

We Other Americans: A Biopolitical Analysis of Japanese-American Internment¹

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I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment.

¹ Title derives from a similarly entitled chapter in Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1*

Abstract

This thesis represents an attempt to offer a biopolitical interpretation of Japanese-American Internment. The method of this paper is largely genealogical in that it attempts to demonstrate the origins of the biopolitical attitudes and assumptions that produced the internment programs and trace their development throughout the program. First coined by Foucault in the 1970s, biopolitics is a mode of power which targets humans as a biological species to the end of regularizing a population. In the biopolitical mode, racism takes on a different meaning. Rather than being a simple contempt between races, Foucault argued, it takes the form of a biological conflict. This conflict entails a murderous attempt to regularize the population through the destruction of an 'inferior' race. This paper argues that this relationship was established between white Americans and Japanese Americans in the years leading up to 1941. Though the internment camps did not produce any kind of direct murder on a mass scale, as would be predicted by a biopolitical conflict, they engaged in indirect murder by stripping Japanese Americans of their juridical personhood, a concept evaluated through the work of Hannah Arendt. Though generalized biopolitical forces had called for them, the camps themselves engaged in disciplinary and individualized forms of power aimed at reforming the political subjectivity of internees. With the failure of this disciplinary program, the generalized biopolitical drive prevailed and sanctioned the social death of Japanese Americans through their dispersal across the United States.

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Note on Terminology: For the sake of simplicity, first generation Japanese immigrants, or "Issei," as well as their children, the American born "Nisei" are both described as Japanese Americans. Furthermore, spelling errors in quotations remain unedited.

1. Introduction

*“Differences are just that – differences. If we think of them as differences to be fixed, then they become weapons with which we wound each other.”*²

– Chieko N. Okazaki

*“I guess you think you know this story
You don’t. The real one’s much more gory
The phoney one, the one you know
Was cooked up years and years ago.”*³

– Roald Dahl

Nearly every morning, one may read the headline of their newspaper of choice to discover a fresh act of senseless violence or terror against Asian Americans.⁴ A sense of complete surprise among Americans is everywhere evident, and the fresh emergence of this horror reveals the truly insidious and clandestine nature of the mechanisms of anti-Asian discrimination. Contemporary cases of physical violence and murder are not unique to this time, nor do they represent a culmination of developing anti-Asian sentiment. They are novel in no sense of the word. One could cite cases *ad nauseum* that bear striking resemblances to those occurring today which occurred during the last ten years alone.⁵ The myth of the ‘model-minority’ has no doubt contributed to the sheer shock that these acts of terror elicit from the American public. Many Americans, even Asian Americans

² Chieko N. Okazaki, *Cat’s Cradle* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1993), 68.

³ Roald Dahl, *Revolting Rhymes* (London: Puffin Books, 2013), 5.

⁴ See: Richard Fausset and Neil Vigdor, “8 People Killed in Atlanta-Area Massage Parlor Shootings,” *The New York Times*, March 17, 2021, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/16/us/atlanta-shootings-massage-parlor.html>; Christine Hauser, “Asian-Americans Were Targeted in Nearly 3,800 Hate Incidents in the Past Year,” *The New York Times*, March 17, 2021, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/17/us/hate-crimes-against-asian-americans-community.html>; Thomas Fuller, “Violent Attacks against Asian-Americans Persist in the Bay Area,” *The New York Times*, March 19, 2021, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/19/us/san-francisco-attacks-Asians.html>; Amanda Rosa, “In Broad Daylight, Another Anti-Asian Attack,” *The New York Times*, March 31, 2021, sec. New York, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/31/nyregion/anti-asian-attack-manhattan.html>; Neil Vigdor, “Attack on Asian Woman in Midtown Prompts Another Hate Crime Investigation,” *The New York Times*, March 30, 2021, sec. New York, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/30/nyregion/attack-asian-woman-midtown.html>.

⁵ Many such cases are cited in: “Racial Violence Against Asian Americans,” *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (1993): 1931. Furthermore, the Yellow Peril stereotype often ensures that perpetrators of hate crimes against Asian Americans are often acquitted. See: Rhoda J. Yen, “Racial Stereotyping of Asians and Asian Americans and Its Effect on Criminal Justice: A Reflection on the Wayne Lo Case,” *Asian Law Journal* 7, no. 1 (2000): 1–27.

themselves, have accepted the premises of this myth. On this view, Asian Americans overcame prejudice because of their industry, respect, patience, and intelligence.⁶ The myth “invites the belief that Asian Americans no longer face any racial discrimination, much less the kind that spawns physical violence.”⁷ This stereotype, it appears, is largely positive and reflects a story of success. Where Asian Americans were once viewed as a cunning, deceptive, and violent horde, or “Yellow Peril” for short, that a 1923 Foreign Affairs article warned would “wipe out American standards of living, eventually reduce us to the economic level of the Oriental, and implant an alien and half-breed race on our soil which might make the negro problem look white.”⁸ How can this interpretation of progress from peril to model account for the constant physical violence against Asian Americans? In short, it cannot do so because the interpretation is flawed. The model-minority and the Yellow Peril do not stand at opposite sides of a linear progression; they form a circle.⁹ Gary Y. Okihiro has pointed out that the very characteristics which support the model-minority myth can be recast as traits which evoke the Yellow Peril. He writes:

The Asian work ethic, family values, self-help, culture and religiosity, and intermarriage—all elements of the model minority—can also be read as components of the Yellow Peril. Asian workers can be “diligent” and “slavish,” “frugal” and “cheap,” “upwardly mobile” and “aggressive,” while Asian families and communities can be “mutual aid” and “self-serving” institutions, “inclusive” and “exclusive” groupings, “multicultural enclaves” and

⁶ George T. Endo and Connie Kubo Della-Piana, “Japanese Americans, Pluralism, and the Model Minority Myth,” *Theory Into Practice* 20, no. 1 (1981): 46. The model minority myth also contributes to the oppression of other racial groups. It supports the falsehood that Asian-American immigrants “did not make waves, overcame prejudice, and turned into good solid middle-class citizens.” Their perceived success vindicates the American Dream and intends to discount the systemic and structural racism that disadvantages other racial groups. Proponents of this myth therefore “shift blame for inequality away from American society and place it squarely on the shoulders of those who it disadvantages.” See: David Mura, “Re-X-Amining Japanese Americans,” *New England Review* 15, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 145; Frank H. Wu, *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 44; Kenzo E. Okazaki, “Shikata Ga Nai: Statelessness and Sacrifice for Japanese-American Volunteers During the Second World War,” *Swarthmore Undergraduate History Journal* 2, no. 1 (2021): 42.

⁷ “Racial Violence Against Asian Americans,” *Harvard Law Review*, 1931.

⁸ Raymond Leslie Buell, “Again the Yellow Peril,” *Foreign Affairs* 2, no. 2 (1923): 307; Endo and Della-Piana, “Japanese Americans, Pluralism, and the Model Minority Myth,” 45. See also: Stanford M. Lyman, “The ‘Yellow Peril’ Mystique: Origins and Vicissitudes of a Racist Discourse,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 13, no. 4 (2000): 683–747.

⁹ Gary Y. Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture*, 2014 edition (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), 142.

“balkanized ghettos.” Asian religious beliefs can be characterized as “transcendentalism” and “paganism,” “filial piety” and “superstition,” while intermarriage can indicate “assimilation” and “mongrelization,” “integration” and “infiltration,” and children can be “our second-generation problem” and “our amazing Chinese kids.”¹⁰

These characteristics can be mobilized in either direction based on historical contingencies motivated by such factors as economic and political competition.¹¹ Therefore, rather than expressing progress of any kind, these two stereotypes feed into one another; “in one direction along the circle, the model minority mitigates the alleged danger of the Yellow Peril, whereas reversing direction, the model minority, if taken too far, can become the Yellow Peril.”¹² It comes as no surprise, then, that an increase in violence against Asian Americans coincides with years of Sinophobic rhetoric and the Trump administration’s attribution of the Covid-19 virus to the Chinese government.¹³

Given the failure of the model of teleological progress to accurately account for the Asian-American experience, a new paradigm is required to interpret and inform responses to anti-Asian racism and discrimination. The violence Asian Americans face has manifested itself in countless iterations in countless contexts, and the brutality of this moment cannot be understood as a single historical moment. In order to appreciate the complexity and historical contingency of this violence, one must reject the teleological model in favor of a genealogical analysis of anti-Asian racism.

¹⁰ Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams*, 142.

¹¹ Political motivations for these shifts include wars. Because many of the latest armed conflicts the United States has involved itself in have been fought against Asian countries, demonization of the enemy has occurred across racial lines. Interestingly, this discourse has also been applied to economic motivations such as competition with Japan in the 1990s. During this time, posters referenced the conquest of the United States and asked readers to “Remember Pearl Harbor.” See: “Racial Violence Against Asian Americans,” *Harvard Law Review*, 1937; David Ibatá, “For Local Japanese, Words Can, Do Hurt,” *Chicago Tribune*, accessed March 30, 2021, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1992-02-09-9201120782-story.html>.

¹² Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams*, 142.

¹³ Zolan Kanno-Youngs, “Biden Announces Actions to Combat Anti-Asian Attacks,” *The New York Times*, March 30, 2021, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/30/us/politics/biden-anti-asian-violence.html>. See also: Jill Cowan, “Looking at the Rise of Anti-Asian Racism in the Pandemic,” *The New York Times*, March 19, 2021, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/19/us/anti-asian-racism-pandemic.html>.

Genealogical analysis rejects the essential progression toward a necessary end and takes into account “the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things which continue to exist and have value for us.”¹⁴ Insofar as anti-Asian racism remains, its roots demand investigation. Foucault famously wrote: “where there is power, there is resistance.”¹⁵ To critically investigate the origins and practices of discrimination that comprise anti-Asian racism is to make possible calculated and effective resistance and action. Foucault went on to write that “just as the network of power relations ends by forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions...so too the swarm of points of resistance,” and “it is doubtless the strategic codification of these points of resistance that makes a revolution possible.”¹⁶ A Harvard Law Review Article published in 1993 concretely emphasized Foucault’s point in the context of Anti-Asian discrimination. Its conclusion reads: “some Asian Americans fear a return to the days of paranoia of the ‘Yellow Peril,’ a return to a time of intolerance and intimidation. Perhaps a deeper understanding of the context and causes of such violence will help avert such a repeat of history.”¹⁷ The aim of the present interpretation is to answer this call by offering a genealogical analysis of the American biopolitical mode of power which produced one of the most significant iterations of anti-Asian discrimination: Japanese-American Internment.

No historical scholarship has previously examined Japanese-American Internment with an explicit focus on biopolitics or attempted to comprehensively demonstrate the continuous expression of this kind of power into the resettlement period. *Personal Justice Denied*, a report composed by a commission specially established by an act of Congress in 1980 to evaluate the

¹⁴ Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1998), 374.

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *The Will to Knowledge* (New York: Random House, 1990), 95.

¹⁶ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 96.

¹⁷ “Racial Violence Against Asian Americans,” *Harvard Law Review*, 1943.

internment program and, perhaps, the most notable work on the subject, found that “there had been no common understanding of the basis of the original decision to exclude nor of how to treat loyal ethnic Japanese after exclusion.”¹⁸ Though this claim appears to be accurate when examining explicit policy, the present interpretation attempts to locate this common understanding in the assumptions underlying the expression of biopolitical power which were so common that they had become implicit. Furthermore, though, as Charlotte Brooks has noted, there has been “intense interest in the tragedy of the evacuation,” comparatively little attention has been devoted to the resettlement period.¹⁹ *Years of Infamy*, a seminal work in the study of Internment composed by a former internee, does consider this period, and Weglyn aptly analyzed the government’s intention to atomize Japanese-American communities.²⁰ However, her work stopped short of examining any kind of unifying factor that both produced the internment program and informed resettlement policy. For example, though she discussed the economic motivation for the aggressive pursuit of resettlement in 1943, she did not consider this pursuit as a conceptual extension of the lessons learned from the experience with the internment camps themselves.²¹ This interpretation will seek to offer an account of each of these subjects. More recently, Richard Drinnon has offered a strikingly critical view of resettlement under WRA Director Dillon S. Meyer in *Keeper of the Concentration Camps*. Though his analysis describes the resettlement program as a deliberate method of cultural destruction, and this interpretation will make a similar argument, his analysis does not orient this program within broader historical processes opting instead to focus on the

¹⁸ United States and Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012), 214.

¹⁹ Charlotte Brooks, “In the Twilight Zone Between Black and White: Japanese American Resettlement and Community in Chicago, 1942-1945,” *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 4 (2000): 1658.

²⁰ See: Michi Weglyn, *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America’s Concentration Camps* (New York: Morrow, 1976), 221.

²¹ Weglyn, *Years of Infamy*, 102.

intentions and traits of Meyer. Those broader historical processes are the subject of this paper, and it will attempt to demonstrate their continuous operation and shed light on their development throughout this period. To this end, this interpretation demarcates the pre-Internment years, the internment program, and resettlement temporally but aims to trace the common threads of thought that weave through each of these periods and bind them together as an expression of biopolitical power.

The following interpretation will proceed in three sections. Section 2 will examine the years leading up to Internment and the development of biological racism against Japanese Americans. It will develop and define both the concept of biopolitical racism that produced Internment and examine the way in which biopolitical power calls for the regularization of a population through a biological-type confrontation between human subspecies. It will then demonstrate that the genealogy of Internment itself is inseparable from this biopolitical formation. Section 3 will demonstrate that the camp program was a direct response to the biopolitical fears examined in section 2 insofar as they represented a form of indirect murder. It will go on to investigate the economy of individualizing power within the camps as well as end to which the War Relocation Authority (WRA) directed this power. It will demonstrate that the internment camps were engaged in disciplinary practices directed to the end of reforming the political subjectivity of Japanese Americans and that their attempt at doing so demonstrates and reflects the biopolitical racism that had developed in the years leading up to Internment. It will also offer a brief epistemological defense of the genealogical interpretation in which this project is engaged. Finally, it will demonstrate the failure of the WRA's Americanization program in principle and in practice with an aside examining the role of sex in American biopolitics. Section 4 will return to the generalizing biopolitical drive which operated at the level of the entire population and evaluate

the resettlement program's goal of atomization in terms of this operation of power. It will show that rather than representing a recession of power, resettlement marks another point of the development of biopolitical practices of power.

2. Genealogy

*“The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line.”*²²

– W. E. B. DuBois

2.1 The Japanese Question: 1860-1941

Sophie and the Rising Sun is a somewhat rare artifact of the representation of Japanese Americans during the period leading up to relocation and Internment. Released in 2016, the film offers insight into how 1941 lives on in American consciousness, yet it fails to offer an accurate account of the long history of anti-Asian racism in the United States. The film begins with a Japanese man being deposited on South Carolina bench by a bus bound for Miami.²³ He is beaten nearly to death and is taken in by the widow of a World War I veteran, Mrs. Morrison. She nurses him to health and provides him with food and clothing. The townspeople mistake him for Chinese and regularly refer to him as a “chinaman.” He reveals that his name is Grover Ota, and he begins to care for Mrs. Morrison’s garden. The townspeople show no open hostility toward Ota but do display all the common forms of prejudice and ignorance, for example, they assume that he does not speak English and cannot read. One shopkeeper is cautious of him and one of the women in the church rejects Mrs. Morrison’s idea of bringing him to church saying: “he’s not white.”²⁴ Up to this point, the film does not portray anything atypical of what one might expect from a rural, white, southern town. Then, suddenly, with the attack on Pearl Harbor, a rapid crepuscule descends upon his fortunes. A sign is hung in the store window which reads: “Jap Hunting Licenses, Free,” Mrs. Morrison’s garden is vandalized, the words “Dirty Jap” are scrawled across Ota’s Cabin, and Ota is again beaten by two enlisted soldiers to within an inch of his life. At this point, even Mrs.

²² W.E.B DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (South Kingstown, RI: Millennium Publications, 2014), 5.

²³ Maggie Greenwald, *Sophie and the Rising Sun* (Monterey Media, 2016).

²⁴ Greenwald, *Sophie and the Rising Sun*.

Morrison still believes Ota to be Chinese, and some ladies at the church later use the infamous *Life* magazine article to attempt to determine whether Ota is, in fact, Japanese.²⁵ This town, which had displayed no signs of aggression or, really, total rejection of Ota, suddenly appears prepared to lynch him. From this story, one may be left with the impression that anti-Asian discrimination and violent conduct was a direct result of the war. It is a rather comforting impression. Yes, one is led to believe, Americans were prejudiced and ignorant, but the violence really only began because of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Ota and his white love interest, Sophie, have their happy ending. The movie closes with Ota tending to a small planter box while Sophie looks on and sketches. The camera pans out to reveal more of the small industrial looking units on whose steps Sophie sits. Finally, the Sierra Nevada range comes into view. Sophie and Ota have ironically escaped from society to the Manzanar War Relocation Center.

Internment and the necessity for such an escape, however, was not a sudden consequence of Pearl Harbor. For nearly a century, Americans had been violently struggling to come to terms with Asian immigration. Since the beginning of Chinese immigration to the Pacific Coast in the 1850s, Chinese immigrants faced violence and terrorism.²⁶ In a single riot in 1877, twenty-five Chinese wash houses were set ablaze, and this was only a prelude to the violence of that year; for the following months, “no Chinese was safe from physical assaults,” and the arson continued.²⁷ Those who were able to escape the flames were “beaten and kicked, often robbed and shot, and sometimes compelled to die in flames.”²⁸ As Japanese immigrants began to arrive on the Pacific Coast, they also began to face strong, though not yet violent, opposition to their immigration.

²⁵ See: “How to Tell Japs from Chinese,” *Life*, December 22, 1941, Washington State University Digital Exhibits, <http://digitalexhibits.wsulibs.wsu.edu/items/show/4416>.

²⁶ K. K. Kawakami, *The Real Japanese Question* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1921).

²⁷ Kawakami, *The Real Japanese Question*, 126.

²⁸ Kawakami, *The Real Japanese Question*, 126.

Japanese immigrants faced similar anti-Asian sentiment to Chinese immigrants, and politicians and the public popularly conceived of them as presenting a similar “question” to the earlier group of immigrants. Though, as James D. Phelan, the former mayor of San Francisco, said in an interview with the *Boston Herald*: “the Chinese question has been solved by the restrictions of the immigration of coolies and the Chinese now are never molested,” the Japanese question had not yet been resolved.²⁹ In 1921, K. K. Kawakami explicitly attempted to answer this question in *The Real Japanese Question* in which he made reference to Phelan’s aggressively anti-Japanese views. He reported that Phelan ran his entire senatorial campaign on the issue of the “Japanese menace” with slogans such as “Keep California white” and “The Japanese must go!”³⁰ Phelan was far from the only person influencing public opinion. Kawakami wrote that “not a day passes that these newspapers do not publish anti-Japanese news stories or editorials, often absolutely groundless, always conceived to rouse suspicion or resentment towards the Japanese.”³¹ This sentiment both resulted from and reproduced the Yellow Peril which Roger Daniels succinctly defined as an irrational fear of “Oriental” conquest.³² This fear was not localized to the Pacific Coast where the majority of Asian immigrants resided. In 1918, the FBI sent agents to surveil Marcus Garvey’s activities in Harlem, New York. One of their reports quoted Garvey as saying

²⁹ “Rejoices at the Fall of Schmitz in 'Frisco: Says Jap Trouble Is Only Labor Question, Will Not Tolerate Invasion of California Even If It Is Peaceful,” *Boston Herald*, June 16, 1907, Museum of the City of San Francisco, sfmusem.org/conflag/phelan.html.

³⁰ Kawakami, *The Real Japanese Question*, 83.

³¹ Kawakami, *The Real Japanese Question*, 86.

³² Roger Daniels, *Concentration Camps, North America: Japanese in the United States and Canada during World War II* (Malabar, Fla: R.E. Krieger Pub. Co, 1981), 29. This fear was not new or even a result of earlier Chinese immigration to the Pacific Coast, rather, Gary Okihiro argues, it originated in Europe and persisted in America since the inception of the American experiment. The Yellow Peril, he argues, “does not derive solely from the alleged threat posed by Asians to Europeans...but from nonwhite people, as a collective group, and their contestation of white supremacy.” As such, the English Puritan colonists defined their identity in opposition to their animalistic conception of Native Americans and, through this construction, “the community mitigated its internal dissensions and found its collective identity and sense of direction and resolve.” See: Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams*, 120; 122.

that “Japan was combining with the Negro race to overthrow the white race because the blackman was not getting justice in this country.”³³

In accordance with the concept of the Yellow Peril, anti-Japanese discourse often took the form of a fear that Japanese Americans were planning to invade the Pacific Coast and, subsequently, the entire United States. This fear was popularly exacerbated by the extensive Japanese-American presence in Hawaii. Kawakami described the rhetoric surrounding this fear as dealing with themes such as “invasion” and “usurpation.”³⁴ A report by the Hawaiian Labor Commission from 1923 reported that “the question of National Defense and the necessity to curtail the domination of the alien Japanese in every phase of the Hawaiian life is more important than all the other problems combined.”³⁵ The government and public imported this rhetoric of a direct political affront to white hegemony to California. One report by the California Board of Control included a map which illustrated the portions of the state that were “occupied by Orientals.”³⁶ Kawakami aptly notes that this may have been a deliberate attempt to conjure up images of invasion and political control.³⁷ Political fears of invasion were more fully fleshed out by a 1921 Bureau of Investigation report which worried that California would “eventually become a province of Japan..., further...it would be only a question of time until the entire Pacific coast region would be controlled by the Japanese.”³⁸ Pamphlets at the time also warned Americans of a “swamping

³³ R. W. Finch, “Memorandum Re: Negro Agitation Marcus Garvey, December 3, 1918,” in *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, ed. Robert A. Hill, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 312.

³⁴ Kawakami, *The Real Japanese Question*, 7-8.

³⁵ Hawaiian Labor Commission, “Report of the Hawaiian Labor Commission, 1923, Synopsis of Findings and Recommendations,” January 5, 1923, RG 174, File No. 16/125, National Archives.

³⁶ California. State Board of Control, *California and the Oriental: Japanese, Chinese and Hindus* (Sacramento: California State Printing Office, 1920), 54.

³⁷ Kawakami, *The Real Japanese Question*, 30.

³⁸ Bureau of Investigation, “Resume Report on General Intelligence Activities, Eighth Division,” 1921-1918, File B.S. 202600-5, Reel 47, National Archives, in Gary Y. Okihiro, *Cane Fires: The Anti-Japanese Movement in Hawaii, 1865-1945* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 116.

invasion of Asiatic civilization” and described towns living “in yearly horror of the Japanese invasion.”³⁹ The Yellow Peril also included other distinctive features that would play prominently in the biopolitical racism directed against Japanese Americans. These will be investigated throughout the following sections.

³⁹ Sidney Gulick, “Lecture II: The American Japanese Problem,” October 15, 1914, Digital Commons @ CSUMB, https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=hornbeck_usa_8_b; Peter Clark MacFarlane, “Japan in California” (Collier’s, June 7, 1913), Digital Commons @ CSUMB, https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=hornbeck_usa_8_b. This fear of invasion and occupation also struck a distinctly biopolitical note. James D. Phelan, who was cited earlier as a prominent Anti-Japanese voice, testified to the House of Representatives about the use of land by Japanese Americans saying: “they are getting possession of the land, they are wonderful producers, they are making lots of money and they are swelling the State statistics. It is a matter of pride to see what a wonderful country we have under intensive cultivation. My point is that it is of no value to us if the white population is destroyed.” See: Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Percentage Plans for Restriction of Immigration: Hearings Before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, House of Representatives Sixty-Sixth Congress First Session* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), 204.

*“Historic revivals of hunting urge make an interesting recital of religious inquisitions, witch-burnings, college hazings, persecution of suffragettes, of the I.W.W., of the Japanese, or of pacifists. All this goes on often under naïve rationalization about justice and patriotism, but it is pure and innate lust to run something down and hurt it.”*⁴⁰

– Carleton Parker, 1919

2.2 The Biopolitical Drive

Fears of invasion and political usurpation encapsulated by the Yellow Peril, however, were not merely political fears; they were thoroughly imbued with biological anxieties. The intersection between political power and biological life is encapsulated by the term “biopolitics” which Michel Foucault first defined as “a matter of taking control of life and the biological processes of man-as-species and of ensuring that they are not disciplined, but regularized.”⁴¹ It will become clear that this regularity is precisely what anti-Japanese activists advocated in terms of purifying the racial composition of America. Biopolitics directs itself at humans not as individual bodies but as a species.⁴² By relying on biological discourse, instances of biopolitical racism represent an attempt to subdivide the human species into biologically distinct subspecies which possess different innate characteristics. This formation established a distinctively violent relationship between the subspecies. Foucault evaluated this relationship as follows: “racism makes it possible to establish a relationship between my life and the death of the other that is not a military or warlike relationship of confrontation, but a biological-type relationship.”⁴³ Biopolitical racism against Japanese Americans which was made possible by this biological subdivision has a long history in

⁴⁰ Carleton H. Parker, “Motives in Economic Life,” in *Papers and Proceedings Tenth Annual Meeting American Sociological Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916), 143.

⁴¹ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*. trans. David Macey, ed. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, 1st ed (New York: Picador, 2003), 247.

⁴² Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 243.

⁴³ Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 255.

the United States. This racism was clearly established by 1941 and called for a confrontation that was biological rather than political.

At this point, the difference between ordinary racism and the biopolitical racism that this paper will examine requires further explanation. Biopolitical racism is, as Foucault would write, “far removed from the ordinary racism that takes the traditional form of mutual contempt or hatred between races.”⁴⁴ However, no analysis of this period can give a satisfactory account of the motivations for the internment program without evaluating ordinary racism, that is, the prevailing conception of racism that manifests itself as a differential treatment of those of another racial group solely on the basis of their race. This interpretation is no different, but it will adopt the view that the biological fears of Japanese immigrants often implicitly grounded instances of what might appear, on initial inspection, as common and war fueled racism. Therefore, this interpretation takes the two conceptions of racism to be inseparable. These implicit assumptions are central to integrating instances of common racism into a larger genealogy of biopolitics in the United States. This integration will, in turn, offer a more detailed and accurate view of how and why the internment program took the form that it did. Instead of relying on racism as a blanket term, this investigation will center on the factors that directed and created this very specific kind of racism against Japanese immigrants and their descendants. Clarity on this issue also makes the uniqueness of this biopolitical analysis clear. The genealogy of racism against Japanese Americans is not biopolitical merely because Japanese Americans are a racial group, racial groups are biologically inherited, and power was practiced over one racial group. One might argue that this same point could be argued about power leveraged over any racial group regardless of the context. This period is amiable to biopolitical analysis because of the unique intersection between biology and political

⁴⁴ Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 258.

concerns that surrounded Japanese immigrants and grounded the specific kind of biopolitical racism they faced. This unique form of racism licensed its own particular set of practices, and to understand these in full, therefore, requires a genealogy of this form of racism. Those practices will be examined in detail in sections 3, 4, and 5.

The intersection between biology, political concerns, and racism emerged well before WWII. The discourse surrounding Japanese Americans constructed them as a biological threat to American political life. In 1917 Montaville Flowers seized upon this biological discourse writing that “to marry descendants of the Revolutionary and of the Civil War stocks to the descendants of the Ainus of Japan, or any other inhabitants of Japan is a race cross as radical and destroying as it is possible to make.”⁴⁵ Flowers’s statement also took on a political dimension. He went on to write that “whenever the white race has attempted to cross a pigmented race, it has lost its racial characteristics and lowered its civilization.”⁴⁶ The emphasis on purification of one race for the benefit of civilization only further establishes the union between biological and political life. Flowers went on to cite Gustave LeBon and argued that LeBon had, in a sense, foreseen the Japanese immigration to America. In 1899, LeBon wrote:

It was the pacific and not the warlike invasions which brought about the fall of the Roman Empire. The barbarians, far from having wished to overthrow Roman civilisation, devoted all their efforts toward adopting and continuing institutions of which they were the respectful admirers. We are probably destined to witness, in contemporary history, pacific invasions analogous to those which brought about the transformation of Roman civilisation. It may seem now-a-days there are no longer any barbarians, but though the barbarians may seem to be very distant, they are in reality very close, far closer than at the time of the

⁴⁵ Montaville Flowers, *The Japanese Conquest of American Opinion* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1917), 216. It is important to note, however, that some had posited the idea that racial mixing between Japanese and white individuals would produce more biologically advanced children. One Pamphlet read: “there is a strong presumption that the intermingling of bloods will produce a new type of American possessing the excellent qualities that Japanese men have inherited from their forefathers. The admirable traits of the Japanese will persist, the Japanese spirit will be part of their inheritance, though modified by the environment of the New World.” Even this position demonstrates that race was viewed as an essentializing element at this time. See: Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Japanese Immigration: Hearings Before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, House of Representatives Sixty Sixth Congress Second Session* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1921), 1053.

