgotten just because the war is over. The fact is the Nisei need more help than ever at this critical stage of postwar adjustment and post-evacuation return. Especially do our youth and young people need the help and guidance of more mature minds to lead them on the path of assimilation and integration.”²⁹⁶ The call to college students hinted at the fear that Issei and older Nisei had of delinquency among young Nisei if they were left without any guidance or mentoring. Having a welcoming space for socializing as well as mentoring was critical for young returnees to give them a sense of belonging. While the International Institute provided activities for younger returnees, it also provided job counseling and leads on employment, which was a critical service to returning Nisei.

Social clubs, like the J.U.Gs (Just Us Girls), the Luknes and the Gabrites, as well as associations organized around occupations, like the Southern California Gardeners Association, provided critical support networks for returnees. The women’s club known as the Luknes formed in the Amache War Relocation Center and continued in the postwar period as many of the women returned to Los Angeles. The women in the club enjoyed the camaraderie and empowerment that came from a supportive social network, but they also felt the satisfaction from service to the community. Organizations like the J.U.G.s and Luknes served the Japanese American community by hosting charity drives to benefit families in need. In October 1946, as returnees were still arriving to Los Angeles and still getting their bearings, members of the J.U.G.s collaborated with the International Institute and the American Friends to host a clothing drive to distribute donations to

²⁹⁶ Mary Oyama, “Reveille,” *Rafu Shimpo*, 17 Jan 1947.

members of the Japanese American community in need of a little extra help.²⁹⁷ A year later the service work of these social clubs continued to benefit returnees. Members of the Luknes held a Thanksgiving drive, collecting canned food, turkeys, food, and money to give to Japanese American families in need.²⁹⁸

Likewise, the Southern California Gardeners' Association and Japanese American community centers continued with the Japanese tradition of *tanomoshi*, an informal loan that would help members by getting a cash advance to get their businesses up and running or to support their families. Members would contribute to a pool of money each month, in good faith, knowing that each member would eventually become the recipient of a sum of money. This informal loan gave members a chance to purchase gardening equipment or a truck necessary to start up a landscaping business. In addition to providing a financial support network, organizations like these occupational associations and community centers provided a social gathering spot where members could feel a sense of belonging amidst the tense social climate that existed outside of these organizations.

Similarly, religious institutions like Koyasan Betsuin Temple on 1st Street in the heart of Little Tokyo became revitalized as a social hub and a place where returnees could turn for assistance, in addition to being a spiritual refuge and a place to preserve Japanese cultural practices. Aside from operating a temporary hostel for returnees, Koyasan became a social gathering venue for community activities. Advertisements in

²⁹⁷“J.U.G.’s to Begin Clothing Drive,” *Rafu Shimpo*, 9 Oct 1946: 1.

²⁹⁸“Luknes Thanksgiving Food Drive a Success,” *Rafu Shimpo*, 1 Dec 1947: 1.

the *Rafu Shimpō* announced dances, like the “Sports Formal; May Dance” that the YBA (Young Buddhist Association) held for “couples only” on May 3, 1947. The announcement indicated that Tak Shindo and his 15-piece orchestra would provide entertainment and dance music for the couples in attendance at the dance.²⁹⁹ Social activities like dances were integral to reestablishing a social network for returnees of a certain age. The types of activities that were held at Koyasan, demonstrate the revitalization of Little Tokyo as the heart of the Japanese American community in Los Angeles, despite the WRA’s intention to break them up and even as the population dispersed widely to neighborhoods across the Southland. Koyasan hosted a range of activities at its facilities on 1st Street, even though many of them did not have any religious affiliation, including: the commencement rite for 58 Nisei girls who completed sewing courses at the Pacific Sewing School, a meeting for Japanese Hospital stockholders, and meetings of advocates for Issei naturalization.³⁰⁰ Having a space to host these events was integral to community reformation.

Individuals also played a critical role in helping fellow returnees back on their feet. Frances Yanai Wong’s memory of her father piling all the kids in the car, along with boxes of food to take to the Takaki family in Montebello, hints at how many people got through resettlement. When a family had a little bit extra, they shared it with someone who needed it. Similarly, Florence Ochi recalls that as a teenager in the early 1950s, she and her brother and cousins rented a truck to pick up fruits and vegetables from the

²⁹⁹ Ad for “Sports Formal; May Dance,” *Rafu Shimpō*, 27 April 1947.

³⁰⁰ See: “Graduation Set for Sewing Class,” *Rafu Shimpō*, 16 April 1947. Ad: “Notice to Japanese Hospital Stockholders,” *Rafu Shimpō*, 14 Jan 1947. “Issei Set Citizenship Drive,” *Rafu Shimpō*, 22 Feb 1947.

produce market in Downtown Los Angeles to distribute to families and Issei bachelors in need. She recalls dropping off boxes of fresh produce to Issei bachelors living alone in SROs throughout Los Angeles's Little Tokyo.³⁰¹

This community support continued long after the war, helping to ease the pain points of resettlement, but also to re-establish the foundational elements that uniquely characterized the Japanese American community in Los Angeles. Despite all of the upheaval, the historic heart of the Japanese American community slowly came back to life. Although many of the prewar businesses and organizations in Little Tokyo began to become re-established again, the neighborhood looked quite different. The boundaries of the ethnic neighborhood enclosed fewer blocks now. Although the majority of the Japanese American population in Los Angeles lived within a five mile radius before the war, the residential patterns changed dramatically in the years following World War II, in part due to the housing shortage and discriminatory housing practices. Many of the mom and pop businesses that Issei operated before the war did not reopen after the incarceration. Issei, now too elderly to restart their livelihoods and organizations, began to look to the next generation for leadership. Within a few years, the Nisei assumed leadership roles within longstanding organizations and institutions to ensure the community's survival. Nearly ten years later, the Sansei began asserting a larger role within the community. Inspired by the various social movements of the 1960s, many Sansei activists began to advocate for additional social services for penurious Issei still

³⁰¹ Florence Ochi, in discussion with the author, 2 July 2019.

living the consequences of the incarceration and structural inequality that handicapped them since their arrival in their adopted country.

