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# Islands and Swamps: A Comparison of the Japanese American Internment Experience in Hawaii and Arkansas

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ISLANDS AND SWAMPS: A COMPARISON OF THE JAPANESE AMERICAN  
INTERNMENT EXPERIENCE IN HAWAII AND ARKANSAS

ISLANDS AND SWAMPS: A COMPARISON OF THE JAPANESE AMERICAN  
INTERNMENT EXPERIENCE IN HAWAII AND ARKANSAS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in History

By

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Arkansas Tech University  
Bachelor of Arts in History, 2009

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## **ABSTRACT**

Comparing the Japanese American relocation centers of Arkansas and the camp systems of Hawaii shows that internment was not universally detrimental to those held within its confines. Internment in Hawaii was far more severe than it was in Arkansas. This claim is supported by both primary sources, derived mainly from oral interviews, and secondary sources made up of scholarly research that has been conducted on the topic since the events of Japanese American internment occurred. The events of Japanese American Internment in Hawaii and Arkansas are important to remember because they show how far the American government can infringe on civil liberties in a time of national crisis and how unequal its treatment of those effected can be.

This thesis is approved for recommendation  
to the Graduate Council.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Japan and the United States of America entered a state of war on December 7, 1941, after the Japanese imperial navy carried out a highly coordinated assault on the U.S. naval forces present in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. In two attacking waves, Japanese naval aircraft virtually shattered the American Navy and seriously undermined its power in the Pacific Ocean. Although the American aircraft carriers, Lexington and Enterprise, were both out of port and not destroyed during the attack, without their supporting fleet they could not carry out any substantive military actions, neither offensive nor defensive, without facing annihilation.<sup>1</sup> This left the United States west coast and Hawaii open to the potential of enemy invasion.

This thesis will examine the experience of the Japanese and Japanese American populations in both Hawaii and the mainland United States focusing primarily on the experience of those in the Arkansas relocation centers of Rohwer and Jerome and those held in the Hawaiian camps of Sand Island and Honouliuli. The result of the attack on Pearl Harbor was a fear of enemy invasion of the Hawaiian Islands and the American west coast. Oral history and personal journals provide the primary lens through which the events of Japanese American internment are examined in this thesis. This research is used to support the idea that the historical grand narrative of Japanese American internment has misrepresented the conditions of internment in these two locations. Contrary to what is commonly argued, Japanese Americans who experienced internment in Hawaii had a far harsher existence than those who were interned in Arkansas.

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<sup>1</sup> An aircraft carrier requires many supporting ships to provide protection and assistance during combat. Without a supporting fleet an Aircraft carrier can easily be engaged by gunships or submarines and destroyed as it lacks any true ship to ship weapons and defenses.

However, before anything else can be discussed, some demographic information must be explained. The Japanese American population uses a series of numerical based titles to describe varying generations of Japanese living in America. For example, the first generation is labeled Issei; their children (born in the United States) are referred to as Nisei; and their grandchildren are labeled Sansei. Each of these titles is drawn from the Japanese terms ichi, ni, and san, which represent one, two, and three. As early as 1875, the United States developed laws to restrict the immigration of Asians into the country. By 1882, tension between Asian immigrants and American citizens resulted in the Chinese Exclusion Act. The law placed limits on the immigration of Chinese laborers for ten years, banned the naturalization of Chinese, and allowed for the deportation of Chinese who entered the country illegally. Political support of this policy grew, and by 1924, the restrictions on immigration that applied to the Chinese were extended to the Japanese as well. American law required citizenship as a prerequisite to landownership in the United States, but the Issei were legally denied citizenship. It was the Nisei generation, the first Japanese to be born in America, that was granted the title of American citizen under the law and given the right to own land.

The Issei are a confusing group of Japanese to label, and it should be noted that the title “Japanese American” does not apply to all of them in this thesis. Issei who returned to Japan after working in America for a period of time and did not purchase land in the name of their children are not treated as “Japanese Americans” in the following pages. Issei who remained in America, established families, and purchased property through their will be considered “Japanese Americans.” Today some Japanese Americans still use the generational title system and it can be extended indefinitely. However, exceeding the usage of sansei is uncommon. The most important marker in this paper is the denotation of Nisei because it indicates they were born

in the United States and that very fact grants them the rights of an American citizen. However, despite the fact that they were American citizens, they found themselves suspect and interned along with other Japanese living in America.<sup>2</sup>

Public anxiety over the attack and potential invasion of the United States continued to build upon as news of a certain notorious event occurring in Hawaii spread. The events that would later come to be known collectively as the Niihau incident took place when a single Japanese pilot, who had taken part in the attack on Pearl Harbor, crash-landed on the Hawaiian Island of Niihau. With the assistance of several Japanese American citizens, he took over the island for several days. After a successful morning attack run on Pearl Harbor, Airman First Class Shigenori Nishikaichi encountered American P36 fighter planes on his return to the Japanese carrier Hiryu. During the ensuing engagement Nishikaichi's A6M2 was struck in the fuel tank, and he was forced to make an emergency landing on the Island of Niihau.<sup>3</sup> Hawila Kaleohano was in the field near his home when Nishikaichi's fuel-leaking plane crashed, and though he was unaware that the attack at Pearl Harbor had taken place, Kaleohano understood

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<sup>2</sup> Yoo, David. *Growing Up Nisei: Race, Generation, and Culture Among Japanese Americans of California, 1924-49*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000). The book *Growing Up Nisei: Race, Generation, and Culture among Japanese Americans of California, 1924-49* by David K. Yoo provides excellent information on the Nisei of California both before and after war. Professor Yoo of UCLA begins with 1929, when the Immigration act was passed and new Japanese immigrants were no longer welcomed into to America. This isolation led the American Japanese to experience a distance from their native culture which allowed the children of the Issei to begin developing into the leading segment of the Japanese population in America. Drawing on oral interviews Yoo argues that racial issues continued to take a large role in the lives of the Nisei even after the war with Japan ended.

For those looking to learn more about the Nisei generation it is important to note that Japanese Americans are not the only Japanese immigrants to use the denotation system of Issei, Nisei, and Sansei. Japanese immigrants to Canada, Brazil, and Peru also commonly refer to the differences in their generations using the system.

<sup>3</sup> The A6M2 was commonly referred to by the Allies as the "Zero" and was Japan's premier fighter throughout the war. Nishikaichi's fuel tank rupture was not uncommon as the Zero did not contain self-sealing fuel tanks or armor in order to be a lighter weight and have increased maneuverability.

that US-Japanese relations were in an extremely poor state. He was aware of Japanese expansionism in the Asian Pacific and the U.S. oil embargo against Japan. He, therefore, took Nishikaichi's side arm and papers before the disoriented pilot could come to his senses. Other locals soon arrived at the crash site and joined Kaleohano in his attempt to communicate with the downed Japanese airman. Realizing that Nishikaichi simply did not know enough English for the group to effectively discuss the situation with him, Kaleohano brought Ishimatsu Shintani, a native of Japan, to provide translation assistance. After speaking only briefly with the airman, Shintani left, acting strangely, and provided no explanation to the Hawaiians. They turned to the only remaining Japanese speakers on the island for help with their communication, a Nisei couple named Yoshio and Irene Harada. While conversing in Japanese, Nishikaichi explained to the Haradas that Japan had carried out a military attack on Pearl Harbor and that Japan and American were now, in the eyes of the Japanese government, in a state of war. It is possible that the Haradas, though Nisei and American citizens, believed the native Hawaiian population of the island regarded them as far more Japanese than Hawaiian and, therefore, did not translate the information about the attack for the villagers.<sup>4</sup>

Harada decided to aid the downed pilot and the two began to secretly recover Nishikaichi's military papers. The islanders kept Nishikaichi under heavy guard in the island's main village of Puuwai, awaiting the next scheduled visit of the island's owner, Mr. Aylmer Robinson, who came on a boat from the neighboring island of Kauai every week. Robinson's boat was several days overdue because of a military order suspending all inter-island travel after the Pearl Harbor attack, a fact unknown to the islanders. Harada suggested that the pilot be moved to his home some distance away in order to ease the tensions and worries of people living

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<sup>4</sup> Lord, Walter. *Day of Infamy*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1957. Pg. 187-197.

in the village.<sup>5</sup> The request was carried out, and the guard over Nishikaichi was reduced to one Hawaiian man named Hanaiki. After sometime alone together, the pilot asked Hanaiki if he could speak with Harada. Hanaiki consented and took Nishikaichi to the honey house where Harada worked. The two Japanese talked for a few minutes. During the conversation, Harada slipped a revolver to Nishikaichi and then pulled a shotgun out of hiding and took aim at Hanaiki. Completely surprised and outmatched, Hanaiki surrendered without a fight, and the two men locked him up in a nearby storehouse and headed toward Puuwai as fast as they could go. On the way, they stole a small cart and horse and left its owners on the side of the road unharmed. Upon nearing the village, they ran toward Kaleohano's house, hoping to catch him and discover the location of the pilot's military papers, but Kaleohano saw them coming. He remained hidden in his outhouse (outdoor bathroom) while they searched his home and uncovered Nishikachi's pistol. However, even after a whole night of searching, they still did not uncover the papers. Before leaving to go to the village and look for Kaleohano, they burned down his house in hopes of destroying Nishikaichi's papers and preventing them from falling into the hands of the American military.<sup>6</sup>

Upon reaching the village, they discovered only one person had remained behind. All the other villagers fled after Kaleohano arrived, telling them how he escaped capture and warning them of the incident at his house. An elderly woman by the name of Mrs. Huluhouani had stayed behind reading her Bible the entire time. Though the armed men threatened her, she ignored them. Unsure how to respond, they simply left her and went to arm themselves with the machine

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, pg. 197.

<sup>6</sup> United States, and Alben William Barkley. *Pearl Harbor Attack. Hearings Before the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack, Congress of the United States, Seventy-Ninth Congress, First [-Second] Session, Pursuant to S. Con. Res. 27.* Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off, 1946. Pt. 24, pg. 1448-1453.

guns that Nishikachi's A6M2 used as its main armament. With the completion of this task, and thus possessing all the firearms on the island, the two men decided they could now simply wait the villagers out. However, the villagers had been busy forming a resistance to the Japanese micro invasion of their island. In the time that Nishikachi and Harada were searching for the papers and terrorizing the village, the Hawaiians had lit a large signal fire and launched a whaleboat that would reach the closest island, Kauai, in sixteen hours with steady rowing. Even so, Beni Kanahali, a 51-year-old native Hawaiian man and his wife overpowered the two men before help could arrive.<sup>7</sup>

On Saturday morning, December 13, 1941, at approximately 10:00 a.m., Beni Kanahali and his wife attempted to sneak into the village and steal supplies away from the two Japanese men, but they both were captured.<sup>8</sup> The men demanded that the military papers be turned over to them. Beni responded to Harada in English, asking him to take the gun away from the Japanese pilot before he hurt someone, hoping that Nishikachi would not understand. Harada said that he could not do that so Beni proceeded to attack Nishikachi himself in order to take the weapon from the enemy airman. Seeing her husband jump the Japanese pilot inspired his wife to join in the attack, but Harada drug her away. This distracted Beni and gave Nishikachi the chance to counter attack. The pilot opened fire and hit Beni three times in the groin, stomach, and upper leg. Both enraged and fearful of death, Beni decided that the pilot must die before he hurt anyone else. Walter Lord recorded the conclusion of the fight in his book *Day of Infamy*: "With a great heave he picked the man up by his neck and one leg- he had often done it to a sheep- and smashed his

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<sup>7</sup> Lord, pg. 199.

<sup>8</sup> United States, and Alben William Barkley.

head against a stone wall [killing him]. Harada took one look, let Beni's wife go, pointed the shotgun at himself, and pulled the trigger.”<sup>9</sup>

At 1:50 p.m., Sunday December 14, 1941, a U.S. Army expedition party of twelve armed soldiers from company M, 299<sup>th</sup> Infantry under the command of Lieutenant Jack Mizuha arrived at the village of Nonopapa, Niihau. Lieutenant Mizuha informed the villagers that their whale boat had arrived at Kauai, and they had been sent to take the pilot into custody.<sup>10</sup> The islanders relayed to them the events that had taken place earlier that day and showed them where the pilot had been buried. Lieutenant Mizuha then took Shitani, Mrs. Harada, and her child into custody and began the trip back to Kauai.

Beni Kanahali, a native of Hawaii, survived his wounds and in August 1945 he was given two presidential citations for his actions, the Medal of Merit and the Purple Heart. For his knowledge of the incident and failure to report the plans of the Haradas and Nishikachi, Ishimatsu Shintani was arrested and interned on the United States mainland for the remainder of the war, although he eventually become a naturalized American citizen in 1960. Irene Harada suffered the loss of her husband, who died of his self-inflicted wounds during the incident, and was jailed in a military prison on Oahu due to the possibility that she may have been a Japanese spy. She was released in 1944 and returned to Niihau.<sup>11</sup>

The events that occurred on the island of Niihau when Airman Nishikachi crash landed showed the American people and President Franklin D. Roosevelt what might happen in either Hawaii or on the U.S. west coast if the Japanese imperial forces launched an invasion on either

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<sup>9</sup> Lord, pg. 200.

<sup>10</sup> United States, and Alben William Barkley.

<sup>11</sup> Hallstead, William. “The Niihau Incident.” *World War II* 14, no. 5 (January 2000): 38. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed September 19, 2011).



location, an invasion that would presumably appeal to the people of Japanese heritage living there. None of the Japanese or Japanese Americans living on the island attempted to stop Nishikachi. All of the Issei and Nisei on the island knew of the plan and either said nothing or aided him. This event made any Japanese living on the mainland of the United States or in Hawaii a potential enemy of the United States. It provided an important backdrop to the internment of the Japanese on the American west coast, but it also influenced the harsher character of internment in Hawaii.

Pearl Harbor and the events shortly following it provided the initial catalyst to a nation primed for large scale racial discrimination.<sup>12</sup> Well before the Pearl Harbor attack, California had experienced a rise in anti-Asian feelings tied to the economic successes of the Japanese immigrants within the state. By 1919, Japanese farmers were producing ten percent of the state's agricultural output. Americans living on the west coast started to see the Japanese as capable and determined competitors in the workforce.<sup>13</sup> With that as context, war with Japan culminated in a collective set of actions known as Japanese American internment.<sup>14</sup> Although the Pearl Harbor attack and the lesser known Niihau incident are critical elements in the explanation of internment, they are not the sole reason for the events that occurred under its label; they simply allowed racial tensions and military necessity to play a direct role in the political decisions of the United States regarding the issue of Asian immigration into the country.

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<sup>12</sup> For more insight into the full effects of the Pearl Harbor attack read: Toland, John. *Infamy: Pearl Harbor and Its Aftermath*. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1982). John Toland presents a historians take on the idea that the United States government knew the Japanese planned to attack Pearl Harbor but did nothing about it so that the nation would be more easily drawn into world war II. The book is both well researched and an excellent example of revisionist history.

<sup>13</sup> Twyford, Holly Feltman. "Nisei in Arkansas: The Plight of Japanese American Youth in the Arkansas Internment Camps of World War II." (Thesis M.A. University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, 1993). 2.