⁴⁶ Flowers, *The Japanese Conquest of American Opinion*, 222.

Roman emperors. The fact is that they exist in the very bosom of the civilised nations. Each people contains an immense number of inferior elements incapable of adapting themselves to a civilisation that is too superior for them.

For LeBon, certain individuals were naturally incapable of participating in and assimilating to civilization. Foucault echoes this precise sentiment in his conception of biopolitics. The logic of biopolitics, Foucault wrote, holds that “the fewer degenerates there will be in the species as a whole, and the more I—as species rather than individual—can live, the stronger I will be, the more vigorous I will be. I will be able to proliferate.”⁴⁷ In the same way, Flowers mobilized this passage from LeBon to call for the isolation of certain biological subspecies to the end of regularizing and ensuring the vitality of a nation.

These biopolitical assumptions regarding the political capacities of Japanese Americans were apparent in the common assumption that Japanese Americans were intrinsically incapable of assimilating to American society. A great deal of the American public and academic community accepted and endorsed this view. Jesse Steiner, a professor at the University of Washington, articulated this position in a work entitled: *The Japanese Invasion; a Study in the Psychology of Interracial Contacts*. Steiner referenced the biology of Japanese Americans as a barrier to assimilation writing that “the fundamental difficulty is a difference of color and physical characteristics so marked that the Japanese cannot merge themselves unnoticed into American life. This makes inevitable the establishment of a color line between the East and the West.”⁴⁸ In a debate published by the Junior Philhistorian Debating Society at St. Ignatius College, Edgar F.

⁴⁷ Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 255.

⁴⁸ Jesse Frederick Steiner, *The Japanese Invasion; a Study in the Psychology of Interracial Contacts* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1917), v-vi. Interestingly, some hypothesized that biological adaptation came hand in hand with social assimilation. Carey McWilliams wrote: “biological adaptation paralleled social adaptation. It has been repeatedly demonstrated (by Dr. H. L. Shapiro, Dr. Inui, Dr. Ichihashi, and others) that the children of Japanese immigrants differ from their parents physically...they are taller, larger, and heavier than children born and reared in Japan.” See: Carey McWilliams, *Prejudice: Japanese-Americans: Symbol of Racial Intolerance* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1944), 100.

Sullivan drew a similar conclusion though a laughable attempt at formal logic consisting of the following premises and conclusion:

- I. Two races unalterably opposed to each other, racially, temperamentally, ethically and morally can never assimilate.
- II. The people of America and Japan are unalterably opposed to each other. Conclusion: They can never assimilate.⁴⁹

This argument features extremely ambitious premises, and the first premise's contention that race is sufficient to prevent assimilation demonstrates the prevailing opinion that assimilation was biologically impossible. Furthermore, the use of the term "unalterably" indicates that it is race, rather than the other conditions, that truly prevents assimilation insofar as the others are each alterable. Furthermore, a digest of testimony given by V. S. McClatchy to the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization in 1920 and distributed as a pamphlet reiterated this sentiment and explicitly connects the concept of assimilation with culture, belief, and race metaphorically with a biological process of breeding. It reads:

The inherent incapacity of the Japanese for assimilation, their religious belief and ideals bred in them for generations and taught to them the world over, which foreign birth and foreign residence does not modify, create a permanent and insurmountable barrier between them and that real American citizenship.⁵⁰

The biology of a certain race, then, was popularly intertwined with political citizenship and posited as a factor that rendered certain political associations impossible on the basis of nothing but the membership to a biologically defined group. This biological assumption constructed Japanese Americans as an inherent threat to or, at least, irregularity in American political life.

⁴⁹ "Resolved, That Japanese Coolie Labor Should Be Excluded From Continental United States: A Debate by the Junio Philhistorian Debating Society of St. Ignatius College" (James H. Barry Co., 1908), Digital Commons @ CSUMB, https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/hornbeck_usa_8_b/.

⁵⁰ V. S. McClatchy, "Our New Racial Problem: Japanese Immigration and Its Menace" (The Sacramento Bee, 1920), Digital Commons @ CSUMB https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/hornbeck_usa_8_b/2/.

The intersection between biological life and political fears was further established by the concern surrounding the Japanese-American birth rate. Kawakami described a number of myths propagated in California newspapers about the “biological fecundity of the Japanese” which were so pronounced that white Americans worried that the state would be overrun with Japanese.⁵¹ One of these publications distributed by the Native Sons and Native Daughters of the Golden West, a notable anti-Japanese group, warned its readers in 1920 that “nearly three times as many children born to Japanese women as are born to white women.”⁵² Democracy brought together this biological fecundity with political processes. Many worried that the number of Japanese Americans resulting from their rapid sexual reproduction would allow them to eventually outvote white voters in political matters. One pamphlet called attention to mathematical forecasts of population arguing:

The most conservative forecasters predict that by 1930 these citizen-born Japanese will comprise about 28 per cent of the electorate and by 1940 about 47 per cent. Thenceforward, their numbers will double every twenty-one years. Between 1940 and 1950 the voters of Japanese blood will reach the point of numerical majority.⁵³

The use of the term “blood” in this passage clearly references a traditional understanding of race as a biological division of species.⁵⁴ The opposition between Japanese Americans as a biological group and white Americans would naturally culminate in what Foucault described as a biological-type struggle, and these biological assumptions about Japanese Americans licensed specific practices for this confrontation.

⁵¹ Kawakami, *The Real Japanese Question*, 34-36.

⁵² H. Stanley Benedict, “California and the Japanese: Intolerable Conditions Resultant from ‘Peaceful Invasion’ Graphically Pointed Out,” *The Grizzly Bear*, August 1920, 2.

⁵³ Paul Scharrenberg, “Labor Problems in Hawaii,” n.d., Digital Commons @ CSUMB, https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/hornbeck_usa_8_b/2/.

⁵⁴ See: John Nale, “Arthur de Gobineau on Blood and Race,” *Critical Philosophy of Race* 2, no. 1 (2014): 106–24.

*“Lemme tell ya 'bout your blood bamboo kid
It ain't Coca-Cola it's rice
Straight to Hell boys
Go straight to Hell boy.”*⁵⁵

– The Clash, “Straight to Hell”

2.3 Internment: Years in the Making

The biopolitical discourse surrounding Japanese Americans persisted and continued to manifest itself in the 1930s and the 1940s. The biopolitical racism that had developed in the years following the beginning of Japanese immigration implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, grounded the racial assumptions that motivated the evacuation and internment program. Examining the biopolitical underpinnings of these racial assumptions reveals that Internment was not any new kind of war fueled racism but rather an outgrowth of a pervasive and very specifically constructed form of biopolitical racism. The attack on Pearl Harbor did not, therefore, generate a fresh racism; it simply offered permission to act on an already established biopolitical threat to the United States which had emerged long before any military threat from Japan. Understanding the genealogy of this event offers an explanation of why a more comprehensive understanding of how such a dramatic policy came to be while offering a novel interpretation of Internment as a response to biopolitical pressures.

The academic community continued to develop the biopolitical discourse that had emerged in the 1910s and 1920s. In 1933, Madison Grant expanded upon the biopolitical fear of Japanese Americans writing of Peru: “Chinese and Japanese as well as Negroes have contributed to the mongrelization of the mass.”⁵⁶ Grant worried that should a solution not be found to this racial problem in the United States, Japanese along with a number of other racial and ethnic groups

⁵⁵ “Straight to Hell,” Spotify, track 6 on The Clash, *Combat Rock (Remastered)*, Sony Music Entertainment UK, 1982.

⁵⁶ Madison Grant, *Conquest of a Continent* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1933), 342.

would “produce a racial chaos such as ruined the Roman Empire.”⁵⁷ Grant’s reference to the Roman Empire recalls Flowers’s citation of LeBon and subsequently demonstrates the potency and durability of this fear as well as its intimate connection to politics. The logical result of this fear was the transfiguration of this sentiment into an essential association between political loyalty and biological race with the advent of Japanese aggression in Asia.

Public fears of direct conquest and usurpation which were central to the Yellow Peril also persisted. In 1935, *Coleman Journal* ran an article which aimed to provoke fear of the “Japanese Menace” by quoting a California representative as saying that there were 25,000 trained Japanese soldiers poised to take up arms.⁵⁸ This association was not limited to the public, rather, it reached the highest levels of government. Upon President Roosevelt’s request, Joseph Poindexter, the Governor of Hawaii, sent a number of memoranda to Washington D.C. in conjunction with the Commandant of the Fourteenth Naval District. One of these, dated August 17, 1934, warned that there were many Japanese Americans in Hawaii “who may be loyal to their blood rather than to the United States.”⁵⁹ Professing that one could be loyal to an inanimate substance is, of course, absurd, and the supposed union between political loyalty and a biological fact of life again illustrates the emergence of a biopolitical mode of racism. Furthermore, the term blood again provokes the intersection between biology and politics discussed in the conclusion of section 2.2.⁶⁰

One may object that simply demonstrating that public opinion toward Japanese Americans is insufficient to prove that these attitudes produced the internment program. However, Morton Grodzins’s interview with John J. McCloy, the Assistant Secretary of War,

⁵⁷ Grant, *Conquest of a Continent*, 286.

⁵⁸ “Sees Japanese Menace,” *Coleman Journal*, February 21, 1935, Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/COL_1935022101/mode/2up?q=japanese.

⁵⁹ T. M. Leovy, “Operation of Sampans by Japanese in Territorial Waters,” August 17, 1934, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, <http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/resources/images/psf/psf000503.pdf>.

⁶⁰ Nale, “Arthur de Gobineau on Blood and Race,” 106-24.

reveals that public opinion and government policy were closely intertwined. Grodzins reported that “in a very general discussion, McCloy admitted that ‘public sentiment was the determining factor in the planning for modern war.’”⁶¹ The philosophy of the War Department with regard to policy formation, then, admitted a great deal of public opinion in its calculus. Insofar as it was initially the War Department that undertook the evacuation, it seems that public opinion was an extremely important predictor of policy in this period. If one were to still be unconvinced by this argument, the statements of General John DeWitt, who oversaw the evacuation, make the same biopolitical assumptions apparent. Thus, even if no other government officials held similar assumptions, which is unlikely, the one official who mattered in this case demonstrably did.

By the time that the United States formally declared war on Japan in 1941, this biopolitical attitude had persisted and solidified, and it would continue to develop throughout the war. The influence of biopolitical concerns is everywhere evident in the discourse of government officials responsible for developing the internment program. General John DeWitt said in his 1943 congressional testimony that “it makes no difference whether he is an American citizen, He is still a Japanese.”⁶² He went on to say that there is no way to determine the loyalty of Japanese Americans.⁶³ DeWitt’s position was reflected in the famous Dr. Seuss cartoon entitled *Waiting for the Signal from Home* (Figure 1). Taken alone, General DeWitt’s statements from 1943 confirm the popular understanding that anti-Japanese prejudice was an eruption as a result of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. On this view, DeWitt’s concern about loyalty would seem to be a question unique

⁶¹ Morton Grodzins, “Interview with Mr. McCloy, Assistant Secretary of War,” October 15, 1942, BANC MSS 67/14c, folder A5.021, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6s75p8q/?brand=oac4>.

⁶² Committee on Naval Affairs, *Investigation of Congested Areas: Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Naval Affairs, House of Representatives Seventy-Eighth Congress First Session Pursuant to H. Res. 30: A Resolution Authorizing and Directing an Investigation of the Progress of the War Effort* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1943), 740.

⁶³ Committee on Naval Affairs, *Investigation of Congested Areas*, 739.

to a state of war; however, the preceding analysis of the development of biological fears of invasion along with DeWitt's contention that biological race put the loyalty of Japanese Americans into doubt show that this concern was merely a continuation of a legacy of biopolitical racism. One need only look as far as Poindexter's above cited report of 1934 to find a parallel of intertwining pure biological descent with political loyalties.⁶⁴

The biological fears of Japanese invasion even extended into the period following Internment. The WRA circulated a document sometime after the Supreme Court's ruling in *Ex Parte Endo* on 18 December 1944 that offered "handy reference in answering telephone inquiries or individual interviews."⁶⁵ This document predicted worries about the loyalty of Japanese Americans during a time when the United States had yet to emerge victorious in the Pacific theater of the war. When confronted with this concern, the document instructed, the employee should "understand their apprehension and then reassure them" that the "Japanese birthrate is a falling birthrate in America."⁶⁶ The fact that the WRA recommended responding to a question of loyalty and political fear with a thoroughly biological measure of birth demonstrates the persistence of biopolitical modes of engagement with Japanese Americans.

⁶⁴ Leovy, "Operation of Sampans by Japanese in Territorial Waters," August 17, 1934, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library. The idea of internment reemerged in the Spring of 1941. Chiura Obata, a well-known Japanese American artist and professor at the University of California at Berkeley, recalled in an undated statement that President Eisenhower's brother and soon to be director of the War Relocation Authority, Milton, met with a group of Professors at Berkeley. At this meeting, Eisenhower proposed that Japanese Americans should be gathered up and "put into reservations like the Indians." The connection between Native American reservations and internment camps will be expanded upon in section 4.5. See: Okiihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams*, 136-37; Chiura Obata, "Artist's Statement, 194-?," n.d., Archives of American Art, <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/items/detail/artists-statement-21292>.

⁶⁵ War Relocation Authority, "Facts, Policy, Quotations and Excerpts on Opinion and Attitudes Pertinent to W.R.A. and Resettlement," n.d., BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder E2.03, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k69p380j/?brand=oac4>.

⁶⁶ War Relocation Authority, "Facts, Policy, Quotations and Excerpts on Opinion and Attitudes Pertinent to W.R.A. and Resettlement," n.d., Online Archive of California.



Figure 1. Theodor Seuss Geisel, *Waiting for the Signal from Home*.

Of course, not everyone was initially taken with these fears. One WRA report stated that unlike the witch hunts of World War I, the public “hesitated to suspect people just because of their descent and to assume that people born in a nation now at war with the United States must therefore be disloyal.”⁶⁷ One high school boy was worried about his reception at school in the wake of the attack on Pearl Harbor but wrote: “I am proud to say that everyone treated us like Americans which we are.”⁶⁸ One school teacher interceded on behalf of a student who had been called a “dirty Jap”

⁶⁷ War Relocation Authority, *Impounded People: Japanese Americans in the Relocation Centers* (Washington D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1946), 3.

⁶⁸ War Relocation Authority, *Impounded People*, 32.

by a white student saying: “the Nisei are good and loyal citizens...just as you and I.”⁶⁹ Even Francis Biddle, the United States Attorney General, said on December 28, 1941:

If we care about democracy, we must care about it as a reality for others as well as for ourselves; yes for aliens, for Germans, for Italians, for Japanese, for those who are with us as those who are against us.⁷⁰

Though the message professes a sympathetic sentiment, the structure of the passage places “ourselves” as parallel with “those who are with us” and “aliens, for Germans, for Italians, for Japanese” as parallel with “those who are against us.” Thus, Biddle perhaps makes an implicit suggestion that those aliens were in some way in opposition to the United States or that some of them could be. Neither of these positions would turn out to be true.⁷¹

Despite these cautions and attempts at responsible handling of groups assumed to be enemies to the United States, the legacy of public fear of Japanese Americans prevailed. The WRA recognized these fears and reported that “doubts of loyalty had been stimulated and multiplied by decades of anti-Oriental propaganda of the Hearst and McClatchy newspapers and the California

⁶⁹ Uchida, *Journey to Topaz*, 20. The term “Nisei” refers to second-generation Japanese Americans.

⁷⁰ Francis Biddle and Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, “Statement by Attorney General Francis Biddle Concerning the Employment of Aliens in Private Industry, December 28, 1941,” in *National Defense Migration: Hearings Before the Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, House of Representatives Seventy-Seventh Congress Second Session Pursuant to H. Res. 113: A Resolution to Inquire Further into the Interstate Migration of Citizens, Emphasizing the Present and Potential Consequences of the Migration Caused by the National Defense Program* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1942), 11044. The Secretary of the Fair Play Committee, a committee of influential individuals in California who attempted to counteract the fears inspired by the Joint Committee on Immigration, similarly said: “our citizens of Japanese parentage are just as trustworthy now as they were a few weeks ago when Governor Olson and other publicists paid tribute to their loyalty and civic action.” See: Charles Wollenberg, “‘Dear Earl’ The Fair Play Committee, Earl Warren, and Japanese Internment,” *California History* 89, no. 4 (January 1, 2012): 26; War Relocation Authority, *Impounded People*, 17.

⁷¹ In fact, a WRA memorandum regarding contraband held by aliens reveals that during their raids in the wake of December 7, 1941 the Federal Bureau of Investigation had no fruitful efforts in discovering 5th column activity. It reads: “we have not, however, uncovered through these searches any dangerous persons that we could not otherwise know about. We have not found among all the sticks of dynamite and gun powder any evidence that any of it was to be used in bombs. We have not found a single machine gun nor have we found any gun in any circumstances indicating that it was to be used in a manner helpful to our enemies. We have not found a camera which we have reason to believe was for use in espionage.” See: War Relocation Authority, “Memorandum Re: Possession of Prohibited Articles by Alien Enemies,” n.d., BANC MSS 67/14c, folder A 7.03:3, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6r78n4b/?brand=oac4>.

Joint Immigration Committee.”⁷² This committee testified before Congress in February of 1942 and, because they argued that “it is very doubtful to be able to establish the loyalty of any person who came from the Empire of Japan, whether the descendent of one who came here or not,” recommended that “the committee recommend to Congress the establishment of combat zones, the evacuation of all persons, aliens or citizens alike, from such zones.”⁷³ The invocation of loyalty as an extension of descentance in terms of only one of three groups whose country of origin was at war with the United States offers yet another manifestation of the union of political affiliation with biological origin for Japanese Americans. With the assistance of the Hearst and McClatchy newspapers, the WRA found, the committee kept alive “fears of the ‘Yellow Peril.’”⁷⁴ The concept of the Yellow Peril was, of course was closely aligned with biopolitical concerns. In addition to the analysis already provided on this issue, it is worth noting that the public fears of the Yellow Peril had been stimulated by a field of literature which told stories of Asian invasion and usurpation, and this literature “quite openly allegorizes the concerns of post-Mendelian racial biologism and eugenics, concerns that were energized generally in the U.S....by the apparently unresolvable dilemma of non-Anglo-Saxon immigration.”⁷⁵ With the power and depth of this genealogy being deployed at full strength, both newspapers and politicians turned up the pressure on Biddle to take action. Henry McLemore, a columnist for the Hearst Newspapers accused Biddle of being in

⁷² War Relocation Authority, *Impounded People*, 22.

⁷³ Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, *National Defense Migration: Hearings Before the Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, House of Representatives Seventy-Seventh Congress Second Session Pursuant to H. Res. 113: A Resolution to Inquire Further into the Interstate Migration of Citizens, Emphasizing the Present and Potential Consequences of the Migration Caused by the National Defense Program* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1942), 11074.

⁷⁴ War Relocation Authority, *Impounded People*, 18.

⁷⁵ John N. Swift, “Jack London’s ‘The Unparalleled Invasion’: Germ Warfare, Eugenics, and Cultural Hygiene,” *American Literary Realism* 35, no. 1 (2002): 64.

charge of the “Japanese menace” and “handling it with all the severity of Lord Fauntleroy.”⁷⁶

Leland Ford, a congressman from California who advocated for a mass deportation described his interaction with Biddle’s office as follows:

I phoned the Attorney General's office and told them to stop fucking around. I gave them twenty four hours notice that unless they would issue a mass evacuation notice I would drag the whole matter out on the floor of the House and of the Senate.⁷⁷

Ford went on to say that congress would “clean the god damned office out in one sweep” should Biddle not approve the measure.⁷⁸ Biddle eventually gave into these among other pressures and agreed to a program of mass removal and internment.⁷⁹

These biopolitical underpinnings of racism remained apparent after the evacuation program began to take effect. At a conference held by the WRA in Salt Lake City, Chase Clark, the Governor of Idaho said of the Japanese in an eminently honest fashion: “I want to admit right on the start that I am so prejudiced that my reasoning might be a little off, because I don’t trust any of them. I don’t know which ones to trust so therefore I don’t trust any of them.”⁸⁰ Governor Clark’s reasoning was in line with, if not full condemnation of an ethnic group, a presumption of

⁷⁶ Henry McLemore, “West Doesn’t Like Playing Squat Tag With the Japs,” *San Francisco Enquirer*, February 5, 1942, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/media/ddr-densho-56/ddr-densho-56-599-mezzanine-ec4ba538cc.pdf>. *Little Lord Fauntleroy* is an 1886 children’s novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett. It depicts a young, impoverished character named Cedric Errol who suddenly inherits the title of Lord Fauntleroy along with a substantial estate. The story is, perhaps, best remembered for illustrations of Cedric’s long, curly hair and clothing which included a lace collar. See: “Little Lord Fauntleroy | Novel by Burnett,” Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed April 14, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Little-Lord-Fauntleroy-novel-by-Burnett>. McLemore is, perhaps, best remembered for a vehemently anti-Japanese article that reads: “herd ‘em up, pack ‘em off and give ‘em the inside room in the badlands. Let ‘em be pinched, hurt, hungry and dead up against it...let us have no patience with the enemy or with anyone whose veins carry his blood...personally, I hate the Japanese. And that goes for all of them.” See: Henry McLemore, “This Is War! Stop Worrying About Hurting Jap Feelings,” *Seattle Times*, January 30, 1942, http://densho.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Documents_SPW.pdf.

⁷⁷ Morton Grodzins, “Grodzins in Washington: Report #6,” September 26, 1942, BANC MSS 67/14c, folder A12.04, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6bp08q4/?brand=oac4>.

⁷⁸ Grodzins, “Grodzins in Washington: Report #6,” September 26, 1942, Online Archive of California.

⁷⁹ “Francis Biddle,” in *Densho Encyclopedia* (Seattle), accessed February 5, 2021, https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Francis_Biddle/.

⁸⁰ “Conference on Evacuation of Enemy Aliens,” April 7, 1942, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder C1.03:1, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6k07bpf/?brand=oac4>.

guilt based on their race. This classic feature of ordinary racism characteristic of the period implicitly relies on and recalls the fear that Japanese Americans would not be loyal to their country but to their “blood.”⁸¹ In a similar vein, Nels H. Smith, the governor of Wyoming, worried that “twenty thousand Japanese in ten years time would put us out of business and take over the state.”⁸² Rather than focusing on fear of sabotage, the purported reason for the military’s involvement in the internment program, Governor Smith’s statement recalls the fears of political usurpation which were ubiquitous in California. These fears were, of course, rooted in the reproductive vivacity of the Japanese though Smith did not explicitly make reference to it here. Additionally, the reference to business references a fear of Japanese economic usurpation. One of the central arguments for curtailing Japanese immigration had been their characteristics as laborers. James D. Phelan, whose anti-Japanese rhetoric was cited above, said that though Americans admire the industry of Japanese laborers, they must be excluded because, as a result, they are “a masterful people, they are more dangerous.”⁸³ Though Phelan does not make clear whether these characteristics of labor are racial in nature, this would be a logical conclusion given the essentializing tone of this statement. In this sense, the interpretation of this economic fear is at least biopolitical.⁸⁴ These perspectives represented the general attitude among the leaders of the Western states and demonstrate that their disdain for the Japanese was not a product of the war. Instead, they represented new transfigurations of an enduring biopolitical racism. These anxieties culminated in wholesale disregard for the civil rights of Japanese Americans. After attending the Salt Lake City Conference, John W. Abbott, the chief field investigator for the Tolan Defense Committee on Migration,

⁸¹ See: Eiichiro Azuma, “Race, Citizenship, and the ‘Science of Chick Sexing’: The Politics of Racial Identity among Japanese Americans,” *Pacific Historical Review* 78, no. 2 (May 1, 2009): 244.

⁸² “Conference on Evacuation of Enemy Aliens,” April 7, 1942, Online Archive of California.

⁸³ Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Percentage Plans for Restriction of Immigration*, 184.

⁸⁴ It is also worth noting that characteristics such as physical endurance were construed as biologically inherent in Japanese Americans, so it is further likely that this kind of racial characteristic is what Phelan had in mind. See:

reported: “not once did I hear any comment which would indicate that the spokesman for the West Coast states considered that the Japanese were anything other than nuisances, useful for the ability to work but definitely a menace to be got rid of as quickly as possible after the war.”⁸⁵ Another WRA report on the meeting similarly recalled a “refusal to recognize that Japanese, even though citizens, have any rights in the matter.”⁸⁶ The consequences of this complete disregard for civil and human rights will be examined in the context of indirect political death in section 3.1.

Rather than representing a turning point in the evolution of racism against Japanese Americans, the attack on Pearl Harbor offered a political impetus as well as an intensification of public fears which worked to put biopolitical racism into action with the internment program. Internment represented a natural outgrowth of biopolitics in two senses. The first concerns the methods by which a state operating in the biopolitical mode conducts war given its emphasis on the different biological subgroups of humans. The second concerns internment itself as a practice. The latter will be discussed in detail in section 3.1. In the biopolitical mode, war takes on a distinctly different meaning. War is no longer “simply a matter of destroying a political adversary, but of destroying the enemy race, of destroying that [sort] of biological threat that those people over there represent to our race.”⁸⁷ Congressman John Rankin made this same idea apparent in his remarks on February 18, 1942 saying: “this is a race war, as far as the Pacific side of this conflict is concerned, and we might as well understand it. The white man's civilization has come into

⁸⁵ John W. Abbott, “Memorandum Re: Notes on Meeting, New House Hotel, Salt Lake City, April 7, 1942, 1:00 P.M.,” April 8, 1942, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder C1.03:1, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6k07bpf/?brand=oac4>.

⁸⁶ War Relocation Authority San Francisco Office, “Report on Meeting, April 7, at Salt Lake City, With Governors, Attorneys General, and Other State and Federal Officials of 10 Western States,” April 8, 1942, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder C1.03:1, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6k07bpf/?brand=oac4>.

⁸⁷ Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 257.

conflict with Japanese barbarism.”⁸⁸ Naturally, the racial war in which Rankin argued the United States was engaged implicated Japanese Americans, and Rankin’s focus on race is reflected in the fact that biological fears only came to bear on Asian Americans. It would be a futile argument to suggest that the Japanese Empire committed acts that were measurably or meaningfully more atrocious and barbarous than Nazi Germany or Italy during WWII, yet the specific biological and racial fears surrounding Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans licensed a different set of practices toward them. Though recent scholarship has recognized that some German and Italian Americans were also interned during the war, the “omission of the...two groups is understandable because the wholesale relocation of Japanese-Americans – the majority, 70,000, being American-born – was the more egregious violation.”⁸⁹ Henry L. Stimson, the Secretary of War, opposed uniform treatment between Italians and Japanese saying: “I consider such persons to be potentially less dangerous, as a whole, than those of other enemy nationalities.”⁹⁰ The Assistant Attorney General described the public sentiment as a clamor for removal of the Japanese having “lost sight of the Germans and Italians who began the trouble in which we now find ourselves.”⁹¹ The WRA addressed this question in one of its reports on the internment policy saying: that “although serious consideration continued to be given until March to the mass evacuation of the Germans and Italians, they were not, to the authorities and general public, quite such an undistinguishable mass as the

⁸⁸ United States, *Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the Seventy-Seventh Congress, Second Session* (Washington D.C.: 1942), 1419.