FURTHER DIRECTIONS FOR CONTINUING RESEARCH

While this study fills a major historical gap in the narrative arc of the Japanese American experience, the topic of resettlement is vast. In 2018, several scholars, film makers, authors, community activists, and individuals who experienced the wartime incarceration and subsequent resettlement period, convened at the University of Southern California's Shinso Ito Center for Japanese Religions and Culture to workshop new research on the topic of Japanese American resettlement in Los Angeles and Chicago. Each presenter shared recent or concurrent work on the topic, including book projects, graduate-level research, short narrative films, and a traveling exhibition. From the historiographical overview of scholarship to date on the topic, the five presentations, and the subsequent discussion, workshop participants suggested that numerous topics remain ripe for further study.

The list of potential topics included a more in-depth study on the temporary trailer installations, the impact of housing covenants, suburban communities that developed in the postwar period, WRA field offices in major cities that intended to help ease the transition back into mainstream society, aid organizations, organized crime, delinquency, relationships between Japanese Americans and other non-white groups, a comprehensive study nationwide on resettlement as a follow-up to *People in Motion*, the report that the WRA produced in 1946. Additionally, the participants agreed that further oral history interviews should be conducted that focus on the resettlement period, since so many of

the interviews of former incarcerated cover the prewar and wartime incarceration so heavily and rush through the postwar period, as a result. Finally, the group suggested that with so much of the Japanese Evacuation and Resettlement Study (JERS) collection at the Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley now digitized and available online, there is a plethora of material that should be mined for further understanding of this time period.

Some of these topics are covered in depth in this study. Additionally, over the past couple of years, Densho Content Director Brian Niiya and I have been capturing interviews that focus on narratives of resettlement in California. Of course, given how broad this topic is, there are numerous areas that remain understudied.

Employment is woven throughout several of the preceding chapters since it was intrinsic to themes of early resettlement away from the West Coast as well as the housing situation and social climate in Los Angeles. Yet, it's a significant topic that should be explored further. One of the biggest shifts that impacted the Japanese American community pertained to employment. Prior to the war, a large percentage of Japanese Americans found employment within the community. Following the incarceration, many Nisei had to look outside the community for employment opportunities. The niche that Japanese had carved out in the agricultural sector in the prewar period shifted as walnut and citrus groves were bulldozed to make way for suburban house tracts in the postwar period. Many Japanese turned to jobs as domestics and gardeners, while others opened small businesses in the service industry, such as laundries, groceries, and hotels.

While Issei had filled an occupational niche as gardeners before the war, this became an even more ubiquitous job after the incarceration, partly due to relative ease in

which an individual could start a gardening route. Gardening represents an occupational niche that has been vital to both the Japanese American community and the Southern California landscape. It was a common profession, particularly since a pickup truck and push lawnmower were the basics required to begin work. While it may have been easy to get started as a gardener, the work required skill and thick skin—to endure the ubiquitous blisters that resulted from the laborious work and the demeaning and demanding requests from clients. Focusing on gardeners and the Southern California Gardeners' Association provides the opportunity to talk about labor as well as economic organization. A group of Japanese gardeners formed the Southern California Gardeners' Association in 1955 on the edge of Little Tokyo near 4th and San Pedro Streets to have a place where gardeners could receive training, purchase supplies, and socialize. Naomi Hirahara's book, *Green Makers: Japanese American Gardeners in Southern California* and her literary series centered on crime sleuthing Nisei gardener Mas Arai, along with the Japanese American National Museum's 2008 exhibition, *Landscaping America: Beyond the Japanese Garden*, have explored this topic in detail. Yet, documentation from USES and the WRA, two of the federal agencies that actively provided job counseling to returnees as well as job ads in the *Rafu Shimpō* could complement this scholarship.

I was hoping to use this chapter as a way to explore the impact of resettlement on Issei and Nisei women. When Japanese American women returned to Los Angeles, the job ads guided them towards a finite number of sectors, including: managing hotels, domestic work, needle trades and contract gardening. Young Nisei women found little opportunity as secretaries in downtown offices, or in the garment shops in spite of the

increasing number of graduates from universities and dressmaking schools in trade schools.³⁰²

The Department of the Interior reported that dressmaking schools were still quite popular in the postwar period, a tradition that continued from before the war. In the 1920s, Shige Yokota used the sewing skills that she learned from staff at the Broadway department to teach Japanese women in Little Tokyo. Yokota was the principal at Rafu Yossai Gakuen (Los Angeles Sewing College), one of the largest sewing schools in Little Tokyo before the war.³⁰³ The other sewing schools in Little Tokyo included The French American Sewing School, the Parisian School of Fashion Arts, and Pacific Sewing School for Nisei Girls and Women. What happened to all of the Japanese American women who graduated from one of the several sewing schools in and around Little Tokyo when they returned after the war? Did these sewing schools continue to operate in the postwar period? Did they support seamstresses in the same way that the Gardeners' Association of Southern California did—by holding training sessions and functioning as a credit union?

Ultimately, a discussion of employment would explore myriad challenges that Japanese Americans faced—from discriminatory hiring practices to entering new occupations—in order to reconstruct their livelihoods.

