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Chapter 5

THE JAPANESE

The Early Years

BACKGROUND

Although there had been a number of Japanese visitors, students, merchants, and officials in the United States from the middle of the nineteenth century—and at least one short-lived small Japanese colony at Gold Hill, California, near Sacramento—significant immigration began only toward the end of the century.¹ The first large group of Japanese migrants to travel east across the Pacific went to the then-independent kingdom of Hawaii as indentured laborers; after the United States annexed Hawaii in 1898 many of them re-emigrated to the American West Coast. There, by the late 1880s, a steady and growing immigration, largely of young men, had begun to create a Japanese American community. In 1900 the census identified almost 25,000 Japanese on the West Coast; by 1920 there were more than 110,000, almost two-thirds of them in California. Although at first this migration seemed to parallel that of the Chinese—which was halted, as we have seen, just before that of the Japanese began—the differences between them are as striking as the similarities.

The similarities, noted by contemporary observers, were that each immigration was predominantly male and that each group worked at physically difficult, low-prestige, and low-paying jobs. The Chinese were employed in mining, agriculture, and railroad building; the Japanese in agriculture and railroad maintenance. Both groups were composed of peasants. However, whereas the Chinese were almost all from one small district

in South China, the Japanese were drawn from rural areas in several parts of Japan and the Ryukyu Islands (Okinawa). In addition, the countries from which they came were in quite different stages of development. China was weak and growing weaker; it had not yet, to any significant degree, begun to take steps toward modernization. Japan had begun the transition toward modernity after the Meiji Revolution (1869) and by the turn of the century was an emerging modern power; increasing numbers of Japanese had been exposed to at least the basics of compulsory education. In the United States, the Chinese presence in agriculture, once quite significant, diminished after the 1880s; however, the Japanese, after initially working at many urban occupations, became more heavily involved as agricultural proprietors and tenants than any other twentieth-century immigrant group. And, perhaps the most important difference of all, the Japanese had behind them a government that inspired and demanded growing respect, whereas the protests of the weak Chinese government about bad treatment were all but ignored. What the Japanese government most dreaded in its negotiations about the rights of Japanese nationals in this country was the enactment of a Japanese exclusion act on the model of the 1882 law barring Chinese. As Hilary Conroy pointed out, the Japanese government, not noted for its concern about human rights, kept an "ever jealous watch against discriminatory treatment abroad" to emigrants from Japan; this concern was chiefly motivated by the desire to protect Japan's "prestige as a nation."²

THE STRUCTURE OF JAPANESE AMERICAN SOCIETY

As we shall see, the influence of the Japanese government was not, in the final analysis, able to offset the combination of American racism and unscrupulous politicians. But—and this was crucially important for the development of the Japanese American community—the pressures of the Japanese government did delay effective exclusion for about two decades, until the barring of the immigration of "aliens ineligible to citizenship" in 1924. In the meantime, the nature of Japanese migration would change from a male-dominated to a female-dominated flow. Thus, by the time immigration was cut off, a firm demographic foundation had been established for a native-born, citizen generation of Japanese, the Nisei,³ who by 1940 would greatly outnumber their parents, as shown in Tables 5.1 and 5.2.⁴

Consequently, the demographic experience of Japanese Americans was quite different from that of Chinese Americans. For the latter, as we have seen, the bachelor society established before passage of the 1882 Exclusion Act prevailed for decades, and the overall population underwent a decline for nearly half a century. Only in the 1950s did the Chinese American population reach the levels it had attained in the 1880s. For Japanese Americans there was only a slight dip in the 1930s, and by 1940 nearly two-thirds

Table 5.1 Sex Ratio of Japanese in the Contiguous United States, 1900–1940

Year	California		Other States		Total		Percent Female	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1900	9,598	553	13,716	405	23,314	958	3.9	
1910	35,116	6,240	27,954	2,847	63,070	9,087	12.6	
1920	45,414	26,538	27,239	11,785	72,653	38,303	34.5	
1930	56,440	41,016	25,331	16,047	81,771	57,063	41.1	
1940	52,550	41,167	19,417	13,813	71,967	54,980	43.3	

Source: U.S. Census data.