⁸⁹ Rose D. Scherinni, “When Italian Americans Were ‘Enemy Aliens,’” in *Una Storia Segreta: The Secret History of Italian American Evacuation and Internment during World War II*, ed. Lawrence DiStasi (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 2001), 27.

⁹⁰ Henry Stimson, “Letter to General John L. DeWitt,” February 20, 1942, BANC MSS 67/14c, folder A6.01, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6hq45tn/?brand=oac4>.

⁹¹ Tom C. Clark, “Memorandum for Messrs. Rowe and Ennis,” February 10, 1942, BANC MSS 67/14c, folder A7.01, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6cz3f2w/?brand=oac4>.

Japanese.”⁹² The reference to an undistinguishable mass reflects the Yellow Peril’s reliance on “horde” logic and its intrinsic connection to biopolitical anxieties.

The program’s guidelines confirm the importance of biological factors in determining the internment program. WRA records report that a half-Japanese and half-white woman married to a Chinese man asked about the Executive Order’s application to her and her children.⁹³ She was informed that “the curfew and evacuation orders apply to all persons of Japanese ancestry, no matter what the percentage of Japanese blood in their veins and that both she and her children were under the order.”⁹⁴ The doctrine expressed by this policy descends from and offers a new iteration of hypo-descent first articulated as the “one-drop rule.” This doctrine ensured that in America a “single drop of non-white blood” as sufficient to qualify somebody as non-white.⁹⁵ The way in which hypodescent was employed in this case represents another iteration of the union between the biological, represented by “blood,” and the supposed military necessity of the evacuation program. In this way, it becomes clear that the Yellow Peril and its calls for action against Japanese Americans was intrinsically tied to biopolitical fears of their human subspecies.

⁹² War Relocation Authority, *Impounded People*, 15.

⁹³ War Relocation Authority, “Memorandum Re. Situation on Pacific Coast Respecting Treatment of So-Called ‘Alien Enemies’ and ‘Citizen Japanese,’” n.d., BANC MSS 67/14c, folder A 7.03:3, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6r78n4b/?brand=oac4>.

⁹⁴ War Relocation Authority, “Memorandum Re. Situation on Pacific Coast,” n.d., Online Archive of California.

⁹⁵ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States From the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul Inc., 1986), 60.

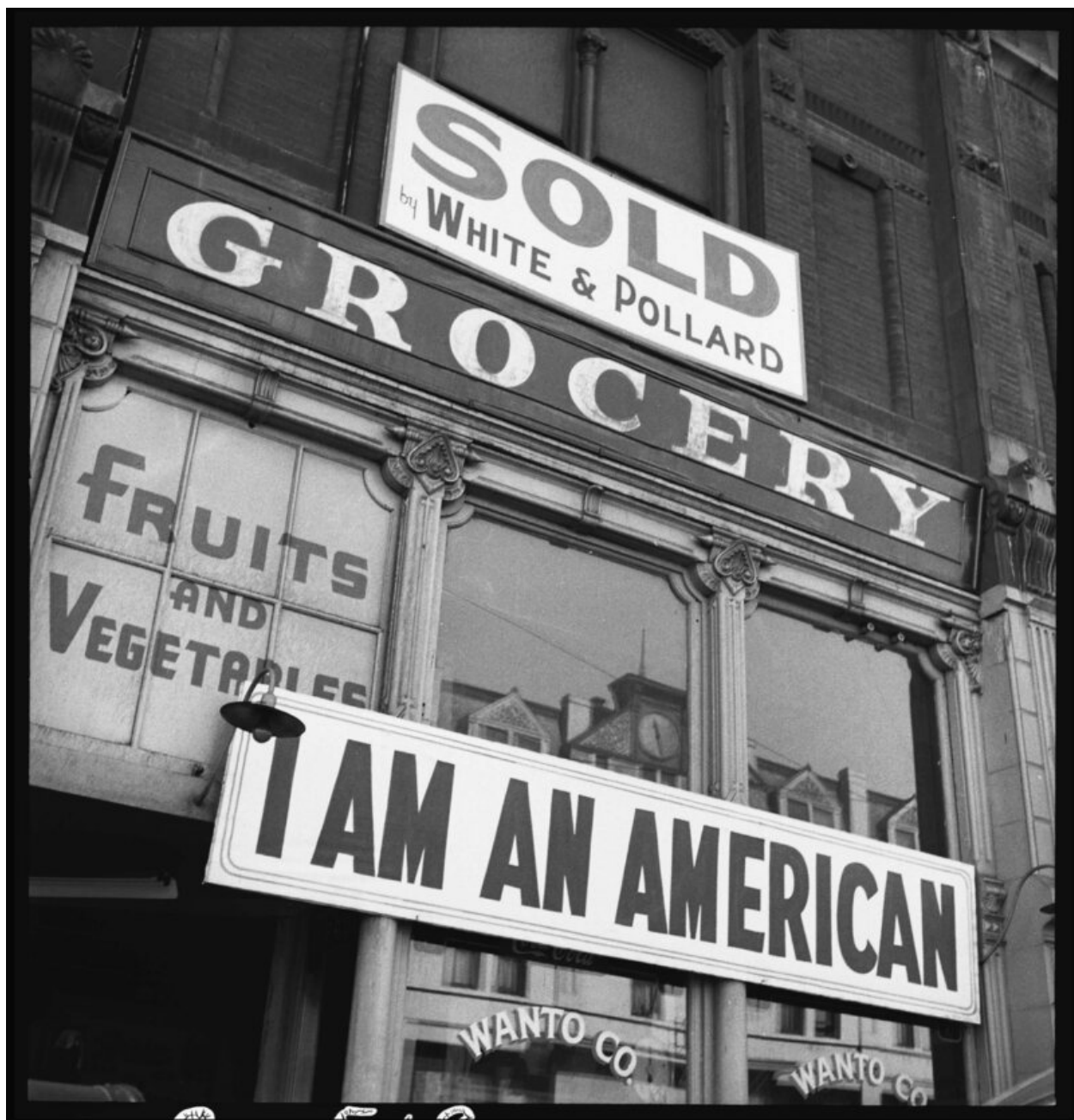


Figure 2. Dorothea Lange, Oakland, California, March 13, 1942.

3. The Other Americans

*“That is the secret of dislike for them felt by Western peoples, accustomed to treat the Oriental as if he were outside the protection of the law.”*⁹⁶

– Hamilton Wright Mabie

3.1 The Camp

** This section includes descriptions of sexual and gendered violence that may be upsetting to some readers. A small asterisk has been placed at the beginning and end of the paragraph that includes these descriptions so that the reader may elect to skip them at their discretion. Leaving this paragraph unread will not detract from the reader’s understanding of the paper as a whole; it has been included to prompt historical research on the topic of gendered violence in the camps and as an attempt to do justice and pay respect to the experiences of those who experienced such violence in the camps while providing a more comprehensive picture of camp life.*

Historians and critics often use the descriptor “unamerican” in reference to Internment.⁹⁷ The preceding sections have made clear, however, that the genealogy of the program has a deeply and, somewhat, distinctly American character. This nature was reflected in the planning of the camps whose regulations required that a 90-foot flagpole be erected in the MP area of each camp.⁹⁸ The flag signaled that the camp’s relocation and imprisonment of a racial group was a deeply American practice. Indeed, the WRA boasted in one of its reports that Internment represented a migration greater than any in American history.⁹⁹ The authority credited the success of this program to America’s experience in such practices writing:

America had learned something about human engineering since the Indians were moved. The human engineering in the evacuation of the Japanese from the West Coast was a magnificent tour de force, as different and superior in technique and administrative management from the transfer of Indians as the oxcart differs from the latest bomber.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Hamilton Wright Mabie, Source Unknown, in Kawakami, *The Real Japanese Question*, 18.

⁹⁷ See: Richard Cahan et al., *Un-American: The Incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II* (Chicago: CityFiles Press, 2016).

⁹⁸ John Lesesne DeWitt et al., *Japanese Evacuation From the West Coast, 1942: Final Report* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1943), 587.

⁹⁹ War Relocation Authority, *Impounded People*, 20.

¹⁰⁰ War Relocation Authority, *Impounded People*, 20.

The experience the WRA references becomes all the more interesting when read in terms of Obata's meeting with the WRA's future director, Milton Eisenhower. Based on this interaction, it seems that the reservation program featured prominently in the conception of the internment program.¹⁰¹ The WRA's excitement about this more modern program reflects a development in biopolitics itself. Indian removal either directly or indirectly produced death on a mass scale. Over the course of removal, some tribes lost up to 50% of their populations.¹⁰² In this period, the movement appears to better resemble an older conception of sovereignty in which sovereign power is determined by the ability to kill and let live.¹⁰³ The internment program represented a different technique of biopolitical power, one whose modernity the WRA aptly noted and which was more sophisticated and discreet. This new form of "human engineering" was a unique response to the demands of the biopolitical mode of power.

Based on the biopolitical mode of war in which the United States was engaged, it would appear that the biopolitical drive would call the destruction of Japanese Americans as well as Japanese in general. Ultimately, in the United States, this extermination never came to pass. Nevertheless, the internment program did constitute a thoroughly biopolitical response. Foucault described the murderous capacity of the state not only as "murder as such, but also every form of indirect murder: the fact of exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people, or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on."¹⁰⁴ Remnants of the older form of

¹⁰¹ The relationship between the internment camps and Native American reservations will be further investigated in section 4.3.

¹⁰² Michael Doran, "Statistics of Nineteenth Century Indian Territory," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 53 (1975): 499-500.

¹⁰³ See: Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 240.

¹⁰⁴ Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 256. The reason why the United States did not pursue a much darker biopolitical response is beyond the scope of this paper, yet it is worth noting that such a program is not characteristic of democratic states. Furthermore, officials were acutely aware of the attention being paid to the handling of the internment and were mindful of its consequences. At a conference in Salt Lake City, Milton S. Eisenhower said: "everything we do here is known not only by our enemies but by those whom we want to remain our friends...we want to handle this program in a way to set a model for the rest of the world." The WRA report on this conference similarly reported that the consensus was that the evacuation should be "handled in an American way, as a proof to the rest of

sovereign power were evident in Internment as the risk of death was certainly pronounced for interned Japanese Americans. Internment camps in Alaska produced mortality rates as high as 25%, and, and many internees in the contiguous United States also experienced death and injury directly at the hands of the government.¹⁰⁵ Military Police shot and killed internees on a number of occasions. Shoichi Okomoto died at Tule Lake after being shot by an MP for disobeying an order to stay in a car, James Hatsuki Wakasa was shot and killed at Topaz after being caught trying to crawl through the camp fence, and, at the Gila camp, a young man was shot while walking past a guard tower at the entrance of the camp after refusing to stop.¹⁰⁶ Violence was also a tool of control insofar as at Topaz, one MP fired a warning shot because two residents were walking too near to the fence.¹⁰⁷

*Though the particular types of violence that interned Japanese Americans faced do not alter the broader aims of this interpretation, historical scholarship often neglects the specific acts of gendered and sexual violence women and, possibly, some men were exposed to in the internment camps. Any view of the Internment experience is incomplete without taking such cases

the world that justice and humanity are American characteristics, even in war time.” One should also note that though this extermination never came to pass, by the end of the war, polls indicated that “up to 15 percent of Americans wished to ‘exterminate’ the Japanese” and there were extremely limited suggestions that “Japanese Americans should be sterilized.” See “Conference on Evacuation of Enemy Aliens,” April 7, 1942, Online Archive of California, and: War Relocation Authority, “Report on Meeting, April 7, at Salt Lake City,” April 8, 1942, Online Archive of California; Eric J. Sundquist, “The Japanese-American Internment: A Reappraisal,” *The American Scholar* 57, no. 4 (1988): 537; 530.

¹⁰⁵ “Forced to Leave: WWII Detention of Alaskan Japanese Americans and Aleuts” in University of Alaska Museum, Mary Fenno, ed. Dean Kohlhoff and Terry P. Dickey (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Museum, 1997): 5. For statistics on deaths in assembly centers, see: DeWitt et al., *Japanese Evacuation From the West Coast, 1942, 202*.

¹⁰⁶ “Tule Nisei Dies From MP’s Shot.” *Topaz Times*. May 27, 1944. Utah Digital Newspapers. <https://newspapers.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s6sb8pvm/24212032>; MP’s Shooting of Topaz Resident Is Investigated.” *Tulean Dispatch Daily*. April 28, 1943. Densho Digital Repository. <https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-65-213/?format=doc>; “Gila Has Shooting Incident, Youth Wounded by Sentry.” *Topaz Times*. December 9, 1943. Utah Digital Newspapers. https://newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=24211482&q=shot&sort=rel&facet_paper=%22Topaz+Times%22.

¹⁰⁷ “Another Shooting Stirs Topaz; No One Injured.” *Topaz Times*. May 22, 1943. Utah Digital Newspapers. <https://newspapers.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s6xm2znz/24210775>. See also: Yoshiko Uchida, *Journey to Topaz* (Berkeley: Creative Arts Book Company, 1985), 119.

into account. Richard S. Nishimoto, the only first-generation Japanese immigrant, or Issei, to be employed for the Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Study and a prolific community leader in the Poston camp, reported that “a group of Kibei shut off the electricity to the women’s latrine and rushed into it. Then they grabbed the women inside the latrine and raped them.”¹⁰⁸ Charles Kikuchi reported that in the Tanforan camp rumors circulated about three cases of rape, one of which was said “to have been committed by one of the Caucasian workers.”¹⁰⁹ In another egregious case, Tamie Tsuchiyama, a Nisei employee of the Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Study described an incident at the Poston camp as follows:

After the movie Thursday night in block 18 a gang of seven boys had kidnapped a girl of thirteen from the movie crowd and had taken her to that spot. She had screamed and screamed but no one had come to her rescue...the father of the victim does not want to prosecute these boys because he is afraid that a bad reputation might cling to his daughter for a long time.¹¹⁰

These are only a small fraction of incidents of sexual assault that occurred in the camps, but the violence female internees faced extended to murder as illustrated by case of May Tsubouchi. Tsubouchi was an evacuee from the Imperial Valley of California who was murdered out of jealousy by her former boyfriend at the Poston camp.¹¹¹ Her assailant, Isamu Takahashi, had become enraged after Tsubochi spurned him for an older man.¹¹² He broke into her apartment and cut Tsubochi twenty-nine times with a knife.¹¹³ Nishimoto reported that the coroner found that Tsubochi was about three months pregnant at the time of the attack and that “a knife would

¹⁰⁸ Richard S. Nishimoto, “27. Law & Order,” n.d., BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder J6.15 (27/43), Berkeley Library Digital Collections, <https://digicoll.lib.berkeley.edu/record/172230?ln=en>.

¹⁰⁹ Virginia Galbraith, “Rumors in Tanforan,” n.d., BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder B8.09, Berkeley Library Digital Collections, <https://digicoll.lib.berkeley.edu/record/172115?ln=en>.

¹¹⁰ Tamie Tsuchiyama, “14. Law & Order,” n.d., BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder J6.27 (14/27), Berkeley Library Digital Collections, <https://digicoll.lib.berkeley.edu/record/172266?ln=en>.

¹¹¹ Nishimoto, “27. Law & Order,” n.d., Berkeley Library Digital Collections.

¹¹² Nishimoto, “27. Law & Order,” n.d., Berkeley Library Digital Collections.

¹¹³ Nishimoto, “27. Law & Order,” n.d., Berkeley Library Digital Collections.

penetrated into her womb and scratched her uterus. The injury resulted in miscarriage while she was still alive.”¹¹⁴ Kikuchi reported on another murder where it was rumored that “a girl was strangled to death and stuffed in a barrel.”¹¹⁵ These are instances of violence that internees, particularly female internees, were subjected to as a result of evacuation. Sexual violence was also likely directed against male internees, yet no documents have emerged that tell these stories.^{116*}

Hannah Arendt’s concept of juridical personhood offers a means to evaluate the political death Foucault described.¹¹⁷ Juridical personhood “comes into being when political authority towards persons is expressed through an institutional order that bears attributes of stability such as predictability, intelligibility, and contestability.”¹¹⁸ Within the internment camps, evacuees from the Pacific Coast were deprived of their juridical personhood insofar as the camps were operating “outside the normal penal system, and...selecting...inmates outside the normal judicial procedure.”¹¹⁹ In this passage, Arendt is analyzing the concept of a concentration camp, and there has been significant scholarly and judicial disagreement on the application of this terminology to Internment. Justice Roberts described the term “internment camp” as merely a euphemism for concentration camps in his dissent in *Korematsu v. United States*.¹²⁰ Justice Black admonished the

¹¹⁴ Nishimoto, “27. Law & Order” n.d., Berkeley Library Digital Collections.

¹¹⁵ Galbraith, “Rumors in Tanforan,” n.d., Berkeley Library Digital Collections.

¹¹⁶ Other forms of sexual violence included solicitation of minors. Tsuchiyama reported on one such incident in which a middle-aged man solicited a sixteen-year-old girl in the women’s latrine. See: Tsuchiyama, “14. Law & Order.” For a comprehensive review and analysis of some of the cases mentioned in this section see: Nina Wallace, “Sexual Violence, Silence, and Japanese American Incarceration - Densho: Japanese American Incarceration and Japanese Internment,” *Hidden Histories* (blog), April 2, 2018, <https://densho.org/sexual-violence-silence-japanese-american-incarceration/>. Thanks to Ms. Wallace for her help locating the primary sources that were consulted to compose this paragraph.

¹¹⁷ See: Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 256.

¹¹⁸ Kristen Rundle, “Legal Subjects and Juridical Persons: Developing Public Legal Theory through Fuller and Arendt,” *Netherlands Journal of Legal Philosophy* 3, (2014): 228.

¹¹⁹ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 447; I have argued previously that for many Japanese Americans, the sacrifice of their lives by serving in the United States military offered the only means by which they could lay claim to the American political community. See Okazaki, “*Shikata Ga Nai*,” 28-45.

¹²⁰ *Korematsu v. United States*, 323 U. S. 214 (1944).

use of this descriptor with “all the ugly connotations that term implies.” Despite these disagreements, it is clear that these camps operated outside of normal judicial procedures and are equally reflective of Arendt’s argument. Furthermore, political discourse during the beginnings of the internment program often did not shy away from the term “concentration camp.” On February 18, 1942, Congressman Rankin said: “I am for catching every Japanese in America, Alaska, and Hawaii now and putting him in concentration camps.”¹²¹ This was not an anomalous statement. The WRA reported that Idaho’s Attorney General “advocated that all Japanese be put in concentration camps” and Idaho’s Governor said in a radio address: “I have urged that Japanese who may be sent here be placed under guard and confined in concentration camps.”¹²² This characterization was not lost on scholars who wished to study Internment because they will “stand out in contrast to the concentration camp techniques of other countries.”¹²³ Those in the camps could no longer expect those three elements of juridical personhood, and this loss entailed and signified their expulsion from the American political community. Succinctly, though the “government never formally stripped Japanese Americans of their citizenship...it in effect...nullified their citizenship.”¹²⁴

Internment also represented a simple defensive reaction to biopolitical racism. The biopolitical anxiety surrounding Japanese Americans was not merely directed toward preventing their immigration and proliferation but also their presence as a whole. As such, the proceedings of

¹²¹ United States, *Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the Seventy-Seventh Congress*, 1420.

¹²² Chase Clark, “Radio Address,” c. 1942, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder C1.03:1, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6k07bpf/?brand=oac4>; War Relocation Authority, “Report on Meeting, April 7, at Salt Lake City,” April 8, 1942, Online Archive of California.

¹²³ Joseph H. Willits, “Memorandum Regarding Study of Forced Mass Migration of Japanese on the Pacific Coast,” May 5, 1942, RG 1.2, series 205.S, box 11, folder 81, Rockefeller Archive Center, https://rockfound.rockarch.org/digital-library-listing/-/asset_publisher/yYxpQfeI4W8N/content/memorandum-regarding-study-of-forced-mass-migration-of-japanese-on-the-pacific-coast-.

¹²⁴ Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 175.

the Second Convention of the Anti-Jap Laundry League were published in a 1909 pamphlet where one Mr. Benham argued that “every effort be made to not only discourage the further invasion of our shores by Asiatics, but that those already here be given to understand that they are not an acceptable element among our people.”¹²⁵ This sentiment is not altogether surprising given Flowers’s contention that “the longer the races thus live together the more certain is their mixture.”¹²⁶ The fear of biological mixing and its political consequences thus called for their removal and was politically motivated by the certain decline in civilization that would ensue with this mixing.¹²⁷ The call for a forced withdrawal persisted into the early days of United States involvement in the war. Beyond simply putting Japanese Americans in “concentration camps,” Congressman Rankin advocated for “shipping them back to Asia as soon as possible;” we must, he said “ship them back to the Orient, where they belong.”¹²⁸ Internment was thus a perfectly intelligible reaction in terms of biopolitical racism inasmuch as it attempted to remove Japanese Americans from society in order to prevent biological mixing and the subsequent biological threat to American political structures. Where extermination and death represented an old, explicit form of sovereign power over individuals, the internment program produced a juridical death and, for a time, foreclosed any prospect of miscegenation.

Internment, though, was not only a program of separation. The true significance of this technique of power adheres closely to the term “human engineering” which the WRA described. The camps themselves represented the convergence of biopolitical and disciplinary modes of power. Where biopolitics is concerned with regularizing a population, disciplinary power is

¹²⁵ “Proceedings of the Second Convention of the Anti-Jap Laundry League,” May 9, 1909, Digital Commons @ CSUMB, https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/hornbeck_usa_8_b/2/.

¹²⁶ Flowers, *The Japanese Conquest of American Opinion*, 222.

¹²⁷ See section 2.2.

¹²⁸ United States, *Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the Seventy-Seventh Congress*, 1420.

individualizing. Foucault wrote that these two methods of power, the disciplinary and the regulatory, “do not exist at the same level. Which means of course that they are not mutually exclusive and can be articulated with each other.”¹²⁹ Disciplinary power, Foucault argued, is most effectively articulated through “permanent, exhaustive, omnipresent surveillance.”¹³⁰ Within this panoptic organization, individuals are compelled to reorganize their internal mechanisms of power.

Foucault wrote:

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power, he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes himself in the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection.¹³¹

By efficiently making individuals express this power over themselves, individualized panoptic practices serve as an efficient complement a totalizing system of biopolitics. These practices of surveillance were at a maximum in the internment camps. Foucault wrote that “the camp is the diagram of a power that acts by means of general visibility.”¹³² This surveillance began at the assembly centers where, the WRA reported, “families were living under crowded conditions, close surveillance, and with no knowledge of what would happen to them next.”¹³³ This surveillance would persist into the camps themselves. Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston remembered looking out the windows of her barrack to see reminders of their constant surveillance. She remembered: “from the guard towers the lights scanned steadily, making shadows ebb and flow among the barracks like dark, square waves.”¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 250.

¹³⁰ Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 214.

¹³¹ Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, 202-3.

¹³² Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, 171.

¹³³ War Relocation Authority, *Impounded People*, 38.

¹³⁴ Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston, *Farewell to Manzanar: A True Story of Japanese American Experience during and after the World War II Internment*, 1st Ember ed (New York: Ember, 2012), 76-77. Margie Fujiyama offered a similar account of her internment at Poston saying in an oral history interview: “we knew there

The surveillance in the camps was further inscribed by the design of the camps themselves which, in turn, expressed individualizing power over subjects stripped of their juridical personhood. The camps were designed, essentially, as military camps consisting of army barracks.¹³⁵ For Foucault, the military camp represented the paradigm of panoptic space.¹³⁶ Though army camps developed past a traditional grid structure, this grid is precisely the manner in which internment camps were constructed. Each camp was made up of a number of blocks oriented in a grid, and these blocks consisted of a grid of barracks and latrines. This careful ordering of the camp was one method of ensuring “the spatial distribution of individual bodies (their separation, their alignment, their serialization, and their surveillance) and the organization, around those individuals, of a whole field of visibility.”¹³⁷ The orientation of the guard towers at the perimeter of the camp, in this orientation, offered a field of visibility down each line of the grid in addition to a complete view of the fence surrounding the camp (Figure 3). Beyond the construction of living spaces, the camp was constructed with the strong symbolic presence of power. Disciplinary power entails the construction of “spaces that are at once architectural, functional and hierarchical...they mark places and indicate values” and offer “a better economy of time and gesture.”¹³⁸ The orientation of the camp itself outside of society reflected its exception from legal procedures and symbolically represented the exemption of internees from any legal protection or recourse. Furthermore, the

were guards. There were barbed wire fences...the block where we were assigned had the GIs, the guards and the personnel on the other side.” See: Margie Fujiyama, “O.H. 1383,” interview by Sue Fowler, January 11-12, 1973.

¹³⁵ In *Impounded People*, the WRA wrote: “they were army camps.” See: War Relocation Authority, *Impounded People*, 39.

¹³⁶ Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, 190; having been established by the military, it is no surprise that individuals in some camps were also organized in a military fashion. WRA guidelines state: “Each internee company will be commanded by a commissioned officer of the United States Army. There will also be assigned to each internee company one duty sergeant, one mess sergeant, one supply sergeant, one corporal company clerk, one private first class, and one cook.” Foucault argued that military institutions were, in a sense, the paradigm of disciplinary practices. See Grover C. McGown, “Internment Camp Regulations,” n.d., BANC MSS 67/14c, folder A 7.03:3, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6r78n4b/?brand=oac4>; Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, 157.

¹³⁷ Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 242.

¹³⁸ Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, 148.

flagpole's position in front of the MP area signified the sovereign power which they could exercise over the life of internees. Furthermore, the nearly absurd height of the flagpole would have made it visible from nearly all areas of camp. In addition to the role it played in signifying the unapologetically American nature of the program, the flag's pervasive presence would have served as a constant reminder of the way in which sovereign power governed all aspects of life in the camp. Therefore, the camp represented a whole economy of symbolic and efficient power relations in addition to explicit practices of surveillance.

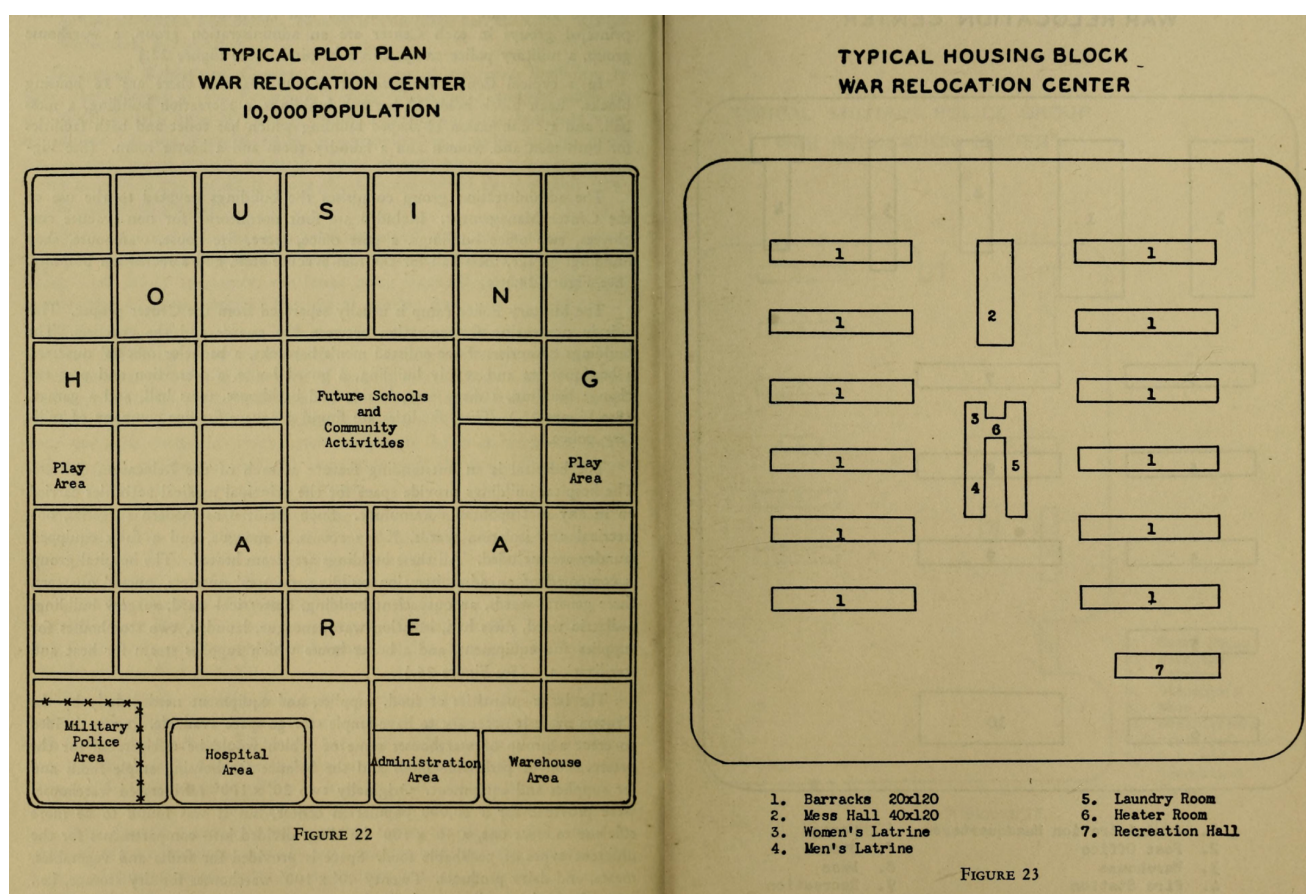


Figure 3. John Lesesne DeWitt et al. Typical Plot Plan War Relocation Center and Typical Housing Block, War Relocation Center, 1943.