³⁰² Department of the Interior, *People in Motion*, 84. Valerie Matsumoto suggests that Issei and Nisei women contributed to the family income by securing work, despite the challenge in finding job opportunities in the postwar period. In *City Girls: The Nisei Social World in Los Angeles, 1920-1950*, Matsumoto determined that Nisei women most commonly found work as domestics, although she also indicated that Nisei women engaged in the growing garment industry in Southern California. Given this claim, perhaps it will be possible to trace graduates from the various sewing schools that operated in Little Tokyo during the pre-war era to see if they were able to secure jobs after the war that allowed them to utilize their skills.

³⁰³ Little Tokyo Historical Society, *Los Angeles's Little Tokyo*: 24.

It was important to tell a narrative that deviated from the dominant “JACL version,” of the post-camp experience, which largely focused on the success of the Nisei who were rewarded for their loyalty to the United States. The Japanese American Citizens League wasn’t the only group who helped to craft an overly rosy narrative about the Japanese American community following the incarceration. Both of these organizations worked in tandem to advance their respective agendas of acceptance of Japanese Americans and acknowledgement that the project of “evacuation and relocation” was successful. To challenge these dominant narratives, which members of the Japanese American community as well as outsiders, like the War Relocation Authority, promulgated, I needed to interrogate the cultural representations of the community as “successful,” “loyal,” and “assimilated.” These organizations weren’t unique in crafting this narrative.

While the recipients of public assistance and charges of the WRA Los Angeles Field Office’s counseling program countered the dominant representations of the success of the community at the time, it would be interesting to examine the body of work of photographers who were documenting the Los Angeles Japanese American community during the resettlement period. Issei photographers like Toyo Miyatake and Kinso Ninomiya took thousands of photographs throughout their careers, documenting celebratory or milestone occasions in people’s lives, including: weddings, graduations, and community events like Nisei Week. The photo archives from both of these studios are invaluable since they document the growth and change of the Japanese community before and after the war. The photographs capture the cultural adjustment of Japanese

Americans, detailing their social networks and day-to-day activities. While the occasions were inherently celebratory, the photographers certainly portrayed their subjects in a positive light. Whether conscious or not, both of these photographers were crafting a narrative of success, or at the very least they were portraying their subjects with dignity and respect, as if to reclaim what the war years took away.

Similarly, the candid photographs that they took of the community, outside of their studios, exclude from the frame any evidence of struggle or hardship that may have defined the resettlement period following incarceration. As a result, each of these photographers was crafting a narrative of the community through photographs—one that suggests success, cohesiveness and resilience during what must have been trying times in a deliberate attempt to remember the period in a certain way. Photographs like these are indications of a deliberate attempt at reinvention. As a result of the disruption that wartime incarceration caused, families lost material possessions. The trauma of forced removal and incarceration likely caused individuals to intentionally forget the past and look towards reinvention for the future. Archie Miyatake contended that his father, Toyo Miyatake, felt compelled to document the camp experience to prevent it from happening again. Yet, if Miyatake took photos at Manzanar as an act of social justice, why didn't he continue to illuminate the discrimination that characterized the resettlement period?

While much can be gleaned from Miyatake and Ninomiya's photographs about the early years of resettlement, what remains excluded from the frame of their camera lens is just as valuable. Looking beyond the edges of the photographs prompts questions of what happened to those who had difficulty overcoming the readjustment necessary to

restart their lives or those who were not able to overcome the psychological trauma of wartime incarceration. Perhaps the abstract look beyond the edges of the photographs is the way to incorporate the stories of bachelor Issei who were late in their years and had difficulty reinventing themselves after the war, juvenile delinquents who rebelled against the conservative values in the postwar period, or Nisei who renounced their citizenship during the war. How important was it for the community to have control over the creation of visual memories? What role did these specific photographers play in creating community memory? I'd like to explore these questions further to understand how Japanese American photographers constructed community memory and manufactured an image that attempted to redeem their public image in the aftermath of WWII.

Further examination of another iconic image—that of the Japanese American World War II veteran—would also make for a fascinating case study for the resettlement period. The men of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and the 100th Infantry Battalion, a Japanese American segregated unit, faced the toughest missions since their lives were seen as expendable. They suffered tremendous casualties as they accomplished amazing feats that included liberating French and Italian towns from Nazi Occupation, rescuing the Texas Lost Battalion, and liberating prisoners at Dachau, a Nazi concentration camp.

As the traditional narrative goes, the Nisei soldiers returned as heroes and became the epitome of the model citizen. President Harry S. Truman greeted the 442nd Regimental Combat Team at a reception at the White House on July 15, 1946, remarking: “You fought not only the enemy, but you fought prejudice—and you have won.”³⁰⁴ Yet,

³⁰⁴ Niiya, *Encyclopedia of Japanese American History*, 74.

despite civic leaders' praise of the Nisei soldier for demonstrating the utmost acts of loyalty and the debut of the 1951 motion-picture film *Go for Broke*, the response from the general public was not nearly as celebratory. As the Nisei veterans shed their military uniforms and transitioned back into civilian life, the heroes' welcome proved effervescent and unable to counter the racist attitudes that prevailed in the postwar period. Military Intelligence Service Veteran Jack Kunitomi indicated that Nisei veterans often displayed signs of their discharge from the Army in the front window of their homes to preempt prejudice recalling that "people respected that."³⁰⁵ Yet, the need to display proof of military service in exchange for respect is an indication that the racial uniform trumped the military uniform.