<sup>14</sup> For the remainder of this work the phrase "Japanese American Internment" will be stated simply as "Internment"

Even before evacuation of Japanese Americans out of “military exclusion zones” began, the U.S. government moved to protect itself from potential spies and saboteurs by making hasty arrests. The primary ethnic heritage of those suspected to be enemy agents was, not surprisingly, Japanese. Within one day of the attack on Pearl Harbor, there were nearly 740 Japanese Americans in the custody of the federal government in California. When explaining this action, former California Attorney General Earl Warren commented, “The Japanese situation in California was the Achilles heel of the entire civilian defense effort... unless something is done, it may bring about a repetition of Pearl Harbor.”<sup>15</sup> By the following spring, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 which allowed the secretary of war and the U.S. armed forces leaders to declare parts of the United States as military zones, “from which any or all persons may be excluded” during wartime.<sup>16</sup> This order made the mass removal of Japanese Americans from the west coast legal.<sup>17</sup>

Very few historians have addressed internment in Hawaii and even fewer historians have focused on the camps and those who were interned in Arkansas. *Cane Fires: The Anti-Japanese Movement in Hawaii, 1865-1945*, by Gary Y. Okihiro, provides the reader with a wealth of background information on the events that happened in Hawaii after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Okihiro begins his history by explaining why the island of Hawaii contained so many

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<sup>15</sup> Roger Daniels, Sandra C. Taylor, and Harry Kitano, *Japanese Americans: From Relocation to Redress* (Seattle:University of Washington Press, 1991), 15.

<sup>16</sup> Roosevelt, Franklin D. Executive Order No. 9066, February 19, 1942.

<sup>17</sup>Robinson, Greg. *By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese Americans*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001). For an in-depth study on the Executive Order 9066 and the president who signed it, read *by Order of the President* by Greg Robinson (Assistant Professor of History at the University of Quebec at Montreal). In his work, Robinson looks at the motivations that FDR had behind creating the order, both racial and military arguments are addressed. Robinson’s central argument is that FDR held a deep seated racial view of the Japanese as untrustworthy and saw Japan as a powerful rival for the United States of America and this lead him to display general indifference to the fate of Japanese Americans during internment. Though his argument maybe a bit bias his overall research is excellent.

Issei and Nisei Japanese on the day of the attack and how their role in the local economy affected the way internment was carried out in the island chain. Okihiro the way suspected Japanese supporters were rounded up, what detention center conditions were like, the treatment of one another by neighbors and friends throughout the island, and just how much damage fear and paranoia can do. He provides an excellent overall narrative of the Japanese American experience in Hawaii all the way until the exiled main land internees returned to the islands. He closes his book with a line of poetry written by an internee as he saw the islands for the first time upon his return home “How bright the sea is, shining in the morning sunlight.”<sup>18</sup>

The main argument of Okihiro’s work centers around the complexities of social relations in Hawaii that developed out of the interactions between white land owners and the ever-increasing migrant labor force used to farm the islands, particularly in the sugar cane fields from which the book takes its title. Okihiro acknowledges the fact that Chinese, Koreans, Filipino, and Asian Indians made up parts of this labor force, but by far the largest segment of the population was Japanese. Because of this, Okihiro labels the interaction that developed over the years of 1865-1945 “Hawaii’s anti-Japanese movement.”<sup>19</sup> He draws parallels between the Japanese American experience in Hawaii and California in terms of race relations and also showcases the differences that demography and culture impressed on both areas.

Most historians who have focused on the subject of internment have combined two historical subfields, cultural history and social history, which provides a more complete answer to why internment occurred and its effects. For example, by using both political analysis and sociology in his book *Prisoners Without Trial: Japanese Americans in World War II*, Roger

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<sup>18</sup> Okihiro, Gary Y. *Cane Fires: The Anti-Japanese Movement in Hawaii, 1865-1945*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991. Pg. 276.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. pg. XV(preface).

Daniels is able to show his readers (in under 115 pages) why the U.S. government believed internment was necessary, why the general public did not cry out against a violation of civil liberties, and the effects the process had on the Japanese American population.<sup>20</sup> He frames all of these topics within the theory that anti-Asian prejudice set the stage for internment, but he also focuses on the belief of American leaders that a large “fifth column” group of subversives must have helped Adolf Hitler achieve his rapid victories in Europe and the fear that the Japanese probably planned to use Japanese Americans to carry out the same tactics.<sup>21</sup>

*Japanese Americans: From Relocation to Redress*, by Roger Daniels, Sandra C. Taylor, and Harry H.L. Kitano, provides a more detailed and less military and politically driven discussion than *Prisoners Without Trial* of the Japanese American experience, starting with the evacuation order and following the story to the public policy debate over the process of redress and reparation. Supporting its chronological grand narrative are several striking photographs and first-person accounts of relocation. The main argument of the book is that anti-Asian movements helped cause the U.S. government to take the process of internment and mass removal too far.<sup>22</sup>

Some of the most important secondary works on the Arkansas interment experience are masters theses, Russell E. Bearden, “The Internment of Japanese Americans in Arkansas, 1942-1945,”<sup>23</sup> Holly Twyford, “Nisei in Arkansas: The Plight of Japanese American Youth in the

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<sup>20</sup> Daniels, Roger. *Prisoners Without Trial: Japanese Americans in World War II*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004). Daniels is currently Professor Emeritus at the University of Cincinnati and is considered by many people in academia to be the leading scholar on Japanese American Internment.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, pg 24.

<sup>22</sup> Roger Daniels, Sandra C. Taylor, and Harry Kitano, *Japanese Americans: From Relocation to Redress* (Seattle:University of Washington Press, 1991).

<sup>23</sup> Bearden, Russell E. “The Internment of Japanese Americans in Arkansas, 1942-1945.” (Thesis M.A. University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, 1986).

Arkansas Internment Camps of World War II,”<sup>24</sup> and Guy E. Dorr, “Issei, Nisei, and Arkansas: A Geographic Study of the Wartime Relocation of Japanese-Americans in Southeast Arkansas (1942-1945).”<sup>25</sup> These works provide excellent foundational information on both the Rohwer and Jerome experiences, ranging from the creation of the camps out of swamp land to their eventual closure after the war. Bearden begins with a detailed examination of the demographic situation on the west coast of the United States from the late 1800s through the 1920s. He uses this portion of his thesis to argue that racial discrimination was one of the strongest forces behind the internment of Japanese Americans. The concept of racial discrimination as a motivational factor behind internment is a later addition into the issue’s historiography, following theories that internment was carried out primarily as a military necessity.<sup>26</sup> Bearden supports this claim with statistical information from United States census reports, interviews, and newspaper articles. As Bearden’s thesis progresses, it eventually follows the Japanese out of the west coast as a group before examining in detail those interned in the state of Arkansas. Bearden’s attention to detail is demonstrated in his description of camp operations.

Holly Twyford’s “Nisei in Arkansas: The Plight of Japanese American Youth in the Arkansas Internment Camps of World War II” attempts to examine the Japanese American

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<sup>24</sup> Twyford, Holly Feltman. “Nisei in Arkansas: The Plight of Japanese American Youth in the Arkansas Internment Camps of World War II.” (Thesis M.A. University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, 1993).

<sup>25</sup> Dorr, Guy E. Issei, “Nisei, and Arkansas: A Geographic Study of the Wartime Relocation of Japanese-Americans in Southeast Arkansas (1942-1945).”(Thesis M.A. University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. 1977).

<sup>26</sup> There are writers who disagree with the theory of an internment driven by race. Michelle Malkin’s book *In Defense of Internment* draws heavily on the claims of former National Security Agency official David Lowman in his book *Magic: The Untold Story of U.S. Intelligence and the Evacuation of Japanese Residents from the West Coast during WWII*. Both these writers argue that military necessity dictated the choices made by the American government during internment. It should be noted that caution needs to be applied when reading and citing these sources as both authors had political motivations for creating their works.

internment experience in Arkansas through the lens of age. She focuses on the changes in the Japanese American population across the generational gaps of Issei, Nisei, and Sansei, claiming that the experience of the Japanese youth in the Arkansas camps changed the fundamental family structure of the Japanese American household. Twyford makes some rather bold assumptions about Japanese American perspectives and opinions. For instance, in the first chapter, she states that “the Nisei looked down with contempt on all things Japanese- culture, customs, and traditions” and hints that many Issei felt deep ties to Japan.<sup>27</sup> These statements are not true in regards to the majority of Japanese Americans. Regardless of these generalizations, her work provides insight into the daily life of the youth inside the camps of Rowher and Jerome.<sup>28</sup>

Guy E. Dorr’s “Issei, Nisei, and Arkansas: A Geographic Study of the Wartime Relocation of Japanese-Americans in Southeast Arkansas (1942-1945)” provides a grand overview of the entire internment experience in Arkansas. Dorr argues that, although much has been written on the topic of Japanese American internment, it has been far too general and often does not mention Arkansas at all. This thesis centers on the study of the Arkansas Japanese American war relocation program through the lens of geography, especially on “the physical and cultural factors and relationships that did occur, or now exist, as a result of the relocation effort.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Twyford, pg 3.

<sup>28</sup> Houston, Jeanne Wakatsuki, and James D. Houston. *Farewell to Manzanar; A True Story of Japanese American Experience During and After the World War II Internment*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973). Jeanne Wakatsuki’s memoir *Farewell to Manzanar* provides an excellent first person account that deals directly with the arguments Twyford puts forth in her masters thesis. Jeanne presents her experience of living as a Nisei in the Manzanar Relocation Center and the different effects the experience had on the varying generations in her family. She centers on the differences between her experience and that of her parents and the struggles between her Nisei culture and the older values of her Issei father.

<sup>29</sup> Dorr, pg 5.

This thesis differs from the work of Bearden, Twyford, and Dorr by examining the circumstances of the people interned in Arkansas and then comparing them to the experience of those interned in Hawaii, where the threat of Japanese invasion originated. This work further separates itself from earlier masters theses by drawing specifically from oral interviews held in repositories and conducted by the author. Many written primary sources exist that support the claims and memories found in oral interviews. One of these accounts is titled “*Wartime Internment*,” written by Mikiso Hane, which provides the personal experiences of its author through the World War II era. Hane was a Kibei, or a person born in America and sent to Japan to study and then returned to America. In the article, Hane describes what life was like in Japan before the outbreak of hostilities, his response to President Roosevelt’s famous “day of infamy” speech, how rumors of lynch mobs and attacks affected him, the discrimination he faced while attempting to enroll in U.S. colleges, and as a graduate student, and the rise of the Nisei during the war as a leading force in the Japanese American community.<sup>30</sup> Mikiso’s main argument claims that internment was critical in pushing the Nisei to take control of the Japanese American community from the Issei prematurely, which led to a more rapid assimilation of the Japanese American community into the mainstream American culture. This is important to this thesis because it helps provide insight into how the Nisei, which make up the largest portion of interview research contained within this work, remember their parents and other Issei.

Another area of internment that receives attention from historians and has changed the historiography of the subject is the political/bureaucratic process involved in redressing the violation of Japanese American civil liberties. In regards to Japanese Americans, the word “redress” applies to the U.S. government’s efforts both to apologize for the psychological and

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<sup>30</sup> Hane, Mikiso. "Wartime Internment." *Journal of American History* 77, no. 2 (September 1990): 569-575. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed September 20, 2011).

economic damage that the mass removal and wartime internment inflicted on the Japanese American population, and the award of 20,000 dollars to each surviving internee. This action was the result of many years of lobbying by Japanese Americans and their supporters who were inspired by the black civil rights movement of the 1960s to seek justice for the internment of Japanese Americans. In *Achieving the Impossible Dream: How Japanese Americans Obtained Redress*, Mitchell T. Maki, Harry Kitano, and Megan S. Berthold analyze a combination of interviews and secondary sources published on the subject.<sup>31</sup> This work, together with *Personal Justice Denied: The report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians*, outlines the events that resulted in redress. The history of internment and its political repercussions remains important as America continues to face racially and culturally driven problems in the present day.<sup>32</sup>

Though pleased with the outcome of the redress movement, many Issei and Nisei who experienced internment viewed the event as a shameful thing and preferred to avoid discussing the topic.<sup>33</sup> When asked to explain why those members of the Japanese American community who were involved in internment previously avoided discussing their experience, George Takei told of a conversation he overheard in the National Japanese American Museum located in Los

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<sup>31</sup> Maki, Mitchell T., Harry H. L. Kitano, and S. Megan Berthold. *Achieving the Impossible Dream: How Japanese Americans Obtained Redress*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999.

<sup>32</sup> United States. *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians* : Report for the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1992.

<sup>33</sup> Guterson, David. *Snow Falling on Cedars*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995). Though not a historical or scholarly work, the fiction novel *Snow Falling on Cedars* by David Guterson shows the social pressures many Japanese Americans felt after the war. The main character of the novel faces a charge of murder motivated by the loss of his family's land during their interment period. Guterson does an excellent job of displaying the distrust and fear that war with Japan brought to many communities on the west coast of the U.S. through personal relationships albeit fictional ones.



Angeles, as he walked through the internment gallery. He heard a grandfather tell his grandsons about what he witnessed during internment. The father of the grandsons repeatedly made such comments throughout the conversation as “Gee, Dad, you never told me that,” and “Gee, Dad, I never knew that.”<sup>34</sup> It took the passage of time and the setting of a respected museum for the grandfather to open up and describe his experience. Takei explained it: “It’s like a woman who’s been raped. They’re reluctant to talk about their rape. They feel shamed and soiled and very uncomfortable talking about that.”<sup>35</sup> The increase in public awareness and recognition of wrong doing during the internment period has begun to generate increased support for foundations like the National Japanese American Museum. This, in turn, resulted in many of the survivors sharing experiences that they had previously withheld.<sup>36</sup>

The increased capabilities of recording technology, such as the voice recorder and video camera, coincided with the new wave oral histories that Japanese internment began producing. The “documents” available for the study of internment expanded and oral sources became as tangible (and more importantly, citable) as written statements. The events of internment occurred after the development of this new methodology, and this research takes advantage of both preexisting interview recordings and oral interviews that were created specifically for this thesis. As more survivors began to discuss the events of internment and the subject grew less taboo, the opportunity for historians to gather new interviews expanded enormously. Many institutions involved in compiling and maintaining the history of Japanese internment created oral history collections, such as the Fullerton Japanese American Oral History Project Collection at the California State University and the Densho Archives Japanese American Legacy Project. These

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<sup>34</sup> George Takei, Phone interview with the Author. March 18, 2011.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> More information on George Takei’s personal experience with internment can be found in his autobiography *To the Stars: The Autobiography of George Takei*.

collections, and others like them, hold hundreds of interviews in both audio and video formats. Had they not conducted and transcribed these oral histories, a valuable record of primary accounts from the Issei and Nisei generations might have been lost.<sup>37</sup>

To take advantage of the recent growth of oral sources in the historiography of internment, the core focus of this thesis involves examining the differences between internment in Hawaii and Arkansas and exploring the rare times these two experiences overlapped. Chapter two will examine Hawaii and how the camp system was established and used there. Firsthand accounts recorded through oral from interviews describe the origins of the many Japanese families that live in Hawaii today, the Pearl Harbor attack, the following arrests and internments, and the overall legal and economic effects the internment experience had on the Hawaiian Islands. Chapter three explores the Arkansas internment experience, beginning with the mass removal memories and racial pressures many of the Japanese who spent the war years in Arkansas related in oral interviews. It will also look at how the camps developed over the course of the war, how the internees felt about their situation, and how the locals perceived them. The conclusion of chapter three describes the long term affects that internment had on both the people of Arkansas and the Japanese Americans who were forced to live there. The final chapter looks closely at the ways the Hawaii and Arkansas internment experiences overlapped, ranging from similar camp stories of hardships and positive experiences, to times when Hawaiians and mainland Japanese Americans encountered each other during internment. Although each area

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<sup>37</sup> Tateishi, John. *And Justice for All: An Oral History of the Japanese American Detention Camps*. (New York: Random House, 1984). The book *And Justice for All: an Oral History of the Japanese American Detention Camps* by John Tateishi provides a good collection of interviews from internees and its publication date of 1984 coincides well with political movement to obtain redress for Japanese Americans that led many internees to add their experiences to the oral history record. In his work, Tateishi does not attempt to provide a new “definitive academic history” on the subject of internment, but instead puts down the story of Japanese Americans in their own words for the first time. Preface.

had different experiences and Hawaii did not endure mass removal, the overall nature of internment on the Hawaiian Islands was far more brutal than that of the mainland.