*“Don’t give me that. I’m sick and tired of facts! You can twist ‘em anyway you like, you know what I mean?”*¹³⁹

– Juror 10, 12 Angry Men

*“Do you think you were born with a monopoly on the truth?”*¹⁴⁰

– Juror 9, 12 Angry Men

3.1.1 Conceptualizing Biopolitics: An Aside

It is natural, at this point, to hold suspicions of this kind of interpretation based on the intentions of historical actors. This interpretation will not be revelatory by disclosing new evidence that shows that WRA directors or other government officials said that they intended to practice biopolitical power. Nonetheless, this interpretation does maintain that they practiced and reproduced biopolitical power. One may argue that because this argument is not strictly tied to intention and awareness of historical actors and that these actors act, in a way, as subjects of a larger mode of power, this project will merely be an attempt to rephrase primary sources to support a conclusion that is at worst historically irrelevant and at best a matter of semantics. This objection will become especially pertinent in section 5.1 wherein Eric Sundquist’s objection to a characterization of WRA Director Dillon S. Meyer is evaluated. This brief section will offer an epistemological defense of the project from these possible objections. Ultimately, it will demonstrate that there is no reason to worry about intentions or awareness. Implicit in the nature of genealogical analysis is that historical actors are not fully aware of the forms of knowledge production that informs their actions and therefore cannot, from within this epistemic framework, view the precise mode of power within which they operate.

The first quick response to the awareness objection may be simply that biopolitics as a concept was not developed by Foucault until the 1970s. It would not be possible, therefore, for

¹³⁹ Sidney Lumet, *12 Angry Men*, 1957.

¹⁴⁰ Lumet, *12 Angry Men*, 1957.

historical actors in the 1940s to be aware of it as such. This, of course, is hardly a satisfying response. Even if the term was not coined until the 1970s, this is merely a semantic issue. The relevant historical actors were not using the term biopolitics, but they were also not acknowledging those conceptual components that form the core of the theory. They were not saying things like: “we are conducting these measures with Japanese Americans as a result of a development of a specific kind of power to regularize the population” or “this drive toward regularization demands the reformation of the political subjectivity of Japanese Americans.” The reason that no such statements are forthcoming is because they were not aware of the development of this power and how it guided their actions. Their inability to do so, however, is not because they were oblivious.

A historical subject’s epistemological orientation precludes their awareness and, subsequently, formation of intentions with regard to the broad historical development of power that this interpretation investigates. Foucault termed this aggregate of epistemological conditions for knowledge an *episteme*. He wrote: “in any given culture and at any given moment, there is always only one *episteme* that defines the conditions of possibility of all knowledge, whether expressed in a theory or silently invested in a practice.”¹⁴¹ One’s own *episteme*, however, is not immediately apparent from within. Within any given *episteme*, individuals believe that their form of knowledge production is most conducive to truth, and this precludes other forms of knowledge from their consideration. The authority of certain forms of inquiry may appear to reveal a teleological truth, but these are merely contingent on the *episteme* that affords those forms of inquiry legitimacy. In this case, consider the discourse pertaining to the idea that Japanese Americans are somehow biologically opposed to becoming good Americans.¹⁴² From our

¹⁴¹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2006), 183.

¹⁴² See section 2.2.

epistemological stance, this is a clearly pseudo-scientific conclusion that expresses a biopolitical sentiment. From within the epistemic mindset characteristic of their time, however, they were merely science and their conclusions merely fact. The very term pseudo is a construction of a view from the outside, from a different *episteme*. Truth is, therefore, not constant, but “truth itself forms part of the history of discourse and is like an effect internal to a discourse or practice.”¹⁴³

This understanding of knowledge also entails that it is, itself, conditioned by the expression of power. The historical actors that this interpretation examines, then, could reproduce forms of power of which they were unaware because of the way that this power conditioned the production of knowledge. Foucault wrote that “humanity installs each of its violences a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination.”¹⁴⁴ Therefore, regardless of intention, taking certain things to be objective truths would guide one to act in certain ways, and if those facts were regarded as such by a regime of knowledge subject to biopolitical power itself then one would reproduce such a system without any awareness of it. Ian Hacking summarizes the connection between such epistemological concepts and everyday activity writing in *Historical Ontology*:

A correct analysis of an idea requires an account of its previous trajectory and uses. Right now these concepts are ours, and they are often essential to the very functioning of our society, our laws, our sciences, our argumentation, our reasoning. We are stuck with them.¹⁴⁵

Thus, the aim of this genealogical interpretation is precisely to trace the trajectory of one iteration of anti-Asian racism by making explicit those implicit biopolitical assumptions that reveal a certain mode of thought and power expression toward Japanese Americans.

¹⁴³ Michel Foucault, “Interview With Michel Foucault,” interview by Duccio Trombadori, *Essential Works of Foucault* 3, (2000) 253.

¹⁴⁴ Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” 378.

¹⁴⁵ Ian Hacking, *Historical Ontology* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002), 8-9.

This is not to say, however, that power simply emerges *ex nihilo* and that those who are subject to its epistemological constructions can be absolved of their actions because they passively accepted contingent truths as absolute. Foucault's did not conceive of power as something "exerted upon us by a discernible agent or authority or system" in a way that would create a problem of moral accountability; instead, on his account, we all "participate in anonymous, unowned arrangements that he called power."¹⁴⁶ The potential unawareness of the certain implicit forms of knowledge production does not, therefore, absolve the actions the historical subjects in question. In fact, it implicates American society at large which propagated these myths and slowly constructed out of them a drive to treat Japanese Americans in a way they otherwise would not have been treated. Ultimately the drive to regularize the population through the indirect murder of a constructed human subspecies on the part of these historical actors is all their own. Their desire to fulfil a biopolitical drive based on this flawed knowledge and the nature of this expression of power, rather than individual actors, is the subject of this project.

¹⁴⁶ Hacking, *Historical Ontology*, 3.

*“Every child had a pretty good shot
To get at least as far as their old man got
But something happened/On the way to that place
They threw an American flag in our face.”*¹⁴⁷

– Billy Joel, Allentown

3.2 Walking in the Free World

To what end, then, was this disciplinary, individualizing power directed? The disciplinary and panoptic practices of power expressed in the camps did not merely serve a negative function of ensuring control over internees and symbolizing power over the juridically dead; the WRA intended them to have positive and productive effects. In one fascinating sense, these practices operated to invert a perceived power relation between Japanese Americans and white Americans. In the most consequential sense, however, these practices represented an active attempt to reform the political subjectivity of Japanese Americans. Foucault wrote that people “are perpetually engaged in a process that, in constituting objects, at the same time displaces [them], deforms, transforms, and transfigures [them] as [subjects].”¹⁴⁸ The forces of biopolitical thought had played a constitutive role in the construction of Japanese Americans, in the view of the public, as subjects which were naturally and biologically opposed to American political participation. Having killed their juridical person, this program represented an attempt by the WRA to reconstitute Japanese Americans into political subjects capable of participating in the American *body politic* through processes of disciplinary power. Furthermore, the model of the camps was an essential element of this program insofar as it was situated outside of society and offered a space for, in theory, practicing democratic organization isolated from public prejudice.

¹⁴⁷ “Allentown,” Spotify, track 1 on Billy Joel, *The Nylon Curtain*, Columbia Records, 1982.

¹⁴⁸ Foucault, “Interview With Michel Foucault,” 276. Bracketed for gendered language.

In one minor sense, the internment program represented a response to and reversal of the observation that white Americans felt at the hands of Japanese Americans. In the wake of Pearl Harbor, the WRA reported:

Suddenly it seemed that the Japanese had always lived to themselves with a one-way screen between the and the Caucasians. The screen permitted the Japanese to see and understand the Caucasians and to calculate carefully what action to take toward them, but made it impossible for the Caucasians to see any farther into Japanese life than they permitted them.¹⁴⁹

Interestingly, it was the majority that felt observed by the minority community. C. B. Horrall, the Los Angeles Chief of Police, even believed that Japanese Americans were more dangerous than Japanese aliens because of their knowledge of America. Attorney General Warren read a communication from Horrall before Congress in 1942 where he articulated his position. He warned of their danger because “they are cognizant of the American custom of living; they are capable of understanding the American language and inference.”¹⁵⁰ Horrall’s concern, of course, reiterated a biological fear of Japanese Americans and their immutable racial characteristics. He said that “...in addition to the family traits...you have racial characteristics, that of being a Mongolian, which cannot be obliterated from these persons, regardless of how many generations are born in the United States.”¹⁵¹ Internment and all of the exercises of surveillance which it entailed served to invert a specific type of power relation in American communities and reinstate control over Japanese Americans.

This inversion was only one small component of the program’s goals. One WRA employee at the Poston Internment Camp hinted at a much larger goal which clarified the WRA’s branding

¹⁴⁹ War Relocation Authority, *Impounded People*, 22.

¹⁵⁰ War Relocation Authority, *Impounded People*, 22.

¹⁵¹ War Relocation Authority, *Impounded People*, 22.

of Internment as “human engineering.”¹⁵² This employee was excited by the project because of the “opportunity to share in the accomplishment of a modern miracle...the eventual return of every member of the relocated group...as better citizens, more realistically democratic in principle, in thought, and in effect.”¹⁵³ This description of the program directs one toward the understanding that disciplinary power is not only a form of restriction, that is, this form of power was also employed to the end of positive effects. Though it served a purpose of military exclusion, the internment camps served as an area of observation and experimentation to the end of reforming the Japanese-American political subject.

The notion of experimentation in relation to internment camps originated early in the program’s history. Already by 9 February 1942, Attorney General Biddle received a letter from the editor and publisher of the Los Angeles Daily News which hypothesized: “certainly there must be a place where they can be classified, examined, guarded and given humane treatment”¹⁵⁴ This statement has a thoroughly scientific air about it, and the notion of examination was later developed by researchers at the University of California who recognized the significance of this program.¹⁵⁵ In April 1942, the president of the University of California, Robert Sproul, wrote to request funds

¹⁵² See: War Relocation Authority, *Impounded People*, 20.

¹⁵³ War Relocation Authority, *Impounded People*, 48. A memorandum from, the Assistant Chief of Staff of the Wartime Civil Control Administration, an agency created by the military to implement the evacuation order, demonstrates the contrast between the understanding of War Department and WRA regarding the goals of the program. Karl R. Bendetsen, the Assistant Chief of Staff in question wrote a memorandum to WRA Director Milton Eisenhower in which he seems to suggest that a program akin to the human engineering described in this section is impossible. He wrote of the assembly centers: “the attainment of any social ideal therein is beyond possibility.” See: Karl R. Bendetsen, “Memorandum for Mr. Eisenhower, Director, War Relocation Authority, Subject: Desirability of Rapid Relocation Center Development,” April 22, 1942, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder C1.02 (2/4), Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/28722/bk0013c8x79/?brand=oac4>.

¹⁵⁴ Manchester Boddy, “Letter to Francis Biddle,” February 9, 1942, BANC MSS 67/14c, folder A7.01, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6cz3f2w/?brand=oac4>.

¹⁵⁵ Arthur A. Hansen would similarly describe the camps as “one of the most ideal living laboratories in modern times for observing and documenting human behavior.” See: Arthur A. Hansen, “The Danger Within,” n.d., BANC MSS 83/115 c, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k65m6672/?brand=oac4>.

from the Rockefeller Foundation for a study of the evacuation and resettlement program.¹⁵⁶ The documents enclosed in this letter indicated that this research was being undertaken “in the belief that this evacuation and resettlement not only represent an extremely important social experiment,” and they went on to say that “it may well be that this event is not unique but may be the precursor of a new policy and pattern of controlled rather than voluntary migration.”¹⁵⁷ This project, then, offered to examine this experience to the end of informing future population regulation and regularization which were, of course, the ultimate aims of biopolitical power. A May 1942 interoffice memorandum expanded upon the potential utility of such a study saying: “many people predict that there will be more forced mass migrations in this country as well as in Europe after the war. If so, we should learn what we can from this experience.”¹⁵⁸ This experiment, however, was not only proposed as an object of study for its significance in terms of the population as a whole; it was also concerned with individuals. The request for funding said that among the important objects of the study were “the effects upon social behavior of individuals, including in this behavior social attitudes.”¹⁵⁹ A later transcript of a University of California Social Science staff conference reveals that Dr. Young argued that this study offered the opportunity to study the “social institutions and individuals as people” as a result of compulsory evacuation.¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, the scientific and detailed analysis of the internees appears to represent a further means of inverting

¹⁵⁶ Robert Sproul, “Letter to Joseph H. Willits,” April 3, 1942, RG 1.2, series 205.S, box 11, folder 81, Rockefeller Archive Center, https://rockfound.rockarch.org/digital-library-listing/-/asset_publisher/yYxpQfeI4W8N/content/letter-from-robert-sproul-to-joseph-h-willits-1942-april-3-.

¹⁵⁷ Robert Sproul, “Letter to Joseph H. Willits,” April 3, 1942, Rockefeller Archive Center.

¹⁵⁸ Joseph H. Willits, “Memorandum Regarding Study of Forced Mass Migration of Japanese on the Pacific Coast.”

¹⁵⁹ Robert Sproul, “Letter to Joseph H. Willits,” April 3, 1942, Rockefeller Archive Center.

¹⁶⁰ “Minutes From Social Science Staff Conference Re: Proposal for Japanese Migration Study,” May 8, 1942, RG 1.2, series 205.S, box 11, folder 81, Rockefeller Archive Center, https://rockfound.rockarch.org/digital-library-listing/-/asset_publisher/yYxpQfeI4W8N/content/minutes-from-social-science-staff-conference-regarding-proposal-for-japanese-migration-study-.

the power relation between Japanese and white Americans based on observation, that is, these studies would have revealed the workings of a previously mysterious social group.

This scientific study was not only of interest to the academic community. On April 17, 1942, Dr. Dorothy Thomas, one of the leaders of the study from the University of California, received a telegram which read: “after examination in Washington, had concluded possibility study of entire process may be made by government.”¹⁶¹ Though the government did not ultimately conduct the research on its own, the WRA was comprehensively engaged in the process. A telegram from Milton S. Eisenhower confirmed that the “War Relocation Authority approves in principle object of research proposed by Dorothy Swain Thomas and will cooperate fully.”¹⁶² The authority’s interest in this research reflects their own objectives of the internment program.

This profound interest into the study of population and individual social changes offered the potential to alter and manipulate social institutions. The actual programs conducted in the camps adhered closely to that WRA employee’s hope to produce “better citizens, more realistically democratic in principle, in thought, and in effect;” they did not only aim at examination but also at intervention.¹⁶³ In a letter to Dr. Alexander Meiklejohn, the former president of Amherst College, the Assistant Secretary of War, John McCloy, wrote:

We would be missing a very big opportunity if we failed to study the Japanese in these Camps at some length before they are dispersed...these people, gathered as they now are in these communities, afford a means of sampling their opinion and studying their customs and habits in a way that we have never had before had possible. We could find out what they are thinking about and we might very well influence their thinking in the right

¹⁶¹ Joseph H. Willits, “Telegram to Dorothy Thomas,” April 17, 1942, RG 1.2, series 205.S, box 11, folder 81, Rockefeller Archive Center, https://rockfound.rockarch.org/digital-library-listing/-/asset_publisher/yYxpQfeI4W8N/content/telegram-from-joseph-h-willits-to-dorothy-swaine-thomas-1942-april-17-.

¹⁶² Milton S. Eisenhower, “Telegram to Joseph h. Willits,” May 18, 1942, RG 1.2, series 205.S, box 11, folder 81, Rockefeller Archive Center, https://rockfound.rockarch.org/digital-library-listing/-/asset_publisher/yYxpQfeI4W8N/content/telegram-from-milton-s-eisenhower-to-joseph-h-willits-1942-may-18-.

¹⁶³ War Relocation Authority, *Impounded People*, 48.

directions before they are again distributed into communities. ¹⁶⁴

A 1942 WRA staff meeting at the Poston camp revealed a similar sentiment. The notes from this meeting indicate that the staff were aware of their project in human engineering. The notes read: “that is the greater problem than taking care of them here. What kind of people are we going to have when we leave?”¹⁶⁵ In an attempt to answer this question, Lieutenant Commander Kenneth Ringle made several policy recommendations that he hoped would permit the WRA to “do a very good job of Americanization within the relocation centers.”¹⁶⁶ These suggestions assume, of course, that a certain deficiency existed in the citizenship of Japanese Americans in the first place. Eisenhower made this clear in a memorandum saying that before developing regulations, “it will be necessary to have some experience and some tangible evidence of the aptitude of the evacuees for the exercise of governing power.”¹⁶⁷ The biopolitical concern regarding the natural aptitude of the evacuees to participate in political processes was therefore at the forefront of the WRA’s consciousness. Though based on fallacious premises, the WRA viewed the reformation of the political subjectivity of the internees as a core component of the internment program and attempted to employ disciplinary power to this end. The camp served as a mechanism whose intention was to examine and produce power relations which would culminate in this effect. This process would equate to the colloquial term: “Americanization,” that is, transforming individuals into proper political subjects of the United States.

¹⁶⁴ John J. McCloy, “Letter to Dr. Alexander Meiklejohn,” September 30, 1942, BANC MSS 67/14c, folder A5.02, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6x06dzk/?brand=oac4>.

¹⁶⁵ Poston Staff, “Staff Meeting,” May 25, 1942, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder J1.061, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6rr257s/?brand=oac4>.

¹⁶⁶ Kenneth D. Ringle, “The Japanese Question in the United States: A Compilation of Memoranda,” 1942, BANC MSS 97/145 c, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6ms3tg8/?brand=oac4>.

¹⁶⁷ Milton S. Eisenhower, “Memorandum for the Regional Director, Pacific Coast Region, and All Project Directors,” June 5, 1942, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder C1.02 (2/4), Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/28722/bk0013c8x79/?brand=oac4>.

The WRA's emphasis on self-government was a disciplinary mechanism directed at the refinement of political subjectivity through praxis.¹⁶⁸ Though the WRA did not share in such pronounced biopolitical assumptions as to believe that Japanese Americans were incapable of assimilation and must be deported, they still participated in such biopolitical assumptions to the extent that they presumed that Japanese Americans were in need of Americanization despite the fact that many were already citizens. Furthermore, regardless of the WRA's position on the matter, the assumptions and forces that placed Japanese Americans in their care were strictly biopolitical in nature. In the same way that the biopolitical mode of power did not result in direct murder in the United States, the WRA was not interested in permanently removing Japanese Americans from the United States. Rather, they gave the following assurance at the Salt Lake City conference:

The Authority will not handle this program in a manner that will make deportation of evacuees inevitable after the war. On the contrary, the process of Americanization which was already underway before the war, will continue to the extent possible under war conditions.¹⁶⁹

To this end, the WRA indicated that the camp should provide a setting "in which normal activities of life can go on as nearly as possible like those of an ordinary American community."¹⁷⁰ According to camp regulations, these American communities were to be largely self-governed in a democratic fashion. Allowing the internees to govern themselves, the WRA reasoned, would "give concrete expression to our purpose of allowing the evacuees themselves the greatest possible latitude in forming and administering the democratic institutions by which the various community

¹⁶⁸ Bryan Masaru Hayashi has mentioned this goal of the WRA program in passing. His analysis does not extend to the same areas as this paper, and his analysis of primary sources is less extensive than that presented here. This interpretation is novel in its philosophical approach to the issue. See Brian Masaru Hayashi, *Democratizing the Enemy: The Japanese American Internment* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2004).

¹⁶⁹ War Relocation Authority San Francisco Office, "Report on Meeting, April 7, at Salt Lake City."

¹⁷⁰ Office of the Director of the War Relocation Authority, "War Relocation Authority Tentative Policy Statement," May 29, 1942, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder C1.02 (2/4), Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/28722/bk0013c8x79/?brand=oac4>.

services will be carried on.”¹⁷¹ This policy was thoroughly imbued with a disciplinary form of power insofar as regulations held that “every effort should be made to train evacuees so that the proportion of positions which they can fill will be increased.”¹⁷² As such, in the same way that panoptic practices of surveillance make individuals play an active role in the power relations that bind them, this extreme emphasis on self-governance represents an attempt to imbue internees in the disciplinary and organizational structures that govern them. This structure not only produced another disciplinary mechanism which ensured the exertion of power at the lowest possible cost, a key criterion of disciplinary power, but also subscribed to the Aristotelian notion that praxis is essential in producing certain moral virtues. States of character, Aristotle argued “arise out of like activities. This is why the activities we exhibit must be of a certain kind.”¹⁷³ Beyond the practical expediency of this approach, this analysis offers another interpretation of the Poston WRA staff’s statement that “a great deal of the success of this project depends upon the people dominating the picture.”¹⁷⁴ Through this democratic exercise, then, WRA officials hoped that the internees would develop democratic principles and virtues.

The success of this program of human and social engineering was intimately intertwined with a camp system insofar as the internment camp offered a safe and controlled environment in which the WRA hoped Japanese Americans could refine their American political subjectivity by

¹⁷¹ Milton S. Eisenhower, “Memorandum for the Regional Director, Pacific Coast Region, and All Project Directors,” June 5, 1942, Online Archive of California. Though the WRA viewed self-governance as achieving this positive purpose, some saw it as merely a means by which to ensure control over the internees, see Brian Masaru Hayashi, *Democratizing the Enemy*, 107.

¹⁷² Milton S. Eisenhower, “Memorandum for the Regional Director, Pacific Coast Region, and All Project Directors,” June 5, 1942, Online Archive of California.

¹⁷³ Importantly, Foucault wrote that the disciplines aim “to obtain the exercise of power at the lowest possible cost (economically, by the low expenditure it involves; politically, by its discretion, its low exteriorization, its relative invisibility, the little resistance it arouses); secondly, to bring the effects of this social power to their maximum intensity and to extend them as far as possible, without either failure or interval.” See Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, 148; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W.D. Ross, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 953.

¹⁷⁴ Poston Staff, “Staff Meeting,” May 25, 1942, Online Archive of California.

practicing democracy. There was, of course, a clear public and institutional distrust of Japanese Americans which was intensified by the bombing of the attack on Pearl Harbor. How, then, can one reconcile the amount of power Japanese Americans were given in the camps with this distrust which supposedly motivated their internment? The camp provided a secluded space in which they could practice the exercise of democratic power without generating public distrust or fear. A 1943 document entitled “A Statement of Guiding Principles of the War Relocation Authority” reads: “loyalty grows and sustains itself only when it is given a chance. It cannot flourish in an atmosphere of suspicion and discrimination.”¹⁷⁵ At a remove from the public, then, the camps were a space where it was possible, in the eyes of the WRA, to produce truly American political subjects. If the public fear was so intense that they had to be evacuated and placed in camps and the only way to reintegrate them into American society was to Americanize them through a process of self-governance, then the camp offered the only safe place to conduct such a program. Though internees were trusted with power to govern themselves, they were clearly not yet trusted to interact with American society. On the other hand, one of the supposed reasons for a government internment program was a protection of the internees. If one operates on the assumption that the internees require Americanization by self-government, the only place Japanese Americans would be able to do so without the threat of violence from the white population. As Governor Clark of Idaho said succinctly: “these Japs need to be protected too, as many things could happen to them.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ War Relocation Authority, “A Statement of Guiding Principles of the War Relocation Authority,” 1943, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder E2.03, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k69p380j/?brand=oac4>. The notion of producing loyalty may also be understood as a sign of producing American political subjects. Manzanar’s Project Director boasted that Manzanar was the most successful center because of their ability to produce loyal citizens as measured by the loyalty questionnaire. He said: “[w]hereas Manzanar had been a problem child up to now, it is totally different now, in that the percentage of loyalty is the highest with a percentage of 97.54...Manzanar is doing better today than any of the other centers.” See: “Block Manager’s Minutes,” 30 April 1943, Folder 66.011A Manzanar June 1942-December 1943 (continued), Box 402, Central Files WRA HDQS, Community Government (General), RG 210 Records of the WRAHSCGF, NARA I, in Hayashi, *Democratizing the Enemy*, 146.

¹⁷⁶ “Conference on Evacuation of Enemy Aliens,” April 7, 1942, Online Archive of California.

This process of Americanization was complemented and emphasized by programs provided for evacuees by the WRA. The regulations permitted the organization of certain groups in camps such as Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. These programs no doubt provided necessary recreation for evacuee children, but they also reflected the attempt to reform the subjectivity of Japanese Americans. A joint statement by the WRA and the Girl Scouts reads: "In keeping with WRA policy of encouraging evacuee identification with groups typically American in concept, WRA will give full cooperation in carrying out a Girl Scout program at relocation centers."¹⁷⁷ Though important features of the Americanization program, the influence of these organizations in the project was dwarfed by the project of community schooling to which this interpretation now turns its attention.

¹⁷⁷ Office of the Acting Director of the War Relocation Authority and Office of the National Director of the Girl Scouts, "Statement of Relationships Girl Scouts and War Relocation Authority," January 20, 1944, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder E2.04:2, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6j390zc/?brand=oac4>.

*“The citizen should be moulded to suit the form of government under which he lives.”*¹⁷⁸

– Aristotle, *Politics*

3.3 Education and The Totalitarian Parallel

When one visits Manzanar today they are at once greeted by a guard tower (Figure 4).¹⁷⁹ This, the most profound of the structures at the site of the camp, is not a relic of the Internment years but rather a reconstruction. When the camps closed, the towers were immediately dismantled, but when Manzanar became a National Historic Site, Japanese Americans demanded that it be rebuilt.¹⁸⁰ Guard towers and barbed wire fences provoke discomfort because they immediately conjure to mind the totalitarian regimes of the 20th Century, and, presumably, the second and third generations of Japanese Americans hoped that the tower would help visitors grasp the contradiction between the American democratic way of life and the disturbing business of interning American citizens on the basis of their race. Rather than producing a juxtaposition between democracy and totalitarianism, however; the camps represented an experiment common to totalitarian and democratic states. The processes of Americanization that the WRA intended them to produce in many ways parallels totalitarian attempts to alter subjectivity. The philosophy underlying educational structures in the internment camps reveals this totalitarian parallel as well as education’s role as a central locus for the expression of disciplinary power intended to reform political subjectivity in the camps.

¹⁷⁸ Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. W.D. Ross, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 1305.