In addition to the mixed response from the mainstream public, the reaction from within the community was also not unified. Eto and Ichiro, two characters in John Okada's 1957 novel *No No Boy* address the intra-ethnic tension over military service. As Ichiro hedges the questions of military service, Eto realizes that he was a "no no boy."³⁰⁶ Eto's response of utter disdain for Ichiro reveals the tension between the Nisei who volunteered to serve in the military or complied with the draft and those who resisted the draft or answered "no no" to the loyalty questionnaire. This heated exchange between Eto and Ichiro is representative of how the issue of military service divided the Japanese American community. The valor and patriotism of the Nisei soldiers, who served in segregated units that comprised the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, 100th Infantry

³⁰⁵ Yoshisuke "Jack" Kunitomi, interview by Michelle Dojiri, April 21, 2002, Go For Broke National Education Center, Los Angeles, CA, accessed 11 Sept 2019, http://www.goforbroke.org/oral_histories/oral_histories_video_display_names_mp4.php?clip=27008

³⁰⁶ John Okada, *No No Boy*, Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1976: 3-4.

Battalion, and the Military Intelligence Service have become iconic to the Japanese American experience, overshadowing the experiences of the draft resisters and “no no boys.” While the shame that Eto puts on Ichiro is representative of the dominant view of the Japanese community, there was certainly dissension.

This intra-community tension that resulted from the JACL’s position and the infamous “loyalty questionnaire,” is fascinating, especially in contrast to the narrative that veterans’ organizations tell, which focuses on the sacrifice and courage of the Nisei soldiers, military intelligence officers, engineers, and medics and downplays any reticence to volunteer or intra-ethnic divisions over military service. In this chapter, I’d like to explore the intra-ethnic tensions over military service and explore the re-entry process for Nisei veterans returning to Los Angeles. Although the reputation of the Nisei soldiers’ military service was said to have helped to quell discrimination towards Japanese Americans returning to the West Coast, this image largely concealed the experiences of those who faced prejudice from inside and outside of the Japanese American community in the postwar period.

As I looked back on the prospectus that I submitted in 2015, I realized that my project shifted significantly due to the research that I came across in several different archives, as well as the finite amount of time that I had to complete my dissertation. In my prospectus, I intended for my dissertation to map the reformation of Japanese American communities in the post-WWII period as a way to examine an aspect of the continuous reshaping of urban spaces that has long characterized Los Angeles. Focusing on Japanese American resettlement patterns was going to be a single case study to make

broader claims about post-WWII Los Angeles. I learned very early on into my archival research, however, that there was a plethora of historical material that documented the WRA's "relocation" (resettlement) program and the return to the West Coast, beginning in January 1945.

I had hoped to broaden the scope of this study to comparatively examine the experience of other racial groups in post-WWII Los Angeles. Providing a deeper knowledge of the early years of the resettlement period is vital and crucial to understandings of race relations in Los Angeles and the underlying power dynamics at play to construct them in the postwar era. Angelenos of other ethnic and racial backgrounds found themselves navigating the same obstacles that plagued Japanese Americans in post-WWII Los Angeles. Comparing the experience of different racial groups of Angelenos during this period will ultimately shed light on the city today.

While I intended to explore occupational niches, the ways in which the community crafted its own community memory and how loyalty and military service were viewed in different ways amongst Japanese Americans, the archives that I spent the most time exploring mainly illuminated the prosaic experiences of the day-to-day in the early postwar period.

Together, the chapters of this dissertation worked in concert to trouble the common images or cultural representations that have come to symbolize the aftermath of wartime relocation and the process of resettlement. Although this dissertation considered the resettlement process as a continued legacy of wartime incarceration, I also intended for it to be a lens into issues that extended beyond the Japanese American experience in

postwar Los Angeles. The resettlement of Japanese Americans factors into ongoing demographic changes in Los Angeles that affected other communities of color. Each theme—social climate, housing, and public assistance— could provide a launching point to take a relational approach as to how other ethnic and racial groups navigated similar exclusions. While this was a goal outlined in my prospectus, it proved to be overly ambitious for this project, which is just the beginning of research that I hope will include a comparative look at other communities of color in Los Angeles. There is great overlap as other racial groups fought against the prohibitions on housing and legal battles over housing covenants, despite the iconic images of new and plentiful housing units built in the early postwar era. Although representative images of Los Angeles in this era include “move-in day,” depicting a moving truck parked in each driveway of a newly built suburban housing tract, Japanese Americans weren’t the only ones who experienced the squeeze of the housing shortage as they attempted to reestablish themselves after camp.

While these specific examples might be unique to the Japanese American experience, African Americans and Mexican Americans were also subjected to housing discrimination and shifting boundaries. Little Tokyo, like the neighborhoods of Bunker Hill and Elysian Park were condemned as areas of blight and targets for urban renewal. Similarly, African American and Mexican Americans’ bids for homes in white middle-class neighborhoods were equally denied. Freeway construction through Bunker Hill, Boyle Heights, and South Central Los Angeles acted as racial fault lines that disrupted communities in these areas.

Economic niches would also be a topic of comparison to other ethnic groups. Issei and Nisei gardeners manicuring the lush gardens of affluent suburban homes as well as Issei and Nisei domestics or seamstresses in service of a more affluent class was not unique to the Japanese American experience. In fact, African Americans, and Mexican Americans had long filled these economic niches as well. Their parallel experience, though, would reveal how integral these service industries were to postwar Los Angeles in a time of economic prosperity.

These images complicate the long-standing notion that one could reinvent him/herself in Los Angeles. Ultimately, taking a relational approach to compare the post-WWII Japanese American experience with that of other ethnic and racial minorities can contribute to dispelling the myth of Los Angeles as the “Land of Sunshine,” where opportunities for social mobility were equal to all. This approach will highlight how Japanese Americans who returned to the West Coast were essentially excluded from the post-war economic boom in ways similar to other racial and ethnic communities.