Table 5.2 Japanese Citizenship Status in the Contiguous United States, 1920–1940

Year	Total	Aliens	Natives	Percent Native
1920	111,010	81,338	29,672	26.7
1930	138,834	70,477	68,357	49.2
1940	126,947	47,305	79,642	62.7

Source: U.S. Census data.

were native-born citizens. Thus in many ways, by 1940 the acculturation process of the Japanese American community was farther advanced than that of the Chinese Americans, even though significant migration of the latter had begun about half a century earlier.

THE ANTI-JAPANESE MOVEMENT

Because the West Coast had "learned" to discriminate against Asians in the 1860s and 1870s, the anti-Japanese movement arose while the Japanese population was still quite small. There was an abortive anti-Japanese movement in the 1890s, but the effective movement against immigrants from Japan dates from newspaper agitation in 1905. It became notorious and a matter of diplomatic concern in 1906 as a result of the so-called San Francisco School Board incident, which involved an attempt to force Japanese pupils in San Francisco to attend the long-established segregated school for Chinese.⁵ The incident set a pattern that would prevail for nearly twenty years: state, local, or regional discrimination offset in part by federal intervention. President Theodore Roosevelt mediated the San Francisco segregation matter himself; he called San Francisco officials to come to the White House and jaw-boned them to back down. Roosevelt, in return, promised to negotiate with Japan to halt further immigration.

The result of Roosevelt's negotiations was the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907–1908—actually a series of notes exchanged between the American and Japanese governments—which hinged on restriction by the Japanese rather than by the American government. Tokyo simply promised not to issue any more passports good for the United States to "laborers." Not fully understanding what would happen—diplomats and legislators have often been ignorant about the facts of life for ordinary people—both governments agreed that Japanese residents in the United States who were established and self-supporting could bring over their wives and other family members.

Thus, although the Gentlemen's Agreement was presented to the public as tantamount to exclusion, it allowed a predominantly female migration for the next sixteen years, which, as we have seen, nearly balanced the

Japanese American sex ratio and led to a continuing increase of the Japanese American population. This caused westerners to believe that they had been betrayed by unscrupulous leaders in Washington. Although under American law only the federal government could regulate immigration, state and local governments could, and did, discriminate against Japanese by statute and ordinance. The famous Alien Land Acts of 1913 and 1920 in California and similar statutes in other western states were based on the federal naturalization statutes that made Japanese and other Asians "aliens ineligible to citizenship." Other restrictions were based simply on race (racial segregation would not be declared unconstitutional until 1954). School segregation, despite the 1906 hullabaloo in San Francisco, was not widely practiced,⁶ but state law did prohibit the marriage of Asians and whites, restrictive covenants were written into many deeds making it illegal to sell the property to a nonwhite, movies usually made Asians sit in the balcony or on one side of the theater, and some municipal swimming pools and even beaches were barred to Asians.

The federal government long resisted overt anti-Japanese legislation: In 1917, for example, a restrictive "barred zone" act kept out all Asians except Filipinos, who, as American nationals, could not be kept out, and Japanese. Finally, in 1924, in a deliberately insulting move, Congress denied immigration quotas to any foreigners who were "aliens ineligible to citizenship," which affected only Japanese, although they were not specifically mentioned. This abrogation of the Gentlemen's Agreement was one of the seemingly irreconcilable issues between Japan and the United States in the years before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

JAPANESE IMMIGRANT ORGANIZATIONS

In the meantime the Japanese American population grew, some prospered, and many of the Nisei, or second-generation children, became increasingly acculturated. The Issei, or immigrant generation, were also exposed to the American world but, in common with most immigrant groups, developed their own organizations. Some of these were influenced by the government of Japan. From the 1890s until the attack on Pearl Harbor—but particularly in the period up to 1924—Tokyo tried very hard to apply various measures of social control to the Japanese immigrants to the United States, largely because it was convinced that Japan's prestige as a nation would be affected by the behavior of its residents abroad.