¹⁷⁹ The image in the figure is an original, operating guard tower rather than a reproduction.

¹⁸⁰ For more information see: “Your Dollars At Work - Manzanar National Historic Site (U.S. National Park Service),” accessed April 10, 2021, <https://www.nps.gov/manz/learn/management/yourdollarsatwork.htm>.

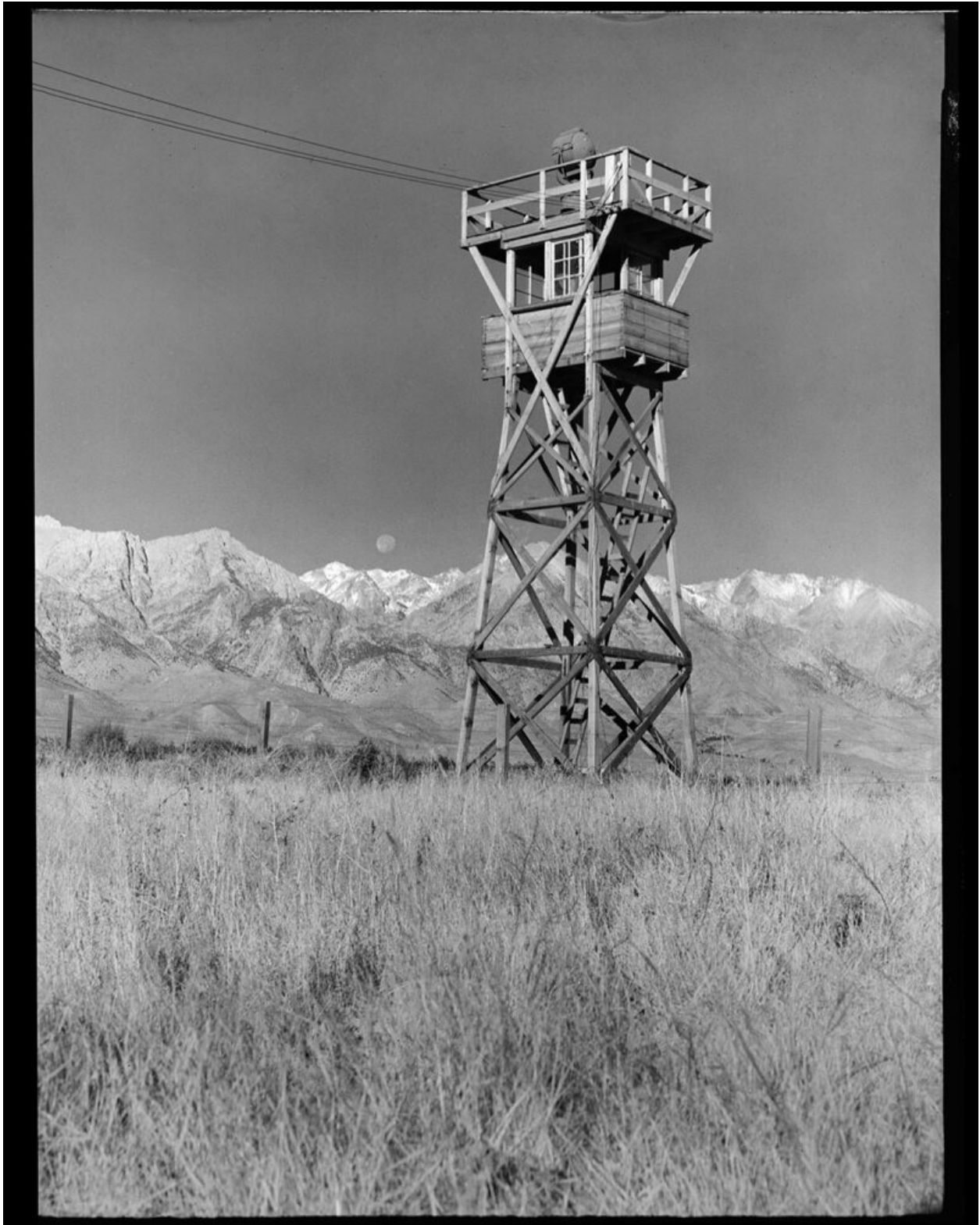


Figure 4. Toyo Miyatake, Manzanar Watch Tower, 1944.

Community schools offered a unique opportunity to further the WRA's project of Americanization. In a confidential compilation of memoranda circulated to employees of the WRA, Lieutenant Commander Kenneth Ringle wrote that "school teachers as a whole are directly responsible for the degree of Americanization that has thus far been attained by both [I]ssei and [N]isei...children have been accustomed to look to their teachers for American ideals and examples."¹⁸¹ Ringle's sentiment was certainly seized upon by the WRA who consulted graduate students at Stanford University to form the curriculum at schools in the internment camps.¹⁸² These students clearly understood the aims of the internment program describing it as follows: "the general educational objective of the Relocation Centers previously mentioned, are to be Americanized as rapidly as possible."¹⁸³ In fact, they appear to have held the same attitude with regard to experimentation as that described in section 3.2. The students wrote that the camps represented "a vast testing-ground for Democracy," and that "the fact that all of the basic social functions are more highly organized and centralized than in most communities makes these centers ideal laboratories for exploration and study."¹⁸⁴ In their report, this group of graduate students argued that robust educational systems in the camps were necessary "if the children and youth of these Relocation Centers are to continue their growth toward American ideals during the war."¹⁸⁵ These students intended the proposed curriculum to, in accordance with WRA policy, promote the

¹⁸¹ Ringle, "The Japanese Question in the United States," 1942, Online Archive of California.

¹⁸² Summer Session Students in Education 299b-Curriculum Development, Stanford University, "Proposed Curriculum Procedures for Japanese Relocation Centers," 1942, Stanford Digital Repository, <https://purl.stanford.edu/xs499cy8213>.

¹⁸³ Summer Session Students in Education, "Proposed Curriculum Procedures for Japanese Relocation Centers," 1942, Stanford Digital Repository.

¹⁸⁴ Summer Session Students in Education, "Proposed Curriculum Procedures for Japanese Relocation Centers," 1942, Stanford Digital Repository.

¹⁸⁵ Summer Session Students in Education, "Proposed Curriculum Procedures for Japanese Relocation Centers," 1942, Stanford Digital Repository.

development of “habits of scientific thought and democratic procedures.”¹⁸⁶ The authors make the previously mentioned influence of Aristotelian thought all the more palpable with the use of the term “habit.”¹⁸⁷ The students seem to have joined in Aristotle’s position that “it makes no small difference...whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather *all* the difference.”¹⁸⁸

The design and philosophical underpinnings of this educational program are uniquely revealing of the nature of “human engineering” that the camps hoped to achieve. The rationale of the proposed curriculum bears considerable resemblance to the totalitarian ideology that had developed under Stalin in the Soviet Union. The Stanford students lauded humankind’s progress toward scientific thought and rapid increase in man’s control over natural phenomena.¹⁸⁹ This is a very similar sentiment as that expressed by Ivan Michurin, a prominent Soviet botanist. He famously said: “we cannot wait for kindnesses from nature; our task is to wrest them from her.”¹⁹⁰ Furthermore, the notion of controlling nature was a central tenant of the ideology of the Soviet state itself.¹⁹¹ Both the Soviet and American iterations of this philosophy came to bear on individual human beings. To push toward the goal of generating the maximum yield from the natural world, scientists in the Soviet Union dreamed of producing man-machines who would be identified by their number, be incapable of independent thought, and have their emotions and souls

¹⁸⁶ Summer Session Students in Education, “Proposed Curriculum Procedures for Japanese Relocation Centers,” 1942, Online Archive of California.

¹⁸⁷ See section 3.2.

¹⁸⁸ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W. D. Ross (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 24.

¹⁸⁹ Summer Session Students in Education, “Proposed Curriculum Procedures for Japanese Relocation Centers,” 1942, Stanford Digital Repository.

¹⁹⁰ Ivan Michurin quoted in Stephen Brain, “Stalin’s Environmentalism,” *The Russian Review* 69, no. 1 (Jan. 2010): 93.

¹⁹¹ Alla Bolotova, “Colonization of Nature in the Soviet Union. State Ideology, Public Discourse, and the Experience of Geologists,” *Historical Social Research* 23, no. 3 (2004): 105.

measured by something resembling a pressure gauge.¹⁹² Where the Soviets called for biological reformation in order to extract the maximum yield from nature, in the American context, the Stanford students took a social approach. They wrote that “man's next period of progress must be in the realm of social pioneering if we are to utilize our recent gains over the physical and natural world.”¹⁹³ Interestingly, Mao Tse Tung drew a similar parallel between social sciences and natural science in 1940. At the inaugural meeting of Natural Science Research Society of the Border Region, Mao said:

Natural science is one of man's weapons in his fight for freedom. For the purpose of attaining freedom in society, man must use social science to understand and change society and carry out social revolution. For the purpose of attaining freedom in the world of nature, man must use natural science to understand, conquer and change nature and thus attain freedom from nature.¹⁹⁴

It is no mistake, then, that these students viewed progress as an increased reliance “on reason, science, human design, and control.”¹⁹⁵ The experimentation within the camps thus converged with totalitarianism in they were both concerned with the transformation of the political subject. Where Stalinism called for its essential destruction, Americanization called for its transformation.

The proposed educational program was not limited to one building or even one section of life in the camps. The influence of Aristotelian thought is palpable in the graduate students' conception of community schooling. Aristotle famously wrote in *Politics* that “man is by nature a political animal,” meaning that humans are unique from other animals in that they are naturally

¹⁹² Orlando Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002), 464.

¹⁹³ Summer Session Students in Education, “Proposed Curriculum Procedures for Japanese Relocation Centers,” 1942, Stanford Digital Repository.

¹⁹⁴ Tse-Tung Mao, “Speech at the Inaugural Meeting of the Natural Science Research Society of the Border Region, February 5, 1940,” in *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1966), 204.

¹⁹⁵ Summer Session Students in Education, “Proposed Curriculum Procedures for Japanese Relocation Centers,” 1942, Stanford Digital Repository.

inclined to associate in groups.¹⁹⁶ In Aristotle's view, humans are so opposed to isolation that "a man who is incapable of entering into partnership, or who is so self-sufficing that he has no need to do so, is no part of a state, so that he must be either a lower animal or a god."¹⁹⁷ The graduate students applied this philosophy to their design of the community school writing: "the individual learns, as he lives, as a unit in a social group. The school has the responsibility of seeing that learning experiences are provided, but the learning is not confined, in any sense, by the four walls of a school building."¹⁹⁸ As such, the students envisioned an educational program with "a scope as wide as all human activity."¹⁹⁹ One of the diagrams provided in the document illustrates how the community school would serve as the center of political life (Figure 5). Aristotle wrote that "the city-state is a natural growth," yet the camps were peculiar insofar as they were not natural but artificial. The construction of this kind of artificial *polis* made it possible to introduce these educational programs at their core. Where Aristotle and Plato understood that "household life exists for the sake of the 'good life' in the *polis*," the community school now served for the sake of political participation in the camps.²⁰⁰ This community school education was, then, political in the strictest sense of the term with its focus on Americanizing its subjects. The centering of the school to the end of political participation in the artificial *polis* thus, in turn, reflects the camp's

¹⁹⁶ Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library 264 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1944), 1253a.

¹⁹⁷ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a.

¹⁹⁸ Summer Session Students in Education, "Proposed Curriculum Procedures for Japanese Relocation Centers," 1942, Stanford Digital Repository.

¹⁹⁹ Summer Session Students in Education, "Proposed Curriculum Procedures for Japanese Relocation Centers," 1942, Stanford Digital Repository.

²⁰⁰ Hannah Arendt, "Selections from *The Human Condition*," in *Biopolitics: A Reader*, ed. Timothy Campbell and Adam Sitze (Durham: Duke UP, 2013), 122. Interestingly, the Classics were a central focus of the educational program at the Poston camp. The available courses were described in the Community Services staff meeting notes. The proposed course was intended to run over two years, and the second of which emphasized Classical political thought. The notes read: "The second sequence begins from March 1943 to July 1943. This term deals with the issues of politics and government, which will cover Plato's *The Republic*, Aristotle's *Politics*," among others. See: Poston Staff, "Community Services Staff Meeting Notes," September 1, 1942, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder J1.061, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6rr257s/?brand=oac4>.

role as an instrument employed for the sake of Japanese political reintegration into the American political community. Beyond the biopolitical assumptions that had placed Japanese Americans in this situation, the emphasis on education was articulated in biological terms. At a staff meeting, Nell Findley, the Chief of Community Services at the Poston camp, said that “birth is crying to be born” in the camps and that “new birth can only come...through our schools and education.”²⁰¹

The totalitarian parallel also extended to the biopolitical drive which produced Internment. Hannah Arendt wrote that forms of totalitarian organization function to weave a central fiction “into a functioning reality, to build up, even under nontotalitarian circumstances, a society whose members act and react according to the rules of a fictitious world.”²⁰² The formation of the camps was based upon a more limited iteration of such fictions. The Americanization programs in the camps operated under the fiction that because of their innate biological characteristics, Japanese Americans required reformation in order to transform them into democratic political subjects. In this case, the fiction was Yellow Peril which was grounded by distinctly biopolitical racism.²⁰³ In these ways, a biopolitical drive produced a fiction which licensed practices that mirror those of totalitarian states.

²⁰¹ Poston Staff, “Community Services Staff Meeting,” August 26, 1943, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder J1.061, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6rr257s/?brand=oac4>.

²⁰² Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 364.

²⁰³ See section 3.1.

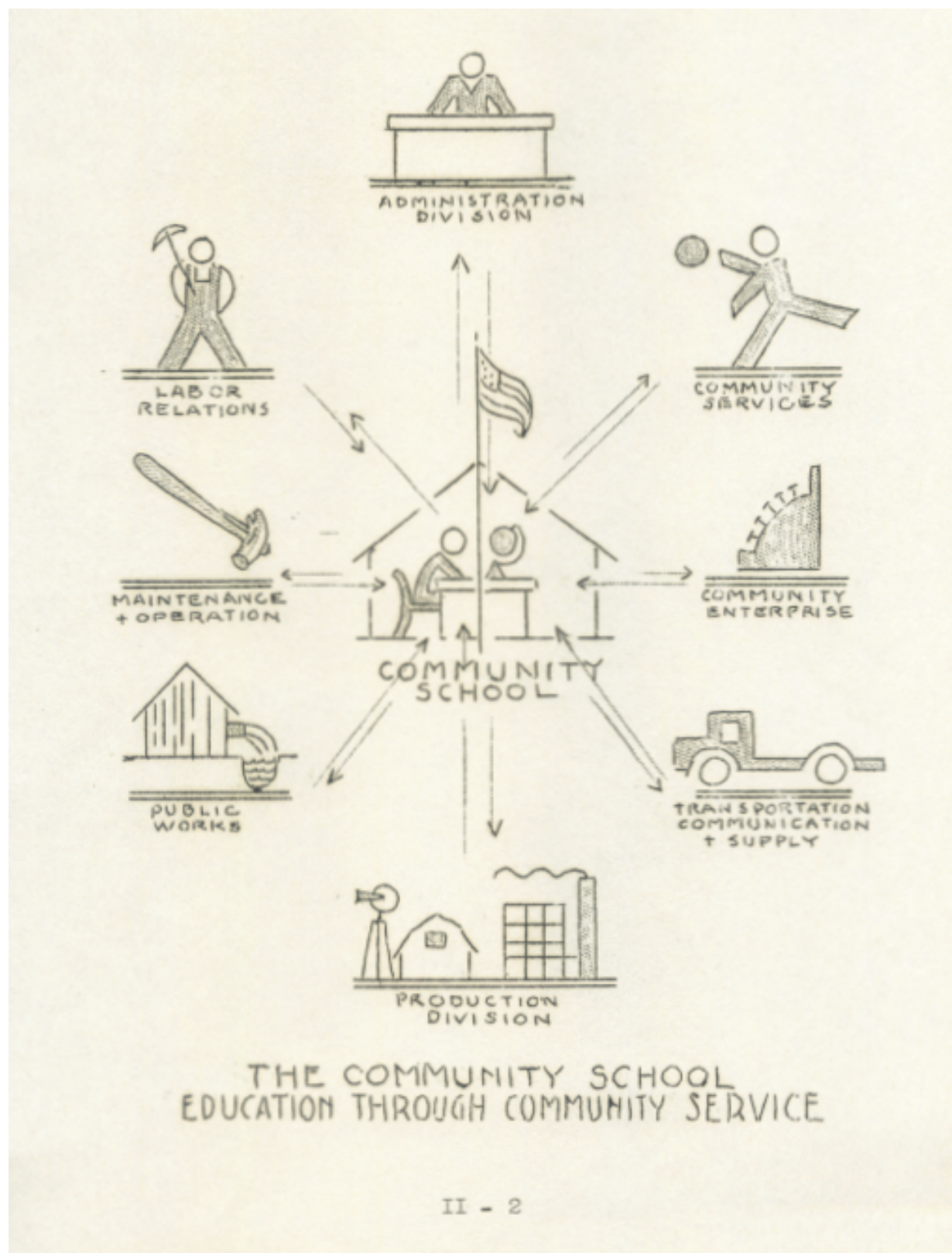


Figure 5. Stanford Summer Session Students in Education, Community School Diagram, 1942.

*“Who in the Hell wants a Japanese citizenship?”*²⁰⁴

– Stanley Hayami, Diary Entry, 14 December 1942

3.4 The Failure of Americanization

Despite the detailed disciplinary mechanisms that the WRA employed to answer a perceived need for the transformation of the political subjectivity of Japanese Americans, this program was an ultimate failure. Its failure derived directly from the fictitious nature of this need for reformation that biopolitical thought. Far from being taught the principles of democracy, Japanese Americans themselves were largely responsible for community organization in the camps that, in many ways, surpassed the United States itself in consistency with democratic and egalitarian principles. Though many internees did wish to Americanize, their conception of the program differed substantially from that of the WRA. Theirs was rooted in a practical desire for advancement and represented an act of self-determination rather than a construction of biopolitical assumptions which had produced Internment. Therefore, despite their desire, the program produced no real reformation of political subjectivity which was, given the falsity of the biopolitical assumptions that had motivated it, bound to fail.

Upon initial inspection, the WRA’s attempt to alter the political subjectivity of Japanese Americans through self-governance appears to have been a success. Democratic government emerged and, in most cases, succeeded. Despite the appearance of success, the WRA’s intended program was a failure. The narrative of democratization would predict that the internees would not be able to govern themselves initially without the careful guidance of white Americans. After all, if they were able to do so there would have been no need to Americanize them in the first place. In fact, internees were perfectly and immediately capable of self-governance from the inception of

²⁰⁴ Stanley Hayami, “Diary, Recto 12,” December 14, 1942, Online Archive of California, <https://calisphere.org/item/ark:/13030/tf6b69n817/>.

the organization of the governing bodies within the camps. Their aptitude for such responsibility is reflected by the constitutions and formation documents of community organizations which mirror the rhetoric of the founding documents of the United States. One such document composed at the Minidoka War Relocation Center reads as follows:

We, the people, residents of the Minidoka War Relocation Center, in order to uphold and defend the Constitution, of the United States of America, to effectively contribute to the national policies, to preserve and maintain the democratic principles of life, to promote the general welfare, to insure harmony and tranquility, to provide for internal peace and order, to create for ourselves a unified community to better enable us to act effectually in all matters and to give serious purpose to our conduct and activities, do hereby, in accordance with the proclamation of the project director, ordain and establish this charter for a community advisory council for the Minidoka War Relocation Center.²⁰⁵

There is little that could demonstrate the lack of need for this program than the composition of organizing documents that are completely true to the most central document in American democracy itself. Their ability to immediately meet the task of democratic self-governance thus exposed the central biopolitical fiction around which the camps were constructed.

There is good reason to think that the internees were neither passive nor blindly complacent in the composition of these documents or in the organization of their lives around democratic governance. They did not organize themselves in this way because it offered the path of least resistance or out of simple obedience to the camp administrators. The clear interpolation of the preamble to the Constitution of the United States in the Minidoka document are obvious, yet their version is not a mere facsimile of the original in that it notably omits the terms “justice” and “liberty.”²⁰⁶ This omission is especially interesting given that many of the phrases such as “tranquility” and “general welfare” are lifted directly from the Preamble to the United States

²⁰⁵ Yoshio Urakawa, “War Relocation Authority Minidoka Project Hunt, Idaho: Yoshio Urakawa File,” n.d. Thanks to Professor Onishi at International Christian University, Tokyo for providing this document.

²⁰⁶ U.S. Const. Preamble.

Constitution.²⁰⁷ The concepts of “justice” and “liberty” were in the most direct opposition to the internment program, and it appears that far from being passive and obedient, the authors of this document recognized its irony and made a comment on it by omission. Composed in a similar fashion, the constitution of the Santa Anita center also supports this conclusion. It reads:

We, the residents of the Santa Anita Assembly Center, in order to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States, to foster and spread the true spirit of Americanism, to build the character of our people morally and spiritually on American Ideals, and to promote the welfare and aid in the development of the residents in this Assembly Center, do hereby ordain and establish this Constitution.²⁰⁸

The phrase “true spirit of Americanism,” which places an Americanism true to its principles in opposition to the Americanism that they had been subjected to, suggests that these authors were similarly aware of the irony of being tasked with forming a democracy behind barbed wire.

Rather than passively receiving an imposed system of Americanization, the internees crafted and articulated a unique form of democratic governance that was, in many ways, truer to the ideals of democratic egalitarianism than that of the country that had constructed the camps. Stanley Hayami, who was interned at the Heart Mountain camp and later killed in combat as a member of the 442nd in Italy, reflected on democracy and self-governance in his diary. He too recognized the irony of conducting democracy in concentration camps writing: “its one of the most democratic places I’ve ever lived in and yet it isnt...though we had our liberty & such, which are supposed to go with democracy, taken away we still live a very democratic life inside.”²⁰⁹ In Hayami’s experience, democracy not only worked in the camp; it set a new standard. He went on to comment on the ways in which the camp had created a sort of egalitarianism by closing spatial

²⁰⁷ U.S. Const. Preamble.

²⁰⁸ Self-Government Assembly of the Santa Anita Assembly Center, “Constitution and By-Laws,” 1942, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder B7.01 (1/3), Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/28722/bk0013c8v9c/?brand=oac4>.

²⁰⁹ Stanley Hayami, “Diary, February 27, 1943,” Online Archive of California, <https://calisphere.org/item/ark:/13030/tf5h4nb0sh/>.

economic gaps because, he wrote, “we behold everyone as equals. The rich and the poor were forced into being neighbors & like it.”²¹⁰ Beyond economic equality, the self-governance of the camps often involved leadership by women. Masaru Hayashi’s research shows that women held notable political positions, especially in the Poston camp. He found that “a number of women served full or temporary terms as Issei Advisory Board members, councilwomen, block managers, or assistant block managers.”²¹¹ Hayashi also described Mary Tachibana’s rise to become the secretary of Poston’s Community Council through her exceptional leadership capabilities.²¹² The appointment of women to these positions, Hayashi found, was met with approval from some men.²¹³ Thomas Fujita-Rony similarly found that “running the camp meant that a wide range of jobs needed to be filled, and unlike the prewar situation of racial and gender-based occupational segregation, Japanese-American women were barred from comparatively few.”²¹⁴ Taking Poston as an example, Fujita-Rony showed that life in the camp transformed the labor of Japanese-American women offering many of them wage earning opportunities for the first time.²¹⁵ Furthermore, the stance that the internees took toward the administration demonstrates their active stance toward self-governance. A study of group protest in the camps found that in all incidents

²¹⁰ Hayami, “Diary, February 27, 1943,” Online Archive of California. Hayashi notes, however, that the camps were not without economic tension. At the Poston camp, wealth was concentrated in certain blocks. The poorer blocks sometimes resorted to running gambling dens to alleviate their poverty, and distinctly classist sentiment sometimes emerged. These were aggravated especially by the Poston strike. See Hayashi, *Democratizing the Enemy*, 132.

²¹¹ Hayashi, *Democratizing the Enemy*, 117.

²¹² Hayashi, *Democratizing the Enemy*, 117.

²¹³ Hayashi, *Democratizing the Enemy*, 117. Despite the opportunities women found in the camps and the limited approval that Hayashi describes, the response to this trend was not universally positive. A sociological analysis of the response of Japanese Americans’ response to the internment program in 1943 found that “some aspects of the love pattern such as kissing, the public expression of emotion, free verbalization, social dancing, and the relatively high status of women are of course repugnant to the parental generation and provide areas of culture conflict.” See: Leonard Bloom, “Familial Adjustments of Japanese-Americans to Relocation: First Phase,” *American Sociological Review* 8, no. 5 (1943): 555.

²¹⁴ Thomas Y. Fujita-Rony, “Remaking the ‘Home Front’ in World War II: Japanese American Women’s Work and the Colorado River Relocation Center,” *Southern California Quarterly* 88, no. 2 (2006): 183.

²¹⁵ Fujita-Rony, “Remaking the ‘Home Front’ in World War II,” 196.

that the researchers considered, “evacuee groups withdrew from communication whenever they interpreted actions of the administration as dictatorial, as taking decisions about their welfare out of their hands.”²¹⁶ Those who participated in the camp governments were already quite capable of democratic citizenship, and they did not accept it at the behest of the WRA. They were active in creating their own articulation of democratic government and refused to respond to the WRA’s own lack of democratic principles.

The inescapable irony of the practice of democracy under the conditions of the internment program offers another lens of interpretation with regard to the failure of the WRA program and the internees’ active effort in shaping more robust democratic structures. The initial organization of the community government in the camps excluded Issei and non-citizens from participation. In fact, until 1943, “over one-third of the evacuees were excluded from formal community government.”²¹⁷ Given that these groups were intended to be governed by community governments and that a central tenant of democracy is the consent of the governed, this program was hardly a convincing one.²¹⁸ It was not the WRA but the internees themselves who rectified this issue. Dr. T. G. Ishimaru wrote that “the Poston Temporary Community Council developed a plan to have Isseis participate in the political life of the project. Issei representatives from each Block were elected by Isseis themselves and formed an Advisory Board to the Council.”²¹⁹ Only later, he reported, did WRA directives change the qualifications regarding membership in the

²¹⁶ Norman R. Jackman, “Collective Protest in Relocation Centers,” *American Journal of Sociology* 63, no. 3 (1957): 271-2.

²¹⁷ Jackman, “Collective Protest in Relocation Centers,” 265.

²¹⁸ Developed, though not in terms of democracy, by John Locke. See: John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government: And a Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. Ian Shapiro, Rethinking the Western Tradition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

²¹⁹ Tetsuya G. Ishimaru, “History of the Temporary Community Council: Poston, Arizona,” 1942, Online Archive of California, https://oac.cdlib.org/view?docId=ft1h4n99hd&brand=oac4&doc.view=entire_text.

Community Council.²²⁰ The Nisei generally supported this program and advocated for the complete abolition of generational categories.²²¹ One Nisei leader argued that “there should be no line of demarcation between the [Issei]s and [Nisei]s since we are all living under the same conditions in this camp and that we were all thrown here against our wishes.”²²² Hayashi’s study of the support of Issei involvement, however, omits surprising dissenting opinions on the matter. Dr. T. G. Ishimaru, for example, did not favor Issei involvement in self-governance. He wrote in broad generalizations about the lack of qualifications that Issei possessed describing them as “comparatively small men, narrow thinking type, selfish with scheming interest.”²²³ Due to his observations, Ishimaru wrote that he was “in favor or of returning to the original plan whereby the citizens are participants in the Community Council.”²²⁴ In any event, this period of 1942 marked a pivotal moment in the internment program insofar as Issei were able to more concretely influence the structure of life in the camps. Their influence will be noted again in section 4.2.