APPLICATION OF THIS RESEARCH

In 2018, Densho, a nonprofit organization that uses its online presence “to preserve and make accessible primary source materials on the World War II incarceration,” received a California Civil Liberties Public Education Fund grant to document stories of resettlement in California. The grant enabled Densho staff to capture oral histories with former incarcerated that focused on postwar resettlement. As part of the project, two public programs—one at the Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute

(GVJCI) and the other at the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles—would highlight the oral histories that were collected. Densho Content Director Brian Niiya asked me, as an emerging scholar on the topic of resettlement in California, to provide an overview to give context to the interview clips that he showcased. The turnout and response from attendees at both of these programs underscored interest in the early postwar period as well as leads on individuals whose postwar experiences help to fill in gaps on this critical period. Although nearly all of the members at the GVJCI and many of those in attendance at JANM were children during the early postwar period and therefore too young at the time to understand the obstacles that faced their parents, they are interested in learning more.

Since starting this research, I have been apprehensive to present the challenges of resettlement for fear of disapproval from the community for bringing up this challenging history. Elaborating on a population of Japanese Americans who required some form of public assistance upon their return to Los Angeles or Issei bachelors who became charges of Los Angeles County without anyone to depend on, are not rosy topics. However, since presenting it to several audiences comprised of former incarcerated and descendants, I have realized that there is great interest in this topic. One man in the audience at the GVJCI admitted that he had never given thought to the possibility that his family was on government public assistance, even though he had always wondered how his mother was able to support two young children while their father remained detained at a Department of Justice camp. After hearing my talk on the challenges of returning to Los Angeles, he

seemed moved by thoughts of how these daunting obstacles affected his family and appreciative of the ways in which his mother bravely navigated them.

The dialogue that these public programs at GVJCI and JANM generated incited great questions as well as leads on stories of postwar resettlement that I hope to document further. It also revealed to me that I have been successful in this project of recovery to begin to reconstruct what it was like for former incarcerated to pick up the pieces of their lives in the immediate post-incarceration period.

Certainly there is more work to be done to continue to sift through the layers of memory, contend with the erasure, and translate the silences that have shaped our understanding of this topic. In the meantime, however, I hope that my work will provide a framework that former incarcerated and their descendants can use to begin to unpack their own family's post-incarceration experiences. Dialogue around post-camp experiences is significant to understanding the consequences of the incarceration and to problematizing the idea of the model minority, which has long overshadowed the complexity of the community, prevented families from discussing their challenging pasts, and ultimately caused the perpetuation of trauma across generations. The narrative isn't completely bleak, though. In fact, during resettlement, just like with the prewar and wartime incarceration periods, there are myriad examples that reveal the knots of resistance and glimmers of contestation that clashed against the structural inequality that intended to limit the mobility of Japanese Americans. Just as trauma has been a legacy of resettlement, so has resistance and resilience.

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Beyond the Japanese Garden: Stories of Japanese American Gardeners & their Gardens: Short Films & Documentaries. Los Angeles, CA: Japanese American National Museum, 2007.

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Exhibitions

Coming Home: Memories of Japanese American Resettlement, Japanese American National Museum. <http://www.janm.org/exhibits/cominghome/>. Institutional archives at JANM with research for the exhibition? Summary of exhibition indicates that "the exhibit will focus on five collections, each displayed in intimate settings, that reflect the process of coming home."

Finding Aids/Bibliographic Guides

A Buried Past: an Annotated Bibliography of the Japanese American Research Project Collection. Compiled by Yuji Ichioka [and others]. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974.

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Table 2.1: Japanese American Population in the Greater Los Angeles Region

	1940	1941	1945	Jan 1, 1946	March, 1946	Sometime between April and August, 1946	Aug 1, 1946	Oct, 1946	Feb, 1947
California	93,717 (*j)	93,717 (*i)			48,600 (*i)				43,775 (*h)
Southern California		108,800 (*c)	estimate d 7047 (*d)						
Los Angeles County	20,653 (*j)			15,698 (*f)	23,037 (*f)	23,147 (*g)	22,000 (*e)	23,000 (*b)	
City of Los Angeles					13,364 (*f)	14,761 (*g)			
Highland Park					180 (*f)	198 (*g)			
Southeast Los Angeles					180 (*f)	198 (*g)			
Hollenbeck and Belvedere					3036 (*f)	3400 (*g)			
Hollywood					1,568 (*f)	1,725 (*g)			
Midtown					4,500 (*f)	4,950 (*g)			
Normandie					2,720 (*f)	2,992 (*g)			
West Los Angeles and Beverly Hills					1,180 (*f)	1,296 (*g)			
Gardena					372 (*f)	409 (*g)			
Glendale					72 (*f)	79 (*g)			
Long Beach					932 (*f)	1,025 (*g)			
Montebello					232 (*f)	255 (*g)			
Norwalk					140 (*f)	154 (*g)			
Altadena					732 (*f)	805 (*g)			

	1940	1941	1945	Jan 1, 1946	March, 1946	Sometime between April and August, 1946	Aug 1, 1946	Oct, 1946	Feb, 1947
San Gabriel Valley (Covina, Claremont, Azusa, Sierra Madre, El Monte, Baldwin Park, Pomona, Puente, Arcadia, San Gabriel, Monrovia, Temple City, etc.)					404 (*f)	444 (*g)			
San Fernando Valley (Van Nuys, Pacoima, N. Hollywood, San Fernando, Encino, Tarzana, Northridge, etc.)					408 (*f)	450 (*g)			
Torrance					100 (*f)	110 (*g)			
Whittier					48 (*f)	53 (*g)			
Harbor area (Venice, Redondo Beach, Culver City, San Pedro, Wilmington, Harbor City, Terminal Island, etc.)					328 (*f)	361 (*g)			
Miscellaneous (Compton, Clearwater, Artesia, Downey, Bellflower, etc.)					180 (*f)	198 (*g)			
Names with incomplete or irregular addresses					240 (*f)	264 (*g)			

In 1942, the Japanese comprised only 1.6% of the population of California and were most heavily concentrated in and around Los Angeles.