## CHAPTER TWO: ISLANDS

The home country of the Japanese people, located at the coordinates of 36 degrees North latitude and 138 degrees East longitude, is a distance of 5,500 miles off the coast of California and nearly 3,500 miles from the network of Hawaiian Islands.<sup>38</sup> In the modern era, a jet plane can make the trip from Tokyo to Honolulu in roughly five hours and thirty minutes. But for anyone wishing to make the voyage before air travel became highly developed, the trip could take weeks, was potentially life threatening, and highly expensive. Yet, this challenge was overshadowed by the economic opportunities that the Japanese perceived existed in America. According the U.S. Census conducted in 1940, the island paradise of Hawaii contained a population of 422,770 persons. The same data reported that 157,905 or 37 percent of those living in Hawaii were of Japanese ethnicity.<sup>39</sup>

The main economic pull on the Japanese toward Hawaii was the rapidly growing demand for farm labor. As late as the 1800s, Japanese men were arriving to work the sugar fields. A single man would work for some time to establish himself. Once he was capable of supporting a family, he would begin the selection of a “picture bride.” Based on pictures of available women and his parent’s advice, the man would select a wife. The selected “picture bride” would then be sent on a boat to join her husband in mainland America or Hawaii. Although this process sometimes produced incompatible marriages, it set up the foundation for the rapid growth of the Japanese population.

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<sup>38</sup> United States War Relocation Authority. *Wartime Exile: The Exclusion of the Japanese Americans from the West Coast*. (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1946), 8.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

As a group the Japanese who immigrated to Hawaii were hard workers. Mothers often brought their infants into the fields so that they could care for them without sacrificing the chance to aid in farm work. Typically, all members of the family were required to work in order to help provide for the household. Larry Kazumura recalled during an interview that when he was young in Hawaii all the school children would work from five o'clock in the morning until eleven o'clock a.m. during the summertime and typically Saturdays and Sundays. He summed up the amount of time spent in the plantation for a Japanese child in Hawaii by stating, "When school is out, we work."<sup>40</sup> Wally Yonamine also recalled working in the cane fields in the summertime to help his family make ends meet. His main tasks were the cutting of weeds with a hoe. "I used to hate that job because, you know, the leaves would cut you and all that," he said. For his labor, he earned about 25 cents a day. Later, after his freshman year of high school, he was able to get a job in the pineapple fields and made about 15 dollars a day loading 50 pound boxes onto trucks for one cent for each box loaded. In Japanese American families, children would often give their earnings to their families. Wally was no exception; he explained that he and his siblings always gave everything they made to their parents.<sup>41</sup>

During these early years, from around 1865 to 1901, the social atmosphere of the islands was generally positive. The Japanese were useful and provided and cheap labor. The Japanese gained a chance to make more money than would have been possible in Japan, and the local land owners gained a larger profit margin. Then, during the 1920s, social tension erupted when the

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<sup>40</sup> Kazumura, Larry. Interview with Megan Asaka. video interview. December 20, 2006. Seattle, Washington. Densho Digital Archive.

<sup>41</sup> Yonamine, Wally. Interview with Art Hansen. Video interview. December 16, 2003. Honolulu, Hawaii. Densho Digital Archive.

Japanese organized and began to strike for better wages and rights.<sup>42</sup> These strikes, combined with the economic success that some of the Japanese were beginning to achieve, increased tension in the islands as the Japanese people offered competition as businessmen, doctors, and farmers, and as they started farms and small businesses of their own.

Ken Saburo provides an example of a Japanese plantation worker who took advantage of the economic mobility in America that was not present in his native Japan. In his home village of Furumachi in Nagano, Japan, Ken was a silkworm farmer. Ken's son, Susumu Oshima, recalled his father telling him that silkworm farming offered very little income. "That's why he decided that he'll take a chance and then move to Hawaii," Susumu recalled, "where, something, new adventure for him. He had a promising job as a plantation worker." Ken had Susumu's mother sent over from his home village of Nagano as a picture bride in 1914 and worked at saving enough money to open a "show house," otherwise known as a silent film movie theater. By the time Susumu was born, August 15, 1926, the couple had six children and the family income was good enough that his father opened a snack shop, in addition to the movie theater, that served local coffee farmers cheap items like Japanese bread called *Pan* and soda pop. Not long after the shop had opened, Oshima remembers that his mother began making ice cream to sell there as well. Soon Saburo was able to buy a used car, which enabled him to open a taxi service as well as maintain his snack shop. While these two businesses were growing, he also sent his children out to work on the local farms, like many other Japanese families. With these various sources of

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<sup>42</sup> United States War Relocation Authority. *Wartime exile: The exclusion of the Japanese Americans from the West coast*. (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1946), 64.

income, he was eventually able to open a barber shop and raise his family into the middle class and make himself a rival to white economic control.<sup>43</sup>

Their drive to better their position in society brought the Japanese of Hawaii into racial conflict with other inhabitants of the island. At the same time, it increased their connection and importance to the economy of the island chain. Over time, they shifted from being expendable hired help to becoming critical members of the community who planned to maintain a lasting residence in the area. When the Pearl Harbor bombing occurred, the Japanese of Hawaii made up not only 37 percent of the population but also represented a large and valuable segment of the economy. This presented a serious problem for the internment and control of the Japanese in Hawaii. Since they were so integrated into the society, the process of internment was more complex and vastly different in Hawaii than on the mainland.

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<sup>43</sup> Oshima, Susumu. Interview with Tom Ikeda. Video interview. June 9, 2010. Kona, Hawaii. Densho Digital Archive.



The Day The Planes Came<sup>44</sup>

On the morning of December 7, 1941, Hawaii native Ramsay Yosuke Mori, eight years of age at the time, had taken a bike ride up into Alewa Heights overlooking Pearl Harbor. He remembered it was quiet when he reached a look out location near St. Francis Hospital. No airplanes in flight, no anti-aircraft guns firing, just stillness. Then there were “hundreds of black puffs of clouds all over the sky,” which he described as very “ominous” the ammunition used in practice drills left behind white puffs of smoke, but everyone knew only that armed anti-aircraft shells left a black cloud. Mori recalled, “We knew it was something real whereas the white

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<sup>44</sup> Bombing of Pearl Harbor <http://brokenworld.wikispaces.com/16.2+Japan+and+the+Pacific> accessed Oct 5, 2011.



clouds were all practice, and these were real, but we had no idea that there was shrapnel flying around up in the air trying to get the airplanes.”<sup>45</sup>

Early the morning of the attack, Toshio Moritsugu, sixteen years old at the time, was sitting in the second story of a building near the Kaneohe Naval Air Station doing his algebra homework for the day:

Every Sunday, the military people did maneuver, and this particular morning I heard loud sounds and it wasn't the normal type of maneuver that they did. I thought about it and said, they must be doing something more realistic as far as that Sunday morning. And before long, I could see that the sound became louder and I could see planes flying around. I thought, "Gee, they're really doing good work, real realistic type of practice." Then black clouds started coming out. There were two hangars and then before long, the planes disappeared. And then about an hour later, the radio announcer from KGMB, which was a major station, announced, "This is the real McCoy. We are being attacked." I couldn't believe it. Then the announcer described that Japanese planes had come over and that they were bombing certain areas.<sup>46</sup>

After the radio revealed that the attack was real, Moritsugu and his family stayed home and prepared to follow the curfew and black-out orders. As the immediate danger passed, his father, he, and his brothers began building an air raid shelter near their home and painted the windows on their home black to help conceal the building and protect against future Japanese air raids.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Mori, Ramsay. Interview with Tom Ikeda. Video Interview. February 28, 2011. Honolulu, Hawaii. Densho Digital Archive.

<sup>46</sup> Moritsugu, Toshio. Interview with Tom Ikeda. Video Interview. March 2, 2011. Honolulu Hawaii. Densho Digital Archive. Segment 15.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

This was evidence that the Moritsugu family thought of itself as enemies to the Japanese, not the Americans and Hawaiians living in the island chain.

The bombing of Pearl Harbor provided the spark that brought the already established racial tension in Hawaii out into the open. The FBI and police forces in Hawaii began to make arrests and confiscate contraband items such as radios, Japanese books, swords, and kendo equipment. Kendo is a Japanese word meaning “way of The Sword” and describes the Japanese martial art of sword fighting. It is used primarily to help discipline and shape a person’s character through hard work and focus rather than teaching the practitioner how to kill with a sword. Moritsugu remembers that his father suspected the FBI would arrest him because of his business connections, strong Buddhist faith, and frequent travel between Japan and Hawaii. Because of this, his father broke his close business ties, and gave taxi cabs over to their drivers so that someone could still make money from them and to protect those near him from potential internment. Moritsugu recalled the day his father was taken. He was at work when they arrived:

They told my father to, "Pack up your tools, we're gonna drive you home." So he returned home with the security people and they, the security people told my mother to pack some clothing for (my) father for a couple of nights. And they would not have my mother talk to my father. They were always close to them. (My parents couldn't discuss) private things. And from what my mother told me, they looked all over, searched the whole house, for anything that they could pick up. And my dictionary for example, Japanese

American dictionary was taken and my *kendo* outfit was taken. And the radio that we had was taken and my father was driven downtown.<sup>48</sup>

Unlike the Toshio Moritsugu family, who only suspected that the attack on Pearl Harbor would cause turmoil for them, Masamizu Kitajima's family immediately expected trouble from the government after the bombing due to their unique position in Hawaii society. The Kitajima clan had held a Buddhist church in Japan that had been endowed to his family by the first shogun. This placed them in a high position in Japanese society. When bad economic investments cost his grandfather the family church, Kitajima's father, Shoyu Kitajima, dropped out of medical school to attend Taisho University, located in the Toshima ward of Tokyo, and enter the ministry school.<sup>49</sup> According to Masamizu, in order to establish himself with a church, his father joined his uncle in Hawaii and began saving funds to build a new church. This process went well, and by December 7, 1941, Shoyu had amassed a large sum of money. Masamizu, who was eight years old at this time, remembered his father said nothing to his family on the day of the attack. Shoyu disappeared with all the church savings. He returned late that evening empty handed and explained that, because he expected to be taken by the FBI and stripped of the funds he had hidden them.<sup>50</sup>

The next day, Masamizu remembers being sent home from school around noon. Upon arriving at home, he discovered his mother crying:

I said, "What's happened?" She says, "Dad got taken. The FBI came and picked him up."

"What's gonna happen?" She don't know yet. "Where they gonna take him?" They don't

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid. Segment 17.

<sup>49</sup> Kitajima, Masamizu. Interview with Tom Ikeda. June 12, 2010. Densho Archive. Segment 2.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. segment 12.

know yet. Nothing, no, just that they came in a black car, grabbed Dad tight and put him in the car and they left, without any word. And it was almost a week before we found out that he was right in the county jail.<sup>51</sup>

After discovering his father's location, Masamizu said they often visited him, and brought him lunch. He remembered the visits with his father in the county jail, which seemed more like an outing or a picnic rather than going to a place of detainment. The men detained in the Wailua jail slept on cots inside cells, but when visitors came, according to Masamizu "their cells were never locked. The doors all open, gates were all open, and they used to walk in and out." The detainees were bored but otherwise in good spirits. The guards were all local men who knew those they were holding so mistreatment was not an issue. Overall, his father's experience inside Wailua County Jail on the island of Maui was not intolerable and far different from the conditions and treatment experienced by people interned on the island.

Even after his father had been taken, Masamizu's interaction with the FBI continued. Every week, agents arrived at their home to search for the funds that Shoyu had hidden before his arrest. "Every week they would come, pull drawers out and just flip it upside down and throw it. Just like you'd see in the movie," Masamizu said.<sup>52</sup> They also sent crews to dig under and around the Kitajima home. Eventually, Mrs. Kitajima stopped cleaning up after them and the house became a destroyed shell. Masamizu remembers telling his mother he planned to hit the FBI men next time. She responded, "Don't. If you hit them you might get taken away."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid segment 12.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. segment 15.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

The Kitajima family's experience followed the typical arrest and detainment of Hawaiian families that found themselves under suspicion. But not all of the Japanese arrests were the same, nor were they even carried out by Caucasians. Haruye Murakami Hagiwara considered herself very lucky to have had her father picked up by a Japanese American. On December 8, 1941, Hagiwara and her family were sitting on the porch of their house when their neighbor, a Japanese American detective, came to take her father away around 7 o'clock that evening. "He was very apologetic, sorry he had to go pick him up and take him for questioning," she recalled. The detective then, as politely as possible, conducted a search for weapons by very lightly patting down Hagiwara's father. After he concluded his check, they left. The detective did not enter their home or confiscate any items. Her father took nothing and believed he would be returning shortly. "We never saw him for four years after that" recalled Hagiwara.<sup>54</sup>

In the early weeks after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, arrests were made by local authorities and people were detained in county jails. Though they were questioned by the FBI, the U.S. Army did not immediately take control of the territory's government and resources. Hawaii seemed primed for racially driven violence, however, against the Japanese living throughout the islands. Fred Matsumura was living on the island of Molokai right after the bombing. He recalled that the other Hawaiians (excluding Caucasians) living on the island had "no hard feelings" toward the Japanese. However, the FBI did question businessmen, doctors, and those with a history of traveling between Hawaii and Japan. When asked to explain why racial tension/differences did not explode into civil violence, Matsumura explained that the members of the community had known each other since they were children. They were friends before the incident and would remain so afterwards. In the opinion of his neighbors and friends,

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<sup>54</sup> Hagiwara Murakami, Haruye. Interview with Tom Ikeda. June 10, 2010. Densho Archive. Segment 16.

the Japanese of Molokai were Hawaiians first and Japanese second. These invaders were not the same Japanese. He also noted that there was not a large population of *haoles*, or white people, present on the island and that this may have had an impact on the social atmosphere.<sup>55</sup>

Ramsay Yosuke Mori, the eight-year-old witness to the attack on Pearl Harbor from a lookout near Alewa Heights, attended Punahou preparatory private school during the war. When asked about the community attitudes in that period, Mori recalled that nobody at school or in his neighborhood said anything about his parents being suspected of spying for Japan before or after they were placed in the Sand Island internment camp. Some of his Caucasian friends continued to invite him to play at their homes throughout the war years and they remained good friends. However, one *haole* boy that was his friend before the war was not allowed to play with him anymore. Mori said he thought the boy felt “real bad” about the situation, but the two never discussed the subject.<sup>56</sup>

Overall, the social atmosphere of the Hawaiian Islands remained positive on the individual level. The majority of friendships lasted throughout the war between the three different racial groups, Caucasians, Hawaiians, and Japanese. However, anxiety and distrust developed on the higher social plain between the government and its citizens. Proof of this is seen in the interactions between government agents and suspected Japanese people that did not know each other personally. Although the social turmoil on the island was not extremely high, the problem of potential sabotage was perceived by the military as a real danger. With the option of mass removal being both impractical and seemingly impossible, the U.S. military government

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<sup>55</sup> Matsumura, Fred. Interview with Tom Ikeda. Video interview. July 2, 1998. Densho Archive. Segment 7.