Crucial to this control were Japanese consular officials and the immigrant organizations they created and nurtured. Evidence of such attempts at control exists as early as 1891. But it was after the Gentlemen's Agreement, which placed certain control responsibilities on the Japanese government, that such control became most important. In 1909 the consulate general in

San Francisco formed the Japanese Association of America, the premier institution of the Issei. Theoretically, all Japanese in the United States had to belong to the association; annual membership, through a local or regional association, cost from \$1 to \$3 a year. To encourage membership, the Japanese government through its consulates gave the associations an official role and made them the intermediaries through which individual Japanese residents had to pass if they wished to retain official connection with the Japanese government. Both Japanese law and the Gentlemen's Agreement required the Japanese consular service to issue certain documents to resident Japanese. The responsibility for these certificates was delegated to the associations, which in turn could collect fees for their issue.

Such certificates required by the Gentlemen's Agreement were related largely to travel abroad, with the right to return and the ability to bring into the country wives, children, parents, and even other relatives. Thus, any Japanese who wished to keep or establish family ties across the Pacific was forced to do so through the appropriate Japanese association. In addition, Japanese law required men of military age who had not fulfilled their military obligations to register yearly, and other certificates were required to register marriages, divorces, births, inheritances, and other vital statistics.

There has been much debate over the true nature of the Japanese associations. Exclusionists, like V. S. McClatchy of the *Bee* newspaper McClatchys, and congressional demagogues, like Representative Martin Dies of Texas, insisted that the associations were part of some kind of sinister Japanese plot to take over America. Apologists for the Japanese, such as Stanford historian Yamato Ichihashi, claimed that the associations were merely self-help groups analogous to those that flourished among other immigrant groups. Neither was accurate. The associations were semiofficial organs of the Japanese government, but their function was essentially bureaucratic, not sinister. In addition to controlling certificates, the associations encouraged Japanese residents to acculturate and, above all, to send their children to school and have them excel there.

Of all the certificates the associations came to control, the most crucial was the one that gave the right to bring a wife to the United States. From the point of the Japanese government, which tried to abide by the terms of the Gentlemen's Agreement, the major problem was how to determine the socioeconomic status of each Issei male who wished a passport for his wife. Eventually a guideline was established: Anyone who could show liquid assets of \$800 or more would be eligible. This was a sizable nest egg. Interviews with surviving Issei indicate that these regulations were often evaded. One successful ruse involved the pooling of \$800 by a group of "bachelors" in what they called "show money" and transferring it from one account to another; in time, the same \$800 would provide passports for a number of wives or other relatives.⁷

At the time of the Gentlemen's Agreement and the founding of the Japanese associations, there were perhaps 60,000 Japanese in the entire United States, with about two-thirds of them living in California. In the next fifteen years there was a net immigration of some 25,000 Japanese women. These women, some of whom were "picture brides"—married by proxy to immigrant men they would not see until they arrived in the United States—began to have children at what seemed to many Caucasian observers an incredible rate. By the early 1930s, the citizen children of these and other immigrant marriages would outnumber their parents.

JAPANESE AMERICAN ENTERPRISES

Thus despite a whole series of discriminatory actions and a generally hostile atmosphere, the first generation of Japanese Americans provided a firm demographic base for the future of the community. Part of the reason that it was able to do this was that it created for itself an important economic niche in the agricultural economy of the Far West in general and California in particular.

Although a few Issei immigrants, such as George Shima (1863–1926), the famed "Potato Baron," came to this country with some capital, most began as laborers, and some remained so all of their lives. Many others, however, soon became proprietors and, from British Columbia to San Diego, began to carve out special niches for themselves. Some, like Shima, ran large-scale, diversified operations, but most were small proprietors concentrating on labor-intensive specialty crops, chiefly fruits, vegetables, and flowers. They also developed essentially ethnic marketing organizations in such centers as Los Angeles and Seattle. By 1919, in California alone, where agriculture occupied about half the Japanese population, Issei farmers controlled over 450,000 acres of farmland, about 1 percent of the state's acreage. But the intensive, high-yield agriculture they practiced brought in more than \$67 million, more than 10 percent of the total value of California's crops.