(*a) Rafu Shimpo, August 28, 1946. (Given the Pacific Citizen article, it seems more likely that the 22,000/23,000 figure correlates to the number of Japanese in Los Angeles County rather than the city of Los Angeles)

(*b) Rafu Shimpo, October 29, 1946. This number conflicts with the population figure for the City of Los Angeles reported two months before.

(*c) Los Angeles Times, September 8, 1945. "It was authoritatively stated, the Southland, which once had 80% of the nation's 136,000 Japanese population has been forsaken as "home " for internees released from relocation centers."

[How could this number be larger than the population total for CA?]

(*d) Los Angeles Times, September 8, 1945. "Figures compiled by the WRA show that of the 22,224 Japanese freed since the first of the year, only 7047 or 31% announced intention to relocate in California. The majority of these moved into Southland counties."

(*e) Pacific Citizen, August 10, 1946. The article also indicates that approximately 1,000 still live in hostels while 900 remain at the Winona Camp.

(*f) Estimates of Major Concentrations of American Japanese in Los Angeles County. Data compiled from WRA records. It is unlikely that this is an exhaustive number from the County of Los Angeles; Numbers are based on known family address of returnees

(found in the C. Bratt Collection, Southern CA Library)

(*g) Estimates of Major Concentrations of American Japanese in Los Angeles County. Data compiled from WRA records. KH's note: Document does not include a date, but it is likely that it reflects data from April to August, 1946. The population numbers are slightly higher than the March 1946 numbers, but they are less than the August 1946 numbers. Numbers are based on known addresses of returnees.

*Not likely an exhaustive number from the City of Los Angeles; Numbers are based on known family address of returnees

(found in the C. Bratt Collection, Southern CA Library)

(*h) Rafu Shimpo, February 8, 1947

(*i) War Relocation Authority Semi-Annual Report, Jan. 1 - June 30, 1946

(*j) Wartime Civil Control Administration Bulletin 8, May 2, 1942 (Seems a little odd that numbers for 1940 and 1941 be the same.)

Table 3.3 Trailer Installation Population										
Trailer Installations	11/17/45	Number of families as of Jan. 28, 1946 (*e)	Total number of individuals in housing installations, 2/21/1946	Number of individuals in housing installations, 2/28/1946	Number of individuals in six housing installations, March 6, 1946 (*a)/(*c)	Number of families as of March 9, 1946 (*f)	Number of individuals in five housing installations (April - August, 1946?) (*b)	Number of Residents 04/06/1946 (*g)	Statistics for War Relocation Projects in Southern California: Families/Singles/Total Individuals (April 25, 1946)	Date Closed
Mariposa - Sepulveda and Mariposa Street, El Segundo	Capacity: 250	6	137 (*b)	135 (*b)	129 (*c)	3		219	15/69/127	4/15/1946-5/1/1946
Winona - Hollywood Way and Winona Street, Burbank	Capacity: 700	20	530 (*b)	545 (*b)	537 (*c)	9		500		3/26/46
Hawthorne - Redondo Highway between Imperial and El Segundo Blvd., Inglewood	Capacity: 700	15	387 (*b)	403 (*b)	393 (*c)	16			75/7/354	4/15/1946-5/1/1946
Santa Monica - 24th and Pico Streets	Capacity: 190	6	156 (*b)	159 (*b)	162 (*c)	2		158	35/4/156	4/15/1946-5/1/1946
17th St. Ct., Long Beach		10				Not listed				
Webster St., Long Beach		11				Not listed				

Long Beach (not clear which facility this pertains to)									173/1/792	
Trailer Installations	11/17/45	Number of families as of Jan. 28, 1946 (*e)	Total number of individuals in housing installations, 2/21/1946	Number of individuals in housing installations, 2/28/1946	Number of individuals in six housing installations, March 6, 1946 (*a)/(*c)	Number of families as of March 9, 1946 (*f)	Number of individuals in five housing installations (April - August, 1946?) (*b)	Number of Residents 04/06/1946 (*g)	Statistics for War Relocation Projects in Southern California: Families/Singles/Total Individuals (April 25, 1946)	Date Closed
Magnolia - Victory Blvd. and Magnolia, Burbank, CA	Capacity: 135	14	118 (*b)	118 (*b)	118 (*c)	4		118	27/3/137	4/15/1946-5/1/1946
Lomita - Pacific Coast Highway near Narbornne, Lomita (Lomita Air Strip)	Capacity: 1,200	43	765 (*b)	815 (*b)	842 (*c)	Not listed		878	155/59/707	4/15/1946-5/1/1946
El Segundo									15/69/127	
TOTAL		125	1,548 (*b)	1,472 (*b)	2,181 (*a)/(*c)	34	2,175 (*b)		480/143 /2,273 (*d)	

*In all these locations accommodations consist of either trailers accommodating four persons or single apartment accommodating four to six.

The FPHA rental charges were \$15.00 per month for a family of two, \$17.00 for three, \$19.00 for four, and \$20.00 for five or more.

No charge is made for children under three. In the case of single persons occupying dormitory space the charge was \$10.00 per month.

The apartments are furnished with Army cots and mattresses. Blankets are furnished for both trailers and apartments.

(*a) Estimates of Major Concentrations of American Japanese in Los Angeles County. Data compiled from WRA records.