<sup>56</sup> Mori, Ramsay. Interview with Tom Ikeda. Video Interview. February 28, 2011. Honoulu, Hawaii. Densho Digital Archive. Segment 13.

of the territory established two primary camps, Sand Island and Camp Honouliuli, to house the leadership and affluent members of the island's Japanese population.



Sand Island<sup>57</sup>

The first of the two U.S. Army facilities established was Sand Island, which opened on December 8, 1941, because the FBI required a detainment and questioning center for the high-risk members of society. Sand Island was located near the mouth of the Honolulu Harbor on the island Oahu, Hawaii.<sup>58</sup> The army took control of the site in 1941 because of its useful, yet isolated, location. It was close to the military governor of Hawaii's office, but water separated

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<sup>57</sup> Picture of the Sand Island internment camp.

<http://archives.starbulletin.com/2004/08/15/editorial/special.html> Accessed Oct. 1, 2011.

<sup>58</sup> Okihiro, Gary Y. *Cane Fires: The Anti-Japanese Movement in Hawaii, 1865-1945*. (Temple University Press, 1991), 214.

the two locations. This made escape much harder and isolated the internees from strategic targets. In addition, many of the area's facilities were ready for immediate use.<sup>59</sup>

Yasutaro Soga was editor of the *Nippu Jiji*, a Japanese language Hawaiian newspaper, and one of the internees held at Sand Island. He, along with other leaders of the Japanese communities on the islands, was rounded up by the FBI and local police within hours of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Soga recalled that once he and his fellow Japanese arrived on Sand Island, they were stripped naked and subjected to body searches. Once the searches were completed, they were led outside into the night rain and ordered to erect their own tents. Because most of the internees were editors, businessmen, priests, and physicians, few of them were “accustomed” to erecting tents, explained Soga. The task of constructing their tents was difficult and exhausting. “Soaked with rain and sweat, I think we completed the work around nine o’clock that night,” he said. Once the tents were finished, the internees were ordered to go to bed.”We all lay ourselves in makeshift beds in wet clothes that night,” penned Soga.<sup>60</sup>

For the first six months of their imprisonment at the Sand Island camp, the internees were forced to live in the tents that they erected themselves. They were kept constantly busy every day. Soga recalled, “We were forced to work constantly such as weeding, picking up rubbish, and swatting flies.”<sup>61</sup> The men were not allowed to stay in their tents unless they were sick. Life in the Sand Island camp and in mainland camps was mentally draining for the internees, even causing mental breakdowns. One internee, a priest, according to Soga, insisted that he was

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 215.

<sup>60</sup> Soga, Yasutaro. *Life behind Barbed Wire: The World War II Internment Memoirs of a Hawaii Issei*. University of Hawaii Press, 2008. Pg 2.

<sup>61</sup> Okihiro, Gary Y. *Cane Fires*, 215.



pregnant and went insane.<sup>62</sup> Another internee tried to commit suicide by cutting his wrists with a razor blade because of the mental strain of the repeated searches and interrogation.<sup>63</sup>

Along with the physical and mental strain, the Japanese were made to feel a sense of defeat and hopelessness. Strip searches removed the men's dignity. One of the internees in the camp recalled, "They stripped us down and even checked the anus. We were completely naked. Not even under shorts."<sup>64</sup> According to Soga, these inspections were sometimes carried out seven to eight times a day. The rough treatment that the internees experienced was systematic. Eating in the rain with wash water and dirty spoons, sleeping in flooded tents, and being forced to relieve themselves in buckets and cans wore down the men's spirits. Soga wrote, "None of us could see a light in our future."<sup>65</sup>

Men were not the only ones detained in Sand Island, but families were not imprisoned together. The male and female populations of the camp lived separately, which meant husbands and wives had little to no contact. Ramsay Yosuke Mori recalled that when his mother and other ladies first arrived at the camp, some as old as sixty to seventy years of age, they were marched around camp by GIs with fixed bayonets.<sup>66</sup> However, this was quickly resolved. Even though these ladies were Japanese, they were well connected in the community, and their outside friends took actions on their behalf to correct camp operations. "There were a lot of people of conscience, really, religious people primarily, that came forward and checked on these,

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 216.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 216.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 217.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 223.

<sup>66</sup> Mori, Ramsay. Interview with Tom Ikeda. Video Interview. February 28, 2011. Honoulu, Hawaii. Densho Digital Archive. Segment 16.

demanded to, to make sure that it was being humane,” Mori observed.<sup>67</sup> When asked if his family had been aided by their community during their time in Sand Island, Mori replied:

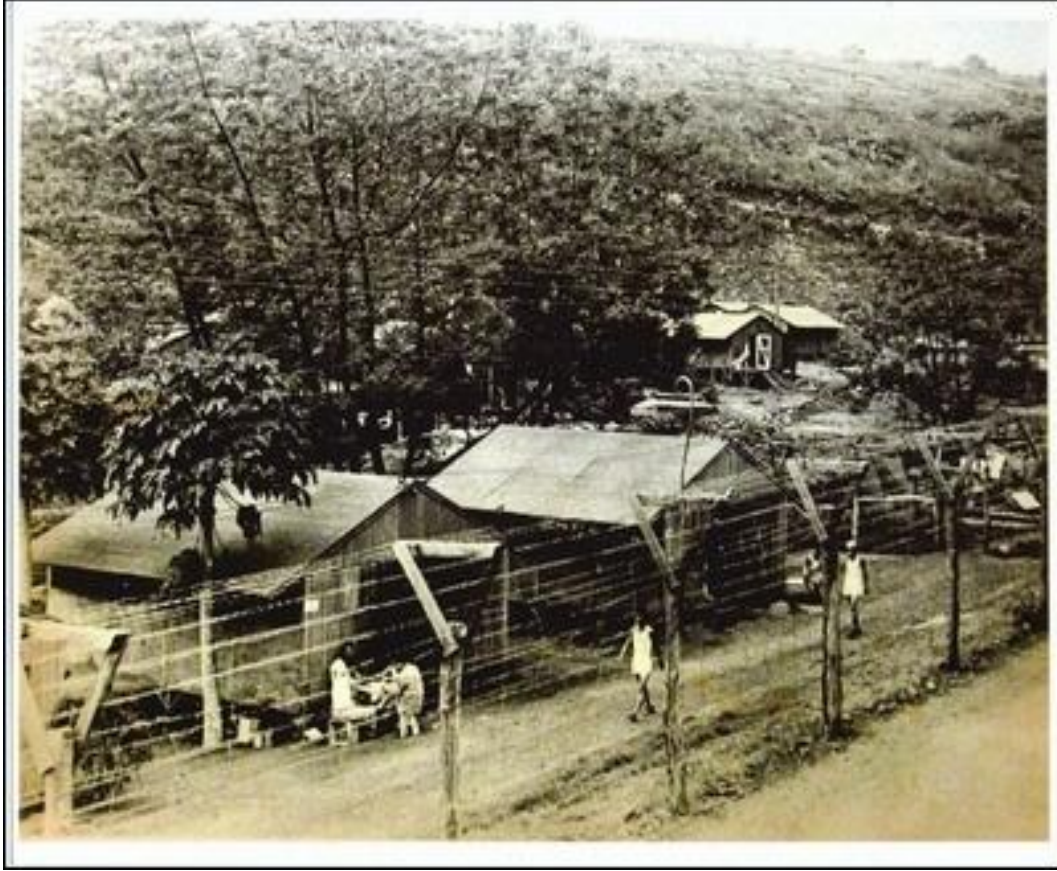
I am sure, particularly in my grandfather's case, that people, other than those that were obvious, must've spoken for him because they knew his age. They knew he wasn't an enemy, and I'm sure they had a great deal of influence. They probably made the military look like, look like crap, puttin' an old man like that, old women into a jail type of confinement.<sup>68</sup>

Sand Island closed on March 1, 1943, to become part of the expanded Honolulu Port of Embarkation. A large number of the internees that were being held in the camp were taken to the mainland internment camps and relocation centers. Those who were not transferred to the mainland were taken to the Honouliuli camp near Ewa on the island of Oahu.

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.



Camp Honouliuli<sup>69</sup>

Camp Honouliuli was the main camp ground for a chain of smaller camp and collection centers that extended from Kalaheo on Kauai, to Molokai and Lanai, to Haiku on Maui, and to Waiakea on Hawaii.<sup>70</sup> It contained not only Japanese internees but also Italians and Germans, with each national group separated by barbed wire fencing.<sup>71</sup> Housing on the Honouliuli camp ground consisted of small cottages that each held eight to ten people. A Swedish vice-consul

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<sup>69</sup> Picture of Camp Honouliuli. [http://umwblogs.org/wiki/index.php/Asians\\_in\\_Hawai'i](http://umwblogs.org/wiki/index.php/Asians_in_Hawai'i) Accessed Oct 2, 2011.

<sup>70</sup> Okihiro, Gary Y. *Cane Fires: The Anti-Japanese Movement in Hawaii, 1865-1945*. (Temple University Press, 1991) 246.

<sup>71</sup> Inokuchi, Yutaka. Interview with Tom Ikeda. Video interview. March 3, 2011. Densho Archive. Segment 14.

named Gustaf W. Olson made visits to the camp during its operation. He found the housing to be acceptable: “The cottages have good air circulation and ample sunlight.” The population at the time of his visits was made up of 84 Issei and 154 Nisei and included both men and women internees. He gave a positive account of the Japanese section of the camp, noting the quality of its hospital, dental clinic, medical dispensary, canteen, and kitchen.<sup>72</sup>

The Japanese did not share Olson’s opinions on camp life. Yutaka recalled that the “cottages” Olson referred to were really more like a wooden lean-to, or semi-walled structures that held six to eight people sleeping in bunks.<sup>73</sup> An internee named Dan Nishikawa remembered that he was angry often during his internment. He claimed that his interest in crafts was the only thing that kept him from losing his mind. He recalled unequal treatment in the Honouliuli camp. The white internees received fresh fruits and vegetables. The Japanese were given canned goods until Nishikawa began to protest. He also claimed that American pilots would practiced bombing raids on the Japanese cottages. When he complained about this, he was told that if the Japanese Hawaii attacked again American planes would bomb the camp first.<sup>74</sup> Umeno Harada, one of a handful of women in the camp, explained her situation “[I was] a mother in deepest distress whose heart is bleeding and can’t take the suffering much longer. I am in my nerves, I lost more than 30 pounds. I have been patiently waiting to be united to my children again who are waiting every hour for the mother to come home.”<sup>75</sup> The Waiakea prison camp, a subsection of the Honouliuli camp ground, was particularly harsh place. According to the camp’s prison report, internees were given a month at hard labor for cursing or using obscene language, three months

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<sup>72</sup> Okihiro, Gary Y. *Cane Fires: The Anti-Japanese Movement in Hawaii, 1865-1945*. (Temple University Press, 1991), 247.

<sup>73</sup> Inokuchi, Yutaka. Interview with Tom Ikeda. Video interview. March 3, 2011. Densho Archive. Segment 15.

<sup>74</sup> Okihiro, 247.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

for being a "disorderly person," and a year for being in possession of what the camp administer considered to be too much money or for having a Japanese flag.<sup>76</sup>

However, overall, the Honouliuli camp was considered a much more humane place than Sand Island. Sam Nishimura compared the two camps and stated that Honouliuli was a better place because it was "family type internment," with only nine men to each barracks. Some of the men in Nishimura's barracks worked in the kitchen. They sometimes returned from their dinner shift with coffee and pastries for snacks before the lights were turned off for the nine o'clock curfew. Yutaka Inokuchi remembered thinking his father, after resigning himself to the fact that he was going to be interned for an extended period, "enjoyed it, I mean, you know, that well, I think that's the kind of quiet my father liked, those who do a lot of reading and writing and stuff like that." He also remembers bringing many items for his father to construct crafts along with the other internees.<sup>77</sup> Still, their confinement at Honouliuli remained stressful, and Nishimura remembered that some internees "lost their minds."<sup>78</sup>

For many Hawaiians, internment was a thing one heard whispers of but did not experience firsthand. Community leaders, such as business men and Buddhist priests like the Moritsugu and Kitajima families, were often the target of FBI investigations and therefore also had the highest chance of being placed in the Sand Island and Honouliuli camps. Conditions in the two camps were extremely harsh. Internees died from medical mistreatment, exposure to the elements, and escape attempts. However, there were small acts of kindness that took place due to the closeness of the Hawaiian population. Racial discrimination and violence on the individual

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 248.

<sup>77</sup> Inokuchi, Yutaka. Interview with Tom Ikeda. Video interview. March 3, 2011. Densho Archive. Segment 14.

<sup>78</sup> Okihiro, Gary Y. *Cane Fires: The Anti-Japanese Movement in Hawaii, 1865-1945*. (Temple University Press, 1991), 248.

level were not severe. For those who were forced to endure internment in the Hawaiian camp system, the war years were hellish, but the majority of Japanese Americans living in Hawaii were spared this experience.