Those who lived in cities worked primarily at service trades and in small businesses, many of which catered either to the ethnic community or as the marketing adjuncts of Japanese American agriculture. Initially, San Francisco and Seattle were the major *nihonmachi*s, or Japantowns, but by 1910, Los Angeles began to prevail. By 1940, Los Angeles was clearly the metropolis of Japanese America, with nearly 37,000 persons; Seattle had the second largest Japanese American population, numbering almost 7,000, with another 4,700 in its outlying regions. Although San Francisco ranked third in numbers, with some 5,000, it remained culturally quite important. Its *nihonmachi* was one of the liveliest; it was the headquarters for the major organizations of each generation—the Japanese associations and the Japanese American Citizens League—and it served as a center for the more than

6,000 Japanese in the Bay Area. Only four other cities in the United States had ethnic Japanese communities of 1,000 or more: Sacramento and Stockton in California; Portland, Oregon; and New York City.

THE PREWAR JAPANESE AMERICAN COMMUNITY

By the 1930s the Japanese American community on the West Coast had achieved, economically at least, lower-middle-class status. But there were enough problems faced by the growing Nisei generation that a grant of \$40,000 was awarded by the Board of Trustees of the Carnegie Corporation to study the "educational and occupational opportunities offered to American citizens of Oriental races." A book, aptly titled *The Second Generation Japanese Problem*, provided data garnered from interviews with the Nisei during the late 1920s and early 1930s. There was widespread despair and disillusionment. For example, one subject responded:

If, in order to avoid troublesome contact with American workers, we man a whole industry . . . with Japanese . . . the cries of "yellow peril" . . . are raised . . . if we limit ourselves to . . . only the Japanese community . . . we are accused of being unassimilable and clannish.⁸

The major issue was race. Americans in the early third of the century simply could not accept Japanese Americans or other Asians as equals. One Japanese American wrote, "So, many of my friends are giving up the fight. 'Why get an education?' they say. 'Why try to do anything at all?' Probably we were meant to be just a servile class."⁹

This was also the period of the Great Depression, a time when job opportunities were limited for all Americans. A few Nisei emigrated to Japan; most stayed in Hawaii and on the West Coast. They developed their own local organizations; there were Japanese American social clubs, athletic leagues, and church groups, where individual Nisei could participate with ethnic peers. There was a high degree of acculturation; most of the groups were modeled on American rather than Japanese or Issei models (i.e., Boy and Girl Scouts, the YMCA and YWCA), but there was very little integration with the dominant community. It was the era of structural separation. Even though Nisei topics of interest were thoroughly American, discussion was limited to members of their own ethnicity. The separation was forced rather than voluntary; even if Nisei desired to enter mainstream groups, opportunities were limited.¹⁰

But the community was still controlled by the Issei. Most Nisei were economically dependent upon their parents, and there were complaints that the younger generation was becoming American too fast. A relatively large number of Nisei were college and university students, and they were beginning to take on middle-class characteristics. Unlike their parents, they

could, as citizens, enter the learned professions—law, medicine, and dentistry, in particular—and they set up their own generational organization, the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL).

The JACL, like many other second-generation organizations, regardless of ethnicity, was hyperpatriotic. Its creed, written in 1940, clearly expressed the hopes, if not the experience, of the second generation:

I am proud that I am an American citizen of Japanese ancestry, for my very background makes me appreciate more fully the wonderful advantages of this nation. I believe in her institutions, ideas and traditions; I glory in her heritage; I boast of her history; I trust in her future. She has granted me liberties and opportunities such as no individual enjoys in this world today. She has given me an education befitting kings. She has entrusted me with the responsibilities of the franchise. She has permitted me to build a home, to earn a livelihood, to worship, think, speak and act as I please—as a free man equal to every other man.

Although some individuals may discriminate against me, I shall never become bitter or lose faith, for I know that such persons are not representative of the majority of the American people. True I shall do all in my power to discourage such practices, but I shall do it in the American way—above board, in the open, through courts of law, by education, by proving myself to be worthy of equal treatment and consideration. I am firm in my belief that American sportsmanship and attitude of fair play will judge citizenship and patriotism on the basis of action and achievement, and not on the basis of physical characteristics. Because I believe in America, and I trust she believes in me, and because I have received innumerable benefits from her, I pledge myself to do honor to her at all times and all places; to defend her against all enemies, foreign and domestic; to actively assume my duties and obligations as a citizen, cheerfully and without any reservations whatsoever, in the hope that I may become a better American in a greater America.