In addition to the irony of excluding Issei from participation while claiming to produce democratic political subjects, the WRA’s control over their governing bodies stood in contrast to democratic governance. Ultimately, though the camps did afford internees some self-determination, “self-government was impeded by the fact that the community council was subservient...to the administration. It was thus a self-governing body only in the narrowest sense of the term. The center was, at best, benevolent authoritarianism.”²²⁵ The WRA’s emphasis on Americanization and democratization, of course, accounts for the benevolence of this program, yet

²²⁰ Ishimaru, “History of the Temporary Community Council.”

²²¹ Hayashi, *Democratizing the Enemy*, 116.

²²² Katsuhiro Endo, “Staff Meeting Research: Political Situation of Poston II,” October 2, 1942, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder J10.05 (1/2), Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/28722/bk0013c655v/?brand=oac4>.

²²³ Ishimaru, “History of the Temporary Community Council,” 1942, Online Archive of California.

²²⁴ Ishimaru, “History of the Temporary Community Council,” 1942, Online Archive of California.

²²⁵ Jackman, “Collective Protest in Relocation Centers,” 265.

this program could never have been a success for those who did not already buy into democracy given the explicit and implicit flavors of authoritarianism and totalitarianism the camps offered.²²⁶ It remained for the internees themselves to adapt the structures of their governance to work as a community and, ironically, to produce, without prompting from the WRA, elements of egalitarianism uncharacteristic of their time.

Though they did not passively accept the WRA's program, many internees did seem to fully buy into the principle of Americanization. Though they demonstrate that their authors were not ignorant of the obvious irony of their condition, these documents do seem to indicate that they wished to participate in the program of Americanization despite the injustice that had been done to them. The Santa Anita Constitution did, after all, proclaim the authors' intent to "build the character of our people morally and spiritually on American Ideals."²²⁷ Some supported the WRA program even more fervently. At a community meeting, Reverend Tarō Gotō, a Methodist minister, joined in the scientific discourse which was so prevalent in WRA documents. He said:

Topaz is more than just an engineering marvel. It is more than just an isolated settlement for evacuees. It is the sum total of dreams, deep thinking, courage, and faith—it is a living personality. Topaz is born of the great Mother America.²²⁸

Though Gotō's comments appear to wholeheartedly endorse the WRA program and praise America in a painfully indoctrinated fashion, one should be cautious of generalizing his sentiment to general opinion. Given his responsibilities as a minister and leader, Gotō likely offered these remarks to encourage internees to do their best to make the most out of a bad situation. Others

²²⁶ See section 3.2.

²²⁷ Self-Government Assembly of the Santa Anita Assembly Center, "Constitution and By-Laws," 1942, Online Archive of California.

²²⁸ Anon., "Topaz Attitudes," September 11, 1942, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder H9.06, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6kh0n15/?brand=oac4>.

shared this pragmatic sentiment. Dr. T. G. Ishimaru, at one time the Chairman of the Temporary Community Council at Poston wrote:

Let us make the Nisei government conscious, that there is a responsibility on their shoulders to make them better citizens, to make them understand American Institutions which is theirs as long as they live in this country. In one respect this is an Americanization program.²²⁹

Dyke Miyagawa wrote in a similar vein regarding Minidoka that “this place has all the essential makings of a model community...there is absolutely no reason why we cannot convert this whole evacuation program into an asset for ourselves on this Minidoka soil.”²³⁰ These passages should not be confused as a subservience to the WRA. Instead, they indicate a pragmatic drive to convert their misfortune into an asset. For internees to succeed in America, the internees understood, they must be able to participate in its governmental structures. They did independently assent to this premise of the WRA program, yet their endorsement is centered on, as Ishimaru wrote, making Nisei “understand American Institutions” rather than some kind of innate aptitude for democratic processes. Therefore, this group of internees did not share in the biopolitical implications of the WRA’s program. Given that a racialized aptitude for democracy was a clear fallacy, it seems that even internees who were willing to support the program viewed it as an extension of factual knowledge than a reformation of political subjectivity. They, who the WRA had intended to teach, avoided this fallacy.

²²⁹ Ishimaru, “History of the Temporary Community Council,” 1942, Online Archive of California.

²³⁰ Dyke Miyagawa, “Dyke Miyagawa Letter to James Sakamoto Describing Conditions at the Minidoka Internment Center,” August 12, 1942, University of Washington Libraries, https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/community.29379406.pdf?ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3Abf611e320d3c76e1667edaf6f56cd105.

*“Anarchy tears up a city, divides a home,
 Defeats an alliance of spears.
 But when people stay in line and obey,
 Their lives and everything else are safe.
 For this reason, order must be maintained.”*²³¹

– Creon, *Antigone*

3.5 The Family Double Bind and Looking Toward Atomization

The evacuation and subsequent internment of Japanese Americans from the Pacific Coast severely disrupted the traditional family structure and subsequent social organization of their communities. Though the social disorder of the camps had a destructive influence on familial control, these familial structures reemerged or persisted in some cases. On one hand, the disintegration of family control threatened the Americanization project as a whole, and on the other, the strength of familial connections did the same. On either account, the Americanization program of the camps from the perspective of the WRA was an inevitable failure. While section 3.4 demonstrated the *a priori* features of the program that dictated its failure, evaluating the role of the family within the camps will demonstrate a phenomenon which the WRA identified as a barrier to their project. The WRA's double bind in this case offers a new interpretation of the ultimate resettlement program. The untenability of the camps as a response to the biopolitically informed racism that had motivated the program, given that they could either not achieve their goal or further Japanize the internees, would have necessitated a transition to a new program. Section 4 will demonstrate how resettlement offered an apt resolution to this tension.

The Nisei's contestation of Issei control and the subsequent conflict between the two groups originated well before the attack on Pearl Harbor. The roots of this conflict, it appears, reach as far as the birth of the second generation. A statement of research intention from the

²³¹ Sophocles, *Antigone*, trans. Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co, 2001), 29.

Evacuation and Resettlement Study from early 1944 stated: “as the [Nisei] began coming of age in the later thirties, conflicts became more vigorous between the two generations. Manifestations of social disorganization were plentiful.”²³² This conflict was expressed in cultural differences produced by immigration. Frank Miyamoto, a Nisei sociologist who served as a field worker for the Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Study, wrote that with immigration to the United States, “the significance of the family name and of primogeniture disappeared, the meaning of the Japanese age structure of society was lost to the American-born Japanese.”²³³ Since the beginnings of the conflict, then, social structure and family structure were intimately intertwined. Thus, the deterioration of this family structure coincided with the destruction of Japanese communities as a locus of social relations. Leonard Bloom, a sociology professor from UCLA who began to study the Internment because of its effects on his students, emphasized the importance of the family in the social structure of Japanese-American communities writing that “the family is the salient Japanese institutional form and the most pervasive system within the socio-cultural complex.”²³⁴

Though the disintegration of family and community structure had been strained in the years leading up to the attack on Pearl Harbor, the evacuation and internment program accelerated their rupture. The initial roundup of Japanese-American community leaders immediately following Pearl Harbor in 1941 destabilized families along with the more general social structure that had developed in these communities. During this period, the FBI detained any and all notable Japanese

²³² Shibutani, “The First Year of the Resettlement of Nisei in the Chicago Area,” 1944, Online Archive of California.

²³³ S. Frank Miyamoto, “Collective Adjustments to the Relocation Center,” 1942, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder R 20.60, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6mw2gvq/?brand=oac4>. For more information on Miyamoto’s career and pioneering work see: “S. Frank Miyamoto | Densho Encyclopedia,” accessed April 10, 2021, https://encyclopedia.densho.org/S._Frank_Miyamoto/.

²³⁴ Bloom, “Familial Adjustments of Japanese-Americans to Relocation: First Phase,” 551. For more information on Bloom see: “Leonard Bloom/Leonard Broom | Densho Encyclopedia,” accessed May 2, 2021, <https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Leonard%20Bloom/Leonard%20Broom>.

community members including “Japanese Association officers, publishers, editors, and staffers of vernacular newspapers, and officials of Japanese cultural organizations.”²³⁵ With the sheer breadth of this roundup in mind, it is no surprise that a study of evacuation found that “this action, aside from accomplishing societal decapitation, seriously disturbed the subculture’s informational ecology.”²³⁶ The loss of so many individuals also disturbed family structure. The Bureau of Sociological Research for the Poston camp wrote that “great numbers of the alien heads of families were picked up for questioning and detained, and most of those who were left were afraid they would be taken at any time.”²³⁷ The evacuation program thus represented more than a forced migration; it destroyed the social structure in which Japanese Americans found meaning. Evacuation replaced these culturally rich settings with assembly centers and internment camps. This period therefore “entailed a cataclysmic change in every facet of their cultural composition.”²³⁸

Though the internment camps offered a greater deal of stability than the evacuation period and concentrated Japanese Americans in spatial proximity, strains on family and social structure persisted. A study of the Poston camp found that “within the relocation centers, influences of disorganization have continued to operate on the family in spite of the return of many fathers.”²³⁹ Though the evacuation briefly drew families together over the uncertainty of their future, life in the camp barracks voided the community of any “common purposes or activities to provide functional ties and group meanings.”²⁴⁰ Camp life reflected and, perhaps, inspired the idea for

²³⁵ Hansen, “The Danger Withinu,” n.d., Online Archive of California.

²³⁶ Hansen, “The Danger Withinu,” n.d., Online Archive of California.

²³⁷ Bureau of Sociological Research Colorado River War Relocation Center, “The Japanese Family in America,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 229, no. 1 (September 1, 1943): 154. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000271624322900119>.

²³⁸ Hansen, “The Danger Withinu,” n.d., Online Archive of California.

²³⁹ Bureau of Sociological Research Colorado River War Relocation Center, “The Japanese Family in America,” 155.

²⁴⁰ Bloom, “Familial Adjustments of Japanese-Americans to Relocation,” 559.

community schools insofar as this plan demonstrated the decentering of the home as an organizing principle of political life.²⁴¹ The WRA found that, among other factors, “eating in common mess halls has had the effect of weakening family solidarity.”²⁴² This lack of solidarity also resulted in fundamental shifts in family structure and power relations. The traditional patriarchal structure disappeared insofar as “the father’s authority as head of the household lost much of its functional character.”²⁴³ Amid waning family control a strong sense of individuality began to develop. Even young children, according to the WRA study, “detached themselves from parental supervision, returning to the home barracks perhaps only to sleep.”²⁴⁴ The WRA strongly identified this individuality with Americanization because it represented the disruption of social controls imposed by Japanese customs and communities. The camps created conditions that accelerated the process of social Americanization which had developed during the pre-war years, and this state of disorder ultimately set the stage for the atomization of Japanese-American communities in the WRA’s resettlement program.

The effects of the disintegration of family control reached beyond the immediate family and threatened the WRA’s project of Americanization. A community analysis report from 1943 worried because “the artificial social and economic situations of center life...created a new society with no regular system of social controls.”²⁴⁵ The family represented a central tool for the expression of disciplinary power, so it is no surprise that the WRA was concerned with its ability

²⁴¹ Given that the family was such an important element of Japanese culture, is it any surprise that the decentering of the home was a key element of the Americanization program?

²⁴² Edward H. Spicer, “The Use of Social Scientists by the War Relocation Authority,” *Applied Anthropology* 5, no. 2 (1946): 20.

²⁴³ Bloom, “Familial Adjustments of Japanese-Americans to Relocation,” 559.

²⁴⁴ Bloom, “Familial Adjustments of Japanese-Americans to Relocation,” 559.

²⁴⁵ John F. Embree, “Community Analysis Report No. 5, ‘Evacuee Resistances to Relocation,’” June 1943, CSU Japanese American Digitization Project, <https://cdm16855.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16855coll4/id/403>.

to regulate life in the camps. In fact, the Bureau of Sociological Research at Poston went so far as to emphasize the use of the family to produce good American citizens. They wrote:

To the extent that filial duty is a trait of Japanese family life, it is a potent force for the creation of good citizens. It seems, therefore, that the problem of the Japanese family is a quest for security in the face of strongly demoralizing and disintegrating influences.²⁴⁶

The lack of the family as a force of disciplinary control naturally had the converse effect of threatening the Americanization program. The 1943 community analysis report found that the disintegrating family structure had made it difficult for parents to restrain the activities of their children, especially young men, who formed gangs that could “easily drift from anti-project administration to anti-American in attitude.”²⁴⁷ On this report’s account, the developing individuality that accompanied Americanization was paradoxically in jeopardy of threatening the program of Americanization that the WRA hoped to institute. Interestingly, on Foucault’s account the family “has been infiltrated by discipline and co-opted by biopower” which diluted its institutional power.²⁴⁸ Is it any surprise, then, that the Japanese family structure began to disintegrate with the advent of biopolitical power expression within the camps including the decentering of the home?

The cases in which family structure and control persisted, however, also undermined the Americanization program and reveals the tension between the disciplinary power expression of the internment camps and the Americanization to which it was directed. The Bureau of Sociological Research at Poston found that “young people who formerly thought of themselves only as Americans are now more under the influence of the culture of their alien parents.”²⁴⁹ This

²⁴⁶ Bureau of Sociological Research Colorado River War Relocation Center, “The Japanese Family in America,” 156.

²⁴⁷ Embree, “Community Analysis Report No. 5, ‘Evacuee Resistances to Relocation,’” June 1943.

²⁴⁸ Chloë Taylor, “Foucault and Familial Power,” *Hypatia* 27, no. 1 (2012): 202.

²⁴⁹ Bureau of Sociological Research Colorado River War Relocation Center, “The Japanese Family in America,” 155.

kind of control clearly ran contrary to the Americanization program, and WRA social scientists explicitly acknowledged this trend writing: “[Nisei] who were becoming Americanized in California are now subjected to strong Japanese influences. A racial solidarity vis-a-vis the Caucasian administrative staff is another inevitable result of center life.”²⁵⁰

Though fears of the Yellow Peril had demanded the dispersal of Japanese-American communities from the Pacific Coast, the tension between the internal structure of families and the WRA’s goal of individualizing Americanization demanded a more pronounced atomization of evacuees. This concept of an Asian horde, a constitutive element of the Yellow Peril, is again apparent in the Poston Bureau of Sociological Research’s report on the Japanese-American family. Beyond finding, as noted above, that the tightening of family ties threatened the Americanization program, the bureau wrote that among the factors producing “increased family unity” was a “lack of white contacts and great increase in Japanese contacts.”²⁵¹ This report thus singles out a need for increased contact with white Americans in order to disrupt the tendency of coherence between the internees. This logic was carried through to the resettlement program and would logically conclude with a call for the destruction of the Japanese-American social body as a whole.

²⁵⁰ Embree, “Community Analysis Report No. 5, ‘Evacuee Resistances to Relocation,’” June 1943.

²⁵¹ Bureau of Sociological Research Colorado River War Relocation Center, “The Japanese Family in America,” 156.

*“Oh, someday girl, I don't know when
 We're gonna get to that place
 Where we really want to go, and we'll walk in the sun
 But till then, tramps like us
 Baby, we were born to run.”*

– Bruce Springsteen, “Born to Run”²⁵²

3.5.1 American Sex: A Brief Comment on Buying into Biopolitics

Among the most pronounced of tensions between Issei and Nisei in the camps formed around the axis of sexual relations. The tendency for Nisei to become more individualistic in the camps often manifested itself as a sexual liberalization which was met with profound apprehension by their Issei parents. Though this sexual liberalization appears, upon initial inspection, as a form of positive liberation ironically produced by their imprisonment in the camps, it should not be understood as such. Sex plays a central role in Foucault’s formulation of biopolitics in *The History of Sexuality*, and studying sexual relations in the camps thus offers a fascinating understanding of the emerging function of biopolitics in the newly Americanized Nisei. Rather than necessarily representing an affront to power, in this case the power relations between parents and children, sexual liberalization merely represents an inscription into other forms of power. The individualism and hence sexual liberalism of Nisei were viewed as features of Americanization, and their adoption of these practices thus did accelerate the formation of power relations that were more American, that is, biopolitical in character, though it was not a kind of Americanization which the WRA was conscious of. This case offers an example of the argument presented in section 3.1.1 insofar as it demonstrates how biopolitics flowed through institutions and individuals without any consciousness of this deployment of power or intent to reproduce it.

²⁵² “Born to Run,” Spotify, track 5 on Bruce Springsteen, *Born to Run*, Columbia Records, 1975.

The WRA was aware of the conflict regarding sexual relations and described the nature of this conflict as the adoption of American culture by the Nisei. Bloom's study reported that by the end of 1942, Nisei ended to "withdraw from the familial group with its conservative Japanese cultural attributes, as evidenced by age group formation."²⁵³ This cultural conservatism, then, was an element to which Nisei reacted and did so often along the lines of sexual relations. The WRA familial adjustment found: "to the concern of their elders, childrens and adolescents became sexually sophisticated and voyeuristically oriented. Lovers became inhibited or defiant or both."²⁵⁴ The individuality of American culture in combination with weakening family control was a root cause of this development. A 1942 report found that "the [Nisei] learned to be more individualistic, and the stress on hedonistic satisfaction in American culture was taken over."²⁵⁵ One young woman described the tension between conservative Issei and newly individualistic Nisei saying:

I guess we can't blame the oldsters for making meaningless comments about those passing by, but pretty soon they become rumors, etc. All of this conservative behavior only because our parents didn't experience the same type of sex behavior during their prime. In fact, my parents have never seen us kissing except once at our wedding ceremony.²⁵⁶

Though this young Nisei was married, Issei still struggled to accept public expressions of affection. Miyamoto described this behavioral rift with reference to typical Issei behavior. He wrote in his analysis of adjustment to the relocation centers:

[Nisei] couples are usually seen walking together to the messhall, sometimes arm in arm, but the [Issei] husbands and wives seldom go together. Among the latter, either each will seek his individual way to the messhall, or the husband will walk several paces ahead of the wife.²⁵⁷

²⁵³ Bloom, "Familial Adjustments of Japanese-Americans to Relocation," 559.

²⁵⁴ Bloom, "Familial Adjustments of Japanese-Americans to Relocation," 558.

²⁵⁵ Tamotsu Shibutani, "Structural Report: Social Disorganization and Reorganization, I," November 11, 1942, Bancroft Library, https://digitalassets.lib.berkeley.edu/jarda/ucb/text/cubanc6714_b266r21_0007_5.pdf.

²⁵⁶ Bloom, "Familial Adjustments of Japanese-Americans to Relocation," 559.

²⁵⁷ Miyamoto, "Collective Adjustments to the Relocation Center," 1942, Online Archive of California.

The emerging conflict in sexuality was also expressed in the recreational activities in which Nisei often participated. The camp social dances were a serious point of tension insofar as “among [Issei] the close body to body contact of American social dances is looked upon with moral misapprehension.”²⁵⁸ Issei did not only express disapproval in terms of a kind of generic moral conservatism. In fact, their concern was culturally informed. In their eyes, “external indications of intimacy or affection reveals too much of the inner qualities of individuals and does injury to one of their most sacred sentiments, that one should not reveal too much of one's inner feelings to others.”²⁵⁹

The emerging conflict along sexual lines was codified and even more greatly emphasized by camp codes of conduct which banned cohabitation.²⁶⁰ Interestingly, the application of these codes as well as those involved in producing and enforcing them nuances generational generalizations often found in Internment scholarship by revealing that this rift was not purely along generational lines. The minutes of a 1942 Temporary Community Council Meeting at Poston reveal that concern surrounding sexual conflict was widespread:

A Councilman said, “This thing ought to be considered because we want to encourage legal marriage here, not illegal marriage.” Another rose to say, “We ought to prevent scandal in the block. If you had a daughter, would you want her to live with a man without being married?”²⁶¹

Though this meeting was held in 1942, which proved a pivotal moment insofar as Nisei made efforts at this time to include Issei in the governance of the camps, Issei would not be eligible for

²⁵⁸ Miyamoto, “Collective Adjustments to the Relocation Center,” 1942, Online Archive of California.

²⁵⁹ Miyamoto, “Collective Adjustments to the Relocation Center,” 1942, Online Archive of California.

²⁶⁰ Community Council of the Community of Poston, “Penal Code of the Community of Poston,” August 5, 1943, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder J1.614, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k67h1rkv/?brand=oac4>.

²⁶¹ Poston Temporary Community Council, “Meeting of the Poston Temporary Community Council,” August 12, 1942, Japanese American Relocation Centers Records, <https://blogs.cornell.edu/japaneseamericanrelocationrecordsarchive/aas-2130-fall-2014/community-governance/meeting-of-poston-temporary-community-council-8121942-mess-hall-of-block-21/>.

leadership positions in the governance in the camps until 1943, so these councilmembers must have been Nisei. Their comments reveal that, in many ways, the Issei/Nisei division is an oversimplification of attitudes toward things like marriage and sex. George Fuji's oral history reveals that he held a contrasting view to that of the councilmembers. Fuji was a Nisei educated in Japan and was appointed to the Judicial committee at Poston when he was about twenty-seven years old.²⁶² When asked about his experiences in this capacity, Fuji recalled: "an outstanding one that I remember was for so-called illicit cohabitation."²⁶³ Fuji did not use his position, however, to punish such offences. He described how he would handle these cases as follows:

I asked the couple if they intended to get married one of these days. If they said yes, then I would tell them to sign a paper to this effect. I don't know what happened to the paper, but at least they promised that they would get married some day...Of course, this was beyond my authority.²⁶⁴

Therefore, though tensions arose around the axis of sexuality, they did not do so purely along generational lines.

Regardless of the stakeholders in this issue, one may be tempted to assume that this sexual 'liberation' was a positive sign of resistance to traditional forms of power that occurred as a result of the internment program. This view is false. The disruption of the web of power relations brought about and emphasized by evacuation and internment allowed for the formation of new power relations that are closely linked to the development of biopolitics. Sex and sexual liberation are central themes in *The History of Sexuality* where Foucault developed the concept of biopolitics. Foucault wrote that sexuality is deployed to permit the investment of power in life.²⁶⁵ Sexuality is central to biopolitics insofar as life is no longer considered a simple organization with the capacity

²⁶² George Fuji, "George Fuji Oral History", August 31, 1976, California State University Fullerton Oral History Program.

²⁶³ Fuji, "George Fuji Oral History", August 31, 1976, California State University Fullerton Oral History Program.

²⁶⁴ Fuji, "George Fuji Oral History", August 31, 1976, California State University Fullerton Oral History Program.

²⁶⁵ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 152.

for reproduction, rather sex represents “that very element which introduces the biological dimension: the matrix not only of the living, but of life itself.”²⁶⁶ Sex represents a grouping of “anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, and pleasures,” and this concept conceals the expression of biological power, “it enables one to conceive of power solely as law and taboo.”²⁶⁷ The deployment of sexuality created a principle of a desire for sex, and “it is this desirability that makes us think we are affirming the rights of our sex against all power, when in fact we are fastened to the deployment of sexuality that has lifted up from deep within us a sort of mirage in which we think we see ourselves reflected-the dark shimmer of sex.”²⁶⁸ Though a full analysis of the ends to which the desire for sex was mobilized in the biopolitical mode is beyond the scope of this investigation, these observations about the investment of biopolitics in sex have been sufficient to show that the development of more liberal practices of sex was not liberation from conservative controls. Instead, it demonstrated the formation of biopolitical power relations amongst the young internees and hence, in a way, their Americanization.

²⁶⁶ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 78.

²⁶⁷ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 154; 155.

²⁶⁸ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 157.

4. Home is Where the Hatred Is: Resettlement and Realizing Dispersal²⁶⁹

*“Such was the work, so intricate the place,
That scarce the workman all its turns cou'd trace;
And Daedalus was puzzled how to find
The secret ways of what himself design'd.”*²⁷⁰

– Ovid, *Metamorphoses*

4.1 The Daedal Operations of Biopolitics

While the camps intended to express power over individuals of a certain biological group assumed to be incapable of democratic political participation, another more generalized form of biopolitical power had also emerged. Just as individualizing and generalizing power operate at different levels meaning “that they are not mutually exclusive and can be articulated with each other,” the individualizing program of the internment camps coexisted with the generalizing biopolitical process that had called for their indirect political murder.²⁷¹ This regularizing process, made possible by the biopolitical racism directed against Japanese Americans and encapsulated by the Yellow Peril, now turned toward producing a new kind of indirect murder by distributing the Japanese-American population across the United States. The approach to indirect murder through dispersal did not emerge as a result of the failures of the camps, but rather had roots in the years leading up to the evacuation. The resettlement period, which began in 1942, dispersed the evacuees into the interior of the United States and marked a new turn in American biopolitics. The disciplinary expression of power in the camps could not achieve Americanization based on both *a priori* and *a posteriori* considerations. The WRA’s evaluation of these problems presented by the

²⁶⁹ This section title derives from: “Home is Where the Hatred Is,” Spotify, track 4 on Gil Scott-Heron, *Pieces of a Man*, Ace Records, 1970. Though this song is dedicated to a very different subject matter, one cannot help but be moved by the following lines given their pertinence to Japanese Americans seeking a new life away from the exclusion area of the Pacific Coast: “Home is filled with pain and it/Might not be such a bad idea/If I never, never went home again.”

²⁷⁰ Ovid, *Ovid’s Metamorphoses*, trans. John Dryden (London: Martin and Bain, 1704), 140.

²⁷¹ Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 250.

family revealed the tension between the two emerging strains of biopolitics. The concern for the family's role in disciplinary power reflects the first, that is, the attempt to reform the political subjectivity of Japanese Americans, and the fear that the family could threaten this very Americanization program represents the other drive to disperse and destroy the Japanese social body as a whole. That is, the control of the family simultaneously supported and threatened the disciplinary practices aimed at a subject formation which was, given Japanese Americans' equal capacity to participate in democracy, already a *non sequitur*.²⁷² The WRA's double bind in this area is consistent with the turn toward asserting a right of life and death over the Japanese-American social body. Ultimately, subjecting the WRA's intentions and the harms of the resettlement program to biopolitical analysis will demonstrate that resettlement was informed by the same biopolitical thought that had produced the internment program and, subsequently, that the resettlement program was a closely related extension of the biopolitical power expressed in the camps themselves. Nell Findley, the Chief of Community Services at Poston, explicitly tied this social death to biological metaphor saying: "part of the society is dying and also how birth is crying to be born."²⁷³

The pre-war Japanese-American communities served a uniquely important function in socially orienting their members, yet their tight-knit structure amplified biopolitical fears of the Yellow Peril which produced a demand for dispersal. In the years leading up to WWII, Japanese immigrants and their American-born children were concentrated primarily on the Pacific Coast and, more specifically, in Japanese communities colloquially referred to as "Little Tokyos."²⁷⁴

²⁷² See section 3.4.

²⁷³ Poston Staff, "Community Services Staff Meeting," August 26, 1943, Online Archive of California.

²⁷⁴ Tamotsu Shibutani, "The First Year of the Resettlement of Nisei in the Chicago Area: A Preliminary Classification of Materials and a Statement of Tentative Plans for Further Research," 1944, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder T1.842, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/28722/bk0013c512n/?brand=oac4>.

These communities were a support structure which Issei formed in response to white hostility and housing discrimination.²⁷⁵ As such, Japanese-American communities “provided Japanese Americans some physical and emotional protection from racial prejudice.”²⁷⁶ The centrality and function of community as a mechanism of support and cooperation, however, contributed to the suspicions surrounding Japanese Americans in the wake of the attack on Pearl Harbor. The WRA found that “the concentration of the Japanese into their own colonies...focused attention on them as a special group.”²⁷⁷ This attention sometimes took the form of suspicions about the allegiance of Japanese Americans which were often linked to factors like economic cohesion. Community members in Orosi, California reportedly suspected that members of the Japanese community were receiving aid from Japan because the Depression had bankrupted Caucasian members of the community but not the Japanese.²⁷⁸ Documents produced after the beginning of Internment also indicate that the dispersal was motivated by the Yellow Peril. Once the internment program was underway, WRA social scientists wrote: “there has been a tendency a priori to interpret the breakup of the Japanese colonies in our cities as assimilative in character.”²⁷⁹ The term “*a priori*,” of course, indicates that these were assumptions produced before experience with the actual internment, and this short line expands upon the logic of the Yellow Peril expressed in the years leading up to the evacuation. The use of phrases such as “our cities” and terms such as “colonies” references the perpetual foreignness inherent in the Yellow Peril. A Harvard Law Review article argued that this idea of the “intrinsic foreignness of Asian Americans bolsters the ‘nativist’ response, which situates anyone ‘different’ outside the boundaries of community, and as such, undeserving of

²⁷⁵ Brooks, “In the Twilight Zone Between Black and White,” 1659.