### Chapter Three: Swamps

The Japanese Americans made up a much smaller segment of the economy in the United States than in Hawaii. In 1940, there were 126,947 Japanese living on the American mainland while the total population of America in that year was 132,164,569.<sup>79</sup> This meant that for every Japanese American person in the United States there were roughly 1040 non-Japanese. Though they were present in smaller numbers and had less effect on the economy than their fellows in Hawaii, they were most densely populated in California and developed into one of the largest producers of crops in the state. In fact, by 1919, Issei farmers were producing 10 percent of the state's total crop output and 80 percent of the celery, asparagus, tomatoes, and strawberries.<sup>80</sup> They also worked as cheap labor in the railroad and farming industries. According to the U.S. Immigration commission, Japanese American laborers tended to work longer hours than other laborers, were quicker workers, and capable of more tedious labor than other races.<sup>81</sup>

During the sugar beet season, many workers would leave the railroads to work for higher wages harvesting beets. Japanese American workers were no exception, and many would join in the industry during the growing season. At this time in history, a beet field worker was normally paid per unit harvested with no limit on how many hours he worked each day. The Japanese Americans earned the highest average wage at between a \$1.75 and \$2.00 per day, with 37.4

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<sup>79</sup> United States War Relocation Authority. *Wartime exile: The exclusion of the Japanese Americans from the West coast*. (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1946), 22.

<sup>80</sup> Bearden, pg. 12.

<sup>81</sup> United States War Relocation Authority. *Wartime exile: The exclusion of the Japanese Americans from the West coast*, 65.

percent of them earning more than that.<sup>82</sup> When the people of an area became dependent upon Japanese American labor, the Japanese would begin making organized demands for higher wages. The Immigration Commission commented that the Japanese Americans were often accused of using the monopolistic tactics of price gouging.<sup>83</sup>

While the Japanese and Japanese Americans were superior low-level wage workers, they were often not satisfied when working for others. There was a common path that the average migratory Japanese worker followed on the mainland. First, he would arrive in America and work as a seasonal worker for roughly two years. Then he would have the experience required to become a year-round farm hand with the goal of earning a share of the crops. The next step was to get a piece of land that he could farm by paying rent with the eventual goal of buying the land, though under the name of his children (due to laws limiting Issei land ownership), with the profits of several harvests.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 65.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 64.



TABLE I  
ADMISSION OF JAPANESE TO THE UNITED STATES  
AND ITS TERRITORIES, 1901-1910

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Continental United States</u>	<u>Alaska</u>	<u>Hawaii</u>
1901.....	5,249	4,908	3	338
1902.....	14,445	5,325	5	9,125
1903.....	20,041	6,990	6	13,045
1904.....	14,382	7,776	16	6,590
1905.....	11,021	4,319	10	6,692
1906.....	14,243	5,178	14	9,051
1907.....	30,824	9,948	11	20,865
1908.....	16,418	7,250	15	9,153
1909.....	3,275	1,593	3	1,679
1910.....	2,798	1,552	7	1,239
Total.....	132,706	54,839	90	77,777

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Their ability to become farmers of their own land within one generation of arriving in America combined with the fact that Japanese laborers produced more than other farmers, rapidly increased racial tension. Japanese American farmers controlled 4,698 acres of land in 1900, which is a very small segment of the viable farm land in the west coast region. By 1910, Japanese Americans controlled 16,980 acres through direct ownership. Another 77,762 acres were controlled by Japanese American farmers through leasing, contracts, and share cropping. This brought the total amount of farm land the Japanese Americans had influence over to 194,742 acres.<sup>85</sup> Given their relatively small percent of the overall population, their control of this amount of farm land generated racial tension. This tension combined with the Pearl Harbor

<sup>84</sup> U.S. Department of interior, War Relocation Authority, *Wartime Exile: The Exclusion of the Japanese Americans From the West Coast*. Washington, D.C. : Government Printing Office, 1946. Pg. 8.

<sup>85</sup> Ichihashi, *Yamato Japanese in The United States: A Critical Study of the Problems of the Japanese Immigrants and Their Children* ( Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1932). Pg. 184.

bombing created the environment needed to make the mass removal and internment of Japanese Americans an acceptable action in the minds of the U.S. public.

The family history of Kay Matsuoka provides a good example of how many Japanese American families developed before Pearl Harbor. Her father, Gosaku Nakahara, was the only son of his parents. Still, he was so drawn to the American dream that he left his family obligations behind, forcing his parents to adopt a man to carry on the family name in his place. Though born on a farm in the Hiroshima countryside, he was able to read and write, which made him considerably educated for the time period. According to Matsuoka, Nakahara was able to take his education and use it to help him immigrate to the United States in the early 1900s. After a few years, he sent for a bride, and Matsuoka's mother arrived around 1912. Her father was in his late thirties and her mother was in her late twenties when they started their family.<sup>86</sup>

Matsuoka was born on the family strawberry farm in Moneta, California, with the help of a midwife. Within four years, the family moved due to the exhaustive effects that strawberries had on the land. Since the first move, her family stayed in a constant state of resettlement. They never established a permanent home, partly because of the land requirements for farming strawberries, but also due to the fact that, like many Japanese who immigrated in the early 1900s, Matsuoka's parents viewed America as a place to make a considerable amount of money in order to return to Japan and enjoy a better lifestyle.<sup>87</sup> As soon as she was old enough to help, Matsuoka picked strawberries, spinach, and boysenberries. She recalled that her parents were poor but that by helping they might have wealth in the future.<sup>88</sup> During high school, Matsuoka began to

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<sup>86</sup> Matsuoka, Kay. Interview with Alice Ito. Video interview. Seattle, Washington. December 29 and 30, 1999. Densho Archive. Segment 2.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. Segment 3.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. Segment 4.

experience the racial tension present on the west coast that would prove to be a barrier to the economic and social development of the Japanese Americans. In her senior year, she was selected to be valedictorian. Yet, when proof of her eligibility for this honor was presented to the PTA of Narbonne High School, administrators decided to give the honor to another girl. Matsuoka was not surprised by this outcome. Her mother and father had raised her to expect a certain amount of racial discrimination and followed the traditional Japanese saying of 仕方がない or *shikata ga nai*, which means “it can’t be helped.”<sup>89</sup> Many Japanese people followed this philosophy during the World War II era. Matsuoka was taught that whenever an argument arose with a white person the goal was to lose and by losing, to win. This would help to make the Japanese people, as a whole, less of a threat and, over time, lead to their acceptance. However, her parents continued to push her to study hard and “get honors” to show that the Japanese were capable people who submitted in confrontations not out of weakness, but in humility.<sup>90</sup>

Through hard study after graduating, Matsuoka was able to open a dress design shop and slowly build her business up to an operation of 250 clients of mostly upper-class Caucasian women and a collection of Japanese students. By the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor, her shop contained five sewing machines and a full staff. Matsuoka had successfully taken advantage of the economic mobility available in America to climb up from poor tenant farming to strong small business owner. Things were going smoothly until Matsuoka completed an order for a custom dress a few weeks after the attack. When the customer who placed the order did not arrive at the usual time, Matsuoka called and asked her to pick up the dress. The woman responded, “I

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<sup>89</sup> The phrase is also sometimes seen written as *Sho ga nai* “しょうがない。”

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. segment 9.

wouldn't be caught in a Jap's shop." It was the first time Matsuoka had ever heard the term "Jap" used in a negative way and it left her feeling "crushed" and hurt.<sup>91</sup>

The social climate of the United States changed drastically with the bombing of Pearl Harbor. It was as if the attack opened a rift that allowed the racial tension, enhanced by economic competition, to pass through common courtesy and into daily life without the normal social reprimands that would otherwise keep such encounters from happening. On the day of the attack, Kaz T. Tanemura was living in Seattle, Washington, and did not notice any animosity or racial discrimination. The social norms he had lived with all his life were, for one last day, still in effect. Then, on December 8, 1941, he was carrying out his usual duties as a school patrol boy, responsible for monitoring an intersection next to his school, when a car sped toward his location and forced him away from the street. After stopping, the driver emerged from the vehicle and began to yell and cuss. Tanemura remembered being repeatedly called a "Jap" and being asked why he was in the street. He replied to the man:

"What am I doing there?" I got my flag, I even had that flag up because I thought he was gonna attack me, you know. Then all of a sudden, bam, he shuts up, jumps into his car and drives off. But that was the first time I was called a "Jap" and whatnot, and the first time I felt the hostility of the people. To me, out of the clear blue sky. I didn't do nothing to him, I'm just standing at the corner monitoring the flag there, and he jumps out and gives me the "H" and whatnot.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Matsuoka, Kay. Interview with Alice Ito. Video interview. Seattle, Washington. December 29 and 30, 1999. Densho Archive. Segment 11.

<sup>92</sup> Tanemura, Kaz T. Interview with Tom Ikeda, video interview. Densho archive. Seattle, Washington. November 17, 2009. Segment 9.

Almost immediately after the attack, life in America underwent significant changes. Curfews went into effect and key people in the Japanese American community were arrested by the FBI. Cherry Kinoshita recalled a day or two after Pearl Harbor that her family received a visit from two men dressed in suits. The men requested to speak with Cherry's father so one of her brothers acted as an interpreter. The reason for their visit, they said, was evidence that her father was a Japanese spy. The family possessed an eight dollar short wave radio that, in the opinion of the FBI, would allow for communication with the Japanese military forces. Cherry remembered the radio was very small and could only pick up a few stations. Still, "the FBI men questioned, oh, it must have been an hour or so, and found that there was nothing. He was nothing but a humble, little dry cleaning operator and so they left." Overall, Cherry remembers that right after Pearl Harbor there was not a large consensus of people calling for mass removal:

It was only later on and it was stirred up by these elements. Economic forces. I don't think enough emphasis had been (placed) on the economic factor. People looked at the farmlands and looked at the holdings of Japanese and wanted them out. I mean, this was a good chance to get them out of the area and so the cry then began, to move all of us.<sup>93</sup>

For Jim Tanaka, the change in the community after Pearl Harbor was almost instant. Tanaka was a student at Stanford Junior High School in Sacramento, California. When asked to relate his time in school just before and after the bombing, he called it a "horror story." The Friday night before the attack, he had spent his time with many of his friends. Then, Monday morning, he remembered walking down the school hallway. "All your former friends stand

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<sup>93</sup> Kinoshita, Cherry. Interview with Becky Fukuda. Densho Archives. Seattle, Washington. September 26, 1997. Segment 5.

outside,” he said, “you have to walk down the middle of the, middle of the hallway, they call you name and all that. I went through that. I never forget that.” Things were so bad in school that Tanaka was glad leave when the evacuation order came out.<sup>94</sup>

The first camps in the United States were established by Executive Order 9066, under the direction of the Wartime Civilian Control Agency (WCCA), in March, 1942. They were described by the WCCA as convenient gathering points inside a militarily protected area where the evacuees could live while awaiting transportation to the relocation centers.<sup>95</sup> These camps were meant to be temporary assembly centers, but in reality, most people spent several months in difficult conditions. While relocation centers, under the direction of the War Relocation Authority (WRA), were being completed further inland, Japanese Americans were often held at fairgrounds or horse racetracks. May Sasaki, one of the Japanese held at the assembly center of the Puyallup fairgrounds in Washington State, was six years old at the time of the initial evacuation process. She remembered what conditions were like in the assembly centers. She, her mother, father, and two brothers were all housed inside a single animal stall. The animal that had been living there had only recently been removed and strong “animal smells” remained present in the air. She slept on a bed of straw and remembers thinking this “must be how cows and animals feel.”<sup>96</sup> Over time, the short term assembly centers were replaced by the newly created

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<sup>94</sup> Tanaka, Jim. Interview with Kirk Peterson. Video interview. Densho Archives. Sacramento, California. October 19, 2008. Segment 8.

<sup>95</sup> Burton, Jeffery F., Mary M. Farrell, Florence B. Lord, and Richard W. Lord. *Confinement and Ethnicity: An overview of World War II Japanese American Relocation Sites*. 1999. [http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/anthropology74/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/anthropology74/index.htm) (accessed March 1, 2011).

Relocation Centers (often unofficially referred to as internment camps) that were spread over the western United States. The Rohwer and Jerome centers in Arkansas were the farthest east.



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<sup>96</sup> Sasaki, May. Interview with Lori Hoshino. Video interview. Seattle, Washington. October 28, 1997. Segment 14.

<sup>97</sup> National Park Service. Figure 1.1 [map].

Rohwer and Jerome proved to be difficult living environments for the Japanese. The land where the two camps were built was originally purchased by the federal government in the 1930s, but its location in the flood plains of the Mississippi river delta had made the land so difficult to use effectively that commercial developers had abandoned it in 1942.<sup>98</sup> Thus, the WRA was able to acquire the land and begin what at this time had become an almost standardized process, building another set of relocation centers. Russell Bearden described the Arkansas centers in his masters thesis as similar to the other relocation centers in the country. The roughly 500-acre complexes were surrounded by a high, barbed wire fence and contained military style barracks that were organized into “blocks.” A single block was designed to hold roughly 300 people in fourteen barracks, each 20’x120’, and holding four to six families. Often, each block also contained a mess hall, recreational center, laundry house, and a communal wash house. None of the fourteen barracks housing families contained indoor plumbing and the only form of heat came from wood stoves.<sup>99</sup>

The Rohwer Relocation Center covered 10,161 acres of swampy Coon Bayou lands, referred to by one native as “ungodly country,” and was twelve miles to the northeast of

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[http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/anthropology74/ce1.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/anthropology74/ce1.htm). accessed August 28, 2011.

<sup>98</sup> Dorr, Guy E. “Issei, Nisei, and Arkansas: A geographical Study of the Wartime Relocation of Japanese-Americans in Southeast Arkansas 1942-1945” (Masters Thesis, University of Arkansas, 1977), pg. 58-61.

<sup>99</sup> Bearden, Russell. “The Internment of Japanese Americans in Arkansas, 1942-1945.” (Masters thesis, University of Arkansas, 1986), pg. 58.