It should also be noted that the JACL deliberately tried to distance itself from the previous generation. By requiring that all members be citizens, it barred persons born in Japan from membership and, unlike most ethnic organizations, which maintained ties with the country of origin, tried to separate itself completely from Japan and Japanese culture. In the short run at least, the effort of JACL members to separate themselves from their parents and their parents' homeland was a failure. When war came between the United States and Japan, all persons of Japanese ethnicity on the West Coast—regardless of citizenship, age, or sex—were herded unceremoniously into concentration camps, euphemistically called "relocation centers."

EXILE AND INCARCERATION

This wartime exile and incarceration—often called the relocation of the Japanese Americans—was and remains the central event of Japanese American history. It makes that history unique, setting off the Japanese American

experience from that of not just other ethnic groups from Asia but from all other immigrant ethnic groups. Because the event has been studied widely, we will provide only a summary here.¹¹

At the outbreak of hostilities, the federal authorities responsible for internal security, according to plan, rounded up a few thousand enemy aliens—Japanese, Germans, and Italians—and interned them. Each internee eventually had a hearing as an individual, and as a result of these hearings, some were released. Most of the interned Japanese were community leaders. In addition, the bank accounts and other assets of Japanese nationals were frozen, which meant that the whole community was economically disadvantaged. Almost from the very moment that bombs fell on Pearl Harbor, the federal government began to discriminate against Japanese American citizens. Travel out of the country was barred for German and Italian nationals and all persons of Japanese ancestry. By late December 1941, the armed forces stopped accepting Japanese Americans either as volunteers or as draftees, even though the Selective Service Act barred racial discrimination. There was a great deal of agitation from the old anti-Japanese forces, from a number of influential persons in the media (including the widely respected columnist Walter Lippmann) and from many senators and representatives. Finally, after a formal recommendation from Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, President Roosevelt, on February 19, 1942, issued Executive Order 9066, which, as a matter of “military necessity,” authorized the army to exclude “any or all persons” from as yet unspecified “military areas.” That military area turned out to be the entire state of California, most of Washington and Oregon, and part of Arizona. The persons moved were all Japanese.

As a result, the entire Japanese American population of the affected area—men, women, and children, alien and citizen alike—were herded, under military auspices, first to “assembly centers,” usually close to where they lived, and eventually to one of ten “relocation centers,” run by a newly created civilian agency, the War Relocation Authority.

There has been much controversy regarding the nature of the relocation centers. On more than one occasion during the war, President Roosevelt, who authorized their creation, referred to them bluntly as “concentration camps,” as did U.S. Supreme Court Justice Owen J. Roberts. However, the uncovering of the incredible dimensions of the Nazi Holocaust in Europe made the term “concentration camp” synonymous with “death camp” or “extermination camp.” Thus, many who were involved in the relatively humane incarceration of the Japanese Americans, such as Dillon S. Myer, the Department of Agriculture bureaucrat who ran the War Relocation Authority so “well” that a grateful government made him commissioner of Indian affairs, vehemently rejected the notion that the places where Japanese Americans were kept should be called concentration camps.¹²

But, whatever one calls them, the camps created to house the Japanese American population were places where persons were confined with neither charge nor trial, simply on the basis of their ancestry and their place of residence. Age, sex, and citizenship meant nothing. The camps were surrounded by barbed wire and were patrolled by armed soldiers, who in several instances shot and killed persons whom they were guarding. Unlike the camps of the Nazis, those of the Soviet Gulag Archipelago, or those in the killing fields of Cambodia, the American camps cannot be called “death camps.” Many more persons were born in them than died there. Yet, they were, indeed, “concentration camps,” as the term has been used since it was introduced by the British during the Boer War at the turn of the century.

It is important to note that not all Japanese Americans were incarcerated. The Japanese Americans who lived east of the proscribed area—or were able to move there before the Army ordered them “frozen” in the early spring of 1942—were left in nervous liberty. There were about 10,000 such persons. In addition, the more than 150,000 Japanese Americans who lived in Hawaii—then a territory—were largely left alone. Martial law was established in Hawaii, but even though Hawaii had actually been a theater of war and its Japanese Americans represented about one-third of the islands’ total population, the military authorities there did not deem it necessary to intern them. It was even pointed out to Washington that their continued labor was vital to the successful conduct of the war. This—and not the foolish vaporings of media strategists, politicians, and chair-borne generals—was true “military necessity.”