²⁷⁶ Brooks, “In the Twilight Zone Between Black and White,” 1659.

²⁷⁷ War Relocation Authority, *Impounded People*, 27.

²⁷⁸ War Relocation Authority, *Impounded People*, 27.

²⁷⁹ Bloom, “Familial Adjustments of Japanese-Americans to Relocation: First Phase,” 559.

respect and solicitude.”²⁸⁰ This response combined with the Yellow Peril’s transmogrification of “Asian Americans into a faceless, deindividualized horde.”²⁸¹ This notion of “horde” was represented in numerous fiction books beginning in 1880 which were concerned with the recent advent of Chinese immigration.²⁸² Steiner also referenced this idea writing of Japanese immigration: “when this oriental horde reaches America it is inevitable that the situation should be further complicated by the factor of racial conflict.”²⁸³ It appears that evacuation and internment represented a first step of dispersal in response to this “horde” logic, that is, it removed the threat of densely packed Japanese-American communities from the Pacific Coast. The next iteration of this drive for dispersal would be a more fine-grained dispersal of individuals from the internment camps.²⁸⁴

The WRA’s resettlement policies intended to accomplish an atomization of individual Japanese Americans in their new homes in a way that clearly responded to the dispersal drive produced by the biopolitical racism of the Yellow Peril. The WRA resettlement program proceeded in stages which, for the most part, began in the fall of 1942. At this time, the WRA offered indefinite leave clearance to any internee who passed a stringent security clearance procedure.²⁸⁵ The WRA began to pursue the program more aggressively in 1943 in order to cut camp expenditures and supplement the country’s workforce.²⁸⁶ By the end of 1944, over 35,000 evacuees had been resettled as a result of this program.²⁸⁷ During this resettlement program, the

²⁸⁰ “Racial Violence Against Asian Americans,” *Harvard Law Review*, 1937.

²⁸¹ “Racial Violence Against Asian Americans,” *Harvard Law Review*, 1938.

²⁸² Lyman, “The ‘Yellow Peril’ Mystique,” 690.

²⁸³ Steiner, *The Japanese Invasion*, 193.

²⁸⁴ Is it any surprise that a more individualized dispersal program corresponded with the individualizing power practiced in the camps?

²⁸⁵ Weglyn, *Years of Infamy*, 101.

²⁸⁶ Weglyn, *Years of Infamy*, 102.

²⁸⁷ Sandra C. Taylor, “Leaving the Concentration Camps: Japanese American Resettlement in Utah and the Intermountain West,” *Pacific Historical Review* 60, no. 2 (1991): 174.

majority of the evacuees relocated to Chicago. For this reason, accounts of resettlers in Chicago are particularly rich, and this interpretation's analysis of resettlement will, therefore, largely center on Chicago.²⁸⁸ The intent of the resettlement program was to atomize the Japanese community and permanently disintegrate the concentrated settlements which were formerly home to most Japanese Americans. The disorder and social violence that was leveled against the internees with their dispersal and subsequent destruction of their communities occurred again with the dispersal of the patchwork communities that they had been able to realize in the internment camps. In a 1943 Press Conference, Dillon S. Meyer, the Director of the WRA, justified the scattering of Japanese Americans away from the Pacific Coast saying:

I think it would be good for the United States generally and I think it would be good from the standpoint of the Japanese-Americans, themselves, to be scattered over a much wider area and not to be bunched up in groups as they were along the Coast. That is one of the objectives that we have in mind in pushing this relocation program. We think it will probably assist in solving what could develop into a serious racial problem by having them scattered throughout the United States instead of bunched up on three or four states.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁸ Before the war, somewhere between 390 and 400 Japanese and Japanese Americans lived in Chicago, and by the end of the war, 20,000 of the 60,000 resettled evacuees had settled down in Chicago. See: S. Frank Miyamoto, "Interim Report of Resettler Adjustments in Chicago," March 1, 1944, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder T1.838 (2/2), Online Archive of California, <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/ark:/28722/bk0013c4z6b/?brand=oac4>; Brooks, "In the Twilight Zone between Black and White," 1655. The second most popular destination, Salt Lake City, welcomed only 3,000 resitters. See: Brooks, "In the Twilight Zone between Black and White," 1655. Miyamoto suspected that Chicago became so popular because, "from the standpoint of distance, Chicago is the first major stopping point, outside of Salt Lake City or Denver, of resettlers moving eastward." Though other cities were closer to both the centers and the Pacific Coast, Chicago was closer "to them in their thinking" given their greater familiarity with it. See: Miyamoto, "Interim Report of Resettler Adjustments in Chicago," March 1, 1944, Online Archive of California. See also: United States, ed., *WRA: A Story of Human Conservation* (New York: AMS Press, 1975), 135. Salt Lake City was a popular resettlement location in part because of the tolerance of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Taylor has described how the city's friendly atmosphere was heavily influenced by the Mormon church's attitude toward resettlers. Some who relocated to Utah viewed this tolerance as a result of the persecution of Mormons in Nauvoo, Illinois. See: Taylor, "Leaving the Concentration Camps," 184-87. For a comprehensive review of resettlement in Utah, see Leonard J. Arrington, *The Price of Prejudice: The Japanese-American Relocation Center in Utah during World War II* (Logan: The Faculty Association of Utah State University, 1962). Weglyn also references the acceptance of Mormons in *Years of Infamy*. See: Weglyn, *Years of Infamy*, 100.

²⁸⁹ Dillon S. Meyer, Press Conference, May 14, 1943, Office for Emergency Management Division of Central Administrative Services Minutes and Reports Section, <http://www.mansell.com/eo9066/1943/43-05/TL13.html>.

Under Meyer's leadership, the WRA consciously intended to solve the oft cited "problem" that Japanese Americans presented by spreading them as thinly as possible across the United States.²⁹⁰ The WRA made this policy apparent in leave clearance interviews. Among other questions, resettlers were asked: "will you assist in the general resettlement program by staying away from large groups of Japanese?" and: "will you for the duration of the war avoid the organization of any typically Japanese clubs, associations, etc.?"²⁹¹ Dispersal was therefore a key element of the resettlement program. This fear of a concentration of Japanese Americans again recalls fears of the Yellow Peril and called for a cautious dispersal of resettlers across the city in accordance with WRA policy. Given the number of evacuees choosing to relocate to Chicago, "there were some fears of adverse reactions from the Chicago community against a large influx of a suspected group."²⁹² This had also been a concern in other resettlement areas where many Issei settled in hopes of regaining a sense of Japanese-American community to ease their adjustment.²⁹³ This desire caused a rapid increase in settlement in Salt Lake City and Denver during 1942 and 1943, but the "W.R.A. established measures to discourage this concentration of Japanese."²⁹⁴ Despite these worries, the WRA report found that "Chicago is large and diversified enough so that even the arrival of several thousand Japanese does not create a conspicuous new group in the total population," furthermore, the work patterns of the Japanese-American immigrants as domestic

²⁹⁰ Consider, for example: Charles Roger Hicks, "The Japanese Problem in California," *The Journal of International Relations* 11, no. 4 (1921): 606–20; Sidney G. P. Coryn, "The Japanese Problem in California," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 34, no. 2 (1909): 42–48; Chester H. Rowell, "California and the Japanese Problem," *The Journal of Education* 92, no. 17 (2303) (1920): 463–64.

²⁹¹ War Relocation Authority, "Leave Clearance Interview Questions," in *Asian America: A Primary Source Reader*, ed. Cathy J. Schlund-Vials, K. Scott Wong, and Jason Oliver Chang (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 146.

²⁹² Miyamoto, "Interim Report of Resettler Adjustments in Chicago," March 1, 1944, Online Archive of California.

²⁹³ Miyamoto, "Interim Report of Resettler Adjustments in Chicago," March 1, 1944, Online Archive of California.

²⁹⁴ Miyamoto, "Interim Report of Resettler Adjustments in Chicago," March 1, 1944, Online Archive of California.

workers entailed that they were more “widely scattered than any other sizeable Japanese population in an American city ever before has been.”²⁹⁵

One must note, however, that the WRA’s policy was not purely malicious. Resettled Nisei were conscious of their concentrated presence in Chicago and feared its possible dangers. In his diary, Miyamoto wrote:

The situation was awkward for there were six of us and all of us felt that it wasn't desirable for us to be seen in that large a group on the streets. I suppose it was for that reason that Ted suggested we go down to Chinatown for our dinner, for there we would be lost among Orientals, and even if other Caucasians spotted our group, they should have no complaints to make about the “Japanese invasion.” But if we were to walk in in a body into one of the 63rd St. restaurants, we would be markedly noticeable.²⁹⁶

Miyamoto’s consciousness of the concepts associated with the Yellow Peril demonstrates that the dispersal of the Japanese-American community was not only an issue of paternalistic policy. For Japanese Americans who feared racial violence, it also represented a means of survival and self-defense. Furthermore, the way in which Japanese Americans mobilized American racial misunderstandings and generalizations to their own advantage is truly fascinating. Regardless of the way in which some resettlers may have accepted dispersal, however, it has become clear that their use of dispersal as a defensive strategy was made necessary by a genealogy of biopolitical racism embodied by the Yellow Peril and sanctioned by a great deal of the American public. The program in Chicago represented a success from the perspective of dispersal from the WRA which, of course, came at the expense of those whom it affected.

²⁹⁵ Miyamoto, “Interim Report of Resettler Adjustments in Chicago,” March 1, 1944, Online Archive of California.

²⁹⁶ S. Frank Miyamoto, “Diary, August 11, 1943,” BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder T1.8405 (2/7), Online Archive of California, <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/ark:/28722/bk0013c505s/?brand=oac4>.

*“In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling.”*²⁹⁷

– Exodus 15:13

4.2 Dispersal as Biopolitical Power

The resettlement period resisted a Manichean characterization wherein the camp represented a subjection to biopolitical power and resettlement signified freedom from this power. Beyond simply descending from a genealogy of biopolitical assumptions encapsulated by the Yellow Peril or being an outgrowth of a biopolitical drive toward dispersal, the resettlement represented another form indirect death directly called for by biopolitical anxieties. It is worth recalling, at this point, Foucault’s analysis of the biopolitical drive described in sections 2.2 and 2.3. Biopolitics, he argued, would demand the murder of another biologically inferior group in order to strengthen the dominant population, yet Foucault wrote that this would not only take the form of “murder as such, but also every form of indirect murder: the fact of exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people, or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on.”²⁹⁸ Where political death, expulsion, and rejection played prominently in Internment, the death of the Japanese-American social body entailed by the resettlement program represented the indirect forms of death that Foucault discusses. Though social death is often construed as the kind of violence created by such extreme institutions as slavery, it also describes such things as oppression and exclusion.²⁹⁹ This kind of social death “happens when people’s voices are muted or suppressed in their cultural environment,” and in addition to the silencing of Japanese culture that the WRA

²⁹⁷ Exod. 15:13.

²⁹⁸ Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 256.

²⁹⁹ Nancy Tuana and Charles E. Scott, “Foucault’s Unreason,” in *Beyond Philosophy*, Nietzsche, Foucault, Anzaldúa (Indiana University Press, 2020), 80.

took as its object in the resettlement program, this program targeted the way in which individuals conceived of themselves in these cultural environments themselves.³⁰⁰

Though Foucault does not specifically mention social death through dispersal and atomization as a form of indirect murder sanctioned by the biopolitical mode of power, the end of this mode of power is regularization of a population. By evaluating how Foucault understands population, the relationship between biopolitics and the socio-cultural features of Japanese-American society will become clear. A 1978 lecture by Foucault clarifies this relationship. Recall that the biopolitical mode of state power sanctions the direct or indirect death of certain racial groups, or biological subspecies, to the end of regularizing the population as a whole. Foucault considered the concept of population as follows:

The population is not the simple sum of individuals inhabiting a territory. Nor is it solely the result of their will to reproduce. Nor is it vis-à-vis of a sovereign will that may encourage or shape it. In fact, the population is not a primary datum; it is dependent on a series of variables...It also varies with people's customs, like the way in which daughters are given a dowry, for example, or the way in which the right of primogeniture is ensured, with birthright, and also with the way in which children are raised...Population varies with the moral or religious values associated with different kinds of conduct"³⁰¹

Resettlement thus represented a new method of regulating and regularizing the population insofar as it is tied to cultural and social factors. The WRA called for the death of the Japanese-American social body through its initial dispersal from the Pacific Coast to the internment camps and finalized by its atomization through the interior of the United States.

The WRA's policy of dispersal was intended to erase the cultural features of Japanese Americans and thus regularize the population in response to biopolitical fears which were examined in section 4.1. The policy targeted, in particular, cultural features such as language which

³⁰⁰ Tuana and Scott, "Foucault's Unreason," 80.

³⁰¹ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978*, ed. Michel Senellart, François Ewald, and Alessandro Fontana, trans. Graham Burchell, 1. Picador ed, Lectures at the Collège de France (New York, NY: Picador, 2009), 72-73.

had a genealogy of feeding into biopolitical fears of Japanese Americans regarding assimilation. Culture and cultural values are necessarily tied to communities, and the destruction of the Japanese-American social body thus necessarily entailed the death of these practices. Richard Drinnon has summarized this point well writing that Meyer's vision of America as a "melting pot" was not, in fact, biological but political and economic...what he proposed to melt or boil away was the cultural heritage of his redistributed 'evacuees.'"³⁰² Leave clearance interview questions confirm the centrality of cultural destruction to the WRA's policy. Questions 22 and 33 asked: "will you avoid the use of the Japanese language except when necessary?" and: "will you conform to the customs and dress of your new home?" respectively.³⁰³ The specification of language in the interview is especially revealing given the importance of the Japanese language in maintaining community organization and values. Aware of the racial and economic barriers in the United States, many Issei thought that their children would eventually have to return to Japan and were concerned with the tendency of Nisei to Americanize at the cost of understanding their Japanese heritage.³⁰⁴ Issei wondered how one "could understand Japan when one could not even speak the language."³⁰⁵ From this cultural concern, schools emerged where Nisei could learn to speak Japanese after their regular school. These schools emerged, then, out of the "universal desire of immigrant parents to impart their native tongue and cultural heritage to their children."³⁰⁶ Beyond the language curriculum, these language schools also taught cultural values. Isao Horinuchi wrote that "apart

³⁰² Richard Drinnon, *Keeper of the Concentration Camps: Dillon S. Myer and American Racism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 57. Hansen made a similar observation writing: "however humane and solicitous the evacuation seemed from the perspective of the government and the dominant society, to the interned Japanese Americans what was at stake was nothing less than their very survival (both in the literal and cultural sense of the word)." Hansen, "The Danger Within," n.d., Online Archive of California.

³⁰³ War Relocation Authority, "Leave Clearance Interview Questions," in *Asian America*, 146.

³⁰⁴ Hosokawa, *Nisei*, 158.

³⁰⁵ Hosokawa, *Nisei*, 158.

³⁰⁶ Noriko Asato, *Teaching Mikadoism: The Attack on Japanese Language Schools in Hawaii, California, and Washington, 1919-1927* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 44.

from the formal course, moral principles were woven into the general curriculum and into school life in any way the ingenuity of the educators could devise.”³⁰⁷ This kind of moral education was suspect to many Americans, and anti-Japanese organizations such as Japanese Exclusion League of California and the Native Sons and Native Daughters of the Golden West seized onto this issue and morphed it into a question of allegiance.³⁰⁸ The latter’s monthly newspaper read in October 1920:

The Japanese children...also attend Japanese language schools conducted entirely in the Japanese language...so long as these Japanese language schools are conducted in our country, there is absolutely no hope of Americanizing the Japanese...IT IS UTTERLY USELESS TO HOPE TO ASSIMILATE THE JAPANESE AND MAKE OF HIM AN AMERICAN CITIZEN ENTIRELY WITHOUT DIVIDED ALLEGIANCE.³⁰⁹

The specification of the schools being conducted entirely in Japanese supports the claim that language was viewed as a central apparatus of cultural development. These feelings persisted into the Internment era, and Congressmen questioned Mike Masaoka, a leader of the JACL, during the Tolan Committee hearings of 1942.³¹⁰ Language, then, acted as a marker of foreignness and culture in the mind of many Americans throughout the Internment era and contributed to the biopolitical fears of the Yellow Peril. Based on this history, it is no surprise that the WRA was so concerned

³⁰⁷ Isao Horinouchi, “Educational Values and Preadaptation in the Acculturation of Japanese Americans” (Sacramento Anthropological Society, 1967), 5.

³⁰⁸ Asato, *Teaching Mikadoism*, 55.

³⁰⁹ Benedict, “California and the Japanese,” August 1920, 3-21; Interestingly, a 1927 article by Yoishi Hanaoka argued that the Japanese language schools in Hawai’i. Hanaoka argued, ironically in hindsight, that because the two great nations of the Pacific were Japan and the United States, Japanese-American children were “particularly destined to solve the problem of peace in the Pacific area.” Their knowledge of Japanese culture and the Japanese language would, he reasoned, allow them to effectively develop the future of American foreign policy in the region. Hanaoka concluded asking: “Is it not Americanizing the young people of Hawaii by preparing them to develop the future policies of America?” See: Yoichi Hanaoka, “The Japanese Language School; Is It a Help or a Hinderance to the Americanization of Hawaii’s Young People,” *Friend* 97 (April 1927): 79–89. See also: Dennis M. Ogawa and Glen Grant, *Kodomo No Tame Ni: The Japanese American Experience in Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1927), 180-182.

³¹⁰ Hosokawa, *Nisei*, 289.

with its regulation in the resettlement program.³¹¹ In fact, one of the perceived threats to the Americanization in the camps was that “[Nisei] who never would have acquired any facility in Japanese are learning it.”³¹²

The WRA’s dispersal program not only represented indirect murder at the level of the abstract entity of the social body; rather, it represented the indirect social murder of individuals. Pre-war Japanese-American communities were unique insofar as they represented and facilitated unique social relations between residents. Though located in America, Japanese Americans lived, in a way, within their own world.³¹³ A resettlement study report found that these communities “had their own legends, their own ceremonies, their own traditional understandings by which the members guided their lives.”³¹⁴ This social and cultural structure rendered the Japanese-American experience intelligible; the report stated succinctly: “the lives of many [Nisei] took meaning only within the confines of his community.”³¹⁵ The importance of these communities to Japanese Americans, therefore, cannot be overstated. Even with the initial disruption to these communities during the evacuation program, community structures were able to reemerge in the camps. Despite the generational conflicts that had emerged as a result of evacuation, eventually new social structures emerged within which individuals were able to lead their lives. Alexander H. Leighton, a sociologist and lieutenant commander of the Medical Corps of the United States Navy Reserve, wrote rather poetically in his study of the Poston camp:

³¹¹ This claim, of course, makes the false assumption that Nisei spoke or would want to speak Japanese. Hosokawa pointed out that most resented their language school education and that the search for Nisei to work in United States intelligence during WWII revealed that only 10% spoke Japanese fluently enough to be of service. Nevertheless, it is interesting that the WRA attempted to turn a *de facto* tendency into a *de jure* qualification for leave clearance. See Hosokawa, *Nisei*, 159.

³¹² Bloom, “Familial Adjustments of Japanese-Americans to Relocation,” 559.

³¹³ Shibutani, “The First Year of the Resettlement of Nisei in the Chicago Area,” 1944, Online Archive of California.

³¹⁴ Shibutani, “The First Year of the Resettlement of Nisei in the Chicago Area,” 1944, Online Archive of California.

³¹⁵ Shibutani, “The First Year of the Resettlement of Nisei in the Chicago Area,” 1944, Online Archive of California.

Although the war and evacuation blew apart much of the social organization, remnants and tatters were brought to Poston and there, little by little, some of them began to assume new life, like willow twigs that sprout roots and leaves when stuck in the ground.³¹⁶

This social organization was sufficiently developed to the point that WRA social scientists identified it as a key inhibitor of emigration from the camps. A report of their activity reads: “reluctance to relocate is due to deep-seated feelings of insecurity in regard to life ‘outside,’ together with another set of resistances due to a newly developed social organization within the center.”³¹⁷ Miyamoto’s analysis of community adjustment to relocation centers offers a brief account of this structure. He wrote in late 1942:

At present the Issei-Nisei relationship is such that the former have essential control over the community, while the latter merely seek escape from the frustrations which they feel when confronted by the immovable force of Issei opinion.³¹⁸

Therefore, the WRA found that “on the whole the people were able to live within the web of mutual expectations that had developed within the Japanese communities on the West Coast during the past forty years.”³¹⁹

Plucking individuals out of this social structure which rendered their lived experiences intelligible constituted a form of indirect murder in the form of partial social death.³²⁰ This took a particularly destructive toll on Issei. Where Nisei tended to be somewhat Americanized and fluent in English, many Issei were not, rendering the challenge of integration all the more distressing.

³¹⁶ Alexander H. Leighton, *The Governing of Men: General Principles and Recommendations Based on Experience at a Japanese Relocation Camp* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), 121.

³¹⁷ John F. Embree, “Community Analysis Report No. 5, ‘Evacuee Resistances to Relocation,’” June 1943.

³¹⁸ Miyamoto, “Collective Adjustments to the Relocation Center,” c. 1942, Online Archive of California. Though the date of this document is not specified in the text and the archive has marked it as 12 January 1942, the true date is presumed to be late 1942 because of the dates of Miyamoto’s citations. The latest citation is marked as 17 November 1942 suggesting that the document was composed in the following months. It seems that the force of Issei opinion developed in conjunction with the increased pressure for their direct participation in governance within the camps noted in sections 3.4 and 3.5.

³¹⁹ Miyamoto, “Interim Report of Resettler Adjustments in Chicago,” March 1, 1944, Online Archive of California.

³²⁰ Though the resettlement program was voluntary, section 4.2.1 will demonstrate why this voluntary choice was, in a sense, illusory.

While investigating reluctance to resettle, WRA community analysts found that “[Issei] feel completely stymied as they realize that they may never be allowed to resettle in large colonies and that the only method of relocation open is the dispersal of isolated families and individuals.”³²¹ Their reluctance demonstrates the importance of the Japanese-American community as a social and economic form of organization. Given that the WRA analysts admitted that with resettlement “Japanese community life will cease,” it is clear that the conditions presented to Issei for their resettlement were “just as much a matter of loss of self-determination as was evacuation.”³²² The fears of these Issei were not unwarranted, and their dispersed resettlement often created tangible harms. Miyamoto’s report on resettlement in Chicago reported that Nisei often expressed sadness at the plight of the Issei. One Nisei said: “every time I see an [Issei] out here I feel so sorry for him because he looks so lonely. He has to take lip from young punks like us and yet he can’t say anything.”³²³ This Nisei’s sympathy was also related to the lack of community and isolation that Issei faced upon resettlement and again emphasized the cultural role of language. They went on to say: “when I see how happy two Issei are when they get together and can say a few words in a language they know, I realize how lonely they must be.”³²⁴

This phenomenon was so pronounced even among Nisei that the WRA recognized the paradox that resettlers of both groups “were considerably more uprooted when they migrated voluntarily to the Mid-West than when they were forcibly evacuated from their homes.”³²⁵ In his

³²¹ Charles Wisdom, “Project Analysis Series No. 18, ‘Relocation at Rohwer,’ Part II, ‘Issei Relocation Problems,’” September 2, 1944, Box-Folder 1.51, Oregon State University Special Collections and Archives, in Spicer, “The Use of Social Scientists by the War Relocation Authority,” 27.

³²² Wisdom, “Project Analysis Series No. 18, ‘Relocation at Rohwer,’” 1944; J. Ralph McFarling, “Granada Community Analysis Trend Report,” November 1945, in Spicer, “The Use of Social Scientists by the War Relocation Authority,” 28.

³²³ Miyamoto, “Interim Report of Resettler Adjustments in Chicago,” March 1, 1944, Online Archive of California.

³²⁴ Miyamoto, “Interim Report of Resettler Adjustments in Chicago,” March 1, 1944, Online Archive of California.

³²⁵ Miyamoto, “Interim Report of Resettler Adjustments in Chicago,” March 1, 1944, Online Archive of California. It is also important to note the effect of other domestic matters on resettler life and adjustment. For example, Miyamoto

diary, Frank Miyamoto offered one case that demonstrates the gravity of the harms of resettlement.

He described an interaction with a Nisei named Chet, writing:

Chet's remarks about his first impressions of Chicago were rather interesting for he seemed strongly inclined to go right back to Minidoka...the immediate impression of a great many resettlers to Chicago seems to be that they made a mistake in coming out from the centers, and that they should have stayed there.³²⁶

Therefore, the destruction of the social structure in which individuals live their lives clearly fits into Foucault's framework of indirect murder as a result of the biopolitical mode of power. The social structures that bind individuals and constituted an element of their intelligibility as social beings, and the destruction of these socio-cultural structures in this period thus represented partial social death. Chet's feelings in particular offer an opportunity to amend previous historical scholarship. The commission that authored *Personal Justice Denied* evaluated WRA resettlement policy as follows: "compared to the WDC or the JAJB, the WRA pursued a liberal course, although its policies continued to compromise individual civil liberties."³²⁷ Though *prima facie* plausible this "liberal" course did not signify a less direct expression of power in comparison to military policy; the WRA's apparent compassion was merely the expression of a different form of power than obstinate military control. In many ways, resettlement represented a more refined and discreet form of similarly efficacious power.

described the mundane routine that came as a result of moving from homes on the Pacific Coast into apartments in Chicago. He wrote: "there isn't much around the apartment to give one an urge to stick around and do things around the house. This is certainly in contrast to the condition on the West Coast where most of us lived in individual dwelling units that always had a lot to be done around it. All that filled one's life and gave variation to it, but here one eats, sleeps, and works at his usual job, there's nothing else that the home demands of one." See: Miyamoto, S. Frank, "Diary, August 7, 1943," BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder T1.8405 (2/7), Online Archive of California, <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/ark:/28722/bk0013c505s/?brand=oac4>.

³²⁶ Miyamoto, "Diary, August 11, 1943," Online Archive of California.

³²⁷ United States and Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied*, 202.

*“Being a firm believer in democracy and justice and knowing the people in the camps had done nothing to deserve their internment, Mr. Meyer did everything possible to make life tolerable for the internees.”*³²⁸

Senator S. I. Hayakawa, Testimony Before Congress

4.2.1 Sundquist, Drinnon, and Intention Revisited

This interpretation has thus far taken for granted arguments from historians such as Richard Drinnon who claim that resettlement was an intentional act of violence against Japanese-American society and culture. Drinnon’s claim, however, is not uncontroversial among historians, so it will require a brief defense. This section will focus on refuting some of the arguments put forward by Eric Sundquist in response to Drinnon’s *Keeper of the Concentration Camps*. Sundquist offered one of the most salient critiques of Drinnon wherein he argues that Drinnon was too heavy handed in his description of Meyer and failed to account for the fact that the resettlement program was voluntary. Sundquist disputes Drinnon’s claim that resettlement represented a form of violence of any kind given that “resettlement was in fact not mandatory” and “Japanese Americans, especially the [Nisei], were anxious to assimilate.”³²⁹ Interviews with resettlers appear to support Sundquist’s evaluation. One Nisei who relocated to Chicago said: “the only thing I don’t want to see is a Japtown as they will take us as a group and then we wouldn’t have a chance at all. A lot of the [Issei] would come out and they would try to run things...I don’t care to be among too many Japanese.”³³⁰ These responses appear to reflect the WRA’s own boast that they had benefitted Japanese Americans in the long run because they “broke up the ghettos and ethnic communities in

³²⁸ S. I. Hayakawa, “Testimony of U. S. Senator S. I. Hayakawa Before the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians,” August 4, 1981, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-352-419/>.

³²⁹ Sundquist, “The Japanese-American Internment,” 546-47.