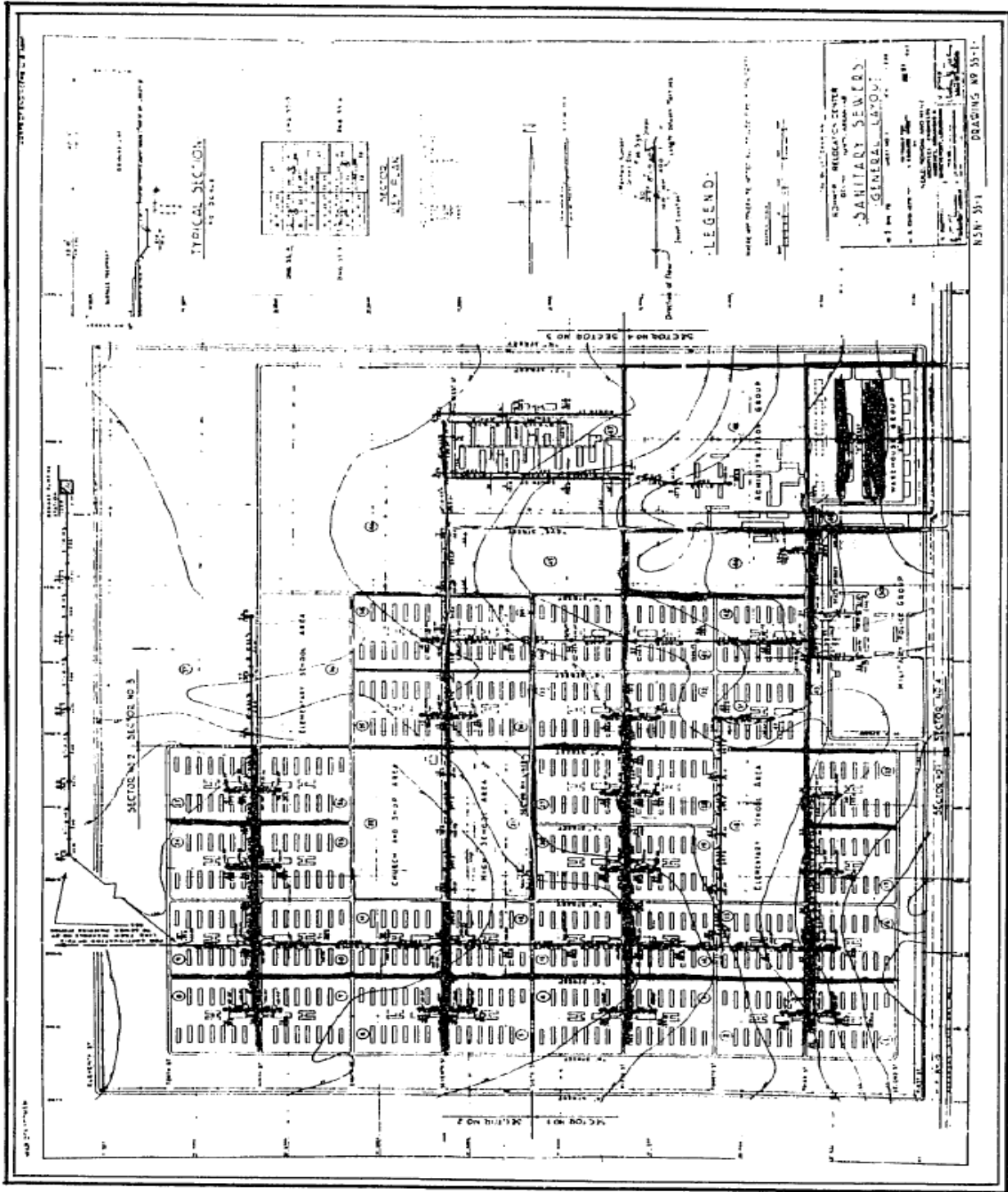
McGehee, Arkansas.<sup>100</sup> The center was open for three years, from September 18,1942, to November 30, 1945. At its highest population, it housed 8,475 Japanese internees. The Jerome Relocation Center was located twenty six miles south of Rohwer by rail and eight miles away from the farming town of Dermott, Arkansas. The Jerome Relocation Center was open from October 6, 1942, to June 30, 1944 (only 634 days), the shortest operating span of any relocation center, and it housed 8,497 Japanese internees at its largest population.<sup>101</sup> Either of these populations dwarf the total number of Japanese Americans interned in Hawaii, which records show was just over 1,400, or one percent of the Japanese in the whole territory of Hawaii.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Gould, Rosalie. Interview with the Author. electronic recording by phone. Mcgehee, Arkansas. July 18, 2011.

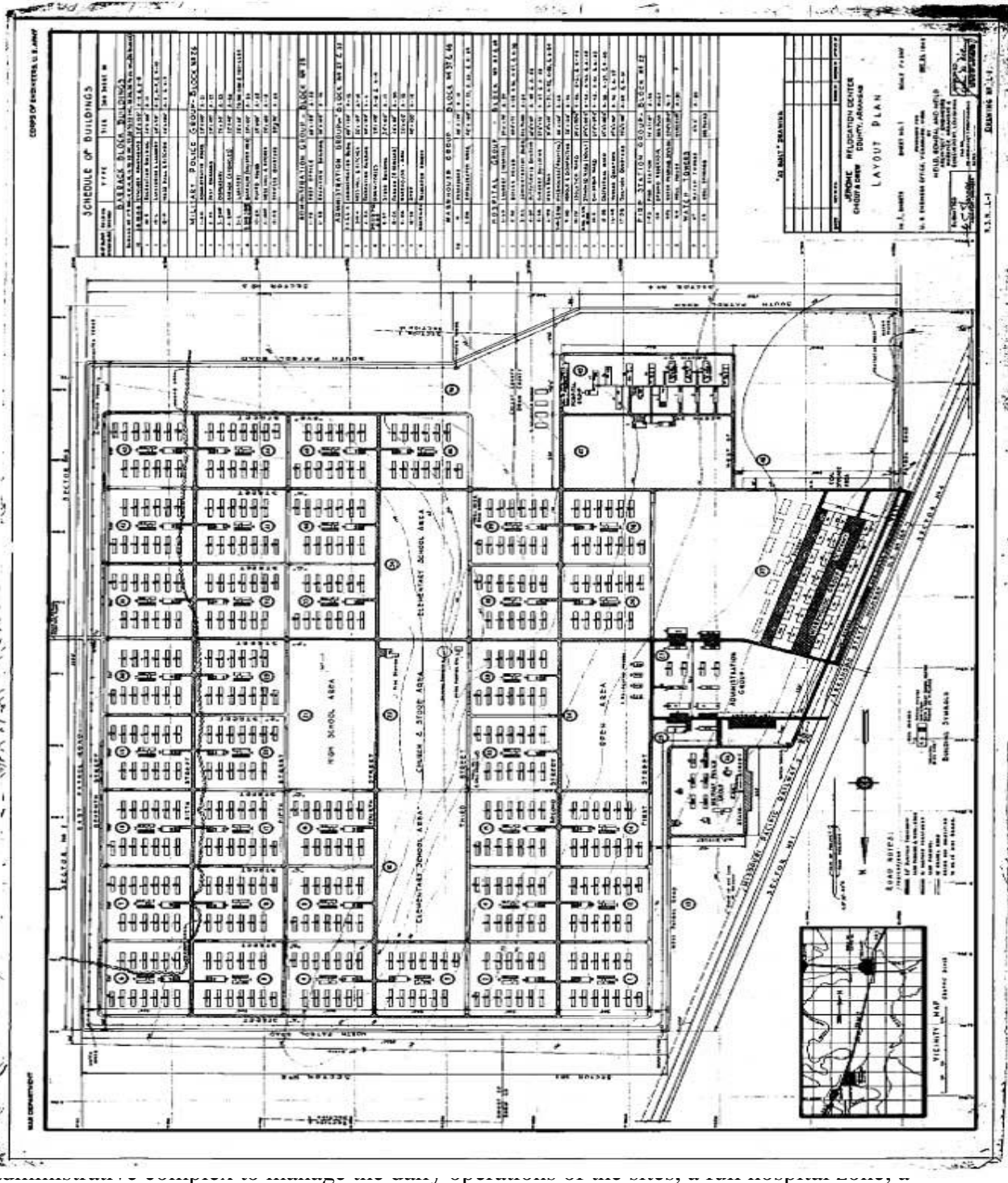
<sup>101</sup> U.S. department of Interior, War relocation Authority, *WRA: A Story of Human Conservation*. (Washington D.C. : Government Printing Office, 1946), pg. 197.

<sup>102</sup> Okihiro, pg ix.



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<sup>103</sup> Photograph of the construction map for the Rohwer Relocation Center. Dorr, Guy E. "Issei, Nisei, and Arkansas: A geographical Study of the Wartime Relocation of Japanese-Americans in Southeast Arkansas 1942-1945" (Masters Thesis, University of Arkansas, 1977), pg 101.



warehouse and factory section, housing for WRA personnel, and a whole assortment of extra buildings to contain things like motion picture theaters, workout areas, auditoriums, vehicle bays,

<sup>104</sup> Photograph of the construction map for the Jerome Relocation Center. Ibid, pg 102.

and fire stations. By July 23, 1942, roughly 4,000 workmen had signed up to help construct the two relocation centers. Building supplies were unloaded at the rate of 50 train cars per day and by September 1942, over 1,000 train cars of wood and other materials had been unloaded. On September 24, 1942, and October 11, 1942, Japanese Americans began arriving at Rohwer and Jerome, respectively, even though construction on the two sites continued into January, 1943. This caused additional hardship for the Japanese as latrines, schools, and medical facilities were not completed.<sup>105</sup>

Local laborers were partly to blame for the delayed construction period, as well as adding to the troubles the newly arriving Japanese Americans faced in the camp grounds. Due to the general shortage of manpower, caused by the troop demands of a U.S. military that was engaged in operations around the world, the personnel who answered the call for workers were often not qualified or experienced enough to do the tasks given to them. A portion of this labor force also carried out limited acts of racial discrimination toward the internees such as restricting internee access to construction areas while the workers slept, gambled, or intentionally worked slowly on the job site. Workers would also intentionally attempt to reduce or restrict internee access to the latrine areas. All the while, the laborers illegally smuggled in alcohol and sold it to the internees, thus violating both state and federal regulations.<sup>106</sup> Although construction was slow, once Rohwer and Jerome were finished, they were among the largest farming communities in Arkansas. They grew few cash crops, like cotton, but their main objective under the command of the WRA was the production of food crops in order to help sustain themselves. Their methods of farming affected the area and local farmers to such an extent that Rosalie Gould, local resident and mayor of nearby McGehee for over a decade from 1983 to 1995, said “the Japanese taught

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<sup>105</sup> Dorr, pg 104.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, pg 105.

us (local residents near the camps) how to irrigate and consequently, we were able to immediately start planting rice.”<sup>107</sup> Together Rohwer and Jerome contained 1,200 buildings, several hundred acres of farm land, and miles of newly constructed gravel roads that brought the total cost of the two camps construction to 9,503,905.00 dollars.<sup>108</sup>

Living conditions in the camps once construction was completed were vastly superior to those of the Sand Island or Honouliuli camp systems. Both had hospitals and each hospital was overseen by a WRA approved physician with the bulk of the medical staff being made up of Japanese American doctors, nurses and dentists. Even before the camps own facilities were operational, camp doctors were able to access the required tools and treatments for their patients at nearby towns. Once they were fully operational, the camp medical facilities had the ability to treat serious wounds and transport patients with their own ambulance systems. Marian Shingu experienced one of the ambulances first-hand when she ran into a section of barbed wire while playing ball with her friends. One of the camp doctors treated the wound with fifteen stitches before she was transported back to her barracks.<sup>109</sup> Yuriko Hohri remembers having her tonsils removed by a doctor in the Jerome relocation center. “The best thing was I got to have some ice cream after that,” she rejoiced.<sup>110</sup> This provides a stark contrast to the recollections of Kaetsu Furuya, who watched a fellow internee on Sand Island, Hawaii, Kokubo Takara, catch cold after being forced to stand “practically naked, in our undershirt and underpants” in February. Takara

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<sup>107</sup> Gould, Rosalie.

<sup>108</sup> U.S. War department, *Final Report: Japanese Evacuation From the West Coast*. (Washington D.C. :Government Printing Office, 1943), Pg. 350. Based on current inflation values the modern cost of the Arkansas Internment Centers was roughly 105,000,000.00 dollars based on the American GDP deflator formula for 1942 to 2011.

<sup>109</sup> Shingu Sata, Marian. Interview with Tom Ikeda. Video interview. September 23, 2009. Densho Digital Archive. Segment 11.

<sup>110</sup> Hohri, Youriko. Interview with Martha Nakagawa. Video interview. July 18, 2011. Los Angeles, California. Densho Digital Archives. Segment 14.

became constipated for a week, and the camp did not provide medical treatment. Furuya and the other internees had “no medicine or means of helping him, so he died.”<sup>111</sup>

Food in the Arkansas camps was generally of good quality. Nine hundred Japanese Americans worked to prepare food for their fellow internees at each camp. Food was served cafeteria style three times day, and for young internees like George Takei, that was “normality.”<sup>112</sup> It was the only life many of the young had known, yet for the older internees, the simple act of eating communally was a drastic change to their life. Traditionally, Japanese households ate together as family where they discussed private family issues and laid out that day’s plans. This discussion period was typically directed by the father of the household. The camp life made this impossible as families now found themselves waiting in long lines to be packed into crowded mess halls. Simply being forced to eat in a mess hall setting helped lead to a substantial degradation in the authority of the Japanese father figure and exacerbated the growing separation between the Issei and Nisei generations.<sup>113</sup>

When asked about the differences in Issei and Nisei opinions of the war and internment, Frank Miyamoto started his answer by saying, “It’s not something that can be easily explained in an oral conversation such as this one.” However, he continued:

Some *Nisei* were caught up in the sense of support for the Japanese. But I would say that, at least the college-educated population I happened to be acquainted with, looked with a good deal of doubt about this part of the activity of the *Issei* population. [Issei support for Japan during the war] Yet, as I say, you

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<sup>111</sup> Furuya, Kaetsu. Oral history. Japanese Internment and relocation: The Hawaii Experience, University of Hawaii, Hamilton Library, Special Collections. Item 233,2.

<sup>112</sup> Takei, phone interview.

<sup>113</sup> Sasaki, May. Segment 18. Also a critical aspect of Twyford’s masters thesis.

understood why the *Issei* would behave as they did. After all, the *Issei* were excluded from participation in the American political life, and so they had behaved as you would expect them to, in response to the needs of Japan.<sup>114</sup>

Therefore, it is important to note that generalizations based on an internee's age or generation, such as those made by Holly Twyford in her Masters thesis on Japanese American youth in the Arkansas camp systems, must be examined with caution as they may be wrong in some cases.<sup>115</sup>

Many internees felt strongly about both the war and internment, which were often discussed, so it was critical for the smooth operation of the camps and prevention of riots that an effective means of governing the population be established. The political structure that eventually developed was a twofold system containing both a WRA appointed authority and an internee driven civilian government. Each camp was headed by a project director who oversaw camp operations and reported only to the director of the WRA. Three assistant director positions existed to carry out the orders of the project director in regards to camp operations, administrative management, and community management. The camp Operations Assistant Director was responsible for the construction and upkeep, farming and manufacturing, roads and transportation, and electric and water supplies. Under these directors were numerous assistants and aids who help to oversee the staff in their daily duties. The WRA also established its policy of internal government in a way that attempted to provide Japanese Americans interned on the mainland with the ability to take a direct and meaningful role in their own self-regulated community government. A general guide existed for all the relocation centers and provided

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<sup>114</sup> Miyamoto, Frank. Interviewed by Stephen Fugita. Video interview. April 29, 1998. Settle, Washington. Densho Digital Archives. Segment 7.

<sup>115</sup> Twyford. Pg. 3.

procedures that outlined precisely how much authority the interne community government would have. This document was created by a group of top WRA officials in Washington, D.C. Camps were allow to make changes to the governing parameters, pending approval from WRA headquarters, but both Rohwer and Jerome did little to change the predesigned program.<sup>116</sup>

Each residential barracks functioned as a district within the camp government. Anyone over the age of twenty-one had the right to take part in the election of a representative from each residential barracks to the Camp Community Council. The council was comprised entirely of the elected barracks representatives.<sup>117</sup> George Takei remembered that his father took part in this process and was selected to serve in a position Takei called “block manager.” However, after hearing Takei’s description of the role his father served, it is clear that he was, in fact one of the elected barracks representatives and therefore a member of the Camp Community Council which made him an important member of the internee’s self government.<sup>118</sup>

Coming from the assembly center in Stockton, California, it took three days for Marian Shingu Sata’s family to cross the desert and plains of the Midwestern U.S. and arrive in Rohwer, Arkansas. Sata remembered there were lots of bugs and mosquitoes. It was very cold, overall “a dismal place.” But upon arriving in their new “home” her father, Lloyd Shuzo Shingu (Marian’s father), quickly took a leading role in the community. Lloyd Shigu had a master’s degree in psychology from USC, was fluent in both Japanese and English, and had experience in administration as a school principal which made him a natural choice for the position Marian Shingu Sata called assistant to the camp director.<sup>119</sup> She recalled that her father made many

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<sup>116</sup> Dorr, pg 116.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> George Takei. Phone interview with the Author. March 18, 2011.