THE STRUGGLE FOR REDRESS

That the mass incarceration of the West Coast Japanese not only was morally wrong but actually retarded rather than advanced the American war effort has long been recognized by scholars. As early as 1948 the United States government admitted that there was some injustice in the procedure by enacting the Japanese American Claims Act, which allowed some of the victims of the relocation and incarceration to collect damages for property lost—but not for wrongful imprisonment. In 1976, partially in recognition of the bicentennial of American independence, President Gerald R. Ford repealed FDR’s executive order by proclamation and declared that:

We know now what we should have known then—not only was the evacuation wrong, but Japanese-Americans were and are loyal Americans. . . . I call upon the American people to affirm with me this American Promise—that we have learned from the tragedy of that long-ago experience forever to treasure liberty and justice for each individual American, and resolve that this kind of action shall never be repeated.¹³

Finally, in 1980, the Congress created the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) to investigate the whole process and make whatever recommendations seemed appropriate. In early 1983, after a long and detailed investigation, the CWRIC found that a "grave injustice" had been done to the Japanese American people. How and why had that injustice been done?

During the war, the whole procedure was given the color of law by the American judicial system, which has traditionally bowed to the executive and legislative branches during wars and national emergencies. Three cases, known collectively as the Japanese American cases, were decided by the Supreme Court in 1943 and 1944. In effect, the court endorsed what the government had done, but it did rule in December 1944, when the war was clearly won, that Japanese Americans who were American citizens and still being held behind barbed wire were free to go anywhere—including the West Coast—that other citizens could go unless there were individual charges against them. It should be noted that the high court was not unanimous in sanctioning the relocation: In 1944 three of the nine justices argued that the whole relocation procedure, as it was applied to American citizens, violated the Constitution. The judge who most vigorously attacked the majority was Justice Frank Murphy, who, in dissenting from what he called a "legalization of racism," argued that:

All residents of this nation are kin in some way by blood and culture to a foreign land. Yet they are primarily and necessarily a part of this new and distinct civilization of the United States. They must accordingly be treated at all times as the heirs of the American experiment and as entitled to all the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution.¹⁴

In 1982 former Supreme Court Justice Arthur J. Goldberg, then a member of the CWRIC, remarked that Justice Murphy's 1944 dissent would surely be a majority, if not a unanimous, opinion were the case to be heard by a contemporary court. But in 1944, Murphy was virtually alone. Although many Americans regretted what one official called the "unavoidable injustices" involved in the relocation, the overwhelming majority supported putting their fellow citizens of Japanese ancestry in concentration camps and, if wartime public opinion polls are to be believed, would have supported much harsher measures. Large numbers—an absolute majority in some polls—wanted all Japanese Americans sent "back" to Japan after the war, even though most of them—native-born citizens—had never been there!

During World War II, the lives of almost all Japanese Americans were turned upside down. By the closing days of the war more than half of those who had been in the wartime camps had left them for work and residence east of the coastal mountain ranges, for college, or for military service. In 1942 and 1943, some Japanese Americans had been allowed to volunteer for

military service, and in 1944 the draft was reinstated for Japanese American young men, even those still behind barbed wire! The wartime military service of 25,000 Japanese Americans, including a hundred or so members of the Women's Army Corps, was largely either in segregated combat units in Europe—the famed 100th Battalion and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team—or in particularly dangerous military intelligence work with front-line units in the Pacific. The well-orchestrated publicity that the former group received, including a postwar White House ceremony at which President Harry S Truman awarded the survivors the Presidential Unit Citation for bravery, was an important element in the relatively rapid rehabilitation of the reputation of the Japanese Americans. As we will show in the next chapter, within two decades this one-time pariah group was being hailed as a "model minority."

But for thousands of Japanese Americans, this rehabilitation came too late. Their lives had been ruined, their property lost or badly damaged by neglect, vandalism, and theft, their self-esteem shattered. Some 5,000 persons of both generations, hopelessly embittered by the treachery of American democracy that had promised so much and delivered so little, chose to emigrate or repatriate to Japan after the war. Others, particularly older people, were never able to resume their shattered lives. Several hundred Japanese Americans, insisting that their incarceration was a violation of American principles, resisted the draft and were tried, convicted, and sent to federal penitentiaries. The image of a resilient, spunky Japanese American population rolling up its sleeves and successfully pursuing upward social and economic mobility after the war has been a popular one that the public and conservative ideologues like S. I. Hayakawa, Thomas Sowell, and William Petersen liked to dwell on and exploit. After all, as William Dean Howells pointed out a century ago, what the American public really wants is a tragedy with a happy ending. For many, if not most Japanese Americans, there has been a relatively happy ending, although as with most happy endings, there were many unreckoned costs.