*Not likely an exhaustive number from the City of Los Angeles;

Numbers are based on known family address of returnees (found in the C. Bratt Collection, Southern CA Library)

(*b) Estimates of Major Concentrations of American Japanese in Los Angeles County. Data compiled from WRA records.

KH's note: Document does not include a date, but it is likely that it reflects data from April to August, 1946.

The document indicates that there are five trailer installations (in March 1946 there were six, but one was about to close at the end of March.)

The population numbers are slightly higher than the March 1946 numbers, but they are less than the August 1946 numbers.

*Not likely an exhaustive number from the City of Los Angeles; Numbers are based on known family address of returnees

(found in the C. Bratt Collection, Southern CA Library)

(*c) Population figures on American Japanese in FPHA Temporary Housing Centers and Hostels. Data compiled from WRA records.

Found in the C. Bratt Collection, Southern California Library

(*d) "Statistics for War Relocation Projects in Southern California" found in the WRA Archives.

Other statistics mentioned: 1029 of the 2273 individuals in the trailer installations were children.

There were approximately 433 welfare cases out of the 480 families and 143 singles in the trailer installations. The type of welfare is not mentioned.

(*e) (per Memo from Henry Harris to Mr. E. Price Steiding, District Relocation Officer, 1/28/1946)

(*f) (per Memo from Helen Davis, Welfare Unit to Mr. E Price Steiding, 3/11/1946)

(*g) per article in the Pacific Citizen

Name of Hostel	Address	Proprietor or Manager	Additional Info	Date of permit to operate
Baptist Hostel	2923 East 2nd Street	Sponsored by the Los Angeles Baptist City Mission Society	Two one-story Type V structures. The front building is a church. The rear building houses 29 persons but the two buildings are potentially capable of housing approximately 40.	9/21/45-12/31/45
Baptist Hostel	1201 E. 1st Street	Mr. S. Amano and Sponsored by the Los Angeles Baptist City Mission Society	Two one-story Type V structures. The first floor is a church. Seven rooms on the second floor house 30 persons.	9/21/45-12/31/45 - Closed January 1946
First Street Hostel	318 1/2 East 1st Street	Newell Stewart, Rev. J. Kow, and Masayoshi Itatani	2-story Type IIIA structure, housing approx. 30 persons on the second floor only.	10/3/45-12/31/45
	459 East 4th Street		1-story, Type V structure housing approx. 20 persons.	
West Hongwanji Hostel	119 N. Central Ave.	A. Pritchett, M. Sakamoto, and S. Ishitani; Sponsored by the Buddhist Temple	3-story, Type IIIA structure housing from 50-70 persons.	9/15/45-12/31/45
Miyaki Hostel	258 East 1st Street	Newell Steward, G.T. Ishikawa, and Shige Iwaki		10/26/45-12/31/45
Zenshuji Hostel	123 S. Hewitt Street	Frank Kiawahara, Newell Steward, and K. Hashimoto	35 Japanese are housed on the 2nd floor. The first floor is operated under a hotel permit from the Health Department. It is now occupied by "colored people."	9/21/45-12/31/45
	126 N. Mott Street		1-story, Type V structure. Approximately 1/3 of the total area in the front is occupied for storage purposes. There is a two-family five-bedroom unit at the rear.	

Nichiren Hostel	2800 East 3rd Street	Newell Steward, Rev. Jitei Ishihara	1-story, Type V structure housing approximately 40 persons.	9/1/45-12/31/45
Christian Church Hostel	827 E. 21st Street	Rev. Kojiro Unoura	2-story Type V, 5 bedroom residence housing approximately 15 occupants.	Closed in Jan, 1946
E. Washington Hostel	517 E. Washington	Yasuno Fukinami, Newell Steward, and Tsugio Ikeda	3-story Type IIIA structure.	10/8/45-12/31/45
	117 N. Saratoga		1-story Type V residence. Occupancy as a hostel is contemplated only. The building was locked at the time of inspection. Please advise the undersigned when occupied as a hostel so a proper check can be made.	
	118 W. Mott Street		2-story Type V structure housing approximately 50 persons.	
East Adams Hostel	711 E. Adams	T. Abe and G. Miyahara; Sponsored by Newell Steward, East Adams Hostel	1-story Type V residence housing approximately 13 persons.	8/28/45-12/31/45
Evergreen Hostel	506 N. Evergreen	Ms. Esther Rhodes and Rev. S. Kowta, Sponsored by the Presbyterian Church and American Friends Service Committee	3-story Type IIIA structure housing approximately 120 persons. The various rooms are exceptionally clean and well lighted and very well maintained.	
	923 1/2 N. Ave 50		There are two Type V residences on this property; one three-room, one story and one seven-room, two-story. The three-room residence is now occupied by Japanese and the two-story residence is occupied by Americans at present who have been given orders to vacate in order that it may be occupied as a Japanese hostel.	

Unitarian Hostel	2936 W. 8th Street	Mr. J. Kobayashi	One-story and basement Type I structure and is occupied by the First Unitarian Church. There are two dormitories occupied by Japanese, 20 persons in the women's portion and 27 persons in the men's portion.	Closed January 1946
	1777 W. 35th Place		Type V residence occupied by approximately 20 persons.	
Methodist Hostel; Sponsored by the Methodist Church	3500 S. Normandie Ave.	Dr. Wendell Miller and Rev. Yamaka	Two Type V structures on this property; One 1-story and One 2-story. They are now accomodating 70 persons and are capable of housing from ten to twenty additional persons. As of Jan 10, 1946: The Methodist Hostel accommodated 40 residents in January 1946. Its registration showed over 600 persons stayed there at one time or another.	6/1/1945- 2/28/1946
	1444 W. 37th Street		Two-story Type V two-family residence. It is occupied by Japanese on the second floor and colored people on the first floor. The colored people plan to vacate next April at which time it is planned to occupy the first floor as a Japanese hostel.	
Beloit Hostel	2138 S. Beloit Ave., WLA	Rev. T. Iwanaga; Sponsored by the Church of New Life	1-story, Type V, nineteen room hotel accomodations accomodating approximately forty persons. This building is a recognized hotel operating under a permit from the Health Department.	