<sup>119</sup> Shingu Sata, Marian. Segment 10.



announcements at camp meetings and people who had considerable grievances came to him for help. Her memories are limited because she, like Takei, was very young during the time of internment. It is possible that the role she describes as assistant to the camp director may have in fact been called Chairman of the Camp Community Council. If this is true then her father would have functioned like a city mayor, elected by the Community Council to provide final oversight on large public concerns and decisions made by the council. The chairman also provided the population of the camp with direct political access to the head of operations at the relocation center, the WRA Camp Director.<sup>120</sup>

Education is one of the greatest differences between the Arkansas and Hawaii internment experiences. In the Hawaiian camps, there was no system for schooling internees, even though whole families were interned, but in Arkansas, as with many other American relocation centers, there was a dedicated educational system contained within the camps. These schools not only taught children, but also instructed adults providing useful life skills and distraction from their daily life. Both Rohwer and Jerome were planned to have staffs of 75 to 100 fully qualified teachers. The WRA planned to pay principals and teachers between the rates of \$1260.00 and \$3800.00 depending of their level of education and qualifications. These were the rates set by the Civil Service Commission and covered a full year of work. In contrast, the state of Arkansas paid its teachers between: \$523.00 and \$1763.00.<sup>121</sup>

The drastic difference in salaries generated protests across the state of Arkansas. The fear was that the better salaries paid by the federal government would lure many of the qualified teachers out of the Arkansas public school system. The parents of students and school

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<sup>120</sup> Dorr, 116.

<sup>121</sup> *Arkansas Gazette Newspaper*. September 23, 1942, pg 2. Also correlated with *The McGehee Times*, September 24, 1942, pg 1.

administrations began to pressure the state government, and this forced U.S. Senator Hattie Wyatt Caraway to take an interest in the matter. The senator requested an explanation from the WRA on the issue, and their response explained that the salaries in question had been established by the Civil Service Commission and then explained that relocation center teachers would be working a full twelve month year instead of the more common nine month teaching period of Arkansas teachers. In addition to a long work period, teachers in Rohwer and Jerome would also be involved in community service programs, like nursery school and adult education classes, that would increase their work load. As a final parting note, the WRA representatives also drew attention to substandard living conditions and limited social life that any teacher who took the higher federal salary would have to endure. This explanation appeased Senator Caraway, but the issue remained a point of contention among much of the population in the state of Arkansas.<sup>122</sup>

Yet, even with the higher pay that could give more incentive to bring quality teachers into the centers, the experience of going to school in Rohwer or Jerome was full of hardships. Marian Shingu recalled that her school rooms were “dismal” places. She resided in the Rohwer relocation center from the second grade through the fourth grades, during which time she did not have a desk to sit in. Instead, she and her fellow students used a bench to sit on and listen to lectures. During writing assignments, she placed her paper on the bench and sat on the floor to write.<sup>123</sup> In Jerome, Yuriko Hohri remembered having a history teacher who disregarded common courtesy by chewing tobacco while lecturing, and allowing the juice to run down his face while he talked. Hohri had been taking piano lessons before she and her family were placed into the internment system. She recalled being able to continue practicing the piano even in camp,

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<sup>122</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, October 4, 1942. pg 10. And *The McGehee Times*, September 24, 1942, pg 1. Dorr, pg 134.

<sup>123</sup> Shingu, Marian. Segment 11.

although, her lessons were taught using a cardboard cutout of a piano keyboard.<sup>124</sup> Though limited, the Rohwer and Jerome centers provided an education to families with children of school age and provided adult internees with opportunities to continue their education, either in a classroom sitting or through occupational training. Available classes included but were not limited to wood working, auto mechanics, basic electrical repair, general American history, American foreign relations, psychology, English, and first aid. The most popular courses were English and American history.

The Arkansas relocation centers of Rohwer and Jerome operated as if they were miniature countries. Everything they needed to operate was contained within their fences, ranging from farms and the farmers to work them to medical services and their own, albeit limited, government. In fact, the living conditions inside the camp even generated animosity from the surrounding locals who were jealous that the Japanese Americans had running water and electricity, both of which were luxuries the average family in Arkansas could not afford.<sup>125</sup> Life in the camps was good enough that the younger internees, like George Takei, did not see the camps as a terrible place. They even had fond memories of playing, catching pollywogs, and visiting a nearby hog farm. However, Takei recalled there were scary moments, like experiencing an Arkansas thunder storm, saying even more than fifty years later that “the terror would never leave him.”<sup>126</sup> Overall, for many of the internees in Rohwer or Jerome the most trying part of being interned in Arkansas was not their treatment in the camps but their loss of freedom and property. Osamu Mori summed up his time in Jerome by stating:

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<sup>124</sup> Hohri, Youriko. Segment 14.

<sup>125</sup> Gould, Rosalie.

<sup>126</sup> Takei, George.

To me, it was a pretty nice camp... not nice, but better conditions than Santa Anita for example. Although Santa Anita, the weather was better, you can't say anything else. Arkansas rained and it was cold, in winter time it got cold but summer time when it rains, oh man it's... I never seen rain like that before in my life. But, you know, when you say isolated, I think they had guard towers but I don't think, initially it might have been manned but at the end, I don't think it was manned at all.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Mori, Osamu. Interview with Richard Potashin. Video interview. April 14, 2010. Concord, California. Densho Digital Archives. Segment 11.

## CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

Japanese Americans who lived in the mainland United States and those living in Hawaii experienced internment very differently. Hawaiian Japanese did not suffer mass removal and relocation, nor did they experience the same level of racial discrimination of those who faced interment in America before and after Pearl Harbor. Since mass interment did not occur in Hawaii, many Hawaiian Japanese remained unaware of the hardships that mainland Japanese Americans faced. For these same reasons, often the harshness of conditions for the limited few who experienced the full process of interment in Hawaii is often underestimated by other Hawaiians. This thesis has attempted to explain that the internment experiences of Hawaiian Japanese and American mainland Japanese differed in harshness. Although interment was less systematic in Hawaii and affected fewer individuals, it was far more brutal for those who were directly affected than those who were interned in Arkansas.

One interesting personal story provides an excellent example of how unaware of the full effect of internment the Hawaiian Japanese were. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Daniel Inouye, a Nisei who later became a Medal of Honor recipient and U.S. Senator from Hawaii, withdrew from the pre-med program at the University of Hawaii and enlisted in the U.S. Army. Inouye joined the newly created 442<sup>nd</sup> Combat team and soon found himself at Camp Shelby, in the state of Mississippi. The 442<sup>nd</sup> was created from a blend of mainland and Hawaii Japanese American volunteers, which initially caused tension in the unit. According to Inouye, both groups were distrustful of one another due to differences in culture that had developed between the Hawaiian Japanese and the American mainland Japanese.

During their childhoods, Inouye and his fellow Hawaiian Japanese had learned to speak a highly developed form of pidgin English that contained root words and grammar from Hawaiian, Chinese, Japanese, and Portuguese. Their pidgin language often sounded humorous to American mainland Japanese who spoke only Japanese and standard English. Yet, if the mainland Japanese expressed their disdain in something as small as a snide smile or joking remark, the Hawaiian Japanese would often respond with violence. This was because, according to Inouye, it appeared to the Hawaiian Japanese that the American mainland Japanese saw themselves as culturally superior. Eventually, this simple conflict expanded into a generally accepted tension between the two subcultures. Each group developed a derogatory label for the other. The Hawaiian Japanese referred to the American mainland Japanese as kotonks. While the American mainland Japanese called the Hawaiian Japanese buddaheads. Inouye recalled that in the early days of training at Camp Shelby the infighting between the kotonks and buddaheads became so commonplace that the senior officers of the regiment began to doubt the possibility of successfully forming a combat unit out of the two groups.<sup>128</sup>

After trying numerous ways to get the 442<sup>nd</sup> to bond, ranging from discussion groups, social hours, and psychological seminars, one final tactic was approached. Invitations were issued to men in each company in the regiment to visit Jerome and Rohwer, Arkansas. Inouye was a member of Company E, which received its invitation from the people of Rohwer, and Inouye was selected to be one of the men from his unit to travel to the camp. Once the selected men were lined up, Inouye noticed that all were noncommissioned officers, who had a good deal of influence on the opinions of their unit, with not a single officer going to Rohwer. At the time,

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<sup>128</sup> Inouye, Daniel. Interview with Tom Ikeda. video interview. June 30, 1998. Honolulu, Hawaii. Densho Digital Archive. Segment 10.

he did not think much about the composition of the group, but instead focused solely on the fact that he had been selected to go on the outing. Inouye recalled the general belief was that Rohwer was a place with a large Japanese community that would make for an excellent chance to get “all gussied up” and have a “weekend with the young ladies.” Some of the men even took their ukuleles and guitars in preparation for the festivities that they hoped would occur.<sup>129</sup>

After the long drive from Mississippi to Arkansas, Inouye remembers first encountering “row after row of barracks” and thought he was looking out at a military camp that the convoy was to pass by on its way to Rohwer. However, the trucks stopped at the gates of the camp, and Inouye observed the high barbed wire fences and machine gun turret nests. He remembers the awkwardness of being in uniform and facing men in the same uniform who were armed with rifles and fixed bayonets. Tension hung in the air for a moment. “Thank God the men had the good sense not to search us,” Inouye recalled, “I can imagine if the guards began searching us. I think we would have had some bloodshed around there. But then the gates were opened and we were escorted in.”

As the gates opened, Inouye and the rest of the “invitees” from the 442<sup>nd</sup> saw the interned for the first time, and it dawned on them how much the kotonks had given for the war effort. He and his fellow Hawaiian Japanese troops were shown to a group of barracks that had been vacated by families so that the soldiers would have a place to sleep during their stay. However, after realizing that the space had been given to them at the cost of doubling up families in other barracks, the men refused the accommodations and slept in the mess hall and on the convoy trucks. Inouye remembers he and the men of his unit tried to remain happy and sociable during

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

the visit, but it was difficult to maintain that facade given the sacrifice they were witnessing first hand. Inouye ended his recollection by stating:

And when we left, the atmosphere was totally different. Because when we arrived, we were all singing and playing ukuleles and having a great time, and when we left, it was absolute silence all the way to Mississippi. No one talked. And I can imagine what was going through their minds, and I think almost all of us must have asked ourselves -- would we have volunteered? That's a good question... Then when we got back, we could hardly wait to tell the fellows. And this is what they anticipated and so overnight the regiment was formed. Next morning you had the 442nd.<sup>130</sup>

Daniel Inouye's recollections of realizing the existence of Japanese American internment camps in the United States for the first time shows just how limited public understanding of internment and its full impact was in Hawaii during the war. Although some Hawaiian Japanese Americans had faced arrests, interrogations, and confiscation of property, many were unaware of the full effect the internment experience was having on individuals who were caught in the system. In Hawaii full internment was limited to the community leadership because they were believed to pose the highest security risk to the Islands and because the demographic makeup of Hawaii would not allow for mass removal without significant economic problems arising. Therefore, Hawaiian Japanese Americans as a whole felt less of an impact from the war with Japan did than their mainland counterparts. However, a lower overall impact does not mean that conditions in Hawaii during internment were better than in the United States as is commonly perceived.

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.



For those who were placed into the internment camp system of Hawaii the experience was far harsher than that of those interned in the United States. Men died from the conditions inside the Hawaii camps. People disappeared into the custody of the Federal government, their families unaware of their location and condition. One way of seeing how different the internment experience was between the United States and Hawaii is to examine the legal issues that arose from each area. The court cases from Hawaii and the United States display the differences between the two regions in terms of laws, and the motivations behind each society's treatment of the accused can be seen. The legal issues in Hawaii were based on the difficulty of keeping a population under military law. One of the key cases to come out of Hawaii during the World War II era was the case of *Duncan v. Kahanamoku*, which was argued before the Supreme Court on December 7, 1945 (an ironic date). Duncan was a civilian ship fitter who held a job in the Navy Yard at Honolulu. On the night of February 24, 1944, he was involved in a fight with two armed Marine sentries when they tried to arrest him for public intoxication at the dock yard. Duncan was subdued and arrested by the military authorities. By this time, the military forces in Hawaii had become more relaxed in regard to military rule on the islands. More than two years after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, signs of normal peace time life were returning. Bars, restaurants, schools, and movie theatres had been reopened. The courts on the islands had been told to "exercise their normal functions." They were once again summoning juries and witnesses to court in order to conduct criminal trials.<sup>131</sup>

However, important exceptions remained. One exception was that only military tribunals still held jurisdiction over criminal prosecutions that dealt with violations of military orders. Consequently, military authority still covered many of the day-to-day activities of civilian

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<sup>131</sup> United States. *Duncan V. Kahanamoku* (1946). Bethesda, Md: University Publications of America, 1975. 327 U.S. 311

conduct. Duncan was charged with violating, paragraph 8.01, Title 8, of General Order No. 2, which listed assaults on military or naval personnel with intent to hinder or resist them in the discharge of their duty as a crime.<sup>132</sup> Because he had assaulted military personnel, Duncan was tried by a military tribunal rather than the Territorial Court. He was convicted and received six months imprisonment. Duncan appealed the decision on the grounds that martial law had no authority on the day of his crime. Duncan's lawyer designed his argument around the concept that the writ of habeas corpus could only legally be suspended under military necessity stemming from the threat of an enemy invasion, which did not exist at the time of Duncan's arrest. The Supreme Court reversed his conviction on the basis that he had the right to equal protection under the law. According to Justice Frank Murphy, "The territorial courts of Hawaii were perfectly capable of exercising their normal criminal jurisdiction had the military allowed them to do so."<sup>133</sup>

Though Duncan's conviction was reversed by the Supreme Court, it was not because he was innocent of the charges, but because the legal process was not carried out correctly. While the military courts in Hawaii were clearly operating longer than necessary, they were still making decisions on cases where the charges were legitimate legal issues and their decisions were not wholly modeled on racial issues or war hysteria. What makes the legal situation in Hawaii important to note in regards to this thesis is that people like Duncan were given trials but Japanese Americans interned in the Hawaii system were not. Those taken by the police and FBI to Sand Island or Camp Honouliuli received no hearing before a court of their peers or even a military tribunal.

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<sup>132</sup> Irons, Peter ed. *Justice Delayed: The record of Japanese American internment cases.* ( Middletown Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 223.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, 93.