³³⁰ Tommy Hamada, Interview by Charles Kikuchi, October 19, 1944, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder T1.979, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/28722/bk0013c599n/?brand=oac4>. This quotation also marks another iteration of the awareness of the Yellow Peril as described by Miyamoto. See section 4.2.

which they had been isolated.”³³¹ Charles Kikuchi similarly indicated that “the resettlement has succeeded in emancipating them from a complete dependence upon the Japanese community which prevented the possibilities of getting a broad experience in occupational fields.”³³² In his testimony before the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, Senator S. I. Hayakawa joined in this opinion in, Sundquist wrote, perverse terms.³³³ Hayakawa said that ultimately evacuation and resettlement had been a benefit to Japanese Americans as they were allowed to find employment beyond the coast.³³⁴ He said that “those who remained in camp in most cases did so voluntarily,” and described experiences in the camps as “trouble-free and relatively happy.”³³⁵

Sundquist’s evaluation of both the issue of assimilation and the voluntary choice of resettlers falls short. Even if Nisei were eager to assimilate, they would not have chosen to do so through imprisonment and restricted redistribution. Furthermore, Americanization in Sundquist’s usage is exceedingly vague, for the desire to Americanize does not equate to a desire to resettle as isolated individuals in unfamiliar environments. Perhaps Nisei were keen to Americanize, but presumably not by being plucked from their social contexts at such a rate. Furthermore, it is somewhat misleading to characterize resettlement as non-mandatory. Internment was mandatory, and the choice between barracks behind barbed-wire and a return to some semblance of normal life does not contain all the elements one would commonly associate with free choice. As one Nisei said while describing his decision to resettle:

³³¹ Taylor, “Leaving the Concentration Camps,” 170.

³³² Kikuchi, “Job Adjustments of Single Young Men,” c. 1946, Online Archive of California.

³³³ Sundquist, “The Japanese-American Internment,” 547.

³³⁴ Hayakawa, “Testimony of U. S. Senator S. I. Hayakawa,” August 4, 1981, Densho Digital Repository; Sundquist, “The Japanese-American Internment,” 547.

³³⁵ Hayakawa, “Testimony of U. S. Senator S. I. Hayakawa,” August 4, 1981, Densho Digital Repository.

Would I find myself boldly happy in being carried off in an Army truck as an enemy of the United States? It was at that time that I realized fully that there was only one outlet for myself and that was to seek a life outside of Tule Lake.³³⁶

Even if one were to grant this argument, the WRA was not sitting idly by to allow internees to choose their own destiny; they were, in fact, attempting to empty the camps. A 1946 study of WRA community analysis reports found that many of the older evacuees resisted resettlement and wanted to keep their families with them, and “by May, 1943, the limited response to resettlement was recognized by the WRA as a major problem.”³³⁷ In response to this concern, the WRA developed “techniques which would be used under the given conditions for influencing evacuees to accept the WRA resettlement program.”³³⁸ Furthermore, the resettlement program fell well short of free choice insofar as it dictated the areas where evacuees were allowed to resettle. They continued to be excluded from their homes on the Pacific Coast despite the fact “a survey in the Heart Mountain center revealed that nearly 50 per cent would return to California or the West Coast, if they were permitted to do so.”³³⁹ Therefore, it would be a mistake to construe the resettlement program as truly voluntary or an extension of the desire to Americanize on the part of many Nisei.

Sundquist also takes issue with Drinnon’s portrayal of Meyer. Where Drinnon portrays Meyer as a man with “the Gestapo mentality of bourgeois capitalism,” Sundquist objects that Meyer was, at worst, “an egocentric paternalist” who “made the best of a bad situation.”³⁴⁰ Sundquist points to Meyer’s resilience in the face of public opinion which decried the WRA for

³³⁶ Shibutani, “The First Year of the Resettlement of Nisei in the Chicago Area,” 1944, Online Archive of California.

³³⁷ Spicer, “The Use of Social Scientists by the War Relocation Authority,” 25.

³³⁸ Spicer, “The Use of Social Scientists by the War Relocation Authority,” 28.

³³⁹ McWilliams, *Prejudice*, 276.

³⁴⁰ Sundquist, “The Japanese-American Internment” 546. Sandra C. Taylor also written that Drinnon’s work “portrays Meyer virtually as an American Hitler.” See: Taylor, “Leaving the Concentration Camps,” 170.

dealing too softly with the internees and cited an account to this effect from Michi Weglyn, a former internee and prominent author.³⁴¹ Even if one were to grant Sundquist these arguments, they are not applicable to this interpretation of Internment. Ultimately, neither Meyer's personal traits nor the desires of the Nisei object to the intentions of the WRA program as a biopolitical development as was argued in section 3.1.1.

³⁴¹ Sundquist, "The Japanese-American Internment," 546. Weglyn composed *Years of Infamy*, a canonical work on Internment which is cited in the above sections.

*“Let me be a free man, free to travel, free to stop, free to work, free to trade where I choose, free to choose my own teachers, free to follow the religion of my fathers, free to talk, think and act for myself—and I will obey every law or submit to the penalty.”*³⁴²

– Chief Joseph, Lincoln Hall Speech

4.3 What They Had Learned: Biopolitics, Dispersal, and Production

The biopolitical assumptions which had licensed the practice of a regularizing form of biopolitical power in the form of sanctioning the death of the Japanese-American social body and, subsequently, the partial social death of Japanese Americans themselves, also had the positive objective of making the Nisei economically productive. This interpretation of biopolitics marks another return to the “human engineering” discussed in section 3.1 and reveals the operation of such engineering over different times and contexts. Resettlement aimed to “mitigate one of the WRA’s chief concerns, the creation of permanent camp populations dependent on the federal government not only during but also after the war,” a concern which was expressed in terms of the government’s experience with Native Americans.³⁴³ This comparison explains the motivation behind the WRA’s boast, which one might recall from section 3.1, that “America had learned something about human engineering since the Indians were moved.”³⁴⁴ This comparison to the violent relocation of Native Americans and the internment and resettlement of Japanese Americans offers a salient and conscious demonstration of the American biopolitical drive. George Fuji’s oral history draws this comparison, albeit in a demeaning and distasteful fashion. He said:

The Indians relied on the government. Of course, we suffered the Evacuation, we came out of it, and we had to re-establish ourselves. In a way, that did us good, because we had to

³⁴² Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt, “Speech at Lincoln Hall in Washington D.C.,” *North American Review* 128, no. 269 (1879): 433.

³⁴³ Taylor, “Leaving the Concentration Camps,” 175. Interestingly, one internment camp, Fort Sill, is also infamous for the detention of Native Americans, most notably Geronimo, during the “Indian Wars” of the late 19th Century. See: “Oklahoma’s Fort Sill Has a History of Jailing Minority Groups. Migrant Children Could Be Next.,” *The World from PRX*, accessed May 2, 2021, <https://www.pri.org/stories/2019-06-26/oklahomas-fort-sill-has-history-jailing-minority-groups-migrant-children-could-be>.

³⁴⁴ War Relocation Authority, *Impounded People*, 20.

struggle. Supposing we were to stay in the camp another three or four years. I think that we would have been in the same position as the Indians—flabby fat, no incentive, and relying on the government.³⁴⁵

This comparison was not merely the statement of a single ignorant internee. It appears that this comparison was widespread among internees, though they expressed it differently. McWilliams reported:

The people have learned to laugh at the things that hurt them most. Whenever anyone mentions that they may stay here permanently, “like Indians on a reservation,” everyone always laughs. But they do not think the subject of Indian reservations is funny.³⁴⁶

The consciousness of this parallel was also reflected in WRA policy. Rosalie Wax, an anthropologist employed by the University of California Evacuation and Resettlement Project, drew a similar comparison from her time at the Tule Lake Internment Camp. She found that the relocation program was largely motivated by this comparison with Native Americans. Wax wrote:

While the evacuees and the staff members were trying to work out some way of life in the isolation of the centers, the War Relocation Authority, bearing in mind what had happened to the federal government in the case of the American Indians, was trying to find ways and means by which they might safely be re-settled in areas other than the Pacific Coast.³⁴⁷

The parallel with the situation of Native Americans was therefore recognized both institutionally and by the internees themselves. In light of this information, it is clear that the WRA’s pride in the advancement of “human engineering” since the removal of Native Americans was not merely an off-handed remark, but a conscious parallel that revealed a continuous genealogy of population regulation which was, in each case, motivated by the biopolitical fears of the Yellow Peril.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁵ Fuji, “George Fuji Oral History,” August 31, 1976, California State University Fullerton Oral History Program. The Poston camp was located on the Colorado River Indian Reservation and was administered, in part, until 1943 by the Office of Indian Affairs which may have motivated these comments. See: “Poston (Colorado River) | Densho Encyclopedia,” accessed April 28, 2021, [https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Poston_\(Colorado_River\)/](https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Poston_(Colorado_River)/).

³⁴⁶ McWilliams, *Prejudice: Japanese-Americans*, 276.

³⁴⁷ Rosalie H. Wax, “Children in the Relocation Centers,” n.d., BANC MSS 83/115 c, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6h41rzg/?brand=oac4>.

³⁴⁸ Recall Okiihiro’s contention, cited in section 2.1, that the Yellow Peril “does not derive solely from the alleged threat posed by Asians to Europeans...but from nonwhite people, as a collective group, and their contestation of white

The regularization of the Japanese-American population through dispersal was, in part, directed at making them a productive economic force. Where the previous expression of this biopolitical power, in the popular view, was a failure insofar as it failed to render Native Americans economically productive, the resettlement program aimed to improve upon the previous deficiencies of population regularization programs. As previously noted, the resettlement of Japanese Americans was at least partially motivated by the need for labor, and Carey McWilliams has gone so far as to write that the resettlement program was a means of exploiting Japanese-American labor.³⁴⁹ By April 1942, the WRA had already conceived of resettlement as a means of extracting production from Japanese Americans. Tom C. Clark, then the Civilian Coordinator of the Alien Enemy Control Program, introduced the topic to a meeting of Western Governors in Salt Lake City saying: “Mr. Eisenhower, who is Director of the War Relocation Authority, will tell you of the resettlement part of the program, resettlement to the end that these people might be put to some productive employment.”³⁵⁰ This productive employment referred to the capacity of Japanese-Americans to contribute to the war effort, yet the program also aimed to produce a more profound shift in economic organization.³⁵¹ The plan for community schools created by Stanford graduate students sheds light on the WRA’s aims for the internment program. They wrote:

supremacy.” This was first developed by English Puritan colonists who defined their identity in opposition to their animalistic conception of Native Americans. See: Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams*, 120; 122.

³⁴⁹ Weglyn, *Years of Infamy*, 102; Taylor has indicated that this was particularly true of the Intermountain West where “new residents provided efficient and reliable labor to an economy disrupted by the war.” See: Taylor, “Leaving the Concentration Camps,” 171. See: McWilliams, *Prejudice*. See also: Taylor, “Leaving the Concentration Camps,” 170.

³⁵⁰ “Conference on Evacuation of Enemy Aliens,” April 7, 1942, Online Archive of California.

³⁵¹ In addition to those long-term shifts discussed in this section, Carey McWilliams has written that economic factors heavily influenced evacuation. This was especially true in the produce industry, the floral industry, and the nursery industry where McWilliams wrote that white competitors worried that Nisei might expand their market share beyond a tolerable portion with their high levels of education and citizenship. For these white competitors, getting “all Japanese out of the state would eliminate, so they thought, this potential *future* competition.” Morton Grodzins joined in this opinion. Grodzins noted that some agricultural pressure groups published invitations to profit from evacuation. See: Carey McWilliams, *Prejudice*, 127; Morton Grodzins, *Americans Betrayed: Politics and the Japanese Evacuation* (Chicago: Chicago Press, 1974), 58. See also: Grodzins, *Americans Betrayed*, 60-61; 167-169.

The War Relocation Authority believes that these centers should have for their primary purpose the training, not only of the youth for new jobs, but also the changing of many of the former occupational patterns of the Japanese-Americans.³⁵²

The economic aspects of Japanese-American communities has its own genealogy dating to well before the inception of the evacuation program. The reference to occupational patterns by the Stanford graduate students is intimately connected to pre-war Japanese-American community organization. Due to white employment discrimination, Issei were able to exercise strict control over the lives of the Nisei, especially in the field of employment.³⁵³ At this time, Japanese Americans had very specific niches in the Pacific Coast economy.³⁵⁴ They primarily “caught fish from Terminal Island, near Los Angeles Harbor, planted asparagus in the Sacramento Valley, and grew fruit near Puget Sound.”³⁵⁵ These developed economic niches were difficult to leave behind for Issei, and many resisted resettlement because, WRA social scientists found, “benefits derived from economic cohesion and cooperation will be gone. Instead, they will face the many problems of individual relocation.”³⁵⁶

The WRA’s objective of cultural destruction through resettlement did not stand in contrast to the economic motivations of resettlement, rather, labor served as a mechanism through which Japanese Americans could be accepted into their new communities and begin to assimilate. In early 1942, John W. Abbott, the chief investigator for the Tolan Congressional Defense Committee on Migration, reported on a meeting in Salt Lake City where the head of the Utah State Farm

³⁵² Summer Session Students in Education, “Proposed Curriculum Procedures for Japanese Relocation Centers,” 1942, Stanford Digital Repository.

³⁵³ Brooks, “In the Twilight Zone Between Black and White,” 1658.

³⁵⁴ Brooks, “In the Twilight Zone Between Black and White,” 1658.

³⁵⁵ Brooks, “In the Twilight Zone Between Black and White,” 1658. For a fascinating study of the way that Japanese Americans developed the economic niche of chick-sexing and its implications during and after the Internment period, see: Azuma, “Race, Citizenship, and the ‘Science of Chick Sexing,’” 242–75.

³⁵⁶ Wisdom, “Project Analysis Series No. 18, ‘Relocation at Rohwer,’” 1944.

Bureau Association said: “we don’t love the Japanese, but we intend to work them, if possible.”³⁵⁷

This statement points to the conditions under which Japanese Americans would be accepted in Utah and foreshadowed the condition of integration into American society in the resettlement period. If they could be worked, their ethnic identity could be ignored, and this is a parallel premise to the attempt to eliminate any cultural identity to the later resettlers. The efficacy of Japanese-American labor continued to act as a condition for acceptance in the resettlement era. In Chicago, the efficiency and work ethic of early resettlers paved the way for later waves of resettlement. Taylor wrote: “as employers discovered how diligent the Japanese-American workers were, more opportunities were made available to camp residents, and administrators publicized the success stories of those who had departed.”³⁵⁸ In this way, Internment represents a continuation of genealogy of biopolitical power expression and directly adapted to the shortcomings of previous attempts at population regularization.

³⁵⁷ John W. Abbott, “Notes on Meeting with Beet Growers, New House Hotel, Salt Lake City,” April 8, 1942, Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/k6k07bpf/?brand=oac4>.

³⁵⁸ Taylor, “Leaving the Concentration Camps,” 178.

5. Conclusion

“出る杭は打たれる” (*The stake that sticks up gets hammered down*)

– Japanese Proverb

“Who will survive in America?”³⁵⁹

– Gil Scott-Heron

The story of Japanese Americans is best understood as a story of perseverance. The oft repeated phrase: “*shikata ga nai*” (it cannot be helped) is a testament to this story. This phrase is ubiquitous in oral histories and scholarly work on Internment.³⁶⁰ Perhaps this philosophy is an answer to the question Hosokawa uses to conclude his study of Nisei in America: “what is there about my heritage that sustained me?”³⁶¹ In any event, the truth of this sentiment cannot be denied. The 442nd Regimental Combat Team composed of Japanese-American soldiers returned to the United States at the conclusion of WWII as the most decorated unit in American history having suffered tremendous casualties. Many volunteered from the internment camps and proved with their lives that they were Americans. President Truman lauded this sacrifice in 1946 saying: “you fought not

³⁵⁹ “Comment #1,” Spotify, track 4 on Gil Scott-Heron, *Small Talk at 125 and Lenox*, Ace Records, 1969. See also: “Who Will Survive in America?” Spotify, track 13 on Kanye West, *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy*, UMG Recordings, 2010.

³⁶⁰ See, for example: Sam Fujimoto, interview by Robert Horsting, February 26, 2006, Tape 3, Hanashi Oral History Archives, Go For Broke National Education Center, Torrance, CA, https://www.goforbroke.org/learn/archives/oral_histories_videos.php?clip=64201; George Karatsu, interview by Russell Nakaishi, December 9, 2001, Tape 2, Hanashi Oral History Archives, Go For Broke National Education Center, Los Angeles, CA, https://www.goforbroke.org/learn/archives/oral_histories_videos.php?clip=22201. For an interpretation of this phrase as it relates to the question of statelessness, see: Okazaki, “Shikata Ga Nai: Statelessness and Sacrifice for Japanese-American Volunteers During the Second World War,” 28-45. It is also important to note that though the feeling of *shikata ga nai* was largely characteristic of the response of Japanese Americans to internment, it was not universal. In recent years, Frank Emi, a draft resister and founder of the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee, has spoken out against the phrase. He explained his view as follows: “when there’s a real blatant injustice like that, they should speak up. No more *shikata ganai*, you know, ‘can’t help it.’ You know, they should speak up.” See: Frank Emi, interview by Lisa Itagaki, May 9, 2006, Japanese American National Museum, CA, <http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/interviews/clips/1013/>. For further information on the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee and draft resistance along with the development of tensions between draft resisters and volunteers on the basis of responses to internment see: Arthur A. Hansen, “The 1944 Nisei Draft at Heart Mountain, Wyoming: Its Relationship to the Historical Representation of the World War II Japanese American Evacuation,” *OAH Magazine of History* 10, no. 4 (1996): 48–60; Okazaki, “*Shikata Ga Nai*,” 38-42. See also: Weglyn, *Years of Infamy*, 280.

³⁶¹ Hosokawa, *Nisei*, 497.

only the enemy, but you fought prejudice – and you have won.”³⁶² In a less dramatic fashion, resettlers manifested their own resilience by reforming Japanese-American community life. Eventually, Nisei in Chicago began to gravitate toward one another in spite of the Americanization program. Miyamoto described their gatherings as follows:

The typical topic of conversation in virtually all of these gatherings was the same: discussion of old times, their friends, their present activities, and the things about Chicago life that they did not like. In these meetings the Nisei sought out old friends and made new ones. The gatherings are significant in that they provided a medium through which the resettlers could develop shared experiences and could communicate their discontents and feelings to each other.³⁶³

These connections demonstrate that in order to readjust, “Nisei relied on each other for support and assistance. In doing so, they created a new kind of Japanese-American community that neither resembled the prewar Little Tokyos of the Issei nor welcomed government interference.”³⁶⁴ Nisei did not simply recreate their old communities which sometimes constricted them but developed their own forms of social organization. Due to their capacity for adaptation, Azuma has written that “the story of the Nisei was full of struggles, sacrifices, and complicities that forced them to invent and reinvent themselves for group survival.”³⁶⁵

The resourcefulness and resilience of the Nisei, however, does not negate the harms and ultimate violence of the evacuation and resettlement program. Charlotte Brooks has written that in Chicago, “Nisei who took domestic jobs discovered that many employers broke agreements, withheld wages, and even resorted to physical abuse.”³⁶⁶ Nisei also had serious difficulty adjusting to life in their new homes. Charles Kikuchi’s study of the occupational adjustments of Nisei men

³⁶² Harry S. Truman, “Remarks Upon Presenting a Citation to a Nisei Regiment,” July 15, 1946, Harry S. Truman Library, <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/public-papers/170/remarks-upon-presenting-citation-nisei-regiment>.

³⁶³ Miyamoto, “Interim Report of Resettler Adjustments in Chicago,” March 1, 1944, Online Archive of California.

³⁶⁴ Brooks, “In the Twilight Zone Between Black and White,” 1657.

³⁶⁵ Azuma, “Race, Citizenship, and the ‘Science of Chick Sexing,’” 275.

³⁶⁶ Brooks, “In the Twilight Zone Between Black and White,” 1665.

in Chicago offers an account of some of these difficulties in adjustment. Common to his case studies of Chicago resettlers are a hatred of Caucasians and a preoccupation with sex and gambling.³⁶⁷ Miyamoto also referenced issues of sexual delinquency in his journal.³⁶⁸ The sheer amount of attention paid to sex in the studies of resettlers warrants further research given the close connection between biopolitics and sex described in section 3.5.1.

Japanese Americans also faced physical violence. Upon their return to the Pacific Coast in 1945, many became targets of terrorism. An article published in the *Rocky Shimpō*, a Denver based Japanese-American newspaper which began circulating in the 1930s, said that there had been sixteen shooting incidents in California between 2 January 1945 and 22 April 1945.³⁶⁹ Though nobody was injured, the *Shimpō* reported that these were “clearly terroristic activity aimed at frightening [N]iseis who have the temerity to come home.”³⁷⁰ The *Topaz Times* also reported on two cases in which shots were fired into the homes of two evacuees returning from the Poston camp.³⁷¹ Such cases were not isolated to the Pacific Coast; the *Poston Chronicle* reported that a Union Pacific brakeman had been arrested in Twin Falls, Idaho for shooting 3 Nisei at a restaurant.³⁷² The violence of the program extended beyond immediate acts of physical violence and continued to affect camp survivors for the rest of their lives which, in turn, mirrors the indirect

³⁶⁷ Consider especially the cases of Blackie, Buster, Mas Wakai, and Endo described by Kikuchi in his study of the adjustment of single, young Nisei to Chicago. See: Charles Kikuchi, “Job Adjustments of Single Young Men,” c. 1946, BANC MSS 67/14 c, Online Archive of California, <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/ark:/28722/bk0013c4z3p/?brand=oac4>.

³⁶⁸ S. Frank Miyamoto, “Diary, August 14, 1943,” BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder T1.8405 (2/7), Online Archive of California, <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/ark:/28722/bk0013c505s/?brand=oac4>.

³⁶⁹ “16 Shooting Cases in Four Months,” *Rocky Shimpō*, May 2, 1945, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-148-142/>.

³⁷⁰ “16 Shooting Cases in Four Months,” *Rocky Shimpō*, May 2, 1945.

³⁷¹ “Shooting Threats on Evacuees in Visalia, Lancaster Reported,” *Topaz Times*, March 3, 1945, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn85040302/1945-03-03/ed-1/?sp=1&st=text>. For another example of violence upon return to California see: “Reveals Third Shooting,” *Granada Pioneer*, April 21, 1945, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-147-259/>.

³⁷² “Man Held for Shooting of 3 Nisei in Idaho,” *Poston Chronicle*, January 31, 1945, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-145-607/>.

murder of the internment and resettlement programs. In an interview with a former internee who was then attending Stanford Medical School, Rosalie H. Wax asked him to describe the hardest part of his evacuation experience. He replied: “I think the incarceration without a hearing. I still wake up in a pool of sweat and I’m still in camp writing letters to the Justice Department and getting no replies...To this day I’m still in camp. It’s a recurring nightmare.”³⁷³ To this Nisei, the ultimate horror of Internment was the failure of American institutions to protect him on the sole basis of racial difference. By understanding the genealogy of this failure, it is possible to direct efforts at deconstructing this persistent racism to its very core.

This interpretation has been an attempt to complexify and refine the history of Internment. Rather than representing simple, war-fueled racism, the factors that produced the evacuation program were based on immutable biological difference. This kind of biological racism had existed since the beginning of Asian immigration to the United States. The camps were not merely concentration camps built out of military necessity or simple race prejudice; they were designed with specific goals that expressed power over internees in parallel with totalitarian forms of power expression. They were laboratories for the study of a specific biological group and a means to test and alter their political subjectivity. Resettlement was not a recession of power which relaxed restrictions and allowed loyal Japanese Americans to reintegrate into American society; it was a calculated practice of indirect murder in response to the same biopolitical fears that had produced Internment. The years before Internment, Internment itself, and resettlement were not punctuated by changes in the WRA’s philosophy or a recession in public racism. Each period represents a

³⁷³ Wax, “Children in the Relocation Centers,” n.d., Online Archive of California. Wax went on to describe how some of her other interviewees told her “that they or their siblings ‘have never been able to cope’ with the anxieties engendered by their experiences.” See: Wax, “Children in the Relocation Centers,” n.d., Online Archive of California.

point upon a continuous spectrum of the development of biopolitical racism and its subsequent expression of power.

The beginning of this inquiry argued for a genealogical analysis of biopolitical racism in order to prevent a return to the fears of the Yellow Peril and the violence of the past. Having concluded this analysis, its origins in the case of Asian Americans has become clear with the understanding that this form of racism is inseparable from that experienced by other racial groups. The violence produced by this kind of racism is not only direct, but also encapsulates a number of indirect iterations, and analyzing this period has brought a number of these to light. By pursuing this analysis, a modest step toward targeting the core of anti-Asian racism and discrimination has been made. It remains now to meditate on the actions that must be taken to prevent future violence called for and licensed by this biopolitical construction.

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[Foucault's formulation of genealogy is central to the framing of this interpretation. In this article, Foucault offers a detailed account of this method and its power of analysis. This paper is one form of such an analysis which aims to offer a new interpretation of a well-studied historical event and argues that such analysis is necessary in order to understand the internment program. Foucault also offers a useful explanation of the ways in which genealogy attempts to peer through regimes of knowledge production that may obstruct the view of historical subjects who are subject to them.]

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[Foucault's lectures during this period are, perhaps, the most important theoretical sources that this interpretation makes use of. In these lectures, Foucault defines and describes the operation of biopolitical racism that takes the form of a biological-type relationship between human subspecies. He subsequently describes the way in which biopolitical power calls for the destruction of the non-dominant group. It is therefore clear that this source was critical to the concept that this interpretation pursues as a whole.]

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[Okihiro is one of the foremost scholars of Asian American history, and his analysis was central to clearly defining the Yellow Peril as it appears in the first sections of this paper. Of particular importance was his argument that the model minority myth and Yellow Peril form a seamless continuum rather than Manichean opposites. This observation, in part, motivates the genealogical analysis of this paper insofar as it illustrates one way in which political contingencies pushed ingrained biopolitical assumptions to drive a Yellow Peril.]
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[Given the events of the last few months, there is a disturbing abundance of cases of violence against Asian Americans to draw on in situating this project in the current moment. This article’s utility is not to offer more examples of this violence but to articulate the roots of this violence and to offer an analysis of the silence that traditionally surrounds such cases. This interpretation is a reply to its call to provide a deeper understanding of the origins and roots of this violence to avert a return to the rampant fears of the Yellow Peril.]

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[Sunquist's argument against revisionist historians writing on Internment offered a useful contrasting perspective to Drinnon's evaluation of Dillon S. Meyer. This debate was notable insofar as it made apparent the need for a section explaining why this interpretation did not depend on the intentions of historical actors (as described in the Drinnon annotation). In its own right, I believe my qualms with Sundquist's view of Internment as voluntary offered an opportunity to rectify this misconception ultimately bolstering the conclusion that resettlement was as much an act of direct power as was the evacuation and internment.]

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[Courtesy of Professor Onishi from International Christian University, Tokyo. This document is unique insofar as it provides previously unstudied source material to evaluate the formation of self-government in the Minidoka Internment Camp. The comparison between this document and that from the Santa Anita center was useful in demonstrating the degree to which the discourse surrounding the formation of self-government was universal and the extent to which it pointed to the irony of the program itself.]

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[Thanks to Ms. Wallace for providing archival research assistance in locating the primary sources which she cites in this blog. Her work sheds light on an important and understudied aspect of life in the camps. This blog, along with the primary sources it cites, were an important resource for this interpretation insofar as any comprehensive analysis of Internment would be incomplete without taking sexual and gendered violence into account.]

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[This book was central to this project insofar as it offers the WRA's perspective on Internment and thus provides an opportunity to analyze the biopolitical thought which grounded their views. Furthermore, the boasts about the advancement in technique of removal since the program enacted against Native Americans as well as descriptions of human engineering prompted the conclusion that the disciplinary project of the camps was the precise locus of the modernity of the internment program.]

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