But for tens of thousands of Japanese Americans the relocation was a tragedy without a subsequent triumph. Beginning in the mid-1970s some community activists began to campaign for some kind of compensation or "redress" for their wartime incarceration. As noted, Congress established the CWRIC in 1980 to investigate if any such redress was proper. During its subsequent public hearings all across the nation, hundreds of survivors of America's concentration camps appeared and told their stories, often for the first time. Only then was it possible to imagine how deep the scars of the wartime experience were and how much pain they were still capable of inflicting.

In 1983 the CWRIC officially recommended that the federal government formally apologize and that each survivor be granted a tax-free, one-time payment of \$20,000. Five years later the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 was

passed, putting into effect the CWRIC's recommendations. The last payments were made shortly before the fiftieth anniversary of the incarceration. By then nearly half of the victims were dead. What happened to Japanese Americans is, happily, a unique experience in modern America. Americans have suffered in other wars, but only in this instance was their suffering inflicted by their own government. Despite its "happy" ending—redress—the Japanese American experience should trouble all Americans, for it demonstrates how fragile their constitutional protections can be in a time of crisis.¹⁵

NOTES

1. John E. Van Sant, *Pacific Pioneers: Japanese Journeys to America and Hawaii, 1850–80* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000).
2. Hilary Conroy, *The Japanese Frontier in Hawaii, 1869–1898* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953), p. 140.
3. Japanese immigrants in the New World have used forms of the words for numbers to distinguish between generations. Thus, the first generation are called "issei" (ichi = one); the second generation, "nisei"; the third, "sansei"; the fourth, "yonsei"; and the fifth, "gosei." Nisei who were sent to Japan for education are called "kibei."
4. Because there are minor discrepancies in the 1920 census data, the figures in these two tables, taken from different places in the fourteenth census, do not agree. For example, at different places native-born Japanese are enumerated at 29,506 and 29,672.
5. Donald T. Hata, Jr., "Undesirables": *Early Immigrants and the Anti-Japanese Movement in San Francisco, 1892–1893* (New York: Arno Press, 1978); Roger Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962).
6. Irving G. Hendrick, *Public Policy Toward the Education of Non-White Minority Group Children in California, 1949–1970* (Riverside: University of California Press, 1975); Charles M. Wollenberg, *All Deliberate Speed: Segregation and Exclusion in California Schools, 1855–1979* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977).
7. Roger Daniels, "The Japanese," in John Higham, ed., *Ethnic Leadership in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 36–63; Yuji Ichioka, "Japanese Associations and the Japanese Government: A Special Relationship, 1909–1926," *Pacific Historical Review* 45 (1977): 409–437.
8. Edward K. Strong, *The Second Generation Japanese Problem* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1934), p. 2.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
10. David K. Yoo, *Growing Up Nisei: Race, Generation, and Culture among Japanese Americans of California, 1924–1949* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999).
11. Roger Daniels, *Prisoners Without Trial: Japanese Americans and World War II* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1993).
12. Richard Drinnon, *Keeper of Concentration Camps* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). Drinnon sees Myer as the prototype of the dull, faceless, spineless bureaucrat who is promoted because of his willingness to serve. The term "the banality of evil" comes to mind.
13. President's Proclamation No. 4417 of Feb. 19, 1976, "An American Promise," *Fed. Reg.* 35 (Feb. 20, 1976).
14. *Korematsu v. U.S.*, 323 U.S. 214 (Dec. 18, 1944).
15. Mitchell T. Maki, Harry H.L. Kitano, & S. Megan Berthold, *Achieving the Impossible Dream: How Japanese Americans Obtained Redress* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999) tells and analyzes the redress story. The official report, Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2 vols., 1982 & 1983; reprint edition, University of Washington Press, 1997), is worth reading.