One of the best known court cases in the United States concerning internment was the case of *Korematsu v. United States*. Fred Toyosaburo Korematsu was a Japanese American citizen who knowingly violated Executive Order 9066, which called for the removal of persons from military zones of control. He attempted to disguise his racial identity with plastic surgery. Korematsu altered his eyes and nose in the hope that he could then blend in with European Americans and live peacefully with his Italian American fiancée.<sup>134</sup> On May 9, 1942, Korematsu did not report to the Tanforan Assembly Center with his parents and three brothers. Three weeks later, he was arrested in San Leandro, California, for violating the exclusion order. Korematsu was originally found guilty on September 8, 1942, and he appealed to the Supreme Court.<sup>135</sup> On December 18, 1944, the Supreme Court ruled, by a count of six to three, in favor of the government. The Court stated that the exclusion order was constitutional and that the need to protect against espionage out-weighed Korematsu's individual rights and the rights of his fellow Japanese Americans.

The decision in *Korematsu v. United States* was very controversial. Many years later, Korematsu was approached by a lawyer and professor of political science, Peter Irons, who convinced him to return to court. Irons explained that while researching a new book he was writing he uncovered information that could lead to a reversal of Korematsu's case. In November, 1983, Korematsu challenged the court's 1944 decision by filing a request of a writ of coram nobis.<sup>136</sup> This meant that Korematsu believed the court had made an error and its original decision should be overturned. It turned out that years after his case was originally closed, Irons discovered that the final report written by General John L. DeWitt and on which the court based

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 76.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, 133.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, 7.

its decision, had been falsified.<sup>137</sup> In his report, DeWitt claimed that mass removal was a military necessity, but not everyone, including J. Edgar Hoover of the FBI and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), agreed. Hoover and the FCC contradicted the evidence offered in support of the exclusion act.<sup>138</sup> This evidence was suppressed, and this gave Korematsu the grounds to challenge the court. Judge Marilyn Hall Patel of the Federal District Court for the Northern District of California granted Korematsu's claim of coram nobis, which replaced Korematsu's initial conviction. The new ruling cleared Korematsu of any charges, although it did not over turn the United States Supreme Court's decision on the original case.

Korematsu's case provides proof that racism was a strong motivator for internment in the United States. Justice Frank Murphy, who wrote a dissenting opinion in 1944, argued that the court was influenced by racial issues in reaching its decision, which led him to disagree with the overall ruling of the court. In his dissent Murphy stated that the whole internment episode "falls into the ugly abyss of racism," and compared the process to "the abhorrent and despicable treatment of minority groups by the dictatorial tyrannies which this nation is now pledged to destroy," a reference to the recently discovered racial policy of Nazi Germany toward the Jews and other minority groups.<sup>139</sup> In the closing portion of his dissent, Justice Murphy called the case a legalization of racism that should not be allowed in American life. For Murphy, the concept that American citizens had ancestral origins in foreign culture did not prevent them from enjoying the full protection provided to them through the U.S. Constitution.

In addition to legal differences between the two areas, the camps in Hawaii and Arkansas operated differently. The United States contained several different types of camps for internees

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, 330.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid, 90-96.

based on their threat level to the country whereas Hawaii had only one type of camp, where internees were held regardless of their perceived danger to America. The deciding factor over which camp mainland internees would be placed in was how they responded to the Statement of United States Citizen of Japanese Ancestry, otherwise known as the “loyalty questionnaire.” The last question on the form asked if the signer would swear their loyalty to the United States and forswear the allegiance to the Japanese Emperor.<sup>140</sup> George Takei was quick to note how confusing the question is worded and that the use of the “forswear” was a ploy to trick those questioned into providing the government with the justification for the internment of Japanese Americans. “By answering the way the government wanted them to,” he said, “they had to fess up that they were loyal to the Emperor of Japan when in fact they were not.” Therefore, rather than answering “yes” and claiming to be loyal while admitting having a previous loyalty to the Japanese emperor, Takei’s father and mother both responded with a firm “no” to question 28 on the survey.<sup>141</sup> Anyone who answered in this manner was deemed disloyal to the United States. In America, such a large number of internees answered “no” to the loyalty question that it was decided that the relocation center at Tule Lake would be set aside for disloyal internees and their families. Thus, Takei and his family were transferred out of Rohwer and placed in Tule Lake for the remainder of their time in internment.

Though the internment of Japanese Americans lasted years, a single event helped to rapidly bring it to an end. On August 6, 1945, a bomb was dropped from the cargo hold of a B-

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<sup>140</sup> Shigeno, John Yoshito, "DSS Form 304A, Statement of U.S. Citizen of Japanese Ancestry for John Yoshito Shigeno, 3/24/1944," in Our Place In History Archive, Item #34, <http://www.ourplacearchive.org/items/show/34> (accessed November 2, 2011).

<sup>141</sup> Takei, George.

29 bomber named *Enola Gay* onto the southern Japanese city of Hiroshima.<sup>142</sup> This was the first atomic weapons attack in history. Jack Dairiki was in Hiroshima when the device was detonated:

Then we came out the bomb shelter by curiosity, to the doorway, and looked out and saw first a victim walking like a ghost, a young lady walking with arms extended. Her clothes were hanging from her body, her hair just burned off, and was just staring straight ahead. It wasn't her clothes hanging; it was the skin hanging. I realized, oh my gosh, what happened. So we backed into the cave and started the discussion, what happened here? Why, what caused this?<sup>143</sup>

Thousands were killed, vaporized by the heat of the blast, with many more dying in rubble, or from radiation sickness later. The city's infrastructure was crippled. Dairiki recalled the city of Hiroshima having fifty-five hospitals with a combined staff of approximately two hundred doctors and close to two thousand nurses before the blast. After the explosion, only two hospitals remained.<sup>144</sup> Three days later, another bomb was dropped on the city of Nagasaki, and again the cost of life for the Japanese was immense. Common estimates place the death toll from the two attacks at approximately 240,000 people. This rapid destruction, combined with the Soviet advance into Japanese-controlled Manchuria, forced Emperor Hirohito to accept Japan's loss in the Second World War and to surrender on August 15, 1945.

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<sup>142</sup> Dower, John W. *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co 1999). Provides excellent insight into the experience of Japanese during the end of the war and functions as a cultural reference to better understanding the reason Japanese and Japanese Americans reacted to the defeat of Japan and internment.

<sup>143</sup> Dairiki, Jack. Interview with Martha Nakagawa. Video Interview. Los Angeles, California. March 15, 2011. Segment 13.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

Once the Allies declared victory, no justification for internment remained. However, even earlier, once it was clear that the Allies had gained the advantage in the war, the internment camp system in Arkansas and Hawaii began to shut down. Japanese Americans found themselves released from internment and faced with a new challenge, reestablishing their private and public lives. For some, this transition was extremely difficult, while others, such as the very young, found the adjustment to be less than severe. George Takei remembered having fond memories while being interned. Because he was age four to eight during that time the experience was the only life he had ever known. However, once he and his family left the camp system, he began to experience the difficulties many other Japanese Americans were facing at the time:

After camp, when we came back to Los Angeles and we had to live on skid row that, you know first of all we were terrorized, we had never experienced anything like that the smell of urine everywhere and scary ugly smelly people leaning on walls and some staggering down and falling down and barfing right in front of you. That was terror.<sup>145</sup>

The racial discrimination he experienced was not limited to strangers, but also darkened his interactions with people in society who had a moral obligation to treat him impartially such as a school teacher that had often referred to him as the “Jap Boy.” So painful was the experience of having his teacher verbally abuse him, a person who normally would have defended him from teasing, that Takei still remembered her name calling more than half a century later.<sup>146</sup>

Many American mainland Japanese who returned to the west coast after their internment shared similar experiences. Sue K. Embrey, who moved back to Los Angeles from Chicago after

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<sup>145</sup> George Takei, Phone interview with the Author. March 18, 2011.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

partaking in the WRA “resettlement” program, had an extremely hard time finding a place to live.<sup>147</sup>

I would go into these public phone booths, and call all these numbers in the papers, you know, advertising rentals. And amazing, the minute I said my name, "Oh, we don't rent to Japanese, we don't rent to Asians." Orientals at that time. Had a hard time looking for something. And then I thought, "Well, maybe we could try buying something." So I called the real estate agencies, and they'd say the same thing: "We don't sell to," you know, "we don't sell to Japs, we don't sell to Orientals."

After a long period of searching for adequate housing, Embrey finally found a house for rent south of Little Tokyo.<sup>148</sup> “Resettlement” was a term often used by the WRA to label the migration of American mainland Japanese out of the camps where they had been interned before the end of the war. Those American mainland Japanese who were accepted into the program were directed to settle in the northern and eastern parts of the United States. In other words, they were allowed to travel freely as long as they kept to the original intent of Executive Order 9066 and stayed out of the west coast zones of exclusion.

Although Takei and others who moved back into the west coast region of the United States were confronted with racial discrimination, Japanese Americans who moved elsewhere in the United States tell the story of a much more positive experience. Wesley K. Watanabe was ten years old when he, his mother, sister, and brother left the Minidoka relocation center in

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<sup>148</sup> Embrey, Sue. Interview with Glen Kitayama. Video interview. September 11, 1997. University of CA, Los Angeles. Densho Digital Archive. Segment 5.



March of 1945. They moved to west Chicago as part of the WRA resettlement program. The Watanabe family was the only group of Japanese American people in the whole community. This made Watanabe stand out at school but, unlike Takei, he was treated simply as a curiosity or cultural novelty. He recalled many times being asked questions about Japanese culture and language, but he never experienced any prejudice. In fact, Watanabe described his teachers by stating, “I felt no prejudice whatsoever from my teachers. I have good memories of my teachers all the way through grade school and high school.”<sup>149</sup>

The racial discrimination of Japanese Americans in the Hawaiian Islands after internment also varied by location. For Grace Sugita, the return to daily life after being taken from Hawaii and interned in the United States with her family was exciting. She remembered going back to school in Hawaii and receiving special attention.

And so my cousin took me around to see all his friends and he wrote an article about me in the school paper. I was such a novelty for them, because a lot of the kids didn't know such a thing... They never knew about camp, they don't know what camp is. You know, I had to explain these things to people. And so they interviewed me and got my article in the school paper and all that, and I was like a celebrity. Because I was the only one in the whole school who was in camp and came back to tell the story.<sup>150</sup>

Grace Sugita’s experience of being interned in Hawaii and then transferred to the mainland for the majority of the war was not that uncommon. During the beginning stages of the war with Japan a boat left Honolulu harbor named the *Ulysses Grant*. On board were 172 Issei and Nisei

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<sup>149</sup> Watanabe, Wesley. Interview with Alice Ito. Video interview. Klamath Falls, Oregon. July 4, 2004. Densho Digital Archive. Segment 7.

<sup>150</sup> Sugita, Grace. Interview with Megan Asaka. video interview. June 3, 2009. Honolulu, Hawaii. Densho Digital Archive. Segment 18.

“troublemakers” bound for internment in America. Though mass removal was not required in Hawaii, people were not prevented from taking part in the mass exodus away from those areas believed to be most threatened by Japan. In fact, internees in Hawaii were told that if they “volunteered” to be placed in the mainland internment system, they would be able to spend the war years as a single family unit. From 1942 to 1943, six more transports, carrying a total of 1,037 internees and close family members who had chosen to spend the remainder of the war interned in the United States with their families, were sent to America.<sup>151</sup>

Grace Sugita’s reintegration into Hawaiian society was positive, but not everyone shared her experience. Masamizu Kitajima, a native of Kapaaa, Kauai, Hawaii, spent the war years in the Jerome relocation center after his father was interned and the family agreed to move to the United States in order to spend the war years together instead of leaving the elder Kitajima to face internment alone.<sup>152</sup> After spending the war in America the family returned to Hawaii and Kitajima began to face considerable discrimination from his peers. The other Japanese school children often kicked Kitajima in the stomach so as not to bruise him and leave evidence of abuse. They also stripped him of his clothes, tying his pants into many knots, ripping his shirt, and taking his clothes so that he would be forced to leave school for the day. Kitajima refused to tell his parents what was happening out of shame. This treatment continued until Kitajima singled out one of his tormentors when they were alone and beat him with a baseball bat. After the encounter news spread that Kitajima would not be easily picked on, and though this stopped

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<sup>151</sup> Okihiro. Pg 253-259.

<sup>152</sup> Kitajima, Masamizu. Segment 15.

the abuse he had been enduring, none of his peers would associate with him. He continued to experience isolation throughout junior high school and high school. <sup>153</sup>

These experiences show that, while both Hawaii and the United States Japanese suffered discrimination before and after the internment period, the motivations behind the unequal treatment were different. In America the discrimination was most often racially and economically driven and focused mostly on the west coast, making discrimination less of a problem once the Japanese Americans had been relieved of their economic assets and transferred to a new location through the process of mass removal. Hawaii's Japanese and Japanese American faced discrimination based on both race and their likelihood of posing a security threat to the United States. That part of discrimination was far more difficult to escape.

Clearly, the views of the society as a whole in the United States and in Hawaii during the years of Japanese internment were racially charged. Japanese Americans in America were eventually placed into different camps based on their supposed "loyalty," while those who were "disloyal" were still interned with their families. In Hawaii, the "disloyal" were separated from their wives and children. The small size of the Japanese American population in the United States was the source of many of the differences that existed between the treatment of Japanese Americans there and in Hawaii. The limited numbers of Japanese Americans in America was too small to effectively resist government commands. Yet, the size of the Japanese American population in America also saved it from the problems that Hawaiian Japanese Americans faced. In the United States it was feasible to intern whole families rather than secretly holding individuals. In the Arkansas camps of Rowher and Jerome, fathers were not separated from their wives and children, while in the Hawaiian camp systems of Sand Island and Camp Honouliuli,

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid, Segment 32.

there were entirely separate areas for husbands and wives with little to no contact allowed between spouses and the rest of their families. The camps in the United States also had better resources, such as food and medical care, which reduced the overall death rate.

Still, the principal reason that internment in the United States was less traumatic than in Hawaii was public influence. The mainland camps were not fully under military control, but under federal government control, and the general public was aware of what conditions were like inside the camps. This allowed for social activist groups, such as churches to help provide for the internees. Schools, family living spaces, medical centers, recreational facilities, the reduction of restrictions and guards over time, and even the opportunity to leave the camp for short periods of time made the experience of being interned in Rohwer and Jerome felt similar to simply living in an all Japanese community rather than a prison camp.

The readjustment to public life after being interned was harder for many Japanese Americans who were held in Arkansas than it was for their counterparts in Hawaii due to the logistical problems connected to losing most of one's property and belongings. While the discrimination Japanese Americans faced in each area stemmed from different causes, such as racism, economic fears and military necessity, they left similar scars of depression and fear. The Hawaiian camp system's operational hardships, including abductions, strip searches, forced labor, lack of medical care, shortages of food, and limited shelter from the elements, sometimes resulted in mental break downs, depression, malnutrition, and death made the overall experience of internment in Hawaii far more brutal. Clearly, it was far worst to be one of the few who experienced internment in the Hawaiian Islands than it was to spend the war years as a mass removal internee in an Arkansas swamp.

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