	1913-17 Purdue Ave. WLA		Three Type IV structures. The north building is occupied by the Reverend Kuwano. The center building, which is a one-story structure is occupied as a combination dining room and kitchen and the south building is divided into rooms by temporary partitions and is housing approximately forty Japanese.	
	321 1/2 East 1st Street		3-story Type IIIA structure having stores on the first floor, a pool room on the second floor and the third floor, which is now vacant, is intended to be occupied as a hostel. It is intended to house approximately 60 men only on the third floor. The kitchen and dining room will be located on the second floor.	
	819 S. Encinita Ave, Rosemead			
Alta Hostel	517 Wall St.	Tom Taira, H.K. Ota, and Newell Stewart	Accommodated approx. 130 persons (130 cots and 130 mattresses were requested from the WRA)	12/1/45- 12/31/45
Tenrikyo Hostel	2727 E. 1st Street	Rev. Misao Goto, A. Katsumura, and Newell Steward		12/20/45- 12/31/45

	2729 E. 1st Street		This building is a 1-story, Type V structure formerly occupied as a Japanese church. A portion of the auditorium, having an area of 2500 sq. feet is being partitioned into eight rooms. These partitions are 8' in height, and no ceilings are being installed, therefore there is plenty of light and venilation as the auditorium is provided with many large windows.	
	506 N. Evergreen		3-story Type IIIA structure housing approximately 120 persons.	
Toyo Hostel	233 1/2 E. 1st Street	Mrs. M. Spang, Mrs. I. Yamashiro, and Mr. Newell Steward		10/15/45-12/31/45
Senshin (Buddhist) Hostel	1336 W. 36th Place	Rev. J. Goldwater, Rev. & Mrs. K. Imamura; Arthur Takemoto; Harry Iba, Kimiko Koizumi, and Newell Steward; Sponsored by the Buddhist Brotherhood in America		3/1/46-4/30/46
East Adams Hostel		Mr. T.H. Abe		
El Monte Hostel		Rev. Jotaro Yokoi		
Fourth Street Hostel		Mr. K. Shimada		
Gardena Buddhist Hostel	1425 West 166th Street, Gardena	Rev. Tabeo Miura, Newell Steward, Shinichi Kishima		9/25/45-12/31/45
Holiness Church Hostel	1777 W. 35th Place	Rev. D.H. Thorton, Dr. T. Miyamoto, Ray Moriwaki, and Rev. George Yahiro		9/15/45-12/31/45
San Fernando Hostel	1335 Woodworth Ave., San Fernando	Newell Steward, Mrs. Dora N. Langton, and T. Maruyama		10/3/45-12/31/45

Koyasan Temple	342 E. 1st Street	Rev. Ryosho Sogabe or Rev. Shozen Yasui; Sponsored by the Buddhist Church and First Street Committee		9/18/45-12/31/45
Nichiren Hostel		Rev. J. Ishihara		
Pasadena Hostel	301 Kensington Place	Miss Sarah Field; Sponsored by the American Friends Committee		9/1/45-12/31/45
Venice Hostel	12448 Braddock Drive, Venice, CA	Rev. and Mrs. Clyde J. Burnett		
Zenshuji Hostel		Mr. Frank Kuwahara		
	3929 Middlebury, Hollywood		Hollywood-Japanese Language School was being used as a child care center during the war. There was discussion in September, 1945 for the facility to be converted to a hostel given the housing shortage.	
Daishi Mission Hostel				
Boyle Heights Hostel	3140 E. 2nd Street	Takashi Makiyama, Kenji Ito, and Newell Steward		11/29/45-12/31/45
Glendale Hostel	317 W. Palmer Street, Glendale	Rev. Saiya Sakai, H. Nagahama, and Rev. E.E. Ellis		10/24/45-12/31/45
Higashi Hongwanji	118 N. Mott Street	Newell Steward, Rev. Kankai Isuhara, and Kyutaro Shimada		10/1/45-12/31/45
Hillside Hostel	226 N. Olive Street	Fred K. Suto, Samuel Nagata, and Newell Steward		1/8/46-2/28/46
Montebello Hostel	1113 S. Maple, Montebello	Newell Stewart, Johnny I. Naydo, and M. Okano		10/25/45-12/31/45
Santa Monica Hostel	1824 16th Street	Cyle J. Burnett, Mrs. Lillian M. Burnett, and I. Sakata		11/1/45-12/31/45
South Pasadena Hostel	923 N. Avenue 50, South Pasadena	Esther Naito, H.V. Nicholson, and Katherine F. Fanning		11/20/45-12/31/45

West Los Angeles Family Hostel	1913 Purdue Ave. West Los Angeles	Herman N. Beimfohr, S. Kuwano, Sam S. Tateishi, and R.G. Sakamoto		11/2/45- 12/31/45
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West Hongwanji Hostel, Evergreen Hostel, Methodist Hostel, Senshin Buddhist Hostel, Pasadena Hostel, and Venice Hostel listed the following rates: \$1.00 per day per person (including two meals) for the first 10 days
 After 10 days, \$1.50; Children, \$.50; Employed persons, \$2.00.
 Beloit Hostel listed rates at \$1.50/day; lower rates for families with children or families with economic problems